

# Why Study the Glory of Christ

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[0:00] Our scriptures are the word of our Lord to us and in 2nd Corinthians chapter 3 we'll read our Lord's word to us for this evening. Paul is writing to the church at Corinth and he says, are we beginning to commend ourselves again?

Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everybody.

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God. Not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves. But our competence comes from God.

He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant. Not of the letter but of the spirit. For the letter kills but the spirit gives life.

[1:13] Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory. So that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory.

Fading though it was. Will not the ministry of the spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness?

For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts?

Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold. We are not like Moses who had put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away.

But their minds were made dull. For to this day, the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed.

[2:24] Because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

Now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the spirit.

Our whole culture seems to be suffocating under a thick blanket of frivolity. Everywhere you look, things really don't matter.

And when we're honest with ourselves, we would have to say that we know that they don't matter.

Sports, reality TV, the 24-hour news cycle of late-breaking, unimportant news is ever upon us.

Everything designed to make us feel like it's something serious, something to be earnest about. But in the end, it only leaves you craving for more. Like a donut, it tastes good, but does not fill you up.

[3:51] And it would be nice to say that the church was any different. But for the most part, it's not.

40 Days of Purpose, Your Best Life Now, 10 Tips on Handling Money, 5 Ways to Be a Better Parent, Lots of Christian Books, some better than others, on how to live the Christian life, or how to do this or that in the Christian life, but so very little on why to live the Christian life.

Why to live. And don't get me wrong, I don't think there's anything necessarily bad or wrong with sports, football games, practical parenting sermons, things of that nature, but they aren't Christ.

They aren't Jesus. And we've been invited in the Christian, in the gospel, we've been invited to an upscale steak restaurant, steakhouse, and we've ordered the hot dog on the menu.

We've had the potential for getting whatever, something wonderful, and we've settled for something that isn't so satisfying. And I don't want the hot dog.

I want Jesus. I want to know Christ, as Paul said. John Owen said it like this, This is where I would live. This is where I would die.

[5:23] This is where I would dwell in my thoughts and my affections, to the withering and consumption of all the painted beauties of this world, unto the crucifying all things here below, until they become to me a dead and deformed thing, no way suitable for my loving embrace.

And Christian, don't you agree with that? Doesn't your soul cry out for something more than what this world has to offer?

Doesn't your soul cry out to know Christ, to experience him and his glory, to experience the weight of his majesty, where you feel it as something tangible and real and overwhelmingly soul satisfying. And so, as we close tonight, we're going to sing more, more about Jesus. And that's the goal of this sermon series that we're beginning this evening.

What is this series going to be all about? In a word, it's going to be about Jesus. And if we put it into a sentence, it's going to be a sustained look at the majesty and the glory of Christ, as he is our savior, as he is our mediator, as he's the go-between between God and man.

[6:55] And so we're going to be talking about, in this series, how he takes on that role of, I'm going to bring man to God. And I'm going to bring, I'm going to make peace between God and man.

And we're going to talk about how he takes on that role and how he incarnates himself and how he loves us and joins us to himself. So this sermon series is going to be a sustained meditation on that, on the glory of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 12 says, fix your eyes on Jesus. That's what we want to do. Colossians 3 says, set your hearts on things above where Christ is.

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. That's what we want to do. Well, we read in 2 Corinthians 3 that Moses, as the mediator of the old covenant, so it was with, it was because Moses was there as the mediator that the old covenant was established.

And Moses, as that mediator of that first covenant, had a certain glory. And remember, it was so brilliant as he met with the Lord and then he came down from the mountain with the old covenant that the Israelites could not look at his face.

[8:17] And so Moses covered his face with a veil so that they were not, so they could not see the glory. But the new covenant is more glorious. And in the new covenant, that veil that separates us from seeing God's glory is taken away.

If the ministry that brought death came with glory, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? And then Paul says, Jesus does not veil himself.

When we come to Jesus, the veil is taken away. And we who with unveiled faces all reflect or contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into the likeness, into his likeness, with ever-increasing glory.

And so it's in the Gospel, it says we look at Jesus, that we see his glory, and it's as we stare into it and meditate on it for a sustained period, his glory so overwhelms us and overpowers us that it changes us.

