

THE PLAN OF MY LIFE: GOD'S WILL**Introduction**

Since glorifying God is the master key to spiritual growth, it is important for us to know how to do it. First, we glorify God by...

I. CONFESSING JESUS AS LORD

If my life is to be focused on glorifying God, that means I must initially focus my attention on the lordship of Christ. Just what does that mean?

A. The Reasons for Salvation

1. THE MAIN REASON

Philippians 2:5-8 discusses the humiliation (Gk. {it}kenosis{ei}) of Christ. Verses 7-8 say that He {it}"took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."{ei} Then the Word of God says, {it}"Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord..."{ei} (vv. 9-11a). The humiliation of Jesus Christ was an act of obedience to the Father. In response, the Father exalted Jesus Christ. And then He calls on everything in the universe to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord {it}"to the glory of God, the Father"{ei} (v. 11b). The reason that we are to confess Jesus as Lord is that it glorifies God, the Father. That is the basic principle of salvation.

2. THE OTHER REASONS

I believe that most people think we should be saved for reasons other than the glory of God. If you asked most Christians the reasons that they communicate their faith, you would most likely receive one of the following responses:

a. {it}**A Circumvention**{ei}

One response is that they want to keep people from going to hell--to avoid eternal punishment. Now that is a valid reason, but not the major one.

b. {it}**A Constraint**{ei}

Someone else might respond, "I present Christ because the love of Christ constrains me. Since God loves them and I love them, I tell them about Christ." That is also a valid reason but not the main reason.

c. {it}**A Command**{ei}

And another person might say, "I speak the gospel because I'm commanded to go

into all the world and preach the Gospel, make disciples, and teach them everything that Christ has commanded."

All of those are valid biblical reasons for evangelism, but the main reason we should preach the gospel is for the glory of God.

B. The Rejection of Salvation

To live without salvation is to deny Christ. And to deny Christ is the greatest affront to God--the one sin that is unforgivable. If any person continues in unbelief, he is committing an unforgivable sin. That is the major sin of man.

1. JOHN 16:9 -- Jesus said that He would send the Holy Spirit to convict the world {it}"of sin, because they believe not in Me."{ei} The greatest sin that a man can commit is failure to believe in Jesus Christ. Why? Because that says that He is not God, that He is not our Savior, that He is not to be worshiped, and that He is not to be our Lord. That dishonors the Father.

2. JOHN 5:23 -- {it}"...all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoreth not the Son honoreth not the Father, who hath sent Him."{ei} You cannot give glory to God unless you give glory to His Son. Christ is the fullness of His glory.

C. The Response to Salvation

1. CONFESSION OF CHRIST'S LORDSHIP

In order to give glory to Christ, we must confess Christ as Lord. That brings about salvation. That is not a second act. You don't say, "I've taken Him as Savior, and later on I'll make Him Lord." Those aren't two distinct things. When you are saved, you confess Christ as Lord. Romans 10:9 says, {it}"...if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."{ei} In other words, salvation is a matter of confessing the lordship of Christ--confessing that He is God and that He is sovereign.

{*}Are You a Lordship Salvationist?{et}

Somebody asked me if I was a "lordship salvationist." According to that individual, a lordship salvationist is someone who believes that you must believe that Jesus is Lord in order to be saved. I said that I didn't know any other way to accept Christ. He is Lord; and I accept Him on His terms, not mine. I don't redefine Jesus as something less than He is, and then accept Him that way. I asked him if Jesus is Lord and he said, "Yes." I said, "Then how do you take Him?" And he said, "You must take Him as He is." When you confess Jesus as Lord, you bring glory to God. But no one can glorify God until they confess Jesus as Lord.{e*}

2. OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST'S LORDSHIP

As Christians, Christ is Lord of our lives. He rules whether we obey Him or not. As He rules our lives, we must keep in mind that our main purpose in preaching the

gospel is that He may rule in the lives of others for His glory. In other words, the great sin of man is not glorifying God.

a. {it}Henry Martyn{ei}

Englishman Henry Martyn served as a missionary in India for many years in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When he first went into a pagan temple and saw people worshiping their gods, he burst out of that place with tears in his eyes. When he arrived back at his place of abode, he took out his diary and wrote that he could not endure existence if Jesus was to be so dishonored. He was incensed by those who didn't glorify Christ.

b. {it}Paul{ei}

In Romans 1:5, Paul says that we preach {it}"obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name."{ei} In other words, "We don't preach the gospel for their sake; we preach the gospel for Jesus' sake."

c. {it}John{ei}

In 3 John 7, John says that the brethren preached for the sake of His name.

