

How can we glorify God?

Deuteronomy 11:13-21; 26-28

Sermon for February 6 2022

Introduction

Today we are looking at Question 6 from the New City Catechism. I will read the question, and then let's read the answer together.

Question 6: How can we glorify God?

We glorify God by enjoying him, loving him, trusting him, and by obeying his will, commands, and law.

Now let's look at today's scripture reading.

Deuteronomy 11:13-21; 26-28

13 "And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,

14 he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil.

15 And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full.

16 Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them;

17 then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the Lord is giving you.

18 "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

19 You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

20 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,

21 that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth.

26 "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse:

27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today,

28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known.

Together we read Isaiah 40:8:

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever."

Let's pray together.

Father, please send the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and truth as I preach. Please open our hearts and minds to your truth, so we can glorify you in everything we do. We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Here are the three points for today's message:

Point 1. What does it mean to glorify God?

Point 2. How does my obedience glorify God?

Point 3. Can we obey God perfectly?

Point 1. What does it mean to glorify God?

In the English language, the word "glorify" is something we usually apply only to God. But there are some synonyms for glorify. We celebrate someone on their birthday. We praise someone when they do something well. We honor a person who achieves something significant.

Outside of the church, maybe the most common place we glorify something is in sports. We glorify our favorite soccer or baseball team by wearing their uniform or their hat. When we watch our favorite team play, we give glory when we celebrate their achievements. We stand up and clap, we whistle, and we yell words of encouragement to them. We tell everyone around us, "our team is the best!"

Isn't the same thing we do every Sunday in this room? We tell everyone around us, "our God is the best!" We stand up and clap. We sing praise to the God who loves us and saved us. When we worship God, he is glorified because we are telling ourselves and each other that He is the most-important thing in our lives. Much more important than any sports team! Listen to how these Psalms encourage us to worship and glorify God.

Psalm 63:3 says, "Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you."

Psalm 34:8 says, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!"

What parts of our body are involved in worship in these verses? What do you see? That's right. Our lips sing praises to our God. And our mouths taste the bread and the wine when we take the sacrament of communion. We are physically involved in worship with our mouth and lips. Here are two more verses from the Psalms:

Psalm 95:6 says, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!"

Psalm 134:2 says, "Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord!"

What parts of our body are involved in worship in these verses? What do you see? Yes, Psalm 95 invites us bow in reverence to honor God. We also kneel down to show how humble we are compared to the holiness and greatness of our Lord, our Maker!

And we lift our hands in worship and prayer. These physical actions are expressing what our hearts feel. That's the goal. It is also possible to sing, and kneel, and raise your hands without worshipping God. Because real worship begins in your heart. To glorify God you must do more than the physical action. The physical actions of worship should flow from the worship in our hearts.

Why do some people praise their favorite sports team, but don't seem excited to worship God? Maybe that happens when we forget all that God has done for us. Maybe it's because we don't spend enough time reading and meditating on his Word. We say in English, "you are what you eat." The protein, carbohydrates, and vitamins that you eat actually become a part of your physical body. In the same way, your heart and mind will honor and glorify whatever we put into them. You will seek whatever you value the most. Maybe your heart values money, or rest, or food, or popularity, or appearance. We give time in our schedule to the things we value the most.

Colossians 3:1-2

1 Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God's right hand.

2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth.

There are a lot of ways to "think about the things of heaven." I like to listen to the audio Bible on my phone. That was not available to Moses and God's people 4,000 years ago! They didn't even have paper Bibles like we have today.

Moses gave some instructions to the people to make God's Word a part of their daily diet.

Deuteronomy 11:18-21

18 "You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

19 You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

20 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates,"

In verse 18 God says through Moses, "lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul." How can you get the Word of God deep into your heart and soul? Verse 18 says, "bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes." Many Jewish people still do this today. You can see in these pictures that these men have God's Word in little boxes on their head and wrapped around their arm. Is it just a religious ritual, or is it a sincere expression of what's in the hearts of these men? Only God knows. But I believe it is supposed to be an external symbol of what is truly in our heart and mind.

In verse 19 Moses says this about the words of the Lord, "19 You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." God knows that our time on earth is short. When one generation dies, the next generation loses the wisdom and experience of their elders. Moses is telling the people that their children won't glorify God in their lives unless someone teaches them how.

We cannot glorify God unless we know him and his ways. Moses encourages us to meditate on God's word in the morning, and before we lie down to sleep, and when we are walking around during the day. Next, in verse 20 Moses tells the people to write the Word of God by the front door of their houses, and on their gates. I think this is to remind people when they go out and when they come in that God is the ruler of everything. Whatever we do at home, and whatever we do in the world, it is all under the eye and control of the Lord.

To summarize Point 1, we glorify God when we make him the central focus of our heart, mind, and body. Because you glorify what you value the most.

Point 2. How does my obedience glorify God?

