

# Soli Deo Gloria

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If you have your Bibles, you can turn to 1 Corinthians 10, where we will be looking at verse 31 in a moment. Our theme for this morning is Soli Deo Gloria: for the glory of God alone. It's Reformation month, and we're taking some time to remind ourselves of history, of where Calvary Bible Church came from, [of] how Protestantism became what it is, and [of how] we look to those men and women who risked their lives to bring us the truth of the gospel and the Bible so that we could know God and live for His glory.

It was on July 10, 1509, that [a son, John, was born to] Gerard and Jeanne Calvin. They were an average, middle-class family. Gerard had worked hard to become a lawyer, and his desire for his son was that he become a priest. Working as a lawyer brought Gerard into contact with the upper class and with the clergy. He was able to get John private education as a young man so that he could be trained, and even received some grants from the church so that [John] could go to school. It was immediately apparent to [John's] teachers that John had an insatiable appetite for the truth. He was hungry to know the truth. Soon it was clear that he was above everybody else in his class academically. By [the age of] sixteen, he was already an excellent scholar. [He] had mastered Latin, read widely in the philosophers, and was ready to begin his theological training to become a priest. But things changed. His father, seeing that John had such an incredible in-

tellec[t], decided that John should go to law school instead [of going into the priesthood]. John reluctantly complied to his father[’s wishes], and for the next six years he became a distinguished law student.

You need to remember that things were changing rapidly [during this time]. The Renaissance was underway, and things were changing, mostly due to the printing press. Printing presses were printing many of the classic works, the Bible, and things like that. People who never before could even afford a single book now could afford [many books], and they read them, traded them, and [there was] an explosion of knowledge and intellect as they began to read and study things [to which] they [had] never had access before. Like many in those days, Calvin read widely—pretty much anything he could get his hands onto. It became popular at that time to learn Hebrew and Greek because those were the original languages of the Bible. So while he was going to law school and studying law, [John] taught himself Hebrew and Greek. If you’ve learned those languages, you know that that is quite a feat.

We have already learned that [Martin] Luther was beginning to print many of his works, and they began to be translated, copied, and spread abroad. Many of Luther’s works ended up in Calvin’s grasp, and he read them. Luther was unique because at that time he was one of the few people who were really challenging the Church and [its] beliefs, and showing how the Church had wandered away from what the Word of God said. Luther argued that salvation could only be had by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Christ alone, which was hugely different from what pretty much everybody understood before that time. [He also taught] that the Bible alone was the sole rule of faith and practice, not the Church councils [or] the pope, which had [both] contradicted each other many times in their writings.

It was sometime around 1535 that John Calvin came to saving faith in Jesus Christ. We don’t really know exactly when this occurred; we just know that it did occur. Calvin gives us a little testimony about himself in his preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. Calvin wrote:

To [the] pursuit [of law] I endeavored faithfully to apply myself in obedience to the will of my father; but God, by the secret guidance of his providence, at length gave a different direction to my course. And first, since I was too obstinately devoted to the superstitions of Popery to be easily extricated from so profound an abyss of mire, God by a sudden conversion subdued and brought my mind to a teachable frame, which was more hardened in such matters than might have been expected from one at my early period of life.

Having thus received some taste and knowledge of true godliness I was immediately inflamed with so intense a desire to make progress therein, that although I did not altogether leave off other studies, I yet pursued them with less fervency. I was quite surprised to find that before a year had elapsed, all who had any desire after purer doctrine were continually coming to me to learn, although I myself was as yet but a mere novice and beginner.<sup>1</sup>

What happened is [that] Calvin became aflame to know the truth of God's Word. [He] began to study the Word in the original languages [and] to just absorb the Scriptures. Soon all these people were coming to him. He was just in his early twenties [and] a brand-new believer, but he knew more than other people. So, from the very beginning, God brought people to Calvin. Calvin was learning from Luther, and other people were learning from Calvin. But, of course, this put John Calvin in great danger because at that time the Roman Catholic Church began to burn at the stake those who believed what Luther did.

What's interesting is [that] John Calvin never met Martin Luther. He did say, at one time, "Even if Luther were to call me a devil I should still re-

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<sup>1</sup>Taken from John Calvin's preface to his *Commentary on the Psalms*. Text available at: <http://www.sacred-texts.com/chr/calvin/cc08/cc08005.htm>

gard him as an outstanding servant of God.<sup>2</sup> Calvin admired Luther greatly. [Calvin] had to flee for his life, and so he left France and went to Basel, [Switzerland], so that he could study the Bible in serenity and peace because he just wasn't a public kind of guy. He was hermitlike, and didn't want any attention. Calvin wrote:

Being of a disposition somewhat unpolished and bashful, which led me always to love the shade and retirement, I then began to seek some secluded corner where I might be withdrawn from the public view; but so far from being able to accomplish the object of my best desire, all my retreats were like public schools.

