

Are we Giving them God?

By Jay Wegter

There is a trend in preaching today to set forth principles, to flood people with hyper-grace comfort and security without actually exhibiting the transcendent holiness of God. What tends to be neglected in these principle-saturated sermons is the setting forth of God Himself in His majesty and holy perfections. It is not this present author's intent to create a false dichotomy between biblical principles and the doctrine of God; for principles do fill Scripture as the revelation of His preceptive will. And, God does make Himself known in Scripture by His interactions with His creation: His works, His ways, His wisdom, His will, His promises, and His providence. But, it does seem that there is a preponderance today of preaching primarily principles. May I suggest that it is harder to preach God than to preach principles? In fact, we are actually asking more of our parishioners when we preach God than primarily principles, for we are asking them to think very deeply about the Godhead (Hos 6:1-3).

What does it mean to give them God? A primary revealer of God is that He makes Himself known by how He saves and why He saves. Our salvation is God's condescension, for He unilaterally makes a covenant with guilty sinners by placing certain claims upon Himself. He binds Himself to His covenant people in such a way that He commits to 'harness' His own attributes—making the exercise of them 'predictable' in His faithfulness and care of His people. "Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust" (2 Pet 1:2-4). This is the manner in which He assures us of His reliability and trustworthiness. For, He never acts out of caprice, but pledges to act perfectly consistent with His goodness and faithfulness. The Psalmists had an intimate understanding and recognition of this, for their worship and meditations focused upon *personalizing* God's character and attributes. The outcome is that they rested upon God as their Rock, Bulwark, and Refuge. "The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold" (Ps 18:2).

God's action of harnessing His own attributes within the safety of the covenant does not mean He is merely putting Himself at man's disposal. What it does mean is that God is revealing His perfections in what He has decreed in redemptive history, and therefore is carrying out that decree within the details of divine providence. But many pulpits, which are regarded today as 'expository' seem to be drawn to endless principlizing in the handling of every text. It is possible to give out a litany of principles, but in the process, be presenting a very reductionistic picture of the knowledge of God. As mentioned previously, biblical principles and the declaration of God are not antithetical, but if all is reduced to principles, God's perfections may retreat into the background—we won't be able to see the forest for the trees. God is the 'Hero' of every passage, therefore, there is work involved in asking, *how is God magnified and made known in this text?* If by implication (by what we do not say), we are merely asking our people to trust a principle (be conformed to it), we may be failing to *give them God*. Rather, we ought to be explaining how the principle is anchored in God's character, in the Person of God Himself. If we do not connect the principle to who God is, we should not be surprised if our hearers, in their practice of Christianity begin to drift in the direction of the formal and the mechanistic.

God's works, ways, wisdom and wonders must be set forth so that our listeners are captivated with God's Person. When our hearers are left primarily with principles, we may find we have actually increased their private doubts. On the outside they may be saying, as they shake hands, "great sermon pastor." But, on the inside, parishioners can be left with a disturbing question, "In the face of my corruptions and unfruitfulness, what is it about our holy majestic God that makes Him eager to show favor to me?" True, we never tire of hearing that Christ has done it all, that there is nothing left to be done. Yes, that is true of justification by grace, but there is also a race to finish, a course to complete, a God to get to know, and adore. I dare say, if you have primarily preached principles you may not have answered their inner query about God's favor. In *giving them God*, we must not miss that it is God's grand purpose to reveal Himself and glorify Himself in the covenants He makes in redemptive history. His purpose of the ages is to construct a temple of living stones. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit" (Eph 2:19-22). If we neglect how He intends to bring glory to Himself, our overly-principlized approach may leave our hearers somewhat myopic. For, if we do not associate His commitment to His Name with His daily care of us, then our listeners can easily settle into a legal approach to the Christian life. In a legal approach, the Christian reasons, *if I do this, then God will do such in such—and that about wraps it up*. What is the solution? When the majesty of God in Christ is addressed to our thinking and affections, then what God has purposed in Christ bursts upon our understanding; namely that, in Christ, God has determined that He will accomplish together His own glory and our highest good (Rom 3:26).

