

Of Snowflakes And Suns And Glory

Charles Whitaker

Given 19-Oct-11; Sermon #FT11-12

Some of you may have heard about the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*. It was written about 30 years after the King James Version of the Bible was translated and it was designed as a tool for Protestant parents to teach their children about God. It is also a fairly concise statement of Protestant doctrine and as such is a pretty good place to go to find some wrong teaching. That is not where I am going today however.

You can all rejoice that I am not going to talk about the Catechism's 107 mostly wrong answers, but the first question—and its answer is—of present interest. That first question is “What is the chief end (aim or purpose) of man? The answer is that “Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” The answer is not fully wrong, but of course, it does lack focus in that it stresses personal gratification, our enjoyment, rather than service. We all understand that we are going to do more than just enjoy God. We are going to work with Him and perform whatever work He has for us to do in a universe-wide work for eternity.

Today I want to talk about the first part of that answer. I want to talk about “glory.” What is glorifying God? How does glorifying God work? What are its effects? We will only be able to scratch the surface here in talking about a rather vast subject. However, it is a very important subject because we are commanded by God to glorify Him.

I Corinthians 6:20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

Revelations 4:11 You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.

We need to know as much about how to glorify God as we can. What is glory? I think many of you would say brightness, brilliance, or effulgence. We often associate glory with light. That is not wrong at all. Though we will not have time to turn there, you can look at Isaiah 60 and you will find that the whole chapter strongly connects light with glory. We will see later on that light does make a wonderful analogy by which we can understand and it adds an extremely important aspect of glory.

Glory is, however, a lot more than light. I think it is important that we get some definitions. Definitions are sometimes as boring as they are necessary so I will try to make this as fast as I can. The dictionary defines the noun *glory* to mean praise, honor, distinction, and renown, which are extended by common consent. It can also refer to a highly commendable asset, a striking, commendable asset as in the phrase “A young man’s glory is in his strength.” You will find that reference in Proverbs 20:29.

The verb *glorify* means to give glory to someone or to something. It is to bestow honor and praise or renown on someone. In Hebrew there are two nouns, which the translators typically render as glory in our translations. Interestingly, both of those nouns appear in Exodus 28:2. God is speaking to Moses and states “Make holy garments for your brother Aaron for glory and for beauty.” The two nouns are *glory* and *beauty*. The first noun translated as *glory* is Strong’s 3519. Its root means “heavy” and it is sometimes translated as rich or wealthy. A rich person is heavy with gold. I think *Vines* mentions that. As an example, though we will not turn there, you can check Genesis 31:1 in the Amplified Version and here the Hebrew word, which the King James Version translates as *glory*, is rendered as wealth or honor. In some other versions it is rendered as riches. Strong’s 3519 means splendor and honor.

Glory is an asset. It enriches its recipients, those who receive it. It increases a person’s well-being, wealth, and value. This aspect of value is an important point that we will come back to later. The second Hebrew noun commonly translated *glory* in God’s Word is what we saw in Exodus 28:2 as the word *beauty*. In fact, this is its first occurrence and it is Strong’s 8597, which means beauty, ornament, honor, and majesty.

The Hebrew verb form *to glorify* is Strong’s 6286 and one of its 13 occurrences is in Isaiah 60:7 where God says, “I will glorify My glorious house.” In Greek the Hebrew words for *glory* and *glorify* are related to our word *doxology*. We in the church do not use the word *doxology* much but a *doxology* is a hymn, a song that is used in Protestant or Catholic liturgy. The group is *Doxa*, and it is Strong’s 1391, meaning an opinion, an estimate, and hence it is the honor that results from a good opinion. It is the honor and fame that you get from having a good reputation. As an example you can consider Paul’s comment that if a woman has long hair it is her glory. It is her *doxa*. You can find that in I Corinthians 11:15.

The Greek verb form *glorify* is Strong’s 1392, meaning to suppose or to seem. I will only cite here one version of it, and by the way its first occurrence in the New Testament, where Christ is speaking in Matthew 5:16:

Of Snowflakes and Suns and Glory by Charles Whitaker (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Please turn now to Exodus 34 and we will begin to see how this works out in the scriptures. This passage introduces us to three themes about glory and we will churn these themes around throughout the remainder of my comments:

Exodus 34:28-35 So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. Now it was so, when Moses came down from Mount Sinai (and the two tablets of the Testimony were in Moses' hand when he came down from the mountain), that Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone while he talked with Him. So when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. Then Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses talked with them. Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them as commandments all that the Lord had spoken with him on Mount Sinai. And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil on his face. But whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out; and he would come out and speak to the children of Israel whatever he had been commanded. And whenever the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone, then Moses would put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with Him.