In short, while my one great object was to live in seclusion without being known, God so led me about through different turnings and changes, that he never permitted me to rest in any place, until, in spite of my natural disposition, he brought me forth to public notice.<sup>3</sup>

Calvin wanted to hid[e]. He didn't want any fame. He certainly didn't want to get up in front of people. He just wanted to study the Bible [and] be one of those people no one ever knew about who studied the Bible. But God had other plans. [Calvin] did start to retreat when he went to Basel, [but] he began to hear news that faithful friends and followers of Christ in France were being burned at the stake. At the same time, they were being accused falsely [and were] described as those who were promoting vicious heresies, [committing] gross immorality, and all sorts of things. This began to gnaw at Calvin's conscience because he knew that somebody needed to speak the truth. [T]here he was in ease, trying to hide in Basel, while his friends were being burned at the stake for the [very] thing he taught them. Calvin wrote:

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<sup>2</sup>*Christian History Magazine*, Vol. V, #4, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Preface to *Commentary on the Psalms*.

It appeared to me that unless I opposed them to the utmost of my ability, my silence could not be vindicated from the charge of cowardice and treachery. This was the consideration which induced me to publish my *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.<sup>4</sup>

If you've ever seen the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, you know [that] it makes a pretty good doorstep—it's thick, [with] small print, [and is very] detailed. But that first edition [was not]. As a matter of fact, the first edition of the *Institutes* was in catechism-type form. There would be a question and then an answer, a question and answer. It was really like a pamphlet, just a small pocket version [of what would later become a vast work]. It [contained] the basic doctrines of the Christian faith set forth in question and answer form that anybody could carry around and [read]. It became extremely popular and most people didn't even know that Calvin wrote it.

From Basel, Calvin decided to travel to Strasbourg. However, even though there was a rather easy, direct route north from Basel to Strasbourg, there was a war going on between Charles V and France, so Calvin decided to go south, in the opposite direction of Strasbourg, and [t]ake this long, circuitous route [to] finally get to his destination and avoid the war torn area. He decided to stay one night in Geneva, and then move on the next morning. However, there was a man in that city named William Farel, who had read [Calvin's] little pamphlet, the *Institutes*. [Farel] was very excited about [the *Institutes*], wanted Calvin's help, [and] sought him out. Calvin described Farel as [a man who was] “burning with extraordinary zeal to advance the gospel, [and who] strained every nerve to detain me.” Calvin explained his encounter with Farel with these words:

William Farel detained me at Geneva, not so much by counsel and exhortation, as by a dreadful imprecation, which I felt to

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<sup>4</sup>Text available at:

<http://www.reformed.org/master/index.html?mainframe=/books/institutes/>

be as if God had from heaven laid his mighty hand upon me to arrest me. . . . He proceeded to utter an imprecation that God would curse my retirement, and the tranquility of the studies which I sought, if I should withdraw and refuse to give assistance, when the need was so urgent.<sup>5</sup>

[Farel] basically [said], “You need to say here.”

Calvin [said], “No, no, no.”

[Farel said], “Listen, we need you here.”

[Calvin said], “No, no. I’ve made up my mind. I’m not staying here.”

“OK,” [Farel said], “I’m going to pray every day that God curses you. I’m going to pray every day that your studies are miserable, your life is miserable, and that God will curse you because we need you.”

It so shocked Calvin [that] he said, “OK! I’ll stay.” Again, he wanted to settle into obscurity, but God would not let him. There were so many conflicts going on because of the Reformation, [conflicts] with Roman Catholics, extreme Anabaptists, and other false teachers, that it pried him out of his study. He thought, “You know what? I need to say something.” So he began to write, preach, [and] teach, trying to fix all of this turmoil that was going on in Geneva. He couldn’t abide the thought that good people were being damned to hell because of false doctrines. He felt compelled to expand his *Institutes* a little bit, and that’s what he did. Protestants were being slandered as heretics, as fanatics, [and] as those who taught ancient heresies and promot[ed] gross immorality, when the exact opposite was true. It was the Roman Catholic Church that was teaching ancient heresies, works salvation, [and] whose priests were indulging in gross immorality. The exact opposite [of what was being said] was true. Satan often takes and vilifies the righteous and glorifies the wicked.

While in Geneva, Calvin was also prevailed upon to fill the role of pastor to preach, teach, and shepherd a church. He didn’t want to do this. He didn’t

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<sup>5</sup>Preface to *Commentary on the Psalms*.

have any training. He was a lawyer. However, he fulfilled the role of pastor to the best of his ability, but his career was happily—[to him]—cut short after eighteen months. Both Calvin and Farel were expelled from the city because they refused to administer the sacraments to their congregation. Calvin's congregation was so angry and bitter and in political and religious turmoil that Calvin said, "I'm not going to administer the Lord's Supper until you guys repent of your carnality." Well, that backfired on him a little bit, so on Easter Sunday [in] 1538, Calvin was asked to leave the ministry and the city [that] he [had] described as a "torture chamber."

He was now free to finally go to Strasbourg and study in peace. At least, that's what he thought. But news reached Strasbourg and one Martin Bucer [thought] Calvin, the one who wrote the *Institutes*, the one who was preaching in Geneva, was coming to his city. Bucer was waiting for [Calvin] and put [him] into pastoral service again, which was good because then Calvin began to grow in his pastoral expertise. After three years, William Farel came knocking at the door again, and said, "Come back. The Reformation has gotten some headway here. You're now welcome back in the city. You need to come back and finish what you've started." So, in 1541, Calvin returned to the city that had banished him three years earlier, but he made it clear: "I'm only staying for a couple of weeks, maybe a couple of months—just until you guys get over the birth pangs of the Reformation, then I'm going back to Strasbourg." He left twenty-three years later, after he died.

