

THE DISCERNER



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Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them; for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.

Ephesians 5:6-12

Christian Hedonism, Biblical Doctrine or Man's Heretical Philosophy?

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Introduction

Christian Hedonism, Biblical Doctrine or Man's Heretical Philosophy?

This writing constitutes a brief article addressing what has become commonly known in conservative Christian circles as Christian hedonism. I recently read a small booklet titled *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*.¹ After reading it my concern over the various things I had heard regarding this teaching was confirmed at which time I became thoroughly convinced of the necessity to respond with this article. The first reason for the necessity to respond is the fact that the information in the booklet purports itself to be biblical when in fact it is in direct contradiction to the clear teachings of the Word of God as I'll demonstrate in this article. Secondly, to warn believers who may have succumbed to the teachings and alert those who have not.

What began in 1986 as merely meditations of a Christian hedonist² has now become more than meditations. Through the publication of multiple books, tracts, booklets, web site ministries, seminars, and countless sermons Christian hedonism is no longer limited to the mere meditations of a single person. It has become a full blown doctrine purported by its founder and his followers to be an essential biblical doctrine. Furthermore, the doctrine has received multiple endorsements from highly esteemed individuals. However, popularity or endorsements are not the basis of truth. Christians should not shrink back in the light of such when it comes to standing on the Word of God.

The basic thrust of this brief article is to demonstrate that Christian hedonism is anything but biblical. I have selected four topics to address:

1. The Contrast between the Human Philosophy of Christian Hedonism and the Biblical Doctrine of Depravity
2. The Origin of Christian Hedonism
3. The Syncretistic Nature of Christian Hedonism
4. The Dangers of Christian Hedonism, Its impact on:
 - The Gospel
 - Christian Discernment
 - The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God

The appendix contains a **to-the-point** response to the question, "How does one 'do all to the glory of God'?"

It is my desire that the reader will be clearly warned of the dangers of the teaching of Christian hedonism. I have attempted through this article to be as concise as possible. I have used the author's own words and compared them with God's Word. There is no malice in this article but it is an act of obedience of one contending for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

¹ Piper, John, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight, The Glorified God and the Satisfied Soul* (Sisters, OR. Multnomah Publishers, 2001)

² *Desiring God, Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, Published by Multnomah Press, Inc. 1986, 1996, 2003, by Desiring God Foundation. One of the strikingly interesting observations about this subject is the fact that the subtitle of the book is *Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*. Yet, these meditations are now heralded by many in mainstream Christian circles as Biblical doctrine.

Christian Hedonism, Biblical Doctrine or Man's Heretical Philosophy?

(1)

The Contrast between the Human Philosophy of Christian Hedonism and the Biblical Doctrine of Depravity

"Well, the human race does in fact crave the experience of awe and wonder. And there is no reality more breathtaking than Jesus Christ."

"God has put eternity in man's mind and filled the human heart with longing. But we know not what we long for until we see the breathtaking God."

"The world has an inconsolable longing. It tries to satisfy the longing with scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, ascetic rigors, managerial excellence, etc."³

All of the quotes listed above are from John Piper's booklet, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. On his website Piper describes his reason for writing this booklet, "I wrote these little books in the hope that those who are intimidated by a 400-page book might be willing to peek at God through a crack in the wall." By this he infers that the booklet, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight* is a very condensed summary of his larger work *Desiring God, Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*.

In each of the quotes listed above Piper states specific information about humanity in general,

"...the human race does in fact crave the experience of awe and wonder..."

"God has put eternity in man's mind and filled the human heart with longing..."

"The world has an inconsolable longing. It tries to satisfy the longing with scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity..."

In each phrase he communicates that all people are longing for something but not knowing what it is they long for, they attempt to satisfy that longing with things other than that for which it truly craves. Furthermore, these statements indicate that for which the human race longs is in the end God. Piper says, "But we know not what we long for until we see the breathtaking God."

