

For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

Introduction

In the last message, we considered "God's chief end and ours." Today we will continue this theme by narrowing down to the fulfillment of our chief end. But before we take up some "how tos" of fulfillment some prefatory remarks in review should be made. 1) We exist for what everything exists for: for God and for His glory. 2) This is appropriately the case because God is the greatest and best of beings; He is perfect and thus it is appropriate that we acknowledge that perfection and glorify Him. 3) It is also appropriate because of who we are as God's image bearers by creative design. To be His image means that God made us to reflect His glory. If we come to terms with our very nature as human beings, then we will recognize that nothing is more basic than glorifying God in all that we say and do. 4) Last, but not least, we are to follow the example of our Father in heaven. Since His glory is His most sought after goal, it should be ours too. Since His own glory is His ultimate goal beyond which there is no greater goal that it serves as a means, then glorifying God ought to be an "ultimate ought" for us.

How do we fulfill this ultimate ought? We do so by prayer, the Law, love, and confession. At least, these are some of the ways to fulfill our chief end.

1A. First, we fulfill our chief end by prayer

If you are going to make glorifying God your most important and final end, then you must begin with prayer in at least three ways.

1B. First, pray against self-glorification

This is the point of Psalm 115:1, "**not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness.**" For emphasis the negative is repeated. The glory, glory in the ultimate sense, does not belong to us and should not be given to us. Interestingly, this is made a matter of prayer: "O Lord may this be avoided among us." This expresses a conscious recognition that we tend toward self-glorification.

To follow Psalm 115 means that we pray against pride. It is to acknowledge that we have a tendency to think of ourselves more highly than we ought. In praying "**not unto us,**" we pray for humility before God and before others. This is a cleansing of the inner person of the heart when we acknowledge our comparative smallness before God with respect to other people knowing that the superiority of others to us in this or that is due to God's providential will.

2B. Second, pray for the glorification of God's name (**Hallowed be your name**)

To fulfill our chief end, we need to pray for the glorification of God's name even when we seek His blessing. His glory is a higher and greater end than our good. In Ezekiel 36:36, the Sovereign Lord says that He is going to give new hearts in order to save sinners but it is "**not for your sake**" but "**for the sake of my holy name.**" So we seek our good for His glory (cf. Ps. 23:3, **He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake**). To pray this way means that seeking our glory can never be independent or separate from the greatest goal of God's glory. It means that when we seek our own glory or honor we do so for the glory of God.

When we pray this way (not for me but for thee) we are saying that our good, our pleasure, our blessing, and our honor are not, and can never be, our chief or ultimate end. The glory we seek to possess in the face of Christ by the gospel we seek for the end beyond all ends, the glory of God (not merely for our honor).

3B. Pray for one another to the end that God be glorified

Note Paul's example of prayer for the saints in Philippians 1.9-11: **And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through**

Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. He has a number of goals in mind: abounding love, knowledge, discernment, spiritual fruits. But the chain of goals leads to a chief and ultimate goal, the praise and glory of God. This is a final reference point guiding all intercession; it is a final goal beyond all other goals.

2A. Second, we fulfill our chief end by the law

Matthew 5:17 tells us how not to think about our Lord's relation to the Law and how to think about it (**Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them**). We are not to think discontinuity but continuity regarding the relation of Christ to the law. We are to cultivate an attitude in which even the least of the commandments is to be practiced and taught (5:19, **Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven**). The principle of continuity strikes home at this very point. Given that there are great changes in the shift from the OT to the NT, we are still to look to all of God's commandments, even the ceremonial laws, for continuity. We are to think, practice, and teach the fulfillment forms of the laws of Moses. So do not think that the details of the Ten Commandments have been abolished; instead, seek how to live them in their new wineskin forms.

What bearing does this have on glorifying God? It has every bearing because all of these commandments in their true spirit and intent *define good works* and Jesus tells us that good works glorify God (5:16, **In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven**). Of course, good works mean nothing without faith just as God is not glorified (in a direct and positive way) by deeds done without repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ the risen Savior. *Works done from repentance and faith glorify God.*

Therefore, it is fundamental to the fulfillment of our design by creation in the image of God that we pursue the law of God. It is where we find the pathway of conduct that glorifies God. Because the law is essential to glorifying God then it is essential in giving us our true humanness, dignity, value, meaning and purpose.

Therefore, the importance and centrality of glorifying God entails the importance and centrality of the law. We need to attend to all of God's precepts, especially to the Ten Words in active pursuit of the great and grand end of all that exists. Among other things, this puts a premium on studies such as the regulative principle based on the 2nd commandment. We are to seek God's regulation for worship for that is the pathway that glorifies God.

3A. Third, we fulfill our chief end by love

We have already seen how love is a goal in prayer for one another that has the further goal of glorifying God (Phil. 1:9-11, **And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God**). Love is others oriented and love fulfills the law so it is another way of pursuing the law to the glory of God. The accent on love is a narrowing down to a specific regulation of our conduct. As Edwards put it, we are to regulate our lives in such a way that we prefer the welfare of God's people as our chief joy (Edwards, *The Great End of Creation*, 116). Think of it as a specific in following our Father's example. The good of sinners is an objective that supremely leads to the manifestation of His glory. It is a subordinate end that God diligently seeks in order to glorify His name. In working the good of undeserving sinners, He displays His perfections in unparalleled fashion.