During his three-year stay in Strasbourg, Calvin [had written] three more popular works [and] his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* continued to swell in size. He totally changed [the] format [of the *Institutes*]. No longer was it in question-and-answer form, but it became one large, reasoned systematic theology—really the first great one that was ever written. [In Geneva], Calvin [was asked] to reorganize the church, and so he also wrote a work called *Ecclesiastical Ordinances*. In this [work] he tried to define and simplify what the Church was about and how the Church should be organized. First, he said, the Church should be concerned with the wor-

ship of God; second, with the equipping of the saints; third, to teach and live sound doctrine; and four[th], to do works of love, mercy, and evangelism.

A pastor's guild was formed. [First and foremost,] they were encouraged to give priority to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. Calvin said that the Word of God was the most important thing—the congregation needed to hear the Scriptures expounded week by week. Second, pastors were encouraged to oversee the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Third, they were to see that church discipline was carried out. Fourth, they were to do the work of the elder by attending to the spiritual health and oversight of the flock. Deacons were also appointed to assist in the social welfare of the congregation [and] those in the community and [in] caring for the poor.

Calvin preached five times a week—twice on Sunday [and] three times during the week—and on the weeks he didn't preach, he taught through the Bible [and also] taught systematic theology and doctrine. One of his biographers writes: "Why did Calvin insist that the pastor's main task was the preaching of the Word? Because, in his opinion, preaching was like a 'visitation' from God, through which he reaches out his hands to draw us to himself."<sup>6</sup> And so, on the days Calvin wasn't preaching, which [excluded] Sunday, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, he taught theology. Calvin's plan for reorganizing the Church was quickly put into practice, and soon it was the boast of all the Reformed churches in Geneva that there was not a single beggar in the entire city. This was huge because at that time beggars were everywhere, but not in Geneva. They were either put to work [and] led to Christ, or [at least just] put to work, but everybody took care of them. The town[speople] took care of their own because they saw it as their responsibility from the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.

John Knox, the great Scottish preacher and reformer, who sat under Calvin's teaching in Geneva, said that when he was there, it was "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apos-

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<sup>6</sup>*Christian History Magazine*, Vol. V, #4, p. 10.

ties.”<sup>7</sup> Calvin trained hundreds of pastors and sent them out as missionaries all over Europe with that same goal: to focus on the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the shepherding of the flock, church discipline, the helping of the poor, and the evangelism of the lost. All of those basic, fundamental truths he drilled into these pastors and sent them out.

In [1559], the final edition of the *Institutes* was published. Calvin’s health was declining, yet he continued to labor diligently and would not stop. His friends kept pleading with him on his deathbed to stop working, to which he replied, “What! Would you have the Lord find me idle when He comes?” And right before he died in 1564, Calvin said this:

I have lived amidst extraordinary struggles here; I have been saluted in mockery at night, before my door, shot at fifty or sixty times. Think how that would terrify a poor timid scholar such as I. . . . While I am nothing, yet I know that I have prevented many problems that would otherwise have occurred in Geneva. . . . God has given me the power to write, but I have written nothing in hatred. . . . but always I have faithfully attempted what I believed to be for the glory of God.<sup>8</sup>

That was the driving principle of his whole life: the glory of God. [He asked himself], “What can I do for the glory of God? What can I write for the glory of God? What can I preach for the glory of God?” So, really, the Reformation cry of Soli Deo Gloria was the rainbow that arched over all of Calvin’s life and drove everything he did. He didn’t seek wealth, fame, [or] public attention. He lived a modest life, worked hard, and died poor. He just wanted to make sure that everything he did was for the glory of God.

This is what we want to focus on this morning. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 10:31. Let me just summarize a little bit about this book and [the] context of our verse so [that] you [can] get a picture of what Paul is

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>8</sup>Text available at: <http://www.puritanboard.com/f24/famous-last-words-8033/>.

talking about. If you've studied Corinthians, you probably know that Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthian church. He mentions them in 1 and 2 Corinthians, which are really 2 and 4 Corinthians. We know that Paul had [written] to [the Corinthian church] at least four times, and that they had lots of problems. Corinth was a very pagan place. Many people had come to Christ, and they were trying to extract themselves from this pagan environment. They were having a lot of problems doing this. As a matter of fact, they had problems in almost every single area, which is good for us because we get to look at and listen in on Paul trying to fix them, which fixes us, too.

In [1 Corinthians] 10:1–11, Paul refers back to several incidents in the history of Israel when [Israel] fell into idolatry, immorality, grumbling, and complaining. He recalls how many the Lord judged and killed because of these sins. Twice in verses 6 and 11, he says that we need to consider these historical events and learn from them, then in verse 12, he says, “And don't get proud because you aren't doing the same things they were doing. Take heed, when you think you stand lest you fall,” and then he gives that classic verse, and says: “I just want you to know that no temptation is ever going to come upon you but such as is common to man. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide a way of escape. So, just know this: you can escape any temptation that comes if you are a child of God” [see 1 Corinthians 10:13]. Then in verses 14–30, Paul goes into an extended section where he is dealing with meat sacrificed to idols.

