

THE SOLAS

FIVE TRUTHS THAT
SHAPE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Week 5 - Soli Deo Gloria (Glory to God Alone)

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

INDIA

Anjana is a student and the only Christian convert in her family—her parents are both Hindu. Anjana faced many struggles when she first became a Christian. This is typical for Hindu Background Believers. The pressure to return to their national faith is strong—both from family and society. However, Anjana recently married a Christian, and they plan to pursue Christian ministry together. “God, I thank you for all the believers in her church who encourage her and support her in her faith. I pray for all her family members—that they may all come to faith. I pray for her husband that he might grow in you and

might be able to do the ministry effectively. You know all her needs, Lord, and I pray that you provide her things that she requires. I also pray for all families and for all churches who are in persecution—I pray that you visit them and also bless them. Amen.”

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Dave Dick and Canyon Lake Community Church.

Closing prayer

INTRODUCTION

Last week during our Center Group (which is what our church calls small group) we had a discussion about the difference between knowing biblical truths and experiencing biblical truths. Art Azurdia, one of the best living preachers today, once said, "Life is easy. Living it is hard." What he meant by that is that these truths are not hard to understand. Many of us know these truths, but getting them deep down to where they change us emotionally is the struggle. Because when you're changed emotionally, it changes how you live.

Forgive as you've been forgiven. It's not hard to understand. Life is easy. Putting it into practice — actually forgiving someone who has hurt you deeply — living it is hard.

Love your wife as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Not hard to understand. And we're just gonna leave it at that.

You believe it's Scripture alone that defines your life, but how many verses do you struggle with believing that they're speaking about you?

You believe you're saved by grace alone, but how often do you feel you have to balance the scales with your behavior so God will love you more? Or at least love you again?

You believe you're saved by faith alone, but how many of us see faith as its own power source rather than the gift that it is?

In all these instances of unbelief, what we're really doing is putting smudges all over God's glory in salvation.

That is our final sola — for the glory of God alone
— Soli Deo Gloria.

Now, in a subject like God's glory, there are so many places we could go, so much we could cover, but we are limited in our scope on Sunday mornings. But some of the ways that we can glorify God — we glorify God when we desire His glory, we glorify God when we confess our sins, when we believe Him, when we bear fruit, when we accept His providence in our lives, when we walk cheerfully, when we are thankful, when we

stand up for truth, when we praise Him, when we share the gospel... and the list goes on.

Today we're only going to look at four places where God's glory is seen.

First, let's begin by defining God's glory. God's glory is about God. God's glory is an attribute of God that reveals the perfection of who He is. It's simply who He is. If you add up all God's attributes they equal glory.

But God didn't just leave His glory inside Himself as an internal quality, but He revealed His glory to us. God's glory is the bright rays of His actions that proceed from who He is. In the same way that beams of light shoot forth from the sun, God's glory comes from who He is. And He has displayed it to us in His actions.

ILLUSTRATION

When you marvel at someone's creative genius, you are marveling at something that brings them glory — their creative ability. In other words, the glory of the person is revealed in their creative

act. The same thing can be said of someone who goes to great lengths to care for others. Their moral actions bring a type of glory. All the acts, both creative and moral, tell us something about the person. It is the same with God.

EXPLANATION

The primary way we see God's glory is through the cross. When we look at what God has done for humanity in the cross of Jesus Christ we see His glory. God's glory, the wonder of who He is, is revealed in what He has done. As humans, we cannot simply look upon the glory of God, so His

glory is revealed to us in His actions, the pinnacle of His acts being the cross of Jesus Christ. That is where we'll end up today.

But let's begin with the first way Scripture tells us that God's glory is revealed to us, which is in the beginning... God created.

Psalm 8:1

O Lord, our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

1 Point #1 - God's glory is seen in creation.

Romans 1:19-20

19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

EXPLANATION

If you live in this world, creation says God exists. If you deny that, you will be without excuse. The glory of God's Being is seen in all aspects of creation. You see the glory of God by looking at the open expanse of the universe at night. What does this tell us about God? He cannot be contained by the universe.

Though God has revealed himself to us, there are aspects of who He is that are just beyond us. Our minds can't contain them. They spill over. Our brains are a cup, the knowledge of God is an ocean.

Though God can be truly known in a way that is analogous to other relationships we have, there is also this aspect to our relationship with Him that we cannot compare to anything else. And there are aspects to who He is and how He does things that we simply cannot grasp. “He does great things that we cannot comprehend.” (Job 37:5) That’s only comforting if you want a great God, which is the only God Scripture offers us.

One aspect of God's glory in creation that we often overlook is God's glory in human beings. God created us in His image.

That is point #2.

2 | Point #2 - God's glory is seen in you.

Nothing else in creation has the image of God stamped on it besides us. Animals can declare

the glory of God, but they do not possess the glory of God in the same way that we do.

The tragedy is in the fall we divorced our meaning from God himself. We made ourselves the meaning. That's basically how humanism is defined — man is the measure of all things. Man determines meaning. Humanism is just a positive spin on idolatry.

The negative spin regarding man divorcing himself from God is to see that without God there

is no meaning. The honest atheist will be a nihilist.

Both humanism (the belief that man is the measure of all things) and nihilism (the belief that there is no meaning to life) are the result of human rebellion against God.

But even in our fallen state, God's glory is seen in you.

All of this is obvious, as Paul declared:

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived

You have to be indoctrinated out of seeing this reality. You have to be told it is a silly belief of the ancients to see God's handiwork in humanity and creation. You have to be told things like “today, birds have developed even more complex uses for feathers [than dinosaurs did].” The creation is turned inward upon itself and given the glory for creating and advancing itself. God didn't design the complex beauty of feathers. The birds

developed it over the years, which is amazing considering they have bird brains. And the people worshipped the created thing rather than the Creator.

