

# The Glory of God Alone

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] We'll continue to sing to God's praise from Psalm 96 and sing the remaining verses of the Psalm from verse 8 to 13.

Psalm 96 from verse 8. Give ye the glory to the Lord and to his name is due. Come ye into his courts and bring an offering with you.

In beauty of his holiness, O do the Lord adore. Likewise let all the earth throughout tremble as before. Among the heathen say, God reigns. The world shall steadfastly be fixed from moving. He shall judge the people righteously.

Let heavens be glad before the Lord and let the earth rejoice. Let seas and all that is therein cry out and make a noise.

Let fields rejoice and everything that springeth of the earth. Then oaks and every tree shall sing with gladness and with mirth. Before the Lord because he comes. To judge the earth comes he. He'll judge the world with righteousness, the people faithfully.

[ 1 : 1 5 ] These verses, Psalm 96 from verse 8 to the end. Give ye the glory to the Lord and to his name is due. Give ye the glory to the Lord and to his name is due.

Come ye into his court and bring an offering with you.

In beauty of his holiness, O do the Lord adore.

Likewise let all the earth throughout tremble his face before.

Among the heathen say, God reigns. The world shall let us flee.

[ 2 : 5 4 ] He shall judge the people righteously.

Let heaven speak.

heaven pray out and make a noise. Let fields rejoice and everything that springeth of the earth.

Then oaks and every tree shall sing with gladness and with mirth.

Before the Lord, because He comes to judge, He ever comes He.

[ 4 : 4 7 ] He'll judge a world with righteousness, the people of faithfully.

Can we turn to the book of the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians?

I'll read again at the beginning of chapter 2. Ephesians chapter 2. Unto you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in time past he walked, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others, and so on.

Well, most of you will remember that we've been considering over the last number of weeks in our Bible study the topic of the five solas of the Reformation.

And although we've taken a lot longer than I envisaged because of the staggered nature of our concentration of it, we'll finish off this evening with the last one of these.

- [ 6 : 41 ] the first we looked at was by salvation, by faith alone, by grace alone, by Christ alone, through the scripture alone, and finally for the glory of God alone.
- all of these, I hope, are most obvious to us, because they were originally the core of the Reformation teaching, without necessarily being highlighted as such.
- the teachings of the scripture necessarily brought all of these things to the attention of the hearer.
- It wasn't that the Reformers set out to establish these elements as the backbone of Reformed teaching, but inevitably these are the things that came to the fore.
- And collectively they describe to us what is essential for the New Testament believer.
- [ 8 : 02 ] And what we understand by what we've considered, that God alone is the author of salvation.
- He is our Saviour in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the one who initiated the act of salvation.
- He provided a Saviour for us, Christ himself, willingly embraced the role of the Redeemer of God's people.
- It is God's Word that brings that to our attention, and brings home to us that only what God did in Christ would suffice.
- There is no other Saviour. There is no other means of salvation. And the whole of what God did is his doing.
- [ 9 : 15 ] He thought of it in eternity. He implemented it in time. And through the Spirit he applies all that is necessary for that salvation to become effectual in the experience of individuals.
- And this evening what we're looking at is what I hope is something that we readily agree to, that God alone is worthy of receiving all the glory in the salvation of sinners.
- When we think of the different elements, well, we can't but think that is the case.
- Who is the Saviour? He is the second person of the Trinity. Whose word is it? It is his word to us.
- He is speaking into our circumstances, our situations, and informing us, enlightening us as to our need.
- [ 10 : 33 ] God is at the heart of everything that goes on. And we understand that whichever aspect of the salvation that we are speaking of, that we would wish to speak about, God is at its heart.
- And the glory of God is essential to what he has done and what he continues to do. And what will be in the experience of God's people, if you go forward to the description that we have in the book of Revelation is a very fertile word.
- And it introduces into our thinking a lot of different aspects to what that word entails. But this evening, just briefly, I'd like us to think about this emphasis that the divines offer to bring to the fore.
- Now we know from the scripture that God himself is a God who is to be glorified.
- It is in the very nature of God that glory is his and that he enjoys the experience of being glorified.
- [ 12 : 10 ] If you think about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, he speaks of the glory that he had with the Father before the world was.
- And that itself is something that suggests something to us about the nature of God.
- That this God is not only glorious in his own passion, but in the triune experience, in the experience of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, there is a glory.

