

Live for the Glory of God

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[0 : 00] So, whatever we do, whether we work as a teacher or a secretary or as a lawyer or a doctor, as a housekeeper or a carpenter, as a student or stay-at-home mother, whatever you do, it's not your purpose. It's simply what you do. Those are careers.

Those are jobs. Those are endeavors. Those are activities. And if you think about it, if those things are our purpose, then it would mean that our purpose changes because I don't think there's any one of us who has constantly done the same thing or constantly given him or herself to the same endeavor, the same career, the same job. We go through different seasons and stages.

So, the truth this morning is that even though we have these different careers and different jobs and different activities and different endeavors, the common purpose that God has given to all of us is the same and never changes. Now, I know that many books have been written on this topic to help people to find their purpose. Some have been bestsellers and many people have tried to follow what those books encourage them to do. And while I don't in any way question the sincerity or the motives of those who wrote those books, largely they are driven from a humanistic understanding as opposed to a biblical understanding about what God has called every single human being who's ever been born, who ever will be born to do. And this morning, as we stand on the second Sunday of a new year, and as we consider what this new year what this new year would hold for us and what we will give ourselves to in this new year,

I want us to consider 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verses 31 through 33. I want to consider from these three verses the common purpose that God has given to all of us. And if you're not there yet, please turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. We'll be reading verses 31 through 33. Paul writes, so whatever, sorry, so whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you this morning for the privilege that we have to gather in this place.

[3 : 24] Lord, we thank you for the privilege of being able to lift our voices to you in song. And now, Lord, to be able to sit under the instruction of your word.

We ask, Lord, that you'd use your word to build your church. We ask that you would use your word to instruct us and to lead us into truth.

Father, I do pray that you would cause each of us to hear your voice in this message today.

Father, would you use this message to be a true rudder for our lives, to truly be foundational upon which we will build and seek to live our lives in this new year?

Father, we ask that you would help us now. Help us as we sit under the instruction of your word. I ask for your grace.

[4 : 27] I ask for your anointing and your spirit to open your word and to be faithful to your word. Lord, we ask that you do these things this morning.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Well, the answer to the question that I raised at the outset of the message is found in the three verses that we just read in 1 Corinthians 10, 31 through 33.

And it is simply this. Our purpose, our common purpose that God has given to all of us is to live for the glory of God. That is the life's purpose for every human being who has ever lived and who will ever live.

Yes, God in his divine providence does give us certain gifts and opportunities and certain sets of circumstances and then he would use those gifts and those opportunities in our lives in particular ways.

But the reason that he gave them to us is still the same. It is all the same for every single one of us and it is to bring him glory. So again, whatever the endeavor is in life, this is what we are called to in these three verses.

[5 : 54] In this common purpose, it is to this common purpose that we are called. Our purpose is to live for the glory of God. That is the unchanging common purpose that every single one of us assembled in this room has.

That was God's purpose when he created man, when there was no sin in the world. And that continued to be God's purpose even after Adam sinned and plunged in the entire humanity into sin. Even after the fall, God's purpose is that we would live for his glory. Now in the last message, I encouraged us and urged us to seek the lasting city.

And in this message, I want to encourage us to live for the glory of God. In these three verses before us, we are called to live for the glory of God in a general and in a specific way.

In a general way and in a specific way. And what I want to do in our remaining time is I want us to consider the general way that we are to live for God's glory and then the specific way we are to live for God's glory.

[7 : 10] First, generally, we are called to live for the glory of God. And before considering what it means to live for the glory of God, we really need to settle the issue that whatever living for the glory of God means, whatever it means, Scripture calls us to it as our primary purpose in life.

We need to settle that. And I realize that some of you may be thinking about what I'm saying in the context of how you may have approached this issue and how you may view your life and think about your life and think of the lives of other people.

I want to ask you for a moment, just lay that aside. Just lay that aside for the moment. And just consider with me what God is saying to us in these three verses.

Again, despite the fall of mankind into sin, despite the sin and the rebellion that is in the world, God created everyone and everything for his own glory.

And that's the witness of Scripture. God created everyone and everything for his glory. And that's the ultimate purpose for which all things were created.

[8 : 29] In the rest of the shorter catechism, the very first question is this. What is the chief end of man? And the answer is, man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

That's the way the rest of the catechism thinks about it. That is the first question as they begin to consider this body of questions to teach us about God and to teach us about ourselves.