Is this what the Bible says? Does God say in His written Word that the human race longs for God? Are "scenic vacations, accomplishments of creativity, stunning cinematic productions, sexual exploits, sports extravaganzas, hallucinogenic drugs, ascetic rigors, managerial excellence, etc" really just misplaced affections for God or just misguided attempts to discover the awe and wonder of the breathtaking Jesus Christ? Here is God's Word,

⁹ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰ as it is written, 'There is none righteous, not even one; ¹¹ There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; ¹² All have turned aside, together they have

³ Piper, John, *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. p. 8

become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one.’¹³ ‘Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving,’ ‘The poison of asps is under their lips’;¹⁴ ‘Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness’;¹⁵ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood,’¹⁶ Destruction and misery are in their paths,¹⁷ And the path of peace have they not known.’¹⁸ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’” Romans 3:9-18

In these verses God’s Word paints an entirely different picture of humanity. These Words of God do not describe a good thing merely running amuck. These verses describe the depravity of humanity which encompasses their passion and pursuit. In a single word God calls it all sin and by saying “all are under sin” He means that all are under sin’s dominion (Rom. 3:9). In the fifth chapter of Romans, God speaking of the natural condition of believers prior to their salvation describes them as: helpless and ungodly (v.6), sinners (v.8), under God’s wrath (v. 9), and God’s enemies (v. 10).

What Piper refers to as “longing,” God calls the mind of His enemy set on the flesh (Rom. 8:5). Such a mind does not long for God but merely misplaces its affections. No! The natural man boasts of his heart’s desire. He does not seek God and God is not even in his thoughts (Psalm 10:4). God says it is hostility toward Him. It is not a longing for God, it is lust. It is not for God, it is against Him.

⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Romans 8:5-8

Elsewhere the Bible clearly teaches that God saves believers from their lusts instead of fulfilling them and calls them to be sanctified by turning from their lusts. The Bible does not teach that they are to turn their lusts to God,

¹ And you were dead in your trespasses and sins,² in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.³ Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

Ephesians 2:1-3

⁵ For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.⁷ Therefore do not be partakers with them;⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light⁹(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth),¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”

Ephesians 5:5-10

⁵ Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.⁶ For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come,⁷ and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.”

Colossians 3:5-7

“² so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. ³ For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.”

1 Peter 4:2-3

(2)

The Origin of Christian Hedonism

In the light of such clear verses from Scripture where would Piper get such information? Information that condones the natural desires of men and indicates that they are not wrong in themselves just misplaced? What sparked the philosophical kindling of Piper’s mind that gave birth to Christian hedonism? Speaking of the things of Christian Hedonism he provides the answer.

“*Before I saw these things in the Bible*, C. S. Lewis snagged me when I wasn’t looking. I was standing in Vroman’s Bookstore on Colorado Avenue in Pasadena, California, in the fall of 1968. I picked up a thin blue copy of Lewis’s book *The Weight of Glory*. The first page changed my life.”⁴ (Emphasis mine)

He then quotes Lewis,

“If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed if we consider the unblushing promises of the reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea,. We are far too easily pleased.”⁵

After quoting this phrase from C. S. Lewis’s book Piper says,

“Never in my life had I heard anyone say that the problem with the world was *not* the intensity of our pursuit of happiness, but the *weakness* of it. Everything in me shouted, *Yes! That’s it!* There it was in black and white, and to my mind it was totally compelling: The great problem with human beings is that we are far too easily pleased. We don’t seek pleasure with nearly the resolve and passion that we should. And so we settle for mud pies of appetite instead of infinite delight.”⁶ (Emphasis his)

Piper stated the words of Lewis on the first page changed his life. Never in his life had he heard anyone say that the problem with the world was not the intensity of man’s pursuit of happiness, but the weakness of it.

Notice he stated it was **before he saw these things in the Bible** that his life was changed by the words of C. S. Lewis. This might not even be too bad had the words he read from Lewis been the Word of God but they weren’t. He did not see the words in the Bible until he read them into the Bible. Does God say that man’s

⁴ *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. p. 22

⁵ *Ibid.*, 22

⁶ *Ibid.*, 22

problem is not the intensity of his pursuit of happiness, but the weakness of it? Is it written in the Word of Almighty God, Who knows the mind and heart of man that the great problem with human beings is that they are far too easily pleased. That they don't seek pleasure with nearly the resolve and passion that they should? And so they settle for mud pies of appetite instead of infinite delight.

Once again, here is God's Word,

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 6:5

Here, God says that every intent of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually. See the word *every*. God does not say *some*, *most*, or *many* but **every**. Every what? Every **intent** of the thoughts of the heart. Furthermore, every one of them was **only evil**. The Scripture does not say some were good while others were bad. No! They were **only evil**. And if this were not enough, they were this way **continually**. Not some times or occasionally or even most of the time but that they were **only evil continually**. In this very verse God calls all of this wickedness and of that wickedness He says it was great. This is God's assessment of man as opposed to man's assessment of himself. When we think about it, it would be just like man whose heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jeremiah 17:9) to minimize his sinful condition by explaining it as merely misplaced attempts of looking for God instead of the out and out sinful condition it is. However, such is not the case with God Who searches the heart and tests the mind (Jeremiah 17:10). He says that the fruit as well as the source is bad (Mt. 7:18; 12:33-35).

