

Recently I was talking to a new acquaintance about the gospel. I was explaining that the purpose of life is to glorify God and trying to illustrate what that means. I resorted to a sports analogy (Sorry to you non-sports enthusiasts! ☺). I asked him how it was that basketball fans glorified their favorite player. We cheer for them. We are delighted to watch them play. We rearrange our lives in order to watch them play. We feel happy when watching them or when thinking about them. We delight to talk about their exploits with others. In short, we glorify our favorite players by having hearts that are full of affection for them and lives that show our delight by how we talk and behave in order to enjoy them more. This is exactly what the Scriptures mean when they command us to glorify God (Psalm 27:4, 73:25-26, Heb. 11:6).

I have used this illustration countless times but something new struck me as we were talking. I asked him, “When you are watching and enjoying your favorite player, are you worried about the project at work? Are you angry with your wife? Do you look at pornography?” What struck me was that when you are glorifying your sport’s team, that’s all you do. You are so full of happiness and delight that worry and anger and troubles and temptations that normally upset you and ensnare you have no effect on you.

Christians in the 1600’s and 1700’s used a phrase to describe this reality. They described the goal of the Christian life as having “affecting views of Christ.” By this they simply meant that God’s goal was that believers be so delighted with Jesus that they delight to worship him and love others. They believed that Christians who had an “affecting view of Christ” would gladly do anything in order to know and love him more, just like sports fans will do anything to get to delight in their favorite players and teams. This is exactly what the apostle Paul meant when he said in Phil. 3:10, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.”

When you read the sermons and the books that these Christians produced they are vastly different from most of what is being said and written by the modern church. The modern church is concerned with how to be happy in this world by using God to fix our broken lives. They were concerned with being taken up with Christ in order to find all their happiness in him. They were in hot pursuit of him through attendance at church, daily reading of the Scriptures and prayer, daily family worship, regular “holy” conversation with other Christians.

When you read the history of these people’s lives you discover people whose homes, while not perfect, were far more contented and peaceful than ours. You read of people who gladly endured all the suffering God brought to them. They sought to care for the needs of others, often at great risk to themselves. These were people who worked to take the gospel to other peoples and cultures. Their communities were noted for their high ethical and moral standards and the absence of open vice. The explanation for their exemplary lives was the goal of their lives—to have an “affecting view of Christ”.

Is it the goal of your life to be so delighted with Jesus that you’d do anything to know and love him more? When you read the Bible, come to church, go to a small group study, engage in family worship, talk with other Christians do you do these things with the

purpose and expectation of seeing more of the greatness of Jesus? Our passion and our prayer must be that in all things the Holy Spirit gives each of us, “an affecting view of Christ”.

Seeking his glory,

P.S. If you are interested in reading about the lives of these earlier Christians I would recommend the book, “Quest for Godliness” by J. I. Packer in our church library.