

Ascribing Glory to God

by Peter Masters

The sermon emphasizes the importance of ascribing glory to God, understanding the meaning of glory, and recognizing God's power and ability to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

Duration: 47:57

Scripture: Ephesians 3:19, Hebrews 4:15

Topics: "Worship", "Glory Of God"

Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of bringing glory to God by understanding and appreciating His love, thoughtfulness, generosity, and sympathy towards each individual. It highlights the power of God to exceed all our prayers and thoughts, showcasing His ability to do far beyond what we can imagine. The sermon encourages worship that is thoughtful, intelligent, and focused on ascribing glory to God in all aspects of life, from personal prayers to public worship in the church.

Transcript

Well, the subject before us is that of ascribing glory to God, and in our studies in this marvellous epistle we've come to this point. But just a few more comments on that 19th verse that we were concluding with in our last study, to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. I won't repeat anything which has been considered already, but just a little further, which I was not able to mention last week, of the fullness of Christ's active, intelligent, individual, personal love to his people, which is so amazing and remarkable.

And I wanted to just briefly comment on its great thoughtfulness, the thoughtfulness of the love of Christ. It is easy to think of the love of Christ in terms of something directed to all his people, but the remarkable thing is we have to think of it as love which is directed not just to all, but to each one of his people. And that infinite, eternal, immense weight of love is so thoughtfully directed to each one of the redeemed.

Elect in eternity past, Christ has set his love upon his people, determined so thoughtfully, so long before we came into this world to come and to suffer and die, specifically, particularly for those who he would save. And we read in Isaiah 53 that when he was on Calvary, suffering that terrible weight of punishment, the punishment due to us, when he took it in his own body on the tree, he could see in his mind's eye all those for whom he died. He was very conscious of our penalty, our punishment, our sins, but it was out of love for us as individuals he bore it all away.

And in his mind he did it for the joy that was set before him, that he would send forth his spirit in due time to work in our hearts, to draw us to himself. And he planned in his mind the things that he would do with us, and for us, and in us, and through us, the thoughtfulness of the love of our Saviour. And not only that, but its generosity, what mighty love, constantly poured out upon us, though so much of our time we are unworthy of his love, and we sin against him, and we, as it were, say to him, right now, Lord, I prefer this or that in this world, and I'm going to give that my attention and my esteem.

And we slight him and his love, constantly, yet the generosity of his love, which continues to flow towards us, and gently bring us back, and bring us to see wonderful things, and to teach us, oh, the sympathy of the love of our dear Saviour. And I read just a verse or two from Hebrews 4. Listen to this. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Therefore, let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, and also these words, who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And the training of the love of Christ, he chastises, he trains, he encourages. Listen to these words.

Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him for whom the Lord loveth. He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? The assurance of the love of Christ, the comfort of the love of Christ, how often we call upon him, and he strengthens our hearts, and he increases our assurance and certainty, and we become aware of his presence, and his power, and his goodness. The enlightening power of the love of Christ, by his spirit he increases our understanding of divine things, as we read his word.

Oh friends, the sharing aim of the love of Christ, Christ shares himself, he seeks to bring us into his image, into his very character. He builds our characters so that we become much more concerned about others, just as he was, than we are concerned about ourselves. Much more concerned about spiritual and eternal blessings for lost souls, than about feathering our nests and having things to look at that are so splendid at home, and it brings us nearer to himself.

He looks to the day when he will share with us his eternal glory, and that place, that realm, and those wonders of sight and sensation that we cannot even imagine. The sharing love of Christ, all these things, well, they bring us to verse 20. Now unto him, that the him here refers not to Christ alone, but to the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Now unto him, that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in or by the church, by Jesus Christ throughout all ages. We'll consider these great words. It is the task of the Christian church and saved individuals to bring glory to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

That's our role. That's what we're set for. We can see easily we're here to make known the gospel, to save souls, to teach the word of God, but above it all, to bring glory to God in our community and as far as we possibly can.

To bring glory to him, and I'm going to consider these things. We'll come to verse 21 in due course. But glory, the glory of God, unto him be glory.

You know, I'll elaborate on this later, but glory is a very thoughtful thing. The term glory actually comes from the verb to think, to know, to esteem, to have an opinion about, to conceive, perceive something. That's where it comes from.

And so it means to have a tremendous view and assessment of God and to make that known and to let it be visible that you hold him in high esteem, that you know him and you know about him and his glories and you value him above all else. That's what it is to bring glory to God. To bring glory to God is not simply to make a noise.