And they ask the question, what is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. Now the background to these three verses that we just read is that the Apostle Paul was giving this general prohibition against believers eating food offered to idols.

He was addressing the motivation of the Corinthians in terms of how they made decisions and how they interacted with the landscape of idolatry that was in the city of Corinth.

He was addressing how they made decisions about whether they bought food in the marketplace or not because the food in the marketplace generally had been offered to idols.

[9 : 52] And he was considering their motivations about what would happen when an unbeliever invited them to dinner. More than likely the meat that was going to be on that table was also offered to idols because that was just the way it was in the city of Corinth.

And Paul was addressing these different scenarios and he was telling them here's what you should do. You should, if they say to you that this food has been, this meat has been offered to idols, he said, well then you should not eat it.

Not for your conscience sake, you could eat it but do it for their conscience sake because it may cause them to stumble. But Paul recognizes that he can't address every single scenario.

He can't give them the rule of thumb to follow for every single situation. So what he does is he he says to them that they need to consider how they make these decisions in a broader way and he gives them a particular rule which we find in verse 31.

He says to them so, this is the conclusion of all that he's been saying to them in this letter about food offered to idols and how they interact with it and so forth. So, whether you eat or drink, whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God.

[11 : 18] So he's saying rather than me trying to specify every single situation that you could possibly come into, here's the rule. Here is the principle.

It is whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God. He's saying to them this is what should preoccupy your attention whether you are living for the glory of God or not.

So, taking this principle that we find in 1 Corinthians 10.31 in mind, taking it to heart that we are to glorify God in what we do, then we should not be preoccupied about whether our purpose in life is

to do this or to do that.

We should not be preoccupied about whether my purpose in life is to be a business owner instead of being an employee. If you're an employee, be the best employee that you can to the glory of God.

And should God open the door for you to be a business owner, then be the best business owner that you can be to the glory of God. But recognize that your purpose didn't change. Your activity changed.

[12 : 35] What you were going to give yourself to on a daily basis changed. But your activity, but your purpose has not changed. You are to give yourself to the glory of God.

Some of you this morning are students. You're in high school and some of you are in college. And some of you may have desires beyond graduation to be a nurse or to be a doctor or to be a pastor or a lawyer, to be an accountant or a police officer, to be a plumber or an engineer, to be a teacher or some other line of work.

Your purpose right now as a student is to glorify God. And when it changes into one of those other careers, it is still to glorify God.

The activity changes, but your purpose never changes. Now this doesn't mean that God does not raise up specific people at specific times for specific purposes and for specific reasons.

We see this in Scripture. God raised up Moses as a deliverer. He raised up David as the king of Israel. He raised up the Apostle Paul, raised up Ruth, raised up Mary.

[13 : 53] We think of it in our own country today, today's majority rule day. God raised up Selendon Pendling. He raised them up at a strategic time in our nation to fulfill the role that he fulfilled.

God gives gifts and he gives motivations and he creates circumstances providentially, leads people into those particular callings and causes that he calls them to.

to. But the purpose is all the same. The purpose ultimately is to bring glory to himself.

So we should not be on this finding my purpose wild goose chase, which as I said is really infected by humanism and pride and all manner of things that God has not called people to, not gifted them for, not opened doors or opportunities for them for, yet they would pursue it because someone has encouraged them to go and find their purpose and sin in us will cause us to reach for things that God simply did not give us.

But God's raising up specific people at specific times to do specific things does not negate the fact that he has just called us to live for his glory.

[15 : 31] And whatever we find ourselves doing in the moment, whatever our hands are finding to do in the moment, we do it to the glory of God, trusting that he will position us and place us where he wants us to be placed.

The psalmist says in Psalm 16, I think in verse 10 and verses 11, he says, Lord, the boundary lines for my life have fallen in pleasant places.

God sets the boundary lines for our lives and they change. He adjusts them. They look differently over time. But what doesn't change over time is that whatever those boundary lines are, whatever he's called us to do, we have to be living for his glory.

I trust you're persuaded that this is true this morning, that above and beyond all that we do, the common purpose that God has given to all of us is to glorify him in whatever we do.

Now, what does it mean to live for the glory of God or to do whatever we do for the glory of God? And perhaps more fundamentally, what is the meaning of glory?

[16 : 50] Well, in the Old Testament, the word glory comes from a root word that means weighty or heavy. The words dignity and respect and reverence also come from that root word.