And so it's like looking in a mirror, except instead of seeing your reflection in the mirror, as you look in the mirror, you see Christ. And an interesting thing happens as you look into that mirror longer and longer, you take upon the image of what's in the mirror instead of the other way around.

[9:47] So his glory changes us. John 1.14 says, we have seen his glory. The disciples had seen his glory.

Now, Jesus didn't have any glory of his physical body. And they didn't see any glory. They didn't see his uncreated glory as God.

They didn't see that glory. They didn't see any glory in his outward position. So Jesus didn't come with pomp and circumstance. No, we have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

They saw the glory of Christ as they saw that he was full of grace and truth for them. And that's what we want to do in this series. We want to take a sustained and ongoing look, meditation at the glory of Jesus Christ as he's presented to us in the gospel as our mediator, as our go-between.

Now, I have a warning for you. A warning. And it's this. It's not going to be easy. Not because his glory is too dim, but because it's too brilliant and dazzling and bright.

[11:05] When you start meditating on the glory of Jesus, the problem is not that you have a hard time seeing glory. The problem is you have a hard time handling that much glory.

It's too much. It's not that it's too little. He takes us into places of love and places of humility and places of grace and glory that are hard for us to understand, to fathom, to get close to, and to stay

close to.

But there's nothing more important for us as Christians in this age of doubt and cynicism where we just think nothing matters, there's nothing to be serious, really serious about, that we force ourselves, that we force ourselves to look at Jesus and his glory, even when that seriousness and that weight is hard to bear.

There's times when you're very nervous and you're in a very difficult situation that people, one of their reactions is to laugh. Sometimes it's hard for a preacher when he is really preaching something very serious to hold that seriousness, that tension, and he'll start to smile and he'll start to fidget and he'll start to even kind of chuckle and the reason is because that tension, that seriousness, is something hard to carry and that is something of what it's like to just look at Jesus and have his glory and all of how wonderful and good and powerful he is to think about that.

And that glory stretches us and it fills us and we desperately, and I speaking just for myself, I desperately need that, need stretched out of myself more into the likeness of Christ.

[13:04] But it's also hard because you have your flesh to deal with. Your flesh will make it hard for you to keep Christ in front of you. There's nothing that your flesh hates more than Jesus because Jesus is the Savior that it wants to be.

Jesus is the Lord that it wants to be. Jesus has the glory that your flesh hungers after and Christ in his glory, his salvation, his lordship pinches the flesh.

His glory steals your glory. His glory exposes your flesh to the light and your flesh loves the darkness. It loves to live in denial and pretend like things are okay.

It loves to hide the truth and suppress the truth. And so your flesh will beg and it will fight to get back into the hole, to crawl back into the darkness. And so I warn you of these things because I don't want you to lose anything that could be yours.

I just want you to know up front that it's going to be, there's going to be a temptation in your heart to look away, to stop meditating on the glory of Christ.

[14:13] The rest of our time this evening, I want to talk about why. Why should we do this? If it's going to pinch our flesh, if it's hard to handle, why fix your eyes on Jesus?

Why struggle and strive to grasp the heights of his glory? To say, you know what, I don't see him as big enough and as great as I ought to.

Why go to that great length to do that? Why this series? And so I have six reasons. Six reasons to behold, to gaze on the glory of Christ, even when the world and the flesh and the devil are all pulling you away from Jesus and making it hard.

So six reasons. Six reasons why I would love at the end, as you go into this week, that you would look at your Bibles and say, I want to be in the Word of God.

I want to find Jesus. Though whatever it costs me, I want to do that. Why do that? Six reasons. The first is it's of first importance.

[15:22] It's of first importance. Turn back a few pages to 1 Corinthians 15. 1 Corinthians 15.

And just listen, follow along as I read verses 3 and 4. For what I received, I passed on to you as of first importance.

That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Now, a lot of things are important, but there's only one thing that is of first importance, and it's Christ.

Christ's death, his burial, his resurrection. It's Christ. Jesus Christ is the center of the first creation. For by him all things were created that have been created.

And without him nothing was created that has been created. So Christ is the center of the first creation. Christ is the center of the new creation.

[16:38] He is the beginning. He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead. So that in everything he might have the supremacy.

So Christ has supremacy in the first creation, and he has the supremacy in the new creation. He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead. With his resurrection, he begins the new creation.

