

Glorying in the Lord

Series 1-12

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**Series Introduction: Glorying in the Lord**

We are living in a time when the language of Christianity is everywhere, but the substance of it is often missing. Men talk about God, talk about ministry, talk about calling, talk about blessing, talk about purpose, talk about favor, talk about influence, and talk about what the Lord is doing, but very little is said anymore about one of the central truths that ought to govern the whole Christian life: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). That is not a decorative verse. It is not a polite little statement to tack onto the end of a testimony. It is a divine command that reaches into salvation, doctrine, service, suffering, holiness, weakness, worship, and reward. It tells us where all boasting must end, where all glory must go, and where all flesh must be brought down. In an age where man has become the center of so much religion, this subject needs to be brought back out into the light with force, clarity, and scriptural depth.

That is why we are doing this series. We are doing it because there is too much confusion about what it means to glory in the Lord. Some use the phrase while they are still glorying in themselves. Some say they are giving God the glory while quietly feeding on praise, attention, influence, and visibility. Some think glorying in the Lord simply means using spiritual words, showing emotion, or sounding humble, while the Bible shows that it is something far deeper, far stronger, and far more humbling than that. The whole point of this series is to strip away the fog, expose the counterfeits, and define the matter from Scripture. We are not interested in man-made definitions, church-culture slogans, or polished religious talk. We are interested in what the Holy Ghost means when He says that if any man glories, he is to glory in the Lord.

This series is built on the understanding that glorying in the Lord is not one narrow truth confined to a single verse or one kind of Christian experience. It begins in the gospel itself, because salvation is arranged in such a way “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). It reaches into Christ being made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It reaches into the cross, where man’s pride is condemned and God’s grace is magnified. It reaches into daily life, where the soul learns to boast in the Lord in trouble, in prayer, in battle, in weakness, and in deliverance. It reaches into ministry, where servants of Christ must labor hard without stealing the glory that belongs only to God. And it reaches all the way into eternity, where every crown ends up at the feet of Jesus Christ. In other words, this series is not about a catchy phrase. It is about a whole God-centered way of understanding the Christian life.

Along the way, we are going to deal with some things that need to be dealt with plainly. We are going to expose the difference between glorying in the Lord and glorying in the flesh. We are going to expose false religion, self-righteousness, celebrity Christianity, emotional manipulation, performance-based spirituality, doctrinal tribalism, and the endless

tendency of fallen man to use sacred things for self-exaltation. We are also going to show the beauty of the positive side of this truth. We are going to see that the believer can glory in the Lord not only when salvation is first understood, but when the Lord gives wisdom, when the Lord clothes him in righteousness, when the Lord sanctifies him, when the Lord redeems him, when the Lord sustains him in weakness, when the Lord carries him through battle, and when the Lord uses him in service. This series will not merely rebuke pride. It will point the heart back to the only worthy object of boasting — the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

So the purpose of **Glorying in the Lord** is both doctrinal and devotional. It is meant to teach the mind and search the heart. It is meant to strengthen sound doctrine and crush religious vanity. It is meant to help believers think rightly, worship rightly, speak rightly, serve rightly, and suffer rightly. It is meant to bring us back to a Christianity where Christ is central, grace is acknowledged, self is brought low, and every good and perfect gift is traced back to the hand of God. If this series does what it ought to do, it will leave us less impressed with ourselves, less interested in the praise of men, less tempted to build our identity around visibility or success, and more taken up with the glory, worthiness, sufficiency, and beauty of Jesus Christ. Because in the end, that is where all true glorying leads: not to man, not to ministry, not to movement, but to the Lord.

If you want, I can also turn this into a **more fiery Ruckman-style version** with even more punch for the opening of the series.

## **1 of 12: Glorying in the Lord - What Does It Mean to Glory in the Lord?**

### **Introduction**

There are phrases in the Bible that sound simple until religion gets ahold of them. Then, before long, a plain scriptural truth gets buried under layers of church talk, emotionalism, vanity, and fleshly interpretation. One of those phrases is found in 1 Corinthians 1:31: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). Now that verse gets quoted by men who are doing the exact opposite of what it says. They stand under the lights, they build their little kingdoms, they count their numbers, they polish their image, they market their gifts, and then they sprinkle a little Jesus language over the whole show and call it “glorying in the Lord.” But the Holy Ghost is not fooled by religious cosmetics. The Book defines its own words, and when you read the context, glorying in the Lord is not self-promotion wrapped in pious language. It is the complete overthrow of human pride by the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Paul does not drop that statement into the chapter as some floating devotional slogan. He builds to it like a prosecutor laying out a case. He says, “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29), and then he says, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30), and then comes the conclusion: “That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). So the meaning is already sitting right there in the passage. Glorifying in the Lord is the exact opposite of glorying in the flesh. It is not man admiring man. It is not the religious ego putting on a necktie and carrying a King James Bible. It is a saved sinner recognizing that everything he has worth boasting about came from Jesus Christ and not from himself. That means if a man is still the hero of his own testimony, he has not yet learned what this verse means.

That is why this subject has to be settled doctrinally before it can ever be lived practically. If you do not define this matter by Scripture, then every proud preacher, every vain singer, every celebrity Christian, every legalistic Pharisee, and every emotional showman will invent his own definition. One man says glorying in the Lord means talking constantly about how much God is using him. Another says it means celebrating his blessings in a way that keeps the camera pointed at himself. Another says it means outward humility while inwardly feeding on praise. Another turns it into some mystical feeling detached from doctrine altogether. But the Bible will not allow that kind of fog. The Bible takes the whole thing out of the hands of the flesh and places it squarely in Christ. To glory in the Lord means to boast in what Christ is, what Christ has done, what Christ has given, and what Christ alone can be to a ruined sinner. When a man finally sees that, his chest caves in, his pride cracks, and the spotlight moves off him and onto the Son of God where it belonged all along.

### **1. The Context Destroys the Confusion**

The first thing you do with any Bible phrase is put it back where God put it. That is where the light comes from. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31) does not mean whatever a preacher’s imagination wants it to mean. It means what the context says it means. Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of their calling: “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). God deliberately bypassed the world’s bragging rights. He did not construct Christianity as a showcase for human brilliance, influence, or rank. He chose “the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” and “the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27). Why? “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). There is the target. Flesh. Human pride. Self-importance. Religious boasting. The whole arrangement was designed to break man down.

That means glorying in the Lord is not some independent doctrine unrelated to the death of pride. It is the conclusion of God's attack on the flesh. If God set up salvation so that "no flesh should glory in his presence," then any version of Christianity that gives the flesh room to strut is a counterfeit version. A man may glory in his intellect, his eloquence, his standards, his denomination, his discipline, his suffering, his ministry, his crowd, his salary, his testimony, or his separated appearance, but the moment that thing becomes his boast, he has left the ground of 1 Corinthians 1. The whole point of the passage is that God arranged matters so you would have no grounds left to brag in but one. The Lord Himself. Not your résumé. Not your growth curve. Not your reputation among the brethren. Not your influence on social media. The Lord.

That is why the passage moves straight from the demolition of flesh to the provision of Christ. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is the source. "Of him." Not of your upbringing. Not of your wisdom. Not of your determination. Not of your self-improvement. "Who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is the substance. Christ becomes the believer's wisdom, Christ becomes the believer's righteousness, Christ becomes the believer's sanctification, Christ becomes the believer's redemption. Therefore the saved man's boasting is redirected entirely. He no longer says, "Look what I have become." He says, "Look what Christ has been made unto me." That is how the context defines the phrase, and if that definition hurts religious pride, good. It was meant to.

## **2. Glorying in the Lord Is the Opposite of Glorying in the Flesh**

If you want to know what glorying in the Lord means, first learn what it is not. It is not glorying in the flesh with a halo glued on it. Paul says plainly, "That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:29). Flesh in Scripture is not merely skin and bones. It is fallen human nature with its vanity, self-confidence, lust for recognition, and incurable habit of taking credit for what God did. Flesh wants the spotlight. Flesh wants to be seen. Flesh wants to be admired. Flesh wants God to act as its endorsement. That is why religion is so dangerous when it gets mixed with flesh. Flesh can quote Scripture, sing hymns, teach Sunday School, preach a sermon, build a church, raise a hand, shed a tear, and still be drunk on self. The Pharisees were masters at that game. Jesus said, "All their works they do for to be seen of men" (Matthew 23:5).

That spirit is alive and well in the church age. Men boast in their learning, though "knowledge puffeth up" (1 Corinthians 8:1). Men boast in their holiness, though Jesus said the publican went down justified instead of the Pharisee who advertised his spirituality (Luke 18:10-14). Men boast in their crowds, though Gideon had to learn that God will cut an

army down so no Israelite can say, “Mine own hand hath saved me” (Judges 7:2). Men boast in their gifts, though “what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Men boast in their suffering, though self-pity can be just another form of self-worship. Men boast in their doctrinal camp, their ministry brand, or their outward standards, and then say, “All glory to God,” while their entire tone says, “Take a good look at me.” That is not glorying in the Lord. That is flesh in religious costume.

By contrast, glorying in the Lord means the believer’s boast leaves self and lands on Christ. It is not false humility that says, “Oh, I am nothing,” while fishing for compliments. It is not a humble tone attached to a proud heart. It is a real transfer of glory from self to the Saviour. Paul did not say, “He that glorieth, let him act modest while quietly enjoying the attention.” He said, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). That means the object of the boast is the Lord. The content of the boast is the Lord. The explanation for the believer’s standing is the Lord. The source of every spiritual blessing is the Lord. If the flesh is still getting fed, the verse is being violated. A man is glorying in the Lord only when his own claims to greatness have been put in the grave and Christ alone is standing over the tomb.

### **3. The Bible Defines the Boast in Christ’s Person and Work**

The Holy Ghost does not leave you to guess what you are supposed to boast in. He spells it out in one of the most packed verses in Paul’s writings: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). That verse is a loaded cannon aimed straight at religious pride. If Christ is made unto us wisdom, then your understanding of divine truth did not originate in your cleverness. If Christ is made unto us righteousness, then your acceptance with God did not come from your goodness. If Christ is made unto us sanctification, then your setting apart unto God did not begin in your fleshly self-reform. If Christ is made unto us redemption, then your deliverance did not arise from your promises, tears, penance, or effort. Every one of those blessings sits in Christ, not in you.

That is why the saved man glories in the Lord. He glories in Christ’s person. The Lord Jesus Christ is not merely a helper who assists you in constructing your own spiritual success story. He is the entire ground of the story. He is “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). He is “the LORD our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6). He is the sanctifier and the sanctification of His people. He is the redeemer who “gave himself a ransom for all” (1 Timothy 2:6). When a believer glories in the Lord, he is not boasting in vague religious vibes. He is boasting in the living Son of God and in the finished work that Son accomplished at Calvary. He is saying, in effect, “If you want to know why I have peace with God, why I have

hope, why I have life, why I have an inheritance, why I have any standing at all, do not look at me. Look at Him.”

This is where modern Christianity has gone badly off the rails. The average church member has been trained to talk about Christ as though He were an enhancement to his life rather than the foundation of it. Christ becomes a life coach, a dream sponsor, a therapeutic companion, or a cosmic encouragement machine. That is not New Testament Christianity. Paul did not preach Christ as an accessory to self-fulfillment. He preached Christ as the death of human boasting and the only possible ground of divine acceptance. “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord” (2 Corinthians 4:5). There is the mark. Not ourselves. Christ Jesus the Lord. A man is glorying in the Lord when the center of his speech, his testimony, his confidence, and his hope is the person and work of Jesus Christ. Anything less may be religion, but it is not 1 Corinthians 1.

#### **4. Salvation by Grace Leaves No Room for Self-Congratulation**

Nothing exposes the meaning of glorying in the Lord like the doctrine of salvation. If salvation is truly by grace through faith, then the sinner has no room left to congratulate himself. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). There it is again. God keeps closing the door on boasting. Why? Because boasting is the natural instinct of a fallen heart. If man can wedge even one sliver of his own merit into the matter of salvation, he will build a religion around that sliver and exalt himself with it. That is exactly what every false gospel does. It gives the flesh something to point to. A sacrament. A ritual. A law. A work. An endurance test. A moral record. A decision followed by performance. Something the sinner can say he contributed.

But the gospel of the grace of God smashes that system to pieces. Paul says in Romans 3:27, “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.” Excluded. Shut out. Locked outside. Not admitted. Why? Because “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). That means the sinner who gets saved has no right to go around acting like he worked his way into divine favor. He has no right to look at the drunk, the harlot, the addict, the blasphemer, or the atheist and think, “What made the difference was that I was a better class of man.” No, sir. The difference was grace. “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). The ground at the foot of the cross is level, and the blood of Jesus Christ removes all bragging rights from the redeemed.

So what does it mean to glory in the Lord in relation to salvation? It means you boast in a salvation you did not invent, did not earn, did not sustain, and could not improve. It means

you say with Jonah, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2:9). It means you understand that your new birth came from above, your righteousness was imputed, your sins were washed in blood, and your standing is in Christ. It means you stop acting like the Lord got a bargain when He saved you. He did not recruit talent; He rescued a wreck. He did not discover hidden worth; He displayed unsearchable grace. A man is glorying in the Lord when his testimony sounds like a blood-bought beggar marveling at mercy, not like a polished religious success story bragging about how wisely he responded to God.

### **5. The Cross Is the Only Safe Place for a Christian Boast**

Paul nails this matter down in Galatians 6:14: “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now watch that thing. He does not merely say he prefers the cross. He says, “God forbid.” That is strong language. That means there is something morally revolting about boasting anywhere else. The cross is the place where God judged sin, condemned the flesh, magnified His holiness, displayed His love, and purchased redemption through blood. If a man understands the cross, he cannot strut. Calvary is not a stage for self-esteem. It is an execution ground. It tells you that your condition was so bad, so corrupt, so beyond remedy, that nothing short of the death of the Son of God could save you. That does not inflate a man. That humbles him to the dust.

That is why the preaching of the cross is offensive to religious flesh. Paul says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Of course it is. The cross tells man what he does not want to hear. It tells him that all his wisdom, all his goodness, all his discipline, all his religion, all his effort, all his sincerity, all his pedigree, all his ceremonies, and all his self-confidence cannot save one guilty soul. It tells him he must come as a helpless sinner and receive what Another accomplished for him. That is why the world hates the cross and why false religion tries to decorate it without submitting to it. They will wear it as jewelry, paint it on a wall, hang it over a pulpit, and mention it in a song, but let that cross start condemning their pride and stripping them of self-importance, and suddenly the offense returns.

When a believer glories in the Lord, he glories in the cross because the cross is where Christ did what he could never do for himself. He says with Paul, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). He sees the cross not merely as an event in history but as the center of his standing before God. He does not boast in how faithfully he carried his own cross while making sure everybody notices. He boasts in the cross of Christ. He does not boast in the sacrifices he made for Jesus. He boasts in the sacrifice Jesus made for him. He does not boast in the wounds he took in service. He boasts in the wounds that bought his soul. The safest place for a Christian boast is Calvary because there the sinner disappears and the Saviour fills the horizon.

## **6. False Religion Talks About God While Magnifying Man**

One of the hardest things for religious people to admit is that you can talk about God constantly and still be full of self. The Pharisees proved that beyond any question. They loved titles, seats, greetings, and public recognition, and yet they were Bible-quoting religious leaders. Jesus said of them, “They say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3). He said they “love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues” (Matthew 23:6). Why? Because fallen man wants worship, even if he has to get it in a religious setting. That spirit did not die with the Pharisees. It walked right into the church age and set up camp in pulpits, choirs, conferences, platforms, boards, institutions, mission agencies, colleges, podcasts, and ministries. Men found out they could use the name of God as a ladder for climbing higher in the sight of men.

That is why the phrase “glorying in the Lord” gets abused so often. A man gives the appearance of giving God the glory while actually advertising himself. He says, “The Lord really moved,” but what he means is, “I was powerful tonight.” He says, “God has blessed our ministry,” but what he means is, “Take a look at what I built.” He says, “I am so humbled by what the Lord is doing,” but his spirit says, “I hope everybody notices how important I am.” That kind of speech is not biblical humility. It is refined vanity. It is the flesh learning how to bow theatrically while secretly keeping the crown. Paul asked the Corinthians, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). Then he adds the dagger: “Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” There is the disease exposed. The sinner receives gifts from God and then parades them like private property.

To glory in the Lord means you do not merely say the right words. It means your heart recognizes the truth behind them. You really believe that if God gave it, you cannot brag as though you manufactured it. If God opened the door, you cannot strut like you picked the lock. If God gave light, you cannot boast in your eyesight. If God gave fruit, you cannot crown yourself with it. If God gave strength, you cannot act self-made. “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psalm 115:1). That is not a slogan for church signage. That is a death blow to human vanity. A man is glorying in the Lord when the praise that comes his way does not settle in his heart as personal food but gets pushed upward in sincere recognition that without the Lord he would have nothing to show but sin and emptiness.

## **7. When Christ Gets the Glory, the Believer Finds His Right Place**

There is a tremendous liberty that comes when a man quits trying to be the hero and lets Christ be the center. Pride is exhausting. You have to protect it, feed it, compare it, defend

it, advertise it, and bandage it every time somebody ignores you. The flesh lives on applause and dies by neglect. But when a believer learns to glory in the Lord, he is set free from the madness of making life revolve around himself. Paul says in Philippians 3:3 that the true circumcision “rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.” That is the sane Christian life right there. Rejoice in Christ Jesus. Have no confidence in the flesh. The flesh cannot be improved enough to become a safe object of trust or admiration. It must be judged, distrusted, and kept under. Christ alone is worthy of the confidence and glory that men are always trying to place elsewhere.

This is not merely a negative truth; it is a positive one. When Christ gets the glory, the believer finally sees where his joy belongs. David said, “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD” (Psalm 34:2). Notice that he does not say his soul has no boast. It has one. The Christian is not told to become a man with no joy, no confidence, no testimony, no gratitude, and no song. He is told to locate all of those things in the right object. He boasts in the Lord’s faithfulness, the Lord’s mercy, the Lord’s salvation, the Lord’s power, the Lord’s righteousness, the Lord’s word, the Lord’s cross, and the Lord’s coming. That kind of boasting is not arrogance; it is worship. It is the soul recovering its proper direction. Instead of curving inward on itself, it turns upward toward God and outward toward others with a Christ-centered testimony.

That is where the believer finds his right place in the story. He is not the star. He is the trophy of grace. He is not the redeemer. He is the redeemed. He is not the source. He is the receiver. He is not the light. He is a lamp that only shines because Another lit it. Jesus said, “Without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Paul said, “Our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). The Psalmist said, “In God we boast all the day long” (Psalm 44:8). There is the final answer. To glory in the Lord means the believer has found the right center, the right boast, the right object of praise, and the right interpretation of his own life. He is no longer the main event. Jesus Christ is. And when a man gets there, confusion clears, false teaching crumbles, and the whole Christian life starts making sense.

## **Conclusion**

So what does it mean to glory in the Lord? It means that the sinner who has been saved by grace has stopped treating himself as the explanation for anything spiritual in his life. It means he has learned from 1 Corinthians 1:29-31 that God designed the whole matter of redemption so “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). It means he has seen Christ made unto him “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30), and because of that he knows that every real blessing he has worth talking about came from the Lord Jesus Christ. Glorifying in the Lord is not polished religious language. It is the humbled heart’s honest confession that Christ is

everything and self is nothing worth boasting in. It is a sinner standing in the light of Calvary and saying, “If there is any glory here, it belongs to Him.”

That truth clears out a whole pile of spiritual weeds. It exposes the celebrity preacher who builds a brand in Jesus’ name. It exposes the legalist who secretly worships his own standards. It exposes the emotional showman who confuses religious excitement with Christ-exalting truth. It exposes the church member who says, “Praise the Lord,” while inwardly living for the praise of men. It exposes the false convert who still talks as though his goodness made the difference. It exposes all of them because it brings the question back to one point: who is getting the glory? If the answer is man in any form, then whatever else is being done, 1 Corinthians 1 is not being obeyed. But if the answer is Christ—Christ crucified, Christ risen, Christ sufficient, Christ righteous, Christ redeeming, Christ sanctifying, Christ saving—then the matter is on scriptural ground.

The whole series begins right here because if this point is not settled, nothing else will be settled either. You cannot understand service until you understand who gets the glory. You cannot understand holiness until you understand who gets the glory. You cannot understand ministry, suffering, fruit, rewards, or worship until you understand who gets the glory. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). That is not just a good memory verse; that is a divine command that cuts the head off religious pride. If you are going to boast, boast in the One who bled for you. If you are going to rejoice, rejoice in the One who saved you. If you are going to magnify anyone, magnify the One who is “altogether lovely” (Song of Solomon 5:16). When a man finally learns that, he is no longer the hero of his own story. Jesus Christ is, and that is exactly where the glory belongs.

## **2 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - That No Flesh Should Glory**

### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:26-29**

#### **Introduction**

There is a reason God set this thing up the way He did, and if you miss that reason, you will miss the whole spirit of New Testament Christianity. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:26-29, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.” There is the whole matter laid out in plain King James English.

God did not build redemption as a tower for man to climb and then stand on top of, waving his little religious flag while he boasts about how high he got. God built redemption as a cross, and at the foot of that cross every sinner is leveled, every mouth is stopped, every résumé is burned, and every ounce of human pride is sentenced to death.

That is why the flesh hates the gospel. The flesh does not hate religion. It loves religion. It can use religion. It can decorate religion. It can market religion. It can get rich off religion. It can build institutions, denominations, conferences, platforms, empires, and personalities out of religion. The flesh can quote verses, wear ties, carry big Bibles, sing specials, and say “Praise the Lord” with a tear in its eye, and all the while it is feeding on one thing: recognition. But the gospel of Jesus Christ tears that idol down brick by brick. It tells the professor he is a fool, the prince he is poor, the celebrity he is dust, the moralist he is guilty, the church member he is condemned without Christ, and the preacher he is nothing more than a sinner who got mercy. The ground at Calvary is not only level; it is humiliating. God fixed this thing so that when salvation is finished, the only being left with any right to glory is the Lord Himself.

That truth is not a side issue. It is one of the deepest explanations for why Christianity is what it is. Why did God choose fishermen, tax collectors, persecutors, harlots, beggars, widows, and broken nobodies? Why does He keep using weak vessels, cracked jars, unimpressive men, and people the world would overlook? Why does He keep shaming the great with the small, the mighty with the weak, and the polished with the plain? Because He is after something bigger than human admiration. He is after His own glory. He is after a system of salvation and service in which grace gets the credit and flesh gets no oxygen. If a man ever understands why God arranged things “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29), then he is already being taught how to glory in the Lord. Until that lesson is learned, the Christian life will be one long wrestling match between the truth of God and the vanity of man.

### **1. God Deliberately Bypassed the World’s Scale of Greatness**

Paul begins by saying, “For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). Notice the wording. He does not say not any, but “not many.” God may save a nobleman here, a scholar there, a ruler somewhere else, but that is not the pattern. The pattern is that God does not line up with the world’s ranking system. He is not impressed with titles, diplomas, bloodlines, influence, followers, or applause. He does not look down from heaven and say, “Now there is a man with enough natural brilliance to help Me out.” The Lord never needed reinforcement from the flesh. He spoke the universe into existence without consulting a committee, and He does not now require a panel of respectable sinners to make His gospel

look credible. The Corinthians themselves were proof of that. They were not the intellectual cream of the empire. They were sinners saved by grace, and Paul reminds them of it before they begin imagining themselves to be something.

That puts a wrecking ball through celebrity religion. The spirit of this age says the key to success is visibility, branding, polish, social standing, and influence. If you can get the famous man, the wealthy man, the brilliant man, the polished man, then supposedly the cause of Christ gains credibility. But the Lord does not borrow credibility from man. He lends breath to man. He lends heartbeat to man. He lends time to man. He lends talent to man. Every great man in human history was a creature whose lungs were working on borrowed air. And yet churches still act as though a movement becomes important when the right names get attached to it. The Book says the opposite direction altogether. “Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Corinthians 1:26). Why? Because if God built His kingdom primarily with the world’s elite, then the elite would begin to imagine that the kingdom rose by their strength.

The Lord has always delighted in overturning man’s measurements. When Samuel looked at Jesse’s sons, he was ready to crown Eliab because he looked the part, but the Lord said, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth” (1 Samuel 16:7). That is the whole issue. Man sees appearance, power, polish, pedigree, and possibility. God sees the pride hiding under all of it. God sees how quickly flesh will crawl up on a pedestal and start feeding on the praise of men. So He bypasses the world’s scale of greatness and chooses in such a way that no honest observer can say the success came from human impressiveness. He sets the whole matter on different rails, and those rails run straight to one destination: “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29).

## **2. The Wisdom of This World Is Useless Before God**

The first class Paul singles out is “wise men after the flesh” (1 Corinthians 1:26). That phrase is a loaded one. He is not talking about the wisdom that comes from fearing the Lord, because “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10). He is talking about fleshly wisdom, natural wisdom, earthly wisdom, intellectual pride, the kind of wisdom that makes a man feel superior because he can juggle concepts, dissect arguments, or dazzle a crowd with his brain. The world worships that kind of man. He has letters after his name, people quote him, institutions parade him, and the masses treat his opinions like commandments. But when that wisdom approaches the things of God, it crashes into a wall. Paul says, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Corinthians 1:21). The brightest pagan philosopher and the proudest

modern academic share the same helpless condition: they cannot think their way into the new birth.

That is why the gospel is such an insult to intellectual arrogance. It tells the scholar that all his learning, though perhaps useful in earthly matters, cannot save his soul or reveal Christ apart from God's revelation. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him" (1 Corinthians 2:14). There is the problem. The issue is not that the truth is defective. The issue is that man in his natural state is blind and proud. He thinks that if he cannot master a truth by his own reasoning, then the fault must lie with the truth. So he sits in judgment on God's words, edits the Bible, corrects the Book, doubts miracles, questions the blood, mocks the cross, and then congratulates himself for being "nuanced." That is not wisdom. That is rebellion dressed up in academic robes. The Lord shatters that conceit by saving plain people through plain preaching and giving them light the scholar cannot find in a library full of commentaries.

