

Only God Is God

There is only one Creator, only one worthy of adoration and worship, only one whose name will be proclaimed throughout eternity. The rest of us are created beings, here for His pleasure and purpose. He is eternal. We are here today and gone tomorrow. He is essential. We are dispensable and disposable. Only God is God.

John the Immerser (the Baptist) understood this, telling the crowds who flocked to his baptism, “‘A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’” (He was speaking here about Jesus.) He continued, “I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel” (John 1:30b–31).

That was the whole purpose of his ministry: that Jesus might be revealed to Israel. Once that was done, John’s mission was completed. As John explained to his followers, who seemed concerned that Jesus was gaining more followers than he was, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30, NASB).

But we are always lifting up people. We are like the followers of George Whitefield, who wanted him to perpetuate his memory by forming a denomination under his name. They were concerned that others would get credit for his work. But his reply was always the same: “No, let the name of Whitefield die, so that the cause of Jesus Christ may live ... Let the name of Whitefield perish, but Christ be glorified ... I have had enough popularity to be sick of it.”

May we learn to be sick of popularity too. A glimpse into eternity would cure us of our shortsightedness. And a glimpse at God’s throne would remind us who He is and who we are not.

Have we forgotten that, in ourselves, we are wretches and the only good that comes out of us is because of Him?

Have we forgotten that “we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us” (2 Cor. 4:7, NIV)?

Have we forgotten that God will not share His glory with flesh and blood?

Or do we crave popularity? Do we long for the affirmation of people? Do we live for praise and recognition?

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May God help us.

I. V. Neprash related that, during the Welsh Revival of 1904-1905, “One of [Evan Roberts’] severest trials during the revival was his being the object of men’s worship. A friend of his once told me of finding him lying on the floor crying to the Lord to bring this to naught so that all the glory should go to God alone.”

All eyes on King Jesus!

Speaking of the day of the Lord, the prophet Isaiah declared that

The eyes of the arrogant will be humbled and human pride brought low; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.

The Lord Almighty has a day in store for all the proud and lofty, for all that is exalted (and they will be humbled), for all the cedars of Lebanon, tall and lofty, and all the oaks of Bashan, for all the towering mountains and all the high hills, for every lofty tower and every fortified wall, for every trading ship and every stately vessel. The arrogance of man will be brought low and human pride humbled; the Lord alone will be exalted in that day (Isa. 2:11–17).

I actually feel a holy terror as I write these words, lest I or any of us try to take the glory or credit or honor that belongs to Him alone.

Acts records,

On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, "This is the voice of a god, not of a man." Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:21–23).

Hopefully, our own situations are nowhere near this extreme. But could it be that a major reason we don't see more miraculous outpourings of the Spirit is that we take some of the credit for what God is doing, or that we allow people to look to us rather than Him?

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God help us to truly get low that all eyes might be on Him. And may our superstar-producing, man-centered version of the faith be replaced by a cross-centered, flesh-killing faith.

In 1989, I wrote that "Instead of producing self-effacing ministries that exalt the Lord, we have created man-centered, flesh-exalting, personality cults." Would you agree that things are much worse today than back then?

Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their carnality and immaturity – he actually called them "infants" – writing, "since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly [or, carnal]? Are you not acting like mere humans? For when one says, 'I follow Paul,' and another, 'I follow Apollos,' are you not mere human beings?"

He continued, "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. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow" (1 Corinthians 3:5–7).

Only God!

It is true that ministry leaders "are co-workers in God's service" (1 Corinthians 3:9) and that, one day, all of us will be rewarded for our labor (1 Cor. 3:8). We will even receive praise from God if we are faithful (1 Cor. 4:5). How remarkable and humbling. Almighty God will express His appreciation for us and say, "Well done!"

It is also true that we should honor those who serve us in the Lord, treating them with respect and appreciation (Phil. 2:29, 1 Thess. 5:12-13). But there is a world of difference—no, a universe of difference—between the honor we give to a person and the honor we give to the Lord. May we never confuse the two.

That's why, when we pray the Lord's prayer, we ask that His name, not ours, be hallowed. And that's why, when we stand before His throne, no one will be pointing at any of us, saying, "Look! It's So and So! He's [or, she's] my favorite!" Instead, all eyes will be on the King, and it is His name alone we will be praising throughout eternity.

As for our time here on earth, it is only as Jesus is lifted up that people will be saved.

May we learn to get out of the way so He can have His way, and may we learn, from the heart, to point all people to Him.

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