

Eternal Weight of Glory

by Steve Gallagher

The sermon emphasizes the importance of glorifying God through our actions, character, and relationships with others.

Duration: 48:32

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1

Topics: "Eternity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the ways in which we try to exalt ourselves at the expense of others. He uses an illustration of two little boys at a parade who both desire to be part of a prestigious military academy. The preacher emphasizes that our true identity and actions will be seen by all, and that we should strive to build something that lasts forever. He also highlights the importance of possessing love, as without it, we will have nothing when we stand before the Lord. The sermon encourages listeners to prioritize love and humility in their lives.

Transcript

I want to talk about what it means to our lives when we glorify God. That is the subject matter today. You know, in English language, the word glorify means that you honor someone in such a way that it causes other people to see that person in the most favorable light.

Now that's just my definition, I don't know what Webster would say about that, but you think that's about right? That, you know, it's something we're doing or saying or whatever is causing others to see that person who we're glorifying, honoring, in a positive light. It's kind of the opposite of tearing someone down, gossiping about them, criticizing them or whatever. Well, you know, once you took the name Christian on, when you came to the Lord, you set yourself up in the role as being a representative of God on earth.

Whether you meant to or not, whether you intended to or not is secondary, it doesn't matter, because as soon as you call yourself Christian, that's the reality. That the way you live your life is going to be a direct representation upon what the character of God truly is. So, you know, that's all in the sense of glorifying someone, but I want to focus on the Hebrew term, really, more than the English term.

And the Hebrew word for glorify is the word kabad. And kabad literally means heavy, weighty, you know. So, I mean, sometimes in Scripture it's used in a literal sense, and it actually does mean, you know, something that's a heavy burden or something like that.

That's the word kabed. But most of the time in Scripture, that word is extended to refer to a person. It's extended to refer to a weighty character.

Weighty character. And so when the Old Testament writers would talk about glorifying God, what they were saying is that they wanted others to recognize the weighty character of God. That He is someone of substance.

He is a substantial person. His character, His nature, His personality. You know, not just, okay, He's big, He's majestic, you know, He's powerful, all those things.

When you're glorifying God, you're not really talking about those kind of physical, as it were, attributes. No, you're more talking about who He is as a person. So to kabed God means that you are ascribing to Him the reality of His character.

Who He is as a person. Now, there's a short little phrase out of 1 Samuel 2:30. You don't even need to turn to it. I'm just going to tell you what it says.

This is what the Lord spoke. He said, those who honor Me, those who glorify Me, those who kabed Me, I will honor. Those who honor Me, I will honor.

Those who glorify Me, I will glorify. Those who kabed Me, I will kabed. Them and them alone will be honored by Me.

And, the second phrase, those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed. All right, now, I said, this is a positive message. I want to talk about what it means to glorify God.

But just as a contrast, I want to focus on the negative just for a second. This second group of people, because really this verse refers to every single human being who has ever lived. Every human has either glorified God or he has despised God.

And what I mean by despise, not what I mean, who cares what I think about it, what the word means is literally that word means light. Isn't that interesting? The literal meaning of despise, I can't remember what the Hebrew word is, but the literal meaning of that word is light. So, you've got to see this balance of weightiness here.

Those who recognize the weighty character of God and treat Him as such. And then on this side, which is the enormously vast majority, those who treat God as if He, His word, His commandments, and so on are a trifling matter. You know, just nothing of significance, nothing of importance.

And they live their lives focused on self and focused on this earth and so on. It says here they are lightly esteemed. And I think it could be said that their souls will become increasingly depleted.

I think that's true. They will become lighter and lighter and lighter as they go on. And it's interesting, you know, if you've ever read *The Great Divorce*, C.S. Lewis' book, outstanding little book, outstanding.

And it's interesting that the people who come down to this middle place, I won't get into the story, but from heaven, he calls them the solid ones. And the ones that have come to this place from hell are ghosts. He calls them ghosts.

And that is exactly the reality of the situation. It's the exact opposite of what our fleshly eyes see. We see substance and we talk about God in the ethereal, you know, like He's the one that's not really there almost, you know, He's just spirit.

