

The Goal of the Christian – John 17:1-8

I was reading a book the other day by a well-known, modern, Christian writer. It is always good to be alert when you read the works of others – read with *“your eyes open.”* This is especially true when you read the works of *“well-known, modern, Christian writers.”* There are many classic Christian books which have passed the test of time. They have been read by saints for decades, even centuries, and they have been approved by many. That is why they are still being read today. While we still read them with our eyes open, we might read them without fear. But the *“well-known, MODERN, Christian writers”* haven’t endured that test of time through the hearts and minds of other saints, so we must approach their work more carefully.

I was reading a recent book on Christian living when I came to chapter 21 entitled *“The Goal of the Christian.”* The author began by asking, *“What is the goal of the Christian life?”* After a few comments, he said that the goal of the Christian must be to bring glory to God our Saviour. Immediately, my heart said, *“Amen.”* That agrees with dozens of crystal clear scriptures. Still in the first paragraph the man wrote, *“One bumper sticker that always catches my attention is the one that says, ‘Don’t follow me, I’m lost.’”* He went on, *“Because many Christians have no clear goal in view, it is impossible for them to accomplish anything in the Christian life. Because we are so vague in our thinking about what constitutes Christian living, we have to confess that we are lost and do not know where we are going.”* Later, as I was still thinking about what he said, I continued to agree, *“Yes, it should be the Christian’s goal to glorify God,”* and, *“Yes, we should know where we are going.”*

Most of you know that I like to play with words – sometimes for fun and sometimes seriously. At times I think it is compulsive – I can’t help myself, and maybe that was true in this case. Without intending to do so, my mind got hung up on the word *“goal.”* What is the definition *“goal”*? My dictionary declares that it is, *“the object of a person’s ambition or effort; an aim or desired result.”* Should it be the ambition and aim of the Christian to glorify God? Absolutely! Without a doubt!

Then thinking back on that book, it seemed to me the author was saying it is ***the goal of GOD*** that Christians should glorify Him. He didn’t come out and say it in so many words, but that was what I thought he was implying. But is it *“the object of GOD’S ambition”* that you and I glorify Him? Is it Jehovah’s *“AIM or His desired result”* that we glorify our Saviour? Does God ***even HAVE*** aims and ambitions? Does God have goals which He is striving to attain? Don’t thoughts like that demean the Lord? Don’t they rob Jehovah of His sovereignty and His deity? Doesn’t ***Ephesians*** say that all things are carried out *“according to the PURPOSE of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”*? I concluded that – when it comes to the Lord, there is a much better word than *“goal.”* It is the *“purpose”* of the Lord to bring glory to Himself. It God’s *“intention,” “plan”* and *“design”* that we bring glory to Him. While it should be ***OUR goal***, it is ***GOD’S clear and unmistakable PURPOSE*** to glorify His Name.

Why did God create the universe six thousand years ago and put man in the middle of it? It was not because He was bored and He wanted some play things. It was not so that minuscule creatures like you and me could boast of their great accomplishments. He created man to fellowship with and to worship Him – and through that to bring Him glorify. The tree of the knowledge was placed in the garden so that through man’s obedience in not eating its fruit God would be honored and glorified. Jehovah permitted man’s sin, so that God would be glorified when He graciously saved a few sinners. And God is even glorified when the unrepentant sinner is cast into eternal judgment. Everything in creation, large or small, and every direct miracle or tiny providential blessing has been given to us for God’s glory.

John 17 gives us some lessons towards our goal of bringing glory to God. But it must be stated up front that God is already infinitely glorious. It is impossible to add anything to the glory He already possesses. In that light, how can we glorify the already glorified God? The Lord Jesus, our Saviour, shows us the way.

