

## Seeking for Glory

Franklin Church of Christ  
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PM Assembly

### Introduction:

One of my favorite quotes of all time is attributed to Theodore Roosevelt, 26<sup>th</sup> president of the United States:

*It is not the critic who counts: not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes up short again and again, because there is no effort without error or shortcoming, but who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, who spends himself for a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least he fails daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.*

I think that is powerful and true as far as it goes. It strikes at the heart of what is success, glory and honor. We think about those men who, through their great works and words, like Roosevelt, have achieved a certain immortality. We dream of such greatness ourselves. We would like to receive glory and honor and immortality. We would like to be praised and receive accolades of our greatness. Therefore, we often pursue such greatness. Are you aware that Paul actually deals with this issue in **Romans 2:6-11**? Interestingly, he doesn't rebuke us for seeking glory, honor and immortality. Rather, he explains the means by which we may truly accomplish it and the means by which so many try to accomplish it but fail because of their fundamental understandings of eternal realities. Do you want glory, honor and immortality? Then listen to Paul's teaching and strive rightly.

### Discussion:

- I. The worldly approach to glory, honor and immortality.
  - A. Paul delineated the worldly approach to glory, honor and immortality in **Romans 2:8**: "...but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury" (ESV).
  - B. There are two keys to the worldly pursuit of glory, honor and immortality.
    1. *Self-seeking*: Several translations use the word "contentious" here. It translates the same word as found in **Philippians 2:3-4** when it says to do nothing from "rivalry" (ESV), "strife" (KJV) or "selfishness" (NASU). It is also found in **James 3:14, 16**, when it says that earthly wisdom is filled with "selfish ambition" (ESV, NASU) or "strife" (KJV). Interestingly, this particular word has an extra-biblical usage that meant "the self-seeking pursuit of political office through unfair means."<sup>1</sup> Many are seeking glory merely for self. They are self-seekers who care little about others. They feel free to use and manipulate others on the way to the top. They don't care who they send toppling to the bottom or on whose neck they have to stand to reach the top. Their climb is wholly about themselves, not about God and not about others. There are even religious people who act like this. Jesus rebuked them in **Matthew 6:1ff**. These only do outwardly righteous acts to be seen and glorified by men. We need to ask ourselves for whom are we most seeking this glory, honor and immortality? Do we want God and others to benefit from this or are we just thinking about putting ourselves forward?
    2. *Obeying unrighteousness*: Paul had talked about this at length in **Romans 1:18-32**. Instead of upholding the truth of God, the worldly suppress it opting for unrighteousness. They ignore the plainly revealed nature of God and choose rather to honor the creature instead of the Creator (namely honoring themselves as they lift up bird, beast and man to the status of deity). Because they exchanged God's truth for man's lies, God gave them up to all uncleanness. He gave them up to immorality, covetousness, murder, deceit, maliciousness, etc. Notice how this began. It didn't begin by going wholesale into evil. It began by simply not obeying the truth, but as time wore on it led to wholesale sin even accepting what is considered by man in all times as the ultimate immorality of homosexuality. Have we not seen this repeated in our day? As churches years ago turned from God's truths and now they have followed their turn to its logical conclusion and even churches claim

<sup>1</sup> Blue Letter Bible. "Dictionary and Word Search for *eritheia* (Strong's 2052)". Blue Letter Bible. 1996-2008. 15 Feb 2008. < <http://cf.blueletterbible.org/lang/lexicon/lexicon.cfm??Strong's=G2052&Version=kjv> >

homosexuality is lawful and happily give approval to those who practice such. Too many today are seeking glory, honor and immortality by pursuing their own passions, by doing whatever feels right, by creeping ever so slowly into unrighteousness and turning from the truth of God. But this provides no glory. Satan has told them this unrighteousness will provide them with satisfaction, with happiness, with contentment. But he lied. He is the father of lies (**John 8:44**).

II. The godly approach to glory, honor and immortality.

A. **Romans 2:7-8** actually provides the keys to attaining true glory, honor and immortality. "...to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth..." (ESV).