In Corinth, [as] in pretty much every other place at that time, idolatry was rampant, and so people were always sacrificing to different idols. The meat, then, was often sold in the back of these idol temples. It was the best cuts of meat, and it was fresh, so people liked to buy it. The question then arose in the Corinthian church whether this was OK. [They wondered], “Does that meat have some sort of spiritual cooties on it so we can't eat it?” Paul says, “No, it's fine. An idol is nothing, and there are no spiritual cooties on the meat. You can eat it. However, you need to keep in mind that there

is more than just you involved here. First, there [are] the unbeliever[s] who may not know that meat sacrificed to idols doesn't have spiritual cooties on it. If they see you eating meat sacrificed to idols, they might see you as hypocritical, as actually participating in idolatry, and it might ruin your witness with them. Second, there are those who are saved, who are brothers and sisters in Christ, who might not understand that they can eat meat sacrificed to idols, that it doesn't have any spiritual cooties on it. And so, if they see you eating that meat, you might cause them to stumble because they might think, since [they believe] that's wrong, they can do something else wrong, and therefore defile their conscience. You, in exercising your liberty, might lead to their ruin—[you would] be a stumbling block."

So, he lays that out in the context. Then Paul wants to remind them of the last person they need to be concerned about when they are living their [lives] [t]here in Corinth. [He says]: "Yes, be concerned about the unbeliever and your witness to [him]. Yes, be concerned about your relationship to those believers who are weaker in faith. And, there's another person," and this is in [1 Corinthians] 10:31, where Paul says: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Here we see the other person [about whom we are to be concerned]: God. "Do everything to the glory of God," [Paul] says. This verse teaches th[e] Reformation cry [of] Soli Deo Gloria. It's a very simple verse. It's easy to understand, but I broke it up into two points just because I wanted to emphasize one part, but it's really just a one-bullet verse.

Look at [1 Corinthians 10:]31. [Our first point is]: Why you must seek God's glory. Notice what Paul says: "Whether, then, *you* eat or drink or whatever *you* do, do all to the glory of God" [emphasis added]. [To] who[m] is [Paul] speaking here? You. Yes, originally he was speaking to the Corinthians, [but] they're all dead now. This is now God's Word to His Church, and if you're part of the Church, then it's for you. There are two stated "yous," and both of them are plural. If you were from the south, you'd have it right [because you'd probably say]: "y'all." There is also another implied "you" in the command "do." Whenever you have a command, [such

as] “Don’t murder,” let’s say, what that really means is: “*You* don’t murder.” It’s very personal [and] direct. So, all commands have the second person implied. So, in this one verse, we have three second-person “yous”—two explicitly stated, one implied. So, if you had [a] southern translation [of the Bible], you might read this [in this manner]: “Whether, then, y’all eat or drink or whatever y’all do, y’all should do everything to the glory of God.” That would be what Paul is saying here.

I point this out because I want you to realize that God is speaking to you in this text. Sometimes we can come to church, and the whole time we’re thinking, “Man, I wish my wife was here,” or “my husband,” or “my neighbor,” or “that guy at work I’ve invited to church sixty times but he’s never come, but he keeps saying, ‘Yeah, I might show up,’ to make me feel good.” I don’t want you to be thinking about the person next to you, and I don’t want you to be thinking about the person who isn’t here. I want you to realize that God is speaking to *you* in this text. He is directing this instruction to you, and it is such an important concept. This is the golden egg of the Christian life here. Every one of us must hear this so as to obey. There are no excuses.

You can’t say, “Well, I can’t help it because I’m tired,” [or], “You don’t know my boss,” [or], “You don’t know my wife,” [or], “my husband,” [or], “the woman you gave me did it [see Genesis 3:12],” [or], “the serpent deceived me [see Genesis 3:13].” No, no, no. There is only one person who is responsible for whatever you do, and that is *you*, unless you’re an unbeliever and you’re demon possessed and taken over by another entity. But if that isn’t the case, you need to hear this. You need to see the little laser dot of God’s sight right on your heart and know that He is speaking to you. He is aiming this at you because He wants you to know something that is necessary for everything you do.

[Our] second [point is]: You must live for the glory of God alone. Look at [1 Corinthians 10:]<sup>31</sup> again. Paul says, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do...” Now just stop there. This qualifies the scope, or breadth, to which we are to give God glory. The first two things he men-

tions [are] eating and drinking, probably referring back to the near context [in which] he's talking about eating meat sacrificed to idols, having lunch behind the idol temple, [and about] whether people should do that or not. Those are just very mundane things. We eat [and] drink every day. We have to survive. It's just a common, ordinary need of life. If Paul [had] just stopped there, then this text wouldn't have been all that incredible, because we'd say, "Yeah, eating, drinking, we need to do it for the glory of God." But he throws in that "whatever you do" in there, which in the Greek means "whatever you do." It is clear; it is beyond cavil. God is saying, through Paul, "All of you need to do everything for the glory of God." That's what He's saying here. So, whether it is a mundane thing, like eating and drinking, or doing some big business project, being at home, enjoying recreation, driving, enjoying entertainment, how you look at the Internet, how you dress, [or] whatever it is you do, do *all* to the glory of God.