That is one reason God uses preaching the way He does. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Not foolish preaching, but the foolishness of preaching as the world sees it. Imagine what that means. God chose a method despised by intellectual culture to convey a message offensive to human pride, and He did it on purpose. He could have designed salvation around philosophical systems, elite schooling, or mental acrobatics. Instead, He took the old rugged cross, wrapped it in preached words, and sent a man with a Book to tell sinners to repent and believe. Why? Because that method strips the flesh of its bragging rights. A professor may stand there with all his degrees and still perish in his pride, while some common sinner hears the gospel, believes it, and gets washed in the blood. "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Yes, He has, and He did it so that the wise man after the flesh would have no throne left to sit on in the presence of God.

### **3. God Also Humiliates Power, Rank, and Earthly Strength**

Paul does not stop with the wise. He adds, "not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). The mighty are the powerful, the influential, the movers and shakers, the men with levers in their hands and crowds at their feet. The noble are the well-born, the socially elevated, the respectable, the decorated, the people whose names mean something in the system of this world. God is not intimidated by any of them. He does not adjust His plan to suit their vanity. He does not make the gate wider for the sake of their comfort. A king must come to Christ exactly the same way a beggar comes. A senator must come the same way a street drunk comes. A celebrity must come the same way a widow comes. "There is no respect of persons with God" (Romans 2:11). That truth chokes the life out of human prestige in one sentence.

Man loves pecking orders. He loves knowing who is above whom. He loves earthly status because status lets the flesh feel substantial. That poison leaks right into religion. Entire denominations are built around hierarchy, rank, titles, garments, chairs, collars, and ceremonial distinctions. Men walk into buildings and expect to be treated according to office, position, and human honor. But the New Testament comes down like a hammer on that nonsense. Jesus said, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:11). He washed feet. He took the lowest place. He was born in a manger, raised in despised Nazareth, rejected by rulers, and crucified between thieves. If the Master took that road, what kind of fool imagines that Christianity is supposed to be a parade route for his own importance? The Son of God “made himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7), and yet modern churchianity acts like the ministry is a chance to build one.

The Lord humiliates earthly power because power is one of the flesh’s favorite intoxicants. A man gets influence and begins to think he is necessary. He gets authority and begins to think he is exceptional. He gets a platform and starts expecting deference. Then one day the Lord blows on the whole arrangement and scatters it like dust. Nebuchadnezzar learned that the hard way when he strutted over Babylon and said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?” and before the words were out of his mouth he was judged from heaven (Daniel 4:30-31). Why? Because pride always imagines it built what God merely permitted. God chooses in a way that humiliates the mighty because He will not share His glory with another. He is not building a redemption in which princes, celebrities, and power brokers get to say they helped pull the cart. He designed it “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29).

#### **4. God Chooses the Foolish to Confound the Wise**

Paul goes on: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise” (1 Corinthians 1:27). That verse does not say God chose foolish doctrine. It says He chose “the foolish things of the world,” meaning things the world counts foolish. The world sees a cross and laughs. It sees preaching and sneers. It sees faith and scoffs. It sees a little local church meeting around an old Book and cannot understand why heaven would take any interest in it. But God delights in taking what the world dismisses and using it to shame what the world celebrates. He took a shepherd boy with a sling and humiliated a giant warrior. He took an ark built by a preacher and drowned the world that mocked him. He took fishermen and turned the world upside down. He took a crucified Messiah and conquered death, hell, and the grave. He specializes in divine reversals because those reversals put the finger on man’s blindness.

This is why the flesh cannot stand simple Bible truth. It wants something impressive by worldly standards. It wants polish, spectacle, complexity, novelty, and innovation. It wants

the “smart” sermon, the “sophisticated” theology, the “respectable” ministry, the “credible” academic framework. God often bypasses all of that and blesses a plain preacher with a plain Book who simply believes what God said. The world calls that foolish. Many religious people call it simplistic. Fine. Let them call it what they want. The Word of God is still “quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). The new birth still comes by the incorruptible seed of the word of God (1 Peter 1:23). The Holy Ghost still takes what looks weak and ordinary to man and uses it to pierce hearts, break wills, and save souls. That is the Lord confounding the wise with what they despise.

And notice the word “confound.” It means to shame, to put to confusion, to expose the bankruptcy of human pride. God is not merely competing with worldly wisdom; He is embarrassing it. He lets the professor sneer at Genesis while a little child believes it and walks in more light than that professor will ever have apart from repentance. He lets the polished religious man mock the blood while some sinner fresh out of the gutter believes on Christ and gets more peace in one hour than the polished hypocrite has had in twenty years of church attendance. He lets the culture mock old-time preaching while that very preaching keeps rescuing souls from ruin. Why? Because the Lord is putting on display one central lesson: you do not get to approach Him on the basis of your brilliance. You come as a fool who needs His mercy, or you do not come at all. That arrangement leaves the wise man after the flesh with no breath left for boasting.

### **5. God Chooses the Weak, the Base, and the Despised**

The passage tightens even further: “And God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). That is not accidental language. The weak are those without obvious power. The base are the lowborn, the disregarded, the socially unimpressive. The despised are the looked-down-on, the rejected, the laughed-at, the castoffs. In other words, God intentionally selects instruments that the flesh would never have chosen if the flesh were trying to build a religious empire. That is why the Lord’s work so often moves through people the world would never feature on a magazine cover. He is not interested in confirming worldly instincts about who matters. He is interested in overturning them.

That truth cuts against every worldly instinct in the church. Men are forever trying to make the gospel look respectable to the world. They want the right scholars, the right celebrities, the right endorsements, the right credentials, the right cultural approval, the right social proof. God says, in effect, “I will take what you despise and use it to shame your entire system.” He chose an old man like Moses, slow of speech, and broke Egypt with him. He chose a barren woman like Hannah to birth a prophet. He chose David, the overlooked

youngest son, and made him king. He chose Mary, a poor Jewish virgin from an obscure place, to bring the Messiah into the world. He chose the poor of this world, “rich in faith” (James 2:5), while the rich often trusted in uncertain riches. The whole biblical record is one long testimony that God does not think like man, and man hates that because man wants a religion that flatters his instincts.

Now this does not mean God glorifies ignorance, laziness, or sloppiness. It means He refuses to let natural advantage become the source of the glory. If He uses an educated man, the glory still belongs to God. If He uses a wealthy man, the glory still belongs to God. If He uses a ruler, the glory still belongs to God. But the pattern is unmistakable: God repeatedly takes weak, base, and despised instruments so that no honest accounting can chalk the result up to human greatness. When the Lord uses a nobody, there is no place left to point but upward. That is why so many of His choicest saints have been hidden people, praying mothers, suffering widows, plain preachers, persecuted believers, and unknown servants whose names never hit the headlines of church history. Heaven knows who they are. The flesh does not like that because flesh wants credit. But the Lord built this thing so that the despised instrument becomes the very proof that the power is of God and not of us.

## **6. Salvation Is a Cross, Not a Ladder**

The whole point of 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 is that redemption was never intended to function as a ladder for self-exaltation. Religion loves ladders. It loves steps, levels, degrees, ranks, attainments, and achievements because ladders let men compare themselves and boast. One man got farther than another, prayed longer than another, learned more than another, gave more than another, endured more than another, or rose higher than another. But the gospel does not hand a sinner a ladder. It hands him a cross. And the cross is not something you climb to boast from; it is the place where your boasting is executed. Paul says, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). Why the cross? Because the cross announces the complete failure of the flesh. If the flesh could have produced righteousness, there would have been no need for Calvary.

At the cross every sinner stands exposed. Your morality could not get you there victoriously; it brought you there guilty. Your religion could not get you there crowned; it brought you there condemned. Your wisdom could not get you there enlightened; it brought you there blind. Your strength could not get you there triumphant; it brought you there helpless. The cross says to all mankind, from the guttermost to the uttermost, that you needed a substitute because you could not save yourself. “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Romans 5:6). There is the verdict. Without strength.

Not mostly strong. Not salvageable by self-help. Without strength. If that truth ever gets hold of a man, it kills his appetite for bragging. He begins to understand why the Lord arranged salvation so that no flesh should glory in His presence.

This is where so much false teaching goes wrong. It turns Christianity into a means of self-improvement rather than a miracle of divine rescue. It talks about “becoming your best self,” “walking in your greatness,” “unlocking your potential,” and all the rest of that syrupy, flesh-feeding nonsense. But the New Testament is not trying to coach the old man into greatness. It is pronouncing sentence on the old man and giving life in Christ to the new. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). That is not ladder language; that is execution language. God did not intend for a man to get saved and then start bragging about the heights he is reaching. He intended for that man to live in continual remembrance that if Jesus Christ had not bled, died, risen, and interceded, he would still be lost. That remembrance is poison to pride and nourishment to grace.

### **7. The Death of Human Boasting Is the Beginning of True Worship**

Once a man understands why God arranged things “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29), something begins to happen in him spiritually. He stops needing himself to be important. He stops craving recognition as the fuel of his joy. He stops measuring his worth by earthly comparisons. He stops trying to turn Christianity into a stage for personal significance. Why? Because he has seen what God is after. God is after worship that rises from grace, not admiration manufactured by the flesh. The twenty-four elders in Revelation do not stand around polishing their crowns and congratulating one another. They “cast their crowns before the throne” and say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord” (Revelation 4:10-11). That is where all true Christian life ends up. It ends with Christ exalted and every lesser glory laid down at His feet.

The flesh cannot worship like that because the flesh is always sneaking itself into the center. It likes songs if the songs make it feel grand. It likes ministry if ministry makes it visible. It likes service if service produces applause. It likes doctrine if doctrine makes it superior. It likes standards if standards make it admired. But once the Holy Ghost gets a man rooted in the truth of 1 Corinthians 1, all of that starts to rot in his mouth. He begins to see that what he once called spirituality was often just refined pride. Then the Lord becomes sweet to him in a new way. Christ is no longer an ornament on top of his identity. Christ becomes his life, his wisdom, his righteousness, his redemption, his song. “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD” (Psalm 34:2). There is the right boast. There is worship with its center restored.

And that is why the humiliation of the flesh is not cruelty; it is mercy. God brings man down so grace can lift Christ up. He empties the vessel of self-admiration so it can be filled with praise. He tears down human boasting so that joy can finally be anchored in something solid. A proud man cannot really worship because he is too busy guarding his own image. A broken man saved by grace can worship because he knows who deserves the glory. That is why God set salvation, truth, calling, ministry, and reward on this foundation: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). But before a man can glory in the Lord rightly, he must first learn why no flesh can be allowed to glory in His presence. The death of human boasting is not the end of the story. It is the doorway into the real story, where grace reigns and Jesus Christ gets the glory forever.

## **Conclusion**

So why did God set it up this way? Why did He choose the foolish, the weak, the base, and the despised? Why did He pass over so much of what the world calls impressive and repeatedly confound the wise, the mighty, and the noble? The answer is sitting there in black and white: “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). God is not interested in running a salvation program that gives sinful man room to brag. He is not building a religious system where the clever can boast in their intellect, the wealthy in their influence, the polished in their refinement, the religious in their performance, or the denominational in their pedigree. He is building a people purchased by blood, indwelt by His Spirit, taught by His word, and preserved by His grace, and the very structure of that arrangement means the glory belongs to Him from start to finish.

That truth should flatten the swagger out of every Christian. It should flatten the celebrity preacher who thinks the kingdom depends on his platform. It should flatten the intellectual snob who imagines Greek lexicons and critical theories give him a throne above simple Bible believers. It should flatten the denominational peacock who boasts in his camp as though Christ died for a brand. It should flatten the legalist who admires his standards more than the Saviour. It should flatten the emotional showman who thinks noise and tears are proof of spirituality. It should flatten all of them because the Lord built this thing to suffocate pride. The minute a man starts turning Christianity into a vehicle for self-exaltation, he is rowing against the very current of the passage. God did not redeem sinners so they could become polished idols in religious settings. He redeemed them so grace could shine where pride once ruled.

If a man gets this lesson, he is already on the road to understanding what it means to glory in the Lord. The first half of the truth is negative but necessary: no flesh should glory in His presence. The second half is glorious: if any man glories, let him glory in the Lord. But you will never get the second part right until the first part has crushed your pride. You have to

see that the cross is not a ladder but an execution ground, that salvation is not a partnership but a rescue, that ministry is not a stage but a stewardship, and that every blessing worth having came down from above. Then you can finally say with a clean heart, “In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever” (Psalm 44:8). When the flesh is brought down and grace is lifted up, the Lord gets what He was after all along: a people who know they are nothing without Him and who gladly give Him all the glory.

### **3 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - Christ Made Unto Us Wisdom**

#### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:30**

##### **Introduction**

One of the surest marks that a man has not yet learned the Bible is that he still thinks human intelligence is the key to spiritual understanding. He may have degrees stacked on a wall, a shelf full of lexicons, enough theological jargon to choke a horse, and a mind sharp enough to split hairs into atoms, but if he has missed Jesus Christ, he is still in the dark. Paul said of the Lord Jesus Christ, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is the issue. Christ is not merely a wise teacher among other wise teachers. He is not simply a better philosopher than Plato, a better moralist than Confucius, or a better religious guide than the founders of dead religions. He is “made unto us wisdom.” That means the believer’s wisdom is not ultimately found in his brain, his education, his arguments, his cleverness, or his study habits. It is found in a Person. It is found in the Son of God. If that truth ever takes hold of a saved man, it will cure him of a thousand forms of spiritual pride and a thousand more forms of religious confusion.

The world has always worshiped the mind of man. It did it in Athens, it did it in Alexandria, it did it in Rome, and it does it now in universities, seminaries, think tanks, podcasts, publishing houses, and conference circuits. The names change, the fashions change, the language changes, but the disease stays the same. Fallen man wants to believe that if he can reason finely enough, compare systems carefully enough, parse words subtly enough, and master enough data, he can arrive at truth by his own light. But the Bible smashes that conceit to pieces. “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God” (1 Corinthians 1:21). That verse is a funeral bell for intellectual arrogance. The world had all its sages, all its speculators, all its schools, all its orators, and still it did not know God. Why? Because God is not discovered by man’s upward climb. He is revealed by God’s own

downward condescension. Spiritual truth is not manufactured in the laboratory of the natural mind. It is given by revelation, received by faith, and illuminated by the Holy Ghost.

That is why this subject is so necessary for the church age, because modern Christianity is drowning in a counterfeit wisdom that talks about Christ while trusting in man. Some boast in scholarship as though a Greek verb can regenerate the soul. Some boast in seminary training as though the Spirit of God now takes His orders from academic institutions. Some boast in theological sophistication as though complexity were proof of truth. Some boast in cultural relevance, some in philosophical depth, some in polished rhetoric, and some in their ability to sound “balanced” while quietly sawing the guts out of the Book. But the saint who learns 1 Corinthians 1:30 starts to see through all of that fog. He learns that if he finally sees the truth, he does not glory in his eyesight. He glories in the One who opened his eyes. If he finally understands the Scriptures, he does not bow before his own intellect. He bows before the Christ who became his wisdom. That is the foundation of this essay, and unless that foundation is laid deep, the rest of the Christian life will wobble on the rotten stilts of human pride.

### **1. The Natural Man Is Blind, No Matter How Brilliant He Thinks He Is**

The first thing that must be settled is the condition of man apart from Christ. If you start with the wrong diagnosis, you will end with the wrong remedy. The Bible does not say the natural man is slightly uninformed, educationally underdeveloped, or philosophically unfinished. It says, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). There is your diagnosis. He “receiveth not.” He “neither can he know them.” That is not a problem of IQ. That is a problem of nature. You can have a natural man with a quick mind, a sharp memory, and a polished vocabulary, but if he is still natural, he is still blind to spiritual truth. His intellect may make him dangerous, but it cannot make him regenerate.

That truth wrecks the whole cult of modern intellectual Christianity. There is a disease loose in the churches where people act as though the key to understanding the Bible is finding the man with the most degrees, the broadest reading list, the smoothest delivery, or the most impressive academic pedigree. But unless that man has been born again and taught by the Spirit of God through the words of God, all his learning is just a more sophisticated form of darkness. Nicodemus was “a ruler of the Jews” and “a master of Israel,” and yet the Lord Jesus Christ had to tell him, “Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:7, 10). Imagine that. A doctor of religion standing face to face with incarnate Wisdom and still not grasping the first principle of spiritual life. Why?

Because all the information in the world cannot overcome the blindness of an unregenerate heart.

This is where saved people must get their footing or they will spend their lives intimidated by the wrong people. A sneering scholar, a polished critic, a cultured skeptic, or a “nuanced” theologian may sound ten feet tall, but if he is contradicting the plain words of God, he is not standing in light. He is stumbling in the dark with a lantern made of his own opinions. The Lord said of the Pharisees, “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind” (Matthew 15:14). Blind leaders can wear robes, write books, deliver lectures, and gather crowds. They can still be blind. The issue is not how smart they appear. The issue is whether Christ has opened their eyes. Until a man understands that, he will keep trembling before the confidence of blind men when he ought to be resting in the certainty of the word of God.

## **2. The Wisdom of This World Cannot Know God**

Paul says, “For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (1 Corinthians 3:19). Now that is not a statement the modern religious mind enjoys. Modern man wants dialogue, synthesis, respectability, and partnership between revelation and human speculation. He wants to sit the Bible down at the roundtable with philosophy, psychology, academia, cultural theory, and all the rest of the babbling systems of fallen man, and then he wants to negotiate some compromise that will make Christianity look intelligent in the eyes of the world. But the Bible does not come to the world hat in hand begging for intellectual legitimacy. The Bible comes as the final authority from the mouth of God, and it tells the world flat out that its wisdom is foolishness. That is not because the Lord is anti-thought. It is because human wisdom, when severed from divine revelation, turns into an idol factory.

Take the philosophers of Athens in Acts 17. They spent their time “in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). There is the itch of the carnal intellectual mind. Novelty. Discussion. Endless speculation. Mental motion without spiritual submission. Paul walks right into that city full of genius and religion and tells them that God “now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). He does not flatter their schools. He does not compliment their intellectual openness. He does not say they are almost there if they just keep searching. He tells them to repent because all their systems had left them ignorant of the true God. That is the great bankruptcy of worldly wisdom. It can produce theories, categories, and arguments, but it cannot bring a sinner into the knowledge of God. It may fill the head with vocabulary while leaving the soul under wrath.

This is why Christians must stop being dazzled by the world’s mental fireworks. The sharpest unbelieving brain on earth is still a brain operating under the curse of sin. It can

calculate, compare, and criticize, but it cannot produce spiritual life. It can tell you what many men have thought about God, but it cannot reveal God as Father through the Son by the Spirit. “Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matthew 11:27). There is the dividing line. God is not the end result of a brilliant thought process. He is known by revelation. So when the believer glories in the Lord, he is refusing to bow before worldly intellect as though that intellect were capable of replacing the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is not one contributor to wisdom. He is the believer’s wisdom over against all the bankruptcy of the world.

### **3. Christ Is Not Merely Wise; He Is Made Unto Us Wisdom**

The language of 1 Corinthians 1:30 is stronger than most Christians ever stop to consider. Paul does not say Christ gives us a little wisdom. He does not say Christ improves our reasoning. He does not say Christ merely supplements our education. He says Christ “is made unto us wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:30). That means wisdom, in the final and saving sense, is embodied in the person of Jesus Christ. The Lord is not just wiser than Solomon, wiser than Isaiah, wiser than Paul, wiser than every preacher, teacher, scholar, or saint who has ever lived. He is the very wisdom of God for the believer. Paul already said in the chapter that Christ is “the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:24). That makes every attempt to build spiritual understanding apart from Him not merely inadequate but insane.

Think about that thing. In Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). All the treasures. Not some. Not most. All. That means the man who has Christ has the fountainhead, even if he has not yet drunk deeply from it. The man who rejects Christ may possess libraries, languages, methodologies, historical tools, and intellectual precision, and still miss the central reality to which all true wisdom points. The trouble with fallen man is not that he lacks information. It is that he is alienated from the source. He may dissect the branches while being cut off from the root. He may handle words while missing the Word. He may study religion while rejecting the Lord of glory. That is why Christless scholarship is finally barren no matter how brilliant it sounds. It has the map without the country, the shell without the life, the vocabulary without the Voice.

So when a saved man says Christ is his wisdom, he is saying something far more profound than “Jesus helps me think better.” He is saying that in Christ he has found the living center of all spiritual truth. He is saying that truth is not finally an abstraction but is gathered up in the person of the Son of God. “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Not a way. Not a truth among truths. The truth. That means the believer’s confidence rests not in his ability to mentally juggle doctrines but in the Christ who is Himself the sum and substance of divine wisdom. A saint may grow in knowledge, sharpen in discernment, and mature in

understanding, but all of that growth is real only as it is rooted in union with Christ. Apart from Him, the whole tree dies. That is why the believer glories in the Lord and not in his own mental furniture.

#### **4. Human Reason Must Bow to Revelation**

Now this is where the real battle starts, because human reason does not like to kneel. It likes to sit in the judge's chair and interrogate God. It likes to decide which doctrines seem acceptable, which miracles seem credible, which moral commands seem relevant, and which passages should be "reinterpreted" to suit modern tastes. But the Bible never grants human reason that throne. "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). That is not a command against thinking. It is a command against enthroning your own understanding over what God has said. Reason is a servant, not a king. The minute it starts overruling revelation, it becomes a usurper. Eve made that mistake in Eden. Once she allowed God's words to be reweighed by her own reasoning and the serpent's suggestion, the whole race went down in ruins.

That same disease is alive in modern theology. Men come to the Bible not to believe it but to manage it. They explain away Jonah because their reason balks at a fish. They explain away the virgin birth because their reason balks at a miracle. They explain away the blood because their reason balks at substitution. They explain away hell because their reason balks at judgment. They explain away the second coming because their reason balks at divine intervention. Then they turn around and act as though they are the sophisticated ones. They are not sophisticated. They are rebels with footnotes. They are the same old natural man dressed in academic clothes. "Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4). That verse settles the issue. If your reasoning crosses swords with the words of God, your reasoning is what needs to be corrected.

The believer who glories in the Lord learns to let revelation govern his mind. He does not worship irrationality, but he knows that finite, fallen reason cannot sit in final judgment on the infinite God. He receives the words of Scripture as the supreme authority because "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16). He bows where the world scoffs. He believes where critics sneer. He accepts where proud religion hedges. That does not make him anti-intellectual. It makes him sane. The highest use of the mind is not to challenge God but to submit to Him. When Christ is made unto a man wisdom, that man learns the right relationship between thought and revelation. His mind becomes a servant of the Book instead of a thief trying to strip the jewels off the crown of God's authority.

#### **5. The Words of God, Not Human Scholarship, Are the Final Source of Wisdom**

Now let us take this thing right down where it belongs, because a great deal of confusion in the church comes from this point. The final source of spiritual wisdom for the believer is not scholarship; it is Scripture. Scholarship may be useful in its place, history may be useful in its place, language study may be useful in its place, and careful thinking may be useful in its place, but none of those things are the fountain. The fountain is the words of God. “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130). Notice what the verse does not say. It does not say the entrance of man’s academic systems gives light. It says the entrance of God’s words does. A simple man with a Bible who believes it is on safer ground than a skeptical genius with access to every manuscript under heaven.

This is one reason the devil has spent centuries attacking the Book. He knows that if he can get men to doubt the words, he can keep them dependent on the “experts.” Once the Book is no longer final, the scholar becomes the priest. Then every plain text has to be filtered through academic fog, every doctrine gets suspended in uncertainty, and the ordinary saint is trained to distrust what God said until some specialist gives permission to believe it. That is spiritual robbery. Jesus said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). He did not say the theories about His words are spirit and life. The words themselves carry the life. That is why a saved man must never confuse the tools with the treasure. The treasure is the words of God, and every tool that helps you understand them is useful only to the extent that it bows before them.

When Christ is made unto us wisdom, He does not lead us away from the words He inspired. He leads us into them. He opens them up. He burns them into the heart. He causes the believer to say with Jeremiah, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them” (Jeremiah 15:16). He causes the saint to prize the Book above the applause of educated fools. A church can have a thousand programs and still be empty if the word of God is sidelined. A preacher can sound polished and still be useless if he has no Book in his mouth. A believer can feel intimidated by educated religion until he realizes that heaven’s wisdom comes down through inspired words, not up through man’s intellectual ladder. That realization will do more to steady a saint than ten years of sitting under foggy talkers who never land anywhere because they never really trusted the Book.

## **6. The Holy Spirit Illuminates What Human Brains Cannot Produce**

The next part of this truth is the work of the Holy Ghost. If Christ is our wisdom, then that wisdom must be made real to us by the Spirit of God. Paul says, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:10). He says again, “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (1 Corinthians 2:12). There is divine illumination. The Spirit does

not add new revelation beyond the written words of God, but He opens the believer's eyes to understand, receive, love, and apply what God has already revealed. That is something scholarship cannot manufacture. A man can parse verbs until sunrise and still miss the living force of the truth if the Spirit of God does not open the thing to his heart.

Look at the disciples after the resurrection. The Lord Jesus Christ "opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures" (Luke 24:45). Notice that. The Scriptures were already there. The words were already written. But their understanding had to be opened. That is the ministry of divine illumination. It is the same principle David prayed for when he said, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). The saint who knows this does not swagger into the Bible acting like his brain is enough. He comes prayerfully, dependently, reverently. He knows that if God does not give light, he will sit in the middle of bright truth and still miss it. That dependence is not weakness. It is wisdom. It is what happens when a man finally knows where light comes from.

This also guards the believer from two opposite errors. One error is intellectual pride, where a man thinks study alone is the key. The other error is lazy mysticism, where a man thinks he can despise study and still claim spiritual depth. Both are wrong. The Spirit of God who illumines the Scriptures is the same Spirit who inspired the command to "study to shew thyself approved unto God" (2 Timothy 2:15). The point is not study without the Spirit or the Spirit without the words, but the Spirit of God opening the written words of God to the believing heart. When Christ is made unto us wisdom, a man learns to pray, read, meditate, compare Scripture with Scripture, and humbly ask God for light. Then when the light comes, he does not beat his chest and congratulate his intellect. He thanks the Lord who turned the lamp on.