Preaching is done for Jesus' sake so that He might be acknowledged as Lord.

If you are not a Christian (i.e., you have never confessed Christ as Lord), there is no capacity within you to live for His glory. You cannot say, "I deny Christ. He is not my Savior or my Lord," and then try to grow spiritually or glorify God. That is a slap at God. If you dishonor the Son, then you dishonor the Father (Jn. 5:23). Glorifying God begins with confessing Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:11). Thus salvation is the necessary beginning for spiritual growth. You can't grow until you are born.

We will glorify God first by confessing Jesus as Lord, and second by...

II. OBEYING JESUS AS LORD

When we allow God to clothe us with the purple robe of His righteousness, He is glorified. When we open our hearts and receive His Son, He is glorified. When His Spirit takes up residence in our lives, He is glorified. When we call Jesus "Lord," He is glorified. And having received the Lord, we are to respond to His Lordship.

A. The Purpose of Submission

The key verse is 1 Corinthians 10:31. Paul says, {it}"Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God."{ei} When you confessed Jesus as Lord, that was done to the glory of God. Now whatever else you do--whether it is the most mundane, menial functions of life such as eating and drinking--should focus on the glory of God. No matter what you do, do it all to the glory of God. That should become the pervasive attitude of your life.

Now Jesus lived with that attitude. In John 8:50 Jesus says, {it}"...I seek not Mine own glory; there is one that seeketh and judgeth."{ei} Back in verse 49 He said, {it}"...I honor my Father..."{ei} He was saying, "I'm here for one reason: His glory, not Mine." You will grow spiritually when focusing on God's glory becomes your main focus in life. And if we submit our lives in obedience to the lordship of Christ, we will be characterized by an attitude of humility, and the death of pride will result. We must beware of self-worship; we must aim always and only at God's glory.

B. The Principles of Submission

What does it mean to submit in obedience to Christ's lordship? First of all, it means...

1. SACRIFICE

We are to glorify God no matter what the cost. That is the essence of what it means to submit to His Lordship.

a. {it}Illustrated by Christ{ei}

1) {it}In His LIfe{ei}

In John 12:27 Jesus said, {it}"Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour."{ei} He is saying, "God, what should be My prayer as I anticipate the cross? Should I ask You to bail Me out? But this is the hour I came for." Then He says, {it}"Father, glorify Thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again"{ei} (v. 28). He is saying, "God, humanly I would like to get out of this commitment. There is an incredible price to pay--pain, anguish, bearing sin. But Father, glorify Your name no matter what it costs Me." As you learn to be content to do God's will and glorify Him no matter what the price, you will be fulfilling the second principle of spiritual growth: obeying His Lordship.

2) {it}In His Love{ei}

There is another appropriate illustration of what it means to submit to Christ's lordship in John 21 involving the Apostle Peter.

a) Peter's Inadequacy

Peter had been chosen by God before the foundation of the world for some very important tasks. He was to be the key leader in preaching the cross of Christ. That began with the birth of the church in Jerusalem and moved out around the world (Ac. 1-12). So it was very important for him to be prepared for the task that God had called him to.