According to Scripture then, man's great problem is not a lack of satisfaction, misguided affection, or weak satisfaction but SIN! It is not a weak longing settling for something less it is SIN! It is not merely a misplaced desire or discouraged delight but absolute rebellion against God Almighty. And such a condition places every person of the human race under the wrath of God.

(3)

The Syncretistic Nature of Christian Hedonism

One of the most dangerous aspects to any false doctrine is its syncretistic nature. Syncretism, involves the intermingling of what are normally two antithetical beliefs (in this case man's philosophy that his longings are good but misguided and the biblical doctrine of total depravity) into one compromising belief system. To state this simply and in the context of the subject at hand, syncretism mixes truth and error to form a position of compromise—"Christian Hedonism." In essence Christian hedonism is nothing more than the attempt of some to baptize the pleasure seeking self satisfying nature of the fallen man into Christ centered self denying Christianity.

Christian hedonism, like other human philosophies is not content with the true, straightforward text of Scripture. The reason for this is simple—human philosophy is evil and cannot co-exist with the straightforward text of God's truth (John 3:19-21). In order for human philosophy to exist side by side Scripture it must change the meaning of Scripture. Otherwise known as twisting truth (See 2 Peter 3:16). A comparable example to that of Christian hedonism's twisting of Scripture is that of the self-esteem movement. In his book, *Believe In The God Who Believes in You, The Ten Commandments , A Divine Design for Dignity*, Robert Schuller managed to use the phrase "believe in the God Who believes in you" to transform the Ten Commandments of

Exodus 20 into means by which man can discover his self-esteem. Commenting on the first commandment (You shall have no other gods before me) Schuller writes,

“What could this exclusive God offer exclusively? Is it possible?

- Pride without arrogance?
- Self-esteem without narcissism?
- Self-respect without vanity?
- Dignity without conceit?
- Individualism without selfishness?

That’s it! Sweet, satisfying, self-effacing, sacred self-esteem!

Yes! That’s it. That’s what He—and He alone—can offer and deliver with total consumer satisfaction.

But why can’t the other gods do as well ?

Hardly—for one simple, obvious reason. The God of the Ten Commandments is the only God who really believes in you.”⁷

Incredible! This man takes the Ten Commandments which God clearly says were given so as to reveal man’s sin (Romans 3:20) and condones the sin of pride!

The human philosophy of Christian hedonism does exactly the same thing, only it places the emphasis on human satisfaction. Also using a catchy phrase— “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him” Christian hedonism turns the biblical doctrine of total depravity on its head explaining it away as something good but misguided. Like those involved in the self esteem movement, adherents to Christian hedonism turn almost every verse in the Bible that contains or even alludes to words such as *joy, glad, delight, rejoice*, desire, happy, reward, etc. into an open door through which Christian Hedonism is carried and then used as the touchstone for interpreting the rest of Scripture.

In another paragraph the author leads the two greatest commandments (Love God and love your neighbor) to the throne of passion and there causes both of them to submit to the pursuit of joy. It is almost as if there is a third commandment or perhaps it is commandments 2 and 3 that are listed in Scripture and the first wasn’t discovered until the 20th century— the pursuit of joy. Here is the paragraph,

“The radical implication is that pursuing pleasure in God is our highest calling. It is essential to all virtue and all reverence. Whether you think of your life vertically in relation to God or horizontally in relation to man, the pursuit of pleasure in God is crucial, not optional. We will see shortly that genuine love for people and genuine worship toward God hang on the pursuit of joy.”⁸

When Jesus was asked, “Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” (MT. 12:36) He did not reply with, “Pursue joy!” instead, He said,

“‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Matthew 22:37-40

⁷ Robert H. Schuller, *Believe in the God Who Believes In You, The Ten Commandments A Divine Design For Dignity*, (Nashville, Thomas Nelson, 1989), p. 3-4

⁸ *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. p. 22

Consider another statement,

“Mere decisions are no sure evidence of a true work of grace in the heart”⁹

By its self this statement could be considered true. Hardly will any discerning believer argue that merely making decisions that appear to line up with Scripture constitutes a true work of grace in the heart. There certainly are other factors to be considered, such as the doctrine that formed the basis of the decision, the deeds that flow from the decision, endurance, and continuance in sound doctrine when faith is under fire, to name a few.