Calvin, commenting on our text, writes: "There is no part of our life, and no actions so minute, that it ought not to be directed to the glory of God, and we must take care that even in eating and drinking, we aim at the advancement of it."<sup>9</sup> [There's something] I just encourage you to try sometime. It's kind of [a] fun [and] interesting conversation starter. You sit down with somebody, and [you] say, "So, tell me, why do you exist?" That is such a good question. It's fun to watch [the person's] face when you ask it. [His] eyebrows kind of tilt or dart up, and [his] eyes go sideways, and [he's] thinking to [himself], "Did he just ask me why I exist?" Then you can see [that] in [his] mind [he's thinking], "Why *do* I exist?" For most people, nothing comes up on the screen. They don't even have a file in that category. They don't even know what's going on. They don't even know why they are. They have nothing in their head[s that] tells them the reason why they exist.

Imagine going into a super, high-powered tool store and walking around until you found [a] big, fat, expensive tool. You [have] no idea what it [is,

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<sup>9</sup>Text available at: <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom39.xvii.v.html>

but] you buy it. Why would you do that? You take it home, unpack it, and you [say], “Wow, that is complex. I wonder what it is. I wonder how you use it.” Every week, you polish and greas[e] it, and you keep taking it in for service. You try to keep it in perfect condition. Why would you ever do that? It would be foolish. But, you know, that’s exactly how most people are in the world. Here they are and they don’t know what they are. They don’t know their reason for existing. They don’t know what their purpose is in life. And so, [do] you know what they do? They try doing things to just *make* a purpose [for themselves]. And you know what? It’s called sin because if you aren’t fulfilling your purpose, you’re sinning. That’s what sin is: a lack of fulfilling your purpose for existing. They are tool[s] without a purpose. They’re like the barren fig tree that Jesus spoke about in Luke 13[:6–9]. Why does it even use up the ground? I mean, it’s a fig tree for figs. [There are] no figs? Cut it down and throw it into the fire.

You’ve been given life, parents, food, education, [and] a body to glorify God. If you aren’t fulfilling that purpose, then you’re not fulfilling the purpose God has for you. Have you ever tried scrubbing the dishes with a hammer, or maybe ironing your clothes with your lawnmower, or cooking with motor oil? You think, “That would be stupid. Why would you do that?” Well, why would you not live for the glory of God? That’s why you were created. Why would you engage in sin if that’s not your purpose? God’s up there, [thinking], “What are you doing? That’s stupid.” Some of you might [try to] put your conscience at ease, though. I think a lot of times [this is] what we do when we realize in some parts of our lives [that] we’re not living for the glory of God, if we even think about it. We kind of massage our consciences by thinking, “Well, at least I’m here, aren’t I? I’m at church. At least I try and read my Bible, and I am serving, and I do give a little. After all, I must be giving God glory in those areas, right? That’s what the Bible says, right?” Well, not necessarily. This is when it really gets scary because you can do the right things with the wrong heart motive and not give God glory.

Let me give you an example. Turn over to the book of Zechariah, one of the minor prophets. Go to the beginning of Matthew and go back a couple [of] books. ([It goes] Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, to help you.) Anyway, it's one of those little books back there. [Go to] Zechariah 7, and while you're finding that passage (if you *can* find it) [allow me to point out that] the Israelites have been exiled in Babylon for seventy years. [After that time], they were able to return to the land to rebuild the city and reestablish Judaism. When they were in Babylon, and they were captives there, they were exiles because of their sin and the judgment that God brought upon them because of their sin and idolatry. [While they were captives], they decided to institute a fast on the fifth and seventh month, [during which] they would weep and mourn and not eat all day because they were in captivity. Look at Zechariah 7:1[-3]:

In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislev. Now the town of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men to seek the favor of the LORD, speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, "Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years?"

So, the fifth month was almost there, and they're thinking, "Should we keep doing these fasts and mournings that we instituted while we were in captivity, or not? Is this something God wants us to do, or not?" Look at [Zechariah 7:]4[-6]:

Then the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying, "Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?' "

They were not fasting for the glory of God. They were not mourning for the glory of God. They were doing it for themselves because they felt bad that they had to suffer the consequences of their sin, and so they instituted these yearly fasts so that they could feel bad about the judgment they deserved. They had no desire whatsoever to give God glory in this. God calls them on it, [saying], “Listen, you’ve been fasting for seventy years, but I want you to know: It wasn’t for Me.”

I think this teaches us something because [the Israelites] were religious, they did fast, they did mourn, and did it for seventy years. The only thing is [that] it never gave God glory. I think it’s very easy to come to church, and to think, “I’m going through the motions, therefore I am giving God glory.” If you’re like me, you probably find yourself doing a lot of things for yourself. You have things to do, maybe even religious things. I could be up there [in my office], thinking, “I need to prepare some Bible studies,” so I’m trying to hurry up so that I can get done what *I* want. Then, after that, I think, “I better pray for so-and-so, so I can get what *I* want.” [Do] you ever do that? Even though the Bible says that we need to pray everything according to what? [God’s] will, but yet we want *our* will. Then when God doesn’t give us what we want, sometimes we complain, or we doubt God because when God gives us what *He* wants, we aren’t pleased with what He wants or when He wants it. We need to be careful, even in [doing] religious deeds, [because] if our heart[s aren’t] right, we still aren’t giving glory to God.