Unfortunately, Peter was inconsistent and uncommitted. He gave a great deal of verbal assent, but he didn't persist. Every time he was given a test, he failed. Yet the Lord wanted that man to fulfill His will for Him. In the past Jesus helped Peter to see His power: He walked on water (Mt. 14:22-33), He fed five thousand people

(Mt. 14:15-21), He was transfigured before him (Mt. 17:1-13). Peter even made this great confession of Christ: {it}"...Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"{ei} (Mt. 16:16). Peter also saw a great display of power in the Garden of Gethsemane when soldiers came to arrest Jesus. When Christ spoke, the soldiers fell backwards like dominoes (Jn. 18:3- 6). If that wasn't enough, Peter had seen the resurrected Christ in the upper room (Jn. 20:19-23), and even had a personal audience with Him (Lk. 24:34). Yet after all of that he remained inconsistent. I think he felt inadequate, thinking, "Every time I've been given a test, I failed it. Who's to say that I'm going to pass one now?"

b) Jesus' Instruction

Jesus said to Peter, "Go to Galilee and wait for Me" (Mk. 16:7). Jesus was testing him.

c) Peter's Impetuosity

But Peter didn't wait as long as he should have. When Christ hadn't arrived after a certain length of time, he said, {it}"...I go fishing..."{ei} (Jn. 21:3a). In other words, "I'm going back to what I used to do. I wasn't cut out for the ministry. I've failed every time I've had an opportunity. The one thing I can do is fish, and I'm going back to it." And since he was the leader, the other disciples that were with him followed him.

Verse 3 says, {it}"...They went forth, and entered into a boat..."{ei} The Greek should be translated, "the boat." That may indicate that they got into Peter's own boat. He was going back to his old profession and the rest were going with him. But they couldn't catch any fish because the Lord had rerouted every fish in the Sea of Galilee to get His point across. Verse 3 says that they fished all night and caught nothing.

d) Jesus' Illumination

The Lord appeared in the morning and confronted Peter about his love. After Peter affirmed three times that he loved Him (vv. 15-17), Jesus said this: {it}"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst where thou wouldest..."{ei} (v. 18). Jesus is saying, "Peter, you've had your own way--putting on your own belt, and going where you wanted." To gird oneself pictured preparing for a journey. Then Jesus said, {it}"...but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands,{ei} [a phrase used in extrabiblical literature to speak of crucifixion]{it}"and another shall gird thee, and carry thee where thou wouldest not. This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God..."{ei} (vv. 18b-19a).

Peter would come to a point in his life when he would glorify God because he would be willing to pay any price before he would deny the will of God--even death. And that had to be news to Peter because every other time that he faced death, he revoked his testimony. On one occasion when he was confronted with the fact that he was a follower of Jesus Christ, he took God's name in vain and swore that he did not know Christ (Mk. 14:70-71). The Lord said to Peter, "There is coming a day when you will die for Me and glorify Me because that will be My will. And you will be

content to die for My sake."

Paul had the same attitude. He said, {it}"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"{ei} (Phil. 1:21). He also said, {it}"For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's"{ei} (Rom. 14:8).

To glorify God now that I'm a Christian means that if I have to die for His sake, then I will do so willingly.

b. {it}Illustrated in History{ei}

1) {it}By Christian Missionaries{ei}

Missionaries throughout the history of Christian missions have been willing to die for Christ.

2) {it}By the Heroes of Faith{ei}

The heroes of faith in Hebrews 11 {it}"(Of whom the world was not worthy...)"{ei} died in great anticipation of glory and resurrection (v. 38). There was no price too high for them.

3) {it}By the Remnant of Israel{ei}

In Isaiah 24:15, Isaiah cries to the remnant saying, {it}"Wherefore, glorify the LORD in the fires..."{ei}

4) {it}By Latimer and Ridley{ei}

Latimer and Ridley, two sixteenth century English reformers, were burned at the stake for their faith, singing praises to Jesus Christ.

5) {it}By Savonarola{ei}

Savonarola, the great fifteenth century preacher in Italy, was burned at the stake by the system of Rome. Throughout history there have been those who have been willing to do anything for the cause of Christ.

