

GLORY ENOUGH

By

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Things are not always as they appear. When Christ died on the cross it looked as though he had suffered a shameful defeat.

Albert Sweitzer maintained that Jesus willed to die because the consummation of the kingdom of Israel had not taken place as he had expected. He gave up because he had failed. Satan had won.

But the reverse was true. Christ was destroying the works of Satan by bearing our sin, the sin which Satan introduced into the world to bring us down to death.

This was the glorious work Christ came into the world to do. Glorious from heaven's viewpoint, not from the world view.

That's because the world has little concern for God's purpose. Men seek goals in time and space, in relation to temporal pleasures and material worth. God has defined His goal — to have man in His own image — but man insists on setting his own goals and the goals that get attention are strictly materialistic and temporal, glorifying man, not God.

Christ's mission was glorious in that it made it possible for man to: 1) be cleaned from sin by His death, and 2) be saved from the ultimate death that, 3) he might live forever with God, in His image.

There was little glory in it from the earthly side. He was hated by the religious leaders, who sought "glory one of another" and were not concerned with the purpose of God.

He was mocked and treated shamefully by the crowd, people who were convinced that no one so unanimously despised could be of any real worth.

Even Peter wavered and caved in when he had to choose whether to be despised as Christ's follower or find some respect among his peers.

Those who believe in Christ (and believe Christ) must admit that what Jesus did in dying was most glorious in the eyes of God, in spite of the disgust it generated in the minds of men. For His perfect obedience and accomplishment in His death God "highly exalted him, and gave Him the same which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

We know that without this work (of His death) there would be no hope; we would be hopelessly condemned for our sin with nothing awaiting us but the final execution of judgment.

According to scripture the death of Jesus was seen by the Father as the most essential and productive event in history. Yet, except for a song, the solemn observance of the communion in remembrance of that death, and mention of it in the sermon — and all this at the specified hour of worship on Sunday — little more is made of it even by the Christians. The rest of the week, glory is sought in every way except in ways that imitate Christ.

No one finds glory in turning the other cheek! To love your enemy and do good to them that harm you is the mark of stupidity in modern society.

Even truth becomes a victim of glory-seeking. A book by popular TV Preacher Robert Schuller, negates the reality of sin and holds up the glory of man. Yet he remains one of the most imitated and quoted modern “church personalities.”

The glory of man is powerful bait, enough to lure many to the ablest preachers away from the simplicity of Christ’s message to popular prophetic speculations and doctrines rooted in tradition rather than in scripture. Jesus asked the religious leaders, “How can you believe who receive glory one of another, and the glory that comes from the only God you seek not?” (John 5:44).

Looking for glory in the wrong things may be one of the chief causes of depression, disappointment and pessimism among Christians. People see things in the world deteriorating, with the constant increase in crime, emphasis on humanism, the prisons filling up, corruption in high places, and a general indifference to sin. They see themselves defeated as Christians because after all the effort to promote the Gospel and to live right and do right, it is still the adulterous movie star, the unbelieving celebrity, and the greedy athlete who get the glory.

But whose glory do we seek? God’s or men’s? Glory often focuses on the person who is able to catch the mood of the times and capitalize on it. He attracts crowds because he meets a particular need. A faith healer is exalted. Having a body free of sickness and pain is something all of us would be happy to claim. But Christ’s atoning death on the cross was not for our present physical well-being. As for the crowds that flock to those who offer better health and greater wealth, they do not exalt Jesus but the one making the offer.

And what value is this glory of men? Would you not rather face the Eternal in shoes of a Simon Peter, than those of Clark Gable? Yet Peter knew no glory in his lifetime and Gable was a legend long before he died.

The church — and this includes every Christian — is glorious only when it is doing the work of God, however weak or ordinary or foolish such work appears to the worldly eye.

God works toward a purpose; not a multiplicity of purposes, but one grand goal which will not be realized until the harvest, when the seed sown in fertile soil has grown to produce the wheat He designed — man in His image. Then it will be gathered for his eternal pleasure, and the rest will be destroyed by fire — not recycled (as reincarnation) or preserved (as in perpetual torture), but destroyed so as to leave the threshing floor clean forever (Matt. 3:12).

Christ sows good seed. Satan sows tares. The weeds grow naturally and outnumber the seed manifold. The glory that accrues to Satan’s followers is predominant due to their vast majority. But no Christian seeks such glory. “That which is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15).

The glory that we seek is not to be realized while we live as pilgrims and aliens in the world, but it will be forthcoming at the revelation of Jesus Christ. “For the earnest expectation of the creation waits for the revealing of the Sons of God” (Rom. 8:19). The Apostle Paul writes of the whole creation suffering and travailing at the present time, waiting for the glory that is to be revealed. This will be the revealing “of the glory of the children of God,” including “the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:21 and 23).

The basic appeal of Christ throughout His ministry was just this: life on the order designed by the Creator. His preaching repeatedly pointed up this message "...that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"He that believes on the Son has eternal life, but he that obeys not the Son shall not see life..." (John 3:36). "You will not come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:40).

The glory of that life is to be realized on in eternity: "...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us" (Rom. 8:18). "Then (after the judgment) shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43).

"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal wait of glory: while we look not at the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:17-18).

God is not dead. The time for revealing His glorious sons is not yet, but He is working. His will is being accomplished. His purpose is inexorable. The burden of the world's scorn will one day become a weight of glory for Christians.

We look not at the things seen (the applause and honor of men) but at the things not seen (the pleasure of our Lord).

The single purpose of God is still to have a race of people who are in fellowship with Him, incorruptible and eternal, in the new earth wherein dwells righteousness and nothing else (II Peter 3:13). **And that's glory enough!**

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