



Our politics are more divisive than ever these days and the Kavanaugh hearings are just another example of the bitter battles. The political and moral divide seems to keep widening all the time. Regardless of which end of the spectrum on which you land, one thing has always been true of both sides of the political fence. If you want to get to the bottom of a scandal, all you need to do is follow the money. That may be easier said than done but more often than not, there is huge sums of money at stake in politics. It's difficult to decide if politicians use money to gain power or if they use the governing power to gain more money. The answer is probably yes to both. Money and power always hang together but it can often be easier to follow the money to uncover hidden scandals and motives.

Within Christianity, we could alter that phrase slightly and say "Follow the Glory." Just as you can follow the money and see who's behind it, so you can follow the glory and see who is getting the credit. What I mean is that this is how we can know if we are glorifying God with our words and actions or not. Follow the glory.

Last week we spent the whole time learning about God's glory, but we didn't get too far into what it looks like to glorify God with our lives. After that message someone said to me that I never presented a definition of God's glory. He was technically correct. I never said, "Here is my definition of God's glory" but I did describe it as best I could using Jesus' prayer. Let me read it again and then I'll show you how to follow the glory.

When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, ² since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. ³ And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. ⁴ I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. ⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.

I did not have a strict definition but here's is how I described God's glory. "He wants us to see his glory because his glory is bound up with his person. His glory is his majesty and utter perfection. He wants his glory restored so that he can share it with us."¹ That may not be a full-orbed definition distilled from the entire Bible, but I think it does represent Jesus' prayer in John 17.

Last week I intentionally avoided researching any definitions of God's glory because I wanted it to come from the text of Scripture. But this week, I did look up a definition and the first one I landed on was from John Piper. Now he's a brilliant man so you'd think his definition would be spot on. Here's what he wrote. "Defining the glory of God is impossible..." There you go. And he's right. That's why our theological terms can only take us so far. When it comes to God, how do you define the undefineable? How do you put labels on infinity? Theology can only take us so far but that doesn't mean we should not work at it. We have a lot of information in the pages of this book and we need to search the diligently to make sure we get it as right as we possibly can.

Piper did go on to offer his own definition. "The glory of God is the infinite beauty and greatness of his manifold perfections."² That doesn't look too far from what I described last week. But then if we are looking at the same Bible, that should not be surprising. There is more that could be said about God's glory from Scripture but my intention is not to exhaust all of them.

The main question we are asking this morning is, "What does it mean to glorify God?" The simple answer is to follow the glory. If what you do and say ultimately makes God look more glorious, then you are glorifying the Lord. If God is glorious, if he's perfect, if he's the greatest possible gift, then glorifying him means making him look as amazing as we possibly can. But if what you do and say does not make God look more glorious—if you are in any way in the center of it all—you are most definitely not glorifying God.

There's an interesting and some might even say, somewhat controversial part of this prayer and to understand it correctly, we need to follow the glory. I'm talking about verse two, which we did not cover the past 2 weeks. *since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.* The key word here is the first word—since. The word since or because are the foundation for what came before it. Since and because are the opposite of so that and therefore. Let me us another verse from this prayer to show you what I mean.

Look down to verse 20. "...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." Jesus wants oneness between His Father, himself and his followers. The purpose of the unity is *so that* the world may believe that you have sent me. Oneness comes first and this wonderful unity results in the world knowing that the Father sent Jesus.

But with a since or because type construction, we can actually flip the order of verses one and two to help it become more plain.

Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him, Father, the hour has come; [therefore] glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.

In this case, the Son having authority over all flesh to give eternal life comes first. Do you see? I inserted the word therefore because it is implied in the flow of the thought. So this is huge. Jesus is asking for a return of his full glory because of what the Father had had given him. And what had the Father given him? *you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.*

Jesus' prayer here is in many ways a summary of the gospel of John up until this point. Just as John 1:1-18 functions as a prologue of all that will come, in many ways, Jesus' prayer looks back to what was. And this is a strong message in Jesus' prayer. We don't usually have any issues with the first half of the sentence: since you have given him authority over all flesh. I think we would all agree that the Son has authority over all flesh.

I love how the Son submits to and defers to the Father by saying that the Father gave him this authority. And of course, it is much more than a slight deference. This goes back to the functional submission of the Son to the Father. Though both are equally God in every way—the essence of their being is fully divine—the Son takes a functional role of submission. He listens to his Father and obeys his Father and his Father gives him wonderful things. Jesus is submissive in terms of his functions, what he does, which is why it is called functional submission.