We have a very difficult time though dwelling on that link, between God's zeal for His Name and His free bestowal of grace, love, and hope upon elect sinners (Ez 20:44; 36:26-32). In the gospel of Christ, God gives us the saving knowledge of Himself by giving Himself to us in the Person of Christ. Pastor, youth worker, biblical counselor, is that where your soul feeds, upon this all-consuming mystery (Jn 6:54-57)? Or, is your verbal ministry quite telling concerning your soul's 'eating habits'? Are you managing a host of biblical principles and making them march in single file from your lectern? Principlizing can leave our hearers spiritually malnourished, it may stop short of *giving them God*. Principlizing can sow to our religious flesh, which is all too eager to *commodify* the benefits of salvation. By 'commodify', we mean that the listener can come away from a principle-laden message with the following sentiment, "I have cooperated with a set of principles, I am 'on board' with these spiritual laws; I am in possession of the benefits." "I am 'good' with God, I have fully 'audited' the truth preached." But, where then are the experiences of God which accompany growth in the knowledge of God as described in the Psalms?

From the pens of the Psalmists we hear of their comfort of God's presence, of exceeding joy, spontaneous worship, panting after God in spiritual hunger, contrition over sin, trauma, awe, disillusionment, devastation, copious tears, bliss, and ecstatic wonder. But, by contrast, principles alone can leave us with a detached and formal Christian experience. A gentleman I disciplined in years past, continually measured the index of his spirituality by keeping his heart in a place of groveling. I did appreciate his effort at humility, for he often expressed, 'why would God save a wretch like me?' But what seemed to be absent in his piety was the kind of adoration and spontaneous worship that produces self-forgetfulness. For, beholding the glory of the Lord takes us off of self, away from being

consumed with questions about our worth and performance. God's moral majesty will always slay us with awe and wonder. Our communing with God, and our honoring of God will not be an exercise in the familiar. For, God's transcendent holiness is co-extensive with the infinitude of His other attributes—that is the glory we were created to behold—a glory that is ever new, fresh, and intoxicating (Ps 145:7).

Thus, when one has been staggered afresh by God's moral majesty, the soul's response is wonder at the fact that the defiled creature has become perfectly right with God's righteousness and holiness. This truth simply will not fit neatly into a principle to be tied up in a package and filed away. God's purposes in grace do not square with any of our natural intuitions about God and religion. For 'the mystery of godliness' (1 Tim 3:15), and the mystery of His predestinating grace, will, of necessity, be baffling (Job 11:7; Ps 139:6). "Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, and His greatness is unsearchable" (Ps 145:3). For, the purposes and eternal counsels of God do not stack up with any earthly experience, nor fit into an earthly category. God's purpose of the ages brings the elect into His wondrous plot, but His purpose terminates on the communication of His glory, and not upon us. God makes a unilateral covenant by which His own glory and excellence form gospel promises which showcase and exhibit the beauty of His glory and excellence (2 Pet 1:2-4). We never outgrow this incredible revelation, namely, that God wills to be known by the satisfaction of His unchanging standard of righteousness through the Substitute He appoints. The fact that this decree is incredibly personal is thrilling (Heb 6:17-20). For, God purposed to save me from all eternity through the infinite love and humiliation of His Son (Heb 10:10, 14).

The mystery of God's love and grace in Christ is transformative; He wins our hearts in order to radically change us. Wonder of wonders, we cannot say that the Substitute's love for His bride is greater than His love for His Father, nor is the Father's love for His Son greater than His love for the Bride (Jn 17:23). For, in His infinite love for His Father, and for His bride, He accomplishes both the glory of the Godhead and the salvation of the church (Jn 14:20). I fear that many pulpits today have isolated the Person and work of Christ from this overarching purpose of glorifying and revealing the Godhead. This neglect has the effect of giving us a sentimental Jesus, who evokes more sympathy than wonder and awe (Phil 3:19ff.). As servants of the Lord, we need to develop and exhibit the infinite merits of Christ. And, as Jonathan Edwards has said, "The glory of Christ is tied to the equipment He earned in order to save." This idea of Christ 'earning something' bothers people because it makes it sound like Jesus is mutable, and had to accomplish certain things in order to be Savior (See Heb 1:1-5; 2:17-18; 5:6-10; 7:24-28). But, is it not incomplete to speak of Christ as all-sufficient Savior without stressing that His glory is inseparably tied to His willing obedience in laying His life down (Jn 10:9-18)?