“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; GLORIFY thy Son, that thy Son also may GLORIFY thee.” Notice that even the eternal Son of God expected to bring glory to God the Father. But He had no intention of creating that glory entirely on His own – He said in essence, *“help me, Father.”* In ***verse 4*** He said, *“I have glorified thee on earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* Christ said that the work He was sent to do was the means by which He glorified the Father on the earth. What exactly was that work? The rest of Jesus’ prayer explains it. ***Verse 6*** – *“I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them...”*

Christ Jesus glorified the Father by revealing God to His creation, according to the eternal plan and covenant between them. He glorified God by giving to humanity a copy of the **LIVING** Word of God – Himself. It wasn't in a static revelation – a text or a tweet. He gave His life a ransom for many of those sinners – revealing both God's love and His righteous hatred for sin. **John 1:18** says, *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him”* – and in the process of that declaration, He glorified Him. This world – filled with spiritual darkness and ignorance – was pierced by Him who is the light of the world. He glorified the Father.

And when those whom the Father had given to the Son are born again, they also glorify God – in their faith and humble repentance. When a spiritually dead sinner is given life – when regenerated – he testifies to the world that God is real. He, like his Saviour, becomes a part of God's revelation – another light in an otherwise dark place. Then, as children of God, those same saved people are to continue that glorification. It should be our goal. *“This little light of mine – I'm gonna let it shine; this little light of mine – I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine; let it shine let: it shine.”*

“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.” Going back to the beginning, how does God work in the Christian – in us – to glorify Himself?

It is initiated in our salvation.

This, of course, is something totally beyond our control, and yet, we are still the means to that glorification. A man asked me the other day if we believed that baptism saves the sinner – absolutely not. There is nothing we can do to contribute to our deliverance from sin. Not even our faith and repentance redeem us. There is nothing a dead man can do to become alive again.

Three hundred years ago a man sculpted a masterpiece, or crafted a mahogany desk, or shaped a vase. We don't know anything about him – not even his name – but his masterpiece still stands, pointing to his genius. Can that statue or desk take credit for its beauty? Of course not. It simply is what it is by the skill of its creator. In the case of the redeemed and forgiven sinner, all praise and glory belongs to God, the Saviour.

In **Ephesians 1**, which is one among many other scriptures, Paul points to God's glory in our salvation. **Verse 3** – *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, **To the praise of the glory of HIS grace**, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”* **Verse 11** – *“In (Christ) also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be **to the praise of HIS glory**, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, **unto the praise of HIS glory.”***

Romans 9:23 declares the same truth when Paul states that God's purpose is to *“make **known the riches of HIS glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory.**”* God has chosen to save us, and eventually glorify us, in order that we might become instruments, through which God would make known to others, the riches of His glory. We are saved in order to carry on the work of Christ – to manifest God's name before the world. And the Lord doesn't usually select the best of humanity to save; generally speaking, He chooses the worst. He saves **SINNERS** – people deserving nothing from Him – in order to display the contrast through *“before and after”* pictures. By reaching down in grace, mercy and love to redeem sinners, He brings glory to Himself.

God brought great glory to Himself when He created the world out of nothing and placed man in that creation. But Adam chose to ignore that glory, following a path of rebellion and sin. When God, however, chose to save some of Adam's sinful descendants, He brought glory to Himself even beyond the original creation. It should be our goal to glorify our Saviour/God in thanksgiving and because that was His purpose for saving us.

That glorification should continue throughout our lives – it should be our goal.

Why did God create man? It was to fellowship with Him, and in so doing to bring glory to His name. Subsequently, why has God saved a few wretched sinners from this sin-cursed and rebellious world? To fellowship with Him, and in so doing to bring glory to His name.

As I suggested earlier, God will be glorified even in the judgment of the wicked. When the lost stand before Christ,

high and lifted up upon His judgment throne, they will all individually and en masse declare God to be righteous in all His works. And *“at the name of Jesus every knee (shall) bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And ... every tongue (shall) confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”* To the glory of God, those about to be cast into the Lake of Fire, will admit that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that He should be worshiped as such.