## **7. The Mind of Christ Replaces Confidence in the Flesh**

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:16, "But we have the mind of Christ." That is one of the most staggering statements in the New Testament. It does not mean the believer becomes omniscient, infallible, or incapable of error. It means that through the indwelling Spirit and the inspired words of God, the saint is brought into the thoughts, values, judgments, and perspective of Jesus Christ. The believer begins to learn how Christ thinks about sin, righteousness, truth, suffering, holiness, eternity, and the will of God. That is wisdom. Real wisdom is not merely the accumulation of facts. It is learning to see things as the Lord sees them. It is having your mind renewed so thoroughly by the word of God that the world's wisdom begins to look like what it really is: spiritual foolishness.

That is why Romans 12:2 says, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The natural mind runs on vanity, ambition, self-protection, pride, and unbelief. The renewed mind begins to run on Scripture. It starts judging success differently, suffering differently, power differently, truth differently, and glory differently. The world says the wise man is the one who gets ahead. Christ says, “What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Mark 8:36). The world says the wise man protects himself. Christ says, “He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 10:39). The world says the wise man follows his heart. Christ says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9). You see what is happening? The mind of Christ overturns the whole operating system of the flesh.

So glorying in the Lord means the believer refuses to boast in his mental capacity as though he arrived at truth by native superiority. He confesses that every right judgment he has is downstream from Christ. Every true spiritual insight, every real conviction, every sound discernment, every godly perspective came because the Lord, by His word and Spirit, taught him to think differently. “Who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him?” (1 Corinthians 2:16). No man instructs God. The wonder of grace is that God instructs men. Therefore the Christian who truly sees does not pose as the source of light. He glories in the Lord who gave it. He is not boasting in his eyesight; he is praising the One who healed his blindness.

## **Conclusion**

So what does it mean that Christ is made unto us wisdom? It means that in a world darkened by sin, clouded by pride, and drunk on its own opinions, the believer has found in Jesus Christ the true and living source of spiritual understanding. It means the bankruptcy of human reasoning has been exposed, the vanity of worldly wisdom has been unmasked, and the false confidence of natural intellect has been brought down. It means the saint no longer looks to philosophers, critics, scholars, or religious showmen as though they held the key to God. He looks to Christ. He looks to the words of Christ. He looks to the Spirit of Christ opening those words in his heart. That is wisdom. Not merely knowing many things, but knowing the One in whom all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid.

This truth should humble every saved man. If you see the truth, it is because the Lord opened your eyes. If you understand the gospel, it is because the Lord revealed it. If the Book burns in your heart, it is because the Holy Ghost turned on the light. If your mind is being renewed, it is because Christ is teaching you by His word. That leaves no room for swagger. No room for intellectual snobbery. No room for theological vanity. No room for acting like your grasp of truth came from your own superior brain. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

The answer is plain. Everything worth having was received. Therefore everything worth boasting in points back to the Giver.

That is why glorying in the Lord is the only sane response to divine illumination. A man who has truly been taught of God cannot honestly worship his own intellect. He has seen too much of his own blindness. He knows what he was before grace found him. He knows how dead his mind was to spiritual reality. So when Christ becomes wisdom to him, he does not climb onto a pedestal and boast in how clearly he sees. He falls at the feet of the Lord who gave him sight. “The entrance of thy words giveth light” (Psalm 119:130). “Open thou mine eyes” (Psalm 119:18). “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom” (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is the whole matter. If you finally see the truth, do not glory in your eyesight. Glory in the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who opened your eyes and became your wisdom forever.

#### **4 of 12: Glorying in the Lord - Christ Made Unto Us Righteousness**

##### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:30**

##### **Introduction**

One of the greatest lies ever sold to fallen man is the lie that he can make himself fit for the presence of God. That lie wears a thousand costumes. Sometimes it comes dressed in religion, sometimes in morality, sometimes in ceremony, sometimes in repentance turned into a work, sometimes in church membership, sometimes in sacraments, sometimes in law-keeping, and sometimes in plain old-fashioned self-righteousness. But no matter how it dresses up, it is still the same rotten lie from the same rotten source. It tells a sinner that if he just cleans himself up enough, performs enough, cries enough, prays enough, gives enough, confesses enough, or endures enough, God will finally look down and say, “Now there is a man I can accept.” The Bible burns that lie to ashes. Paul says of Jesus Christ, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is the blow that knocks the props out from under every religious fraud on earth. Christ is made unto us righteousness. That means righteousness before God is not achieved by the sinner. It is given to the sinner in the Son of God.

That truth is not just another doctrine in a systematic theology notebook. That truth is the dividing line between the gospel and every counterfeit gospel ever invented. If righteousness can be earned, then Christ died in vain. If righteousness can be developed as a ground of acceptance, then Calvary was unnecessary. If righteousness can be

maintained by human effort so as to secure standing before God, then grace is no more grace. But the apostle will not allow that kind of compromise. He says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16). He says again, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (Romans 3:20). He says again, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God” (Romans 4:2). The whole line of revelation runs in one direction: man has no righteousness fit for God, and God has provided righteousness in Christ. That is why glorying in the Lord here means that a man quits admiring his own goodness and starts resting in the perfect righteousness of Another.

And that truth cuts two ways, just like the Book always does. On one side, it is a sledgehammer to religious pride. It takes the Pharisee by the throat and tells him his good works are filthy rags. It strips the priest, the legalist, the self-reformer, the sacramentalist, the moralist, and the church-going hypocrite of every excuse and every claim to merit. On the other side, it is sweet comfort to the struggling saint who knows good and well that if he stands before God in his own performance, he is ruined. The believer who has failed, stumbled, wept, and seen the weakness of his flesh needs to know that his standing before God does not rest on his best day or his worst day. It rests on Christ. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). That is not partial righteousness. That is not borrowed moral improvement. That is not spiritual cosmetics. That is divine righteousness bestowed in union with Jesus Christ. If a man ever gets hold of that, it will break his pride and steady his heart at the same time.

### **1. Man’s Greatest Delusion Is Confidence in His Own Righteousness**

The first enemy that has to be dragged into the light is human confidence in personal righteousness. That disease is older than the church age, older than Moses, older than Abraham, and older than Babel. It is native to the fallen heart. Ever since Adam sewed fig leaves together in the garden, man has been trying to cover his own shame by his own effort. That is why religion comes so naturally to sinners. They do not naturally come to grace. They naturally come to bargaining, performing, promising, and dressing themselves up. The flesh would rather do anything than stand before God empty-handed. It would rather crawl up a staircase of religious labor than receive salvation as a gift, because the flesh wants something to brag about when the dust settles. But the prophet said, “But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6). Not merely our sins. Our righteousnesses. That means the very things man tries to offer God as proof of his worth are polluted at the source.

The Lord Jesus Christ exposed this spirit perfectly in Luke 18 when He spoke “this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others” (Luke 18:9). There is the whole rotten chain. First a man trusts in himself that he is righteous, and then he starts despising other people. That is what self-righteousness always produces. The Pharisee stood and prayed, “God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are” (Luke 18:11). He had his list ready. Fasting, tithing, moral comparison, religious performance. He was his own favorite exhibit. Meanwhile the publican stood afar off, smote upon his breast, and said, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Luke 18:13). Jesus said the publican went down justified rather than the Pharisee. Why? Because the publican came needing righteousness, while the Pharisee came advertising righteousness. The first man went home with God’s verdict. The second went home with his own.

That same poison runs all through modern Christianity. Men still trust in themselves that they are righteous. One man trusts in baptism. Another trusts in church attendance. Another trusts in separated standards. Another trusts in repentance turned into self-punishment. Another trusts in emotional experiences. Another trusts in sacraments. Another trusts in a long history of outward morality. Another trusts in theological correctness itself, as though having good doctrine in the head could wash filth from the heart. All of that is the same old fig-leaf religion. It is man trying to present himself as acceptable by what he is or what he has done. But the Bible says, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). That shuts every mouth. If a man is ever going to stand before God accepted, he will not stand there in his own righteousness. He will stand there in Christ’s.

## **2. The Law Can Reveal Sin, but It Cannot Make a Sinner Righteous**

A second great truth that must be settled is the purpose of the law. God never gave the law as a ladder for sinners to climb into justification. He gave it as a mirror to show them what they are. Paul says plainly, “Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20). Notice that carefully. The law gives knowledge of sin; it does not provide justification from sin. The law can expose the stain, but it cannot wash the stain out. It can pronounce the sentence, but it cannot pay the penalty. It can reveal what God requires, but it cannot create in fallen man the righteousness that requirement demands. That is why every sinner who tries to get right with God by law-keeping is trying to use the law for something it was never designed to do.

Paul knew that matter from both sides. Before he met Christ, he had law righteousness coming out of his ears. He could say concerning “the righteousness which is in the law,” he was “blameless” (Philippians 3:6). That means outwardly he was a first-rate religionist. He had zeal, pedigree, discipline, orthodoxy, and all the marks of a man admired in religious

circles. But when the commandment came home to his conscience, the whole thing caved in. In Romans 7 he says, “I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Romans 7:9). The law did not make him righteous; it killed his illusions. It showed him what he was. That is exactly what the law still does when it is preached right. It strips away excuses, exposes inward corruption, and shuts the sinner up to the need of grace. But the minute a man starts using the law as his means of self-acceptance before God, he has missed the whole point of it.

That is why every works-based system is finally anti-gospel, no matter how religious it sounds. Paul says, “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16). Then he repeats it in the same verse just in case somebody in a robe wants to wiggle out of it: “for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). That includes Mosaic law, church law, denominational law, homemade law, and every private set of standards men devise to prop up their pride. The law cannot make a sinner righteous before God because righteousness good enough for God must be perfect, continuous, inward, and unbroken. Once a man sees that, he either despairs or he flees to Christ. And that is exactly where the law was always meant to drive him.

### **3. Christ Is the Believer’s Righteousness Before God**

Now we arrive at the heart of the matter. Paul says that Christ “is made unto us... righteousness” (1 Corinthians 1:30). That is one of the grandest statements in all the Pauline revelation. It does not say Christ helps us become partly righteous so we can finish the job. It does not say Christ makes up the difference after we contribute our portion. It says He is made unto us righteousness. The believer’s standing before God is rooted in a person, not a performance. It is rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jeremiah saw this in prophecy when he said of the Messiah, “and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:6). There is no mistaking that. The righteousness that justifies a sinner is not man’s righteousness offered upward. It is the Lord’s righteousness bestowed downward.

Paul explains the mechanics of it in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” That verse is thunder from heaven. The sinless Christ was made sin for us, not by becoming sinful in His nature, but by being made the sin-bearer, the substitute, the offering, the one on whom God laid the iniquity of us all. Why? So that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Not in ourselves. Not in our sacraments. Not in our efforts. In Him. That is imputation. Our sin laid to His account. His righteousness laid to ours. That is the exchange that saves the soul and breaks the neck of religious boasting. If a man’s righteousness before God is

the righteousness of Another credited to him in Christ, then he has nothing left to glory in but the Lord.

This is why Romans 3 is so vital. Paul says, “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested” (Romans 3:21). Without the law. There is the separation. God’s righteousness as the ground of justification comes apart from law-keeping. Then he says that this righteousness is “unto all and upon all them that believe” (Romans 3:22). It is received by faith. It is bestowed, not earned. It is put upon the believer. That is how a filthy sinner can stand accepted in the presence of a holy God. Not because he scrubbed hard enough, but because God clothed him in Christ. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isaiah 61:10). That is not self-tailoring. That is divine clothing. The saint does not come dressed in his own achievements. He comes covered by the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

#### **4. Abraham and David Prove That Righteousness Is Imputed, Not Earned**

If there were ever two men religion would love to claim for works righteousness, it would be Abraham and David. Abraham is the father figure, the patriarch, the man of obedience. David is the king, the Psalmist, the man after God’s own heart. Yet Paul drags both of them into Romans 4 and uses them to prove the exact opposite of works religion. He says, “For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God” (Romans 4:2). There is the issue again—glorying. If Abraham had been justified by works, he could have bragged. But he could not do it before God. Why? Because “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness” (Romans 4:3). Counted. Reckoned. Imputed. That is accounting language. God put righteousness to Abraham’s account on the basis of faith.

Paul presses it further: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5). There is enough truth in those two verses to smash every counterfeit gospel on earth. God justifies “the ungodly,” not the cleaned-up nearly-godly. The man in view is not working for justification but believing on the God who justifies. His faith is counted for righteousness. That does not mean faith is a meritorious work. It means faith is the empty hand receiving what God provides in Christ. The sinner is not bringing righteousness to God; he is receiving righteousness from God. That is why works religion hates Romans 4. It does not leave them room to sneak in a little merit around the side door.

Then Paul brings in David, and this is where it gets even sweeter because David knew what it was to fail badly. Paul says David describes “the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works” (Romans 4:6). Without works. Not with works helping. Not with works maintaining. Without works. Then he quotes David: “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Romans 4:7-8). There you have both sides of the ledger. Sin not imputed to the believer because it was laid on Christ. Righteousness imputed to the believer because it is found in Christ. Abraham proves it is by faith. David proves it is mercy for the guilty. Together they preach the same gospel Paul preached. Righteousness before God is credited, not achieved.

### **5. Paul Counted His Own Religious Righteousness as Dung**

Now if anybody could have strutted in religious confidence, it was Saul of Tarsus. He lays out his old résumé in Philippians 3 like a man laying out medals on a table. “Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Philippians 3:5). Then comes his religious record: “as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Philippians 3:5-6). That is a sterling reputation in the eyes of religious flesh. If there were ever a man who could have gone around peacocking before the brethren about his performance, it was Saul before conversion. He had the bloodline, the orthodoxy, the zeal, the system, and the external morality. In the eyes of religion, he was top shelf.

But then Christ showed up. That changes everything. Paul says, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Philippians 3:7). Then he keeps driving the knife in deeper: “Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord” (Philippians 3:8). And then he uses the word that tells you exactly what he thought of his old religious stockpile: “and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” (Philippians 3:8). Dung. Not stepping stones. Not helpful supplements. Not partial contributions. Dung. Why? Because the moment a man sees the glory of Christ’s righteousness, his own religious righteousness starts to stink. What he once admired he now rejects as spiritually useless for justification.

Then comes the target verse: “And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith” (Philippians 3:9). There is the line in the sand. Either “mine own righteousness,” or “the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Paul wanted no mixture. He did not want Christ plus Pharisee. He did not want grace plus law. He did not want faith plus merit. He wanted to be found in Christ alone, clothed in righteousness from God. That is the heart of glorying in the Lord on this point. A man quits polishing his own goodness

and starts resting in the perfect obedience, sinless life, substitutionary death, and triumphant righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul had seen both systems from the inside, and he cast one overboard forever.

## **6. Every Counterfeit Gospel Mixes Grace with Human Merit**

Here is where the gloves come off, because the devil is never content to deny righteousness in Christ outright if he can corrupt it more subtly by mixture. He loves mixtures. He loves Christ plus sacraments, Christ plus church membership, Christ plus law, Christ plus endurance, Christ plus penance, Christ plus performance, Christ plus emotional experiences, Christ plus moral reform, Christ plus social activism, Christ plus anything that gives the flesh a little foothold. But the Holy Ghost says, “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work” (Romans 11:6). There is no hybrid gospel in that verse. Grace and works are mutually exclusive as grounds of justification. The minute works enter as the basis of acceptance, grace is overturned.

That is why Paul dealt so fiercely with the Galatians. They were not denying Christ altogether. They were adding law to Christ. They were mixing circumcision and legal observance into justification and sanctified standing, and Paul did not treat that as a harmless doctrinal variation. He said, “I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain” (Galatians 2:21). Dead in vain. Think of that. Every system that adds human merit to righteousness before God is, in effect, saying Christ’s death was insufficient by itself. No wonder Paul said to those bewitched Galatians, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Galatians 5:4). That is not losing salvation. That is falling away from grace as the operating principle into a legal system that robs Christ of His glory and man of his peace.

So let every sacramental system, every legalistic church, every self-righteous movement, and every polished counterfeit hear it plainly: righteousness before God is not dispensed through ritual, maintained through performance, or secured by denominational loyalty. “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). That verse does not leave room for a little ceremonial boasting or a little moral credit. None. If a man is trusting in anything he has done, is doing, or plans to do as the ground of his acceptance before God, he is standing on sand. The only safe ground is Christ. The only garment fit for heaven is Christ’s righteousness. The only boast left to the redeemed is the Lord Himself.

## **7. The Believer's Standing Is Secure in Christ, Even While His State Needs Daily Cleansing**

Now here is where this doctrine becomes precious to the saint who knows his own weakness. There is a difference between a believer's standing and his state. His standing is his position before God in Christ. His state is his daily condition in experience. His standing is perfect because it rests on Christ's righteousness. His state fluctuates because he is still in a body of flesh. If a Christian confuses those two things, he will either become a legalist or collapse in despair. But if he understands them, he will find both stability and motive for holy living. Paul says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Why no condemnation? Because they are in Christ. Their standing is not hanging by the thread of their latest spiritual performance. It is secured in the Beloved.

That does not mean sin does not matter. It means sin matters in the life of a justified man as a matter of fellowship, testimony, chastening, reward, and fatherly discipline, not as the ground of his judicial acceptance. A believer who sins needs confession, cleansing, and restoration of fellowship. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). But he does not need to reconstruct his righteousness before God from scratch every time he falls. If that were the case, no saint would survive the week. The same apostle who told the Corinthians about Christ being made unto us righteousness also told the Ephesians they were "accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). That acceptance rests on union with Christ, not on the temperature of your feelings or the perfection of your daily walk.

That is why this doctrine comforts the struggling believer without excusing carnality. It tells the trembling saint, "Your righteousness is not your own." It tells the weary soul, "You do not stand because you have become impressive." It tells the failing Christian, "Look away from yourself and back to Christ." At the same time, it tells the saint to walk worthy, because the One who justified him has also called him to holiness. But the order matters. You do not walk to become accepted; you walk because you are accepted. You do not labor to secure righteousness; you labor because righteousness has been given. "And ye are complete in him" (Colossians 2:10). There is the settled ground. Complete in Him. Not complete in your church attendance, your devotions, your ministry output, or your latest victory. Complete in Christ. That truth kills pride and relieves despair at the same time.

### **Conclusion**

So what does it mean that Christ is made unto us righteousness? It means that the believer's standing before God is not built on the quicksand of human merit but on the rock of Jesus Christ. It means the law has done its work in exposing sin but cannot justify. It

means self-righteousness has been shown for the filthy rag that it is. It means Abraham and David stand in the witness box and testify that righteousness is imputed by faith apart from works. It means Paul took his polished religious résumé, threw it into the manure pile, and chose instead to be found in Christ. It means that all the sacraments, ceremonies, moral reforms, law systems, and performance-based counterfeits in the world cannot add one ounce of worth to the righteousness God gives in His Son. Christ is our righteousness. That is not poetry. That is the gospel.

That truth ought to tear the heart out of religious pride. The church-going boaster, the sacramentalist, the legalist, the moral exhibitionist, the preacher proud of his own consistency, the man impressed with his own standards, the woman admiring her own piety, the scholar trusting his own orthodoxy, all of them need to hear the same thunder: “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Romans 3:10). “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28). “Not having mine own righteousness” (Philippians 3:9). The sinner is not accepted because he became righteous enough. He is accepted because God places him in Christ and credits Christ’s righteousness to him. That leaves no room for boasting in self. It leaves all the glory with the Lord.

And for the saint who knows the misery of the flesh, that truth is a pillow for the soul. When the devil accuses, when conscience trembles, when failure stares you in the face, when your own heart reminds you how weak you are, you do not answer by parading your goodness. You answer by pointing to Christ. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth” (Romans 8:33). “The LORD our righteousness” (Jeremiah 23:6). “That we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). There is your hope. There is your ground. There is your boast. If any man glories here, let him glory in the Lord, because the only righteousness that can stand in the presence of God is the righteousness of Jesus Christ Himself, and blessed be His name, God gives it freely to everyone that believes.

## **5 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - Christ Made Unto Us Sanctification**

### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:30**

#### **Introduction**

One of the most abused words in the Christian life is the word “sanctification.” Some men use it like a club, and others use it like a doormat. One crowd turns sanctification into a parade of outward regulations, fleshly badges, polished appearances, and man-made

standards that can be imitated by anybody with enough stubbornness and a good enough costume. The other crowd hears the word grace and decides sanctification must be optional, as though Jesus Christ shed His blood merely to forgive sin but had no interest in delivering a man from its dominion, filth, and daily power. Both crowds are wrong, and both of them prove the same thing: if you do not let the Bible define sanctification, the flesh will. Paul says of the Lord Jesus Christ, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). There is the foundation. Sanctification is not first a program, a standard list, or a self-improvement project. Sanctification is found in a person. Christ is made unto us sanctification.

That one verse already tells you more than a shelf full of confused theology books. It tells you sanctification does not originate in your willpower. It does not spring from your upbringing. It does not come from your denomination, your discipline, your clothing, your voice tone, your vocabulary, or your private set of taboos. It comes from Jesus Christ. That means the believer does not glory in holiness as if he manufactured it, and he does not despise holiness as if it were some optional add-on for the especially serious Christian. He glories in the Lord because the Lord is the source, the pattern, and the power of sanctification. Real holiness is not man polishing the flesh until it shines in church light. Real holiness is Christ setting a sinner apart unto God and then conforming that sinner to His own image by the Spirit through the word. That truth will make a legalist mad and make a libertine uncomfortable, which is usually a good sign you are getting close to the truth.

Now this is a subject that must be handled with both hands. If you overreact to legalism, you will slide into laziness and excuse sin in the name of grace. If you overreact to carnality, you will build a religion of externals and start measuring sanctification by all the wrong yardsticks. The Bible refuses both ditches. The Bible says, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:3), and the Bible also says believers are “sanctified in Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:2). So sanctification is both something the believer already has in Christ and something he is commanded to pursue in daily life. It is positional and practical. It is rooted and worked out. It is settled and developing. If you do not keep both sides in view, you will either boast in your own supposed holiness or shrug your shoulders at holiness altogether. This essay must cut through that fog and show plainly that Christ did not save a man merely to keep him out of hell. He saved him to set him apart for God.

### **1. Sanctification Begins in Union with Christ, Not in Human Reform**

The first thing that must be settled is that sanctification begins where salvation begins: in union with Jesus Christ. Paul writes to the Corinthians, of all people, and calls them “them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints” (1 Corinthians 1:2). Now that is a

remarkable statement because if there was ever a church with a mess on its hands, it was Corinth. They had carnality, envy, division, immorality, lawsuits, confusion over marriage, abuse of spiritual gifts, disorder at the Lord's table, and doctrinal trouble over the resurrection. Yet Paul still says they were sanctified in Christ Jesus. That tells you immediately that sanctification at its root is not the believer's flawless daily behavior. It is his position in Christ. The moment a sinner is saved, he is taken out of Adam and placed in Christ. He is set apart unto God in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the foundation under every other aspect of sanctification.

This is where legalistic religion always starts off on the wrong foot. It begins with human behavior rather than union with Christ. It says, in effect, "Here are the rules. Clean yourself up. Dress right. Talk right. Avoid these things. Do these things. Act like this crowd, and then you will be sanctified." But that is exactly backwards. A man is not sanctified because he imitates a culture. He is sanctified because God joins him to Christ. "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Notice the language. "Ye are washed." "Ye are sanctified." "Ye are justified." These are divine acts accomplished in relation to Jesus Christ, not trophies a sinner earns by religious polishing. The change begins from above, not from the outside in.

That means every true doctrine of sanctification must begin with who the believer is in Christ. He is not trying to become set apart to God as though that were some future possibility if he behaves well enough. In Christ he has already been separated from the old standing in Adam and given a new standing before God. He belongs to Another. He has been bought with a price. He is in Christ Jesus. That is why Paul can say, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (Hebrews 2:11). Christ is the sanctifier, and the believer is the sanctified one because of relationship to Him. If you skip that truth, all your talk about holiness will collapse into man-made reform, and man-made reform can create Pharisees by the dozen, but it cannot produce one truly sanctified saint.

## **2. Positional Sanctification Is a Finished Reality for Every Believer**

Once union with Christ is understood, the next step is to see that there is a finished aspect of sanctification already true of every saved man. Hebrews says, "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). That is not gradual language. That is not, "We are slowly maybe becoming sanctified if we perform well enough." It says, "we are sanctified" through Christ's offering. Then verse 14 says, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). There is the ground of stability for the believer. Positional sanctification rests on the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. It is as secure as the blood that purchased it. It is as

settled as the cross on which it was accomplished. A saint may be weak in experience, but he is still set apart to God in Christ by virtue of that offering.

That truth is precious because it prevents the believer from turning sanctification into a treadmill of insecurity. If you make sanctification nothing but daily progress, then every failure becomes a threat to your identity. Every stumble becomes a question mark over whether you belong to God at all. Every bad day becomes a possible eviction notice from the family of God. But the Bible does not leave the saint there. It says Christ “also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it” (Ephesians 5:25-26). He gave Himself with a sanctifying purpose in view. The church is not trying to sanctify itself into His affection. It is the object of His sanctifying love. That changes the entire spirit in which the Christian life is lived.

This positional sanctification also destroys spiritual snobbery. If every believer is sanctified in Christ Jesus because of Christ’s offering, then no saint can strut around acting as though his standing with God is the product of his own superior holiness. The weak brother and the strong brother alike stand on the same blood. The older saint and the younger saint alike are set apart in the same Christ. The difference in growth and maturity is real, but the foundation is common. That is why glorying in the Lord matters so much here. A man who understands positional sanctification will not boast in his own sanctified status as though he crafted it. He will boast in the Christ whose offering sanctified him once for all. He will say, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10), and mean it.