But in the context of Christian hedonism as explained by its proponents, the phrase “Mere decisions are no sure evidence of a true work of grace in the heart” is used to infer the absolute necessity of the presence of joy. Once again, as previously demonstrated, joy becomes the determining factor. However, according to Jesus, neither is a decision with joy a sure evidence of a true work of grace in the heart,

²⁰ "And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and **immediately receives it with joy;** ²¹ yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.

Matthew 13:20-21

(4)

The Dangers of Christian Hedonism

Given the far reaching effects of the leaven of any false doctrine it would likely be impossible to list all the possible dangers of Christian Hedonism. For this reason and to keep this article brief I will only address three at this time. Even in the following three examples much could be said but I will keep them brief as well so as to not lose continuity.

- **The Impact on the Gospel**

The information in the *Dangerous Duty of Delight* booklet is intended for the lost. On John Piper’s web site regarding this booklet and others he says,

“If you have not considered using these little books to give away to unbelieving friends with a note of personal testimony, I pray you would think about it.”

This further demonstrates that Christian hedonism considers man’s great problem to be a lack of satisfaction, misguided affection, or weak satisfaction instead of the sinful nature from which his lusts come.

⁹ Ibid., 28

The difference between Christian hedonism's view of lost man's problem has already been demonstrated in this article:

Christian Hedonism says,

The great problem with human beings is that we are far too easily pleased. We don't seek pleasure with nearly the resolve and passion that we should. And so we settle for mud pies of appetite instead of infinite delight."¹⁰

The Bible says,

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually."

Genesis 6:5

Under Christian hedonism the Gospel, which is the message of Christ becomes merely a means of channeling or redirecting one's desires to God for the purpose of satisfying those previously misplaced longings. In this situation one must seriously consider the question, "Is God really the end or is it the satisfaction of the desire that is the end? The Christian hedonist's answer is, "Both!" Such an answer is nothing more than philosophical double-talk springing from the philosophical delusion that God is his affection, so that he can say by pursuing his affection he is pursuing God.

The Bible, on the other hand calls man to repent and turn to Christ in order to be reconciled to God. The message of the Gospel of the Bible is that through Jesus Christ sin can be forgiven, thus, reconciling the believer to God.

- **The Impact on Christian Discernment**

Phrases like, "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him"¹¹ elevates satisfaction (a subjective element) to a level where it becomes a means for determining obedience. When this occurs it supplants the objective Word of God. Once locked in the mind the motto inevitably causes its host to discern what is truth and obedience based on either some present level of satisfaction or some level of satisfaction to be gleaned or a combination of both. While it may or may not be the intent of the founder, the consequence of Christian hedonism causes Christians to constantly be in the position of having to take inventory of their feelings in order to determine whether or not they are sinning or will be sinning.

The interesting thing about feelings is that they can be bad when feeling good and they can be good when feeling bad. This is one of the reasons feelings are not the standard nor can they even be part of the standard. The fact that the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked above all else and that **it cannot be known** (Jer. 17:19) should be enough to cause the average Christian to fear using emotions as a means of discernment at any level,

"There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death."

Proverbs 14:12

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 22

¹¹ Ibid., p. 21

Many supporters of Christian hedonism would verbally deny they elevate feelings to a level of discernment but they cannot legitimately deny it and remain loyal to Christian hedonism. The reason for this has to do with the term "hedonism." In philosophy the very term means that "pleasure is the sole or chief good in life and that the pursuit of it is the ideal aim of conduct."¹² From Piper's statement it is evident that this definition remains the same even in the syncretistic phrase "Christian hedonism",

"The radical implication is that pursuing pleasure in God is our highest calling. It is essential to all virtue and all reverence. Whether you think of your life vertically in relation to God or horizontally in relation to man, the pursuit of pleasure in God is crucial, not optional. We will see shortly that genuine love for people and genuine worship toward God hang on the pursuit of joy."¹³

Piper's statement shows that it is pleasure which is pursued. Furthermore, it has already been demonstrated multiple times in this article that the pleasure he speaks of is the longings of the natural man, only here these longings are baptized with the biblical terminology "in God." Pleasure remains the end goal.

