

For my name's sake I defer my anger,
for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you,
that I may not cut you off. . . .
For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it,
for how should my name be profaned?
My glory I will not give to another.

ISAIAH 48:9, 11



God's chief end
is to glorify God
and enjoy His glory forever.



God loves His glory more than He loves us,
and this is the foundation of His love for us.

2

Brothers, God Loves His Glory

I grew up in a home where 1 Corinthians 10:31 was almost as basic to our family as John 3:16. “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (NASB). But not till I was twenty-two years old did I hear anyone say that God’s first commitment is to His own glory and that this is the basis for ours. I had never heard anyone say that God does everything for His glory, too, and that is why we should. I had never heard anyone explain that the role of the Holy Spirit is to burn in me what He has been burning with for all eternity: God’s love

for God. Or more precisely, God the Father's delight in the panorama of His own perfections reflected as a perfect image in His Son.

No one had ever asked me, "Who is the most God-centered Person in the universe?" And then answered, "God is." Or, "Is God an idolater?" And then answered, "No, He has no other gods before Him." Or, "What is the chief end of God?" And then answered, "God's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy His glory forever." So I was never confronted forcefully with the God-centeredness of God until I sat under the teaching of Daniel Fuller and was directed by him to the writings of Jonathan Edwards.

Since those explosive days of discovery in the late sixties, I have labored to understand the implications of God's passion for His glory. That is now the title of a book I wrote as a tribute to Jonathan Edwards, half of which is a reproduction of his book, *The End for Which God Created the World*. Edwards' thesis in that book is this:

[God] had respect to *himself*, as his last and highest end, in this work; because he is *worthy* in himself to be so, being infinitely the greatest and best of beings. All things else, with regard to worthiness, importance, and excellence, are perfectly as nothing in comparison of him. . . . All that is ever spoken of in the Scripture as an ultimate end of God's works is included in that one phrase, *the glory of God*.¹

Why is it important to be stunned by the God-centeredness of God? Because many people are willing to be God-centered as long as they feel that God is man-centered. It is a subtle danger. We may think we are centering our lives on God when we are really making Him a means to self-esteem. Over against this danger I urge you to ponder the implications, brothers, that God loves His glory more than He loves us and that this is the foundation of His love for us.

"Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?" (Isa. 2:22). "Put not your trust in princes, in a son of man, in whom there is no salvation" (Ps. 146:3). "Cursed is the man

who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength” (Jer. 17:5). “Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales. . . . All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness” (Isa. 40:15, 17).

God’s ultimate commitment is to Himself and not to us. And therein lies our security. God loves His glory above all. “For my name’s sake I defer my anger, for the sake of my praise I restrain it for you, that I may not cut you off. . . . For my own sake, for my own sake, I do it, for how should my name be profaned? My glory I will not give to another” (Isa. 48: 9, 11).

God performs salvation for *His own sake*. He justifies the people called by His name in order that He may be glorified.

“Therefore say to the house of Israel [and to all the churches], Thus says the Lord GOD: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came. And I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the LORD. . . . It is not for your sake that I will act, declares the Lord GOD; let that be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your ways, O house of Israel” (Ezek. 36:22–23, 32).

This is no isolated note in the symphony of redemptive history. It is the ever-recurring motif of the all-sufficient Composer. Why did God predestine us in love to be His sons? That the glory of His grace might be praised (Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). Why did God create a people for Himself? “I created [them] for my glory” (Isa. 43:7). Why did He make from one lump vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor? That He might show His wrath and make known His power and reveal the riches of His glory for the vessels of mercy (Rom. 9:22–23). Why did God raise up Pharaoh and harden his heart and deliver Israel with a mighty arm? That His wonders might be multiplied over Pharaoh

(Exod. 14:4) and that His name might be declared in all the earth (Exod. 9:16).

Why did God spare rebellious Israel in the wilderness and finally bring them to the promised land? “I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations” (Ezek. 20:14). Why did He not destroy Israel when they rejected Him from being king over them and demanded to be like all the nations (1 Sam. 8:4–6)? “The LORD will not forsake his people, for his great name’s sake” (1 Sam. 12:22). God’s love for the glory of His own name is the spring of free grace and the rock of our security.

Why did God bring back the Israelites from Babylonian captivity? Because Daniel prayed, “For your own sake, O Lord, make your face to shine upon your sanctuary, which is desolate” (Dan. 9:17). Why did the Father send the incarnate Son to Israel? “To confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy” (Rom. 15:8–9). Why did the Son come to His final hour? “For this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name” (John 12:27–28). Christ died to glorify the Father and to repair all the defamation we had brought upon His honor. Our only hope is that the death of Christ satisfied God’s righteous claims to receive proper glory from His creatures (Rom. 3:24–26).

Brothers, God loves His glory! He is committed with all His infinite and eternal might to display that glory and to preserve the honor of His name.

When Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:13, “If we are faithless, he remains faithful,” it does not mean that we are saved in spite of faithlessness. For the verse before says, “If we deny him, he also will deny us.” Rather, as the verse explains, “He remains faithful” means “He cannot deny *Himself*.” God’s most fundamental allegiance is to His own glory. He is committed to being God before He is committed to being anything else.

Do your people know these things? Do they stake the answer to their prayers on God’s love for His own glory? Do they make their

case before His throne on the grounds that God does everything for His own name's sake? "Act, O LORD, for your name's sake!" (Jer. 14:7). "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name; deliver us, and atone for our sins, for your name's sake!" (Ps. 79:9). "For Your name's sake, O LORD, Pardon my iniquity, for it is great" (Ps. 25:11 NASB). Do our people really know that "hallowed be thy name!" is a petition for God to glorify Himself as God? "Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory" (Ps. 115:1).

We have told our people a hundred times, "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). But have we given them the foundation of this command? God loves His glory. He loves it with infinite energy and passion and commitment. And the Spirit of God is ablaze with this love. That is why children of God love the glory of God; they are led by this blazing Spirit (Rom. 8:14).

Let us declare boldly and powerfully what God loves most—the glory of God. Let us guard ourselves from the ocean of man-centeredness around us. "Stop regarding man in whose nostrils is breath, for of what account is he?" (Isa. 2:22). The foundation, the means, and the goal of God's *agape* for sinners is His prior, deeper, and ultimate love for His own glory. Therefore, brothers, tell your people the great ground of the gospel: God loves His glory!

Notes

1. Jonathan Edwards, *The End for Which God Create the World*, in John Piper, *God's Passion for His Glory: Living the Vision of Jonathan Edwards* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 140, 242.

This material is Chapter 2 in *Brothers, We are Not Professionals*, by John Piper. The entire book can be downloaded free as a PDF file from:
<http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/books>