Brethren, are we preaching primarily manageable truth? There are manifold aspects of God which are incomprehensible and baffling, which leave us breathless. God refuses to fit into our manageable categories. That means that an encounter with God's self-revelation in Scripture will at times affect us in the following ways: we will be knocked off balance, staggered, speechless, smitten, at a loss for words, no longer glib, chatty, and garrulous. Is there a single thing in your sermon like this? Or is your sermon an exercise in *managing the truth*, in which no *marveling is produced by the truth*? Because so many preachers are not *giving* their congregations *God himself*, the fear of God is at an all-time low (Albert Martin, *The Forgotten Fear; Where have all the God-fearers gone?*). There is no shuddering and quaking over the fact that God is like a furnace who will, in a very public manner, consume everything that is not like Him in holiness (Heb 10:26-31; 12:28-29). Have you regularly proclaimed what it is about God that inspires reverential fear, worship, trauma, and awe?

The rampant influence of psychology, with its rank humanism, has given us a bare ‘god-concept’, stripped of anything that would unnerve our fragile psyches. The Hebrew word for presumptuous in Psalm 19:13 means *insolence*: “Also keep back Your servant from *presumptuous sins*; let them not rule over me; then I will be blameless, and I shall be acquitted of great transgression.” To act presumptuous means to thumb your nose at God, thinking you can escape moral consequences. And, as in Galatians 6:7, all attempts to ‘mock God’ by escaping His moral government are doomed to fail. Far from being able to use God, God uses people for his holy ends in the grand demonstration. God’s governance in the *grand demonstration* described in Romans 9, and His eternal counsels go together, hand-in-hand. How sobering; the sheer weight of being His image-bearer is stunning. For every individual will ultimately prove to be a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy, a perpetual object lesson to the rational watching universe of either justice or grace. The moral significance of carrying the image of God means that every person’s creational identity mandates that he reflect his Maker.

But, fallen man does not wish to contemplate what he owes God by virtue of being formed in His image. When we *give God to our hearers*, their hearts are pricked. But, when the majesty of God is buffered and insulated by endless layers of principles, we may find ourselves left with the errant concept of a manageable deity. This is why we need a regular Romans 9, ‘reset’. How corrective it is that in a world of men deluded by their imagined sovereignty, God says, “I alone am sovereign.” There is no saving grace apart from My divine sovereignty. Men are self-deceived in their imagined autonomy, thinking they can placate God and protect themselves from Him. They imagine that their status before God is ultimately self-directed and self-determined. Thus, sovereign grace is the most humbling doctrine in the Bible. It brings low because it states that it is God who, from the same lump of fallen humanity, makes distinctions strictly by His own good pleasure. As the only Sovereign, He alone is the Distinction-maker. Therefore, what distinguishes you from your reprobate neighbor must be credited to His sovereign pity alone (Rom 9:16, 19-24).

God’s gracious choice in unconditional election is designed to eliminate all boasting (1 Cor 1:31). We ought to frequently read Romans 9 with the intent of having our perspective reset. As it says in Proverbs, “though a fool is ground in a mortar and pestle, his folly will not depart from him” (Prov 27:22). Our folly is the autonomy lie; thinking and acting as if we are independent of God—the autonomy lie is wedded to our flesh. The themes of Romans 9 have the power to reset our thinking. Those Romans 9 themes are: *God’s purpose is realized by election. God, the potter has the absolute right to select His objects of mercy and compassion. The cause of His grace is not due to man’s willing or running, but to God who has mercy. God recognizes no merit on earth that should earn reward. God uses people, people do not use God. As the sovereign potter He has the right to harden whom He desires and have mercy on whom He desires, He has the absolute right over the clay to make vessels of honor or to make vessels of dishonor from the same lump. His intent is to pour out the riches of mercy on vessels of honor, and pour out His wrath upon vessels of dishonor. He will call every elect vessel through faith.*

