

Soli Deo Gloria

Leader Discussion Guide

Ephesians 1:3-14

Illustrations

- Westminster Shorter Catechism. First question: What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- Getty Center and Disney Concert Hall
- Lowell Observatory – Details of the stars with passion
- Smart phones - 80% of young smart phone users check them before brushing their teeth in the morning.
- Multi-tasking – The human brain doesn't really multi-task
- Praise is like a fire
- Bach wrote Soli Deo Gloria at the end of his talks
- Bryan and In-N-Out

Comprehension

1. Where do we see the themes of Christ alone, faith alone, and grace alone in our passage (these were the last 3 sermons - Christ alone: v3, 5, 6b, 7, 11, 13; Faith alone: v13; Grace alone: v7)
2. Why did God save us by His grace, through faith, in Christ alone?
3. What does Soli Deo Gloria Mean?
 - a. What does it mean that God is full of his glory?
 - b. Where do we see that God has put his glory on display? (creation, salvation)
4. If our praise is like a fire, what is the fuel to keep the fire going?
 - a. Where in our passage do we see Paul throwing logs of fuel on the fire?
 - b. If we are going to sustain or increase our praise of God, we must keep throwing fuel on the fire of praise. In our lives, what can fuel our fire of praise? (Some answers: Focused Bible reading and meditation, singing, reading good books, gospel rich conversations, singing in congregational worship.
 - i. How does this work? Why does having a time of focused Bible reading increase my desire and fuel to praise God?

Application

1. Mark said, "If we are going to fulfill our purpose and be a people who praise the glory of God we must give deep and focused attention to His glorious grace."
 - a. What does it mean to give focused attention to His glorious grace?
 - b. How could this be applied to our lives?
2. Multi-task vs. Uni-task: Is it true that worship and prayer must be uni-tasked? Why?
 - a. How do you struggle with this?
 - b. What can we do immediately to help with this? How do we need to retrain our brains to begin to be able to really focus?
3. How does worship with others encourage our praise of God? What should our congregational singing be like?
4. If we are going to praise the grace of God, the glory of God. We can't just hear about it. We must first experience it. What is God calling you to do to increase your experience of his grace?

Extended Outline

The last 3 weeks we have seen how we are saved. Those 3 things are here again:

We are saved in Christ alone:

v3 – Blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

V5 – adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.

V6b – Blessed us in the Beloved.

V7 – In him we have redemption through his blood.

V11 – In Him we have obtained an inheritance.

V13 – In Him ... you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

All the blessings we receive come to us because of, through, in Christ.

Martin Luther “The believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has Christ claims as his own. Let us compare these and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them / and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ’s, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul’s.” (*The Freedom of a Christian, in Three Treatises, 286.*)

Through faith alone:

V13 – heard the word, believed in Jesus, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

- Eph. 2:8-9 – By grace you have been saved, through faith.

By grace alone:

V4 – He chose us. V7 – according to the riches of His grace.

Why did God save us by His grace, through faith, in Christ alone?

This is a question that has massive implications for all of our life. What we are asking is, Why am I here? What is the ultimate reason God saved me? What am I supposed to be living for? What motive should be driving my life? When I plan out my schedule, when I think through my priorities, what is the one thing that God wants to direct me? When I think about my marriage? When I think about my work? When I think about my money? When I think about my involvement in church? What goal should be shaping all of it?

The answer is described in the last motto of the Reformation: Soli Deo Gloria – to the glory of God alone. We are saved, for the purpose of enjoying, and displaying, and praising the glory of God.

Illus: Westminster Shorter Catechism. First question: “What is the chief end of man? To glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The ultimate reason we exist, are saved.

This passage gives us this answer in 3 places:

1. V6 – “to the praise of his glorious grace.”
2. V12 - “so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”
3. V14 – Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance to the praise of His glory.

Summary:

1. God is full of glory.

- a. He is full of everything that is honorable, worthy, and good.

2. God loves to put His glory on display.

- a. **Illus:** Getty Center. 1.3 billion dollars were spent. **Why? So that** they could showcase the beauty/glory of art.
- b. **Illus:** Disney Concert Hall - \$274 million spent over the course of 16 years. Built to showcase the greatest musical compositions and musicians.
- c. John Calvin, said, “The world was no doubt made, so that it might be a theatre of the divine glory.”

- i. The entire history of redemption is a showcase for the glory of God's grace. Through it God puts on display His love and glory.

3. So that we will praise Him for His glory – especially the glory of His grace.

- a. This is the right thing. We know instinctively that this is fitting.
 - i. He deserves all glory. He is the one who accomplished our salvation.
 - 1. Remember Eph 2:8-9 – “So that no one may boast.”
- b. This is also satisfying / fulfilling.
 - 1. C. S. Lewis: “I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation.”
 - ii. Also, Psalm 22:3 – “God dwells in the praises of His people.”