There's no substance to Him. But it's the opposite of what our eyes tell us. So the unbelievers of this world, you know, it could be said that they're all empty suits.

All unbelievers are empty. All unbelievers are going from nothing to nothing in life. The psalmist said they are like chaff which the wind drives away.

It's interesting that, you know, in our verse here, those who despise me will be lightly esteemed. Or as one translation says, esteemed as nothing. And it's that same sense of just ghosts with no reality, no substance.

Now, just on a brief side note, that is true of all unbelievers. All unbelievers are substance-less, if I could say it that way, or without true substance. But there's a secondary phenomenon spiritually that also goes on.

And that secondary phenomenon is this, that the more a person gives over and indulges in sin, the more depleted he becomes in life. And I think that probably most of you guys know that feeling too well, right? I can remember my days of being given over to sin, and just the utter emptiness and misery of life. And it's like the more I gave over to try to fill that void, the bigger the void became inside me.

And so I think that that whole process is really a picture of the just desserts of sinners when they stand in judgment before God. That the reality of the way they live their lives, hell is not going to be the same for everybody. You know, I know some people say, well, they all get thrown in the lake of fire.

Well, that's a very simplistic perspective of hell. I guarantee you that people are going to be judged by what they did in life. Adolf Hitler is not going to get the same judgment as some little old lady who just kind of lived a simple, quote-unquote, decent life, but never gave her heart to Christ.

They are going to live two completely different hells. And that's about as far as I can go with figuring that out. But I believe that this whole thing of giving over to sin, there's something that so depletes the soul and increases the agitation of lust that a person has to live in for eternity.

You understand what I'm saying? You know, I don't know how well I even understand it. I don't know if anyone really understands it. But there is something in that.

All right. But anyway, like I said, I want to focus on the positive. I want to focus on what occurs in our lives as believers, as true, sincere believers, when we glorify the Lord.

And, you know, I don't think I need to tell you that we glorify the Lord mostly by the way we live our life. It's not what we say. You know, we all sang some very wonderful worship songs in here today.

And I don't think that that means much to the Lord. When He hears people who in their daily life are doing anything but representing His character, and then they come to church and just sing some songs that supposedly glorify Him, do you think that's pleasing to Him? All right. So, like I said, I want to focus on those who glorify the Lord.

And, you know, I kind of alluded to it, that as we glorify God in the way that we live our lives, we are adding weighty substance to our souls. We are becoming increasingly more solid and more substantial inside. Weightiness of character is being built inside of us.

And so I want to talk about three. I always like to make these little three-point sermons. They're just nice and neat and tidy.

But I'm going to just share. I suppose there's others as well. I've picked out three that I felt like were most pertinent.

Three ways that we glorify God or should be glorifying God and how that affects us as well. But with each of these is an inherent challenge. And what I mean by that is that it does not come naturally.

And so the challenge is to go against what comes naturally and to fight against that and to attempt in our best efforts, by God's grace, to do the things that will bring glory to the Lord. Okay? So, you know, number one is we glorify God by loving other people. And I suppose, you know, that that is maybe the thing that glorifies him the most.

I'm not sure exactly, you know, how you weigh one against the other. But I know that it certainly glorifies God when we treat other people with his love. Jesus said, Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

And those good works, almost always in Scripture, refers to doing good to those in need. You know, whatever that may mean. There's a million different ways to meet needs.

And God has a special calling on each of your lives. That's not just talk from this pulpit. I want you to understand that.

That's not just trying to rouse you up and somehow get you, you know, all stirred up that when you leave here you're going to go do some great thing for God. I'm telling you, just as a matter of course, as a matter of fact, spiritually speaking, that each of you has a direct call on your life. A direct pathway that has been written out in ages in the past.

I shared it in a different message that God has written a DNA on your heart. And that pathway, you know, that path that a DNA is physically, spiritually, is your life of good works. How you're going to love other people.