I don't suppose it's right to say exchanged, but it is the experience of glory within the Trinity that comes to the fore, even before he created the world.

But after creating the world, the world that he created is created for his glory. You know, the first two catechisms, what is man's chief end?

[ 13 : 21 ] We're told that man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever. And the second catechism, what rule have God given to us?

How we may glorify and enjoy him. And we're told that the word of God, which is contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, is the only rule to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy him.

So the very outset of this precise document, which is so full of theological truth, it points us in the direction of the existence of man being for the glory of God.

God created man to enjoy his glory and to ascribe to his glory, as the psalm that we were singing from describes to us.

We can't make God's glory more glorious than he is. We can't make him more glorious than he is. But it is our duty as his creatures to ascribe to, to acknowledge it, and to come into his presence and declare it to him as something that we understand.

[ 14 : 39 ] In Psalm 29, the psalmist, there again, just as the psalm that we were singing, the psalmist's desire to give to God what is rightfully his.

Give ye unto the Lord, ye sons, that of the mighty be all strength and glory to the Lord with cheerfulness, give ye unto the Lord, the glory give that to his name is Jew and in the beauty of holiness unto Jehovah bow.

And frequently you find that in the Psalms, the acknowledgement that this is what we are about. And it's something that we frequently forget and frequently fail to comprehend the significance of it in our experience.

I was reading some time ago of a woman who was probably terminally ill and because of her circumstances, she had more time to reflect upon her life as a believer.

And this was one thing that she felt burdened by, that in all her activities as a believer, which she knew she was, that she hadn't devoted enough of her time to giving God his rightful place in her life in glorifying his name.

[ 16 : 19 ] And that's what we find in the scripture. A reminder to us of that. A verse that I'm sure you're familiar with in the prophecy of Isaiah.

God is jealous of his own glory. In chapter 42. He's jealous for his own glory rather.

Thus saith the God, the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out, he that spread forth the earth that which cometh out of it, he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.

I, the Lord, have called thee in righteousness and will hold thine hand and will keep thee and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

I am the Lord. That is my name and my glory will I not give to another. neither my praise to graver images.

[ 17 : 33 ] I think that's broader than simply a reminder to us of of God's jealousy for his own glory in the sense of being the one who who brings salvation.

Although that I think comes into that context. But he demands it of all men and all women of every generation that they are obligated to him to give him the praise and the glory that is due.

But I suppose that what we're most interested in is our duty as saved to give him the glory. But we can't just immediately go to that and think that we can understand it or appreciate it.

I know that it is impossible for a person who is unsaved to fulfil what they are as creatures obliged to fulfil.

What is specifically in view is that with regard to the salvation glory belongs to God alone.

[ 18 : 51 ] glory to us to us to us and the glory of God is the believer is the believer's concept of his holiness.

God has been pleased to reveal his holiness to us and the more we envisage the nature of that holiness the more we understand it the infinite value and worth that he himself has placed upon it in revealing it to us it is it is something that prompts us to give him what is his but you can only do that by faith you can only do that when your eyes are open to that glory but what exactly are the theologians wanting us to understand when they say for the glory of God alone I think as I've said frequently that when we come to speak about our salvation it is almost inevitable that we find something of ourselves to to speak of that is in some way a credit to ourselves that there is something that we either at times compare ourselves to the blind and to the indifferent and to the openly hostile and say well I was never like that

I was never like that as if by saying that you are saying well I'm a step above I'm a step step closer to God when I say that but the reality of the matter is the description that the apostle Paul gives to us here in Ephesians which I'm sure you're all familiar with is a description of a person who was dead spiritually dead and as spiritually dead incapable of taking a breath taking a step making a motion of any description towards God to say otherwise is completely flying in the face of what this truth is saying when God saves a sinner he saves a sinner completely incapable of saving themselves or doing anything that would enable that salvation to be possible all the glory is due to God alone and that is what we need to remind ourselves of if we read the passage before us what is clearly stated is that those who are without