Some people think it is. That if the church can make a tremendous noise and racket and clamor, that's bringing glory to God. Bringing glory to God is to have an understanding of him and to think of him and to worship him in the context of that understanding, to direct intelligent thoughts or words towards him.

That's glory. Did you understand that? It isn't to have, say, a gigantic orchestra just to make a noise. There's no intelligence in that.

There's no thought. There are no sentiments, ideas, concepts. God is not appreciated.

He is not exalted. He is not made known. To bring glory to God involves the mind and thought.

Let us sing as enthusiastically as we can. And by the way, let's do our utmost to turn up at the very beginning of the service, because bringing glory to God begins with the opening prayer and the first hymn. We are engaged entirely.

It isn't just the message for our understanding. It's everything. That's why it's vital for Christian people to be on time in church.

I say this delicately because this is a big city and people have difficulties very often and things they didn't plan happen in order to get here. But you know, oh, it would be a wonderful thing if these galleries were full from the first moment and we were engaged together. We are here to bring glory to him, to sing his praises, to be here in time, to compose our minds, to be ready and to connect and communicate with the living God and glorify him and make him known.

Let me commend it to you. It's so important. This is our task.

This is our calling. This is what God has saved us in order to do. Well, we praise him, the infinite God, the eternal being.

He is immense. He is everywhere. His presence enters the tiniest particle and fills the vast expanses and beyond.

He is a personal, spiritual being with, as it were in human terms, a mind and a heart. But his intelligence is infinite. His knowledge is infinite.

He knows all things, everything that has ever happened and will happen and understands everything so fully and so perfectly. The all-knowing, altogether wise God, and he is perfect. We have a view of him.

We grasp him as much as we can. There is no imperfection in him at all, no stain, no shadow. He is infinitely wonderful and pure and holy and glorious and he is loving and he is good and he is just.

He is unchanging. Of course it is obvious that which is perfect cannot change because if it changed it means it would either have been imperfect before or it has become perfect. He is the everlastingly perfect, holy, unchanging, faithful to his promises God and he is the self-existent one.

He needs no power from outside himself to exist, to act. He is the source of all life and power. Oh, let us have the attributes of God in our minds so very clearly and humble ourselves before him and worship him and adore him and rely upon him.

Now unto him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, unto him be glory. Well, we see God in our dear Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord. I remind you of some words in John 14 and verse 8. Philip saith unto him, Lord show us the Father and it sufficeth us.

Jesus saith unto him, have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father and we see all the attributes of God and the heart of God in the record of the life of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Well, this 20th verse, what a verse it is. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, what double superlatives, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask.

Let's deal with that first. All that we ask, and time permitting, will come to all that we think. He has power to do and does infinitely more than we imagine when we ask, above all that we can ask.

Now I hope the majority of you who are listening to this, the majority of people, I wish you all, but I hope the majority of people in this church have said to God, Lord forgive me my sin. I hope so. If you haven't you must.

You must come to God in the name of Jesus Christ who came from heaven to earth to atone for sinners on Calvary's cross and to take our punishment in our place and trusting in him and in him alone and in no righteousness of your own, you must ask with sincere heart, Lord forgive me. Well there was a time when most of us here said, Lord forgive my sin and he answered far above what we asked. When we first made that prayer we had no idea of the extensiveness of our sin.

We had no realization just what sinners we were. So much unknown sin. Do you look back on your conversion? Do you say to yourself, in the years that my conversion, I've had such a deeper view of the worthlessness and the sinfulness of the human heart.

How could I ever have been forgiven when I first said, Lord forgive me my sin and save me. I have been brought gently to see so much more that was wrong with me. The depths of human depravity and so on.

Ah yes, but fortunately for us it's true that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask and he does. We little know what we ask for but he freely forgives all our sin. Unseen sin, unknown to us sin, secret sin.

He forgives the sins of the heart which we haven't even learned about. The state that we're in as well as the deeds. Things that we've excused ourselves about.

Things that we've long lost sight of. Far beyond our asking he forgives all our sin so that we can be justified. So that we can be freely forgiven and beyond any of our expectation he clearly casts that sin, the whole mass of it, into the sea of his eternal forgetfulness and chooses to remember it no more.

The complete forgiveness of our God. He answers prayer far beyond anything we expect or at cost to Jesus Christ. And then we came to Christ once and we came maybe like the prodigal son who said make me as one of thy hired servants.

He dared not ask to be received back into the full privileges of his father's house. Oh father he said receive me back just as one of your servants. And we come to Christ and we say forgive us and receive us.

But like the prodigal the father says take the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his hands and shoes on his feet. Make him a prince with God.

