

Transcript 164

Shea Houdmann

Welcome to the Got Questions podcast. So today's episode joining me again is Kevin, the managing editor of Got Questions Ministries and Jeff, the administrator of bibleref.com. And this is the final in our series of the five solas or the five alones. Most, made most famous by the Reformation. We've done salvation by grace alone. Salvation through faith alone, salvation in Christ alone. And then we did Scripture alone. Today is the least known of the five, for the glory of God alone. Probably going to butcher the Latin but I think it's pronounced solely deo gloria. This one is a little more broad and it says everything is to the glory of God alone. With this in mind, and this one kind of provides a foundation for the other four that also has a very broad impact. But a very common question we get is what exactly does it even mean to glorify God? So Kevin, once you start off with that, what does it mean to glorify God?

Kevin Stone

Well, first I'll define glory as a noun. And we see this in Exodus Chapter 3, when Moses asks God to show me your glory. And God there links his glory with his His grace, his compassion, his sovereignty and his his name and his goodness. So we're talking about the, the attributes of God, his perfections, his qualities, his goodness, his sovereignty, and so this is what we mean by the glory of God. Now, when it comes to how we glorify God, using glory as a verb here, then we're talking about acknowledging his magnificence, promoting his worth, magnifying his, his beauty, the beauty of his nature, that is. To make known his grandeur and to worship his perfection. This is what it means to glorify God. We we see God for who he is. Has he? Has revealed himself in Creation and in scripture. And then we just, we worship him. We magnify who he is and what he's done. And this is really our our goal in life.

Kevin Stone

When I was in high school, we, my history teacher at the Christian High School that I attended, had us memorize portions of the Westminster statement of Faith, the shorter catechism. And you will always remember question one. What is the chief end of man was answered with this answer, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever. And so we had to memorize that in high school, along with several of the other questions and answers in the catechism. And it stuck with me. I think it's a beautiful question in response. This is really why we're why we're created. We were created for the glory of God and he made humanity and his image. And Scripture talks about how humanity is crowned with glory as as as God has given us that certain aspects that work together to become the image of God in us. And so we we were created to reflect his glory. And it's a, it is really what we are designed to do, and if we're not doing that, if we're not glorifying God, magnifying his magnificence, and focusing on his character and spreading the word of God, then then we are really missing out on our very purpose for life.

Jeff Laird

Knowing what our purpose is is important. A lot of people struggle with this idea of everything being for God's glory, and it's because we're used to being told that anytime somebody wants all the credit, all the glory, that there's something wrong with that person. We get questions like is, is God a megalomaniac, which is just a fancy way of saying somebody who's got a raging ego, because we say that this is all for

God's glory. Everything he's done, everything is because of his glory and glorification. And the key here is to remember something we've talked about in some of these other discussions, which is that God is not exactly like us. He is not a human being like we are, in the same way that we are. So when a politician or an emperor or a boss or a parent or a spouse, demands that they be given this absolute loyalty, this perfect and complete credit for every single thing, then yes, we recognize that there's something wrong with that. But the reason we recognize there something wrong with that is because that person is not perfect. That person is not absolute. That person is not all knowing and all powerful. When we're talking about God, we're talking about the creator of us and the universe and everything else. So it's very different when we say that everything is for God's glory and that he intends everything to glorify him, because we're not talking about some random person who is limited. So when a person who's in charge of something wants to get all the credit and they always want to be the center of attention, we say that there's a problem with that, but that's because that person didn't create me. That person didn't form me. It's not that person who decides my purpose. So when I create something I say I write a computer program or I design a machine or anything like that. It's completely reasonable for me to decide what the purpose of that thing is.

Jeff Laird

So even within a human context we can see that when I create something, when I make something, it's legitimate for me to make it for my purposes and my reasons. And even then, it's still difficult for us as human beings to get through this idea that in a sense, the only thing that matters is what God wants and his glory and his understanding and his desire. That's difficult for us to understand. We have to temper that a little bit by knowing that in God's mercy and his love, he chooses to interact with us in a very loving, very gracious way, in that he doesn't treat us like we're just animals. He doesn't treat us like we're just mindless robots. But it's very important to remember that when we talk about everything being for God's glory, we are not talking about everything being for the glory of some imperfect limited you know, partial human being. We're talking about the literal creator of everything, including us.