J. Vernon Magee, commenting on this, says:

This is the test every believer should apply to his life. Not “should I do this, or should I do that,” but “can I do it for the glory of God?” Unfortunately, there are Christians who don’t even go to church for the glory of God. They go for some other reason—maybe to criticize or to gossip. With a motive like that it is better to stay at home. Whatever a believer does should be done for the glory of God.

We need to seek God's glory when we come [to church and] when we're singing songs. People sometimes complain, "I just don't like those songs."

"Well, why? You don't like them because they aren't giving God glory?"

"No, I don't like them because they're not what I like."

"Well, sorry. It's not about you." You're missing the point. We're talking about Soli Deo Gloria here: to the glory of God *alone*. [It's] not the glory of *you* alone, but [of] *God* alone. The question is: "Does *God* like it?" not "Do *I* like it?" We need to seek to obey the Word of God. Even in our religious activities, we need to check our hearts to make sure we're doing things for the right reason.

We [think], "I'm going to study this passage and I'm going to get it down so people are impressed by how much I know." [Or we think], "I'm going to go to Bible study, and I'm going to make sure I'm prepared so they [say], 'Oh, man, you really read your section. You really marked up your book. You really put some good answers down. You must be great.' [Then I can say], 'Well, thank you. Is this not Babylon the great Bible study that I have written?' [see Daniel 4:30]." It's the same thing. It can be a religious deed, and yet we aren't doing it for God's glory. Calvin said:

The Lord recognizes nothing as his own, except when his word is heard and religiously observed. Thus, though the glory of God sat in the sanctuary between the cherubim (Ezek. 10:4), and he had promised that he would there have his stated abode, still when the priests corrupted his worship by depraved superstitions, he transferred it elsewhere, and left the place without any sanctity.<sup>10</sup>

You remember what happened [in that passage in Ezekiel]. God says, "You know what? Build the temple. I'm going to enter in there. My glory is going to dwell above the mercy seat [on] the lid of the Ark of the Covenant,

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<sup>10</sup>Christian History Magazine, Volume IV, ii, p. 3.

and it is there that I will meet with you. It is there My glory will reside.” What happened? [The Israelites] begin to sin against God, and sin against God, and sin against God, and finally the prophet has [a] vision of the glory of God moving out of the temple, going to the threshold, moving out to the western part of Jerusalem, up to the Mount of Olives, and disappear[ing]. “Ichabod” is what was written, [which means] “the glory has departed” [see 1 Samuel 4:21]. Think of how many works that we do [in which] the glory has departed. Why? [It is] because we’re not doing them for the right reasons. It’s scary to think about how many of our works should have “Ichabod” written on them because we never even consider the glory of God. We’re just thinking about ourselves, what’s easy, what’s good, what we like.

Paul says in Colossians 3:17: “Whatever you do in word or deed,” notice “*whatever you do* in word or deed,” “do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.” Notice “everything.” He says it twice—he makes two huge, all-encompassing statements: do it all for the glory of God. Peter, in 1 Peter 4:11 says:

Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Did you see that? “So that in *all things* God may be glorified.” That sounds like our text [in 1 Corinthians 10]. It’s *exactly* like our text. It makes you wonder why the Westminster Confession starts out with the question: “What is the chief end of man?” [and gives the answer] “To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.” Why was that put at the beginning? [It’s at the beginning] because that is it, man. Everything else is how we do that thing, that one thing.

You might be thinking to yourself, “Well, OK. I see we’re supposed to give God glory in everything, and that’s a pretty easy concept to understand,

but how exactly do you go about doing that?” Well, first, two things must be observed. One: You need to make sure that whatever it is you’re doing complies with the Scriptures. That is the first way to give God glory, by aligning your actions [and] thoughts, with the will of God. So if it passes the test of Scripture, then that’s the first thing. [Two]: you need to make sure that your heart is right within you. [Do] you remember what Jesus said to the woman who came to the well in John 4? After he exposes her sin, she changes the subject, and says, “Yeah, you know, our people say that Gerizim is where people ought to worship, and your people say Jerusalem.” So she’s trying to get Jesus off of her and her sins onto some popular topic of the day. Jesus says in John 4:24: “God is spirit, and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth.” God is seeking those kinds of people. What does that mean, “spirit and truth?” [It means] that you [must] worship Him from your heart, your being, your soul and that you [must] worship Him according to the Word of God—not just cold, dead, letter-of-the-Law [worship], and not just [with] passion and feelings [without] complying with Scripture. [You are to worship Him by] complying with Scripture with passion and feeling, from your heart. Those are the two things that have to be in place if you’re going to give God glory.

There are also two directions [in] which you should giv[e] glory to God. The first is directly at God. [Do] you remember when the religious leaders came to Jesus in Matthew 22:36–38, [and said], “‘Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?’ And He said to him, ‘“YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.” This is the great and foremost commandment’ ”? In other words, that is a Godward direction. We love God directly with our hearts, minds, souls, [and] strength. [With] all of that—our whole being, physical and immaterial—we love Him. [This is] like the first four commandments, right? “I am the Lord God, you shall have no other gods before me. Don’t make any images of Me. Don’t take My name in vain. Keep holy the Sabbath unto Me” [see Exodus 20:1–10].