Though these truths of Romans chapter nine scandalize our religious instincts, we desperately need a regular Romans 9 ‘realignment’. The reason why is because public education, the media, entertainment, culture, politics, and psychology all operate in tandem with our flesh. We are daily bombarded with the full set of assumptions that we live in a world in which mankind is the measure of all things. The message of God’s sovereignty is desperately needed, for it crushes man’s trust in his own righteousness, in his own will, and in his imagined autonomy. The message of God’s sovereignty brings a man low, causing him to see that his deliverance is due to the exercise of God’s sovereign compassion. If that truth were not enough to stagger us and humble us, the parallel truth is that God never violates the will of the creature. Whether in hardening, or in showing mercy, whether in His dealings with the Pharaoh of Egypt, or Saul of Tarsus, God places significance upon man’s choices even while God is

sovereign over those choices. My friends, that is a God whose ways we cannot fully analyze or contain in our finite minds. God's intent, according to 1 Corinthians 1-3 is to publicly destroy all human wisdom.

As the divine means of destroying carnal wisdom, I picture God lowering His Son's cross onto this planet like an immense wedge of carbon steel. Every time the truth of the cross touches human wisdom it reduces it to dust and rubble. Thus, human wisdom as it encounters the word of the cross is constantly being publicly exhibited as the epitome of folly (1 Cor 1:18-25). God's singular wisdom has two great expressions which destroy carnal wisdom. The two parts are: 1) *Jesus Christ Himself*, the mystery of the God-man (Col 2:1-3; 1 Tim 3:16), and 2) *Him crucified*; the wonder of His perfect sacrifice (1 Cor 2:2; Rom 8:3-4). God's wisdom is not esteemed by men as wise or strong, yet it is cherished as the wisdom of God and the power of God by those who are being saved (1 Cor 1:24). The first point of God's wisdom is the mystery of Christ Himself, the hypostatic union. God's infinite wisdom is shown in His giving of Christ. The glory of our Savior is seen in His fitted-ness to be our perfect Substitute (Heb 7:26-27). That the God-man should be given by the Father to be the propitiatory sacrifice in order for sinners to be given a God-approved righteousness is not comprehensible to the natural mind.

No person who clings to a single speck of self-righteousness has ever really understood the two aspects of God's wisdom: *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*. For the message of the cross, believed and applied, completely destroys a legal spirit (Rom 7:4). Another way which God destroys carnal pride is by choosing people who are not esteemed to be wise or noble. God establishes His glory purpose by choosing the foolish, the unwise, the base, and the poor-born. He does this to destroy human pride and wisdom (1 Cor 1:19-21). Through the cross and by His good pleasure in election, He accomplishes His purpose of ultimately shaming what the world boasts in—those who are esteemed as the wise and mighty. This is astounding; God seeks to shame what the world esteems (Lu 16:15). First Corinthians chapter one terminates with this statement, "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord'" (1 Cor 1:30-31). God's wisdom deconstructs human wisdom. It is through Christ and Him crucified and His distinguishing, redeeming love of His elect that grace is truly grace. God is eliminating the possibility of even one instance of boasting when it comes to a person's salvation. His purpose is that our faith may rest in His divine wisdom and not in the wisdom of men.

This object of divine wisdom, *Christ and Him crucified* is where our chief knowledge of God is to reside. How does the proclamation of this message of *Jesus Christ and Him crucified*, and God's sovereign bestowal of grace; how does that *give us God*? When we consider what it is about God that moves us to admiration, and worship, and awe, it is not the mere academic study of His attributes (though there is rich spiritual food in studying God's character and perfections). But, if we merely study God's attributes as an academic exercise, we might find ourselves admiring but not exulting. For God's attributes are showcased and exhibited in their exercise in our salvation. This is featured up close in 2 Peter 1:2-4. God's own glory and excellence are harnessed by God, and then cast into glorious and magnificent gospel promises. These promises make us partakers of the divine nature, and escapees of the corruption that is in the world by lust. Thus, we are to view God's attributes from the vantage point of union with Christ, for our Savior is both our 'observatory' (our safe refuge for beholding God), and the object of our beholding (2 Cor 3:18; 4:6). When the eyes of my heart focus on Him by faith, I understand that He, in Himself, restores everything I lost in Adam and infinitely more. "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ" (Eph 1:3). The redeemed in Christ become recipients of the gift of God Himself. As John Piper writes: you have only embraced the true gospel if the glory of Christ is your true treasure—otherwise you have not embraced the gospel, even if it looks like you have complied with the gospel. If the promises of God in Christ in justification and eternal life have not led you to behold and embrace God