B. Paul provides three keys within these two verses to attaining glory, honor and immortality.

1. *Well-doing*: **Romans 2:4** explains that all of God's kindnesses have been extended to us so that we might repent. That repentance should lead us to good works. Jesus did not die merely so we could revel in forgiveness. He died so we could be free to walk in His good deeds. **Ephesians 2:10** explains we were recreated in order to walk in good works. **Titus 2:11-14** nails this down explaining that the whole purpose for God's grace was to help us renounce ungodliness and worldly passions but to pursue self-control, righteousness and godliness. God saved us so we might be zealous for good works. **Galatians 6:10** says, "So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith." Thus, if we want true glory, honor and immortality. We do not do so by climbing to the top of our personal success ladder. We do so by divesting ourselves of ourselves and pursuing the good of others. We must use ourselves up in service to those around us. Only then will we ever have true glory, honor and immortality.

2. *Obedying the truth*: As Paul rebuked those who were seeking glory, honor and immortality through improper means, he explained something they did not do, thereby expressing what those who are living properly should do. Those who obey unrighteousness do not obey the truth. Those who are seeking for glory, honor and immortality properly, therefore, do obey the truth. The truth of God is not just some subjective love lesson for us. It is a concrete teaching that God intends us to obey. According to **I Corinthians 13:6**, rejoicing in truth is at the heart of real love (for God and for others). According to **II Thessalonians 2:10**, we are to love the truth and thereby be saved. Sadly, today, even some Christians act like truth is unattainable. They consider the fact that any of us might be wrong to mean we need not worry about truth or strive to persuade others regarding what we believe is truth. But God explains that we must search out, understand and follow truth. Further, the fact that God claims we gain glory, honor and immortality by obeying the truth demonstrates we can know what truth is. It may be a growth process. It may take time, but we can understand, we can increase in understanding and we can obey the truth as we grow.

3. *Patience*: I can't help but think of **Galatians 6:9**. Apparently, Paul understood that a life of doing good for others can be tiresome. That is especially so if we are doing good to others who do not return the favor and sometimes even repay us with evil. At times, while we strive to do good and obey the truth we may not see the reward. We may not see how it is helping others or us. It is. Trust God. Look at the long-term big picture. We must not grow weary and tired, but patiently keep our chin. God is merely giving all men the opportunity to repent and He will use our lives to help accomplish that (cf. **II Peter 3:9**).

III. Why this works.

A. Paul really explains why this works in **Romans 2:9-11**. The fact is, most people today do not understand the true realities of this world. They act like this world is all there is (whether they say they believe that or not). When we are so enamored with this world, its goods and its prestige, we are neglecting the reality that this life is not about this life, but about the next. What good are all the material goods of the world if we dwell eternally in hell when we have left this world? What good are the praises of men if they lead us to the condemnation of God?

B. God is the judge. This life is not the end. This universe is not the extent of reality. There is something more. There are a heaven and a hell. There are eternal destinies that we are

establishing with every choice we make. When we stand before God, He won't care where we went to school, who our parents were, who our children were, what company we ran, what cars we drove, what neighborhoods we lived in, what jobs we held. In this life, those things often cause people to be partial too us. In this life, if we live in the right neighborhood, rub elbows with the right people, come from the right stock, have enough money, people will overlook all kinds of bad things, opening doors for us. God, however, is impartial. When we stand before Him in judgment, He is going to look only at our works. Have we patiently done good and obeyed His truth? Have we grown in our ability to do that? Or were we satisfied with doing some minimal amount we thought would grant us heaven while we pursued our own goals the rest of the time?

- C. Why do those who are self-seeking and obey unrighteous not gain glory, honor and immortality? Because before God, the only one that matters, they are merely storing up wrath and tribulation. Those, however, who patiently do good and obey the truth will receive eternal life. There is not greater glory, honor and immortality than that.

**Conclusion:**

Do you want the glory, honor and immortality that come through God's gift of eternal life? Then repent and develop a patient life of good deeds and obedience to God's truth. Seek God's will, not your own. Seek the good of others, not yourself. Don't allow life to get in your way and cause you to lose sight of why God saved you—to serve others and obey Him. We can attain glory, honor and immortality. Let's submit to God together.