The epistle of James warns believers of the danger of pursuing one's pleasures,

"¹ What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your **pleasures** that wage war in your members? ² You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. And you are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. ³ You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your **pleasures**." James 4:1-3

The Greek word translated *pleasures* in verses 1 and 3 is the word *hedone*. It is the word from which we get the English word *hedon* or *hedonism*. This word appears 5 times in the New Testament, never in a good sense. In light of this fact it is very interesting that a believer would have chosen such a word to espouse a so called Christian doctrine. Again this addresses the syncretistic nature of this philosophy. Besides the two cases in James the word appears in the following verses,

"And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and **pleasures** [*hedone*] of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity."

Luke 8:14

"For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and **pleasures** [*hedone*], spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

Titus 3:3

"... suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a **pleasure** [*hedone*] to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you..."

2 Peter 2:13

¹² "Hedonism," Microsoft® Encarta® Online Encyclopedia 2008. <http://encarta.msn.com> © 1997-2008 Microsoft Corporation. All Rights Reserved.

¹³ *The Dangerous Duty of Delight*. p. 21

What has been written on this point should not be taken as a statement against Christians experiencing emotions. Emotions are God’s design but given the fact that they can be and are extremely capricious and easily influenced by sin they are never to be used as a standard for measuring truth. Furthermore, and of the most important reason Christians should not use emotions, pleasure, feelings, or any other thing as a means of discernment is the fact that God has given us the standard of truth—His Word!

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:12

In this verse the phrase “able to judge” is the single Greek word *kritikos*. We get the English word *critical* from it. In the Greek it is an adjective and therefore describes the nature of a noun. In this verse it explains that it is the nature of the Word of God to literally be critical of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Essentially, God is telling us in this verse that it is His Word that is the standard or Judge and that our thoughts and intents are not permitted to take the bench but are to remain subject to and be measured in the light of the ruling of the Word of God.

This brings us to the last of the three points regarding the impact of the philosophy of Christian hedonism and this one is the most significant of all.

- **The Impact on the Sovereignty of God.**

When one considers the catch phrase of this movement “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him” it should be seen at the very onset as a direct assault against God. Regardless of the multitude of philosophical gyrations used to explain the phrase the straight forward meaning is that God being most glorified in people is subject to people being most satisfied in Him. This is a blatant lie. Though there are many, two brief Scriptural examples will suffice.

Pharaoh was never satisfied in God yet glory was magnificently ascribed to God by his dissatisfaction and his actions that stemmed from that dissatisfaction. Here are God’s Words to Pharaoh,

“¹⁵ For if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would then have been cut off from the earth. ¹⁶ But, indeed, for this cause I have allowed you to remain, in order to show you My power, and in order to proclaim My name through all the earth. Exodus 9:15-16

“¹⁷ And as for Me, behold, I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they will go in after them; and **I will be honored through Pharaoh** and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen. ¹⁸ Then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, **when I am honored through Pharaoh**, through his chariots and his horsemen.”

Exodus 14:17-18

“For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I raised you up, to demonstrate My power in you, and that My name might be proclaimed throughout the whole earth.’”

Romans 9:17

If the Christian hedonistic motto is true then God failed to glean the greatest glory from Pharaoh for Pharaoh was never satisfied with God. Furthermore, given the fact that God raised Pharaoh up to honor him and if what Christian hedonism says is true (God most glorified when one is most satisfied in Him) then God failed in his purpose for Pharaoh, because it is clear that Pharaoh went to a watery grave dissatisfied with God.

Finally, what about all those people who will end up in the everlasting Lake of Fire of Revelation 20. Not a single one of them at any level will have any satisfaction in God. Yet in every one of them glory will be ascribed to God, as all of them will be a clear testimony of the glorious justice and righteousness of God.

God is absolutely sovereign and infinitely intrinsically glorious. Because His glory is innate to His nature it cannot be added to neither can it be diminished from. God does not change (Malachi 3:6). The Christian hedonist would generally agree with the fact that ascribing glory to God is not adding to or diminishing from God, However, he fails to recognize ascribing glory to God is not dependent on man's satisfaction. This is to say that even attributing the glory to God that is due Him is not dependent on one being satisfied in God. The case of Pharaoh makes this evident.