Three themes emerge here in Exodus. The first one is that during the 40 days that Moses had been with the being who we know later became Jesus Christ, Moses' face came to reflect the glory of God (hold onto this concept of "reflect"). Secondly, that glory; that shining face, became a sign which was visible to all; a sign that he had spoken with and was in communication with God and that he was speaking for God whenever he spoke to the people. The people could see this very clearly. There was no question about it. Third, Moses was able to obscure, to cloud, to hide that glory with a veil. The veil allowed him to curtail or to arrest its shining forth.

Turn to II Corinthians 3. In what is probably Paul's most robust discussion of the subject of glory he alludes to Moses' shining face in this incident on and about the mountain.

Of Snowflakes and Suns and Glory by Charles Whitaker (<http://www.cgg.org>)

II Corinthians 3:7-18 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away. But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the Old Testament, because the veil is taken away in Christ. But even to this day, when Moses is read, a veil lies on their heart. Nevertheless when one turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding [notice the present tense] as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

What do Paul's comments tell us about the nature of glory? There are five points, and although the first two are pedantic, pedestrian, I do feel I need to mention them.

First, there are different types of glory and not all glory is the same. An old man's glory is his grey hair while a young man's glory is his strength, as mentioned in Proverbs 20:29. A Woman's glory is her long hair: Paul mentioned this in I Corinthians 11:15. Proverbs 17:6 teaches that the glory of a child is his father. Character traits can also be a manifestation of glory. For example, Proverbs 19:11 tells us that the passing over of another's fault is a glory to a person. It is a glory when you pass over someone's faults and forgive them. All of these are different types of glory.

Secondly, there are different degrees of glory. Paul says that the glory attending the Old Covenant pales in comparison with the glory of the New Covenant. Turn to I Corinthians 15 regarding the first resurrection.

I Corinthians 15:40-41 There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory.

So it is with snowflakes. As small, frail, short-lived, and unpretentious as they are, they have a glory all their own—each one being distinctive and yet all created in the same hexagonal pattern. Suns too have differing glories, as some are further away from us in space and have different sizes and luminosities, different temperatures of different magnitudes. Glory comes, you see, in different degrees as well as different varieties and types.

Third, and very importantly, God is the source of glory. God was the ultimate source of Moses' shining face. In Psalm 62 we read that our glory rests with God. Some translations say it comes from God. Another translation of Psalm 62:7 says, "My salvation and glory depend on God." Turn back to Psalm 8:3. We know this scripture well. It is also quoted in the book of Hebrews. We will talk more about this glory that God has given to man.

Psalm 8:3-5 When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

God provisioned man with a type of glory. Likewise, God's children even now reflect His own glory. Paul says that God transforms the glory that He bestowed on physical man into His own glory and hence we grow from glory to glory. But, in both cases, no matter what kind of glory it is, God is the one who gives it.

Fourth, we see that glory is dynamic, not set in stone or static, it changes and it can grow, fade, wax, or wane. Paul mentions that we are being transformed into the same image of God from glory to glory. The type of glory that we have now is in the process of changing.

Not everything in creation is that sanguine, however, and we all know that. Nations rise and fall. The prophet Isaiah talks about Ephraim's fading glory in Isaiah 28:1. What about people? In Matthew 6:29 Christ tells us that Solomon in all of his splendor (that word splendor is the word for glory in Greek), all of his doxa, was not even adorned like one lily, and Solomon lies in the grave bereft of all of his glory right now. As the psalmist wrote in Psalm 49:17, when a person dies, his glory (and another translation says his wealth) does not go with him into the grave. The apostle Peter writes in I Peter 1:24 that all flesh is as grass which withers. We are indeed as transient snowflakes, which grow in size and complexity as they fall but they quickly relinquish their glory in the heat of the

Of Snowflakes and Suns and Glory by Charles Whitaker (<http://www.cgg.org>)

sun and are very often not long lived.