6) {it}By John Paton{ei}

John Paton was a great nineteenth century missionary in New Hebrides. After he graduated from school and ministered in Scotland for awhile, he was sent to New Hebrides with his wife. At that time only cannibals lived there. When they landed, they didn't speak the language or know anyone who lived there. All they knew was that people had gone there and had never returned. The threat of their life constantly hung over them. At a later time, when the chief of the tribe in that area was saved, he asked John Paton what army protected his place of dwelling in the early months when he first arrived. It seems that God's holy angels apparently became manifest in order to protect the missionary.

After having lived there a few weeks, Paton's wife gave birth to a baby. But the baby died, and a few days later so did his wife. He slept on their graves for three or four nights to keep the natives from digging up their bodies and eating them. In spite of that, he devoted the rest of his life towards ministering to the New Hebrides. Paton, in his autobiography (*The Story of John G. Paton*) [N.Y.: A. L. Burt Co., n. d.], compiled by his brother James) said near the end of his life that he didn't know of one native that hadn't made at least a profession of faith in Jesus Christ. He went there with great hopes, lost his cherished wife and baby, and stayed on alone, but God used him because he was content to do God's will no matter what it cost him. That is what it means to aim your life at God's purposes.

If you are charting your own course, saying, "Lord, here's what I will do, and here's what I won't do," then you are not willing to pay the price of being embarrassed, defamed, and dishonored by the world, or settling for fewer possessions in this life. You will never know what it means to be content with God's will at any price and grow spiritually because you won't be aiming at God's glory. You grow when you are consumed with His glory and not your own comfort and plans.

2. SENSITIVITY

God's glory should be so consuming that you hurt when He is dishonored. I can usually determine when someone is aiming their life at the glory of God by how they react when God is dishonored.

a. Exemplified by David

In Psalm 69:9 David looked at the Temple and the worship of Israel, and his heart broke. He said, *"For the zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up..."* David was saying, "I have a tremendous love for what exalts You and a tremendous hatred for what dishonors You. And I concern myself with Your Temple, Your presence, and Your worship to the extent that it tears me up." In the remainder of verse 9 he says, *"...the reproaches of those who reproached Thee are fallen upon me."* In other words, "When You are dishonored, I hurt."

As a father, I understand what David is saying. If you hurt my child, you hurt me. If you hurt my wife, you hurt me. If you hurt someone I love, you hurt me. I have cried more over things that have happened to other people I care about than I have ever cried about things that have happened to me. It is hard for me to cry about things that happen to me, but it is much easier for me to cry with someone I care about whose heart is broken. I identify with them in love. When you are identified with God, the things that break your heart will not so much be the things that happen to you, but the things that dishonor God. That is the mentality of one who is focused on God's glory. What breaks God's heart breaks his heart. Do you live your life that way? Do you aim your life at the glory of God? Do you not care what glorifying God costs, and are you consumed with how things affect Him?

b. Exemplified by the Church at Ephesus

One particular statement in the Book of Revelation is easily passed over. In reference to the church at Ephesus, Revelation 2:2 says, *"...thou canst not bear them who are evil..."* One of the great characteristics of that church was that they

couldn't tolerate people who were evil. Why? Because they knew that evil impinged upon the holiness of God and His will. I'm amazed at how few Christians understand that. So many of them are consumed with their own will, comfort, and problems that they don't feel the pain when God is dishonored; they only feel pain when they are dishonored.

c. {it}Exemplified by a New Christian{ei}

I remember one young girl who came to California some years ago who did feel pain when God was dishonored. She came to live with a guy who was a student at U.C.L.A. Neither one of them were Christians. She was only of high school age from a little town in West Virginia. After a while, he kicked her out. She wandered around, and eventually tried to take her life several times by slashing her wrists. But each time she was spared. My sister and I came across that girl and had the opportunity to lead her to Christ. She said that since her life was changed, she wanted to go back to her home town and tell her mother and friends about Christ. I said to her, "Is there a church that you can go to so someone can disciple you?" She said, "No. And I don't know any other Christians there, but I'm going to go back." I gave her a Bible and prayed for her. She decided to attend another high school because she knew that if she went back to her old high school she would fall into her old patterns.