At its core Christian hedonism is anthropocentric (man-centered). In it God's glory is inevitably dependent on man being satisfied. I urge all Christians who may have become involved in this philosophical movement to repent and return to the clear teaching of Scripture regarding the nature of man and the glory of God. Flee from the obscurity of feelings and emotions and return to the position and path that is illuminated by the Word of God.

Piper said,

"If I cannot show that Christian Hedonism comes from the Bible, I do not expect anyone to be interested, let alone persuaded. There are a thousand man-made philosophies of life. If this is another, let it pass. There is only one rock: the Word of God. Only one thing ultimately matters: glorifying God the way he has appointed. That is why I am a Christian Hedonist. That is why I wrote this book."¹⁴

Comparing the author's own words to Scripture it has been shown that the very basis of Christian hedonism is not the Bible. Rather, it is nothing more than man's philosophy read into the pages of Scripture. Do not wait on it to pass remove it from your mind by filling your mind with the Word and warn others of the deception.

In the words of Scripture,

"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ..."

2 Corinthians 10:5

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

⁹ For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority..." Colossians 2:8-10

¹⁴ Piper, John, *Desiring God, Meditations of a Christian Hedonist*, (Sisters, OR. Multnomah Publishers, 1986, 1996, 2003, by Desiring God Foundation) p. 28.

For additional insightful information on the phrase “God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him” and Christian Hedonism see the following blog site:

<http://homepage.mac.com/jbaugh/blog/JohnBlog.html>

APPENDIX

A to-the-point response to the question, “How does one ‘do all to the glory of God’?”

“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31

In a Christian’s life how is this great command to be achieved in practical living? Or in other words, “How can a believer live to the glory of God?” To answer this question let’s first look at the command portion of this verse, “do all to the glory of God.” In essence, the command encompasses every aspect of the life of the Christian. This is clear from the phrase “do all.” There is to be no part of the life of a believer that is unaffected by this command. It reaches to absolutely every thought, every action, and every goal or plan. Upon embracing absolutely every aspect of the life of the believer the command brings them all to one solitary end—“to the glory of God.” No philosophical double-talk here. No word games, mind benders, or flowery orations just straight forward unadulterated truth! Without exception, everything a believer does is to be done to the glory of God. The following information addresses the natural response to the command to glorify God— “How then does one ‘do all to the glory of God’?” To answer this question we will examine:

- [Three Dangers](#)
- [One Purpose](#)
- [A life Long Process](#)

Three Dangers

In response to the question, “How then does one ‘do all to the glory of God’?” First, it is essential to acknowledge that the command as well as the answer to the question is too important to leave the practical out working of the command to subjectively determining whether or not glory is ascribed to God. Because the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked and cannot be known it cannot be assumed that glory is ascribed to God merely because a person feels good about what he or she does. Neither can it be assumed that glory is not ascribed to God just because someone does not feel good.

Secondly, tacking statements like “To God be the glory” or “May God be glorified” onto the beginning or end of capricious acts unsupported by Scripture does not constitute honoring God. Use of phrases such as these to sanction ignorance, acts of sin, irresponsibility, etc. actually constitute testing God as opposed to ascribing glory to Him. To test God is a violation of His command (Deut. 6:16; Mat. 4:7), thus, a sin against Him.

Thirdly, as mentioned in the article, living to the glory of God does not add anything to God. It does not increase His glory when the Christian lives to His glory nor does it diminish from God’s glory when the Christian sins by failing to live to the glory of God. As Malachi 3:6 states, God does not change. To add to or diminish from God’s glory would be to change the intrinsically glorious nature of God—something that is absolutely impossible.

One Purpose

Therefore, by ascribing glory to God it is not God's nature that is changed but the believer's life that is changed, so that one's life becomes aligned with that which is true of God. By such conformity glory is ascribed to God. It is God Himself Who is presently conforming His people to the image of His Son and being conformed to Christ's image is His purpose for them,

“²⁸ And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; ³⁰ and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Romans 8:28-30

The *good* of verse 28 toward which God is working all things together in the lives of His people (those who love God and are called according to His purpose) is conformity to the image of His Son in verse 29. It is God Who began this work in His people and it is God Who will complete it as is clear in these three verses of Romans 8 as well as stated explicitly in Philippians 1:6,

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Therefore by commanding us to do whatever we do to God's glory (1 Corinthians 10:31) God is calling His people to participate in His present work in them and purpose for them. Such participation is known as the process of sanctification. The end of the process is the glorification mentioned above in Romans 8:30. It should be noted that being conformed to the image of Jesus and thereby being glorified does not mean that a person becomes Jesus or God but that the child of God, at the point of glorification, perfectly reflects the glory of God. Recognition of doing all to the glory of God as an element of the sanctification process captures the thrust of the command of 1 Corinthians 10:31. It is not merely single acts or experiences that are in view of the command to glorify God but absolutely all aspects of one's life that are to be to the glory of God. Living to the glory of God, which is to say ascribing glory to God by the way a Christian lives, involves living one's life so that in all areas of life God is honored (glorified).