### **3. Practical Sanctification Must Be Worked Out in Daily Separation Unto God**

Now if that were all the Bible said, lazy Christians would use it as a hammock. They would say, “Well, I am sanctified in Christ, so what difference does daily life make?” But the Bible will not let them sleep that way. The same Lord who sanctifies positionally also commands practical holiness. Paul writes, “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication” (1 Thessalonians 4:3). There is sanctification in shoe leather. There is sanctification in conduct. There is sanctification in what a man does with his body, his thoughts, his appetites, and his choices. The believer is not only set apart in Christ; he is called to live set apart in the world. “As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). That word “conversation” means manner of life. Holiness is not merely a doctrinal label. It is to show up in daily walk.

This is where the modern lazy abuse of grace must be rebuked hard. There is a crowd now that talks about grace as though it were divine permission to remain carnal without consequence. They act as if any call to holiness is legalism, any warning against sin is bondage, and any emphasis on obedience is somehow a threat to the gospel. That is

spiritual nonsense. The Bible says, “God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Grace teaches us “that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly” (Titus 2:12). Not merely think about living that way. Live that way. The grace that saves also trains. The Christ who sanctifies positionally also works practically in the believer so that sin is to be resisted, not excused.

At the same time, practical sanctification must never be confused with self-produced righteousness. The believer works it out because God works in him. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). There is balance. The saint is active, but God is the source. The believer resists sin, pursues holiness, disciplines his body, renews his mind, and orders his steps, but all of it is downstream from divine life in Christ. Therefore he cannot boast in his progress as if he were the architect of his own sanctification. The life is real, the obedience is real, the separation is real, but the glory belongs to the Lord who works in His people to make them willing and able.

#### **4. Legalistic Sanctification Is Flesh Painted Religious**

Now let us deal with one ditch plainly. Legalistic sanctification is one of the devil’s favorite counterfeits because it looks serious while feeding pride. It takes the holy call to separation and turns it into a fleshly contest over externals. Men begin measuring sanctification by visible rules alone. They can spot a hemline from three pews away, judge a haircut like a prophet of Baal, inspect a music preference like a customs officer, and build an entire religion on the power of outward conformity. Now do not misunderstand me. Outward conduct matters. Clothing matters. Speech matters. Associations matter. Music matters. All those things touch the Christian life. But when those matters become the definition of sanctification itself, divorced from the heart, from union with Christ, and from the inward work of the Spirit, you are no longer dealing with biblical holiness. You are dealing with fleshly standard-keeping dressed up as spirituality.

The Pharisees were masters of that game. Jesus said, “Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:28). There is the legalistic disaster. Outwardly righteous. Inwardly rotten. They cleaned the outside of the cup, but the inside was full of extortion and excess (Matthew 23:25). That is what happens when sanctification is reduced to appearances. A man can learn the look, the language, the habits, and the tribe signals and still be eaten alive with pride, lust, envy, bitterness, malice, and secret uncleanness. The flesh loves that kind of religion because it can perform it. It can wear it. It can compare itself by it. It can boast in it. And once it starts boasting, 1 Corinthians 1:30 has already been forgotten.

Real sanctification is not the old man learning manners. It is not the flesh becoming photogenic. It is Christ setting a man apart and working inwardly so that even when outward standards are embraced, they are embraced as expressions of devotion to God rather than trophies of superiority over men. Paul warns in Colossians 2 against “touch not; taste not; handle not” religion when it is severed from Christ and built on “the commandments and doctrines of men” (Colossians 2:21-22). He says such things have “a shew of wisdom” but are not the answer to the flesh (Colossians 2:23). That is the key phrase: “a shew.” They look wise. They look severe. They look holy. But if Christ is not central, if the inward man is not being renewed, if the affections are not set on things above, then the whole thing is a religious stage play. The believer who glories in the Lord rejects that counterfeit because he knows sanctification cannot be manufactured by cosmetics.

### **5. Carnal Sanctification Denial Is Just as Dangerous as Legalism**

Now swing to the other ditch, because error seldom travels alone. If legalism makes sanctification outward and fleshly, modern carnality makes sanctification optional and sentimental. This crowd hears that salvation is by grace and concludes that holiness can be safely neglected. They tell themselves they are secure in Christ, and that much is true if they are genuinely saved, but then they use that security as a cloak for compromise, worldliness, sensuality, irreverence, and indifference to sin. They do not want a holy Christ; they want a permissive mascot. They do not want chastening; they want validation. They do not want to be conformed to the image of God’s Son; they want Jesus to bless the image they are already conforming themselves to. That spirit is just as anti-biblical as legalism, and in some ways it is even more deceitful because it speaks the language of grace while trampling grace’s purpose.

Paul saw this coming a mile away. After teaching justification by grace, he asks, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” and answers, “God forbid” (Romans 6:1-2). That is plain enough for a child. “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Romans 6:2). The believer has been identified with Christ in death and resurrection. He is not under sin’s old tyranny the way he once was. Therefore, though sin still dwells in the flesh, it is not to be yielded to as master. Later Paul says, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body” (Romans 6:12). Why even give that command if sanctification did not matter? Because sanctification does matter. It matters profoundly. The saint’s conduct matters to God, to testimony, to fellowship, to reward, to usefulness, and to chastening.

The New Testament is full of warnings to believers precisely because grace is not permission to drift. “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall

see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). That is not teaching works salvation. It is teaching that the life of God in a man produces a pursuit of holiness rather than contempt for it. “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous” (1 John 3:7). These are not verses for the legalist to weaponize, but neither are they verses for the carnal Christian to explain away. Real sanctification means Christ changes a man. Not all at once in experience, not without battle, not without setbacks, but really. A grace that never leads to separation from sin is not grace rightly understood.

## **6. Christ Is the Pattern and Power of True Holiness**

If you remove Christ from sanctification, you are left with either rules or ruin. But when Christ is central, everything comes into focus. The believer is not merely separated from something; he is separated unto Someone. Jesus prayed, “For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth” (John 17:19). Christ set Himself apart fully to the Father’s will, and His people are sanctified in relation to Him. That means holiness is not an abstract moral code floating in midair. Holiness has a face. It has a pattern. It is seen in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the believer pursues sanctification, he is not trying to become the best version of himself. He is being conformed to the image of God’s Son. That is a much higher, much deeper, and much more humbling matter.

The Holy Spirit uses the word of God to accomplish this. Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). There is no real sanctification without truth. Not sentiment. Not church culture. Not peer pressure. Not emotional atmosphere. Truth. The word of God gets into the inner man and begins separating the believer from lies, idols, lusts, worldly patterns, corrupt affections, and false ways of thinking. That is why a saint can sit under hard Bible preaching and, though it may sting, come away cleaner than when he went in. The word exposes and washes. Paul says Christ sanctifies and cleanses the church “with the washing of water by the word” (Ephesians 5:26). That is not academic theory. That is the daily means by which Christ works holiness into His people.

And none of this happens by sheer fleshly energy. The power is divine. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13). Through the Spirit. Not through gritted teeth alone. Not through appearances alone. Not through self-hatred alone. Through the Spirit. The believer fights sin, but he fights in dependence on the Holy Ghost, armed with the word of God, looking unto Jesus. That is why he glories in the Lord. Christ is the pattern he follows, the truth that sanctifies him, and the life that empowers him. The more a man truly grows in holiness, the less impressed he becomes with himself and the more thankful he becomes for Christ. Sanctification that ends in self-admiration is a fake. Sanctification that ends in deeper dependence on Jesus Christ is the real thing.

## **7. True Sanctification Produces Humility, Separation, and Christlikeness**

What does real sanctification look like when it is working properly? First, it produces humility. A truly sanctified man is not walking around like a peacock in a black suit. He is not constantly sniffing around for someone less holy than himself so he can feel tall. He has seen too much of his own flesh for that. He knows what he would be apart from the grace of God. The holier a man really becomes, the more he learns to say with Paul, “Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20). That is because real sanctification makes Christ bigger and self smaller. Counterfeit sanctification makes self bigger and uses holiness talk to advertise it. One produces worship. The other produces spiritual vanity.

Second, true sanctification produces real separation. Not weirdness for weirdness’ sake. Not tribal eccentricity. Real separation from sin, from the spirit of the world, from corrupt affections, from uncleanness, and from partnerships that choke spiritual life. “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord” (2 Corinthians 6:17). That verse still belongs in the Bible, and it still means something. The believer cannot walk hand in hand with the world’s filth and pretend sanctification is intact. He cannot love what crucified his Saviour and then talk big about grace. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). Real sanctification touches habits, associations, entertainments, thoughts, speech, and conduct. It is not shallow, but it is not invisible either. If Christ is truly setting a man apart, it will show somewhere.

Third, true sanctification produces Christlikeness. That is the goal. “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). Not conformed to a preacher’s personality. Not conformed to a church subculture. Not conformed to a legalistic checklist. Conformed to the image of His Son. That means greater love for truth, greater hatred of sin, greater meekness, greater obedience, greater purity, greater compassion, greater firmness, greater reverence, greater willingness to suffer for righteousness’ sake, and greater submission to the will of God. It also means that the more a saint grows, the more obvious it becomes that the work is supernatural. Flesh can mimic a few externals, but it cannot produce the life of Christ. Therefore, when sanctification is real, the believer does not stand back and admire his workmanship. He glories in the Lord who is making him like Himself.

### **Conclusion**

So what does it mean that Christ is made unto us sanctification? It means holiness begins in Him, not in us. It means the believer is first set apart to God by union with Jesus Christ, through the offering of His body once for all, and then called to work out that set-apart life in daily obedience, separation, and growth. It means sanctification is neither the legalist’s

costume parade nor the libertine's discarded doctrine. It is not man polishing the flesh, and it is not grace excusing carnality. It is Christ claiming a sinner for God and then shaping that sinner by the Spirit through the truth. That is why the doctrine is both humbling and glorious. It humbles because it strips the flesh of credit. It is glorious because it shows the power of Christ to take a ruined man and progressively make him fit for God's pleasure.

This truth tears the mask off both counterfeits. It tears the mask off the legalist who parades externals and calls it sanctification while his heart swells with pride. It tears the mask off the lazy professor who claims grace while hugging the world and refusing practical holiness. Both errors are flesh in different uniforms. One wears a necktie and boasts in discipline. The other wears casual compromise and boasts in freedom. Neither one is the Lord Jesus Christ. Real sanctification bows to Christ, looks to Christ, receives from Christ, follows Christ, and becomes more like Christ. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2:6). That is not legalism. That is Christianity.

And for the saint who wants to walk with God but feels the battle in his own members, this doctrine is a comfort. Your sanctification does not start with your strength. It starts with Christ. It does not continue by your flesh. It continues by the Spirit. It is not sustained by your own brilliance. It is sustained by the word of God. So do not boast in your progress, and do not despair over your weakness. Look to the Lord Jesus Christ, who "of God is made unto us... sanctification" (1 Corinthians 1:30). If there is any real holiness in your life, He is the source of it. If there is any victory over sin, He is the power behind it. If there is any conformity to God's will, He is the One producing it. Therefore if any man glories here, let him glory in the Lord.

## **6 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - Christ Made Unto Us Redemption**

### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:30**

#### **Introduction**

There are words in the Bible that are so deep, so rich, and so full of blood-bought thunder that the modern church does not know what to do with them anymore. One of those words is "redemption." Paul says of the Lord Jesus Christ, "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). Now that is not poetic garnish. That is not theological decoration. That is a Holy Ghost declaration that the sinner who has come to Jesus Christ did not merely receive advice, inspiration, uplift, reform, or a second chance. He received redemption.

That means he was bought back. That means a price was paid. That means there was bondage, ownership, captivity, debt, and a transaction so costly that heaven itself still sings about it. Redemption is not God giving a pat on the back to a well-meaning sinner trying to improve himself. Redemption is God purchasing a ruined slave out of the market of sin through the blood of His own Son.

That is why flesh hates the doctrine of redemption when it is preached right. The flesh does not mind religion, because religion lets it keep some credit. The flesh does not mind moral reform, because moral reform can still be admired. The flesh does not mind ceremonial systems, because ceremonies let men imagine they are participating in their own rescue. But redemption strips the sinner bare and tells him a truth he cannot stand unless grace humbles him. It tells him he was not free. He was not mostly free. He was not just confused. He was not merely immature. He was sold under sin, shut up in bondage, under wrath, condemned already, and unless somebody outside himself stepped in with an acceptable price, he would remain a slave forever. That is why Paul says, “Ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20). There is no room for bragging in that statement. Bought men do not boast in themselves. Bought men boast in the one who paid.

And the price was not silver, gold, church membership, sacramental water, denominational loyalty, a sinner’s tears, promises of reformation, or a moral turnaround. The price was blood. Not symbolic blood. Not poetic blood. Not blood reduced to a metaphor for love or sacrifice in some vague sentimental sense. The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s spotless Lamb, was shed as a ransom for guilty sinners. Peter says, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). That verse burns every counterfeit redemption scheme to the ground. You were not bought by your own worth. You were not reclaimed by your promises. You were not rescued by your efforts. You were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. That truth leaves a man humbled, grateful, and unable to glory in anything except the Saviour who paid his ransom.

### **1. Redemption Assumes Slavery, Not Freedom**

The first thing the doctrine of redemption does is insult human pride at the root, because redemption only makes sense if man is not free. The natural man wants to think of himself as morally independent, spiritually capable, and fundamentally in charge of his own destiny. He talks big about free thought, free choice, free will, and free self-expression, but the Bible says something far less flattering. It says, “Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). There is the Lord’s diagnosis. Not the patient of sin. Not the struggler with sin. The servant of sin. That means bondage. That means captivity. That

means ownership. A man may dress his chains in respectable language, but if he is outside Jesus Christ, he is still serving a master that destroys him while lying to him about freedom.

Paul speaks the same way in Romans. He says men are “servants of sin” (Romans 6:17), and then he says that before salvation believers were “sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). That is slave-market language. That is purchase language. That is not God counseling confused people into healthier habits. That is God breaking into a market of condemned slaves and buying them out. The sinner is not in a neutral zone waiting for spiritual motivation. He is in bondage to corruption, bondage to lust, bondage to darkness, bondage to the course of this world, bondage to the god of this world, and bondage to the fear of death. Hebrews says that through fear of death men were “all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15). Subject to bondage. The sinner’s problem is not a lack of inspiration. It is captivity.

This is why redemption is so offensive to self-righteous religion. Self-righteous religion wants to imagine that man is weak but not enslaved, misguided but not owned, bruised but not shackled. Why? Because if man is only weak, he can still help save himself. If he is only uninformed, he can still improve himself. If he is only slightly damaged, he can still contribute something to his own recovery. But if he is a slave in the market of sin, then all boasting dies. Then he must be bought. Then the whole burden falls on the redeemer. That is exactly where God intends it to fall. He designed redemption so that no slave can stand up afterward and say, “I mostly got myself out.” The man who has really seen the slave market of sin stops bragging about his little acts of reform and starts praising the Lord who opened the door and paid the ransom.

## **2. The Price of Redemption Was Blood, Not Human Effort**

Once the sinner’s bondage is seen, the next question is obvious: what price could ever buy him out? The answer is not found in man. It never was. No sinner can pay for his own redemption because he already belongs to the problem. A slave in chains cannot purchase himself with the currency of his own captivity. God settled this long ago in the Old Testament types and then fulfilled it perfectly in Christ. “For the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Leviticus 17:11), and God says, “it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11). That means redemption, if it is to be real, is not a motivational speech and not a symbolic ceremony. It requires death. It requires substitution. It requires blood shed in the place of the guilty.

Peter makes that matter plain enough to flatten every sacramental system on earth. He says, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold” (1 Peter 1:18). Stop right there. Silver and gold may buy property, offices, influence, and earthly power, but they cannot buy a soul. Then he says believers were not

redeemed from their vain conversation “received by tradition from your fathers” (1 Peter 1:18). That knocks over all inherited religion, all traditional salvation schemes, all denominational hand-me-down redemption stories. Then comes the answer: “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). There it is. Redemption cost blood, and not just any blood. Spotless blood. Sinless blood. Divine blood by virtue of the person who shed it. That is the price.

So every system that minimizes the blood is a fraud, no matter how polished it sounds. If a church gives you moral improvement without blood, it cannot redeem you. If a preacher gives you life tips without blood, he cannot redeem you. If a denomination gives you sacraments without blood, it cannot redeem you. If a theologian gives you lofty language about love and community but sidesteps the shed blood of Jesus Christ, he cannot redeem you. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Ephesians 1:7). Not through our sincerity. Not through our repentance as a meritorious work. Not through our promises to do better. Through His blood. That means the redeemed man does not spend his life admiring how sincere he was when he came to God. He spends his life admiring the blood that bought him.

### **3. Redemption Is a Purchase, Not a Self-Improvement Program**

Modern religion likes to turn everything into therapy because therapy leaves man feeling like he participated in his own healing. But redemption is not therapy. It is purchase. Paul says twice to the Corinthians, “Ye are bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23). That is commercial language, ownership language, transfer language. It means the believer belongs to Christ because Christ bought him. He was once under another master. He is now under another owner. That does not mean salvation is cold or mechanical. It means it is costly, definite, and objective. The redeemed man is not merely inspired to live better. He has changed ownership. He is no longer his own. That is why Paul follows the statement with, “therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:20). The body and spirit are God’s because the price has been paid.

This destroys the silly notion that redemption means God simply believes in you enough to empower your journey. No, sir. Redemption means you were in the market, and Christ paid the price. It means you were under condemnation, and Christ bore the judgment. It means you were in chains, and Christ purchased your release. It means you were not just bad off; you were owned by sin, death, and darkness until the Redeemer stepped in. That is why the New Testament so often uses words like “ransom” and “bought.” Jesus said He came “to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). A ransom is not a pep talk. A ransom is a payment made for release. If the sinner could have climbed out by moral effort, there

would be no need for a ransom. The very existence of the ransom proves the helplessness of the captive.

That also means the believer cannot treat redemption like a little religious add-on to an otherwise self-directed life. If you are bought, you are not your own. If you are redeemed, your life is no longer private property. If Christ paid the blood price, then He has every right to your body, your time, your mouth, your money, your plans, your affections, and your loyalty. That truth cuts against the grain of Laodicea, where people want a Saviour but not a Lord, redemption without ownership, and forgiveness without surrender. But the Bible will not split Christ up that way. He redeemed you unto Himself. The whole point is that the purchased possession now belongs to the purchaser. That is why glorying in the Lord here means not only praising the price He paid but bowing to the right He purchased over your whole life.

#### **4. The Lamb Without Spot Is the Only Redeemer God Accepts**

Now why did the price have to be Christ's blood? Why not the blood of bulls and goats once and for all? Why not angelic help? Why not a less costly arrangement? The answer is simple: only a spotless substitute could redeem guilty men. Peter says Christ was "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). That reaches back to every Passover lamb, every Levitical offering, every type laid down under Moses. The offering had to be without blemish because God would not accept a corrupt substitute for a corrupt sinner. The Lord Jesus Christ alone met that requirement. He "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter 2:22). He "knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Hebrews 7:26). That is why He alone could stand in the sinner's place.

The blood of animals could never finally take away sin because those sacrifices pointed forward to the one sufficient sacrifice. Hebrews says, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Hebrews 10:4). They covered ceremonially, typified prophetically, and instructed spiritually, but they could not redeem eternally. Christ came to do what no animal, priest, church, ordinance, prophet, or philosopher could ever do. "Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Hebrews 9:12). Eternal redemption. Not temporary uplift. Not probationary improvement. Eternal redemption. The blood that purchased it was the blood of the eternal Son of God.

That truth also exposes every system that tries to reduce Jesus to a moral example rather than a substitutionary redeemer. The modernist wants Christ as an inspiration. The liberal wants Christ as a reformer. The mystic wants Christ as a spiritual symbol. The moralist

wants Christ as a teacher. But God presents Him as a Lamb. John the Baptist saw Him and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). That is not vague uplift. That is sacrificial language. That is substitutionary language. That is blood language. If you lose the Lamb, you lose redemption. If you lose the blood, you lose redemption. If you lose substitution, you lose redemption. And if you lose redemption, all you have left is religious theater for dead men.

## **5. Redemption Brings Deliverance from Bondage, Not Just Forgiveness from Guilt**

One of the richest parts of this doctrine is that redemption does not only address guilt; it addresses bondage. Thank God the guilt is answered, but the Bible goes farther. Paul says believers have been “delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14). Notice how deliverance and forgiveness sit side by side. Redemption is not merely a change of legal status in a courtroom. It is also a rescue from one dominion into another. The sinner was under the power of darkness. In Christ he is translated into another kingdom. That is liberation language. That is exodus language. That is chains-broken language.

This is why the Christian life cannot be reduced to “I got forgiven, now I live however I please.” Redemption changes the relationship to the old master. Paul says, “Sin shall not have dominion over you” (Romans 6:14). It may still harass you, tempt you, and fight in your members, but it no longer owns you the way it once did. The redeemed man may stumble, but he is not the same captive he was before the blood bought him. Christ did not merely redeem a sinner from hell later; He redeemed him from the tyrannical ownership of sin now. That is why believers are told to “stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Galatians 5:1). Liberty is not lawlessness. It is deliverance from an old bondage into the service of a new Master.

At the same time, that liberty is not self-glory. It is purchased liberty. It is blood liberty. It is Christ liberty. So the redeemed man cannot walk around boasting in how he broke free, how strong he became, or how disciplined he now is. If he has any liberty at all, Christ bought it. If he has any victory at all, Christ secured the ground of it. If he has any deliverance from the chains that once owned him, Christ is the reason. That is why the redeemed saint hates any preaching that turns redemption into generic self-help. Self-help may teach you to rearrange symptoms. Redemption breaks ownership and transfers you to another kingdom. One massages the slave. The other buys him free.

## **6. The Blood Must Stay Front and Center**

There is a reason the devil hates blood preaching. There is power in the blood because there is life in the blood, atonement in the blood, cleansing in the blood, redemption in the blood, and victory through the blood. The devil will tolerate religious discussion, philosophical sermons, family advice, cultural commentary, political opinion, and polished storytelling, but let a man get up and preach the blood of Jesus Christ as the only hope for sinners, and hell starts coughing. Why? Because the blood is where the transaction happened. “Without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). God did not say without sincerity there is remission. He did not say without ritual there is remission. He did not say without reform there is remission. Without shedding of blood is no remission.

That is why all through Scripture the blood is placed in the center. At Passover the blood on the doorposts turned away judgment: “when I see the blood, I will pass over you” (Exodus 12:13). In Leviticus the blood made atonement. In Hebrews the blood opened the way into the holiest. In 1 John, “the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). In Revelation the saints overcome “by the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 12:11). So what kind of fool tries to push the blood to the edge of Christian preaching? Only a fool who wants Christianity without substitution, salvation without offense, and redemption without death. But the New Testament will not allow a bloodless gospel. A bloodless gospel is a Christless gospel, no matter how often it uses His name.

Therefore any system that downplays the blood must be exposed for what it is. It may be sophisticated, scholarly, ancient, popular, ecumenical, or emotionally impressive, but if it minimizes the blood, it is robbing the sinner of the only price God accepts. Men may talk about redemption in vague, poetic terms to make it more acceptable to modern ears, but heaven still speaks in blood language. The song of the redeemed is, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Revelation 5:9). Notice that. By thy blood. If heaven is not embarrassed by it, the church has no right to be. The blood stays in the center because the blood is where the price was paid.

## **7. Glorifying in the Lord Means Boasting Only in the Redeemer**

When a man finally understands redemption, boasting in himself becomes ridiculous. What exactly is he going to brag about? That he was expensive to rescue? That he held still while the price was paid? That he at least admitted he was a slave? There is no ground of glorying in the sinner anywhere in redemption. The whole doctrine is set up to magnify the Redeemer. Paul says believers are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). Freely by grace through redemption in Christ. That leaves no room for a man to brag in his church attendance, his penance, his tears, his reform, or his moral turnaround. All of those things may have their place in a believer’s experience afterward, but none of them paid the ransom.

This is why Paul could say, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). The cross is where redemption was accomplished. The blood was shed there. The ransom was paid there. The substitute died there. The old account was settled there. So if any man is going to glory, he had better glory there. He had better boast in the Lamb. He had better boast in the blood. He had better boast in the Redeemer. The redeemed man is like the man in Psalm 107:2: “Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.” Notice the wording. Redeemed of the LORD. Not redeemed of themselves. Not redeemed by their sincerity. Redeemed of the LORD.

And this produces exactly the right spirit in a saint. It produces gratitude instead of swagger. It produces worship instead of self-admiration. It produces reverence instead of presumption. It produces obedience rooted in ownership. The man who knows he was bought with blood does not speak lightly about sin, because sin is what made that blood necessary. He does not speak lightly about grace, because grace is what moved God to pay such a price. He does not speak lightly about Christ, because Christ is the one who paid. His heart begins to say with Paul, “Who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). That is personal redemption language. And once that gets hold of a man, his mouth stops bragging about himself and starts praising the Saviour.

## **Conclusion**

So what does it mean that Christ is made unto us redemption? It means that the believer was not rehabilitated by religion or inspired into self-improvement. He was bought. He was purchased out of bondage. He was ransomed from the slave market of sin. He was delivered from the power of darkness. He was transferred into another kingdom. And the price of that transfer was not silver, gold, tears, sacraments, promises, reform, or effort. The price was the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot. That is redemption. That is why the doctrine is so glorious and so offensive at the same time. It is glorious because it reveals the love of the Redeemer. It is offensive because it destroys every lie of human self-salvation.

That truth should level every religious boaster on earth. The church-going moralist cannot boast, because he was bought. The sacramentalist cannot boast, because water never paid a ransom. The legalist cannot boast, because law never bled for him. The modernist cannot boast, because uplift never purchased a soul. The emotional religionist cannot boast, because feelings are not currency in the court of God. The only acceptable price was paid by Jesus Christ when He shed His blood at Calvary. Therefore the redeemed sinner stands with empty hands and a full heart, saying, “In whom we have redemption through his blood” (Ephesians 1:7). There is the whole matter in one line.