Therefore, we are to love all people especially those of the household of faith: **⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity,**

let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6.9-10). Doing good is so fundamental and we are to do so especially for the sake of God's elect: ¹⁰ **Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory** (2 Tim. 2.10). Evangelism includes gospel preaching to those who are outside the household of faith, gospel preaching to those who have made profession of faith in baptism, and gospel preaching to those who gather regularly for public worship. Evangelism is simply gospel proclamation for the gathering in and the edification of God's people.

So pastors are to work for the good of the church, even suffer many things to this end (as Paul states in 2 Tim. 2:10). Likewise, Christians are to endure many things with this as a fundamental goal that is geared to glorifying God. As Edwards put it, "every Christian should, in all he does, be employed for the good of the church, as each particular member is employed for the good of the body" (Ibid. 116). Obviously the feet cannot say to the eye, "We don't need you" because walking about in the dark will lead to stubbed toes. But the eye cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you." How will the eye move around to see all that there is to see, with no feet (to picture eyes with feet shows the need of the whole body and each member in particular).

This means that we must try to spread the gospel far and wide as best we can in accord with our gifts, circumstances, and resources. It also means that we will give a priority to the people of God beginning here in our fellowship and including all who name the name of Christ. It must begin here where we are eyeball to eyeball, as we think of ministering to others far and wide.

4A. Fourth, we glorify God by our confession.

Our "confession" refers to the praise we give to the Lord and about Him with others. Both senses are contained in Philippians 2:9-11 where we are told that **"every knee shall bow"** and **"every tongue (shall) confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."** That has to be a universal and public confession that is directed to the Lord (with others and to the Lord). This acknowledgment of Christ is **"to the glory of God the Father"** (v. 11). Perhaps we can distinguish between a confession of praise and a confession of faith. On one hand we speak to the Lord with adoring wonder about His majesty and greatness. On the other hand we speak to one another with adoring wonder about His majesty and greatness. Both give confession and both give praise. The only difference is the direction to the Lord versus about Him.

In this light, it is important to understand a major function of the church. That is, it is important to understand ourselves as members of Christ and thereby joined to one another. I suppose many answers can be given to the question, "What is the church for?" I think a central purpose is that we glorify God by our confession. This is of course in song, prayer, preaching, teaching, conversation, and our very confession of faith.

Consider 1 Peter 2:9 in this regard: ⁹ **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** The church is a holy nation, a people who belong to God, and a royal priesthood. Why? The language here is **"to declare the praises."** Again, both elements are here: confessional declaration and praise. Praises are to be not only offered but declared by preaching, teaching, confession of faith, and personal testimony.

The function is straightforward: declare the praises. These are praises "to Him" and "about Him." Peter is saying that we are to take the praises that we normally offer to God and reiterate them in the form of a declaration. That means to state, show, reveal, and affirm the praises of God emphatically as in the Fanny Crosby song Praise Him, Praise Him (note where "glory to God" appears in the song and declaration, vs. 3 and the chorus).

**Praise him! Praise him! Jesus, our blessed Redeemer
Heavenly portals loud with hosannas ring!
Jesus, Saviour, reigneth forever and ever;**

**Crown him crown him! Prophet, and Priest, and King!
 Christ is coming! Over the world victorious,
 Pow'r and glory unto the Lord belong
 Praise him! Praise him! Tell of his excellent greatness
 Praise him! Praise him! Ever in joyful song!**

This is a good hymn; it has many good lines, but there is something specific in our declaration of praise that is missing in this hymn. Peter tells us that we have been "chosen" to belong to God to declare the praises of Him "who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2.9).

In other words, we honor and glorify God in prayer, singing, preaching, teaching, testifying, and conversing about God's call that brought us out of utter darkness into marvelous light. This is God's effectual call that brings us "out of" something (darkness, 1 Pet. 2.9) and "into" something else (fellowship, 1 Cor 1.7). God's call produces this result. It is His work alone. We do not help Him in it. We are unable to help Him (no one is His counselor; He is debtor to no one, Rom. 11.34-35). We were in a dark blindness and could not do a surgery on our own eyes to heal them. It is not the case that we help God in the sense that we allow God to do the surgery. Some claim that we must allow Him to do this or it will not be done. But this misses the point that our dark blindness means that we did not have the ability to cooperate with God in anyway. Being in darkness means we were dead in trespasses and sins and therefore could not respond in any positive way. We could do no spiritual good. Being in darkness means that we were unable to yield to God, cooperate with God, submit to God, or trust in God (Eph. 2:1; Jn. 6:44-45).

But God who chose us before the foundation of the world to be His people also called us at a point in time. His call saves. His call breaks the power of sin. It dispels the darkness. The Crosby hymn needs some of these words from Wesley: "Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light. My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose went forth and followed thee." The darkness was binding (as well as blinding). We were imprisoned in the dark blindness of sin and death. But God quickened us, that is, He made us alive so we awoke and could then see the light of the gospel in the face of Jesus Christ. Therefore, being freed, we followed Him. It is our purpose as a church to make declarations about this grace in preaching, conversation, *and song* because of His gracious call:

⁷ Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸ For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹ and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name" (Rom. 15.7-9).

Conclusion

Thus, to fulfill the grand end of our existence as a church and as the children of God, to fulfill the great end of glorifying God we move in the right direction by prayer, by the law, by love, and by confession.

To Him be the glory forever, amen.