She had been gone three or four months when she wrote me a letter. I was deeply concerned, fearful that she had wandered away and was writing for counsel in the midst of a terrible situation. But this was what she wrote:

"I hope everything is well with you. I have really begun to put things together in the Bible. By reading the Old Testament I have been able to see that God deserves much more recognition than He's getting. I can see how He gave people so many chances and how they continued to break His heart by worshiping idols and sinning. God wanted the Israelites to sacrifice lambs, goats, oxen and things like that as an atonement to Him for sin. He is God, after all, and He had to have some payment for the trouble and the sins of men.

"To think that God actually talked and was in the visible presence of these people and yet they kept on complaining and sinning! I can almost feel the unbearable sadness that God feels when someone rejects and doesn't glorify Him. He's God! He made us. He gave us everything. We continue to doubt and reject Him. It's awful! When I think of how I hurt Him, I hope I can someday make it up.

"I have a soft spot in my heart for God. I can feel His jealousy now when I see people worshiping idols and other gods. It's all so clear to me that God must be glorified. He deserves it, and it's long overdue.

"I can't wait to just tell Jesus, and thus God indirectly, that I love Him and just kiss the ground He walks on because He should be worshiped. I want God to be God and to take His rightful place. I'm tired of the way people put Him down."

It is amazing that someone so new in the faith understood the whole picture of living to the glory of God--to the point of hurting when God is dishonored.

I glorify God by confessing Jesus as Lord and by bending my will to His lordship

no matter what that costs me. Then I feel the pain that God feels. There is a third element. When you aim your life at the glory of God you will be characterized by...

3. HUMILITY

You can usually determine the person who is truly living for the glory of God because he will be content to be outdone by someone who does exactly what he can do, only better.

a. Examples of Contention

1) People in the Pew

Someone has said that when Satan fell, he landed in the choir loft. Many of the people in the choir want to sing solos. And when someone doesn't get to sing the solo, he complains. At that point he is not concerned about glorifying God. I know of one pastor who has so many people who wanted to sing solos that he has a solo night once a year. Everyone who wants to sing gets to sing one verse, and there is a parade of soloists across the platform.

Jealousy is not just true of people in the pew; it is also true of...

2) People in the Pulpit

I know of two pastors who held a contest to see who could get the most people into Sunday School. The one who lost got sick. He didn't want to lose to another pastor.

b. An Example of Contentment

Jealousy is a factor in the Christian life because Christians are more often concerned about who gets the credit than if God is glorified. When you can rejoice that someone has done something for the Lord better than you could have, then you are aiming at God's glory. When you can rejoice that somebody can preach, teach, or do anything better than you can--and do it with greater blessing and response--then you are aiming at God's glory.

A good illustration of that is found in Philippians 1:14-18 in the life of the Apostle Paul.

1) The Influence of Paul

As Paul wrote Philippians, he was most likely a prisoner. He was approaching the end of his ministry. He had some great adventures through the years. He took part in the expansion of the church in Asia Minor and Greece. He experienced the wonder of preaching in Athens on Mars' Hill and the great accomplishments in Corinth. He received great blessing from the people of Thessalonica. He experienced the tremendous joy of the Bereans. He returned to Jerusalem across the Mediterranean, and then lived through a shipwreck while being transported as a prisoner to Rome.

Indirectly, he was the spiritual father, grandfather, or uncle of everyone who was saved in the Gentile world at the time. He may have been founding churches in his

own country before he was ever called to be a pastor at Antioch and was the leader of the missionary tours. He had an influence unlike any man who lived at that time in the Gentile world. In fact, he sometimes preached all night. On one occasion while he was preaching, a young man fell out of a second story window and died. But Paul went to him, raised him from the dead, and then continued to preach his sermon (Ac. 20:7-12). Paul was so loved by everyone that whenever Paul came to town they embraced him, and when he left Miletus, the Ephesian elders fell on his neck, kissed him, and wept because they knew they would not see his face again (Ac. 20:37-38).