Make her a daughter of the most high. Elevate these people who come to me. Give them status and eternal status in my sight.

Chosen ones, precious ones, loved ones. It's amazing. We ask to be accepted but how we're accepted and given status and blessing far above anything we could ever have thought about or deserved.

We say remake my life Lord. But we get a totally new nature, a new mind, a new outlook, new hopes and aspirations. Everything is new.

We can think so much more purely. We can understand scripture. Our minds are emancipated.

He answers that feeble prayer far above anything we asked for or hoped for. And he changes our hearts, our emotions, our delights, our sentiments. And he changes our will so that there are sins we simply could never conquer.

But now by his help we can resist them and stand against them in the battle against sin. And his answering of prayer is far beyond anything we expected or intended or asked for. Save this one, that friend, this relative.

We begin to intercede for others and we pray. And even as we pray sometimes to our shame there is little hope in our hearts. That one is too far gone.

That one will never turn. And he answers our prayers far beyond our expectation and brings rebels to himself just as he brought us to himself. And then we have trials and tribulations, sometimes deep and heavy.

And perhaps health problems or great grief and difficulty. And we pray to the Lord to see us through. And how he helps us and strengthens us and blesses us and we never forget it.

These are the ways in which he hears and answers everything that we could ask far beyond our expectation and our hope in his great love. You remember how often we prayed for the prisoners in Soviet Russia years ago? Who would have thought that within the space of a few years not only would they be released but the mighty power of the Soviet machine would crumble and fall. None of the political observers expected it to happen in the way that it did so quickly.

Now they look back and some of them they're so smart after the event, oh of course it can be seen that this might have happened and that might have happened but they never saw it at the time. Because it was God answering the prayers of his people both there and around the world far beyond our expectation and our hopes. And I remember when I was invited to go to Moscow by Christians in 1990.

There the prisoners were released, the pastors were out. I remember being at Moscow airport introduced to the KGB controls of the people who met me and there were smiles and handshakes. The controls were still on but there were no more arrests and it all finished in a short space of time.

And there I was taken into the underground where Christian believers had set up little stalls with books upon them to libraries to lend to people and the queues at that time of hundreds of people queuing for books. What a turnaround dear friends because when God acts he acts far beyond our asking and our expectation and God in that was saying pray for others also and in my time I will act and relieve and release. We've proved it so many times.

It wasn't so very long ago we were praying for peace in Nepal that there would be liberty for the gospel and nobody expected that the Maoists and the Royalists would settle so quickly and so easily. Something entirely unexpected in the western world. Yet it happened and God blesses and the gospel goes forth in all the remote mountain villages and the towns when God acts wonderful things take place.

And then of course here you remember back in 93 we were called together as a church to pray. The authorities wanted to so over develop the area immediately around there wouldn't have been a square inch to park a vehicle. Here we rather need some space for people to park and for the cause the preservation of the cause we appealed to the Lord and that whole planning application even by the local authority and powerful people was as they say called in by the government of the time and ultimately refused and rejected.

When God hears and answers prayer he does it beyond our expectations and our desires and our hopes. Oh friends we come to him for help we come to him for healing but look at these words now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask. Why are our prayers limited? Why do we have such small faith and we hesitate to ask for big things or when we do we ask for them in a half-hearted manner? Why sometimes are we insincere in our praying? Why do we have foolish self-reliance and we don't ask for the blessing of God? Oh I'll go out in the morning we say to ourselves I'll drive to work or get on transport on autopilot I don't have to commend to the Lord things I've done every day for years I can manage so many things I can do in my own strength we are so self-reliant and so quickly get out of the practice and the habit of earnest prayer and then we make wrong requests.

Lord give me a better this, give me a bigger that, give me this opportunity, that opportunity all earthly things for ourselves. Yes we may ask for earthly things friends but make sure that you're asking far more for spiritual things that they are your priorities. Pray much more for lost relations, pray much more for lost neighbours and colleagues and for witness than you do for creature comforts or personal things.

We get it the wrong way round and our prayers can so quickly become personal and selfish and material, earthly rather than spiritual and beneficial because God is ready to hear and to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask if we get our priorities right or there may be some sin or some compromise in our life which makes answered prayer virtually impossible. Oh but if we could only pray as we should now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask and I come to the words or think. Now we've passed from prayer to thought he is able to do exceeding abundantly infinitely more than

anything we think of or can imagine.