Nevertheless, he has been given authority over all flesh. All flesh means all flesh—each man, woman and child who has ever lived or ever will live. D.A. Carson wrote, “Everything and everyone in the universe is subject to this kingdom, whether the point is acknowledged or not.”³ Not everyone will acknowledge that they are subject to the kingdom of God. But truth is not true simply because you think it is. Truth is never relative. Truth is objective and the ultimate standard of all truth at all times is God himself. Despite what the world believes about God, Jesus' prayer is true. He has been given authority over all flesh. I hope you are in full agreement with this fact.

What we may not like to hear is that the specific authority that Jesus mentions here is the authority “to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.” We don't mind Jesus being in control, but we don't always like to think of him controlling eternal life. He can have the world and all parts of my life, but it doesn't seem fair that he also controls eternal life.

It's almost certain that Jesus' closest teaching to this prayer comes in chapter six where he said this.

- “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out” (37).
- “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day” (44).

The language in his teaching is almost identical to the language in his prayer. In both cases the Father is granting authority to Jesus to give eternal life to specific people. This can't be a general call to come to God because of 6:44. The Father gives eternal life and draws people to himself and the result is that those who come are “raised up on the last day.” In other words, all who are drawn by the Father are eventually saved and raised to eternal life. So the drawing is not just potentially fruitful it is absolutely fruitful. All who are drawn by the Father are ultimately saved

and all who the Father gives to the Son are ultimately saved. This is what Jesus meant when he said that he had been given authority over all flesh.

However, in case some of you are squirming in your seats about now, we also have to affirm what Jesus said in verse three. *And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.* Eternal life is given by the Father but this in no way changes the fact that eternal life is defined by knowing Jesus. I have to quote D.A. Carson again here. “Eternal life is not so much everlasting life as personal knowledge of the Everlasting One.”⁴

Also, if you jump down to verse eight, Jesus prays the same idea again. “For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me.” And not surprisingly, this is backed up by Jesus teaching in chapter six. “For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (40).”

So does God have authority over eternal life, to give it to whomever he wishes or do we need to believe in Jesus to have eternal life? Both! Amen? Both are wonderfully and completely clear from this prayer, from all of Jesus’ teaching and all of Paul’s teaching. Now do you want me to explain how these two truths hang together? If you do, you’re going to have to fire me and get a new preacher, cuz I can’t do it. God grants eternal life. Jesus thanked the Father for this very truth but at the same time, my belief matters. I have to believe in order to have eternal life and in some unexplainable way, my belief is actual belief. And so is yours.

One of the most helpful things I have ever read on this topic comes from a conversation between John Wesley and Charles Simeon. The view that God grants eternal life is part of Calvinism and the view that we make the ultimate decision about saving faith is part of Arminianism. Most of you know that Wesley was the founder of Methodism and so was an Arminian. Charles Simeon served as a pastor at Holy Trinity Church in Cambridge for 54 years. He practiced and popularized biblical, expository preaching and he pioneered on-campus discipleship among university students and is the Calvinist in this conversation.⁵

Just to give you a picture of his passion, Wesley he not only disagreed with another Calvinistic preacher, George Whitefield, but while Whitefield was on a preaching tour in the U.S., Wesley singlehandedly ruined Whitefield's reputation in London. So Wesley had no love for the opposing viewpoint.

Here is the conversation between these two dear saints that wonderfully illustrates what I have been trying to say. December 20, 1784 (the date is given in Wesley’s Journal):

“Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers. But before I consent to begin the combat, with your permission I will ask you a few questions... Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart?”

“Yes,” says the veteran, “I do indeed.”

“And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ?”

“Yes, solely through Christ.”

“But, Sir, supposing you were at first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works?”

“No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last.”

“Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power?”

“No.”

“What, then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother’s arms?”

“Yes, altogether.”

“And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom?”

“Yes, I have no hope but in Him.”

“Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it.

And therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree.⁶

To this I add a hearty Amen. Agree we do and agree, we must. I happened to see an interesting comment in a blog post recently where someone asked this question.

Is it truly possible for two competing theologies on the plan of God’s salvation to co-exist in a single denomination going forward?

I could not let this question go unanswered, so I replied.