And for the child of God, this doctrine is more than theology. It is identity. You are not your own. You were bought with a price. You do not belong to the old master anymore. You do not belong to your lusts anymore. You do not belong to the fear of death anymore. You belong to Jesus Christ. Let that humble you. Let that steady you. Let that fill you with gratitude. Let that keep the blood precious in your eyes and the cross central in your heart. If any man glories here, let him glory in the Lord, because you were not reclaimed by your goodness or rescued by your effort. You were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, and blessed be His holy name, that is enough to leave a man unable to brag about anything except the Saviour who paid his ransom.

## **7 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - God Forbid That I Should Glory, Save in the Cross**

### **Main Passage: Galatians 6:14**

#### **Introduction**

There are some verses in your Bible that do not just correct a man; they insult him, strip him, flatten him, and leave him standing there with nothing left but Christ. Galatians 6:14 is one of those verses. Paul says, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). Now that is not soft language. That is not Paul saying he prefers the cross over a few other nice devotional ideas. He says, “God forbid.” In other words, may God shut the door on it, curse the thought of it, reject the very instinct of it, if I should glory anywhere but in the cross of Jesus Christ. That tells you immediately that the cross is not just one doctrine among many. The cross is the death sentence on human boasting. It is where flesh goes to die. It is where all man’s imagined worth, merit, goodness, spirituality, and bragging rights are nailed up and exposed for the frauds they are. If a man has truly met the cross, he cannot walk away admiring himself.

That is exactly why the world hates the cross and why religion keeps trying to repaint it. The world does not mind spirituality in the abstract. It does not mind talking about purpose, destiny, morality, kindness, uplift, or personal growth. It can even tolerate “Jesus” as a cultural symbol or sentimental figure. But the cross of Christ is another matter. The cross says man is not improving; he is condemned. The cross says sin is not a series of mistakes; it is rebellion so foul that it required the blood of the Son of God. The cross says your righteousness is not almost enough; it is so worthless for justification that nothing short of substitutionary death could save you. That is why Paul says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Of course it is foolishness to them.

It tears the crown off human pride and throws it in the dirt. Men do not mind a religion that flatters them. They hate one that crucifies them.

And the tragedy in our day is that much of modern Christianity wants the decoration of the cross without the verdict of the cross. They put it on buildings, jewelry, screens, album covers, and sermon backdrops, but they do not want what it actually says about the flesh. They want a cross that inspires but does not offend, a cross that uplifts but does not condemn, a cross that comforts but does not kill self-righteousness, a cross that can be added to man's dreams instead of replacing them with Christ. But the real cross will not cooperate with that fraud. The real cross is where man ends and Christ begins. It is where your merit dies, your pride dies, your self-salvation dies, your religious vanity dies, and your boasting dies. And that is exactly why true glorying in the Lord is born there. If any man is going to glory rightly, he will glory in the place where he learned he had absolutely nothing in himself worth glorying in at all.

### **1. The Cross Is the Great "God Forbid" Against Human Pride**

Paul's language in Galatians 6:14 is as strong as a hammer blow: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not say, "I try not to glory anywhere else." He does not say, "I generally prefer the cross." He says, "God forbid." That means there is something morally outrageous about a redeemed man boasting anywhere but in the cross. Why? Because once the cross is understood, all other boasting becomes absurd. A man who glories in his own goodness after Calvary is like a criminal bragging about his manners while standing under a death sentence. The cross announces that man's condition was not fixable by effort, polish, religion, or reform. It had to be judged. It had to be answered by blood. It had to be dealt with by the death of a substitute. That truth turns all self-congratulation into blasphemous nonsense.

This is why Paul's conversion changed his whole boasting structure. Before he met Christ, he had plenty to glory in according to the flesh. He was circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee, zealous, and outwardly blameless concerning the righteousness of the law (Philippians 3:5-6). That is the résumé of a first-rate religious showpiece. But once he met Jesus Christ, all that fleshly capital turned into liabilities. He says, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7). Why? Because the cross revealed what all his religious capital could never do. It could not justify him. It could not cleanse him. It could not redeem him. It could not reconcile him to God. It could not remove guilt. It could not make him righteous. Only Christ crucified could do that. So the old boasting had to die.

The same thing must happen to every sinner who comes to God honestly. The cross is the Lord's declaration that your best was never enough. Your best praying was not enough. Your best church attendance was not enough. Your best morality was not enough. Your best tears were not enough. Your best reform was not enough. If any of that had been enough, God would not have given His Son to die. "I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21). That verse shuts the trap on religious pride. If Christ died, your system failed. If the cross was necessary, your boasting is forbidden. That is why Paul says what he says. The cross leaves him no room to brag anywhere else.

## **2. The Cross Reveals the Horror of Sin**

One reason the cross kills boasting is because it tells the truth about sin with terrifying clarity. Men like vague language about brokenness, weakness, bad habits, and trauma because those words allow room for sympathy without guilt. But the cross will not let sin hide behind soft vocabulary. The cross says sin is so monstrous, so vile, so God-dishonoring, so deserving of wrath, that nothing less than the death of the spotless Son of God could answer for it. If you want to know what God thinks of sin, do not start with a self-help seminar. Start at Golgotha. Look at the crown of thorns, the nailed hands, the pierced feet, the stripped body, the mockery, the darkness, the cry of dereliction, and the blood. That is what sin costs. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). There is no softer interpretation available.

The flesh hates that verdict because it wants to retain a little dignity in the matter. It wants to admit mistakes while denying guilt. It wants to admit weakness while denying rebellion. It wants to talk about consequences while skipping judgment. But the cross tears that mask off. Isaiah said, "The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). Not mere bad choices. Iniquity. Not unfortunate patterns. Iniquity. The Lord Jesus Christ was "wounded for our transgressions" and "bruised for our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:5). That means your sin and mine were not so light that God could wave them away. They had to be borne. They had to be judged. They had to be punished. That is why the cross is not just an expression of love. It is also the clearest revelation in the Bible of the horror of sin.

This is why true cross preaching never flatters the sinner. It does not stand there telling him he is wonderful, valuable, and mostly fine with a few spiritual gaps. It tells him the truth. He is lost, condemned, guilty, helpless, and under wrath apart from Christ. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (Romans 5:6). Ungodly. Not almost godly. Ungodly. The cross leaves no room for boasting because it proves that what man needed was not a better environment or a stronger motivational speech. He needed a blood atonement. A man who has looked honestly at the cross will not come away saying,

“I must be pretty good after all.” He will come away saying, “If that is what it took to save me, then I had nothing in myself worth trusting for one second.”

### **3. The Cross Reveals the Greatness of Divine Love**

Now the cross not only shows the horror of sin; it also shows the greatness of divine love. In fact, you will never understand either one rightly unless you see them together. If you talk about sin without love, you end in despair. If you talk about love without sin, you end in sentimentality. But the cross joins both truths in one bloody, blazing center. Paul says, “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Notice the timing. Not after we improved. Not after we cleaned up. Not after we promised to do better. “While we were yet sinners.” That is love of a kind the flesh cannot comprehend and religion cannot imitate. It is not God loving the lovely. It is God loving the guilty enough to give His Son in their place.

That love does not cancel the offense of the cross; it deepens it. The one hanging there was not a mere man. He was the only begotten Son, the beloved Son, the sinless Son, the eternal Word made flesh. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). There is love with backbone in it. There is love with justice in it. There is love that does not compromise holiness but satisfies it. God did not show love by pretending sin did not matter. He showed love by giving His Son to bear the judgment sin deserved. That means the cross is the place where the holiness of God and the love of God meet without contradiction. And once a man sees that, he cannot boast in himself. He can only fall down and worship.

This is also why any preaching that talks constantly about love while sidelining the cross is lying about love. Love without blood is not New Testament love. Love without substitution is not biblical love. Love without propitiation is not the love of God revealed in Christ. The world likes the idea of a tolerant deity who affirms people in their current condition. But the God of the Bible loved sinners enough to kill His own Son in their stead so they could be saved righteously. That is love with wounds in its hands. That is love measured by a crossbeam. That is love that leaves man speechless. The redeemed sinner does not respond to that by saying, “Look what I contributed.” He responds by saying, “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood” (Revelation 1:5). The cross leaves no room for boasting because divine love at that level swallows the sinner’s pride whole.

### **4. The Cross Is an Offense Because It Condemns the Flesh**

Paul says in Galatians 5:11, “then is the offence of the cross ceased.” That tells you the cross is offensive by nature. It is not offensive because preachers are loud or because the world is overly sensitive. It is offensive because it pronounces judgment on the flesh. The

flesh wants to be admired, trusted, refined, educated, celebrated, and eventually enthroned. The cross says the flesh must die. Not improve. Die. “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him” (Romans 6:6). That is why the world can handle Jesus as a teacher and even as a moral example, but it chokes on Jesus crucified as substitute and Lord. The cross is not flattering. It says your old man is not a project to be polished but a thing to be crucified.

This is also why religious flesh spends so much energy trying to neutralize the offense. It takes the cross and turns it into an aesthetic symbol, a decorative logo, a sentimental backdrop, or a slogan for inspiration. But the biblical cross will not stay in the role of decoration. It keeps speaking. It keeps condemning pride. It keeps exposing self-righteousness. It keeps calling sinners to die to themselves and trust Christ alone. That is why Paul did not preach a cross that made everybody feel noble. He preached “Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23). The Jews stumbled because the cross wrecked their religious pride. The Greeks mocked because the cross wrecked their intellectual pride. Nothing has changed. The cross is still a stumblingblock to religion and foolishness to worldly wisdom because it condemns the flesh in every form.

Therefore, any Christianity that has somehow become entirely inoffensive has probably lost the cross in the biblical sense. If your “cross-centered” message leaves the self-righteous comfortable, the proud unbothered, the vain admired, and the flesh untouched, then the offense has ceased because the cross has been emptied of its verdict. Paul warned about men who are “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Philippians 3:18). Some of those enemies sit in pulpits. Some write books. Some smile on camera. Some use Christian vocabulary. But wherever the cross is reduced to a motivational emblem rather than the divine death sentence on human boasting, the enemy has done his work. The true cross still offends because it still says what it always said: no flesh can glory in God’s presence.

### **5. Modern Religion Wants the Symbol of the Cross Without the Shame of the Cross**

One of the dirtiest tricks of Laodicean religion is that it keeps the symbol while discarding the substance. It keeps the cross on the wall but removes the blood from the preaching. It keeps the language of Calvary but replaces substitution with sentiment. It keeps Jesus in the marketing but drops the offense in the message. So you get sermons on success, destiny, purpose, self-worth, breakthrough, healing your inner child, and discovering your greatness, while the old rugged cross gets treated like a stage prop. That is not Christianity. That is religious cosmetics on a motivational cult. Paul said he was determined to know

“Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Not Jesus Christ and your optimized future. Not Jesus Christ and your improved self-image. Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The shame of the cross is part of its message. Hebrews says Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2). Crucifixion was not a polished death. It was public disgrace, humiliation, weakness, curse, and reproach. That is why the Book says, “Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13). Christ was made a curse for us. That means the cross is not merely a heroic scene to admire from a distance. It is the place where the Son of God entered the shame of our guilt to redeem us from the curse we deserved. Modern religion wants the glow without the gore, the symbol without the scandal, the inspiration without the humiliation. But the real cross refuses to cooperate. It says redemption came through curse-bearing, shame-bearing, blood-shedding substitution.

That is why biblical preaching must keep dragging the church back to Calvary. Not because the preacher lacks imagination, but because men keep wandering away into self-admiration. The church does not need less cross preaching; it needs more of it, harder and clearer. It needs to hear that no amount of religious polish can improve on the bloody death of Christ. It needs to hear that all the modern programs in the world cannot replace the power of preaching “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). It needs to hear that you cannot outgrow the cross, advance beyond the cross, or mature past the cross. The cross is not Christianity 101 with “deeper truths” later replacing it. The cross is the center, and every time the church moves it to the edge, man moves himself back to the center.

## **6. The Cross Is Where Man Ends and Christ Begins**

If you want one sentence to sum up the doctrine, here it is: the cross is where man ends and Christ begins. At Calvary, every illusion of self-sufficiency comes to its funeral. The legalist ends there because the law could not save him. The moralist ends there because his righteousness could not justify him. The philosopher ends there because wisdom could not discover God. The ritualist ends there because ceremony could not cleanse his conscience. The emotional religionist ends there because feelings could not atone for sin. The proud preacher ends there because his gifts could not redeem a soul. Everybody ends there. The cross is the universal confession that man could not save himself. That is why it is the birthplace of true glorying in the Lord.

Paul says in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ.” There is identification. The believer not only trusts a crucified Saviour; he is joined to Him in death and resurrection. That means the cross is not merely Christ dying for me, though it certainly is that. It is also the

end of the old “me” as the center of the story. The old man’s rights, boasts, confidences, and claims are all judged at the cross. “Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20). There is where Christ begins. Not Christ as an assistant to your old life. Christ as the life. Not Christ as a religious addition to your ambitions. Christ as the center, the source, the Lord. That is why Paul could say in Galatians 6:14 that by the cross “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” The whole old arrangement has been broken by Calvary.

This is also why the cross creates a kind of spiritual sanity no other truth can create. Once a man has really gone through the cross, he stops trying to rescue his own reputation before God. He stops trying to maintain the myth of his own adequacy. He stops trying to turn Christianity into a self-esteem project. He begins to understand that salvation is of the Lord, righteousness is of the Lord, sanctification is of the Lord, redemption is of the Lord, and therefore glory belongs to the Lord. The cross did not merely give him a cleaner version of himself. It ended the old claim of self and established Christ as all in all. That is where true glorying in the Lord is born—right where the sinner’s last defense collapses and Christ stands alone as Saviour.

## **7. To Glory in the Cross Is to Glory in Christ Alone**

When Paul says, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14), he is not glorifying a wooden object or a historical event in isolation. He is glorying in what the cross represents and accomplished in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The cross is never detached from the one who hung there. It is “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” That means to glory in the cross is to glory in Christ crucified. It is to boast in the blood, the sacrifice, the ransom, the atonement, the substitution, the victory, the reconciliation, and the love displayed there. It is Christ-centered glorying. Not Christ plus you. Not Christ plus your effort. Christ crucified for sinners.

This is why every other boast becomes offensive to the spiritual mind. How can a man boast in his own goodness when the cross says he needed substitution? How can he boast in his own wisdom when the cross says the world by wisdom knew not God? How can he boast in his own righteousness when the cross says Christ had to be made sin for us? How can he boast in his own holiness when the cross says the old man had to be crucified? How can he boast in his own ministry when the cross says every bit of fruit rests on the death and resurrection of Another? The cross sweeps every other platform out from under the sinner and leaves him standing on one foundation only. That is why Paul uses such absolute language. Glory anywhere else is forbidden because the cross has already exposed every other glory as fraudulent.

The practical result is worship, gratitude, humility, and boldness all at once. Worship, because the cross shows the worthiness of Christ. Gratitude, because the cross shows the cost of your redemption. Humility, because the cross shows your complete inability to save yourself. Boldness, because the cross gives the believer an unshakable ground of acceptance before God. A man who glories in the cross is not a defeated man. He is the freest man in the room, because he no longer has to defend his own goodness. Christ is his boast. Christ is his peace. Christ is his righteousness. Christ is his redemption. The cross has settled the account. Therefore he can say with the apostle, and mean every word of it, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## **Conclusion**

So why must the Christian glory in the cross? Because the cross is where God told the truth about everything at once. He told the truth about sin, and it was worse than man wanted to admit. He told the truth about love, and it was greater than man deserved to receive. He told the truth about righteousness, and it could not come by law. He told the truth about the flesh, and it deserved death. He told the truth about salvation, and it had to come through substitutionary blood atonement. That is why the cross does not merely save the sinner. It destroys every ground of self-congratulation. It kills the lie that man had something worth offering God as part of his own redemption. At the cross, all the sinner can do is look and live.

That is why the church must never move away from bloody cross preaching. The minute it does, man starts crawling back onto the throne. Then you get sermons about success without sacrifice, destiny without death, self-worth without sin, and uplift without atonement. You get decorated crosses and empty pulpits. You get Christian branding with no Calvary backbone. You get religion that makes man feel large and Christ feel useful. But the New Testament has no patience for that nonsense. "For the preaching of the cross... unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). Not the preaching of your potential. Not the preaching of your greatness. The preaching of the cross. That is where power sits because that is where Christ won the battle.

So let every other boast go to the cemetery. Bury your righteousness there. Bury your pride there. Bury your religious résumé there. Bury your denominational vanity there. Bury your self-esteem project there. Bury your polished flesh there. And stand where Paul stood, at the foot of Calvary, saying, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14). That is where man ends and Christ begins. That is where true glorying in the Lord is born. And that is where every redeemed sinner, if he is thinking straight, will gladly leave all the glory forever.

## **8 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - When Religion Glories in the Flesh**

### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:29-31**

#### **Introduction**

There is a kind of religion that is more dangerous than open wickedness because open wickedness usually does not pretend to be holy. It is dirty and knows it. It stinks and does not care who smells it. But religion that glories in the flesh is another matter entirely. It knows how to put on church clothes, carry a Bible, speak with the right tone, cry at the right time, and sprinkle the name of Jesus over a whole performance that is secretly centered on man. That is exactly why Paul says, “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29), and then says, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). The Holy Ghost put that in the Book because He knows the flesh never stops trying to invade spiritual things and turn them into a stage for self-display. Flesh does not need a barroom to show itself. It can show up in a choir loft, a pulpit, a prayer meeting, a testimony service, or a ministry conference just as easily as anywhere else.

That is why this subject has to be handled with a sharp edge. A lot of what passes for Christianity today is not Christ-exalting faith at all. It is religious vanity with better vocabulary. It is preachers building their names under the banner of God’s glory. It is ministries running on polished personalities instead of spiritual substance. It is worship services designed to create emotional reaction more than reverent truth. It is testimonies that make the sinner look fascinating and the Saviour look like a supporting actor. It is doctrinal camps that spend more time boasting in their tribe than in Jesus Christ. It is religious men who have learned how to sound spiritual while quietly feeding on praise, influence, and attention. It is church culture that has taken the old man, cleaned him up, taught him some hymns, and then set him loose to perform in front of an audience while still calling it ministry.

The real issue is not whether the activity looks religious. The issue is who gets magnified when the thing is over. If the singer is bigger, if the preacher is bigger, if the brand is bigger, if the camp is bigger, if the emotional atmosphere is bigger, if the personality is bigger, then religion has gloried in the flesh. But if Christ is bigger, if self is smaller, if the heart is humbled, if the truth is clearer, if the cross is dearer, and if the soul leaves saying, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psalm 115:1), then the thing has moved in the right direction. Glorifying in the Lord is not polished religious performance. It is the crushing of self-exaltation under the truth that every good and perfect gift came

from above, and that no man has one ounce of spiritual capital worth boasting in except the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

### **1. The Pharisee's Religion Was Flesh in Holy Clothes**

The clearest picture of fleshly religion in the Bible is the Pharisee. The Pharisee was not a drunk lying in a ditch. He was not a harlot on the street. He was a religious man with clean hands, strong opinions, public discipline, visible devotion, and all the right outward signals. But Jesus Christ treated that crowd with a severity that ought to scare every churchgoing hypocrite alive. He said, "All their works they do for to be seen of men" (Matthew 23:5). There is the issue laid bare. Not all their wicked acts. All their works. Their praying, fasting, giving, teaching, washing, separating, broadening, and quoting all ran on one dirty engine: to be seen of men. They used religion as a mirror in which they could admire themselves.

That same Pharisee spirit is alive right now in churches all over the place. A man can carry a King James Bible and still be a Pharisee. A woman can dress modestly and still be a Pharisee. A preacher can thunder against sin and still be a Pharisee. A teacher can parse doctrine correctly and still be a Pharisee. What makes the Pharisee is not seriousness. What makes the Pharisee is self-righteous performance. The Pharisee is a man who uses spiritual things to advertise himself. He thanks God with his lips while comparing himself favorably with others in his heart. That is exactly what happened in Luke 18 when the Pharisee prayed, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are" (Luke 18:11). His prayer looked upward, but his eyes were really on himself.

And that is the terrifying thing about flesh in religion. It can wear truth on its sleeve while still worshiping self in the heart. It can denounce worldliness while feeding on human admiration. It can defend orthodoxy while secretly loving the status of being orthodox. It can make holiness its costume and pride its secret god. That is why Jesus called the Pharisees "whited sepulchres" that "outwardly appear beautiful, but are within full of dead men's bones" (Matthew 23:27). The issue was not outward neatness alone. The issue was inward corruption beneath a polished surface. When religion glories in the flesh, it always majors on appearance, reputation, and visible righteousness, but the Lord sees the self-love festering under the white paint.

### **2. The Praise of Men Can Corrupt Even Religious People**

The flesh does not merely enjoy praise. It feeds on it. It breathes it in like oxygen and begins arranging life around getting more of it. That is why John says of certain religious men that they "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). That verse ought to shake every preacher, singer, teacher, and public Christian witness. Not because they necessarily do not mention God, but because it is possible to mention God constantly and

still love the praise of men more. The issue is not the vocabulary. The issue is the appetite. What does the heart really crave when the service is over, the sermon is finished, the song is sung, the post is published, or the conference is done? Does it crave that Christ was honored, or does it crave being noticed?

Jesus attacked this spirit directly in Matthew 6. He said not to do alms “before men, to be seen of them” (Matthew 6:1). He said the hypocrites pray “standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men” (Matthew 6:5). He said they disfigure their faces when fasting “that they may appear unto men to fast” (Matthew 6:16). Notice the repeated problem: to be seen, to be seen, to appear. That is the religion of the flesh. It takes acts that could be good in the sight of God and twists them into props for human admiration. Then Jesus says, “They have their reward” (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16). That is devastating. They do get paid. Their pay is the attention they wanted. But that payment is carnal wages for spiritual prostitution.

This temptation is not reserved for famous men with giant platforms. It shows up in little places all the time. A church member can make a performance out of prayer requests. A preacher can make a performance out of burden. A singer can make a performance out of brokenness. A teacher can make a performance out of being “deep.” A soul winner can make a performance out of zeal. Even a man exposing false religion can turn the thing into a performance if what he secretly loves is the admiration of looking bold. The flesh can turn anything into a stage. That is why a believer must keep dragging his motives under the light of God’s word. The love of human praise is one of the strongest corruptions in religious life because it can piggyback on holy activity while quietly poisoning the heart.

### **3. Flesh Can Use Spiritual Activity Without Being Spiritual**

A great many Christians still think that visible activity proves spiritual reality. It does not. The flesh can preach, the flesh can sing, the flesh can witness, the flesh can cry, the flesh can write, the flesh can rebuke, the flesh can debate, the flesh can “discern,” and the flesh can build entire ministries while remaining flesh. The Corinthians are the textbook example. They came behind in no gift, and yet Paul had to tell them, “For ye are yet carnal” (1 Corinthians 3:3). So there it is in the plainest possible form: gifts present, activity present, utterance present, knowledge present, and carnality still present. That means no man has any right to assume that religious output equals spiritual maturity.

The devil himself is not afraid of activity detached from brokenness. He is not afraid of sermons if those sermons become a vehicle for self-display. He is not afraid of songs if those songs become tools of vanity. He is not afraid of public prayer if that prayer feeds the ego of the one praying. He is not afraid of Bible quotes if the quotes are ammunition for

pride. He is not afraid of a man being “known for truth” if that truth becomes the man’s self-made throne. The flesh can take every sacred thing and use it for unsacred ends. That is why Paul said, “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge... and have not charity, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2). Not a little off. Nothing. That is how little religious giftedness means when love and humility are absent.

This also explains why some men are very impressive in public and very dangerous in private influence. They are gifted enough to draw attention, articulate enough to sound substantial, and religious enough to seem trustworthy, but underneath all of it they are still centered on self. They want to be the center of the room, the point of reference, the one everybody cites, the one everybody praises, the one everybody fears disappointing. That is not ministry. That is self-worship with Bible language attached to it. True glorying in the Lord is not the multiplication of visible religious activity. It is the reduction of self as the center. If the man gets bigger while Christ gets smaller, flesh is at work no matter how much Scripture is quoted along the way.

#### **4. Celebrity Christianity Is Personality Promotion Under a Religious Banner**

One of the clearest modern forms of religion glorying in the flesh is celebrity Christianity. That thing is everywhere. The preacher becomes the brand. The ministry becomes the machine. The platform becomes the kingdom. The image becomes the product. Christ may still be named, but the emotional gravity of the whole operation centers on a human figure. The crowd talks about the man, watches the man, quotes the man, dresses like the man, imitates the man, and measures everything by the man. At that point the ministry is no longer functioning as a window through which men see Christ. It is functioning as a mirror in which men admire a personality.

Paul intentionally rejected that spirit. He said, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5). That verse should govern every pulpit and every ministry. Not ourselves. Christ Jesus the Lord. Servants for Jesus’ sake. But celebrity religion inverts the whole arrangement. It says Christ with our personality, Christ through our style, Christ around our image, Christ under our branding strategy, Christ behind our influence. The ministry starts orbiting around the figure at the center, and that figure learns how to use spiritual language to preserve the orbit. He may speak of humility, but the whole structure feeds his significance. He may speak of God’s glory, but the machine is built to magnify his reach. That is flesh with microphones.

And the danger is not only “out there” in the biggest names. The same thing can happen in smaller settings. A local preacher can become a little king in his own circle. A teacher with a modest following can build a cult of personality out of a niche audience. A social media

Bible account can become a vanity project dressed up as discernment. The scale changes nothing. The issue is always the same: is Christ the center, or is man the center? If loyalty to the personality becomes more important than faithfulness to the truth, if the image becomes guarded more fiercely than doctrine, if the audience is being drawn into attachment to a figure more than submission to Christ, then religion is glorying in the flesh. It may wear a cross, but it is still feeding on self-display.

### **5. Emotional Worship Can Become Fleshly Performance**

Now there is nothing wrong with strong feeling in the things of God. A man ought to feel something at the cross. He ought to feel something when he thinks of judgment, grace, the blood, the resurrection, heaven, hell, and the mercies of God. Deadness is not spirituality. But emotion is not the measure of worship. Truth is. Jesus said, "They that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). Once truth is pushed aside and emotional effect becomes the goal, worship quickly turns into manipulation. Then the measure is not whether Christ was honored in truth, but whether people felt moved, stirred, softened, broken, electrified, or emotionally flooded.

