

# The Glory of God And the Joy of Man

(How is God glorified in and by our character, and how does our character relate to the gospel?)

- **George Whitefield:** Preachers who leave their hearers with a spiritual sense of shock at the sense of God—some sense of the infinite weight of the reality of God.
- **The Supremacy of God in Preaching:** “People are starving for the greatness of God. But most of them would not give this diagnosis for their troubled lives. The majesty of God is an unknown cure. There are far more popular prescriptions on the market, but the benefit of any other remedy is brief and shallow.”<sup>1</sup>
- 1. **The God Centeredness of God: God Loves His glory More Than Anything Else.**

**Jonathan Edwards** ~ “The great end of God’s works, which is so variously expressed in Scripture, is indeed but ONE; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called, The Glory of God.”<sup>2</sup>

- **Question:** Why did God predestine us in love to be His sons?
  - **Answer:** “for the praise of His glory (Eph. 1).”
- **Question:** Why did He create a people for Himself?
  - **Answer:** “I created them for my glory (Is 43.7).”
- **Question:** Why did God make from one lump clay vessels of honor and from the same lump vessels of dishonor?
  - **Answer:** “That he might show His wrath and make known His power and reveal the riches of His glory” (Rom 9. 22, 23).”
- **Question:** Why did God raise up Pharaoh, harden his heart, and deliver Israel from Egypt?
  - **Answer:** “That His wonders might be multiplied over Pharaoh (Ex. 14.4), and that His name might be declared in all the earth (Ex. 9.16).”
- **Question:** Why did God spare rebellious Israel in the wilderness and finally bring them to the promise land?
  - **Answer:** “I acted *for the sake of my name*, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations (Ezek 20.14).”
- **Question:** Why did he not destroy Israel when they rejected him as king?
  - **Answer:** “The Lord will not forsake his people, *for his great name’s sake*” I Samuel 8.4-6.

<sup>1</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 9.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *A Dissertation Concern the End for Which God Created the Word, The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols, ed. Sereno Dwight (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 1:119.

- **Question:** Why did God bring back the Israelites from Babylonian captivity?
  - **Answer:** Daniel prayed (Dan. 9:17): “For your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate.”
- **Question:** Why did the Father send the incarnate Son to Israel?
  - **Answer:** “To confirm the promises given to the patriarchs...in order that the Gentiles might glorify God...(Rom 15.8-9)”
- **Question:** Why did the Son come to His final hour?
  - **Answer:** “For this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name (John 12.27-28).”
- **Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ:** “The created universe is all about glory. The deepest longing of the human heart and the deepest meaning of heaven and earth are summed up on this: the glory of God. The universe was made to show it, and we were made to see it and savor it. Nothing less will do. Which is why the world is as disordered and as dysfunctional as it is. We have exchanged the glory of God for others things (Romans 1:23). ~ “The heavens are telling of the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). That is why all the universe exists. It’s all about glory. The Hubble Space Telescope sends back infrared images of faint galaxies perhaps twelve billion light-years away (twelve billion times six trillion miles [12,000,000,000 x 6,000,000,000,000]). Even within our Milky Way there are stars so great as to defy description, like *Eta Carinae*, which is five million times brighter than our sun. Sometimes people stumble over this vastness in relation to the apparent insignificance of man. It does seem to make us infinitesimally small. But the meaning of this magnitude is not mainly about us. It’s about God. “The heavens are telling of the glory of God,” says the scripture. The reason for “wasting” so much space on a universe to house a speck of humanity is to make a point about our Maker, not us.”<sup>3</sup>
- **Psalm 19:1** “The heavens declare the glory of God.”
  - **Ills.** Stars and the cosmos
- **Brothers We Are Not Professionals:** “We were made to know and treasure the glory of God above all things; and when we trade that treasure for images, everything is disordered. The sun of God’s glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit. But when the sun is displaced, everything flies apart.

<sup>3</sup> John Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), 19-20.