Yes, it is. The EFCA has been doing it for decades. [See this 2014 doctrinal survey](#). Page 2 shows that 38% of pastors identify as Calvinist and 35% as Arminian/Wesleyan. I am told

that the balance used to lean slightly the other direction, but they have always co-existed in harmony. We ain't perfect, but this is certainly a strength of the EFCA.⁷

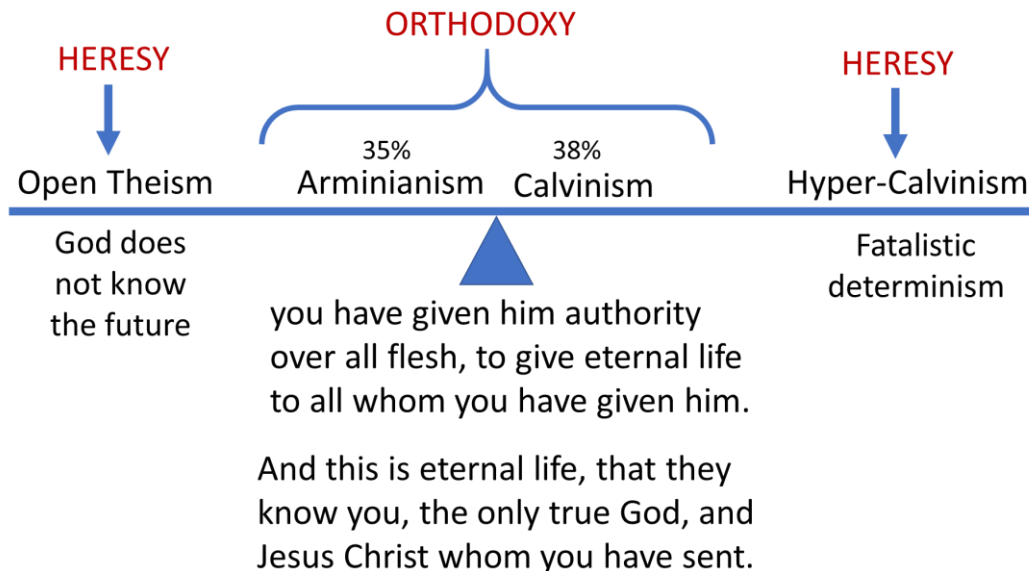
We should be in agreement on this issue but where we do need to take up daggers is in the extremes of either viewpoint. The two extremes are called Hyper-Calvinism and Open Theism.

Hyper-calvinism was the view of the man who infamously opposed William Carey, the father of modern missions. While Carey was holding a meeting to convince his fellow believers that they should be taking the gospel to the end of the earth, someone stood up and said this. "Young man, sit down! You are an enthusiast. When God pleases to convert the heathen, he'll do it without consulting you or me."⁸

But the opposite of hyper-Calvinism is Open Theism, which is the belief that God does not know the future. Charles Simeon has another stunning bit of wisdom to share regarding both extremes.

Doubtless either of these statements may be injudiciously stated or improperly applied. If the doctrines of election and predestination be so stated as to destroy man's free agency, and make him merely passive in the work of salvation, they are not stated as they are in the Articles and Homolies of our Church, or as they are in the Holy Scriptures. On the other hand, if the doctrines of free will...be so stated as to rob God of his honor, and to deny that he is both "The Author and Finisher of our faith," they are equally abhorrent from the sentiment of our Established Church, and from the plainest declarations of Holy Writ.⁹

I am a very visual person, so I put Simeon's thoughts into a diagram. In my vernacular, I believe he is saying that Arminianism and Calvinism belong in the center of the fulcrum of a balanced theology. You could argue that both are represented in verse two and verse three of John 17. The fact that both belong within orthodox belief is also demonstrated by what I already mentioned—that EFCA pastors are almost split down the middle on these—and that we live in harmony.



I hope you would instantly reject both extremes but of the two, Open Theism is the one gaining a foothold into evangelicalism. The Baptist General Conference, now called Converge, is probably the closest denomination to our own. We are very like-minded on almost everything—except that is, on the issue of open theism. In the summer of 2000 they passed this resolution.

Be it resolved that we, the delegates of the Baptist General Conference affirm that God's knowledge of all past, present and future events is exhaustive; and, we also believe that the "openness" view of God's foreknowledge is contrary to our fellowship's historic understanding of God's omniscience.¹⁰

While that sounds quite strong, what the denomination did next was inexcusable, in my opinion. Here's their follow-up resolution passed in the same conference.

We affirm the unanimous vote of the Committee for Theological Clarification and Assessment, that [open theist] Dr. [Greg] Boyd's views did not warrant his termination as a member of the Bethel College faculty and by inference that his views fall within the accepted bounds of the evangelical spectrum.¹¹

How can they say that open theism is contrary to their historic understanding but also affirm that it falls within “the accepted bounds of the evangelical spectrum”? You’ll be happy to know that our denomination sounds rejects open theism.

We believe in one God, Creator of all things, holy, infinitely perfect, and eternally existing in a loving unity of three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Having limitless knowledge and sovereign power, God has graciously purposed from eternity to redeem a people for Himself and to make all things new for His own glory.

Moreover, in 2008 this statement was altered slightly with the express purpose of defending against open theism.