Christ are clearly dead and as such they are incapable of responding to God when they do respond it is by reason of the enabling that the Spirit of Christ gives to them and we can't get away from it we can't make it anything other than what it is some people say well it's not fair God wants me to do something that I can't do no God wants you to do something that you should do and the fact that you should do it and you're unable to do it is something that you're responsible for that you're accountable to him for your inability is your inability and the fact that you have experienced or discovered that inability has only one possible response on your part and that is by coming to God and declaring to God

I am unable to do what you want me to do I am incapable of doing what you want me to do you want me to believe I can't then I must be given the wherewithal by which to believe there's a mystery as opposed surrounding that but that is the way it is when you look at this passage and you read again how even he says when we were dead in sins we were dead in sins he says he has quickened us to together with Christ by grace are you saved you can't say that a dead person can in any way respond to even the promptings of God unless God enables the response that he insists upon he is the one who initiates the quickening and he is the one who accomplishes the redemption of his own people and it's even more more complete than that what what God has undertaken to do he undertook to do it before the world was before the work of creation before the fall before the act of sin

[ 25 : 12 ] God had in us good pleasure elected son to everlasting life and while there may be mystery attached to the insistence of the scripture requires us to understand it and acknowledge it God's first step as far as the unregenerate is concerned is to regenerate to give life to the person who is dead to give new life to the person who needs to be born again by the spirit that enables him to be born again why is there a need to emphasize what seems to be obvious of the scripture why should there be an emphasis seen in the experience of the reformed church that required this emphasis if it's so plainly said before us in passages such as this one and I can't see how you can read this chapter without understanding what it is saying to you you might not like it you might not find it easy to understand but it's plainly set out for us here and elsewhere by nature we are fallen we are descendants of Adam we have asked all righteousness we are incapable of establishing any righteousness of our own if we were to appear before God as we are by nature the only conclusion that can come our way is that we would be condemned by God as a holy God who must condemn a sinner that's what the scripture repeatedly and clearly brings to our attention and yet because of man's unwillingness to appreciate what the truth is saying there had to be a time in the experience of the church where it emphasized the need for grace and the need for mercy and the need for salvation to be all of

God's doing so that God alone would have the glory in the salvation of sinners I think what we discover if we look at theology is that usually very often anyway if not always when a doctrine develops it develops on the back of error the truth is there and error rises out of the truth it is either misrepresented or something is taken out of it or something is added to it that is erroneous that is it is wrong so what the Bible pleases or says before us plainly is taken out of its original context and it is misapplied and whatever the heresy is whatever the error is it finds its place in the church so that the believers who may possess the truth are taken aside or led to believe something that is inconsistent with the truth now in this case without wanting to oversimplify it one original thought that went against the emphasis that there is on the part of

Paul that insists on God alone having the glory there is thought I suppose a 4th 5th century theologian by the name of Pelagius and he taught that man was capable in some way of making strides or taking steps to facilitate salvation for themselves not to save themselves but in some way that they could do something man could do something that would result in their salvation passion and I don't want to oversimplify it because it was probably if I understand it myself it stems from this that there is an understanding that when

Adam sinned when Adam fell from his first estate. He lost all the power or the ability to do good.

He was incapable of living out his life because his will was destroyed by sin.

[ 31 : 16 ] He was no longer able to do the will of God. When he sinned against God, he fell from the original position that he held where he delighted in doing God's will.

Now, Pelagius held that that ability to do what God wanted was still something that was innate in the passion, that they could, if they would, do what God wanted.

And in the basis of that, that they could strive for salvation or do something that would put them in the right tracks in order to be saved.

I suppose that's an oversimplification. But when man lost all original righteousness, the fact of the matter was that there was never an ability to do anything that was pleasing to God because sin permeated the atmosphere in which he breathed.

It polluted his own mind, his heart, his will. Every facet of his humanity was spoiled by sin. And to think that he could still do what was good is clearly not what the Bible taught.

[ 32 : 49 ] So Pelagius taught that and those who were his followers added to that thinking and eventually it became recognised as an open heresy that was inconsistent with God's word.

But it doesn't stop there. Later on, maybe quite quickly after that, there was what is called semi-Pelagianism and which is alongside what you would call modern-day Armenianism.