You know, there's the general sense of just being kind with people, being compassionate, and things like that. But there's something much more specific for you, you know, that God has in mind. The other night, when we were here in the chapel, sitting in silence, waiting on the Lord, I opened my Bible to 1 Corinthians 13, and I was just sitting there, just, I started reading at the beginning of the chapter, and I got stuck.

As soon as I got to verse 3, I just sat there and pondered those first three verses. And I looked at them, and I thought about them, and I prayed over them, and I considered them, and I knew vaguely what I was going to be preaching on today. And so it was just kind of stirring in my heart.

Let me just read those briefly. We're talking about glorifying God by loving others. And this is what Paul says, and he refers to himself, which is very interesting.

He doesn't point at some, you know, I don't know, make-believe Christian out there or something. He talks about himself. If I, the Apostle Paul, you know, if I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not possess this thing called love, agape, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I have the gift of prophecy and know all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Now, there's a couple of things that stood out to me when I looked at this.

First of all, that verse 1 refers to speech, and verse 2 refers to knowledge or, I don't know, the workings of the mind, and verse 3 refers to behavior. And it kind of basically covers all the bases, doesn't it? And the second thing that stood out to me is that this very much shows how our lives will be evaluated one day. Notice, here's the word that caught my attention.

Okay, so here's the truth. This is why it grabbed my attention the other night. The last word of verse 2 and the last word of verse 3. Nothing.

Because I very much had in my mind this whole concept of weight. You know, I knew I was going to be preaching on this subject. And when I started chewing on that word nothing, I started realizing, you know, if I don't possess love, then at the end of my timeline on earth, when I stand before the Lord, what am I going to be? What am I going to possess? Nothing.

Nothing. Now, I don't know how that figures into our salvation. I won't go there.

But I suppose it could be true of those Christians referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 3 where he says they just escape as though by fire. You know, somehow they make it through just barely, but they end up with nothing to show for their lives. Nothing.

And then, of course, there's the vast majority of mankind who just are nothing. They have substanceless souls, ghosts, bodiless beings. I don't know how you would say it, but it reminded me of something someone said.

The great day of judgment determines nothing. It only makes visible and palpable what we really are. And that's true.

The reality of who you are is going to be shown before millions of angels and dear saints who have paid a dear price with their lives. Who and what you are is going to be seen by all, and me too. Me too.

But these three verses, let me just kind of rephrase them a little bit. If we reverse the logic on these verses, again, I'm trying my best to be positive this morning. It doesn't come naturally to me.

It's not my call to be positive. It's Jeff's call. He's the pastor, and I'm the one who has the gift of making people feel bad.

And it is a gift. And I've been greatly endowed with it, as you know. So let's reverse the logic on these verses, and let me say them this way.

Verse 1, if I allow love to dominate my speech, my words will have significance and weightiness. Verse 2, if I allow love to dominate my attitudes and perspectives and my viewpoints of Scripture and spiritual life and people, etc., my value to God will only increase. And verse 3, if I allow love to dominate my actions

and behavior, the way that I treat people, great profit will be affixed to my life on that day.

I think that's pretty true. Would you say so? I think that's pretty right on. Okay, number 2, we glorify God through humility.

Now here again, we have a challenge. The challenge is that naturally we're prideful. We just have this innate desire to glorify ourselves, don't we? I've got one person that nods their head, and everyone else quickly looks away.

We just naturally want to grab honor for ourselves, don't we? We just naturally are prone to do that. And we do it in a thousand different subtle ways. What is pride? Pride is exalting yourself at the expense of those around you.

That's what pride is. I once gave this illustration. I think I was in a prison when I was doing it.

I made one of the guys stand up on a chair, and I used him as an example of pride. I said, now see him. He's standing up.

Everyone's looking at him. He's the center of attention. He's just glowing and basking in all this attention.

But look at where you are in relation to him. But that's what pride does. This desire to glorify ourselves.

Jesus saw this in the Pharisees in a lot of different ways. But one of the times he really grabbed it. Man, it was good.

In Luke 14, he saw something that was going on. I think it was at a wedding feast. He saw something happening there, and he used it.