2) {it}The Intimidation of Paul{ei}

To be living in the world with that kind of acceptance, affection, and love would be a tremendous experience. The Philippians even sent Paul love gifts (Phil. 4:18). But by the time he wrote the Philippians, he was in prison and not active in the world. A new breed of young preachers were capturing the fancy of the people. They had learned the best of what Paul taught and maybe had advanced a little in technique. With those men attracting the attention of the crowds, the people may have begun to forget the influence of the Apostle.

I remember meeting a dear old man of God in the Midwest. He was ninety-six, and he hadn't been able to preach for about fifteen years. But he had preached from the age of twenty until he was eighty-one. He sat in the congregation with his Bible and listened to me preach. No one even knew who he was. I imagine that he wondered about all of the glory days and years when he was a shining sword in the service of the Lord.

Paul was near that time of his life. Soon his head would be on a block, and an axe head would sever it from his body. Then his part in this world would be over. And coming behind him were those young men seeking their place in the sun. Invariably, they criticize the generation before them. Some of the things they might have said about Paul was that he was a prisoner because the Lord was through with him, that he wasn't contemporary enough, or that he might have made some mistakes in his life. They assumed that there must have been a reason that the Lord had him out of the way.

3) {it}The Integrity of Paul{ei}

a) Praising His Followers

In Philippians 1:14 Paul says, {it}"And many of the brethren in the Lord, becoming confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."{ei} Some people, seeing that Paul was a prisoner, became more bold. They were saying, "If Paul can be a prisoner for Christ, so can we. He's our model and example." So Paul was saying, "Some are still following me. And they are becoming bold, even though I'm a prisoner."

b) Prevailing over His Detractors

But in verse 15 he says, {it}"Some, indeed, preach Christ even of envy and strife..."{ei} What does Paul mean? Some were preaching Christ, but they were doing

so out of envy. They were envious of what God had done in Paul's life. They were jealous of his reputation, his place in the church, and the love he received, so they created strife.

In verse 16 Paul says, {it}"The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds."{ei} It wasn't enough that Paul was a prisoner, but they were criticizing him. Can you imagine young men criticizing the Apostle Paul? I can. It is easy for a young man to think that the sun rises and sets on him, and that the old generation didn't know anything. But that is why God lifts up the hoary heads (Lev. 19:32). That is why God wants elders because there are some things they know that young men need to learn because they don't have all the answers. The longer I live, the fewer answers I am sure about, and the more I look to the wisdom of the aged.

3) Praising His Lord

But what was Paul's attitude in the face of that criticism? Verse 18 says, {it}"What then? Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in that I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."{ei} Paul is saying, "If Christ is preached, who cares what they say about me!" That is spiritual maturity.

When you confess Jesus as Lord, that is the beginning of spiritual growth. When you are content to give Him glory no matter what it costs, when you begin to feel the dishonor that He feels, and when you don't mind being dishonored if He is honored, then you are moving toward maturity. That has to begin with obedient submission to Christ.

C. The Perspective of Submission

1. THE INSTRUCTION

In his first epistle, Peter is writing to believers who are being persecuted for their faith. They were suffering. They were being confronted by people who want answers about what they believe.

a. {it}The Blessing of Reproach{ei}

First Peter 4:14 says, {it}"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye..."{ei} Most Christians wouldn't experience that happiness. If they were reproached for the name of Christ, they would become angry, reactionary, retaliatory, or vengeful. I've seen people on the job, and professional athletes reproached for the name of Christ; I myself have been mocked for the name of Christ. Can we say, "I'm happy"? Peter said we should be happy because being reproached is a special blessing. Christ should be visible enough in your life so that you are reproached for Him.

b. {it}The Evidence of God's Glory{ei}

Then Peter says, {it}"...for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you..."{ei} (v. 14b). In other words, if you are living in obedience to His will to the point that the world can't tolerate you, then the Spirit of glory is evident in your life

and you are obviously living to the glory of God. But if the world accepts you--if you are just flowing along with the world's system--then you are not aiming at His glory or growing.