Now for our part of participation in the process, the entire process of sanctification hinges on a single element—**Allegiance to the Word of God**. In the most condensed form this is how the believer lives to the glory of God.

Because God's Word is His revelation of that which honors Him (Psalm 119:9), because it is true, being without sin or error (John 17:17; Psalm 19:7) and like God, His Word is immutable (Psalm 119:89) and eternal (1 Pet. 1:23-25), the Word of God is therefore the standard by which Christians measure their lives. As a matter of fact, it is the very Word of God that is effectual in the lives of God's people (1 Thess. 2:13) as the Holy Spirit first uses it to regenerate the elect (Jn. 3:5-8; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:23) and then continues to use it in the process of sanctification (Jn. 17:17).

Scripture teaches us that God esteems His Word as being equivalent to His name.

“I will bow down toward Thy holy temple, And give thanks to Thy name for Thy lovingkindness and Thy truth; For Thou hast magnified Thy word according to all Thy name.”

Psalms 138:2

For this reason allegiance on the part of God’s people to His Word is not an over simplification to the profound command to live to God’s glory. Rather, it is the utmost fundamental aspect of keeping the command to do all to the glory of God. Just as God’s name reveals Who He is, His Word also communicates His nature. The Holy Spirit informs us in 2 Peter 1:3 that God’s “divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him Who called us by His own glory and excellence.”

A Lifelong Process

The practical conformity to Scripture begins in the mind of the believer,

¹ I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. ² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

Romans 12:1-2

However, conformity is not limited to the mind. As the Christian learns God’s will through the study His Word he or she is to bring the rest of his or her life into conformity with God’s truth. James 1:22 says that Christians are to be doers of the Word and not merely hearers. A doer of the Word of God is one whose complete life depicts allegiance is to the Word. This encompasses one’s pursuit of holiness before God in his own life, marriage, family, Christian family¹⁵, works, finances, etc. Such allegiance to the Word of God ensures the believer that he or she is living to God’s glory. In other words, when our lives take the shape of His Word then we can be confident that glory is ascribed to God by our lives. That by our very lives we are declaring the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). Essentially, a life that is transformed by the Word of God is a life that glorifies God. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the Christian to walk in obedience to the Word of God, bringing all aspects of his or her life under the umbrella of God’s revealed truth. This is the answer to the question, “How then does one ‘do all to the glory of God?’”

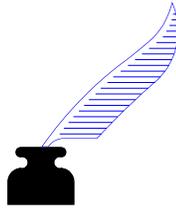
In closing it is important to remember that the sanctification process is just that. It is a process. As a matter of fact it is a lifelong process never fully accomplished until, as Romans 8:28-30 teaches we are completely conformed to the image of Christ when we see Him (1 John 3:2). God’s work in this process is perfect and He will ensure it is achieved. However, our part in the process will be marked by imperfections—we are not yet perfected in this life. Nevertheless this should not discourage the believer. The imperfections reveal the need to continue the pursuit of holiness to the glory of God. When sin occurs, and the believer sees he or she has

¹⁵ The command of 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” is given in the context of exercising Christian liberties. Essentially, “All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own good, but that of his neighbor.” (1 Cor. 10:22-23). This is the attitude and character of Christ (Philippians 2:1-18). When our lives are conformed to His image glory is ascribed to God. Notice then that the context of 1 Cor. 10:31 relates directly to the subject of denying one’s self and taking up his cross daily and following Christ.

fallen short of the glory of God the sin must be confessed forsaken and the pursuit continued. Dear one, God has ordered your steps, though you stumble you will not be utterly cast down.

“²³ The steps of a man are established by the Lord; And He delights in his way. ²⁴ When he falls, he shall not be hurled headlong; Because the Lord is the One who holds his hand.”

Psalms 37:23-24



The Discerner reflects the heart desire of this pastor for God's people to know and understand God as He has revealed Himself through the Scripture. Jeremiah 9:23-24

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