The suns themselves, like all physical objects, experience fading glory. Some actually blow up. Many are classified as what is referred to as variable stars, pulsating stars, whose brightness pulsates in a period of over a number of days, or centuries in some cases. Their creator though, does not vary in any way. James 1:17 tells us that the glory of the Father, the creator of those great lights, does not vary at all, does not fade. His is a permanent splendor, an everlasting glory which we can come to share.

Turn to Daniel 4 and we will see a good example of the changeableness of man's glory. We know the story of King Nebuchadnezzar's pride and his repentance later on.

Daniel 4:29-33 At the end of the twelve months he [Nebuchadnezzar] was walking about the royal palace of Babylon. The king spoke, saying, "Is not this great Babylon [it is interesting that the word 'great' is used here since Revelation refers to her as 'Babylon the great'], that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" While the word was still in the king's mouth, a voice fell from heaven: "King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is spoken: the kingdom has departed from you! And they shall drive you from men, and your dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field. They shall make you eat grass like oxen; and seven times shall pass over you, until you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." That very hour the word was fulfilled concerning Nebuchadnezzar; he was driven from men and ate grass like oxen; his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair had grown like eagles' feathers and his nails like birds' claws.

God removed the glory of a man, and in this case it was also the glory of a monarch. Nebuchadnezzar changed that glory for the glory of animals. In the process of time we know that the king came to recognize that God's dominion, as Nebuchadnezzar himself says in verse 34, is an everlasting dominion and His Kingdom is from generation to generation. Then God restored the king's glory as we see in verse 36. The king is still speaking in verse 36:

Daniel 4:36 At the same time my reason returned to me, and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and splendor returned to me. My counselors and nobles resorted to me, I was restored to my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me.

We can say that glory is a bit fickle at times. God has the prerogative to give it and to take it away. Notice verse 37 and we will see what I think is the most important characteristic of glory and the fifth point I want to make about glory.

Daniel 4:37 Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down.

Glory is, or should be, reflective and we could say reflexive as well. After Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation, God re-glorified him, but this time the king glorified God in return. Glory is one of those many examples of our reciprocal relationship with God. Turn to John 17 and we will see that Christ mentions this reciprocity. I will read this from the *Amplified Version* for emphasis:

John 17:1 (AMP) When Jesus had spoken these things, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come. Glorify and exalt and honor and magnify Your Son, so that Your Son may glorify and extol and honor and magnify You.

We have already seen that God is the source of all our glory, but we are to reflect that glory and not hide it in a veil or, as we will see, under a basket. I want to read II Corinthians 3:18 again, but this time from the *Phillips Paraphrase* just to pick up the emphasis that he provides:

II Corinthians 3:18 (Phillips) But all of us who are Christians have no veils on our faces, but reflect like mirrors the glory of the Lord. We are transfigured by the Spirit of the Lord in ever-increasing splendour [*doxa*, the word for glory] into his own image.

It starts from God. It emanates from Him, but we need to reflect it back to Him. By rough analogy we could liken this to the relationship between the sun and the moon. This analogy shows us so much about this spreading nature, how this light spreads and emanates, how glory grows and emanates. The moon as we know emits no light of its own, but reflects the light of the sun. When the sun's light fails to reach the moon, through some object that comes between it, the moon quickly grows dark. This is what happens in an eclipse. Many of us have seen an eclipse. We are to reflect the glory of God, just as the moon reflects the light of the sun.

I want to spend the remainder of the time today focusing on this concept of reciprocity. The concept that glory is to be reflected.

Daniel 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.

God here mentions two categories of people; those who rise to eternal life and those who rise to face shame. The opposite of glory is shame. Now go to Hosea 4:7. The prophet here is speaking about physical Israel but it has application to what we are talking about. I will be reading from the *Amplified Version*.

Hosea 4:7 (AMP) The more they increased and multiplied in prosperity and power, the more they sinned against Me; I will change [remember, glory is dynamic] their glory into shame.

In Romans 3:23 Paul tells us that all have sinned and as a result of that sin have fallen short of the glory of God. Sin and glory do not mix. When people sin or when a nation sins, because sin is a reproach to any peoples, God ultimately changes any glory, honor, wealth, or fame they may have into shame.

Proverbs 3:35 The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.

Turn back to Daniel 12:3. God makes a distinction between fools who will inherit shame and the wise who inherit glory.

