

The Glory You Seek

Ryan Goodwin

What do you think of when you hear the word *glory*? Glory is often ascribed to great battles in history, triumphant moments of good over evil. Imposing structures, such as the Eiffel Tower or Golden Gate Bridge, are often called glorious. We also think of great moments in sports, like the Super Bowl, or inspiring stories of athletes who had to overcome obstacles in order to reach their glory. But glory is most aptly applied to God, the very One who is often forgotten in our conversations about glorious things. Even many Christians seem to have only a vague sense of God's glory, yet it is repeatedly mentioned in the scriptures:

- *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive...glory and blessing...To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessings and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever"* (Revelation 5:12-13).
- *"Glory to God in the highest"* (Luke 2:14).
- *"To whom be the glory forevermore"* (Galatians 1:5).
- *"To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever"* (Ephesians 3:21).
- *"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever"* (1 Timothy 1:17).

It is both our duty and privilege to glorify God, even in trials and tribulations (1 Peter 4:16). 1 Peter 4:11 says that in everything we do, including our speech and service, we are to glorify God through Jesus Christ. It is easy to forget just how much our examples can glorify God (or not). We do not always realize who is watching us, for better or worse – just as my good speech and humble service can glorify God, my evil speech and arrogance can drive someone away from Him.

Distracted By Lesser Glory

Do you ever get sidetracked in your thinking about glorious things? I will admit that I am often awestruck by nature – canyons, mountains, the ocean, even little things like birds, flowers, and bugs. There are a lot of *glorious* things in this world. There are moments and accomplishments, too, that can seem more glorious than they actually are. We get distracted by a promotion at work, a new toy in the garage, a vacation, or some other diversion. These things are all glorious to a degree, depending on how much we value them. Kids can be a good reminder of how fickle (and easily impressed) people can be. Every new thing in a child's life is his "favorite" – three minutes of viewing a new television show and he declares it is his favorite; a toy at the store that he does not even own is his favorite toy; whoever gives him gum at church is his favorite person. Do we see the things in our lives the same way? The most *glorious* battle is the one that was recently won, the most *glorious* sunrise is the one we are currently observing, the most *glorious* achievement is whatever we just accomplished. But do not forget that everything glorious in this world is really only temporary, fleeting, fragile, and small compared to God's glory. *"For all flesh is like grass, and all its glory is like the flower of grass; the grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever"* (1 Peter 1:24).

I will never win an Olympic medal. I have come to accept this reality. I will never host my own television program. I will also never be remembered for my visionary architecture, my bold poetry, or my award-winning filmmaking. Really, none of these things are attractive to me because they are practically unachievable. For most of us, though, the glory that captivates is more subtle and dangerous. I may never be ensnared by the glory of a millionaire celebrity, but seeking the praise of other people – people I know, people I am trying to impress – will always be a temptation. Even very religious people can be caught up in this trap, as Jesus describes the motivation of the Pharisees, saying, *“But they do all their deeds to be noticed by men”* (Matthew 23:5). He told His disciples, *“Woe to you when all men speak well of you”* (Luke 6:26). Paul noted that he avoided the trap of seeking man’s glory in 1 Thessalonians 2:5-6.

“How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?” (John 5:44).

True belief is impossible as long as glory from other people is our motivation. It is a hindrance that should not be ignored or overlooked. I think we believe that as long as we are not being really obvious or grandstanding then we are not in danger. But one does not need to climb Mt. Everest or receive accolades and honors to become a glory seeker. *“How can you believe”* is a reminder that it is impossible to give yourself fully to Christ as long as you are preoccupied with the wrong kind of glory.