

## GLORIFY GOD

*17 After Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes toward heaven and said, Father, the hour has come, glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you—<sup>2</sup>just as you have granted him authority over all peoples so that he may give eternal life to all those whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup>And this is eternal life, [namely,] to know you, the only true God, and [to know] him whom you sent, Jesus Christ. <sup>4</sup>I glorified you on the earth by accomplishing the work you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup>And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world was created. (Jn. 17:1-5)*

### **Introduction**

By age 19, Michael was attending Drury College in Springfield, MO, and performing his own one-man show of Mark Twain during the summer at the Silver Dollar City theme park. Building on his dramatic abilities first cultivated in high school, Michael was having a great time exercising his natural gifts of speech and theater. A few years later the highlight of his acting career came as he portrayed Mark Twain in a PBS film shot on location in Hannibal, MO, and St. Louis.

Some years afterward, when a group of people from Hannibal asked him to write an original play, direct it, and set up a Mark Twain theater in the historic riverside town, Michael took a year's leave of absence from his job to return to his first love, the theater. During this time an idea was born in Michael's mind: Why couldn't the city of Hannibal have a Mark Twain theme park? He began to envision a Mark Twain Heritage Park, complete with hotel, marina, and outdoor amphitheater.

But the theme park was not to be. Indeed, Michael was beginning to realize that his love affair with the theater and his pre-occupation with Mark Twain were not meeting the deepest needs of his heart. The LORD eventually brought Michael to the point where he let go of his theatrical ambitions and even threw away all of his Mark Twain material.

Michael confesses that his involvement with Twain had become something of an idol: "I looked on my acting and communication abilities as something I had developed, not as a gift from the LORD. I needed to bring it all to the altar and leave it there."

What Michael had thought was the most important part of his life and his chief ambition—the stage, performing and directing—became the least important as he sought the LORD's will. Today Michael testifies of his desire to "be used by the LORD in an effective way for His kingdom and His glory." (*POWER*, 7/28/91, pp. 2-ff.)

What is **your** chief ambition?

From our Lord's prayer we learn that His chief ambition was to glorify God His Father:

*After Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes toward heaven and said, Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you ... <sup>4</sup>I have glorified you on the earth by accomplishing the work you have given me to do. (Jn. 17:1,4)*

This should be our chief ambition, too.

## **I. Glorify God, By Making Him Known**

Four times in this chapter our Lord refers to the fact that He has made God the Father known:

*I have revealed your name to the men whom you gave me out of the world. (Jn. 17:6a)*

*... the words you gave me I have given to them. (Jn. 17:8a)*

*I have given them your word. (Jn. 17:14a)*

*I have made your name known to them, and I will make it known. (Jn. 17:26a)*

That is to say, He has revealed God to men, especially to His disciples, and has spoken God's Word to them.

In verse 3 our Lord declares that it is essential for men to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ—it is essential for men to enter into a personal relationship with God and with Christ if they are to be saved and experience eternal life in the blessed fellowship of God. Note that Jesus defines eternal life as being in union and communion with the true and living God and with His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Contrast our Lord's statement with the erroneous concept held by the woman of Samaria; namely, her view that eternal life is to be found in some magical "fountain of youth,"

*Jesus answered her, Every one who drinks this water will be thirsty again; <sup>14</sup>but whoever drinks the water that I will give him shall never be thirsty [again]. On the contrary, the water that I shall give him shall become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life. <sup>15</sup>The woman said to him, Sir, give me this water, so that I will not be thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw [water]. (Jn. 4:13-15)*

This was the purpose of Christ's work; namely, to make God known to men so that we might know God in a saving way. By His life, our Lord revealed the God of heaven in all of His love and in all of His holiness. By His death and subsequent resurrection, our Lord reconciles to God those who receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

There is a desperate need to make the God of heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, known to the world because, by himself in his natural condition, man is without hope and without God and is destined for the judgment of hell. Note Ephesians 2:1-3,11-12, a passage in which the Apostle Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians of what their condition was prior to their conversion to Jesus Christ:

*... you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now working in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. We were by nature children of wrath, just like the rest [of mankind] ... <sup>11</sup>remember that formerly you ... <sup>12</sup>... were separated from Christ ... having no hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:1-3,11-12)*

There is a desperate need to make the God of heaven and His Son, Jesus Christ, known to the world, because forgiveness and reconciliation and communion with God are only found through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and in a living relationship with Him. Note Acts 4:12, a passage in which the Apostle Peter testifies that Jesus Christ is the only Savior, *“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.”* Consider, also, the testimony of the Apostle John as recorded in 1 John 5:11-12, *“this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”*

One way in which we can glorify God is by making Him known. We glorify God by making known to men what the true and living God is really like: His holiness, His truth, His purity, His justice, His majesty, His love, His mercy, His compassion—pointing them to God as He has revealed Himself in the Bible and especially in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. We glorify God by making known to men what the true and living God has done for us and for our salvation; namely, the giving of His one and only Son to be the Savior of all who believe in Him: *“for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life”* (Jn. 3:16.)

In practical terms, how can we make God and His Son, Jesus Christ, known to the world—to our neighbors, to our fellow-workers, to our fellow-students, to our loved ones? We can do so by living a Christian life of peace and contentment and pointing others to the source of that life:

*Do all things without grumbling and arguing, <sup>15</sup>so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a perverse and depraved generation, among whom you shine like stars in the universe, <sup>16</sup>firmly holding the word of life. (Phil. 2:14-16a)*

We can do so by being ready to tell others the reason for the hope we possess as a Christian, as the Apostle Peter exhorts us: *“be always prepared with an answer for everyone who asks you for an explanation concerning the hope that is in you”* (1 Pet. 3:15.) That hope is nothing less than the certainty that we have a place in the kingdom of heaven, prepared for us by the Lord Jesus Christ by virtue of His atoning work of redemption:

*Do not let your heart be troubled; trust in God, trust in me also. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me; so that where I am, you may be also. (Jn. 14:1-3)*

Yet another way can we make God and His Son, Jesus Christ, known to the world is by supporting the spread of the gospel at home and overseas by means of prayer. The Apostle Paul exhorts the church, *“pray for us, too, that God would open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. <sup>4</sup>Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should”* (Col. 4:3-4.) We can support the spread of the gospel not only by prayer, which is most essential, but also by means of financial support. The Apostle Paul also expresses his appreciation to the Philippian church for their faithful financial support of his ministry:

*Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; <sup>16</sup>for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. (Phil. 4:15-16)*

Yet another way we can support the spread of the gospel is by offering ourselves to God in response to His call, should He call us into the fulltime ministry of the gospel. If He should do so, may we respond in the same way as did Isaiah, *“Then I heard the voice of the LORD saying, ‘Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?’ And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’”* (Isa. 6:8.)

Let us glorify God, by making Him known.

## **II. Glorify God, By Finishing the Work He has Given You to Do**

In verse 4 our Lord Jesus Christ emphasizes the fact that He glorified God His Father by accomplishing the work His Father gave Him to do: *“I glorified you on the earth by accomplishing the work you gave me to do.”*

The Lord Jesus concentrated on the work His Father assigned Him to do; an example of this is provided in Mark 1:34-39,

*He healed many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; but he did not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him. <sup>35</sup>In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and went out, retiring to a desolate place, and there he prayed. <sup>36</sup>Simon and those who were with him followed him. <sup>37</sup>They found him and said to him, Everyone is looking for you. <sup>38</sup>But he said to them, Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby towns, so that I may preach there also; for this is the reason I have come. <sup>39</sup>So he traveled throughout all of Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. (Mk. 1:34-39)*

Jesus resisted the temptation to offer Himself to the people as a popular miracle worker. Instead, as His number one priority He focused on the ministry His Father gave Him, namely, the preaching of the gospel and the demonstration of His victory over the devil.