Himself as your highest joy, then you have not embraced the gospel of God. The church must awaken to the truth that the saving love of God is the gift of Himself, and that God Himself is the gospel (John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, pp. 17, 37-38). Consider that at the cross, the full spectrum of God's attributes were put on display. Christ being bent over in agony on Calvary's cross was like a crystal prism bending light to enable us to see all of the spectral colors of the rainbow. All of God's attributes were put on display in our salvation. So how does this covenantal glory that God has purposed to reveal, transform those who behold it?

The answer is that Christ's death is made our death to sin, Christ's resurrection and glorification is made the cause of our resurrection and glorification. For, our salvation includes the glory we will gain in Christ at our glorification (2 Thess 2:13-14). When we consider that our cleansing, righteousness, sonship, and justification are salvific blessings traceable to God making us the objects of His attributes exercised in gospel promises, it should stagger us. His attributes were put on display in forming the very gospel promises that made us His people. Therefore, the question, "What is God like?"—must be joined to how He saves. *Are we giving them God?*—if we are, our hearers will be eager to ask, "what is there about God that rocks me, staggers me, fills me with wonder, love and praise, reverential fear and adoration?" The response is that He made His glorious self-revelation take place through the manifestation of His attributes, put on display in our salvation. The true believer is a beholder and a possessor both. The true believer can say, "I will never be able to exhaust all that God is toward me in Christ." When I arrive in glory, I will be able to say, "God on yonder throne is mine!"

The world sees no wisdom or value in the crushing abandonment and dereliction of the Son of God at Calvary. But, this is wisdom that towers over the human intellect. For, the sinner cannot be beautiful to a holy God but by the cross. "I cannot endure the sight of God until I see Him in Christ; and God cannot bear the sight of me till He sees me in Christ" (Charles Spurgeon). There is no eternal life for those who are not right with God's righteousness, only physical death, and the second death await them. But, true believers are right with God's righteousness because their Substitute is the perfectly righteous Son of God; they are clothed in the righteousness of their Substitute. They are accepted in the Beloved; united to Christ Who is their life (Col 3:1-4). Though the lost sinner is in a state of spiritual deadness, having lost spiritual inability, his will of desire, depraved as it is, is not violated by God. Preachers of the First and Second Great Awakenings, knew how to preach total depravity, original sin, the bondage of the will, and the urgency of salvation. They knew how to shine an exposing light on the chains that held the unregenerate sinner fast. They could preach the dire urgency of salvation without preaching human ability. They never flattered sinners by implying that salvation was ultimately the sinner's prerogative. They actually believed that the new birth was sovereignly bestowed. They understood from Scripture that God does not violate a man's will even when He grants the new birth.

These doctrines are certainly a paradox when considered together: *human responsibility, human inability, and divine sovereignty.* The new birth inclines the will toward God by removing its resistance, but regeneration does not violate the will. In theology, we refer to this apparent contradiction as an *antinomy*. On Judgment Day it will be publicly revealed that those who love and desire Christ, belonging to Him, will be with Him forever. But, it will also be revealed that those who do not desire Christ will experience a Christ-less eternity. The challenge of preaching the doctrine of human inability is vigorously opposed by man-centered psychology and by the enthronement of reason. We seem to have lost the knowhow and the desire to preach the antinomy of *responsibility and inability*. We have refused to take pages from Moses' sermons in which, through him, God commands his hearers to 'circumcise their own hearts' (Deut 10:16). How is a command like this to be perceived if we have removed the antinomy? If we have dismissed the paradox, then men will imagine that they can do what only God can do. And yet God through Moses, commands something that is humanly impossible.