We cannot conceive what God can do. The vast numbers of the elect for example, you cannot conceive the numbers being taken in to everlasting glory. Back in the days of Elijah when he thought he was all alone there were 7,000 in the land who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

That was the gloomiest of times and there was there a congregation of 7,000 and some people think it's a symbolic figure and there were even more. Dear friends a vast number of the elect going back across the rolling centuries into every land and nation wherever the gospel have been back into the Old Testament age all who trusted in the coming Messiah and that God would forgive their sin. Why there are billions of people saved and in glory we cannot imagine it.

We shall spend all eternity roaming among the vast host and fellowshiping with the redeemed of the Lord. We cannot imagine the scale of the price paid for us on Calvary. We just can't grasp it.

One sin would take us into banishment forever and punishment eternally. One sin, what it cost to redeem us from one sin and we have millions of sins. We sin every second.

If I have a selfish heart or a proud heart that isn't one sin, that's a sin every millisecond stretching on for as long as it lasts. The cost of Calvary, we cannot even begin to think of it. God does things far beyond our power to grasp in redemption, in salvation.

We cannot even understand the vastness and the detail of the universe. When I was a boy at school, I'm pretty sure this was true, we were taught that an amoeba was a simple cell which you could draw like that and then it had a nucleus and a vacuole in it and that's about all. And now as you know, it is said that if an amoeba were to be projected onto the clouds above our heads, a picture of it, filling all our view, the detail contained in that cell would be so complex, so incredible.

We have now in the days of the electron microscope and the power of science to investigate, poor Darwin had no idea how complex the world was and nor do we have the chains of chemical activity that are involved in everything, the thousands and millions of things that go on in the human body to get a small part to work. The incredible complexity of the infinite designer's mind, we shall spend all eternity wondering at it. We would have to have emancipated minds.

God will have to give us all super intelligence in the eternal world even to begin to grasp throughout the eternal ages the wonders of his handiwork and his design and his mighty power. God does things vastly, vastly beyond the power of our imagination, our thought, our investigation here on this earth and end time events. I've often wondered to myself, I'm sure you have too, how is it that the scripture says that when Christ comes again every eye shall see him? In Australia? In England? At the same time? How is that going to happen? I have no idea.

I could imagine and imagine and imagine my hours away but God is able to do things when he works in super power far beyond the capacity of my thought and that's what the text says. These things will be done now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask in prayer or even think in our private contemplation and as for the wonders of paradise, the paradise of Christ even now beyond all human understanding and that new creation that will come in the future when this world is melted down and reconstituted and made heavenly for the occupation of the people of God in their glorified bodies, infinitely more beautiful than the most beautiful place on earth. We in England are not a mountainous

country.

We see pictures of some parts of the world and some have the opportunity of visiting where there are the most breathtaking mountains and forests and wonderful things but you know they're nothing to what we shall see everywhere in the eternal new creation of this earth. The mind cannot now even dream of it or take it in. God will demonstrate wonderful things that he is able to do and the depths and the heights of our knowledge and the details of his love will be disclosed far beyond our power of thought while here on earth and yet here's a tremendous thought itself in this verse at the end of verse 20, according to the power that worketh in us.

We've seen just something of the mighty power of God in that radical irreversible change in our hearts when we came to Christ, the wonderful things that God did for us. May I say delicately, you see it pastorally. It's true of me, it's true of you.

Pastoral work is a tremendous privilege. Why being able to give advice and help to others from the word of God, I hope always from the word of God, never from one's own mind. But sometimes and not so sometimes, sometimes we may be very resistant to advice.

There's a situation we need the help of the word of God but we are difficult people sometimes. We are self-willed people. We are self-assertive people and resentful of advice.

But what a wonderful thing pastorally. You just pray and you see a strong, perhaps rather self-willed, self-assertive person but that person is a Christian, nevertheless humble before the word of God. If it's the word of God, we listen, we bow, we're different, we respond, we're humbled, we're compliant.

The mighty power of God to change the human mind and will and bring us in subjection to himself. We see so many saved around the world, proud intellectuals, humbled, opening their hearts to Christ. Violent people made gentle.

All friends, coarse people become refined and pure. All that God will do eternally in the cosmos and the universe is only the same as the wonderful work that he carries out in conversion in us. This is our role dear friends, verse 21, unto him be glory in the church, by and through the church, by Christ Jesus.

That's our role here in inner south London at the Elephant and Castle. Let everyone go charging off after worldly heroes if they like. There's the Lord's day consumed up with football or something of the sort.

Great gales of sound and worship and excitement on trivial and passing things and our task called of God is to stand for the glory of God, to project it, to ascribe all wonder and glory to him and that's what we must do. Friends, worship him as creator. Love him and adore him as the creator of all things.