That kind of worship culture can become an ideal hiding place for the flesh. A singer can learn how to produce emotional response and mistake that for spiritual power. A worship leader can learn how to control atmosphere and mistake that for the moving of the Spirit. A preacher can learn how to pace stories, music, pauses, tears, and crescendos to produce reaction and mistake that for heaven's approval. A congregation can get addicted to the feeling of being moved and never learn whether they are actually being transformed by the truth. Then the flesh has managed to crawl into the very place where people think they are most spiritual. It is performing behind uplifted hands.

The problem is not that emotion exists. The problem is when emotion becomes the sought-after product instead of the byproduct of truth. The Holy Ghost does move the heart, but He does it through truth, not through stagecraft. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). When worship is built more on atmosphere than on the word of God, more on feeling than on the fear of God, more on effect than on doctrine, it becomes easy for flesh to take the controls. Then people start saying "God really moved" when what they often mean is "the room got emotionally intense." But the real test is simpler and harder: was Christ magnified, was truth exalted, was self brought low, and did the thing leave men more under the authority of God rather than more attached to the experience itself?

### **6. Testimonies and Doctrinal Camps Can Both Become Self-Glorifying**

A testimony is supposed to glorify the Lord. It is supposed to say, in effect, "Look what Christ did for me." But flesh can hijack even testimony. Sometimes a man tells his story in

such a way that the most interesting figure in the whole thing is himself. The emphasis becomes his wild past, his emotional experiences, his pain, his drama, his struggle, his uniqueness, and his intensity, while Christ becomes the small closing line at the end. At that point the testimony has become a stage performance with a religious ending. The sinner remains the hero. That is backwards. The real glory of a testimony is not how extreme the sinner was. It is how merciful the Saviour is.

The same corruption shows up in doctrinal tribes. A man can get hold of truth and then start glorying in his camp more than in Christ. Paul had to deal with that at Corinth: "Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos" (1 Corinthians 1:12). That spirit never died. Now it takes the form of denominational boasting, theological camp boasting, movement boasting, niche doctrinal boasting, and culture boasting. Men begin to identify themselves more by the group than by Christ. They start admiring the status of belonging to the right tribe. They talk more about "our crowd" than about the Lord. They take comfort more in being in the right camp than in being rightly related to Jesus Christ. Even truth itself can become raw material for the flesh once it is turned into tribal vanity.

This is why Paul asks, "For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). That verse destroys both the dramatic testimony that glorifies self and the doctrinal camp that glorifies tribe. If you received mercy, why are you boasting in the spectacle of your old life? If you received light, why are you strutting because you can see? If God kept you from error, why are you acting as though you generated truth? Every gift worth having was received. Every mercy worth mentioning was given. Every bit of useful light came from above. Therefore the only right tone is gratitude, humility, and praise to Christ. Anything else is flesh trying to profit from grace.

## **7. Every Good and Perfect Gift Came From Above**

James settles the whole matter in one verse: "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights" (James 1:17). That statement is pure acid on religious pride. If a man can preach, it came from above. If a man can sing, it came from above. If a man can teach, it came from above. If a man has doctrinal clarity, it came from above. If a man has influence, it came from above. If a man has boldness, opportunity, fruit, understanding, or usefulness, it came from above. So what exactly is left for him to boast in? Nothing. He is a receiver, not a source. He is a steward, not an owner. He is a vessel, not the treasure.

Paul says the same thing another way: "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). That question should be stamped onto every pulpit, printed on every conference banner, and burned into every servant's conscience. What do you have that you

did not receive? The answer is absolutely nothing. Not one ounce of spiritual worth came out of your flesh. Not one bit of divine usefulness was generated by your fallen nature. Everything good is traceable to grace. Everything perfect came from above. That means the minute a man starts glorying in his own gifts, fruit, tone, courage, faithfulness, platform, reach, or knowledge, he is behaving like a fool boasting over borrowed property.

That is why glorying in the Lord is the only sane response to spiritual blessing. It means the believer looks at every good thing and traces it back to God. He says with Paul, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). He does not deny that labor happened. He does not deny that fruit happened. He does not deny that God used him. But he refuses to let his heart turn the thing into private self-worship. He knows that apart from Christ he is nothing, has nothing, and can do nothing. The more he really sees that, the safer he becomes in ministry. Not because he becomes passive, but because he becomes God-centered. The danger of fleshly religion decreases when a man truly believes that every good and perfect gift came from above.

## **Conclusion**

When religion glories in the flesh, it may still carry a Bible, use the name of Jesus, speak about ministry, sing about grace, and look highly spiritual in the eyes of men. But underneath the surface, it is still the same old self-exalting spirit that the Lord Jesus Christ condemned in the Pharisees. It loves to be seen. It loves praise. It loves public spirituality. It loves performance. It loves personality cults. It loves emotional manipulation. It loves tribal boasting. It loves anything that lets man stay large while pretending God is getting the glory. That is why this kind of religion is so dangerous. It does not merely sin openly; it teaches others to confuse flesh with spirituality.

True glorying in the Lord is the opposite of all that. It is not religious theater. It is not self-display in a Christian setting. It is not the use of Jesus language to make man impressive. It is the bringing down of self under the truth that Christ alone is worthy, Christ alone is the source, and every good thing in the believer's life has been received, not produced. It is the death of the need to be seen, praised, admired, and enlarged. It is the heart learning to say, and mean, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31). That is not a polite little afterthought. It is a divine command that kills vanity at the root.

So let the church judge this thing hard. Let the Pharisee be exposed. Let the love of human praise be named. Let celebrity religion be resisted. Let emotional performance be tested by truth. Let testimonies be made Christ-centered. Let doctrinal camps be humbled. And let every servant of God ask the question that must be asked: who is getting bigger here? If the answer is man, the flesh has gotten in. But if Christ is being magnified, self is being brought

low, and the heart is honestly tracing every good gift back to the Father of lights, then that is the beginning of real spirituality. That is the beginning of true glorying in the Lord.

## **9 of 12: Glorying in the Lord - My Soul Shall Make Her Boast in the Lord**

### **Main Passage: Psalm 34:2**

#### **Introduction**

There is a great difference between knowing a doctrine in your head and having that doctrine become the reflex of your soul. A man can say all the right things about glorying in the Lord when he is sitting in church, quoting verses, or writing a doctrinal outline, and then fall apart like wet cardboard the moment life presses in on him. That is because the real test of what you glory in is not what you say on your best day in public. The real test is what your soul runs to when fear hits, when trouble rises, when money gets tight, when prayers seem delayed, when enemies gather, when the body weakens, when people misunderstand you, and when you cannot see your way clearly. David said, “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad” (Psalm 34:2). That is not pulpit language only. That is survival language. That is how a believer learns to live when the pressure is real and the flesh wants to panic.

The trouble with many Christians is that they have learned how to talk like a Bible believer without yet learning how to react like one. They know the right verses about faith, but when trouble comes they murmur. They know the right verses about God’s goodness, but when delay comes they pout. They know the right verses about prayer, but when things tighten up they start trusting in schemes, personalities, moods, and visible props. In other words, they know how to discuss glorying in the Lord, but they have not yet learned how to do it in the trenches. David did not write Psalm 34 from an ivory tower with a hot cup of coffee and a neat devotional journal. He wrote out of pressure, danger, humiliation, and deliverance. The title tells you he wrote it after he changed his behavior before Abimelech and drove him away. In other words, David is not writing as a man who has never been cornered. He is writing as a man who has seen fear, tasted deliverance, and learned where his soul had better run.

That is why this essay matters so much, because glorying in the Lord is not merely a doctrinal statement about salvation, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, though it certainly includes all of that. It becomes the ongoing language of the soul in daily life. It becomes the believer’s instinct. In trouble, he boasts in the Lord. In deliverance, he boasts in the Lord. In weakness, he boasts in the Lord. In answered prayer, he boasts in the

Lord. In battle, he boasts in the Lord. In uncertainty, he boasts in the Lord. Not because he is pretending life is easy, but because he has learned who God is. He has learned that the Lord is his refuge, his strength, his hope, his song, and his deliverer. Once that truth gets down out of the head and into the marrow of the soul, it changes the whole tone of a man's life. He stops murmuring and starts magnifying. He stops sinking into self-pity and starts leaning into confidence in God.

### **1. Glorifying in the Lord Becomes the Soul's Language**

David says, "My soul shall make her boast in the LORD" (Psalm 34:2). Notice the wording carefully. He does not merely say his mouth will say religious things. He says his soul will boast in the Lord. That is deeper than public speech. The soul is the inner man, the seat of affections, fears, desires, burdens, and inward conversation. What David is saying is that the inward reflex of his life is going to be this: he is going to talk big about God. He is going to magnify the Lord in his heart before he ever magnifies Him in public. That is where real glorifying in the Lord starts. It starts when the inner man has learned that the safest, strongest, sanest boast available to a sinner saved by grace is the Lord Himself.

The flesh has another language altogether. When pressure comes, the flesh boasts in its own resources if it has them, and if it does not have them it collapses into complaint. The flesh either brags or broods. It either puffs itself up or sinks into a swamp of self-pity. But the soul taught by God learns another reflex. David says, "I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1). "At all times." That does not mean life is always comfortable. It means the Lord is always worthy. The saint who learns this begins carrying around an inward vocabulary of God-centered confidence. He starts talking to himself about the Lord's faithfulness, the Lord's mercy, the Lord's past deliverances, the Lord's promises, the Lord's character, and the Lord's power.

This is one reason the psalms are so precious. They give the believer holy speech for hard times. They teach the soul how to answer fear, sorrow, confusion, guilt, pressure, and danger with truth about God. When David says, "The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer" (Psalm 18:2), he is not just writing poetry for decoration. He is teaching the soul how to speak under pressure. A soul that learns to boast in the Lord is a soul that refuses to let circumstances write the final interpretation of life. It insists that God gets the final word. That is what makes glorifying in the Lord a daily matter. It is not just something you confess when explaining the gospel. It is something your soul learns to say every time trouble knocks on the door.

### **2. In Trouble, the Believer Learns the Difference Between Murmuring and Magnifying**

Trouble reveals more about a man than comfort ever will. Anybody can talk big when the pantry is full, the body is healthy, the family is peaceful, and the road is smooth. But let the pressure increase, and the heart starts speaking its native language. Israel murmured in the wilderness because their reflex was not trust but complaint. They saw God divide the Red Sea, feed them, guide them, and defend them, and still they murmured because trouble squeezed unbelief out of them. The believer has the same battle. When things tighten up, one of two things usually comes out first: murmuring or magnifying. Murmuring says, "Why is this happening to me? Why is it always like this? Why has God left me here?" Magnifying says, "The Lord is still good, still wise, still near, still in control, and still worthy of trust."

David gives the right pattern in Psalm 34. He does not deny trouble. He says, "This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Psalm 34:6). There are troubles there, plural. But notice what he does with those troubles. He does not turn them into a shrine of self-pity. He turns them into an occasion for boasting in the Lord. That is the difference between murmuring and magnifying. Murmuring takes the trouble and makes self the center. Magnifying takes the trouble and makes God the center. Murmuring stares at the size of the problem. Magnifying stares at the character of the Lord. Murmuring says, "This is too much for me." Magnifying says, "It was never too much for Him."

Paul learned that same lesson. He said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (2 Corinthians 3:5). That is the language of magnifying. A man like that is not pretending the trouble is light. He is confessing that God is greater. It is one thing to know that doctrinally and another thing to apply it when the pressure is on your own house, your own body, your own finances, your own family, your own ministry, and your own fears. But the saint who keeps learning to glory in the Lord begins to catch himself sooner. He begins to feel the old murmuring reflex rise, and instead of giving it the microphone, he starts talking about the Lord. He blesses the Lord in the middle of the storm. That is not denial. That is warfare.

### **3. In Deliverance, the Believer Learns Not to Boast in His Escape but in His Deliverer**

One of the easiest places to lose the plot is after God answers. When the pressure lifts, the danger passes, the money comes through, the healing comes, the door opens, the burden lightens, or the enemy backs off, the flesh is quick to start reinterpreting the whole thing in a self-flattering way. It says, "Well, I handled that pretty well. I stayed smart. I navigated that. I made the right calls." But the soul that has learned to glory in the Lord answers differently. David says, "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4). Then again, "The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth

them out of all their troubles” (Psalm 34:17). The emphasis is not on the cleverness of the rescued man but on the mercy of the rescuer.

That matters because deliverance itself can become food for pride if it is not traced back to God. A man can survive a hard thing and then quietly begin admiring himself for having survived it. He can tell the story in such a way that he becomes the hero. But a soul making her boast in the Lord will not do that. She will say, “The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation” (Psalm 118:14). Notice that. Not merely my emergency assistance. My strength and song. The saved man learns that deliverance is not a chance to brag about his resilience. It is a reason to worship the God who pulled him through.

This is one reason David’s psalms are so refreshing. Even when he was in caves, hunted like a partridge in the mountains, surrounded by enemies, betrayed by familiar friends, or overwhelmed with inward distress, when deliverance came, he did not stand on a stump and admire David. He praised the Lord. “Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight” (Psalm 144:1). There is balance. David did fight, but even the fighting was traced back to God’s enabling. The saint who learns this begins to tell his stories differently. He does not erase the facts, but he locates the glory where it belongs. He says, “The Lord brought me through.” That keeps the soul clean after victory.

#### **4. In Weakness, the Believer Learns That Self-Pity Is Not the Same as Humility**

A man can be weak and still be proud. In fact, one of the most subtle forms of pride is self-pity. Self-pity looks broken on the outside, but it is still self at the center. It still stares inward. It still circles around “me,” “my pain,” “my burden,” “my wound,” “my struggle,” and “my story,” only this time without swagger. But biblical boasting in the Lord takes weakness and turns it into an occasion for dependence. Paul says, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9). He is not glorying in pain for pain’s sake. He is glorying in what weakness becomes when Christ’s strength is made perfect in it.

That changes everything. A weak man full of self-pity says, “I cannot believe I have to deal with this.” A weak man glorying in the Lord says, “If the power of Christ rests on me through this, then His grace is enough.” A self-pitying soul stares so long at its own condition that the Lord fades to the edges. A believing soul says, “My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (Psalm 73:26). That is not the language of denial. That is the language of a man who has learned that weakness is not the end of the story. God is.

This is crucial in daily life because weakness comes to everybody. Bodies fail. Minds get tired. plans crack. people disappoint. doors close. prayers delay. emotions wobble. A

believer who has not learned to boast in the Lord in weakness will usually swing between panic and self-pity. But the one who has learned some of God begins to say, “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27). He does not deny his weakness. He lays it in the hands of One who is not weak. That is a far different thing. It is one thing to admit you are weak. It is another thing entirely to make the Lord your boast in that weakness. That is where daily glorying in the Lord gets very real.

### **5. In Prayer, the Believer Learns to Boast in God’s Ear Rather Than His Own Desperation**

There is a kind of prayer that is really just spiritualized panic. A man is in trouble, and he starts throwing words upward with no settled confidence in the God to whom he is speaking. Then there is prayer that comes from a soul taught to boast in the Lord. David says, “This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him” (Psalm 34:6). That is one of the sweetest short testimonies in all the Bible. Not “this strong man strategized.” Not “this clever man maneuvered.” “This poor man cried.” But he did not cry into the ceiling. “The LORD heard him.” There is the whole power of prayer for the believer. Not the volume of the cry, but the ear of the God who hears.

A believer who glories in the Lord begins to learn this difference in prayer. He does not merely pray because things are bad. He prays because God is good. He does not merely pray because he is desperate. He prays because the Lord is near. “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart” (Psalm 34:18). He does not merely pray to unload emotion, though he may do that honestly before God. He prays because he has confidence in the character of the one listening. “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). Boldly does not mean arrogantly. It means with confidence that Christ has opened the way and that the Father is not irritated by the cries of His children.

That changes the whole posture of prayer. The man glorying in the Lord does not make prayer a showcase of his own intensity. He makes prayer an act of confidence in divine mercy. He does not boast in how long he prayed, how strong he prayed, or how broken he sounded while praying. He boasts in the Lord who “inclined unto me, and heard my cry” (Psalm 40:1). That is why answered prayer, too, becomes part of daily glorying in the Lord. The saint stops saying, “Well, I really pushed through.” He starts saying, “Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me” (Psalm 66:20). Prayer becomes another place where the soul learns to boast in God’s faithfulness rather than its own emotional exertion.

### **6. In Battle, the Believer Learns That Confidence in God Is Not the Same as Natural Boldness**

There are battles in the Christian life that are not solved by mere personality. A naturally bold man can still be spiritually foolish, and a naturally timid man can still become mighty through faith. What matters is not the man's natural wiring but where his confidence lands. David says, "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God" (Psalm 20:7). There is battle language for the soul. Chariots and horses were visible military assets. In our day that can be money, connections, image, public clout, intellect, strategy, or anything else the flesh leans on to feel safe. But the believer boasting in the Lord says, "We will remember the name of the LORD our God." That is where the real confidence sits.

David lived that way early. When he stood before Goliath, he did not boast in his sling, his aim, or his courage. He said, "I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts" (1 Samuel 17:45). Then he said, "the battle is the LORD'S" (1 Samuel 17:47). There is the difference between fleshly confidence and glorying in the Lord. Fleshly confidence may use God language while still leaning on self. Glorying in the Lord looks at the battle, admits it is too large for the flesh, and then anchors itself in the name, character, and power of God. That kind of confidence is not loud bluster. It is settled certainty rooted in who the Lord is.

This matters in daily battles just as much as public ones. Temptation, spiritual attack, fear, ministry pressure, family burdens, financial strain, and opposition from people all bring the soul into conflict. The believer who has not learned to boast in the Lord will either shrink back in unbelief or push forward in fleshly striving. But the saint taught by God says, "The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?" (Psalm 118:6). He begins to see that confidence in God is not the same as natural toughness. It is a holy dependence that says, "If the Lord is my strength, I can stand. If not, I am already finished." That is why glorying in the Lord becomes battle language in real life.

## **7. Glorying in the Lord Becomes the Reflex of a Soul That Has Found Its Refuge**

At the bottom of all this is one great truth: the believer keeps boasting in the Lord because he has found in the Lord what he never found anywhere else. David says, "O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him" (Psalm 34:8). There is experience. Not empty theory. Not borrowed language. Tasted. Seen. Trusted. The man who has found the Lord to be his refuge starts running there instinctively. He says, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe" (Proverbs 18:10). That is how glorying in the Lord becomes the reflex of the soul. The soul has discovered by repeated trial that the Lord is better than panic, steadier than self, truer than appearances, and stronger than every visible prop.

That changes the whole tone of life. A soul that has found its refuge in God does not stop feeling pressure, but it stops treating pressure like an absolute master. It stops reacting as though circumstances are the lord of the day. Instead, it begins to say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?” (Psalm 27:1). Those are not just nice verses for wall art. Those are the speech patterns of a soul that has learned where safety really is. Once that gets down inside a man, glorying in the Lord ceases to be occasional language and becomes habitual language.

And that is what the Christian life is supposed to become. Not a forced performance of positivity, not a fake smile pasted over trouble, not a denial of pain, but a deepening reflex of confidence in the Lord. In trouble, the soul runs to Him. In blessing, the soul thanks Him. In prayer, the soul leans on Him. In battle, the soul remembers Him. In weakness, the soul rests in Him. In fear, the soul hides in Him. Over time that soul begins to sound like David sounded: “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD” (Psalm 34:2). That is the reflex of a man who has learned by experience that God is his refuge, his strength, his hope, and his song.

## **Conclusion**

So what does it look like when glorying in the Lord moves out of doctrine and into daily life? It looks like a soul learning new reflexes. It looks like magnifying instead of murmuring, confidence instead of collapse, prayer instead of panic, gratitude instead of self-congratulation, and hope instead of self-pity. It looks like David crying to the Lord and finding Him faithful. It looks like Paul glorying in infirmities so that the power of Christ may rest upon him. It looks like a believer in the middle of real trouble saying, “The LORD is my helper” (Hebrews 13:6), and meaning it. That is not theoretical religion. That is lived faith.

This kind of boasting in the Lord is not loud religious talk. It is the steady language of a soul that has tested God and found Him true. It is the saint learning that the Lord is not merely useful in sermons but sufficient in life. It is what happens when a man keeps going back to the strong tower, and after enough trips there he stops being surprised that it is still standing. He begins to trust reflexively. He begins to pray reflexively. He begins to praise reflexively. He begins to tell his fears, “The Lord heard me.” He begins to tell his weakness, “His grace is sufficient.” He begins to tell his enemies, “The battle is the LORD’S.” That is how glorying in the Lord becomes the ongoing speech of the soul.

And that is where this doctrine is headed all along. Not merely to right statements in church, but to a right reflex in life. “My soul shall make her boast in the LORD” (Psalm 34:2). That is how the believer lives when he has learned who God is. He does not become

trouble-free, but he becomes God-centered. He does not become incapable of fear, but he learns where fear must go. He does not become independent, but gladly dependent. He does not become impressed with himself, but increasingly impressed with the Lord. If any man glories, let him glory in the Lord. And if that glorying ever becomes the reflex of the soul, then the humble will hear thereof and be glad.

## **10 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - Most Gladly Therefore Will I Rather Glory in My Infirmities**

### **Main Passage: 2 Corinthians 12:9**

#### **Introduction**

There are some verses in the Bible that no flesh would ever have written. If religion had written the New Testament, it would have given you slogans about conquering every problem, rising above every pain, unlocking your greatness, and stepping into your best life with a grin on your face and a polished testimony in your pocket. But the Holy Ghost does not write like a salesman. He writes like God. So when Paul says, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:9), every carnal instinct in the natural man recoils from it. Glory in infirmities? Boast in weakness? Rejoice when the vessel is cracked? That is not the language of self-esteem religion. That is not the language of prosperity preaching. That is not the language of polished church performance. That is the language of a man who has learned something the flesh never learns willingly: Christ’s strength often shines brightest where human strength has finally been broken.

That is why this passage is one of the most searching and practical texts in all of Paul’s writings. It rips the mask off the fake triumphalism that has infected modern Christianity. There is a kind of preaching today that acts as though the Christian life is a nonstop parade of visible success, constant breakthrough, emotional strength, material increase, and public victory. In that kind of system, weakness is always a problem to be hidden, suffering is always a sign of deficiency, unanswered prayer is always a puzzle to be explained away, and limitation is always something to be conquered by more confidence, more declaration, more positivity, or more “faith.” But Paul was caught up to the third heaven and still came back down with a thorn in the flesh. Paul saw unspeakable things and still needed grace to bear something God did not remove. That one fact alone is enough to blow the roof off a whole lot of religious nonsense.

The real Christian life is not lived in a showroom. It is lived in a battlefield, in a sickroom, in a prayer closet, in seasons of waiting, in unexplained limitations, in bodily weakness, in inward strain, in misunderstood burdens, in repeated dependence, and sometimes in afflictions that do not leave even after earnest prayer. The question is not whether those things come. They do. The question is what the believer learns through them. Does he collapse into bitterness? Does he sink into self-pity? Does he fake a strength he does not have? Does he hide his frailty under spiritual cosmetics? Or does he learn to glory in the Lord even there? Paul learned that glorying in the Lord is not only for the day of visible victory. It is also for the day when the answer is “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9). In fact, sometimes that is the very day when glorying in the Lord gets deepest, because self has been brought lower than ever before.

### **1. God Sometimes Answers Prayer by Giving Grace Instead of Removal**

The passage begins with Paul’s thorn in the flesh, “the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Whatever the exact details of that thorn were, one thing is crystal clear: it was painful, humbling, and persistent. Paul did not enjoy it, did not celebrate the pain for pain’s sake, and did not pretend it was pleasant. He says plainly, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me” (2 Corinthians 12:8). He prayed. He prayed repeatedly. He prayed earnestly. And the thing did not leave. That is already enough to correct a lot of bad teaching. Here is an apostle, a man of immense faith, a man used mightily of God, a man who had suffered more than most believers could imagine, and yet he prayed for removal and did not receive removal. That means unanswered prayer, in the sense of not receiving the specific request as asked, is not proof of spiritual failure.

The Lord did answer, but not in the way Paul first requested. The answer was, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is one of the most important answers to prayer in the whole Bible because it reveals the Lord’s priorities. Paul asked for subtraction. God answered with supply. Paul asked for removal. God answered with sustaining grace. Paul asked for the burden to depart. God answered by saying the burden would remain, but divine sufficiency would meet him in it. The flesh hates that answer because it wants relief on its own terms. But the spiritual man eventually learns that grace is not a consolation prize. Grace is divine strength given in the middle of the thing you would have chosen to escape.

This means believers must stop talking as though the only valid form of answered prayer is immediate visible removal of the problem. Sometimes God does remove the burden. Praise His name when He does. But sometimes He leaves the thorn and gives more of Himself instead. That is not neglect. That is not indifference. That is not defeat. That is divine wisdom. The believer who learns this stops measuring God’s faithfulness merely by

whether the hard thing disappeared. He starts measuring it by whether God met him in the hard thing with sustaining grace. “As thy days, so shall thy strength be” (Deuteronomy 33:25). That promise does not say the days will always be easy. It says the strength will match the day. That is grace, and sometimes grace is the greater miracle.

## **2. Weakness Exposes the Lie of Self-Sufficiency**

One reason the Lord leaves infirmities, weaknesses, and limitations in place is because they expose how deeply the flesh loves the illusion of self-sufficiency. Human nature wants to feel competent, capable, impressive, and in control. It likes to imagine that with enough discipline, intelligence, structure, energy, and planning, it can run life well enough to stay mostly upright. But weakness tears the mask off that fantasy. A thorn in the flesh does not ask permission before reminding a man how little control he really has. Pain, bodily weakness, mental strain, emotional exhaustion, limits in time, unanswered questions, and recurring afflictions all remind the creature that he is dust. “He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14). God never forgets that, but we do.

