

His Be the Victor's Name*Samuel Whitelock Gandy (1780–1851)*

His be the Victor's name,
 who fought the fight alone;
 triumphant saints no honor claim;
 His conquest was their own.

By weakness and defeat
 He won a glorious crown,
 trod all our foes beneath His feet
 by being trodden down.

He Satan's pow'r laid low;
 made sin, He sin o'erthrew;
 bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
 and death, by dying, slew.

Bless, bless the Conqu'ror slain,
 slain in His victory;
 who lived, who died, who lives again—
 For thee, His church, for thee!

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ*In the Nick of Time***Elements in a Philosophy of Ministry: Sanctification***Kevin T. Bauder*

The first goal of a local church should be the clear exposition and application of Scripture. Faithful ministry must ground itself upon what God has said. Explaining and applying God's Word is the most important thing a church can do. This task is critical to the success of all its other functions.

The most important of these functions is to know the God of the Bible. Knowledge of God comes through the knowledge of His Word. God's purpose in inspiring Scripture is not merely to give us abstract knowledge of Him, as if passing a theology exam were the *summum bonum* of the Christian life. Instead, we learn the Bible so that we might know Him. Knowing and loving God is the fundamental means by which we glorify Him—and glorifying Him is the ultimate goal of salvation.

The Bible teaches that Christ is the great revealer of God (John 1:18). Whoever has seen Christ has seen the Father (John 12:45, 14:9; Heb 1:3). In other words, for us to know God means exactly to know Christ—the Christ of the Bible. We read the Bible so that we might encounter the glory of God in the face of Christ (2 Cor 4:6). Knowing God and knowing Christ are the very same thing.

This knowledge of Christ is the very thing for which the apostle Paul longed (Phil 3:10). Knowing Christ is a treasure of such excellence that, compared to it, all other things seem like refuse (Phil 3:8; Paul's term is *skubala*, a crass word often used for human excrement). Clearly, knowing God hinges upon a yearning to know Christ.

This yearning for God and Christ is what we call *devotion*. Devotion is the engine that propels all legitimate ministry. If a church were an automobile, Scripture would be the frame upon which the whole car is built. Devotion would be the engine that powers the car and makes it go. The destination toward which the car is headed would be the full, personal knowledge of God in Christ.

To change the metaphor, the heart of all true ministry is love for Christ. Without this love, doctrinal knowledge becomes a dead, arid, and desiccated orthodoxy. Without this love, obedience becomes a corrosive legal-



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ism. Our love for Christ permeates and quickens nearly every doctrine. For example, ecclesiastical separation is not primarily a matter of what we refuse to participate in or who we refuse to participate with. Instead, it is a matter of what—or, more importantly, Whom—we are separated to. A married man devotes himself in love to one woman, and that devotion implies a level of separation from other women. Likewise, if we genuinely devote ourselves in love to Christ, then that love implies abstinence from a range of other affiliations and activities.

Jesus taught that discipleship begins with radical devotion: “And he said to *them* all, If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.” To follow Jesus is to reject a life of self-indulgence. It is to take up one’s cross—a First-Century metaphor that implied complete self-abandonment, for a person who carried a cross was on his way to be executed. To go after Christ requires that we see ourselves as already dead. We must abandon our own goals, hopes, dreams, and ambitions. The first step in living out the Christian life is to recognize that this life is not about us. It is about Christ, and about holding ourselves ready to be used (or even used up) by Him.

Is such a life worthwhile? Jesus says *Yes*. If we try to hold onto our own lives—i.e., to the things we might have judged to be worth living for—then we will lose them. Anything we live for other than Christ will eventually be taken away from us. Only if we willingly throw away our lives now, abandoning all that we might have lived for so that Christ can use us (or use us up), will we find the true, enduring satisfaction that nothing outside of Christ can ever bring. This is a satisfaction of which nothing, not even death, will ever deprive us.

A life thrown away for the sake of Jesus is never wasted. A dream, a goal, an ambition, a cherished hope, when cast aside for Him, has not been squandered. Indeed, the abandonment of such things is wonderfully bracing and liberating. As the fog of self-occupation lifts from our hearts, we can finally begin to see beauties and behold wonders beside which our previous loves seem spectral and paltry.

Therefore, we must learn to love Christ, not merely for His gifts but for Himself. Indeed, He lades us with wonderful benefits, but if we love only the benefits without loving Him, then we are idolaters. He Himself is infinitely glorious, infinitely beautiful, infinitely worthy of adoration. To devote ourselves to Christ means that we pursue Him for His own sake and not merely for what He promises.

Except that what He promises is ultimately Himself. Consequently, the goal of our ministries must be to expose people to Him in all His perfections, character, and mighty deeds. Our aim must be to bring people to Christ

Himself, so that they can love Him and so that His character can grow in them. Everything else that we do in ministry—evangelism, fellowship, instruction—has this goal. The church’s program must revolve around Christ Himself.

If the foregoing is true, then we have two good reasons to go to church. If the frame upon which biblical ministry rides is Scripture, then we go to church to hear the Word of God. If the engine that drives ministry is devotion, then we go to church to meet Jesus Christ. Any church’s ministry can rightly be appraised by whether its vision grants pride of place to these two exercises.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
