

## **ABOVE ALL HONOR JESUS**

Recently I spoke on the importance of honor. Although we touched on honoring God and all men, we focused on honoring our father and mother. Today we will continue on a similar theme – ‘Above all, honor Jesus.’

*Some years ago I felt the Holy Spirit lead me to speak on this very topic. It has been a Sunday service that I have never forgotten. William was away, attending an evangelism course, and I remember sitting in the front row of our church in Malaysia, as Pastors do. During the worship I sensed the presence of Jesus in a powerful way – it was so real, so strong – I felt he was sitting in the chair beside me. That morning the Holy Spirit moved and everyone responded at the end of the service.*

*A few weeks later, when William had returned, we were having lunch with a couple who had begun to attend our church. They owned the largest supermarket in our town. This man was somewhat of a gangster, but God was working in his heart. As we were eating he suddenly said, “Remember that Sunday when you were speaking ... I saw Jesus sitting beside you.” What a moment! Although I didn’t see him, I knew he was there – but that experience was also very significant to that man.*

As I look back, I see God’s love and grace – he was preparing me for an onslaught of the enemy, such as we had never experienced. But whenever I sense the presence of the Lord strongly in a service, it is as if I am back in the church with Jesus beside me. I have realized that when we have an encounter with Jesus, it is eternal, it is spiritual – and we can enter that same place again and again – because it is real and it is outside of our time limitations.

So today the Lord has impressed on me to speak on this same topic again – ‘Honor Jesus’. We sing many wonderful songs about Jesus but many Christians don’t speak about him so much. Do we really give him the honor he deserves?

We all have favorite speakers – a certain prophet, a great Bible teacher or someone with a powerful signs and wonders, of healing ministry. And it isn’t wrong to, but sometimes there is a danger that Christians can elevate these ones higher than they should. We hear comments like ‘he is so anointed’, or ‘what a powerful ministry that person has.’ Because we see their ministry as anointed or powerful we hold on to every word they say, almost elevating them to superstar status. In some ways it is no different to those who elevate a rugby player, or a singer or movie star. This danger isn’t new – it was a problem right from the beginning of the early church.

Today we are going to look at a passage in 1 Corinthians.

### **THE CONTEXT**

The Apostle Paul was writing to believers in the City of Corinth in Greece. Paul had gone there on his second missionary journey. In fact he spent 1 1/2 years in Corinth, preaching the gospel and teaching the Word of God. As a result a church was established. Now Paul was in Ephesus, and others had come, including Timothy, Silas and Apollos. Paul began to hear of divisions in the church, so he writes to them. Let’s pick up what he writes in:

**1 Corinthians 1:11-13**

My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul," another, "I follow Apollos," another, "I follow Cephas," still another, "I follow Christ."

**1 Corinthians 1:28-31**

He chose the lowly things of the world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no-one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

I am sure we have all heard or been part of conversations among Christians, where one has said, "Oh I like that speaker", "No I prefer that one." This has been happening since the church began. And we will respond to one more than another. However Paul is wanting the believers in Corinth to turn their focus from men to God.

He gives 3 reasons in these chapters why Jesus is the one who deserves the honor – why it is important to give him the glory.

## **JESUS DESERVES THE HONOR**

### **1. HE ASSIGNED THE TASKS**

These early believers were comparing Paul and Apollos. Paul says, "Who are we?"

**Paul** - He was the one who planted the church, the one who first went to Corinth and preached the gospel. In fact he faced persecution and opposition wherever he went, including in Corinth.

**Apollos** - What about Apollos? Who was he? We read about him in Acts 18. He arrived in Corinth just after Paul left. This is what we learn about him:

- He had a deep knowledge of God's Word.
- He preached with great fervor – we would describe him as anointed.
- It tells us he was good at debating with people and convincing them to believe.

Some preferred Apollos, others Paul, but Paul is saying, "That is the wrong attitude."

**1 Corinthians 3:5**

What after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

**1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

- So Paul is saying that we are just doing what God has called us to do.
- Paul had been called to plant – to reach the gospel.

- Apollos had been called to water, to teach the Word of God.
- They were simply doing what their Master had assigned them to do – so they complemented each other and were working for the same purpose.

*At the end of 1981 William and I went to live in a small town in East Malaysia, believing that God had called us to plant a church. At that time it was really a cowboy town. Natural gas had been discovered off shore and a huge liquefied Natural Gas plant was being built. Tribal people had come from the interior to work as laborers, thousands of Korean men had come to build the plant, and Europeans working for Shell had arrived.*

We discovered how the gifts God had given to each of us, complemented each other. William would go to the town, the saw mills and the squatter areas to share the gospel and lead people to Jesus. Meanwhile I prepared Bible studies to share the Word of God and build up the believers.

All of us have been called to do different tasks, but it is Jesus who has assigned these tasks to us. So who should get the honor – Jesus should.

## **2. HE BRINGS THE GROWTH**

This is really a continuation of what we have just said – Jesus is the one who assigns the tasks, and he is the one who brings the growth.