But he always used situations and things around him to illustrate spiritual truths. And he did that in this case. And I'm just simply going to read this because it really, you'll get it.

You'll see what I'm saying. Luke 14, verse 7. And he began speaking a parable to the invited guests when he noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table. Saying to them, When you're invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him.

And he who invited you both will come and say to you, Give your place to this man, and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place. But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, Friend, move up higher. Then you will have, what? Honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. And that last phrase, or that last sentence there, that Jesus said, is expressed by him in a number of different occasions in the Gospels. And also, Peter said it, and I think it was James that said it as well.

I mean, this was one of the most important truths that Jesus wanted to leave with his disciples. If you try to exalt yourself, I guarantee you, you will be put in your place. But if you'll humble yourself, God will raise you up.

God will exalt you. God will honor you. And that is the truth.

That is a spiritual reality, men, that if you'll just humble yourselves, you are entrusting your life to God, and you're saying, Lord, you know better than me how I should be honored, if I should be honored, and so on. You know how to handle all that, Lord. But again, it's our natural tendency to want to bring it to ourselves.

We do it in just so many different ways. Boasting, name-dropping, gossiping about others to make ourselves look better somehow. There's just endless ways that we can try to exalt ourselves at the expense of others.

Jesus used this situation to illustrate that truth. I'll illustrate it in another manner just to kind of hopefully bring it out a little bit better. There were two little boys that went to a parade.

And there was this big parade in the middle of Boston, let's say. And these two little boys didn't know each other, and they were there with their dads. And all the different processions were going through and stuff.

And then came this smartly dressed military academy marching in cadence going right down the main street. And both of these little boys had the same reaction to seeing these other boys in their uniforms and their hats and marching just in perfect step and all of that. And both of them had the same reaction.

I want to be in that school. I want that to be the reality of my life. And so they both talked to their dads, and their dads took them separately, of course, to this school.

Well, Jimmy, his father was well-to-do. So Jimmy's father takes him into the headmaster of the school. And he makes a sizable donation to the school and says, look, I want to make sure that Jimmy is taken care of.

I want to make sure, in fact, I expect Jimmy to be that kid that was out in front of that marching formation. Next year, I want to see my little boy be the one who's out in front of that formation. Do you understand what I'm saying? And, of course, the headmaster, he's a good man and all that, but he has a great financial need for the school.

And so he bends and compromises his integrity some, and he makes the promise. So Jimmy enters the school. Well, Bobby, on the other hand, comes from a lower-middle-class family there in Boston, and he's been saving his money for some amount of time, and his dad decides to match funds.

And between the two of them, they're able to pay for the first semester in this military academy. And so they go in for the interview, and he's accepted as well. So all through this school year, Jimmy is given preferential treatment.

And the instructors have all been told, you make sure he passes, you make sure he gets this, he gets what he wants, you know, et cetera, et cetera. And by the end of the school year, you know, he becomes that lead cadet. Well, Bobby doesn't have that, you know, all those privileges.

He's got to fight his way for everything. He's got to go the hard way. He's got to earn it.

Here's what I want to say to you. And this is the point I'm trying to get at, is those two little boys represent the way that we can do the Christian life. You know, there's always going to be those people who want the easy path and they want the honor without earning it.

They want the name. They want to be exalted. They want their name up in the lights and so on.

But they're not willing to pay the price, you know. And just the way things are in the spiritual realm, God doesn't necessarily honor outwardly those who he esteems highly in his kingdom. You know, he doesn't.

Daniel Nebuchadnezzar is a perfect example. Daniel was highly esteemed in heaven, the angel told him. But who was he? He was just a bureaucrat in Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom.

And that's a picture of what we see in the church so often. Sometimes the big names in God's kingdom, lightweights. I'm not saying all the time.

You know, don't take that beyond where it's meant to be. But I'm telling you from much experience, that is the reality spiritually. I have met very big names, and the sense you get around them, spiritual lightweights.

But, you know, you take a Bobby who's had to go the hard route. And can I say to you guys that that's what you're doing here? God bless you. You're fighting through.

You know, you're doing the hard thing. You're not the one who just flakes out because things get rough. You're still in there fighting.