Paul says the thorn was given “lest I should be exalted above measure” (2 Corinthians 12:7). That means weakness was used by God as a safeguard against pride. Think of that. Paul had seen extraordinary things, and one danger of great revelation is great exaltation in the flesh. So the Lord, in mercy, permitted something that would keep Paul from imagining himself larger than he was. Weakness has a way of doing that. It cuts a man down to size. It reminds him he cannot sustain himself by brilliance. He cannot out-plan mortality. He cannot out-muscle affliction. He cannot preach his body into invincibility. He cannot “mindset” his way beyond creatureliness. Weakness exposes the lie that man is enough for himself.

That is why God often strips a believer of confidence in his own power before teaching him the sweetness of divine sufficiency. “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). That is not a slogan for weak people only; that is the standing truth for every saint. The strong saint needs it. The gifted saint needs it. The busy saint needs it. The fruitful saint needs it. The bold saint needs it. Every one of us is a dependent creature pretending at independence more often than we care to admit. So the Lord allows weakness to come in and wreck the fantasy. Not because He delights in our discomfort, but because He loves us too much to leave us drunk on our own imagined adequacy.

## **3. The Lord’s Strength Is Made Perfect in Weakness**

The center of the whole passage is the Lord’s statement: “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9). That does not mean weakness is morally good in itself, or

that sickness, pain, or limitation should be worshiped. It means weakness becomes the stage on which Christ's strength is most clearly displayed. When a vessel is naturally impressive, flesh is tempted to explain the outcome by the vessel. But when the vessel is obviously insufficient, then the excellency of the power is harder to misattribute. Paul says elsewhere, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Corinthians 4:7). Earthen vessels crack. Earthen vessels wear out. Earthen vessels are ordinary, fragile, and breakable. That is exactly the point.

This runs contrary to almost everything the flesh admires. The flesh admires visible strength, polished confidence, charisma, physical energy, unbroken success, and outward momentum. But the Lord delights to work in such a way that men cannot honestly say the result came from natural greatness. Gideon's army had to be cut down so Israel would not say, "Mine own hand hath saved me" (Judges 7:2). The widow's little oil had to be multiplied so the glory went to God. Lazarus had to die and stink before the resurrection power of Christ was displayed. The disciples had to row into a storm beyond their management before they learned what it meant for the Lord to speak peace. Again and again God arranges the circumstance so human strength reaches its limit and divine strength gets the glory.

That means the believer has to stop interpreting weakness as uselessness by default. A cracked vessel may be precisely the kind of vessel through which Christ is about to be seen more clearly. A burden that keeps you dependent may do more spiritual good than a season of unbroken ease ever could. A limitation that humbles you may make you safer than a gift that inflates you. The Lord's strength is "made perfect in weakness" not because weakness is the final answer, but because weakness brings man to the end of himself where Christ is free to be seen as sufficient. That is why the saint can learn to glory even there. He is not boasting in the pain as such. He is boasting in what the Lord is in the middle of the pain.

#### **4. Prosperity Religion Cannot Handle Paul's Thorn**

One sure mark that prosperity preaching is false is that it cannot handle passages like 2 Corinthians 12 honestly. It has no category for a man full of faith, full of revelation, full of usefulness, praying earnestly, and still carrying an ongoing thorn. It has to either explain the passage away, redefine the thorn into something harmless, or imply that if Paul had just had the right formula, he could have broken through into constant visible triumph. But the Bible will not cooperate with that fantasy. Paul had faith. Paul had authority. Paul had revelations. Paul had prayer. Paul had power. And Paul still had a thorn. That ought to shut the mouth of every religious salesman who has been promising people that the will of God is uninterrupted outward ease.

Prosperity religion is built on the flesh's hatred of weakness. It wants a Christ who functions as a booster for personal success, visible health, financial increase, and constant upward motion. It treats suffering as an intrusion into the "real" Christian life instead of part of the battlefield through which God shapes His saints. It can talk about victory as long as victory looks shiny. But Paul's victory in this passage is not that the thorn left. His victory is that grace met him there. That kind of victory is invisible to a carnal eye because the carnal eye wants proof in the form of obvious outward improvement. But heaven often measures differently. A believer quietly enduring by grace may display more of Christ than a thousand public victories celebrated in the flesh.

This is why churches need far more preaching on divine sufficiency and far less preaching on religious triumphalism. People are not helped by being taught that every burden should vanish immediately if they have enough faith. That sets them up either for pride if something lifts or for despair if it does not. But when they are taught the Bible, they begin to understand that a thorn may remain while Christ's strength rests upon them. They begin to see that the Christian life is not fake invincibility. It is real dependence. They stop measuring spiritual success merely by visible breakthrough and begin measuring it by faithfulness under grace. That does not make them passive. It makes them biblical.

### **5. Glorifying in Infirmities Is Not Self-Pity but Christ-Centered Confidence**

Paul says, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That is an astonishing statement, but it must be rightly understood. He is not saying he enjoys pain the way a morbid man enjoys sorrow. He is not cultivating a victim identity. He is not making a spectacle of his weakness so people will feel sorry for him. That would just be another form of self-centeredness. There is a world of difference between self-pity and Christ-centered boasting in infirmity. Self-pity keeps the eyes on the wound. Glorifying in infirmities, in Paul's sense, keeps the eyes on Christ's power resting on the wounded one.

That is why he says he glories in infirmities "that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). The point is not infirmity as an end in itself. The point is Christ. A believer who learns this does not deny his weakness, but neither does he turn weakness into his personal shrine. He sees weakness as an opportunity for divine strength to be displayed. Then in the next verse Paul broadens it: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Why? "For when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10). Again, not because weakness magically becomes strength on its own, but because the weaker the man is in himself, the more clearly the strength is seen to come from Christ.

This is desperately needed in real life, because believers often swing between two wrong extremes. One extreme is pretending they are stronger than they are, masking every frailty in religious language, and trying to project uninterrupted victory. The other extreme is collapsing into self-focused misery, talking endlessly about the burden until their whole life starts orbiting around their wound. Paul gives a third path. Tell the truth about the weakness. Pray honestly about the burden. Receive the Lord's answer. Then boast in Christ's sufficiency there. That kind of boasting is not dramatic. It is not theatrical. It is not self-promoting. It is quiet, strong, and deeply God-centered. It says, "I am not enough, but He is."

## **6. Unanswered Prayer and Ongoing Affliction Can Become a School of Grace**

There are some truths you do not learn in a textbook. You learn them in repeated dependence. You learn them in seasons where the burden stays long enough that slogans stop working. You learn them when no quick fix comes, when no easy explanation satisfies, and when the Lord's answer is not removal but "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Corinthians 12:9). That kind of season becomes a school of grace. It teaches the believer what he cannot learn from theory alone. He learns that God's nearness is not dependent on visible ease. He learns that grace is not sentimental language but a real supply. He learns that endurance is supernatural. He learns that the Lord can hold a man up under what would have crushed him otherwise.

David learned that. He said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71). That is not a man romanticizing pain. That is a man confessing that affliction taught him something prosperity never could have taught him. Again he says, "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word" (Psalm 119:67). Affliction became a teacher. The flesh hates that lesson because it wants all instruction without pain. But some lessons about God's faithfulness, tenderness, and sufficiency only become real when the saint must lean on them day after day. Ongoing affliction has a way of driving doctrine out of the lecture hall and into the bloodstream.

This is also why believers should be very careful before assuming that hard circumstances automatically mean God is displeased. Sometimes affliction is chastening, and when it is, it should be received as such. But sometimes affliction is also training, humbling, preserving, and deepening. Job's friends got that wrong, and a lot of modern church people still get it wrong. They see a thorn and assume deficiency. But Paul's thorn sat right next to immense revelation. The issue was not God's abandonment of Paul. The issue was God's wise handling of Paul. The Lord was shaping a vessel who would not trust in himself. Sometimes the school of grace has a hard curriculum, but the Teacher is wise and the grace is real.

## **7. The Cracked Vessel Makes the Power of Christ More Visible**

One of the most precious truths a believer can learn is that usefulness to God does not require the kind of polished invulnerability the flesh admires. In fact, that polish often gets in the way. The Lord uses cracked vessels all the time. He uses tired men, limited men, afflicted men, misunderstood men, weak women, burdened mothers, suffering saints, aging bodies, people with tears in their eyes and tremors in their hands. Why? Because the treasure is not the vessel. The treasure is Christ. And if the vessel is cracked enough that nobody can honestly mistake the treasure for the container, then so much the better for the glory of God. “That the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Corinthians 4:7).

This should be a great comfort to believers who feel their limitations sharply. The world says usefulness belongs to the strong, the glossy, the fast, the young, the untroubled, the naturally impressive. The Lord says something very different. He looks for yieldedness, faith, dependence, humility, and a willingness to let Him be strong where we are not. Moses stammered. Jeremiah felt too young. Gideon felt too small. Timothy had bodily weaknesses. Paul had a thorn. Yet God used them. That does not mean the Lord loves weakness for weakness’s sake. It means He is not hindered by what hinders us. In fact, He often chooses to work right through the place where we feel most insufficient so that His power will not be mistaken for ours.

That is why glorying in the Lord in infirmity becomes such a high form of worship. It says, in effect, “Even here, where I would have chosen differently, Christ is enough. Even here, where the vessel feels fragile, Christ is enough. Even here, where I prayed for removal and received sustaining grace instead, Christ is enough.” That kind of soul is no longer dependent on a polished image to feel useful. It is dependent on the Lord. It is no longer trying to hide all frailty as though weakness were a spiritual disgrace. It is learning that weakness, under the hand of God, may become the very stage where the beauty of Christ is most plainly seen. That is not defeat. That is holiness with its roots deep in reality.

### **Conclusion**

So what does it mean to glory in infirmities? It does not mean a believer becomes morbid, theatrical, or addicted to being seen as broken. It does not mean pain itself becomes the boast. It means Christ becomes the boast even there. It means the saint learns that divine sufficiency is not only for triumphant days but for thorn-filled days. It means the answer to prayer is sometimes removal and sometimes sustaining grace, but in either case the Lord remains faithful. It means weakness stops being interpreted merely as an embarrassment

and starts being seen as a place where the power of Christ may rest. That changes the whole spiritual posture of a man.

This truth is a death blow to prosperity religion and all its polished lies. It tells the suffering saint he is not outside the will of God because the burden stayed. It tells the weak believer that grace is not measured by outward shine. It tells the afflicted servant that usefulness is not over because the vessel is cracked. It tells the proud heart that self-sufficiency is an illusion. It tells the whole church that the Christian life is not a showroom of human strength but a theater of divine grace. “For when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). That verse has more real help in it than ten thousand sermons about personal greatness.

And for the believer walking through something hard right now, this passage is a handhold from heaven. You may have asked for removal and received grace instead. You may have prayed thrice and found the thorn still there. You may feel more like an earthen vessel than a polished instrument. But if Christ’s power is resting on you, then you are not abandoned, not forgotten, and not useless. Glorifying in the Lord means you can boast in Him even there. Not because the weakness is pleasant, but because the Lord is sufficient. “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Corinthians 12:9). There is enough in that sentence to carry a saint all the way home.

## **11 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - He That Glorieth, Let Him Glory in the Lord in Service and Ministry**

### **Main Passage: 1 Corinthians 1:31**

#### **Introduction**

One of the most dangerous places a Christian can ever stand is not always in obvious temptation. Sometimes it is behind a pulpit. Sometimes it is in front of a classroom. Sometimes it is leading a song, teaching a lesson, writing a post, running a ministry, counseling a saint, giving publicly, organizing an outreach, or laboring in a work that God is visibly blessing. Why? Because ministry has a way of exposing not only what a man believes, but what he secretly wants. And if that man is not careful, sacred things can become food for private vanity. That is why Paul says, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). That is not only a salvation verse. That is a ministry verse. That is a pulpit verse. That is a service verse. That is a warning to any man or woman doing anything in the name of Jesus Christ. If the work begins to feed self, then the flesh has crawled into holy things and started making a meal out of the altar.

Christian service is one of the easiest places in the world for subtle pride to hide because it can wear such noble clothing. A man is not robbing a bank. He is preaching a sermon. He is not openly indulging some scandalous vice. He is teaching the Bible. He is not cursing God. He is giving, serving, leading, helping, witnessing, building, and laboring. Yet right under all of that good activity, another question may be operating the whole time: who is getting the glory? A man may start out wanting to serve Christ and slowly begin measuring himself by visibility, fruit, recognition, popularity, reach, numbers, response, and influence. He may still say “Praise the Lord,” but in his heart he is quietly checking whether people noticed him. He may still speak of God’s blessing, but inwardly he is beginning to enjoy his own significance. That is the corruption of ministry, and it is as deadly as a snake in a nursery because it poisons good work from the inside.

The tragedy is that a man can be doctrinally sound, hardworking, sincere in many ways, and still be in danger here. The flesh does not need open heresy to feed itself. It can live on applause. It can live on being needed. It can live on being quoted. It can live on being admired for sacrifice, admired for boldness, admired for scholarship, admired for content, admired for fruit, admired for “being used.” That is why this subject must be handled with a knife, not a feather. Ministry is a stewardship, not a stage. Preaching is a trust, not a platform for self-display. Teaching is a service, not a chance to build a following. Giving is worship, not image management. Laboring for Christ is holy, but once a servant begins to enjoy the glory of being the servant more than the glory of the Master he serves, something has already gone wrong. Paul knew how to labor harder than most men ever will, and still say, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is the spirit this essay must press hard, because servants of Christ are in constant danger of using sacred things to feed private vanity.

### **1. Ministry Does Not Cancel the Flesh; It Exposes It**

A common mistake among Christians is to think that because a person is active in ministry, the danger of the flesh must be lower. In many cases, the danger is actually higher. The flesh is never more subtle than when it can use something outwardly righteous to pursue inward self-exaltation. A man can be too busy “doing the work of God” to notice he has started enjoying the work for the wrong reasons. He can be teaching truth while quietly basking in the role of being the teacher. He can be preaching Christ while secretly enjoying the effect of being the preacher. He can be serving people while inwardly feeding on the feeling of being indispensable. Ministry does not eliminate the flesh. It often drags it into the light. That is why Paul said, “That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). He did not say, “except flesh involved in ministry.”

Look at the disciples themselves. They had seen miracles, heard the Lord, followed Him personally, and still there were disputes among them about who should be greatest. In Luke 22:24, “there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” Think of that. Men walking with the Son of God, and the flesh still itching for rank. So if the flesh could rise in the apostles before Pentecost, then let no preacher, teacher, ministry worker, or Christian content maker imagine he is above the same disease. The flesh loves significance. It loves to be “counted” something. It loves to be seen as important to the work. That instinct does not die simply because the work is religious. In fact, religion often gives it a better hiding place.

That is why ministry must be entered with fear and walked through with self-judgment. A servant of Christ has to keep asking the hard questions. Why do I want to do this? Why did that praise feel so good? Why did that criticism sting so deeply? Why am I bothered that someone else got noticed? Why do I keep checking response, numbers, reaction, or visible fruit? Why does obscurity feel threatening? Those questions are not for morbid introspection. They are for survival. The flesh in ministry is especially dangerous because it can keep all the right forms while quietly changing the motive. And once the motive shifts from Christ’s glory to self’s enlargement, the work may still look fruitful to men while becoming corrupt before God.

## **2. A Servant Can Labor Hard and Still Refuse to Take the Glory**

The Bible never teaches lazy humility. It never says the answer to pride is to do nothing. Paul worked. Paul endured. Paul preached. Paul planted churches. Paul wrote letters. Paul suffered. Paul fought. Paul instructed. Paul corrected. Paul traveled. Paul prayed. Paul poured his life out. And yet this same man said, “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Then he says something else that is just as important: “and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all” (1 Corinthians 15:10). There is no false humility there. Paul does not deny labor. He admits it. He worked hard. But then he adds, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is the balance servants of Christ must learn.

That means it is possible to acknowledge labor without worshiping it. It is possible to speak honestly about work accomplished without stealing the glory for it. It is possible to testify to what God has done through a ministry without turning the testimony into a mirror for self-admiration. Paul never talked like a man pretending he had done nothing. He talked like a man who knew exactly where the power came from. He could say, “I laboured,” and in the same breath say, “yet not I.” That is the great protection for a servant. He does not have to erase the reality of effort, but he must keep tracing the source of that effort back to grace. The moment he starts talking like the fruit came from his brilliance, stamina, charm,

creativity, boldness, or discipline as the ultimate cause, he has crossed into dangerous ground.

This is where many workers get tripped up. They begin with grace, but as fruit appears they slowly start rewriting the story in their own favor. The language stays spiritual, but the inward accounting changes. They begin to feel that the results are tied to their personal greatness rather than God's mercy. Then if the Lord blesses, they swell. If the Lord withholds, they collapse. Why? Because the ministry has become entangled with self-worth. But the man who has learned Paul's spirit can work hard and stay low. He can pour himself out and still say, "Yet not I." He can receive fruit without becoming bloated, because the grace of God gets the final explanation. That is the kind of labor that stays useful without becoming poisonous.

### **3. Visibility, Fruit, and Influence Are Dangerous Measurements for the Flesh**

There is nothing wrong with fruit. There is nothing wrong with influence used rightly. There is nothing wrong with visibility if God places a man somewhere public. The problem is not the existence of these things. The problem is what the flesh does with them. Visibility can become a narcotic. Fruit can become a scoreboard. Influence can become a personal identity. Then the servant of Christ slowly begins to measure himself by what can be seen, counted, tracked, reported, posted, or praised. He starts living off momentum. He starts needing evidence that he is "making impact." He starts fearing obscurity more than unfaithfulness. That is where service gets dangerous. The motive shifts from faithfulness to significance.

Paul cuts across that whole spirit in 1 Corinthians 3. Some were saying, "I am of Paul," and others, "I am of Apollos" (1 Corinthians 3:4). Paul responds, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" (1 Corinthians 3:5). Then he says, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). There is the correction. Planting matters. Watering matters. But increase comes from God. Then Paul says, "So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:7). That verse should be stapled to the forehead of every preacher, teacher, church planter, content creator, and ministry leader in the world. Neither is he that planteth any thing. Neither is he that watereth. God gives the increase.

Now flesh does not mind quoting that verse in theory, but flesh hates living by it. Flesh wants to be "something." It wants to be central to the result. It wants to feel that the outcome rose or fell by its own value. But once a servant really believes that God gives the increase, he is freed from two corruptions at once. He is freed from arrogant inflation when fruit appears, and he is freed from despairing self-condemnation when visible results are

delayed. He still works, still prays, still labors, still plants, still waters, but he knows increase is not ultimately his property to produce. That keeps him from turning fruit into a private idol. It keeps visibility from becoming a throne. It keeps influence from becoming his hidden god.

#### **4. Praise Must Be Handled Like a Dangerous Substance**

One of the great tests of ministry is how a servant handles praise. Criticism is easier in some ways because criticism plainly hurts and drives a man to seek help. Praise is more subtle. Praise can arrive dressed as encouragement and quietly begin feeding pride before a man realizes what is happening. It can make him start expecting certain treatment. It can make him begin curating his ministry around the response it produces. It can make him dependent on affirmation to keep going. It can make him protective of an image he should never have been nurturing in the first place. That is why praise must be handled with fear. It is not always wrong for others to express gratitude, but it is always dangerous for the flesh to swallow that gratitude whole.

Herod is a terrifying example. In Acts 12, the people shouted, “It is the voice of a god, and not of a man” (Acts 12:22). Herod accepted the atmosphere, received the glory, and “immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory” (Acts 12:23). That is not in the Bible to entertain you. It is there to warn every public servant of God that stolen glory is serious business. Now most ministry praise is not that extreme, but the principle remains. God is jealous of His glory. The servant of Christ must be very careful not to let his heart begin feasting on what belongs to the Lord. The danger is not only in openly saying “I am great.” The danger is often quieter than that. It is in enjoying the impression, feeding on the attention, and letting praise settle in the heart as food.

Paul shows another spirit entirely. After miraculous works at Lystra, the people wanted to treat Paul and Barnabas like gods. What did they do? They “rent their clothes” and cried out, “Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you” (Acts 14:14-15). There is the reflex of a right servant. He does not quietly enjoy deification. He tears at the whole atmosphere of it. He points away from self. He says, in effect, “Do not do this to me. I am a man. The glory belongs to God.” That same reflex is needed now. A servant cannot always control what others say, but he can judge what his heart does with it. If he starts liking the taste too much, he is in danger. Praise is not harmless. It must be redirected upward or it will begin rotting the soul from within.

#### **5. A Man’s Speech About His Ministry Reveals a Great Deal About His Heart**

Listen carefully to how a servant talks about what God is doing, and you will often hear where the glory is settling. A man can sound humble while still advertising himself. He can

tell stories that seem to glorify God while actually positioning himself as the indispensable figure in every scene. He can repeatedly speak about “how God is using me” in a way that keeps the spotlight carefully centered on his role. He can talk about fruit, reach, burden, sacrifice, opposition, and impact with a subtle self-congratulation running under every sentence. That is one reason Jesus said, “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matthew 12:34). The way a man narrates ministry often reveals whether he sees himself as a servant or as the main attraction.

Paul did speak of his ministry. He did speak of his calling. He did speak of his labor, his sufferings, and his stewardship. But his speech carries a repeated God-centeredness. He says, “According to the grace of God which is given unto me” (1 Corinthians 3:10). He says, “I am what I am” by grace (1 Corinthians 15:10). He says he was “made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me” (Ephesians 3:7). He says he is “less than the least of all saints” (Ephesians 3:8). He does not deny the ministry. He locates it in grace. That is the key. A man may need to speak of what God has entrusted to him, but if grace is not carrying the weight of the explanation, then self is probably creeping in.

This matters especially in a time when many workers speak constantly, publicly, and often in self-curated formats. Testimony, reporting, updates, newsletters, public posts, videos, ministry announcements, podcasts, and personal branding all create endless opportunities to narrate oneself. That is dangerous territory for the flesh. The servant of Christ must ask, “When I talk about what God is doing, does Christ get larger or do I get larger? Am I speaking to inform, encourage, and glorify God, or am I quietly cultivating admiration?” Sometimes the line is very thin, and that is why the heart must be judged often. A man who truly glories in the Lord learns to speak of ministry with gratitude, sobriety, humility, and an awareness that anything useful in the whole affair came from grace.

## **6. Even Giving and Hidden Service Can Be Corrupted by Self-Exaltation**

It is easy to think of pride in connection with public preaching or visible leadership, but the danger goes far deeper than that. Even giving can be corrupted by self-exaltation. Even hidden service can become a private altar to the ego. Jesus warned directly about this in Matthew 6. “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them” (Matthew 6:1). Then He says that those who do so “have no reward of your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 6:1). The act itself may still look generous. The motive ruins it. A man may give large amounts and still be feeding on the feeling of being known as generous. He may serve tirelessly and still be secretly hoping somebody notices how much he sacrifices. He may volunteer, help, organize, clean, build, counsel, support, and carry burdens while inwardly composing a case for his own significance.

The flesh loves being the quiet hero just as much as it loves being the loud one. Sometimes it actually prefers hidden service because then it can feed on unrecognized martyrdom. It says, "Nobody sees what I do. Nobody appreciates me. Nobody understands how much I carry." Now there may be real pain in being overlooked, but that pain can quickly merge with pride if the servant is not careful. He begins to build an identity around being the underappreciated faithful one. That, too, is a form of self-exaltation. The center is still self. The service may be outwardly hidden, but inwardly the ego is very much alive. This is why even hidden work must be laid before God and judged. It is not enough to be unseen by men if self is still being worshiped in secret.

The cure is to remember that the Father "which seeth in secret" rewards openly (Matthew 6:4). The servant of Christ is not finally working for the eyes of men, whether those eyes are admiring him loudly or neglecting him painfully. He is working before the face of God. That frees him from the need to be publicly validated. It also frees him from keeping score in his own heart. He can give without building a shrine to his generosity. He can serve without turning sacrifice into a self-made crown. He can labor without demanding that everyone understand his cost. Why? Because he is glorying in the Lord, not in the role of being the worker. That makes hidden service cleaner. It makes generosity purer. It makes ministry less about identity and more about worship.

## **7. The Judgment Seat Will Burn Away the Vanity in Ministry**

One of the most sobering truths for every servant is that ministry will not finally be evaluated by current applause, visible size, emotional response, public reputation, or earthly usefulness as men define it. It will be evaluated at the judgment seat of Christ. Paul says, "Every man's work shall be made manifest" (1 Corinthians 3:13). Then he says, "the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13). Not only how much it is. What sort it is. That means motive matters. Material matters. Source matters. The inner quality of the work matters. A lot of flashy religious activity that looked impressive on earth may go up in smoke there. And some unnoticed, grace-driven, Christ-exalting service may shine like gold, silver, and precious stones in that fire.

That truth ought to purify the servant's aim. He is not working for current reputation. He is not working merely for visible results. He is not working to build his own name in Christian circles. He is not working to become "known," "respected," "followed," or "influential" as an end in itself. He is working for the day when the Lord will make manifest the counsels of the hearts. Paul says, "Then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Corinthians 4:5). That is the praise worth waiting for. The praise of men is unstable, intoxicating, and often misleading. The praise of God will be exact, righteous, pure, and eternal. A servant who remembers that becomes safer. He starts losing interest in manufacturing earthly impressions. He

becomes more concerned with being faithful before God than appearing impressive before people.

This is also where false ministry motives become especially serious. A preacher who built on personality, a teacher who fed private vanity, a giver who sought image, a worker who lived for recognition, a content maker who turned truth into self-promotion, all of that faces fire. The Lord sees what men do not see. He sees whether the labor arose from grace or ego, from worship or self-importance, from love for Christ or hunger for applause. That is why no servant can afford to be casual here. The judgment seat is not a doctrine for curiosity. It is a doctrine for cleansing motive. If all of it is going before fire, then let the servant begin now to put the knife in his pride and say, "Lord, keep me from stealing what belongs to Thee." That is how a man stays sane in service.