3 Keys to living out this life of praise:

1. A deep and focused contemplation of God's glorious grace.

- a. **Illus:** Lowell Observatory. Astronomers who were able to tell us all about the stars, in detail, and with passion.
 - i. Imagine if they had only said, “There are a lot of stars. They are really big.” In order to praise the glories of the stars, they had given careful, focused attention to understanding them in depth.
- b. **App:** If we are going to fulfill our purpose and be a people who praise the glory of God we must give deep and focused attention to His glorious grace
- c. The glory of God and His grace is infinitely greater than the stars.
 - i. V6 – His glorious grace, with which he has blessed/graced us in the Beloved. V7b – according to the riches of his grace, v8 he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight....
 - ii. 3:16 – “that according to the riches of his glory... v18 – may have strength to comprehend.... Height, breadth of love”
 - iii. As we comprehend and experience more, our praise grows.

2. Beware of deadly distractions.

- a. Beware things that discourage deep and focused attention.
- b. Today we have several new challenges we must consider:
 - i. Smart phones: 80% of young smart phone users check them before brushing their teeth in the morning. There are thousands of highly-paid, well-trained engineers who research the way we think. In order to guide our mental habits, to attract our attention and keep it on what they want. Not God's glory. Apple's value hit 900 billion.
 - ii. **Multi-tasking:** Nicholas Carr, in his book, *The Shallows: What the Internet is Doing to Our Brains*, explains that the human brain doesn't really multi-task. It just switches from one task to another quickly. Worship and prayer must be uni-tasks. If we spend time with God while peeking at our Facebook feed – how will that affect our praise? If we can't read a chapter of the Bible, without checking our texts. If we can't spend 10 minutes in focused prayer, but we can spend 2 hours on Facebook, what does that mean for our worship?
- c. We must think carefully. Take steps to put away distractions.

3. Put fuel on the fire of our praise.

- a. **Illus:** Think of our praise like a fire. If the fire of praise is going to burn hot in our hearts and lives, we must have fuel. The fuel is an ever growing comprehension of God's glory, and His grace, and what He has done.

- b. **Illus:** That is what Paul is doing here. V3 – “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has And then throws logs on the fire.
- c. **App:** We get fuel through focused Bible reading and meditation. Through singing (Hymns of Grace). Through reading good books. Through conversations where we remind each other of God.
- d. **App:** We get fuel through congregational worship.
 - i. As we gather, God is giving us fuel. Through songs about Him. Through His word preached. Lord’s Supper. Through others alongside us. We receive the fuel, and we fulfill our purpose together, by praising God together.

4. Worship with others.

- a. God gives us fuel. Songs, speaks to us. The glory of Christ is displayed. Reminded through the Lord’s Supper.
- b.
- c. We hear from others. Calls us to gather together.
- d. We are given fuel.

Young man – woman worked her fingers to the bone to put him to college. She puts him through college. I want you to be a good man – tell the truth, take care of others. Let’s say he never calls her, or sends her a card. He owes her a relationship.

Illus: Bach – A Lutheran, wrote at the end of his talks. Soli Deo Gloria.

App: He was saying, this is why I write. This is the goal of my compositions. This is the ultimate end of all that I do. This is what I am living for.

This has focused on how we know, and how we are saved by God. The motto: Soli Deo Gloria. We are saved, to the glory of God alone.

Why did God save us?

5. A real experience of God’s grace.

- a. **Illus:** When Bryan came to CA for the first time, I told him about In n’ Out. He heard about it plenty. He could have praised, second hand. Not genuine. But then we went out to the desert. He ate = real praise.
- b. **App:** If we are going to praise the grace of God, the glory of God. We can’t just hear about it. We must first experience it.
 - i. Confession and cleansing; Forgiveness; Holy Spirit in us.
 - ii. If you are not praising God, call out to Him for mercy. For more of Him. That I may know Christ.

From the Atlantic: But the twin rise of the smartphone and social media has caused an earthquake of a magnitude we’ve not seen in a very long time, if ever. There is compelling evidence that the devices we’ve placed in young people’s hands are having profound effects on their lives—and making them seriously unhappy.

Author puts it this way: Try to pinpoint the last time you took a purposeless walk through the late spring breeze, when there was no itch in your hand to reach for a mobile device, and you felt like the wind and sky around you had nothing to disclose to you other than the vast and mysterious sympathy of existence itself. Was it 2007? Or as far back as 1997? Does just asking the question make you feel ill?”