The healing of the soul begins by restoring the glory of God to its flaming, all-attracting place at the center. ~ We are all starved for the glory of God, not self. No one goes to the Grand Canyon to increase self-esteem. Why do we go? Because there is a greater healing for the soul in beholding splendor than there is in beholding self.”<sup>4</sup>

- **Isaiah 48. 9, 11:** “For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off... *For my own sake, for my own sake*, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another”
  - **John Piper:** “Brothers, God loves His glory! He is committed with all His infinite and eternal might to display that glory and to preserve the honor of His name.”<sup>5</sup>
- **The Supremacy of God in the Life of the Mind:** “When a person is overwhelmed by the pervasive Biblical truth of God's supremacy in his own mind, then God's supremacy in ours is almost irresistible.”<sup>6</sup>
- a. **The Priority of God’s Glory: He Loves His Glory More Than He Loves Us**
  - i. **John Piper:** “Why is it important to be stunned by the God-centeredness of God? Because many people are willing to be God-centered as long as they feel that God is man-centered. It is a subtle danger. We may think we are centering our lives on God, when we are really making Him a means to self-esteem.”<sup>7</sup>
  - ii. **Ills:** Animal rights activist with their house on fire. If she could only save one thing, her baby or their pet rat, which would it be? *Answer:* She don’t know. Such an answer is psychotic. To place equal value on things that are so clearly disproportional is little short of madness.
  - iii. **Ills:** Jim and Tammy Faye Baker and their air-conditioned dog house. The outcry that came from that.
    - **Isaiah 2.22:** “Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?”
    - **Psalms 146.3:** “Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation.”
    - **Jeremiah 7.5:** “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength”

<sup>4</sup> Piper, *Seeing and Savoring Jesus Christ*, 21.

<sup>5</sup> Piper, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals* 8

<sup>6</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in the Life of the Mind*, [http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/culture/life\\_mind\\_03.html](http://www.desiringgod.org/library/topics/culture/life_mind_03.html)

<sup>7</sup> Piper, *We Are Not Professionals*, 6-7.

- **Isaiah 40.15, 17:** “Behold, the nations are like a drop in a bucket, and are accounted as dust on the scales...All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness.”

2. **However the very fact that God loves His glory more than us is the ground of His love for us**

- i. **Ills:** When God was going to wipe out the Israelites in the wilderness and Moses interceded. He told God “Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that he brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth’?...Then the Lord relented and did not bring on his people the disaster he had threatened. (*Exodus 32.11-14*).”
- o **Ezekiel 36:22-32**—“Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. 23And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Lord GOD, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes. 24I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. 25I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. 26And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. 28You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God. 29And I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. And I will summon the grain and make it abundant and lay no famine upon you. 30I will make the fruit of the tree and the increase of the field abundant, that you may never again suffer the disgrace of famine among the nations...32It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you.
- ii. **Let the Nations Be Glad:** “If the pursuit of God’s glory is not ordered above the pursuit of man’s good in the affections of the heart and the priorities of the church, man will not be well served and God will not be duly honored.”<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> John Piper, *The Supremacy of God in Missions*, (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1993), 12.

iii. Why did He create a people for Himself: **Answer:** “I created them for my glory (Is 43.7).”

- **J. I. Packer:** “Modern Christians tend to make satisfaction their religion...Typical of Christianity today...is its massive rash of how-to books for believers, directing us to more successful relationships, more joy in sex, becoming more of a person, realizing our possibilities, getting more excitement each day, reducing our weight, improving our diet, managing our money, licking our families into happier shape, and whatnot. For people whose prime passion is to glorify God, these are doubtless legitimate concerns; but the how-to books regularly explore them in a self-absorbed way that treats our enjoyment of life rather than the glory of God as the center of interest. Granted, they spread a thin layer of Bible teaching over the mixture of popular psychology and common sense they offer, but *their overall approach clearly reflects the narcissism—“selfism” or “me-ism” as it is sometimes called—that is the way of the world in the modern West...Now self-absorption, however religious in its cast of mind, is the opposite of holiness. Holiness means godliness, and godliness is rooted in God centeredness, and those who think of God as existing for their benefit rather than of themselves as existing for his praise do not qualify as holy men and women...It is an ungodly sort of godliness that has self at the center.*”<sup>9</sup>