Verse 14 continues, {it}"...on their part He{ei} [Christ]{it} is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified."{ei} When you are reproached for Christ, He is being glorified. And that is no better illustrated than by the cross. While it looked as if the citizens of hell were having a carnival as they mocked and reproached Jesus, God was being glorified. Jesus even prayed, {it}"...Father, glorify Thou Me..."{ei} (Jn. 17:5). He was anticipating His death on the cross as a part of that glory. When He said that He would be glorified in John 13:31, He was referring to the cross.

First Peter 4:15-16 says, {it}"But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf."{ei} In other words, you ought to be glad to be able suffer with Christ.

2. THE APPLICATION

a. {it}Live Like Christ{ei}

If someone doesn't want to grow spiritually, there's a good chance that he isn't saved. I think that one of the characteristics of life is that it reproduces--it matures, it progresses. If I have confessed Jesus as Lord and been made alive spiritually, I should want to grow beyond that beginning point. My viewpoint should not be focused on how I am going to grow, but on how God is to be glorified. As I am content to be outdone by others, to bear His reproaches, and to suffer no matter what the cost, then I will be living to His glory.

b. {it}Bear the Reproach of Christ{ei}

As you do that, you will run head on into the world's system. You cannot grow spiritually and be comfortable in the world. Now I don't mean that you should be less than charming or obnoxious. But I do mean that if you live a Christlike life, you will bear the reproach of Christ. We live in a day when many people want to make Christianity easy, but the Bible makes it hard. We live in a day when people want to make Christians lovable, but God wants Christians to be reproachable. Why? Because reproachable Christians are confrontive--they fight against the world's system. Christianity must be distinct. It has to be able to point out sin before it can provide a remedy. And that is why we don't want cheap grace or easy believism. We want to confront an evil world. One writer said this, "Let my candle go out if in that the Son of righteousness may rise with healing in His beams."

Focusing on the Facts

1. What must the initial focus be for the Christian if he is to glorify God? (see p. xx)

2. What is the basic principle of salvation? (see p. xx)
3. Give several of the reasons that people communicate their faith. Include the main reason for evangelism. (see p. xx)
4. What is the greatest sin that man can commit? Why? (see pp. xx-xx)
5. What is another way of saying that Jesus is Lord? Please clarify your answer. (see p. xx)
6. In order to grow spiritually, what must become the pervasive attitude of the Christian's life? (see p. xx)
7. In John 12:27-28, what principle of obedience does Jesus Christ illustrate? (see p. xx)
8. Give some illustrations of people in the past who have been willing to pay the price for the sake of God's glory. (see pp. xx-xx)
9. What should be the response of the Christian when God is dishonored? How did David respond? (see p. xx)
10. What was one of the great characteristics of the church at Ephesus? Why? (see p. xx)
11. Why is jealousy a factor in the Christian's life? What attitude should be true of the Christian? (see p. xx)
12. According to Philippians 1:14-18, what principle of spiritual maturity did Paul manifest? How? (see pp. xx-xx)
13. Why is there blessing in being reproached for Christ? (see 1 Pet. 4:14; p. xx)
14. What are the conditions that Peter places on the kind of suffering that glorifies God? (see 1 Pet. 4:15-16; p. xx)
15. Fill in the blanks: We live in a day when _____ want to make Christianity _____ but _____ makes it _____. (see p. xx)

Pondering the Principles

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:31. Is everything that you do glorifying to God? List the various activities that you perform during a typical day. After each activity, write down the things you are doing to honor God in it. If you are not glorifying God in a particular activity, write down some ideas on how you might do that. Put into practice your ideas. Ask God for His guidance in doing so.
2. Are you willing to glorify God no matter what might happen to you? Does the

price have to be death? Give some examples from your life that would indicate that you are or are not. Memorize Luke 9:23: {it}"...If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."{ei} What is Jesus saying to you in that verse? What do you need to deny?

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3. How do you react when God is dishonored? How do you react when you are dishonored for Christ's sake? Is your reaction the same in both cases or different? Why? Look up the following verses: Psalm 19:7-11; 43:3; 119:9, 11; 2 Peter 1:4. Based on those verses, how can you best understand God's holiness and how He guards it?