Preachers of a man-centered gospel see the antinomy (the paradox) as counterproductive, as a discouragement to sinners, even an insult to them. Why would God command what is beyond our power and capacity? That would be foolish and silly. But as J. I. Packer points out in his *Introduction to Owen's Death of Death*, the sinner, in hearing about his inability, is actually hearing something that is advantageous to his conviction of sin, and thus, shattering to his self-esteem (p. 3). Packer argues that the sinner's despair is actually salutary in the matter of his salvation—for it is an aspect of his preparation by the Spirit. Preaching the antinomy has been used throughout church history to produce the *desperation factor*, for as long as sinners think they possess the golden key to their salvation, as if it is resting in their pants pocket, they will continue in their apathy, presuming that salvation is within their own power and capacity. But, when the Spirit is going to save someone, He introduces true desperation into the conscience so that the individual's cry for mercy is not only the cry for compassion and pity, but also is the cry for the ability even to believe and repent! "Immediately the boy's father cried out and said, 'I do believe; help my unbelief'" (Mk 9:24). George Whitefield preached what we hesitate to preach today, namely that the gospel is dead apart from the Holy Spirit (George Whitfield, *Select Sermons of George Whitfield*). The Gospel is good news because of the Holy Spirit—the gospel is the power of God because of the Spirit, and because the gospel comes bringing with it the ability to comply with what it requires and demands. It has the power to grant faith and repentance, and to resurrect the dead sinner from his tomb of total depravity and inability. This very spiritual resurrection which the sinner so desperately needs, finds its source in Christ's resurrection (Rom 1:16-17).

Much of Evangelicalism has become light, bouncy, and helpful, but has lost the vision of God's holiness, majesty and transcendence. Being God-centered is becoming scarce. I recently asked a couple who claimed to be Christians the following question: "Do you know what this means, 'Jesus is Lord?'" They appeared puzzled, looked at each other and said, "No, we don't." The whole concept of Christ's preeminence was foreign to them. God's overarching purpose to glorify Himself by Christ having first place in everything, was completely missing from their understanding (Col 1:18). When one considers the biblical titles of Christ in His offices and roles, the following words ought to come to mind: *Creator, Redeemer, Judge, Prophet, Immanuel, Priest, King, Logos, Lawgiver, Lamb, and Lion*. But, how many professing Christians think deeply enough about their Savior to ask the following kinds of questions? "How do each of these titles and roles affect my life?" "How do each of these roles and titles affect the use of my time, my personal resources, my present aspirations, my desires, and my future?" "How is my life to be calibrated and adjusted to these offices and roles of Christ?"

After reading the Puritans and the Reformers, I am convinced that it's possible to preach about the gospel of Christ, and about salvation itself as a plan without actually preaching the Person of Christ Himself. Christ spans the infinite distance between the invisible eternal God and the defiled creature of dust. He spans the entire spectrum of existence, thus, all things pale into insignificance compared to His importance. Sinners need to have Christ exhibited before their eyes; they need to be confronted with His Person. My friends, preaching principles and spiritual laws is far less disturbing and invasive than preaching Christ's Person. Why, you ask? It is because the listener can relegate the principles which are preached to a category of *helpful and useful information*. How well the great divines of former years understood this fact that gospel proclamation means that men and women are to be urged to deal directly with Christ's Person. Thus, gospel faith was not presented as merely mental assent to a body of truth claims, or a divine plan, but actually involves *closing with Christ*. By that phrase, *closing with Christ*, they meant that the former distance from Christ was closed by faith and repentance. It was bridged by rolling the entire welfare of one's soul upon the Redeemer in an act moral trust and fiduciary reliance. Unbelief is repented of—the sinner acknowledges to his Savior that up to this point, he has preferred sin, self, and unbelief, and an idolatrous distance from God. When you

actually give your listener Christ, whether they are called by the Spirit or not, the hearer will have his false refuges exposed. His excuses, complacency, presumptions and hypocrisy are revealed and diagnosed by the Savior's Person. "For the Word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do" (Heb 4:12-13).