Jesus refused to deviate from the work His Father assigned Him to do, as we see from His response to the crowds following His miraculous feeding of the five thousand:

*Now when the people saw the sign that he had performed, they said, Surely, this is the Prophet who is to come into the world. <sup>15</sup>Jesus, perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force in order to make him king, withdrew again into the hills by himself. (Jn. 6:14-15)*

Jesus resisted the temptation to allow the people to make Him a conquering political leader. He steadfastly remained faithful to the work His Father assigned Him to do, namely, to save His people from their sins by offering Himself unto God as the atoning sacrifice upon the cross of Calvary.

Jesus firmly resolved and committed Himself to finish the work His Father assigned Him to do, even though it mean enduring the cross. The Gospel of Luke tells us that, as the time approached for Him to be received up to heaven via the cross, *“Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem”* (Lk. 9:51.) In the Garden of Gethsemane, as He anticipated the cross that lay before Him, we hear our Lord pray, *“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will”* (Matt. 26:39.)

Accomplishing the work God His Father assigned to Him demanded endurance and perseverance, as is made clear by the testimony of the Book of Hebrews:

*Let us focus our eyes on **Jesus**, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him **endured the cross**, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. <sup>3</sup>**Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men**, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Heb. 12:2-3)*

The wording of the Greek text of John 17:4 makes clear that God the Father expected His Son to finish and fulfill the work assigned to Him. Jesus reports that He has *“accomplished the work you gave me to do;”* (literally, *“the work ... you gave me in order that I should do it.”*)

In practical terms, how might we glorify God by accomplishing the work He has given us to do? We may do so by persevering in specific prayer for some person or for some godly purpose without losing heart. We may do so by persevering—in reliance upon the grace of God—under a personal trial until the LORD provides the deliverance. We may do so by fulfilling a particular ministry to which we have been assigned, just as the Apostle Paul exhorts Archippus to do: *“Tell Archippus, See to it that you complete the work you have received in the LORD”* (Col. 4:17.) We may do so by continuing to lead a Christian life of commitment and allegiance to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, even in the midst of intense opposition:

*We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure. <sup>12</sup>We do not want you to become sluggish, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised.* (Heb. 6:11-12)

Let us glorify God, by finishing the work He has given us to do. Let us give heed to the admonition our Lord speaks to the church in Sardis:

*Be alert, and establish the things that remain [but] that are about to die, for I have not found any of your works perfected [completed, accomplished] before my God”* (Rev. 3:2.)

### **III. Glorify God, And He will Receive You into His Glory**

Now that His work has been accomplished, our Lord Jesus Christ requests God His Father to receive Him back into the state of divine glory: *“And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world was created”* (Jn. 17:5.) Jesus is requesting God His Father to receive Him back into that eternal state of glory He shared with the Father throughout eternity. Note: Because the Lord Jesus had at this point fully relinquished Himself to the will of His Father, accepting the death on the cross His Father had commissioned Him to undergo, He could speak of having accomplished this work in the past tense as a finished task.

Scripture informs us that if we likewise glorify God on the earth, the heavenly Father will also receive us into His glory. The LORD assures us that if we honor Him, He will honor us: *“Therefore Jehovah, the God of Israel, declares ... those who honor me I will honor, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed”* (1 Sam. 2:30.) The LORD assures us that if we are faithful to endure for Him, He will be faithful to reward us:

*Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we shall also live with him; <sup>12</sup>if we endure, we shall also reign with him. (2 Tim. 2:11-12a)*

*To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. (Rev. 3:21)*

Let us glorify God, being assured that He will receive us into His glory.

## **Conclusion**

What is **your** chief ambition in life? For whom or for what are you living?

Can you identify with Michael, the man whom we met in the Introduction, when he states, "my heart's desire ... is to be used by the LORD in an effective way for His kingdom and His glory."

Let us make it our chief ambition to glorify God, 1) by making Him known, and 2) by finishing the work He has given us to do. Let us do so with the assurance that if we do so, He will receive us into His glory: *"His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will set you over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord'" (Matt. 25:21.)*