Those are direct ways we love God. Praising, singing, thanking—those are direct ways to love God.

There is one other way to love God, and that is indirectly. We love God indirectly when we what? Love other people, because that's what Jesus goes on to say in Matthew 22:39–40: “The second is like it,” that is, the first great commandment, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’” Then He makes this incredible statement: “On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” There are about 613 commands in the Old Testament. (I have never counted, I just read that in books, but I'm sure someone did [count them up].) But, every one of those commands in the Old Testament, and every command in the New Testament is either about worshipping God directly, loving Him directly, or loving other people. Every one. Just try it—any time you come to any command of the Bible, say, “Is this about God direct[ly] or [about] people?” You'll find it always fits into one of those two categories. You either love God directly, or you love God indirectly by loving other people. That is why the last of the Ten Commandments [say], “Honor your father and mother; do not commit murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not covet; do not bear false witness” [see Exodus 20:16]. All those things are talking about how you relate to who[m]? [How you relate to] your neighbor, how you love your neighbor.

This is why Paul goes on to say what he does. If you look in the verse following 1 Corinthians [10:]31, he goes on to explain how we need to love others. He has just said, “Give glory to God in everything,” [basically saying], “Yeah, go for it directly, but I also want you to know,” verse 32: “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.” That pretty much covers everybody. You're either a Jew, a non-Jew, or a Christian. There you go. “Just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved” [see 1 Corinthians 10:33]. Notice here [that] you can love God by loving God directly, and you can love God by loving God indirectly by loving other people.

Where do we get into trouble? When we love who[m]? Ourselves, and that's what we're good at. We're experts at it. I never have to be told to take care of myself, man. I do it real[ly] well. The hard part is always to be thinking, "What would God have me do? What would be good for my neighbor?" That takes effort. That takes practice. So, before we do anything—before we do the dishes, eat [a] hamburger, go golfing, read the newspaper, build some thing, do some project at work, or whatever it is, [we should ask], "Can I do this for the glory of God?"

You may be sitting out there thinking to yourself, "Well, Jack, OK. All right. I'm getting this here. I need to do it according to the Bible, do it from the right heart, love God directly, love God indirectly, but what if there are M&Ms on the counter? Can I eat those for the glory of God? What if I want to ride my bike? Can I do that? Is that a God-glorifying kind of thing? What about all these little weird issues that aren't specifically mentioned? M&Ms are not in the Bible. How do I do that?" Well, here are some things you can ask. [First]: Is it allowed by the Word of God? So, you think to yourself, "Let's see, are M&Ms in the Bible? No. However, Paul does say that we can eat anything we want as long as we give thanks, for everything is sanctified by the means of the Word of God and prayer. Thank you, Lord," [and you munch on those M&Ms]. There it is. Then you go out to take a bike ride, and you think, "OK, let's see here. God gave me the bike. Thank You, Lord. God gave me the ability to ride the bike. Thank You, Lord. And, I even get some benefit from doing this, so I'm going to do it. Thank You, Lord." Ride the bike. But there are some things [about which] you just can't say that. They won't pass the test of Scripture.

Second, you need to ask, "Is my heart right within me," as we mentioned earlier, "or am I doing this for a selfish reason?" What's interesting is [that] selfishness can turn any good act into a bad act. Third, [ask], "Will this thought or action be good for my neighbor?" "Should I pelt that barking, yapping dog with an orange from my tree or not?" [Your thinking should go something like this]: "Well, that probably wouldn't be good for the neighbor, so I'll just put up [with the dog,] [because Scripture does say], 'Love

your neighbor as yourself.’ ” (Barking dogs bother me.) Fourth, and this is the one that will kind of just fix it for you; it’s probably one of the best ones, [ask yourself, “Can I pray,] ‘Lord, I’m going to think, or do, this thing, or whatever, because I know I can do it and bring You glory’?”

Just think of how many sins we have committed and how much misery we have brought upon ourselves that could have been prevented if we [had] asked ourselves things like that. Think about it. How many times do we do things, and after [we do them], we think, “That was so dumb. I should have never said that. I should have never done that. Why did I do that?” Then ask yourself, “Did I stop, and say, ‘Lord, can I do this for Your glory?’ or not?” If we [had] asked the question, we probably would have gotten a very clear answer, and then we would have done what gave Him glory rather than what pleased us.

Matthew Henry, commenting on 1 Corinthians 10:31, writes:

The apostle takes occasion from this discourse to lay down a rule for Christians’ conduct, and apply it to this particular case (v. 31, 32), namely, that in eating and drinking, and in all we do, we should aim at the glory of God, at pleasing and honoring him. This is the fundamental principle of practical godliness. The great end of all practical religion must direct us where particular and express rules are wanting. Nothing must be done against the glory of God, and the good of our neighbors, connected with it.<sup>11</sup>

Man, he gets it. He wraps in the neighbor, God, the Word of God—everything.