In a world that has gone mad in its fist-shaking revolt against its Creator, the godly person will yearn for a fresh site of God's glory. Man's sin screams in God's ears, 'stop being the Holy Judge of all the earth, of the living and the dead!' But, the cross proclaims, be reconciled to Me, be reconciled to who I am, the Holy One. Come to Me, I have made peace through My Son's cross. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21). There is no greater balm for renewed life in our apostate age than to behold the glory of the Lord. "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18). This was true for Isaiah, Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Paul. In times of national idolatry and apostasy, the attainment of the divine viewpoint through the sight of God's glory is an indispensable asset to God's servant. We notice on many social media platforms today that Christians commonly say something about Romans 8:28, "God is in control, it'll all work out." That is certainly true, but, I am not certain that these statements are equivalent to beholding the glory of the Lord. For, *the glory of God in the face of Christ* is the great revealer of the Godhead (2 Cor 3:18; 4:6).

When searched by the eyes of the Lord in His holiness, the creature is placed in the dust. For, the cross not only reveals the glory of God, it also slays our flesh and destroys the works of the devil (1 Jn 3:8). The cross is paradigmatic of the whole Christian life. Our flesh recoils from the cross, for the cross humbles to the Nth degree. The cross strikes at the root of our fleshly ambition. It disturbs the agendas of the empire-builders, the movers and shakers. It overturns mottos such as, "If it's going to be, it's up to me." The cross pulls off our masks, it shows how tawdry our carnal defensive armor is. The cross exposes fleshly building materials and discards them. In doing so, the cross devastates us, showing us our innate spiritual impotence when it comes to doing God's work God's way. As a result, the useful man of God will regularly be humbled by God (Ps 73:25-26). This painful work of being brought to weakness is essential. For, our Lord has condescended to designate us His fellow workers (1 Cor 3:9). And, if we did not have this cycle of weakening and strengthening, we would fall into the same trap as Nebuchadnezzar. He stood on the roof of his palace and said, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan 4:30). We secretly burn incense to our works in covert self-worship, this pride can only be mortified by the cross applied to our lower natures. This hits us men where it hurts the most; it's a shot right to the solar plexus of our adequacy. Paul outworked his fellow apostles, but he saw all his fruitfulness as a function of God's grace (1 Cor 15:10). Paul was an incessant student of the cross; and he was intimately aware of this tension between hard work and utter reliance upon the Lord. Paul is cross-centered but he is not a passive quietest. He plows all of his energy into what Christ is building through His cross.

Prayer involves daring to draw near to God, but, there is trauma involved in praying the way the psalmists prayed. The Psalmist is continually conscious of God's moral government, therefore he makes God's attributes as personal as possible. 'Yes, God is dealing with me in the safety of a covenant, but I am relating to the One who is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. These *omni*-attributes mean that God is my very environment (Ps 139:7-12). I am to live a Godward life in which I share my thought life with the Father. Do we fear God because He has a divine mallet of condemnation? May I suggest that for believers, our fear of God ought to be more closely tied to His grand demonstration,

which is His plot to display His moral majesty to men and angels in both justice and mercy (Rom 8:2-23). No creature can, or will complain on Judgment Day when all is laid out comprehensively. Let us remember the faithful who have gone before us, whose lives are recorded in sacred Scripture—their lives are witness to the fact that there is trauma in retaining the Scriptural, theocentric God of grandeur. The cost of retaining the knowledge of God is ongoing repentance. We must have God transcendent in holiness, or we do not know Him! (David Wells, *God in the Wasteland*, pp. 115-117).

The only way to be God-centered is to be Christ-centered. Disinterest in God's holiness always results in a lack of interest in the pursuit of godliness and little interest in the reception of holiness from God. The experimental knowledge of God's holiness should move us to *awe, obedience, fervent prayer, ongoing repentance, and submission to His moral authority* (Ibid, pp. 132, 134, 135-138). The cross reveals that burning purity and tenderness are joined in the cost of making the new covenant. For, God's holiness necessitates the work of Christ. God's holiness and majesty belong together and interpret one another. His holiness is synonymous with His majesty in so many scriptural passages (i.e. Ex 15:11). Therefore, there must be an echo of holiness in those who approach God. That echo manifests itself in separation from sin, and in consecration unto God. God's holiness is intrusive to the inner man. To approach God's holiness is to have the life of the inner man invaded by light that exposes everything (Ibid, pp. 140-143). Is this the God you are preaching and proclaiming? If so, then you are *giving them God*.