Shea Houdmann

And Jeff, you've raised an excellent point about God is the only one who deserves glory. That God, as the creator of everything, has the right to determine that everything else is for. This conversation and the questions we often receive it to me go hand in hand with the whole jealous God conversation. And the several people I know really struggles issue. There's a famous celebrity who the fact that the Bible describes God as a jealous God on more than one occasion was her reason for essentially leaving the Christian faith. When we think of the word jealous, we think wow, Jeff has something that I want and I'm jealous of him. It's it's not something I deserve, something that I've earned, like, no. Jeff has a nicer car than me, a nicer home than me. I'm jealous of Jeff that I want what he has. That's not what the Bible said about jealous, referring to the Lord. The biblical context is referring to God is jealous of what is rightfully his. And in terms of glory, in terms of worship, in terms of adoration, God is the only one in the universe who is worthy of those things. So when those things are given to someone else, that's what God expresses that he is jealous for those things. Not this jealous, you have something I want. It's like, no, you're receiving something that only I should receive as the creator. As the only perfect being, as again the initiator of all these things, that's what it means to be God for jealousy. So when we think of Jeff and Kevin what you're describing, God, the glory of God, God being glorified. When a person wants all the glory for themselves, we recognize that as wrong because that person doesn't deserve all the

glory for themselves. But with God, he does deserve all the glory for himself. He's the actually the only one who deserves to be glorified, to be worshipped, to be adored in that sense. So it is not selfish of God to say I'm the only one who deserves glory. For him to be jealous when that glory is given to someone else because it truly and only belongs to him.

Kevin Stone

Right. If God is God, if he is the creator and the sustainer of the universe, then he's worthy of our worship. He is worthy of glory. And I think it's an important reminder maybe to insert at this point that we talked about the five solas, we are talking specifically about justification, talking about that act, whereby God has made us right with him. Justification involves forgiveness and the application of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ to our behalf. But we're talking specifically about justification. And so when we talk about the five solas, we are saying we are justified before God, by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone or on the basis of Christ alone in his work for us. To the glory of God alone, as taught in Scripture alone.

Kevin Stone

But it all points back to this act of justification, how God has saved us. And all through scripture we see that salvation belongs to the Lord. Psalm 3 and verse 8 says exactly that, salvation is the Lords. And we also see it in the Book of Revelation Chapter 7 and also in the book of Jonah. Book of Jonah is very symmetrical and if we were to take the book of Jonah and divide it neatly into halves, then at the very midpoint of Jonah, in at the end of Chapter 2, be Chapter 2 and verse nine. We have the statement, salvation is from the Lord. And that is a key statement in the book of Jonah for several reasons. It is the point at which Jonah's discipline ends and he goes on to fulfill God's mission in his life. Which, by the way, has to do with saving people. That's what, that's what Jonah's whole purpose was to bring the good news to Ninevah, and I I guess it was bad news to start with that, that, but God save them, God save that city of Nineveh, that great city. And and that is the turning point of the book. It's the hinge of the book. That statement, salvation is from the Lord. It all, it all goes back to him. Jesus said in John Chapter 15, apart from me, you can do nothing. And so I'm just a branch. He is the true vine. I I cannot, you know, stand off by myself, someplace away from the vine and say, well, I'm gonna produce all this fruit on my own. No, it doesn't work that way. I have to be connected to the vine. And Jesus is that vine. Apart from him then I can do absolutely nothing. All the glory for my salvation and for my sanctification, and everything else goes straight back to him.

Jeff Laird

And there is that logic behind that, that that we have to remember that if God is the one who created everything, if he's the only one who is there as a creator, then it's reasonable for him to be the only one to get the glory and the credit for what's happened. If, if you can imagine somebody making some sort of delicious food and this person comes up with the recipe. They cultivate the fields that the vegetables are grown in. They raise the animals, they harvest the grains, they process the meat, they build the stove, they forge the pans, they they literally do every single step of the entire process. And then they cut the food and put it in your mouth. And then when you swallow it, you say, well, how come, why do you want all the credit for this? And that's that's just a little slice of what it's like when it comes to God. He is literally responsible for the creation and the setup of everything that has happened here. So even as human beings, we understand that if I'm the one who's made something, if I'm the one who's created

something. I created it for my purpose. And that's where God is. And the other thing that's important about the the only part of it is that God is the only God. It's not there that there is some plurality of deities out there that he's sharing his his responsibilities with, or his power with. He is the only one. So here again we have this idea that as uncomfortable as it is, understanding this idea of justification being all for God's glory comes down to our understanding of who and what God is.