And so we can say that glory means weight or dignity or reverence or respect. You've probably heard a person say, oh, he's a lightweight or she's a lightweight.

And what they really mean by that is the person is of no real significance. You don't need to pay them much attention. Or you've probably heard someone say something like, don't listen to him or her.

Her words don't carry any weight around here. I think we've heard those kinds of statements and they communicate this idea of weight or a lack of weight.

The New Bible Dictionary of Biblical Theology makes this statement about glory. Very simple statement but very profound. It says, glory is preeminently a divine quality.

[18 : 04] Ultimately, only God has glory. Glory is preeminently a divine quality. It's a quality that belongs to God.

Ultimately, only God has glory. Now, God grants glory to his creatures. He grants glory among his creatures, but all that glory is derived from his ultimate glory.

Ultimately and preeminently, the glory belongs to the Lord. The conclusion of the Lord's prayer, when we pray, we pray, for yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.

Yours is the kingdom, yours is the power, yours is the glory. So now, when we connect all of this together, when we remember that glory means weighty or heavy, reverence or respect, it must mean that all weight and heaviness and reverence and respect are attributed to God.

So when we live for God's glory, when we live for the glory of God, we are living with regard for him. We are living with this awareness that he is weighty, that he is majestic, that he is deserving of our reverence and our respect and our worship.

[19 : 27] He is worthy of our reverence. They rightly belong to him. And this means that if God is truly weighty, we wouldn't disregard him the way we would say, oh, that person carries no weight.

No, what we do is we consider God in all that we do. God becomes our reference point for living. He becomes the compass for our lives.

He becomes, as some would say, our true north, the one who guides us and directs us wherever we are to go. And this morning, we need to allow this to really sink in our minds.

All of life, all of life, is to be lived for the glory of God. Whatever tasks or activities that we can think about this morning that's a part of our daily lives, they can be lived to the glory of God.

That's why Paul says, oh, whatever you do, whatever we do can be lived to the glory of God in worship and in reverence to him.

[20 : 34] Now, in a short while, we're going to leave here and we're going to go, most of us, to a meal of some sort, maybe the biggest meal of the week or something other than that.

And as we do that, as we enjoy the gift of food, as we enjoy the gift of fellowship, we can bring glory to God. We can glorify God, first of all, by pausing to thank him for his provision, thanking him for providing food and drink.

We can glorify him by expressing gratitude, by being gracious to those who prepared it, and those who serve it. We can glorify him by remembering and thanking him for saving us as we sang this morning.

See, when God saves us, and as David shared, it transforms everything. We see things differently. We see our food differently. We see it as a gift from God. We see our relationships differently.

We see them as gifts from God that he brought us into through Jesus Christ. Christ. And so we can enjoy them, not in a vacuum, not absentmindedly, but for the glory of God, thanking him for all that he has given to us in Jesus Christ.

[21 : 51] We can enjoy the fellowship, we can have great conversation, and we can glorify God in that conversation by praying and asking, Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing and acceptable in your sight.

You see, it is so easy for us to be more aware this morning about bringing glory to God in this context, and leave and not consider, we can continue to bring glory to God in whatever other context we find ourselves in.

In the morning, we're going to all go into our different worlds, some of us the world of work, and some of us the world of school, and we'll be engaging in various kinds of activities, but we have to remember our purpose is the same, we are to glorify God in whatever we do.

Well, that's the general purpose to which we are called in these verses, but that's not all that we are called to. the apostle Paul goes on in verses 32 and 33, and he says, give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many that they may be saved.

Here in these two verses, what the apostle Paul does is he moves from the general to the specific. he moves to a specific purpose that we are called to as well.

[23 : 35] He is saying that in addition to living for the glory of God, we are also called to seek the salvation of others. And that's my second and final point.

Seek the salvation of others. The specific purpose to seek the salvation of others is connected to our general purpose of living for the glory of God.

Now again, the situation in Corinth was that people were doing all manner of things in God's name, but they showed little concern for how what they did affected others.

They really didn't care. They saw themselves as spiritual and they did all the things that marked them as spiritual, but they had little regard for how their actions affected the people around them. So Paul is essentially saying glorify God in all that you do, but be mindful of the effect of your actions on others, and in particular, how your actions affect them in terms of their salvation.