Bless your hearts. Solomon said, a man's pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain kabeed. Yes, a humble spirit will obtain honor.

All right, number three. We glorify God by the way we handle adversity. Here again, the challenge is to go against our nature.

All of us are this way. Nobody enjoys trials and opposition and hardships and affliction and adversity. And none of us enjoy persecution.

Who in the world wants to go through any of that? I don't, you know. And yet, if we can handle these things in the right way, they are the very things that bring God glory. And they're the very things that are the most effective ways of building weighty character into our beings.

It's just true, guys. It's the difficulties. It's the difficulties.

You know, I've said this before that God will occasionally give us those mountaintop experiences. Pastor Jeff had one this morning that we heard about. You know, glorious revelation of the eternal kingdom.

You know, and it just thrilled his soul. But Pastor Jeff, tomorrow is Monday. And Monday, huh? I backslid temporarily.

I'll encourage you at the end. But Monday's coming, was that one sermon. It's Friday, but Sunday's coming.

Well, I'm telling you, it's Sunday, but Monday's coming. Monday, you find yourself down slogging through the jungle floor. You know, through swamps and hard areas and muck and mire and opposition and snakes and lions roaming around.

And you don't know what you're going to run into. Dangerous toils and snares, John Newton called it. That's the reality of the daily life in Christianity, isn't it? That is the pilgrim's progress.

It's to go through all that. But God does give us those mountaintop experiences to encourage us along the way. But the mountaintop experiences don't build character.

Jeff is no more godly of character today because of this morning. But what he went through, you know, in Central America, you know, the hardships, the difficulties, the battles and all of that, fighting through. Those are the things that build godly character.

That's where you're changed and transformed. And, you know, when you're going through it, it's hard. I understand it's difficult.

It's a struggle. And it is hard to get your eyes out of the small little picture of your own little world. But I can tell you from experience, when I look back over my life, and this is the truth.

Of course, it's easy saying it from here. But it was the hardships that I thank God for most of all. That is the truth.

It was the hardships. It was the times I was humiliated. It was the times that people got right in my face and called me names and ripped into me after I poured my heart out at a church service or something.

It was the times when I would pour my heart out to some man sitting up here in an office, and he would, you know, turn on me in hatred. Those were the things that built character into me. Those are the things that God used to change me and soften me and humble me and so on.

You know, it's just the reality of the Christian life. Paul said in Romans 5, he said, not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations. Why? Why would we exult in our tribulations? Are you crazy? Because this, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance and perseverance proven character and proven character hope.

You know, I remember a time, guys, that I don't know how to say it. I was just a big baby. I couldn't take the slightest crossing of my will.

You know, every little thing in life had to go my way, or I was whatever, bent out of shape or whatever. I was very much that way, very, very much that way. And, you know, the Lord helped me to grow through this process over the years and did change me.

But it's through that process. I can't explain it, but when God takes you through a hardship, somehow you come out the other end of it with brighter hope. It's just true.

And the reason why is because you've been carrying 500 pounds, if I could say it that way, 500 pounds in the wrong way, 500 pounds of flesh. And God has used some experience to carve off 50 pounds of it. And you're only, now you're walking at 450 and you feel light as a feather, you know.

It's not a good analogy because it's kind of backwards, isn't it? But, you know, that's just the process that God takes us through to change us. And it happens little by little through life. You know, a person with a weighty character, everything can be taken from him.

And one day I believe that's what's going to happen to true believers. That's where we're headed, that they are going to persecute us. The false church are going to be right at the forefront of the persecution.

You better know that. The pseudo-Christians that you feel like are your brothers aren't. And one day they're going to turn on true believers, the remnant.

And they can take everything we own away from us. They can take our loved ones away from us. They can take our freedom away from us.

They can take all our stuff away from us. They can even take our health away from us. And they will take our lives.

But they can't take the spiritual substance that God has built within our souls. They can't lay a finger on that. They can't lay a finger on it.