But out of the billions of wicked humanity the Lord has saved you – regenerated you – giving you spiritual life. His ultimate purpose was His own glory – not your personal happiness; not to give you license to live in sin. And as such, it should be your goal to augment the glory of salvation itself with your praise and glory. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples and to us, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and **GLORIFY** your Father which is in heaven”* – **Matthew 5:16**. He could have said, *“Make it your goal to so live and light your surroundings in such a way that your Heavenly Father might be magnified and glorified.”*

To paraphrase a later statement, Christ Jesus might have said, *“Make it your goal in life, disciples, to bear much fruit, for herein is my Father glorified”* – **John 15:8**.

Paul loved the Christians in Thessalonica. He said, *“For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.”* Later he exhorted them, saying, *“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be **GLORIFIED** in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

How specific should be our goal of glorifying our Saviour? It might be that the Lord would have to be one of His gospel ministers; a missionary perhaps. Maybe you are qualified to serve the Lord in some other church office – like teaching. I won't try to tell you to do this or that; I won't try to force my goal for God's glory upon you. But the Bible does get *“generally specific”* – if that is even a thing. **I Corinthians 10:31** – *“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do **ALL** to the glory of God.”* When you walk around the block or post an item on Facebook, your should do so for the glory of God. When you eat out, do so as a Christian; if you leave a tip, do so as a Christian. And later, even brush your teeth for the Lord of God. Be the best employee in the company for the glory of God. Ask the Lord how you can be the friendliest and most helpful neighbor on your block – for His glory. You don't need my instruction in the details; ask the Lord how you may be better able to glorify His name.

To encourage us in this goal, there is the culmination or eternal continuation of God's glory.

Colossians 3:1-4 says, *“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in **GLORY**.”*

Think for a moment about the last words in **verse 4** – *“appear with him in glory.”* What is the meaning of *“in glory”*? The first and most common explanation is *“Heaven”* – the glorious abode of God. I have no quarrel with that interpretation, and it is in completely accord with the rest of the Bible.

But there is a second perfectly acceptable explanation. This may not refer to **WHERE** we will be with Christ, but to **HOW** we shall be when Christ returns for us. *“When Christ shall appear, then you also will appear with Him, as a **GLORIFIED ONE**.”* John Gill explains this verse with these words – *“yea, they shall ‘appear in glory’ too; with a glory on their bodies, which will be raised in glory like unto the glorious body of Christ; and on their souls, being in perfect holiness, having on the ... robe of Christ's righteousness, being clothed upon with their house from heaven, and appearing in the shining robes of immortality, incorruption, and glory; having the glory of God upon them in soul and body, and such a glory revealed in them, as the sufferings of this present life, and all the enjoyments of it, are not to be compared with. All which furnish out strong arguments and reasons, enforcing the above exhortations to seek for, and set the affections on things in heaven, and not on earth.”*

In other words, we shall soon wear the glory of our Saviour. **I Corinthians 15** – *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”* John takes that thought and drives it to its proper conclusion – **I John 3** – *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,*

that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Conclusion:

Our salvation will conclude, and then extend, throughout eternity in our conformity to the glory of our Saviour. With that in our future, guaranteed by the promise and power of God, what is God’s purpose in leaving us in this world? We might talk about a hundred smaller points, but they culminate in one – His glory. He left me here to preach the gospel of Christ – for His glory. He left you here to be the best parent or the best child you can possibly be – for His glory. He saved you and equipped you with several talents to use for His glory.

We need to ever keep in mind – we are here to glorify our God and our Saviour. We should set as our life’s ambition – our goal – to glorify God. When that foolish student philosopher asks, *“What is the purpose of man?”* we must declare the Biblical answer. We can be and should be like the stars in the night sky – *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.”*

You will eventually bring praise to the Lord; it is guaranteed. But which way will you do it? Will it come as you are being judged for your rebellion and unbelief; will you glorify God in your punishment and condemnation? Or will it be through coming to God through Christ on bended knee in humble faith and repentance? Let’s begin today to bring glory to God; let me introduce you to the Saviour.