And so he is the son that brings everything into orbit, into his orbit. And so nothing exists in all the world, including you, except what exists for him, for his fame, his joy, his glory.

Everything that was and is and is to come is for Jesus. It exists for him. And so why gaze on his glory?

Because he is the whole reason you exist. And you can't begin to understand anything about your life, your meaning, your purpose, of your existence, until you begin to know Christ.

[17:50] He's of first importance. So why gaze on Christ and his glory? Second, because you will never see Christ and his glory in heaven if you do not first see it here.

You will never see Christ's glory in heaven if you do not first see it here. Lots of people wish for heaven and lots of people have no idea what they're wishing for.

And they have no idea what they long after. What is heaven about? Father, I want them to be with me where I am so that they might see my glory, the glory I had from the beginning.

Heaven is about Christ. Who's at the center of the throne? God and the Lamb. Revelation paints a picture of heaven in concentric circles.

Circles inside of circles. So, there are angels and then there are higher angels and then there are the highest angels.

[19:03] There's angels, there's elders, and then there's the cherubim, the four living creatures. And at the center of heaven, at the center of heaven's geometry is Jesus Christ.

And all eyes are faced and looking toward him. And so, God shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of heaven.

It all begins there. And so, you can't pretend that you will enjoy heaven. You can't pretend that you will enjoy heaven if you haven't enjoyed Jesus here first.

To go even further, no one will see Christ's glory there who hasn't first seen it here because seeing Christ's glory is the beginning and the middle and the end of faith.

Of saving faith. To believe the gospel in a saving way is to by faith see the glory of Jesus Christ.

Christ. It's to see him as your savior and your Lord and you see him as wonderful and good and to live by faith is to live in the light of the glory of who Jesus is.

[20:26] Now, if you've been saved recently, you can testify to this. Isn't this true? When you first believed what happened, your eyes were open to see the glory of Jesus Christ.

And so for the first time you saw his majesty, you beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only full of grace and truth. And you saw him and that was it.

Sin became ugly and he became beautiful and he repented and you believed. Faith and repentance is a response to the gospel of the glory of Christ flooding your heart, flooding your mind by the spirit. And so gazing on Christ's glory is the required preparation for heaven. It's required because that's what we're going to be doing forever and ever in heaven and that is the heart of faith.

And so if you don't crawl out of your cave, crawl out of the darkness and wonder at his glory now, then you'll never be able to see his glory there and enjoy it.

[21:45] And that's my second reason. No one will see Christ's glory in heaven who has not first seen it here. And so let me be clear, I'm going to be preaching to see some of you saved and maybe you don't want it.

Maybe you don't care. But I do care. because I know that what you need most in your life, what would be the best thing for you is to see Christ in his glory.

So you might not care, but I'm going to care and it might make you uncomfortable at certain points.

Third, gazing on Christ's glory as a mediator, as a savior, strengthens your faith.

It strengthens your faith. So children, when you first go to a new class at school, it can be kind of scary, can't it? You don't know that teacher.

Can you trust her? Will she know what she's doing? Can she take care of me? Will she help me?

And in the beginning your faith is very small in her. Because you don't know her very well.

[22:59] But after a while you see how she smiles at you. And how she's able to take care of you. She's able to get you to the cafeteria so you can have lunch when you need lunch. And she lets you go outside to play at recess.

She knows how to keep everyone in order and she's kind to you. And what begins to happen is where there was small faith in her before, now you trust her more.

You trust her more and more. And that's what it's like with Jesus. At first we trust him. And for the most part, we have a small faith.

But then we see him more and more. We see more of his goodness, more of his power, more of his love for me. And that becomes more real and bigger in my life.

And we see more of his majesty, his greatness, and that starts crowding into my life. And my faith begins to grow and grow because I am seeing him more and more.

[23:59] So remember that time that the disciples were on the Sea of Galilee and the storm came up and they were terrified and they cried out, Lord, save us.

And Jesus got up and the first thing he said was, oh, you of little faith, little faith, why are you so afraid? Is that where some of you are?

Little faith, lots of fear, well, what do you need? You need what the disciples needed. You need to see the glory of Jesus.

And he said, oh, you of little faith, why are you so afraid? And then he got up and rebuked the winds and it was completely calm. And then they were very afraid.