Have your opinion about him. He is the creator of everything. Tell people, tell yourself often, praise him for it.

Praise him for redemption. He is the author and giver of redemption. He's purchased souls through the death of Christ and he alone can change hearts and save powerfully.

Worship him for our eternal hope. Through him we can get to heaven and eternity. Worship and praise him for all the benefits of your life.

Thank him daily for husband, wife, children, provisions and above all for spiritual blessings. Praise him as the source of all moral values and standards and conform to him. Praise him for all truth in his word, all that matters.

Praise him for every comfort, every blessing, all saved people, all your deliverances. Remember them. Worship and adore him for these things.

All answered prayer. Praise him for providential care, even disciplines, even difficult circumstances. Lord thou has portioned this out to me.

I ask for greater ease and deliverance but if this is thy will, I will glorify thee and serve thee and praise thee in this situation, in these circumstances. Praise him for guidance praise him for the power of reason and all your gifts. Don't let them go to your head.

Thank him. Lord thou has given me some small portion of this skill. May I use it to thy glory and not for mine.

Deliver me from pride, vainglory and foolishness. This is giving glory to God. It's our calling.

It's our task. If we're proud of ourselves, if we're cynical, if we focus on material things, we'll stop doing this. It's so important as a church and as individuals to bring glory to God.

Just a word as we come to conclusion. Look at this again. Unto him be glory in the church, not noise, thoughtfulness.

The worship of the people of God is not shouting, sing as loud as you can. It's not shouting. It's not singing.

But it's not just getting worked up into a trance of some sort. It's not repeating the same things over and over again. The loud band, the screeching out.

I can feel the presence of the Lord over and over and over and over again. Not a single intelligent thought, wrong mistake in theology. You can't feel the presence of the Lord.

Mistakes abound in foolish worship. People worked up just as if they're in a carnal pop concert. Nothing going through the mind.

No rich thoughts about God. No deep thoughts. No thankfulness for specific things.

It isn't worship. It's another religion. And it discredits God.

And people who are unsaved look on and they're appalled. And God is discredited and brought down by mindless worship. Glory to God means I think and I esteem him and I estimate him highly.

And I intelligently thank him for real things and for real qualities that are his. And then I sing with raised voice thinking of these glorious things. That's bringing glory to God and in my private prayers and in my witness.

And just as we close, unto him be glory in the church. Oh dare I prolong our message. When I was about 18, forgive this personal reference, I'd been saved in a church for a year or more.

It was a good church in many ways. But it had got a preacher. He was sound.

But he was very subjective in his teaching. I'm going, thinking of over fifty years ago. Nobody will know who I'm talking about I'm sure.

And he preached a little gospel. It was a little subjective gospel. However, I visited another church.

And I was overwhelmed at the difference. And this preacher had a big gospel. And a big God.

A glorious God. The maker and ruler of heaven and earth. And he reasoned things.

Not in an over cerebral way. Over complicated. But he made God glorious and reasoned things.

And all of a sudden you thought, oh how much easier to bring people to this sort of preaching. This brings glory to God. This says who he is.

This highlights his greatness. And the supremacy of conversion over the worldly life. And so on.

And this is what our lives must be like. And our churches must be like. Unto him be glory, greatness, esteem, in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages.

The Greek says generations, world without end. The modern translations skip that. They just say forever.

Or something like that. Forever and ever. And it is true that the Greek doesn't actually say world without end.

It says age without end. Eon without end. But our translators have translated it world.

And well they might. Because it often must be translated as world. World is implied.

And they're absolutely right in this instance. World without end. But isn't the world going to end? Well in a way it is, yes.

The elements will melt with the fervent heat. But it will not entirely end. It will be melted so that it may be rejuvenated.

Improved. Vastly changed. And made wonderful.

And in that great melting of the earth, in the end of time, bring glory to God in this. He does things beyond anything we can ask or think. Just think every microbe will be destroyed.

Every weapon will be destroyed. Every blood stain will be obliterated. None of these things must survive into the new heavens and into the new earth.

All the rubble caused by human violence will be melted to nothing in a moment. There'll be no memory of it. No evidence of it.

In the new heaven and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness which will be beautiful beyond all possible human conception while we're here on earth. And we look to these things and we bring glory to God. And the apostle cannot help it.

It's inspired of course. But he cannot help it. He concludes with the word Amen.

So be it. Let it be so. And that's the word for us.

We think of the mighty things that God has and will do. And we live to make them known and to bring glory to him and to be his people.

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