### 3. We Are to Love God and Strive For His Glory More Than All Else.

- a. ***I Cor. 10:31:*** “So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all *to the glory of God.*”
- b. ***I Peter 4:11:*** “Whoever renders service, [let him do it] as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; *in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*”

### 4. How Do We Give Glory to God? Answer: By the Complete and Utter Abandonment of our Own Efforts for Righteousness and By Our Unqualified Dependence Upon Him

- a. **God is supremely glorified in the gospel!**
- b. ***2 Cor. 4:4:*** “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”
- c. What is the gospel?
- d. God loves to show His greatness and mercy. It redounds to his praise.
- e. God is glorified in the gospel.
- f. The Gospel: The person and work of Jesus Christ.

<sup>9</sup> Packer, J. I., *Keep In Step With the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1984), 97-98.

- i. It is all about Him and His work, not us and ours.
- ***The Pleasures of God***: “God has no needs that I could ever be required to satisfy. God has no deficiencies that I might be required to supply. He is complete in himself. He is overflowing with happiness in the fellowship of the Trinity. The upshot of this is that God is a mountain spring, not a watering trough. A mountain spring is self-replenishing. It constantly overflows and supplies others. But a watering trough needs to be filled with a pump or bucket brigade. So if you want to glorify the worth of a watering trough you work hard to keep it full and useful. But if you want to glorify the worth of a spring you do it by getting down on your hands and knees and dirking to your heart’s satisfaction, until you have the refreshment and strength to go back down in the valley and tell people what you’ve found. You do not glorify a mountain spring by dutifully hauling water up the path from the river below and dumping it in the spring...the way to *please* God is to come to him to get and not to give, to drink and not to water. He is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him...God is the kind of God who will be pleased with the one thing I have to offer—my thirst.”<sup>10</sup>
  - “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, for which I am suffering...” (2 Timothy 2.8).
- ii. ***Ills***: Watching the northern lights up in Alaska. A small boy wanted to help the experience so he turned on the flood lights so everyone could see better. It not only did not add to or increase the glory, it destroyed it!
- iii. ***Sinclair Ferguson***: “The glory of the gospel is that God has declared Christians to be rightly related to him in spite of their sin. *But our greatest temptation and mistake is to try to smuggle character into his work of grace.* How easily we fall into the trap of assuming that we only remain justified so long as there are grounds in our character for that justification. But Paul’s teaching is that nothing we do ever contributes to our justification.”<sup>11</sup>
  - ***Preaching as Expository Exultation for the Glory of God***: “Every sin flows from the failure to treasure the glory of God above all things.”<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2000), 208-209.

<sup>11</sup> Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 82-83.

<sup>12</sup> John Piper, Preaching as Expository Exultation for the Glory of God, *Together for the Gospel Conference*, Louisville, Kentucky; originally preached under the title "Why Expository Preaching is Particularly Glorifying to God", April 27, 2006, <http://www.desiringgod.org/library/sermons/06/042706.html>.

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## Stars

Do you remember when you were in elementary school and up on the wall were pictures of the planets and their relationship to the sun? Unfortunately those pictures did not tell the truth. Yes, the planets' names are correct and the sun *is* at the center of the solar system, but relationship between them is all wrong; it's not to scale. So let's begin at the beginning.

The earth is approximately 8,000 miles across. That's pretty big. But the sun is roughly 1,000,000 miles across. That's huge! So already the relationship between the earth and the sun in the pictures is not accurate because the sun is many, many times bigger than the earth; 125 times bigger. Perhaps a better model would be the relationship between a large wagon wheel and a marble. Got the picture in your mind? Okay.