Daniel 12:3 Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.

Fragile snowflakes though we are not, God will resurrect us as sons. These, God says, are those who have led many to righteousness. How have they done that? They have done that by the way they walked, the way they lived. They followed Christ's instruction as recorded in Matthew 5:15-16:

Of Snowflakes and Suns and Glory by Charles Whitaker (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Matthew 5:15-16 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

From whence comes this light, this glory that we are to shine forth for others to see? Remember, glory comes from God and this light we have comes from God. It comes from spending quality time with Him and humbly receiving His instruction just as Moses, the meekest man on the earth as it says, spent a lot of quality time with God and received His instruction on the mountain. You all know that this light is not just head knowledge, but it describes a way of life. As John says in I John 1:7, we should walk in the light. This is not just head knowledge, but the way we live. Our godly lifestyle will ultimately be a sign for others. A sign that we are God's people and that we are working His work and those who see this sign, who see our light, who see our good works, will eventually come to glorify God.

In spiritual type, the light of which Christ is speaking here in Matthew 5 is the reflection of His glory, just as Moses' face reflected the light of God's glory to the children of Israel. Unlike Moses, we are not to hide our light under a veil or under a basket. God expects us to reflect that light and glory, which we receive from Him. If we choose to stop reflecting it, and we can make that choice if we let something come between us and God, the reciprocal relationship will eventually cease and we will grow dark, just as the moon does in an eclipse.

Example is a powerful, powerful, powerful teacher. All of us in this room are those who have received God's light. We are those who by the example of the way of our life teach others, ultimately leading them to righteousness. We are the snowflakes today, but the sons tomorrow who follow the apostle Peter's advice in I Peter 2:12: If we have conducted our lives honorably (one translation refers to it as 'righteously'), so that when the Gentiles speak against you as those who do evil, they may by observing your good works, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Count on it, worldly people will slander the truth now. There is no question about that, but in the day of their judgment, in the White Throne period, they will remember our good works and they will come to glorify God. It is all part of this cycle of reciprocity. It is not going to happen overnight. It is going to take years, but the light that we shine now, the glory we emanate now, will ultimately come back to God through the millions, yes billions, of people in that resurrection.

Of Snowflakes and Suns and Glory by Charles Whitaker (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Remember in Matthew 5:16 Christ says we are to let our light shine so that others could see and glorify God in heaven. He could have ended the sentence without that 'who is in heaven,' but why did He do that? He wanted us to understand that the glory we reflect back to God goes all the way from us here, under the sun, all the way up there. There is not a lot that does that, but glory does. Glory is able to go from under the sun all the way up to the highest heaven. What happens then, when it gets up there? Remember how Mr. Armstrong used to teach us that you cannot out-give God? When He receives that glory from us, when we glorify Him, He sends it right back down to us in the form of spiritual or physical blessings. They may not always be physical or spiritual, it depends upon the situation. He pours these blessings, cascading showers of blessings be they talents, gifts, whatever they are, they are glorious gifts and these are the assets, the things that enrich and enable us to live His way of life and to do His work.

People in the around about, the world, see our godly lifestyle and they cannot help but see it any more than the children of Israel could not help but see the glory of Moses' face as it shown. These people eventually will come about and come to glorify God, and He will reciprocate and He will shower blessings on them. This is a whole cycle that just keeps going and growing, larger and larger, from heaven to earth to heaven, round and around again, from under the sun to the highest heaven and back again. This could be compared to a gigantic convection current like the ones you can see in a giant pot of boiling water.

Speaking of boiling water, we on the earth right now are all in pretty hot water. The glorifying of God crescendos, growing like compound interest, it starts just with a few snowflakes growing into a snowball and eventually becoming an avalanche of glory down the line.

For the penultimate scripture, turn to Psalm 86:9. How great is this power of example?

Psalm 86:9 All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and shall glorify Your name.

In some way, to some extent, this glory that the nations will bring to God will be a reflection of what those people and all of those nations have seen in us as we walked with unveiled faces, reflecting the light that we have received from God. To an extent, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* may not miss the mark entirely. Understood properly, we could say that man's chief end is to glorify God.

We will close in verse 12:

Of Snowflakes and Suns and Glory by Charles Whitaker (<http://www.cgg.org>)

Psalm 86:12 I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart, and I will glorify Your name forevermore.