And as God takes you through difficult circumstances like this live-in program, He's building something so wonderful inside you. Again, the Apostle Paul. This is 2 Corinthians 4.16. Therefore, we do not lose heart.

But though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory. Far beyond all comparison.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Let me read that in a couple other translations.

Phillips says it this way. Verse 17. These little troubles, which are really so transitory, are winning for us a permanent, glorious, and solid reward out of all proportion to our pain.

And the Amplified says it like this. For our light, momentary affliction, this slight distress of the passing hour is ever more and more abundantly preparing and producing and achieving for us an everlasting weight of glory beyond all measure, excessively surpassing all comparisons and all calculations. A vast and transcendent glory and blessedness never to cease.

Hallelujah! That's what God is doing in your lives, men. It's hard to see it sometimes, I know. But that is the reality of what He's doing inside of you.

The eternal, long-lasting picture of what's going on. You know, it's interesting that Jesus, when He referred to the cross, He often talked about how He and how His Father would be glorified through that. Now think about the reality of that.

Jesus was stripped and beaten and mocked and spit upon and nailed to that cross. The worst thing that the world could do to a human being would be to treat Him like that. A spectacle in front of everybody.

I mean, that's about as humiliating as you could possibly be. And that, in the Kingdom of God, is what it means to be glorified. To glorify God and to be glorified in the most extreme sense.

You know what I'm saying? That's the extreme. In God's Kingdom, and you study it out, I promise you it's true. That you will find that it's true.

It's when they persecute you. Great is your reward in heaven, Jesus said, when they revile you. That is where you're truly glorified and esteemed in God's eyes.

When you go through that sort of thing. And when He expressed that in John 12, He said, The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. He went on to say, If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.

The Father will honor him. The Father will honor him. That's a very interesting statement.

The Father will honor him. Do you know, men? The Father will one day honor you. For everything you've done.

For God. It says in 1 Corinthians 4, just after Paul has described the foundation, the building of our judgment and so on. The fire will test the quality of each man's work and so on.

Then in chapter 4, he says, Praise will come to him. Meaning a godly Christian. Praise will come to him from God.

What an incredible concept. I can't imagine God praising Steve Gallagher. I cannot comprehend that.

I can't comprehend that. And yet, that is basically what he's saying. That if we will live our lives in such a way that glorifies God, one day before multitudes, God will glorify us.

Not because he really, I mean, he will say some things, I'm sure. But it will just be the reality of who we were. Of what God built inside of us throughout our lives.

Will be seen by all. There won't be any more of the facades and the lies and the flattery and all the falsehood. All of that will be swept away on the day of judgment.

And the reality of who we are and what we are will be revealed to all. But it's a process. It doesn't happen overnight.

We're building something for an eternity, aren't we? We're not building something. We're not throwing together a shack that we can live in for a few months or something. We're building something that is meant to last us forever.

Now, I have a little illustration here that I'm going to show you. Because I want this to get inside you. You know, I don't want you to ever forget the reality of what I'm sharing with you this morning, okay? Pastor Steve has so much love for you guys that I went down to Fort Knox yesterday.

I ran down there and I talked to the commander and I asked him, could I borrow a few bars of gold? And he was kind enough to give me these. Loan them to me. You can see here, this is your life from God's eyes.

This is what God is doing inside of you. And everything that you are going through in life is adding to that building, to that eternal building that God is building inside you. So when you resist that sinful thought and it seemed like such a struggle and you've forgotten it in moments and it's gone, God has just added another block, another gold brick to your soul.

And when you did that kind deed to that lady down the street, God has just added a little more substance to your inner being. And when you humbled yourself before that brother and you just went under and you let him think that he was the big shot, God was watching. He went away a little more depleted and you went away a little more weighty.

And when you gave yourself over to spending time in intercession for some lost soul, more weight was being added to your soul. And when you poured out your heart to someone in need, more weight. When you gave of yourself and of your substance, more weight.

That's the reality, men, of what's going on inside you. And I hope that you can get a sense of it. I hope that you can get a sense of it.

I hope that you can see what a glorious and awesome thing that God is doing inside you as you go through this process that can seem so difficult at times.

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