They were very amazed. they saw his glory and it took them right out of their fear of dying and right out of their fear of storms and it put them into a place of holy reverence and fear of who he was.

[25:11] So seeing Christ's glory strengthens your faith and a strong faith gets you through trials. A strong faith puts to death sin and it dethrones idols and it destroys doubt.

a strong faith is wonderful. It's so wonderful to have the assurances of faith. We've sang about it, the assurance of consolation that I believe and so my heart is comforted.

That's what comes from a strong faith. A strong faith is wonderful and we should all want it. And gazing at Christ and his glory, appreciating it and bringing it more into our lives is how it happens.

So the more you know him, the more you see of him, the stronger your faith gets. Fourth, gazing on Jesus' glory grows our love for Christ.

It grows our love for Christ. And so the more we see him, the more we love him. Jesus isn't like other lovers. Because with other lovers, sometimes it's love at first sight.

[26:17] When you first meet that special someone, it seems like they can do no wrong. They're so cute, they're so wonderful, they're so smart, they're so funny, they understand me, love is easy. And then you marry them, or you get to know them better, and you start to see some things that aren't so lovely about them.

And then love becomes harder. Jesus is the exact opposite. Exact opposite. He's altogether lovely. He has nothing to hide. There's no sudden discoveries that ruin it for you. What he does is lovely. He is lovely.

And as you see it, you realize just how good it is. So glorious and so good. And the more we see him, it just starts to add up and compound. Now I want to love him more.

it's easier to love him as you know him because his loveliness never ends. Now there sometimes, isn't it true, that you think that you've exhausted him.

[27:29] Sometimes we think I've seen all there is to see, and my heart is growing cold and I don't know what to do. And then what does the spirit of God do?

Well, he opens up these brand new vistas. He opens up doors. The words of scripture take on new meaning and more meaning and fresh meaning.

And the windows of our hearts fly open and the spirit of God says, look at him. Look at him now.

The Holy Spirit is like a real litter.

And you bought a property, you have a property, and now he's displaying the wealth and the grandeur and the glory of the estate.

And that's the spirit's ministry, to take from what, to take Jesus and shine him into our hearts, to take what is Jesus and bring it to us.

[28:29] And so the more we see of him, the more we love him, because he's exhaustless. And so the more fervent and passionate our love for him grows.

And that's how you can know if you're a Christian or not. Can you look at your life and say, I do things because I love Jesus?

Not just because they're right or wrong, surely because it's right or wrong, but not just because it's right or wrong, not just because that's what it means to be a Christian.

I do it because I love him. I love him and I want to do this. And I love my wife and so I clean up the house because I want to serve her.

I want to make her happy. I love her. And it's the same way with Jesus. I cut off right hands. I pluck out right eyes. I do what it takes to show him that I love him.

[29:33] And I do difficult, painful things because he loves me and I feel that and I know that. And so my heart burns within me to lay down my life for him. And there is everything in Christ to do that for us.

There's everything in Christ to do that for us because whatever Jesus does, whatever he did, whatever he is as our prophet, as our priest, as our king, it all sings into our hearts. Oh, love the Lord. Love him. So why gaze on Christ's glory? Because by it, our love for him grows. Fifth, it encourages Christian holiness.

It encourages Christian holiness. What happens when your faith is growing and your love is growing?

The inevitable result is Christian holiness. Love powers obedience. Faith powers obedience. And so now I obey Christ because I love him and I trust him.

[30:46] And so when Christ and his glory gets ahold of me, then it drives out every idol, every other love, everything else.

So with Paul, we say it's all rubbish. It comes through, his glory comes through with a hurricane's power to shipwreck all of our idols.

So people pleasing, people pleasing, peace loving, where you love peace more than truth, porn watching, gluttony, ease, money, it all sinks under the power of Christ and his glory.

Now it comes powerfully. Sometimes it comes quickly like a hurricane and it blows through and it destroys. And sometimes it happens bit by bit like the tide coming in gradually.

But change is inevitable. It's certain. The tide might come in with a rush, might be a tidal wave, and it might just be a gradual thing. But the tide comes in, Christ comes in, and he fills our hearts as we gaze upon him, and he drives out every idol, all of his rivals.

[32:07] So why gaze on his glory? Because that's how Christian holiness happens. Because that's how Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.