Some of you may be sitting out there, thinking to yourselves, “But what if you don’t *want* to give God glory? Why would I want to do that?” Well, to escape hell; so you won’t be judged [and] cast into hell for all eternity;

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<sup>11</sup>Matthew Henry, *Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 1 Corinthians 10, available online at: <http://www.studylight.org/com/mhc-com/view.cgi?book=1co&chapter=010>

so that you will be able to fulfill the very reason for your existence; so God doesn't say, "Why does he take up the ground? Let me cut him down and throw him into the fire [see Luke 13:6–9]." If you are living for any other reason than the glory of God, you're really committing idolatry, aren't you? That's what we do. That's what sin is: A refusal to give God glory, and instead to give ourselves, or some other thing, glory. It's idolatry. God is so gracious, He knows we're sinners, and He knows we're idolaters. Yet, because He is merciful, because He is loving and compassionate, even when we were ungodly, even when we were dead in our sins, Christ died for us so that we, through faith in Him, could receive the gift of eternal life [see Colossians 2:13].

If you've never done that, [you've never placed your faith in Him], what are you waiting for? Why would you want to iron your clothes with a lawnmower? Why cook with motor oil? Why brush your teeth with a hammer? It's ridiculous. God has a purpose for you. It's a good purpose, a purpose of peace, blessing, and joy, not only in this life, but [in] the one to come [as well], so why wouldn't you fulfill that purpose? Jesus holds out his nail-pierced hands to you, [and] He says, "You who are weak and heavy-laden, [come to Me] and I will give you rest" [see Matthew 11:28], so are you just going to tell Him, "No, no, no"? Jesus says, "Receive Me, and I will give you the free gift of eternal life" [see John 5:24]. "To as many as received Him," John said, "He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believed in His name" [see John 1:12].

If you have never trusted Christ *alone* for salvation—not Christ plus you, but Christ *alone*, by grace alone, through faith alone, according to the gospel of God and the Word of God alone—do it because right now you're cooking with motor oil. You're not fulfilling the reason for your existence. You're missing it. But as soon as you believe in Jesus, then God instantly transforms you into one of His children. You instantly become a soldier of Christ. You begin to live your life for the glory of God. When you blow it, He forgives you. Then, when you want to do what's right, He helps you—

He gives you strength, His Word, the Body of Christ, prayer, [and] all the resources you need to live for His glory.

That's when you really begin to battle, like when you go to pray, and every single thought in the world but what you should pray about comes to mind. You begin to battle to give God glory because Satan doesn't want that. When you begin to read your Bible, it seems like every distraction in the world comes upon you, and you realize, "God wants me to do this, this glorifies God, this helps me so I can glorify God," and you wage that war, you fight the good fight [see 1 Timothy 6:12] because now you're in the battle.

Calvin, in his *Institutes* writes:

One thing which ought to animate us to perpetual contest with the devil is, that he is everywhere called both our adversary and the adversary of God. For, if the glory of God is dear to us, as it ought to be, we ought to struggle with all our might against him who aims at the extinction of that glory. If we are animated with proper zeal to maintain the Kingdom of Christ, we must wage irreconcilable war with him who conspires its ruin.<sup>12</sup>

That's what it means to be a Christian. So, we've learned one thing today. Hopefully you got it: We need to live for the glory of God.

In closing, I want to read a hymn that we have sung here many times. But, a lot of times when you sing hymns, you get used to the words and the music together, and the music sometimes is like oil, and the words just go through, and we don't really contemplate them. This was a hymn written by one of the greatest women hymn writers, Frances Havergal. She just wrote down some lines [that] were kind of just like propositions. She is known as the "hymn writer of consecration," because she wanted her whole life to be for the glory of God. She wrote this hymn, which is really a prayer and

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<sup>12</sup>Text available at: <http://www.reformed.org/books/institutes/books/book1/bk1ch14.html>

a hymn together. So, why don't you bow with me in prayer. I'm going to read this and close us. Just listen to these words.

Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee. . . .  
Take my hands, and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.

Take my feet, and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.  
Take my voice, and let me sing  
Always only, for my King.

Take my lips, and let them be  
Filled with messages for Thee.  
Take my silver and my gold,  
Not a mite would I withhold.

Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
At Thy feet its treasure store.  
Take myself, and I will be  
Ever, only, all for Thee,  
Ever, only, all for Thee.<sup>13</sup>

Father, we marvel at Your graciousness to us because as we look at Your Word, and we see Your grand purpose for our lives, how often we miss it, how often we seek ourselves, or seek the world, or seek things [that] do not bring You glory. Oh, Father, we just pray that You would help us to leave here with that thought ever fixed in our minds, that we would be consecrated to You, that in our singing; our praying; our mundane, everyday chores; our big things that we do; in work, and studying, and just all the things of life that we would seek to give You glory and honor. If Your Spirit convicts us,

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<sup>13</sup>Frances R. Havergal, "Take My Life, and Let It Be Consecrated," *Voices in Worship: Hymns of the Christian Life* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc. 2003), 317.

and we aren't sure [the things we want to do would bring You glory], then may we abstain from those [things]. Give us the power to not detract from Your glory. Help us to live in such a way that we honor You in all that we do. And, Father, if there [are people] here who [have] never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, right now I would pray that they would cry out to You in their hearts, confess their sins, admit they are sinners, admit that Christ died on the cross for them, [and] that they would believe and be saved, and forevermore be transformed into [people] who will forever give You glory both in this world and the one to come. Father, we thank You for loving us. Give us the grace we need to walk before You in a way that pleases You. We ask [this] in Christ's name, Amen.

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