## **Conclusion**

So what does it mean to glory in the Lord in service and ministry? It means that the preacher, teacher, giver, helper, singer, worker, writer, and servant of every kind learns to trace every useful thing back to grace. It means he can labor hard without worshiping his labor. It means he can speak of fruit without making himself the center of the story. It means he can receive encouragement without swallowing stolen glory. It means he can endure obscurity without bitterness and visibility without inflation. It means he remembers that God gives the increase, that every good gift came from above, and that sacred things are never to be used as food for private vanity. Ministry is not a stage for self. It is a stewardship under Christ.

This doctrine should speak loudly to our generation because there has never been a time with more opportunities for ministry to become self-curated, self-narrated, self-promoted, self-measured, and self-admired. Platforms are everywhere. Metrics are everywhere. Visibility is easy to track. Reaction is instant. Influence is quantifiable. That environment is gasoline on the fire of flesh unless a servant is deeply rooted in the fear of God. The answer is not to stop serving. The answer is to keep serving while staying low. The answer is to keep laboring while saying, "Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10). The answer is to do the work with all your might and then hand the whole explanation of anything good in it back to the Lord.

If any man glories, let him glory in the Lord. Let the preacher glory in the Lord. Let the teacher glory in the Lord. Let the giver glory in the Lord. Let the worker glory in the Lord. Let the content maker glory in the Lord. Let the servant in public glory in the Lord, and let the servant in secret glory in the Lord. Because the day is coming when everything false will burn, every stolen glory will be exposed, and every truly grace-born work will shine for what

it is. Better to learn it now than then. Better to bow low now than be ashamed then. Better to say now, with a clean heart, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psalm 115:1).

## **12 of 12: Glorifying in the Lord - Every Crown at His Feet**

### **Main Passages: Revelation 4-5**

#### **Introduction**

If a man has followed this subject through honestly, then he ought to know by now that all true glorying ends in one place. It does not end in the sinner. It does not end in the preacher. It does not end in the worker, the giver, the teacher, the singer, the martyr, the overcomer, the doctrinally sound man, or the faithful laborer. It ends at the feet of Jesus Christ. That is where the whole matter has been heading from the beginning. Paul said, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). He said Christ is made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). He said, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Galatians 6:14). He said, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Every one of those truths is moving in one direction. They are all marching toward a throne. And around that throne, in the world to come, not one saint will be standing there polishing his own résumé. Every crown worth having will end up where it always belonged—at the feet of the Lamb.

That is what makes Revelation 4 and 5 so devastating to fleshly Christianity. Here is heaven opened. Here is the throne set. Here is worship stripped of all human performance, all earthly branding, all ministerial vanity, all denominational boasting, all applause-seeking, all religious politics, and all personal image management. What remains? “The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne... and cast their crowns before the throne” (Revelation 4:10). Think about that thing. They have crowns. Real crowns. Rewards. Recognition. Honor given by God Himself. Yet the crowns do not become a platform for self-display. They become something to throw down. Why? Because the nearer a redeemed man gets to the unveiled glory of Jesus Christ, the less taste he has for his own importance. Heaven does not inflate redeemed sinners. Heaven finishes the death of their pride.

And that is the right ending for this series, because the whole matter of glorying in the Lord has never been mainly about polite wording or spiritual-sounding phrases. It has been about the destruction of self-exaltation and the exaltation of Jesus Christ. In salvation, the

glory went to Him. In righteousness, the glory went to Him. In sanctification, the glory went to Him. In redemption, the glory went to Him. In the cross, the glory went to Him. In weakness, the glory went to Him. In service and ministry, the glory went to Him. So what happens at the end? The same thing. Whatever rewards the saints receive will never become grounds for personal boasting in glory because even rewarded service was enabled by grace. Heaven has no room for self-promotion, no room for fleshly applause, and no room for religious pride. The atmosphere there is Christ. The song there is Christ. The center there is Christ. And if any man glories there, he had better glory in the Lord.

### **1. Heaven Finishes What Grace Began on Earth**

The Christian life begins with grace shattering human boasting, and heaven completes that work in its fullest expression. Paul says in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For by grace are ye saved through faith... not of works, lest any man should boast.” That is where it starts. A sinner comes to Christ with nothing worth offering, nothing worth claiming, and nothing worth admiring. He is saved by grace, not by merit. But then the Christian life proceeds through all kinds of experiences—service, battle, suffering, endurance, fruit, victories, responsibilities, chastening, growth, and reward. Along the way, the flesh keeps trying to crawl back in and reclaim a little ground for boasting. Heaven is where that battle is finally over. In heaven, there is no more shadow, no more self-deception, no more religious pride hiding under service, no more pretending that grace was only a starting point. Heaven reveals that grace was the whole story from beginning to end.

That is why Revelation 4 is so important. The elders do not stand around admiring their crowns as badges of personal distinction. They fall down. They cast them down. They say, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power” (Revelation 4:11). Notice the direction of the glory. Not inward. Upward. Not selfward. Godward. The redeemed in glory finally see without obstruction what grace had been teaching them all along: every good thing they ever received came from the One on the throne. Every opportunity, every strength, every bit of useful service, every ounce of endurance, every answered prayer, every opened door, every preserved step, every light received, every temptation survived, every burden carried, every act of obedience, every reward given—all of it traces back to Him.

This means heaven is not the place where redeemed sinners finally get to enjoy themselves as the main event. Heaven is the place where they finally enjoy Christ without distraction. That matters because a lot of modern Christianity talks about heaven in such man-centered ways that it almost sounds like glorified self-fulfillment. But Revelation corrects that nonsense. Heaven is not man enlarged. Heaven is Christ unveiled. Heaven is not the final celebration of what you became. Heaven is the everlasting celebration of what He is.

That is why the elders cast the crowns. Grace began the work of dethroning self on earth, and glory finishes it by placing Christ before the soul in such blazing worthiness that every redeemed instinct bows gladly and says, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psalm 115:1).

## **2. Crowns Are Real Rewards, but They Are Not Grounds for Self-Boasting**

The Bible is plain that there are rewards for faithful service. Paul speaks of an incorruptible crown (1 Corinthians 9:25). James speaks of “the crown of life” (James 1:12). Peter speaks of “a crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Peter 5:4). Paul says there is “a crown of righteousness” laid up for those who love Christ’s appearing (2 Timothy 4:8). So let nobody act as though reward is some imaginary thing. God is not unrighteous to forget labor of love. The judgment seat of Christ is real. Rewards are real. Crowns are real. Recognition from the Lord is real. But the great lesson of Revelation 4 is that even real rewards do not become fuel for personal glory in heaven. They become material for worship.

That is because the very rewards themselves are trophies of grace. How could they be otherwise? If a man was saved by grace, called by grace, gifted by grace, strengthened by grace, preserved by grace, corrected by grace, sustained by grace, and used by grace, then what exactly is left in the reward that he can claim as ultimately self-generated? Paul deals with this spirit when he asks, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Corinthians 4:7). That question does not expire at the judgment seat. If anything, it becomes even more obvious there. What did the rewarded saint have that he did not receive? The answer is still nothing. He received the calling, the strength, the open door, the enabling, the truth, the grace to continue, and the mercy that kept him from quitting.

So the crowns are not fake, but neither are they personal monuments. They are evidence that grace bore fruit, that the Lord was faithful, and that God delights to honor what His own grace produced in His people. Yet the elders do not misunderstand that. They do not grip the crowns as if to say, “At last, proof that we were exceptional.” No, sir. They cast them before the throne. Why? Because they understand what rewards mean better than any man on earth ever has. They know those rewards are not interruptions to the glory of Christ but occasions to increase it. They are not trophies of autonomous human greatness. They are the Lord’s own testimony to what His grace accomplished in weak, dependent, redeemed people. That is why even rewarded service ends at His feet.

## **3. The Throne Destroys Every Last Illusion of Human Greatness**

There is something about seeing the throne that cures a man of self-importance. On earth, people can still maintain certain illusions. They can compare themselves among

themselves and think they are something. They can build a name, gather a following, preserve an image, and feel large in their little circle. They can even preach against pride while quietly enjoying their own status as the one doing the preaching. But the moment the soul is confronted with the unveiled throne of God, all those illusions collapse like rotten lumber. Isaiah got a taste of that in Isaiah 6 when he saw the Lord high and lifted up. He did not come away praising Isaiah's ministry résumé. He cried, "Woe is me! for I am undone" (Isaiah 6:5). The throne has that effect on men.

Revelation 4 magnifies that same truth. John sees "a throne... set in heaven, and one sat on the throne" (Revelation 4:2). Everything else in the chapter is arranged around that reality. The thunderings, lightnings, elders, living creatures, worship, and crowns all orbit around the throne. That is the great correction to all fleshly religion. Flesh wants itself at the center. Heaven has no room for that arrangement. Heaven is fundamentally throne-centered. That means everything is interpreted by the worthiness of the one seated there. The self cannot survive that sight as a rival center. It must bow. It must fall. It must cast down whatever it had been tempted to admire in itself.

This is why the believer's life on earth is safest when it is lived in the light of the throne. A servant who remembers the throne will be less intoxicated by applause. A sufferer who remembers the throne will be less destroyed by present trouble. A worker who remembers the throne will be less tempted to turn ministry into personal empire. A saint who remembers the throne will be less obsessed with how things appear here, because he knows all of it is moving toward that center. The throne destroys illusions because it reveals scale. It shows God as God, Christ as worthy, and man as creature. Once that sight governs a soul, personal greatness starts shrinking to proper size. That is why every crown ends there. Nothing else in the universe is large enough to deserve the glory.

#### **4. The Lamb Is Worthy Because Redemption Is the Center of Heaven's Song**

If Revelation 4 gives the throne, Revelation 5 gives the Lamb, and it is impossible to separate the two. In chapter 5, the focus falls on the Lion who is the Lamb, "a Lamb as it had been slain" (Revelation 5:6). Then heaven erupts in one of the greatest songs ever recorded: "Thou art worthy... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood" (Revelation 5:9). There is the center of heaven's worship. The Lamb is worthy because He was slain. He is worthy because He redeemed. He is worthy because of blood. That means even in glory, redemption remains central. Heaven does not outgrow Calvary. Heaven sings because of Calvary. The blood is not an earthly doctrine left behind in maturity. It is the eternal song of the redeemed.

That truth should settle a lot of foolishness down here. Men act as though once they advance in knowledge, service, or maturity, the blood becomes elementary and the cross becomes one doctrine among many. But in heaven, the highest worship is still Lamb-centered worship. The saints are not singing, “Thou art worthy, for we have labored mightily.” They are not singing, “Thou art worthy, for our ministry was fruitful.” They are not singing, “Thou art worthy, for we finished our course by our own stamina.” They are singing, “Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood” (Revelation 5:9). In other words, the final explanation for why anyone is there at all, and why any reward is meaningful at all, is the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. That alone forever destroys self-congratulation.

And it also explains why every crown belongs at His feet. If the Lamb had not been slain, none of those elders would even be there to cast anything. If the blood had not redeemed them, there would be no throne-room worship from redeemed sinners. If grace had not intervened, there would be no crowns, no song, no place, no standing, no acceptance, and no reward. The Lamb stands at the center of all of it. That means the final atmosphere of heaven is not “Look what we achieved,” but “Look what He purchased.” It is not “Notice our accomplishments,” but “Behold the Lamb.” That is why the closing glory of the believer’s story is not his own endurance, doctrine, labor, or martyrdom as independent points of honor. It is the worthiness of Christ, who gave every one of those things their only lasting meaning.

## **5. Rewarded Service Was Enabled by Grace from Beginning to End**

One of the reasons the crowns get cast down so naturally in heaven is because the saints finally see without any remaining confusion that even their rewarded service was carried by grace from the beginning. Paul understood this on earth better than most. He said, “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Then he says, “I laboured more abundantly than they all,” and immediately adds, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). That is the whole secret in one verse. There was real labor, but the grace of God carried it. There was real suffering, but the grace of God sustained it. There was real fruit, but the grace of God produced it. There was real endurance, but the grace of God preserved it.

Take any saint in heaven with a crown and ask how he got there. If he is there scripturally, the answer will never terminate in self. If he preached, grace enabled it. If he stood under pressure, grace sustained it. If he resisted temptation, grace empowered it. If he gave faithfully, grace supplied it. If he suffered well, grace steadied it. If he finished his course, grace kept him from quitting. If he overcame, it was because “greater is he that is in you” (1 John 4:4). If he loved Christ’s appearing, that love itself was worked in him by the Spirit. At

every point, grace underlies the whole thing. So by the time the saints stand before the throne, there is no honest way to detach the reward from the Lord's enabling and pretend it arose from autonomous human excellence.

This is why truly spiritual people on earth already have a foretaste of this instinct. The more God uses them, the less they should feel like swelling. The more fruit there is, the more they ought to fear stealing glory. The more labor is rewarded, the more they ought to say, "Yet not I." If that spirit is absent on earth, then the crowns, if any are received, will be a severe correction when the throne makes everything plain. But if that spirit is learned now, then the casting of crowns in heaven will not be some shocking loss. It will be the natural completion of a life that had already learned to trace every useful thing back to grace. Heaven does not humiliate the saint by making him surrender what was "really his." Heaven delights the saint by finally letting him do fully and openly what grace had been teaching him to do all along—give it all back to Christ.

## **6. Heaven Has No Room for Self-Promotion, Religious Pride, or Fleshly Applause**

One of the most refreshing things about heaven is not only what is there, but what is not there. There is no self-promotion there. There is no religious posing there. There is no applause-chasing there. There are no ministry brands angling for attention there. There are no camps boasting in themselves there. There are no polished performances there. There are no ego-driven testimonies there. There is no fleshly competition dressed up as spirituality there. There is no preacher building a personality cult, no singer curating emotional effect, no worker quietly keeping score, no giver craving recognition, no saint comparing his standing with another. Why? Because heaven is too full of Christ for self to survive as a rival center. The very atmosphere excludes pride.

You can see that in Revelation 5. The whole host says, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing" (Revelation 5:12). Notice that all the things flesh wants to claim are explicitly given to the Lamb. Power belongs to Him. Riches belong to Him. Wisdom belongs to Him. Strength belongs to Him. Honor belongs to Him. Glory belongs to Him. Blessing belongs to Him. That leaves no leftovers for self-exaltation. Heaven is not democratic in its worship. It is Christ-centered. Everything converges on His worthiness. That is why religious pride cannot breathe there. Pride needs comparison, visibility, and self-consciousness. Heaven gives the soul something infinitely better to look at.

And that should rebuke the church now. If heaven has no room for self-promotion, why should the church make room for it? If the final atmosphere of glory is the worthiness of Jesus Christ, why should Christian service down here keep getting tangled in self-display?

The more church life reflects heaven's center, the healthier it becomes. The more it reflects earth's self-consciousness, the more corrupt it becomes. The church ought to be practicing now what heaven will perfect then. It ought to be learning how to speak lowly of self and highly of Christ. It ought to be learning how to labor without needing applause, how to serve without needing image, how to suffer without needing pity, how to give without needing notice, and how to worship without needing personal significance. Heaven is the final answer to fleshly religion because heaven leaves no room for flesh to be admired.

## **7. Every Victory, Doctrine, Endurance, and Ministry Finds Its Meaning at His Feet**

By the time this series reaches its end, one thing should be plain: every major category of the believer's life only makes sense finally at the feet of Jesus Christ. Wisdom makes sense there, because He is made unto us wisdom. Righteousness makes sense there, because it is His righteousness, not ours. Sanctification makes sense there, because He is its source and pattern. Redemption makes sense there, because He bought us with His blood. The cross makes sense there, because it revealed the horror of sin and the greatness of love. Weakness makes sense there, because His strength was made perfect in it. Service and ministry make sense there, because grace enabled them. And crowns make sense there, because they become acts of worship instead of monuments to self. Everything converges at His feet.

That means the believer's life can never be rightly interpreted as a self-contained story of personal development. It is a Christ-story. Even the saint's victories are not finally about him. "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Even endurance is not finally self-sustained. "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling" (Jude 24). Even doctrine is not personal brilliance. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know" (1 Corinthians 8:2), apart from what God teaches. Even ministry is not self-generated. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers?" (1 Corinthians 3:5). Every road keeps leading back to the same center. Christ is the meaning of it all.

This is why the casting of crowns is not a sad ending to the saint's labor but the right ending. It is the moment when the whole truth of the Christian life is confessed without obstruction. The believer says, in effect, "Lord, every victory was really Thy victory. Every truth I held was really Thy light. Every step of endurance was really Thy grace. Every service rendered was really Thy strength. Every reward given is therefore only another reason to worship Thee." That is not loss. That is fulfillment. That is what glorying in the Lord had been moving toward all along. Not merely saying Christ gets the glory, but reaching the place where the whole redeemed life is joyfully laid before Him without reserve.

## Conclusion

So where does all true glorying end? It ends where it began—in the Lord Jesus Christ. It ends at the throne. It ends before the Lamb. It ends with crowns cast down, with redeemed voices crying, “Thou art worthy” (Revelation 4:11), and with the blood-bought confessing forever that the whole story belonged to Him from the start. The sinner had no ground of boasting in salvation. The saint had no ground of boasting in righteousness. The worker had no ground of boasting in ministry. The sufferer had no ground of boasting in endurance. The rewarded believer will have no ground of boasting in heaven. Why? Because from beginning to end, grace was the operating principle and Christ was the worthy one.

That is the great correction to every form of fleshly Christianity. The final atmosphere of glory is not self-promotion. It is not religious applause. It is not the enlargement of human personalities. It is not the celebration of ministry brands, denominational tribes, intellectual brilliance, or spiritual resumes. The one atmosphere of heaven is the worthiness of Jesus Christ. The one song that gathers everything up is the song of the Lamb who was slain and redeemed us to God by His blood. That means all the things men boast in now—image, influence, recognition, fruit, status, platform, tribe, talent, and reward—will either be burned away or cast down in the presence of His superior glory.

So let this be the right ending to the whole matter: “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31). Let the sinner glory in the Lord. Let the saint glory in the Lord. Let the preacher glory in the Lord. Let the sufferer glory in the Lord. Let the laborer glory in the Lord. Let the rewarded saint glory in the Lord. And let every crown go where it belongs—at His feet. Because when all the sermons are done, all the battles are over, all the labors are finished, all the tears are wiped away, and all the rewards are given, one truth will stand brighter than a thousand suns: **Jesus Christ is worthy.**

### **Series Conclusion: Glorying in the Lord**

As we come to the end of this series, one truth ought to stand taller than everything else we have looked at: the Christian life was never designed to make much of us. It was designed to make much of Jesus Christ. That is the thread that has run through every part of this study. We saw that God arranged salvation in such a way “that no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Corinthians 1:29). We saw that Christ is made unto us “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Corinthians 1:30). We saw that the cross is the death sentence on human pride. We saw that religion can glory in the flesh while still using the name of Jesus. We saw that a believer can learn to boast in the Lord in

daily life, in trouble, in weakness, in prayer, in battle, and in service. And finally, we saw that every crown ends up at the feet of Jesus Christ. In other words, this whole series has been one long correction to the lie that man belongs at the center. He does not. Christ does.

What we learned in this series is not just a set of doctrinal observations. It is a way of seeing the Christian life rightly. We learned that glorying in the Lord is not a slogan, not a pious phrase, and not a bit of religious language people use while still secretly admiring themselves. It is a complete reversal of the old fleshly instinct to boast in self. It means the believer stops tracing spiritual worth back to his own goodness, his own strength, his own knowledge, his own holiness, his own gifts, his own ministry, or his own success, and starts tracing everything back to the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It means when we see truth, we glory in the One who opened our eyes. When we stand righteous before God, we glory in the One who clothed us. When we grow in holiness, we glory in the One who sanctifies us. When we are redeemed, we glory in the One who bought us. When we endure weakness, we glory in the One whose strength rests upon us. When we labor in service, we glory in the grace that enabled us. And when we think about eternity, we remember that even rewarded faithfulness will never become grounds for self-exaltation, because everything worth rewarding was produced by grace in the first place.

This truth helps our Christian walk because it clears out a thousand spiritual dangers at once. It helps kill pride. It helps expose false religion. It protects us from celebrity Christianity, self-righteousness, performance spirituality, and the need to be seen of men. It keeps us from confusing gifts with godliness and fruit with ownership. It reminds us that the Christian life is not about building our own image under the banner of Jesus Christ. It is about decreasing so that He may increase. It also helps us when life gets hard, because glorying in the Lord does not only apply when things are going well. It applies when the body is weak, when the burden is heavy, when prayer seems delayed, when ministry is costly, and when the road is rough. A believer who learns to glory in the Lord learns how to stand when the flesh would either boast or break. He learns that his sufficiency is not in himself but in God. He learns that Christ is enough, not only for the start of the race, but for every mile of it.

So what do we do from here? First, we take this truth into our private life. We begin listening more carefully to the way we think, pray, speak, and react. We ask the Lord to show us where self is still hiding under religious language. We ask Him to expose where we still crave praise, recognition, control, admiration, or personal significance. We ask Him to teach our souls to boast in Him instead of in our own performance, our own image, or our own strength. Second, we take this truth into our public life and ministry. If we preach, teach, sing, give, serve, write, or labor in any way, we do it with a guarded heart,

remembering that sacred things are never to become food for private vanity. We labor hard, but we say, “Yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Third, we take this truth into our future with hope. We remember that the whole Christian life is moving toward one final scene where every crown is laid at His feet and every redeemed voice confesses the same thing: “Thou art worthy” (Revelation 4:11).

So let this be the lasting lesson of **Glorying in the Lord**: if there is anything good, pure, useful, true, holy, strong, enduring, fruitful, or eternal in us, it came from Him. Let that humble us. Let that steady us. Let that purify our motives. Let that strengthen our walk. Let that correct our worship. Let that govern our service. And let that keep our eyes where they belong — on Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy of the glory. Because in the end, after all the sermons are preached, all the battles are fought, all the burdens are carried, all the works are tested, and all the crowns are given, the one truth that will still shine over all the redeemed is this: **He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord** (1 Corinthians 1:31).



	TOPIC	MAIN PASSAGE	CORE TRUTH	KEY VERSE (KJV)	WARNING / CONTRAST	APPLICATION	KEY TRUTH
✝	1 Glorifying in the Lord – Salvation	1 Corinthians 1:29	God saves to remove all boasting in the flesh.	“That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1 Cor. 1:29)	⚠ Salvation that allows boasting is not the gospel.	🙏 Trust God’s grace alone for your salvation.	<b>Every good thing in the Christian life originates in Christ, is sustained by Christ, and ends in Christ.</b>  <b>SUMMARY</b> From salvation to eternity, the Bible teaches one unchanging truth: <i><b>If any man glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.</b></i> Not in self. Not in ministry. Not in works. Not in gifts. <b>All glory is His.</b>
📖	2 Glorifying in the Lord – Wisdom	1 Corinthians 1:30	All spiritual wisdom comes from Christ, not man.	“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom.” (1 Cor. 1:30)	👤 Pride of knowledge puffs up.	📖 Seek Christ for true understanding.	
⚖	3 Glorifying in the Lord – Righteousness	1 Corinthians 1:30	Our righteousness is Christ’s, not our own.	“...and righteousness.” (1 Cor. 1:30)	⚖ Self-righteousness excludes Christ.	✝ Rest in Christ’s righteousness, not your performance.	
🌿	4 Glorifying in the Lord – Sanctification	1 Corinthians 1:30	Holiness is God’s work in the believer.	“...and sanctification.” (1 Cor. 1:30)	❤ Boasting in holiness is fleshly pride.	🙏 Let God be the author of your holiness.	
🔗	5 Glorifying in the Lord – Redemption	1 Corinthians 1:30	Redemption is by Christ’s blood alone.	“...and redemption.” (1 Cor. 1:30)	🔗 Trying to earn favor robs Christ’s glory.	💧 Remember you are bought with a price.	
✝	6 Glorifying in the Lord – The Cross	Galatians 6:14	The cross kills pride and exalts Christ.	“God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Gal. 6:14)	✝ Glorifying in the cross while ignoring Christ.	🙏 Glory only in what Christ did for you.	
👤	7 Glorifying in the Lord – Not in the Flesh	Galatians 6:13	Boasting in the flesh is condemned of God.	“For whosoever shall glory, let him glory in the Lord.” (Gal. 6:13b-14)	👤 Fleshly glory is enmity with God.	🙏 Examine your heart and motives daily.	
✝	8 Glorifying in the Lord – Christ My Righteousness	Jeremiah 9:23-24	Glory in Christ, not in self, positions, or works.	“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me...” (Jer. 9:24a)	✝ Glorifying in self leads to spiritual ruin.	🙏 Know Christ and glory in Him alone.	
🙏	9 Glorifying in the Lord – Boast in the Lord Daily	Psalms 34:2-3	The believer learns to boast in the Lord in all seasons.	“My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.” (Ps. 34:2)	🗣 Murmuring magnifies self; boasting in the Lord magnifies Him.	🗣 Make boasting in the Lord your daily language.	
🏺	10 Glorifying in the Lord – Glory in Infirmities	2 Corinthians 12:9-10	In weakness, Christ’s strength is made perfect.	“Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Cor. 12:9)	🏺 Pride seeks strength in self; faith rests in Christ.	🙏 Glory in Christ when you are weak.	
🏛	11 Glorifying in the Lord – In Service & Ministry	1 Corinthians 1:31	Serve hard, but never take the glory.	“He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” (1 Cor. 1:31)	🏛 Ministry pride steals the glory from God.	🙏 Give God the credit for every fruit.	
👑	12 Glorifying in the Lord – Every Crown at His Feet	Revelation 4:10-11; 5:9-14	Every reward and crown belongs to the Lamb.	“...they cast their crowns before the throne...” (Rev. 4:10) “...Thou art worthy... for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us...” (Rev. 5:9)	👑 Heaven has no place for self-promotion.	🙏 Live now for His glory; rejoice in Him forever.	

**REMEMBER**  
What God gives,  
He gets the glory for.

**TO GOD BE GLORY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST FOR EVER. AMEN.**  
ROMANS 16:27

**VERSEQUEST**  
MINISTRIES