When scientists began to study our solar system they discovered that they needed an entirely new unit of measurement because the numbers became too large. For example, the earth is about 93,000,000 miles away from the sun. That's the diameter of the sun (one million miles across) 93 times! That's enormous. In fact, it's so enormous that astronomers came up with the unit of measurement called the *Astronomical Unit* (AU for short). An astronomical unit is ninety-three million miles. So that means that Venus is a little over 0.7 AU, Mercury is about 0.38 AU, and that of Mars is a little more than 1.5 AU. If you think of the model as the wagon wheel (i.e., the sun) and the marble (the earth) about a football field (i.e., one AU) apart then you're beginning to get an idea of the distance between the two bodies and their relationship to each other. But to appreciate this further, think about the distance between the sun and the planet Pluto. Pluto is about 40 AU from the sun, and since Pluto is so small picture it as the size of a grain of sand. So the model is a wagon wheel (the sun) 40 football fields away from a grain of sand (Pluto). Do you see, from 40 football fields away (i.e., 4,000 yards away—that's about two and a half miles) you couldn't even begin to see a grain of sand. Those distances are just remarkable. But that's only the beginning.

Once we move outside of our solar system we find stars far, far away. The nearest star that we know of is called Proxima Centauri. It is part of a three-star system called the Alpha Centauri system. But to measure the distance between us and Proxima Centauri we need another unit of measurement: the *Light Year*. A light-year is defined as the distance that light will travel in a year. Oh, that number is difficult to appreciate! If the speed of light is 186,000 miles per second, then calculate the distance that light will travel in one year. The calculation looks something like this:  $186,000 \text{ miles/sec} \times 60 \text{ sec/min} \times 60 \text{ min/hr} \times 24 \text{ hr/day} \times 365 \text{ days/yr}$ . So a light year is 5,865,696,000,000 (5.8 trillion) miles or 63,072 AU. So the nearest (please note: the *closest star*, not a 'distant' star) is 25,222,492,800,000 (25 trillion) miles or 271,209 AU. That is a number that we simply cannot comprehend. The distance is so vast it defies our understanding. But that's not all.

Our solar system is part of a much larger group of star systems (i.e., galaxies) called the Milky Way. The Milky Way is a spiral disk-shaped group of over 200,000,000,000 (200 billion) stars. But there are other galaxies as well. The nearest large galaxy is called the Andromeda Galaxy. It is a spiral galaxy like the Milky Way but is 4 times as massive and is 2 million light years away. Our galaxy is one of more than a billions galaxies known to us and is traveling through intergalactic space.

A few years ago the director of the Hubble telescope decided to take a gamble. He proposed pointing the Hubble telescope at a 'blank' section of outer space. Now the cost to operate the Hubble telescope is enormous; nevertheless, the director decided to dedicate 100 hours to this risky project in the hopes that he may get 'lucky.' Oh, and he got lucky! They discovered over 3,000 new (never before seen)

galaxies. Please note: **not** 3,000 new stars, but 3,000 new galaxies; each one with between 100 and 300 billion stars! We honestly don't know how many galaxies exist in the universe (much less how many stars), but it is possible that there are over a trillion galaxies, each with 100 – 300 billion stars!

One final image: A few years ago I saw a photograph in a newspaper of a star that had exploded. The star was over 4,000 light years away, which meant that the explosion had taken place 4,000 years ago. That means that it exploded back during the time of Abraham! It had taken the rays of light 4,000 years to reach earth; 4,000 years before we could see it. That is, 23,462,784,000,000,000 (23.4 quadrillion) miles away. A number so vast we can't even begin to conceptualize it!

It was then that I remembered a verse in Psalms: “For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him” (103:11). In view of all the incomprehensible miles throughout the galaxies God's love is quantitatively greater towards those who love His gospel!