Isn't that a wonderful truth? Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. That's how Christ lives in us by the power of the Spirit. And we read it in 2 Corinthians 3.

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there's freedom. And we who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

And so beholding the glory of Christ is what it means to live by the Spirit. And beholding the glory of Christ is what it means to walk with the Spirit. Beholding the glory of Christ is the power of living a transformed life.

And living by the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit. So gazing and gazing long at Christ and his glory and his love and his humility and his honesty and his goodness, every beautiful thing about him, the majesty of his person is one of the most important keys to Christian holiness.

[33:36] Now sixth and last, gazing on Jesus and his glory brings you incredible joy. Incredible joy.

Paul ached to go and be with Christ, which is better by far. Paul wanted sight instead of faith.

Why? Because that's where pleasures forevermore are. To see him is everlasting joy. Because when we see Christ with our own eyes, that drives sadness away.

And so, dear Christian, you will see him and you will be like him and he will fill your heart with inexpressible joy, with peace and comfort and rest.

But now we have brief glimpses of him. By faith, we see through this glass dimly, but we do have glimpses of him. But haven't those glimpses of him filled you with joy?

[34:44] Joy, where the window was opened and you saw his glory and it made you happy. And if that is what the first of the first fruits are like, what will the full harvest be?

joy? If he can fill our hearts with that kind of joy now, when it's just by faith, what will it be when it's by sight? If the tokens of the gift are this good, how good is the full gift going to be?

Now, there's more to come. There is more to come. And sight is much better than faith. But now we are encouraged and we are invited to meditate and to live in the glory of Jesus Christ by faith.

So faith is not as good as sight, but faith is real. And it does really bring us joy when we gaze on Jesus. And so why should you do this hard work, this killing of the flesh, the saying no to the flesh? Why do that hard work of meditating on Christ? Because there's joy there. And for the joy set before you, you should do this. There's untainted, there's perfect joy, and it's just the beginning of the dawn, the full day is coming, but it's still real, and it's still wonderful.

[36:18] So why gaze on Jesus? Because that's the place of joy, and that joy will destroy all your lesser joys and wicked and evil things. Now, what do I want you to walk away from the sermon with?

I want you to decide that whatever it costs you, you will strive to get a view of Christ. That you won't satisfy yourself with lesser things.

that you won't just forget this sermon ever happened and go home and do whatever you normally do. That you won't satisfy yourself with this world's trifles.

I want you to say with Paul, I press on, I press on, forgetting what's behind, I press on to take a hold of that for which Christ Jesus took a hold of me.

me. Why did Jesus take a hold of Paul? So that Paul could know him? So that Paul could know Christ? Now, how do you do that?

[37 : 29] You have to give yourself to this word. Because here is where the Spirit speaks to our hearts. Here is where the Spirit opens up to us the glory of Jesus Christ.

And so meditate upon the word of God. Find Christ in it and then don't let him go. And pray.

I know these things aren't new. But pray. Pray for the Spirit to work powerfully and really in you to bring Christ to you. And pray for experience.

Pray to feel that light and that glory and feel the goodness and the joy of Jesus Christ. pray that you might know Christ in grace and in truth and that you might see his glory like the disciples saw him.

And so pray Spirit of God show me. Show me Jesus. Bring Jesus to me. Open my eyes that I might see Jesus. So there's much more to Jesus than we yet know.

[38 : 35] Much more to Jesus that we don't know anything about yet. and he's knocking on the door. He's willing to have fellowship with you.

Will you open the door for him? Will you open the door for him? Let's pray. Heavenly Father, I pray that you would please give us grace upon grace that we might seek Jesus above everything else, that we might love him above any earthly thing.

Lord, I pray that you would give us a vision of what could be, of where our Christianity and our faith could be, if we would give ourselves to knowing Jesus, to running hard after him, show us how worthwhile it will be, and then give us grace to run and pursue him.

Pray that you would do that for everyone here, that those who have eyes that are closed and hearts that are dead, that you would open their eyes and give new life to them.

And that they might see Jesus and worship him. It's not right that they're not worshiping him. It's not right that they should live in a world created by Jesus and filled with his glory and not see him and not enjoy him, not behold him.

[40 : 21] So I pray for Jesus' sake that you would help them to see who he is and how he could be their savior. Pray this in Christ's name.

Amen. Let's stand and sing hymn 676.