[24 : 49] Now, he says in verse 32, give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God. What does it mean to give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God?

Well, I think what Paul means becomes very clear when we take as a whole what he says. He says we are to live life the way he lived life, and he was not seeking his own advantage, he was seeking the advantage of many that they may be saved.

So, in other words, this is a call to live and act in a manner that others might be saved. And notice the three groups of people that he refers to, he refers to Jews, and they were those who really, in a sense, were near to God, but they still weren't saved.

The Greeks, those who were far from God, worshipping multiple gods, and then he refers to the church of God, those who belong to God, and those who are saved.

And obviously the concern for those who are near to God, and those who are away from God, is for them to be saved.

[26 : 09] That's the burden, that's the concern. And the concern for those who are part of the church of God, those who are saved, is that we ought not do anything that trips them up, or harms them spiritually.

So for those two groups who are not saved, he is concerned that we live in such a way that we can perhaps bring them to salvation, and for those who are saved, that we live in such a way that we do not trip them up, harm them spiritually.

in his commentary on these verses, in his 1 Corinthians commentary, David Garland effectively summarizes the point that Paul makes in these two verses, and he writes this, one must avoid doing anything that might turn potential converts away from the gospel, or that might cause Christians to betray their faith.

this approach demands far more than simply trying to avoid hurt feelings. To bring glory to God, Christians must behave in ways that lead others to a saving relationship with Christ.

So the issue is not about being politically correct and not offending people and hurting their feelings and so forth. No, he is saying that it has salvation in view.

[27 : 38] There's a gospel motivation behind living in this particular way. He's talking about living in such a way that we bring the unconverted to Christ, hopefully, and that we would not be a stumbling block or upset some people's faith, those who already know Christ.

So how do we do this? Well, I think it's obvious some of the things that we should not do. For example, we all know that if we profess to know Jesus Christ as Lord and personal Savior, we should not live in a way that contradicts that.

We should live a life that is consistent with the profession of faith that we have, that God has called us to, to live and to walk in a manner that is worthy of the calling that we have received.

I think we all know that. We all know that we should not live contrary to that. and that's in particular as it relates to unbelievers.

As it relates to believers, I think we all know that we should not in any way live a life that is going to be misleading or harmful to a fellow believer, perhaps, through conduct that could lead them into worldliness or conduct that could cause them to be filled with arrogance and pride through ungodly counsel and bad advice.

[29 : 18] We know that we should not do those things. And I don't think the Apostle Paul is addressing those kinds of things as he is calling us to live for God's glory and to conduct ourselves in a manner that does not offend and bring a stumbling block to those who are away from Christ and also bring spiritual harm to those who are in Christ.

That doesn't seem to be his concern. That kind of blatant sinful conduct is not Paul's concern. Instead, the concern that Paul seems to have is conduct that is selfish and self-pleasing and self-advantageous against the spiritual advantage of others.

Paul seems to be getting at self-centered living that is not mindful of other people's need to be saved if they are not saved or mindful of other believers need to be strengthened and encouraged

in their faith as opposed to hampered and harmed and weakened in their faith.

Paul seems to be getting at that. He says, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many that they may be saved.

And in most cases, these dynamics play out at work, at home, and at school, where the people we rub shoulders with. And let's be honest this morning, it's not easy to give up our rights.

[31 : 06] It's not easy to take the short end of the stick and to be humble as opposed to proud.

These are not natural responses for us. These were not natural responses before Christ came into our lives, and even after Christ has come into our lives, they still are not automatic and natural responses.

But by the grace of God, the transforming effect of the saving work of God in our lives does enable us to respond in humility as opposed to pride, does enable us to willingly take the short end of the stick as opposed to the long end of the stick, does enable us to at times lay down our rights instead of trying to uphold those rights in particular situations.

It's not easy to do that. And that's what it means to live for the good of others. That's what it means to live for their spiritual good that they may be saved.

I want you to imagine, just imagine if in this room we by the grace of God who have come to know Christ resolve that we are going to live this way.

We're going to live for the glory of God and we are going to live for the good of others, for the salvation of others, bringing them to Christ hopefully, or that God would use our lives to strengthen them if they are already believers.

[32 : 49] Let me close with two concluding thoughts. First of all, at the beginning of this message, I intentionally did not distinguish between believers and unbelievers because God's purpose for believers and unbelievers is the same, that they would all bring him glory.