This Statement of Faith is intended to exclude the view commonly known as “open theism.” In April, 2001, the EFCB Board of Ministerial Standing determined that it “will not approve credentials for those who deny God’s exhaustive foreknowledge, which includes the future free acts of human beings.”

Why does this matter? I’ll say it again. Follow the glory. If God does not know or control the future, if we are the sole determiner of our salvation, who gets the glory? Us, not God. Here are a few quick applications.

1. Good doctrine glorifies God by preserving his glory—that which makes him look glorious. The opposite is also true. Wrong doctrine dishonors God. We owe it to God to be diligent, careful and passionate with his Word.
2. God is jealous for his own glory. Therefore, we should be as well.¹² If we were jealous for our own glory, we would be brimming with toxic levels of pride. So why is it wrong for us but completely right for God? Because he is worthy of all glory. Because he is the

greatest gift he could give us. As I said last week, there is nothing we can do to actually increase God's glory because he is already infinitely perfect in every way. All we can do is recognize His glory.

3. We gain joy from seeing God's glory and walking in obedience. This happens as we recognize and lean into God's glory. We enjoy him. We worship him and that leads to obeying him. This was also Jesus' experience when he prayed, *I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.*
4. The overflow of enjoying God's glory is sharing his glory with others. To the degree that we are overwhelmed with Jesus' presence and glory, we will share this joy with others.

Rich Maurer
September 30, 2018

TABLE TALK

1. Could you share the gospel only using verse 3? How is this helpful and what pieces are missing from a complete gospel presentation?
2. How does verse 3 fit together with verse 2 which says that God gives eternal life?
3. Verse 5 deals with eternity ("before the world existed") and verse 1 ("the hour has come") is a moment in time. How aware are you on a daily basis that God controls eternity and each moment?

¹ <http://www.grace-efca.org/sermons-current/glorify-your-son-john-171-5-rich-maurer>

² <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-gods-glory--2>

³ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 555). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁴ Carson, D. A. (1991). *The Gospel according to John* (p. 556). Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans.

⁵ <http://www.charlessimeon.com/>

⁶ Charles Simeon, *Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible*, Vol. 1: Genesis-Leviticus Preface, pp. xvii-xviii.

⁷ <http://thewartburgwatch.com/2018/09/24/resignations-due-to-infidelity-rock-elmbrook-church-jd-greear-on-calvinism-and-the-sbc-a-pedophile-hunter-discusses-his-job-and-more-on-tom-chantry/#comments>

⁸ As a result of this kind of pushback, Wesley wrote--*An Enquiry Into The Obligations Of Christians To Use Means For The Conversion Of The Heathens*. Here's a wonderful passage. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, a little before his departure, commissioned his apostles to Go, and teach all nations; or, as another evangelist expresses it, Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. This commission was as extensive as possible, and laid them under obligation to disperse themselves into every country of the habitable globe, and preach to all the inhabitants, without exception, or limitation. They accordingly went forth in obedience to the command, and the power of God evidently wrought with them. Many attempts of the same kind have been made since their day, and which have been attended with various success; but the work has not been taken up, or prosecuted of late years (except by a few individuals) with that zeal and perseverance with which the primitive Christians went about it. It seems as if many

thought the commission was sufficiently put in execution by what the apostles and others have done; that we have enough to do to attend to the salvation of our own countrymen; and that, if God intends the salvation of the heathen, he will some way or other bring them to the gospel, or the gospel to them. It is thus that multitudes sit at ease, and give themselves no concern about the far greater part of their fellow-sinners, who to this day, are lost in ignorance and idolatry.”

⁹ Charles Simeon, *Memoirs of the life of the Rev. Charles Simeon. With a selection from his writings and correspondence.* London, J. Hatchard, 1847.

¹⁰ <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-took-a-good-stand-and-made-a-bad-mistake>

¹¹ Here’s a quote from Boyd. “The statement that God is helpless and unable to prevent suffering, has in mind then, the open theist’s commitment to the notion that God values libertarian freedom so much that he rarely will interfere with its operation. By self-constraint, then, God is faced with the reality of being helpless to stop suffering that he wishes did not happen.” (Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible*, Baker Books, © 2000, pp. 103-106.)

¹² Isaiah 42:8-9

I am the LORD; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to carved idols.

⁹ Behold, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth
I tell you of them.”

And Isaiah 46:8-11

⁸ “Remember this and stand firm,
recall it to mind, you transgressors,
⁹ remember the former things of old;
for I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is none like me,
¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning
and from ancient times things not yet done,
saying, ‘My counsel shall stand,
and I will accomplish all my purpose,’
¹¹ calling a bird of prey from the east,
the man of my counsel from a far country.
I have spoken, and I will bring it to pass;
I have purposed, and I will do it.