Kevin Stone

Couple of other passages come to mind. One is the very often quoted Ephesians 2 verses 8 and 9, for by grace are you saved through faith. And that not of yourselves it is the gift of God, not of works. And then here's the key phrase for today that no one can boast. And that this is what the grace of God that we receive by faith, the salvation that justifies us. This excludes human pride. It is not of works, so that no one can boast. We also see this principle taught in Romans 3 and verse 27. I'll read from the new living translation for this, can we boast then that we have done anything to be accepted by God. No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. It's not what we do. It is what Christ has done on our behalf that saves us. So the salvation of sinners was God's idea. The accomplishing of that salvation was God's work. The granting of that salvation is God's grace. And what a gracious promise that is.

Shea Houdmann

Kevin, thanks for the the great reminder that everything in the whole process of salvation is God and Jeff as well. And I think this is a powerful reminder that the glory of God alone applies in many, many areas, but specifically in this focus it's remembering that the reason God provided for our salvation was for, for his glory. And that's not a selfish thing that is just a reminder that God is to be worshipped, that we are to be so thankful to him. We are to spend our lives living obedience to him out of gratitude for what he has done, because it's all for his glory.

Shea Houdmann

I'm not going to tell you what movie it's from, but I definitely don't recommend the movie, but there's a movie where in one scene a man in the movie is praying beside his bed. He says something effective as like Lord, thank you for this beautiful home you've given me to live in. And he says I, and I know I've worked really, really hard to earn the money, so I can afford this home. But you created matter. So ultimately all the glory goes to you. And that's just a good reminder, yes we accomplish things. They're things in this world where people to an extent, and Kevin, I think you'll have some clarifying points on this, deserves some some praise, obviously a lesser degree. But that ultimately though, we can't do anything apart from Christ, even people who don't know him, the whole universe is held together by Christ. It says that in the in Colossians but God gets all the glory because he's the one who enables anything. So even anything that we accomplished is not truly accomplished on our own. It's only accomplished through the power of our creator. The fact that he's holding us together. The fact that he's enabling us to do those things. So it's such a powerful matter, both of who deserves the glory and also it's a reminder for us to be humble about the things that God uses us to accomplish, because without him we can do nothing.

Kevin Stone

God is really good at saving people. We see it all the way through scripture. Who knocked the walls of Jericho down? You know who gets the credit for that? It wasn't Joshua. The people of Israel. It was God that knocked the walls of Jericho down. Who defeated the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night during the days of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah doesn't get the credit for that. He did not lift a finger to make that happen. God made that happen and delivered the City of Jerusalem at that time. Who delivered Shadrack, Meshach and Abendigo from the burning, fiery furnace? Well, it was, it was God himself that did that. In all of those situations and in our own salvation, the glory belongs to God alone. And we, it's clear in Scripture that salvation belongs to the Lord, and we give him the glory. He alone deserves that glory.

Jeff Laird

And he's the only one who deserves the glory. But sometimes people do get confused, and when we say that and again to what you were saying, Kevin, we're specifically talking about sanctification or justification, I should say. You know, we're talking about the idea that our salvation is primarily for God's glory. But everything is for God's glory. But sometimes people get confused in that and think that that means that we are supposed to think of ourselves as being entirely and completely pathetic and beyond any possible love or positive thoughts. And I seem, remember somebody referring to something like worm theology or something in that nature, and the idea is that that that when we say that everything is for God's glory, that what we mean is that there is nothing of worth in human beings. Now obviously when we talk about in comparison, I don't bring anything of value that can buy my salvation. I can't earn my credit with God. But all of this discussion of things being for God's glory, when we talk about some leader or boss or neighbor who is incredibly arrogant or has that megalomania, you know you're talking about somebody who, who typically does not behave well towards others. Whereas when it comes to God, he does not treat us like we are vermin or bacteria or viruses. He he chooses to treat us very graciously. He created us in a way differently than a lot of other things he created. He gave us authority. He gave us freedom. He gave us power. He gave us the ability to experience different things. The whole point of salvation is so that we can spend eternity enjoying that relationship with him. So I don't think that we we we want to stay away from correcting that misconception which is that when we say that everything is to God's glory, especially our salvation, that's not to say that God does not treat us well. He does not treat us with a tremendous amount of love and care and concern. So giving God all the glory does not mean that that that means that God is somehow treating us unfairly or poorly.