But God's glory can be seen in humanity.

Psalm 8:4-5

**4 what is man that you are mindful of him,
and the son of man that you care for him?**

**5 Yet you have made him a little lower
than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.**

EXPLANATION

It has been said that Psalm 8 is King David's poetic commentary on the creation of humans in Genesis. In the Hebrew language the word David uses here, the word that is translated as "heavenly beings" is the Hebrew word Elohim. Most of the time the word Elohim is translated as God. When it comes to humanity being created in the image of God, David is basically saying that God created us a little lower than God himself. That's why we're crowned with glory and honor. It

is a glory that comes from God's grace. It is glory gifted to us, a glory we do not deserve.

In the fall, the glory of God in humanity was marred, clouded, smothered by man's greatest idol — himself. When our first parents turned from God, they forfeited our royal heritage. They gave up the crown.

But this is our heritage — God's glory and image stamped upon our souls. This is what gives every human being their dignity and worth even now, regardless of religion, regardless of sex,

regardless of status or education or income. This is one of the Christian motivations for caring for people. They are created in God's image.

But the image has been marred. The crown has been lost.

Just like God, we can be kind.

Just like sinners, we are cruel.

Just like God, we can be compassionate.

Just like sinners, we are cold.

Just like God, we can be creative.

Just like sinners, we are plagiarists.

Just like God, we can be organized.
Just like sinners, we are chaotic.

Now, don't think our natures are a mixture of the good and the bad. At our very core of who we are, even the good is tainted by sin. Even when our actions are kind, our motives can be selfish (and often are). We need forgiveness for who we are at the core and we need to be changed for who we are at the very core. That's what the gospel brings.

The primary motivation of Christians caring for people is the gospel, because in the gospel God restores his image in each Christian. A Christian is simply someone in whom God's image is being restored.

BIG IDEA: The gospel puts the glory of God back in us.

2 Peter 1:4

by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine

nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

This is how God is restoring his image in you — through the gospel. You become partakers of the divine nature through the gospel. What does that mean? When you are born again by the Holy Spirit, God's divine nature resides in you. The Holy Spirit takes residence in your soul, inside of you.

BIG IDEA: The gospel puts the glory of God back in us.

God brings glory to Himself by enabling His people to act for his glory. To have the Spirit is to participate in Christ's glory. Now, what does it mean to participate in Christ's glory?

ILLUSTRATION

Well, if you look at the gospel story, you will see how the Christian life plays out. Before Christ experienced glory in His resurrection, He experienced humiliation. Before His glory, He experienced suffering. And He was perfect. This tells us something about the Christian life. Before

there is glory, there is a walk of humility. Before we experience glory, the resurrection from the dead, we're going to be experiencing some humiliation and suffering in this life, because God is conforming us into the likeness of His Son here and now.

In fact, believers can be persecuted by the world precisely because they are sharing in the glory of the Lord. The world crucified the Lord of glory and does not look with favor on his children.

In fact, the more you become like Christ, the more likely you are to experience this persecution from the world. Paradoxically, at the same time, it is the thing that will most attract the world to the gospel.

The reason God is conforming us into the image of Christ brings us to point #3.

3 | Point #3 - God's glory is seen in Christ.

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature,

Again, if you take all the attributes of God and add them up, they equal glory. This is why Christ is the radiance of the glory of God, because He has the exact imprint of God's nature.

It's just that His glory was covered over in human flesh.

and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins,

**he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty
on high,**

EXPLANATION

It's after His humiliation, it's after His perfect life where He suffered unjust accusations and unjust persecution and an unjust trial and an unjust death on the cross that He is finally glorified through the resurrection.

God's glory was veiled in human flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ, but His glory was finally revealed in the resurrection of Jesus.

And that leads us to the gospel.

4 Point #4 - God's glory is seen in the gospel.

EXPLANATION

John 12:23-24

23 And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

He continues, **“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!”** (John 12:27-28). It is through the gospel that God is glorified.

When Jesus was betrayed, He said, **“Now the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in him”** (John 13:31), and he later prayed, **“Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you... I have brought**

you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:1, 4).

God is glorified in the gospel, because in the gospel He restores His glory in you through everything Jesus Christ has done.

Every member of the Trinity brings glory to God through the gospel; God the Father gave us life; God the Son lost his life for us; and God the Holy Spirit produces a new life in us. Then, we in turn, after being born again, bring glory to the whole Trinity.

God's glory is seen through His word and His works, but especially in His word of the gospel and His work of the gospel.

ILLUSTRATION

The Word of God is a wonderful illustration of how glorious God is and how everything is ultimately attributed to Him even when He involves us. This should cause us to worship, wonder and stand in awe of Him.

Think about how the gospel presents our salvation and how the Bible came to be. When we talk about salvation in the gospel by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, God gets all the glory because He gave us unmerited favor which He displayed by sending Christ. Then the Holy Spirit used the vehicle of faith to apply our salvation to us. Yet, we are responsible to repent and believe.

The Bible is the very authority of God, the very thoughts and words of God — but He used human instruments to write it. In the same way

we give God glory for the whole of Scripture even though humans were involved, we give Him all the glory for our salvation even though we repent and believe.

What does it mean for us to glorify God? In short, it is when God has the highest place in our thoughts. Because He is primary in our thoughts, it effects everything we do. This is how we glorify God practically in all that we do.

1 Corinthians 10:31

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

The gospel puts the glory of God back in us.

CONCLUSION

- And this is our primary motivation for sharing the gospel with others.