Now, obviously, if you're here this morning and you do not know Jesus Christ as your Lord and as your personal Savior, you cannot in that condition live for the glory of God.

You just can't do it. You cannot seek the good of others, the spiritual good of others, because if you think about it, if you could, then Jesus died in vain.

If you could do that away from a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, all that we're doing this morning is a royal waste of time. But nonetheless, God has created you for his glory.

God has given you life and breath and health and strength so that every day, every waking moment will be lived for his glory. And to position yourself to be able to do that, you have to come to Christ, submitting to him, asking for his forgiveness, recognizing that you are separated from him that you need to be reconciled to him.

[34 : 34] And the way that we are reconciled to God is through Jesus Christ, through the perfect life that he lived, through the sinless life that he lived, and the sacrificial death that he died on the cross, so that sinners can be reconciled to God.

And those who put their trust in Jesus Christ, those who come to him, seeking forgiveness for their sins, whatever those sins are, they're forgiven, they're made sons and daughters, and they're seated at the Lord's table.

And that forgiveness can be yours this morning, and you can begin to live for God, bringing glory to his name. And so that's you this morning, and you're here without Christ.

I encourage you to settle that issue today before you leave this place. And then the second thought I have for us this morning is for those of us who are believers in Christ, we're called to live every day for the glory of God, and to live every day seeking the spiritual good, the salvation of others.

And by God's grace, we need to seek to fulfill that every day. Every day we need to be asking the Lord, Lord, help me today in all that I do to live for your glory, and help me today to live in a way that I'm mindful of other people, mindful of unbelievers, hopeful that through my living they will be brought to Christ, mindful of my brothers and sisters in Christ that I will do nothing that will cause them to stumble or to weaken them or to mislead them in a way that they should not go.

[36 : 16] But we're called to do that though, we need to remember, we will never do it perfectly. perfectly. And I know when we come to New Year's, you know, we are very enthusiastic and we try to go for absolute perfection in all that we strive for and we plan for.

But the truth is, we won't do this perfectly. Because of indwelling sin, we do nothing perfectly.

Because of living in a fallen world, we do nothing perfectly. yes, God has saved us. Yes, he has broken the power of sin in our lives, but we're not free from the presence of sin.

And therefore, we may have some good days and by God's grace, we live for him and we seek his glory and we benefit other people. But there are going to be some days we fall flat on our faces. But the truth is, even if we had all good days, even if we had all those days where we came home rejoicing, because we live for the glory of God, because we live mindful of other people, we turned the other cheek, we went the extra mile, we took the short end of the stick, we do all of that.

[37 : 31] If every day of our lives was marked by that, that's still not enough. That's still not enough.

There's nothing that we're able to do in that regard that would be absolutely perfect in the eyes of the Lord. And we should not be looking to what we do in terms of living for God's glory to give us acceptance before him.

Our consolation this morning, our encouragement this morning should be that wherever we fail, Jesus Christ has already succeeded.

it should be that Jesus perfectly glorified God as he walked the face of the earth.

He perfectly glorified God in his death. And you know what? He did more than just seek the salvation of others. He gave his life for the salvation of others.

[38 : 36] And he did to the utmost, he did to utmost perfection what we are called to do. Listen to how Jesus says it at the end of his earthly ministry when he prayed in John 17, the prayer that we often call the high priestly prayer, he prayed these words to the Father, I have glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do.

I've glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work you gave me to do. So, brothers and sisters, as we seek to glorify the Lord in all that we do, as we seek to seek the salvation of others, let us remember that our Savior has already done it perfectly.

It doesn't mean that we slack off and we don't give our best efforts by the grace of God and we seek to do that as best as we can. Still called to do that. But let us not rely on our own effort, let us not look to our own effort, let us not trust in our own effort for acceptance before God.

We have been accepted by him. And we have been accepted because Jesus Christ has perfectly glorified God in every single way.

He has perfectly walked towards other people doing the utmost of laying his life down for sinners.

[40 : 17] And so as we embark upon 2016, as we embrace this new year, let's live for God's glory.

Let's ask the Lord every day, God, help me today, whatever I will experience in this day, whatever endeavors come my way, that I will live for your glory.

And then Lord, help me to live in a selfless way towards other people. Those who don't know Christ, would you use my life today to point them to you? And those who know you, use my life to deepen their love for you, deepen their faith in you, and to help them to follow you.

Let's pray together.