God's glory is also seen in how we live. When we choose to love instead of hate, God receives glory. When we say "I am sorry" instead of making excuses for our sin, God receives glory. When we give generously of our time and money, God receives glory. These kind of actions glorify God because they do not come naturally to us. We become loving, humble, and generous when God changes our hearts.

Here is the most important thing I want you to see and remember about this. God acts first. God loves us before we love him. We were dead in our sin before Jesus resurrected us to new life. We cannot obey God until we receive God's love and forgiveness.

True obedience is a response. Have you ever stopped doing something because you love Jesus? Have you ever decided to do something, maybe something hard, only because you love Jesus? Our love for God is made visible when we obey. And that glorifies the God who loved us first.

Love must come before law. If we see God as someone who gives us rules because he wants to control us, then we will want to disobey. Or, we will pretend to obey so that we can look good to other people, and manipulate God to bless us. If you don't believe that love comes before rules, think about marriage. Marriage is very hard work. I have to be willing to repent and forgive, to work on my sin problems and lay down my life for my wife. What could make someone do those difficult things? What would make a man love his wife as Christ loved the church, as Paul says in Ephesians 5:25? It is only love. We will sacrifice anything for someone we truly love.

That's why God always reminds us of his love before he gives his law. Right before God gave his people the 10 commandments, He says this in Exodus 20:2, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." God is saying, "I did this for you. So now I want you to respond to my love with your loving obedience."

God gives us rules because he loves us. When you were a child, did your parents let you run around in the street, or play with knives and matches? Did your parents let you eat cookies and ice cream for three meals a day? Why not? That kind of freedom is what our hearts want. But parents love their children enough to say, "you can eat and drink this but you can't have that. You can do these things but you can't do those things." Parents don't want to ruin our lives with rules. They love us enough to give us freedom within safe boundaries.

We all have the choice between blessings and curses, my friends. Obedience leads to blessing because God's law is designed for our good. You can use a hammer to drive a screw if you want, but it won't work very well. You can use a screwdriver to open a can of food, but it won't be a blessing! God's rules teach us how to use our time, talent, and treasure according to his design. Our obedience will glorify God, and it will also bless us. Let's finish now with Point 3.

Point 3. Can we obey God perfectly?

Have you ever tried to break a bad habit? It's really hard! Have you ever apologized to someone for something you said or did, and then a week later you did the same thing again? I have.

Our sin is deeply rooted in our hearts. God is in the process of making us more holy. But that work will not be complete until we are in heaven. We cannot obey God's law perfectly. But God's law is perfect, because he is perfect. Look again with me at Deuteronomy 11:26-28.

26 "See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse:

27 the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you today,

28 and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way that I am commanding you today, to go after other gods that you have not known."

How does that make you feel? It makes me a little uncomfortable, because I know that I turn aside from God's commands every day. I don't want God's curse, but I know that is what I deserve.

But God loves us too much to leave us without hope. When God gave his law to the people in the Old Testament, he knew they could not obey His law perfectly. That's why God gave instructions for animal sacrifices to wash away the guilt of human sin. Even after thousands and thousands of animal sacrifices, however, the people remained under the curse of sin. That all changed when one person came to live a perfectly obedient life. Jesus was the only person who deserved God's perfect blessings for obedience. But instead, Jesus suffered the curse and punishment we deserve. Listen to what Galatians 3:13 says, "But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.""

The gospel is good news because it promises an escape from the curse. We receive God's blessing if we believe that God put our curse on Jesus. Look with me at John 6:28-29.

28 Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

29 Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

The most important way we obey God is by believing in the death and resurrection of Jesus as our Savior. That one decision that will affect your future for thousands of years. The blessings and curses we experience on earth are temporary. Today's blessings are only pictures and reminders of the eternal blessings of heaven. The pain and

persecution we experience here on earth are temporary curses compared to the eternal curse of hell. You must make that choice. To believe the gospel and welcome Jesus as your Lord and Savior, or believe in your own ideas and reject Jesus as Lord.


I hope you have believed in the Messiah, because that is the only way to receive God's eternal blessing. We can never obey God's law perfectly. Only Jesus could do that. God accepts and loves us as His children because we come to God the Father dressed in the perfect record of Jesus. When we obey God's law and worship him, we are doing it with the power that Jesus gives us. And we are doing it as a response to the love of God, not to earn his love.

The blessings and curses we read today in Deuteronomy are not about following rules. It's about following God. The Christian life is not about following rules. It is about following Jesus. And when we love and follow him, we will also glorify him by the way we live in obedience.

Let's pray together now:

Jesus, your love for us is beyond our understanding. You knew that we had chosen the path of sin and disobedience. But you loved us enough to die in our place. And you lived a holy, perfect life so that we can receive life and blessing in your name. Father, please give us the Holy Spirit today, to help us walk in obedience and love as a response to the generosity and love you've poured into us. We thank you and pray in the name of our Savior Jesus.

Amen.

 One Voice Fellowship