### **1 Corinthians 3:6-9**

**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.**

*Some of you have beautiful gardens. Imagine visiting someone’s garden, admiring the flowers and shrubs, and the husband says, “Well I was the one who planted these.” Then the wife retorts, “Yes but I look after them.” In fact William and I sometimes have this banter – because he likes planting, but doesn’t look after them, so I do that!*

Sometimes we are like that as believers. One says: “I was the one who shared the gospel”. Another replies: “Yes, and I was the one who invited them to church.” “I was the one who really prayed for them.” Paul says, ‘Each one will be rewarded’

### **1 Corinthians 3:8**

**Each one will be rewarded according to his own labor.**

- It reminds me of Jesus’ words to the disciples after they had met the woman at the well. “One sows and another reaps - the sower and the reaper will be glad together.”
- Whatever our calling, whatever task God has given us to do, or whatever someone else is doing, we are simply to do what our Master tells us, so the Kingdom of God is established. We will be rewarded for doing what he tells us to do.
- So Paul is saying, “It is neither Paul nor Apollos.”

## BUT IT IS GOD WHO GIVES THE GROWTH.

*This is true in the natural isn't it? We may plant trees and look after them, but they only grow because God created life within the seed. He makes them grow. This is also true in the spiritual – whether we are the ones who prayed, shared the gospel or invited them to church, it is only because of a work of the Spirit that a person is born again and grows in their relationship with God. IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN THE HEART OF A PERSON.*

Therefore Jesus is the one we should boast about. That word boast means 'to glory' or 'to rejoice'. He is the one we should rejoice about, the one worthy of praise, the one we should honor. So we have seen two reasons why Jesus should be honored. Let's look at the third.

### **3. HE GIVES THE GRACE**

God is the one who calls us, and prepares us for the task he has chosen for us to do – he given gifts, both natural and spiritual, for this task. It is by his grace.

#### ***1 Corinthians 3:10***

**By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder.**

We are all saved by his grace and we receive different gifts according to his grace. The word grace in the Greek language is 'charis', and the word gift is 'charismata' – it literally means 'a gift of grace'.

#### ***Romans 12:6***

**We have different gifts, according to the grace given to us.**

In the book of Corinthians we read how the Holy Spirit gives, not only different kinds of gifts, but the way in which they operate and the area in which they operate are so different and diverse. Just as God created such a variety of plants, he makes us each unique and uses us in different ways. There isn't a mold that he uses, we are all different.

#### ***1 Corinthians 12:11***

**All these are the work of the one and same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.**

Let's not allow fear to hold us back from using what God has given us. Let's not compare ourselves with others and feel we are not so good or inferior. Remember God has given you grace to do what he wants you to do.

So we have seen that Jesus deserves the honor – he is the one who called us and gives us the grace. God is the one who makes all things grow. Paul reminds the Christians in Corinth not to focus on him or Apollos, but on Jesus.

Then he gives two words of caution, and we will briefly look at these.

## **TWO WORDS OF CAUTION**

### **1. DON'T BOAST ABOUT MEN**

#### **1 Corinthians 3:21**

**So then, no more boasting about men, all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the futures – all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.**

*Over the years I have heard church members boast about their Pastor, or someone they follow. Now we are to honor our leaders and speak well of them, but we also need to be careful not to lift another person to a place above where they should be. I believe there is a danger when we do that – a door is opened for the enemy to attack that church or leader.*

As we saw earlier Paul said, “so then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ.” That doesn’t mean we should treat them as servants – they are servants of Christ!

*The word ‘servant’ that is used here is interesting. It is a picture of a canoe or waka(as they say in Maori), with rowers all working together, each one doing their part. So Paul and Apollos, you and I are all rowers in the same waka, moving together in the same direction and for the same purpose.*

### **2. DON'T JUDGE MEN**

#### **1 Corinthians 4:5**

**Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.**

This doesn’t mean we don’t need discernment, but what Paul is saying we are not to judge another person’s motives because we can’t see what is really in their heart, only God can. So Paul says, “Don’t go beyond what is written”. In other words, don’t go beyond what is written in God’s Word.

#### **1 Corinthians 4:6b-7**

**Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did no receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you did not?**

What we have and what others have, has all been received from God. So Paul Concludes by saying that we should not judge or boast about ourselves or anyone else.

**LET HIM WHO BOASTS BOAST IN THE LORD.**

Jesus is the one who deserves the honor, the glory and praise.

## CONCLUSION

So to summarize: Paul gives 3 reasons why we should give the honor to Jesus:

- He assigned the tasks
- He brings the growth
- And he gives the grace

So let's be careful:

- Not to boast about men
- Not to judge their motives

To close I would like to us to look at a verse in Malachi.

### ***Malachi 3:16***

**Then those who feared the Lord talked with each other, and the Lord listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the Lord and honored his name.**

How do we speak to one another? Let's honor him, not just by singing songs on a Sunday, but in the way we speak every day. The Lord is listening. Each time we give him the honor it is recorded in his scroll of remembrance.

**ABOVE ALL HONOR JESUS**