Kevin Stone

And isn't it amazing that part of our salvation involves the fact that God will glorify us some day? It's in Romans chapter 8 those he justified, he sanctified and glorified it. It's all part of the salvation plan and so we humble ourselves in the sight of the Lord and let him lift us up. There is a glorification coming. And we read in the Book of Revelation Chapter 4 as John sees the vision of the heavenly throne room, that there 24 elders are there and they have crowns. They've been crowned. They've been glorified by the Lord, and as they are there before the presence of the Lord, they they worship him, who lives forever and ever. And they lay their crowns before the throne. And they say you are worthy, our Lord and God to receive glory and honor and power. And so even the glory that we ourselves receive from God and part of our salvation is that we will be glorified, will live in glory, and he amazingly shares his glory with us. Even that is a reflection of his glory and ultimately reflects back to him. And we're just privileged to be, to have a part in his grace and in that glory.

Jeff Laird

It's also important because that aspect is one of the reasons that grounds the way Christians believe we should treat people and other people. When the Bible says that God created man in his image that means that every single human being has at least that level of intrinsic value. Every single person is a little icon or representation in a sense of reflection and image bearer of God. So just from a basic theological standpoint, when we say everything is to God's glory, that is one of the reasons why Christians believe that we should do things like defending life and rights and life. All these other things is because we believe that people really are valuable because of who they are. So even when we talk about God's glory, we're talking about him being positive towards people.

Shea Houdmann

Well said both of you. Let's close today with getting really practical, since this is the final episode of our series on the five solas. Whether it's this episode, so the glory of God or one of the others, what's something eminently practical to you about one of the solas that really stands out to you as you've studied as you've gone through these solas, that you really want people to think through not just theologically, but how it actually impacts them practically. And I'll start, just focusing on today's episode with the glory of God alone. So my life verse since I was a teenager, I think it was the first time I read the book of Romans, I read Romans 11:36 which reads for from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen. And this multiple times in my life, this verse has been a powerful reminder that to God be the glory, great things he has done. Everything in my life is from him or to him, or through him. Something that keeps me humble, something that even keeps me encouraged, remembering that it's God who is accomplishing things to me that doesn't rely on me, my strength, my wisdom, my intellect. No God has chosen to use me for his glory and to me that gives me a confidence knowing that he will accomplish great things through me, through others, all for his glory. And I'm not always perfect at being comfortable in that place. We're all prone to want some of the glory for ourselves, so I'm not perfect as any stretch, but truly, it's knowing everything is for the glory, glory of God alone keeps me humble, keeps my perspective in line.

Kevin Stone

I think that the teaching of in Scripture alone is very practical as we need guidance here in this world and we want to look at scripture as the only rule for our faith and practice. Because things can get very confusing. We have a lot of voices in our world today saying we'll do this, do that. You know, you've got to do this to please God or whatever. And for the believer, if we just remember this, scripture alone. We go back to the word of God and that is our guide for what we believe and what we do? God has given us all we need for living a life pleasing to him. And I think it is. This is such a practical teaching because it grounds us in the truth, thy word is truth, Jesus said in John 17. And we need to just go back to that steady that, meditate on that. The written word of God, this is our guide in life and the the more we get into the word of God, the better off we'll be as children of God.

Jeff Laird

I like that, I think one of the things that comes through for me and I'm, I'm sure people have been able to pick it up in the way I've talked about these is when when I think of grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone only in Scripture, only for God's glory. It's a reminder to me that God is God and I am not. And

where that's practical for me is knowing that no matter what your belief is spiritually, religiously, you have to accept that you have limitations. You're you're you are not capable of fully and completely understanding all things and everything. And when I see God the way he's presented it helps me to remember that God is God and I am not. So I can't know everything, but there is someone who does. That I don't always understand the purpose behind what's happening, but there is a purpose. And that I don't have to fully and completely understand. I don't have to claim that if I don't understand something, it couldn't possibly be true, or that if my reasoning led to it, it must be infallible. So for me, a practical outworking of this is this idea of saying that it is OK. It is good for me to recognize that I have understanding and I have reason and I have ability, but they're limited. And that it's OK for me to admit that at some point in time there's things I'm not going to know and I'm not going to understand and I have to accept those as being a human being. Not because I want to be ignorant or because I just throw my hands up and go well, I can't. No, but I can recognize it just because I don't like it doesn't mean it's not true. Just because I don't understand it doesn't mean that there's no good answer for it, because God is God and I'm not.

Shea Houdmann

Well said, both of you thoroughly enjoyed this whole series of the on the five solas. Each conversation has been different, and I like how it's been reminded to us of how they're linked together. Each one impacts the other. Hope you found our conversation on to the glory of God alone today informative and also encouraging. That's a powerful reminder that we all need to have it impact us in personal and powerful and practical ways. So this has been the Got Questions podcast on to the glory of God alone. Got questions? The Bible has answers and we'll help you find them.