And there the thinking is that while there is acknowledgement that God in his grace works in the life of a sinner in order to save, it is possible for that sinner to resist God's grace and for that grace of God to be ineffectual.

so that a person who may be saved can fall away from the state of grace and be lost. Maybe there again we have an oversimplification.

But the Armenian position is that every person can come to faith in Jesus Christ. They're encouraged to do so, to believe and that's all they have to do.

[ 34 : 30 ] But having believed, the thinking is that that person can ultimately fall away from the faith. Now the teaching of the reformers is that where God has effectively called a sinner to himself by his grace, that grace is a saving grace from which he will not or she will not fall.

God has laid claim to them. He has elected them to everlasting life from all eternity. And that will not be in any way thwarted.

The challenge for the person who believes is to make their calling and election sure. That's what the apostles teach. That this is their duty.

They're not making themselves any more saved than they are. But they are making themselves more assured of their position in Christ Jesus that God has given to them by his grace.

What our theology teaches us is that when the Holy Spirit go back to the Catechism where it teaches us there the doctrine of effectual calling that when the Holy Spirit convinces us of our sin and the misery and that as a result of the fall that it follows that by the light of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to see Christ in his fullness.

[ 36 : 20 ] Everything that is true of Christ that is necessary for the salvation of sinners is brought to light by that Holy Spirit. And then following on from the illumination of the Spirit we are told he does persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ as he is freely offered in the Gospel.

This is God's doing. Remember it is God's Spirit that enlightens. It is God's Spirit that persuades us of our sin that brings sin home to us that enables us to see sin for what it is.

and it is the same Holy Spirit that enables us to surrender what we are hanging on to for dear life. The righteousness that is ours that we profess at times to believe that we need this for our salvation.

Well, no, we don't. There is a righteousness that accompanies the righteousness of Christ that righteousness which is worked out by faith without which we will not be faith because it's evidence without which we will not be saved because it is evidence of our salvation.

salvation but Christ alone is our salvation and our saviour and the evidence we have of our relationship with him is our works righteousness which isn't what we work out in order to be saved but because we are saved.

[ 38 : 07 ] R.C. Sproul talking about what he calls and what many theologians call the golden chain of salvation and he's referring to these words which I'm sure again you're familiar with in Romans 8 and describing to us what takes place in the experience of the believer.

We know that all things work together for good to them that love God to them who are called according to his purpose for whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son that he might be the firstborn among many brethren moreover whom he did predestinate them he also called whom he called them he also justified whom he justified them he also glorified.

What do you notice about these words? Well they tell you not what you did but what he did he did these things he called he foreknew he predestinated he conformed to the image of his son all of these things are highlighted as what God has done in the salvation of sinners and the text as it was is a text that reminds us of this truth that God alone has the glory and is worthy of receiving the glory in our salvation salvation when we are tempted to elevate ourselves and puff out our chest and say oh well if it wasn't we're not in a cooperation although we cooperate it's not because

God enables us to cooperate with himself and we say well if I don't cooperate I won't be saved that's not what it's saying that's not what God is teaching the word all applies throughout all that he has done in the experience of those who are saved by him for his ultimate glory if we were talking about man you would say well how how petty is that how how self a grand a grand is grand deciding is that God wanting to to elevate himself if it was man not God you could allege that but God is simply restoring the equilibrium to what it was before the fall where glory was his that was rightfully his and only his as God but now there is the addition of the fact that he is the alone saviour of sinners to God be the glory and the praise well jealously guard that when you find yourself falling prey to to painting your feathers and saying oh well maybe I don't read it we part to play correct yourself

God alone is the one who saves the lost let us pray oh lord our god our sinful inclination is to elevate ourselves even in the presence of a god that we know to be holy when we have been taught and we have even experienced the wildness of our nature and when your spirit comes and brings home to us what we are by nature how can we possibly think that there is anything commendable in us that there is anything that would promote us to possess that glory that is yours we recognise that you are jealous for your own glory may we acknowledge it and preserve it even in reminding ourselves of all that you have done and are doing and will do until the day we leave this world watch over us we pray for giving sin in

[ 42 : 53 ] Jesus name amen I'm going to sing in conclusion to verses in Gaelic from Psalm 62 Psalm 62 at verse 7 Go inia Oh

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[ 45 : 55 ] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen. The deacons call to be meeting immediately after this service.

Amen.