

To God Be the Glory

The Peace of God Part 15
Philippians 4:20 7/15/2017

Summary: God’s glory is that which is spectacular, amazing, beautiful, etc. about God. To glory to be to him means that we ascribe it to him – giving him the credit for the wonders in the creation and for everything else that is true about him. We glorify God by making him more glorious in people’s sight (wiping away the dirt from the window). This is the best thing that can happen for everyone, and it is the ideal relationship to God for us.

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Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

Imagine the world’s fastest race car. Every component on that car is the best you can buy. The wheels cost \$5000 each. The problem is, the car can’t go anywhere because the left rear wheel decided it wanted to be in charge, so it’s in the driver’s seat. So the tire is accomplishing nothing, because it can’t drive. The car is disgraced, because it can’t even get off the starting line. And the driver is kicked out of the race. Nobody’s happy. So the wheel says, “I was a fool to think I could drive. I need a much more lowly and humble place.” So it goes under the car and tries to be the exhaust pipe. That doesn’t work out either. It tries to find a spot on the hood, then on a door, then in the transmission – nothing works out, until finally it finds its spot. It attaches to the axel, it is finally in the right position, and now the car wins the race and the car is happy, the driver is happy, the wheel is happy – everyone’s happy. It works that way because when the wheel is in that spot – right there on the axel, it is in the right relationship to all the other parts of the car. For example, it has the right kind of connection to the engine. Power comes from the engine, it turns the drive shaft, that turns the axels, and if the wheel is on the end of the axel, it’s in a spot where it receives all that power from the engine, which is the design. In the driver’s seat, it’s not in a position to be connected to that power.

Also, when the wheel is attached where it belongs, that puts it in the right relationship to the body, because it holds the car up off the ground. It’s in the right relationship to the brakes, so that when you hit the brake pedal, that action goes to where that wheel is supposed to be attached. You get that wheel in the spot where it is in the right relationship to all the other parts, and the car takes off and wins the race.

Millions of people go through life like that wheel before it finds the axel. They aren’t in the right position in relationship to everyone and everything else, and so their life goes nowhere. God designed them to be a high performance, state of the art wheel, and they’re in the trunk, glove box, under the hood,

and they have all kinds of problems because they can't find that sweet spot where they were designed to function.

In this passage, Paul is going to teach us the exact spot where he designed us to flourish. And that spot is defined by where you are in relationship to God, in relationship to people, and relationship to yourself. So Paul's going to spell all three of those out for us – our ideal posture in relationship to God (v.20), to people (vv.21-22), and to yourself (v.23). We'll only get to the first one tonight. What's the ideal relationship to God that will connect you to the power from the engine?

Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

The ideal spot for you – the ideal posture in relationship to God, is for you to give glory to him.

Glory

Now what does that mean? Start with this – what is glory? The Greek word for **glory** means *radiance, brightness, or splendor* and it refers to that which is spectacular or amazing about something.

Matthew 4:8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

So Satan showed Jesus two things: the kingdoms, and what was impressive about the kingdoms – their glory. The devil drew Jesus' attention to all the most amazing, beautiful, impressive, spectacular things about those kingdoms. That's what glory is. The glory of something is that which is spectacular or beautiful about that thing. God's glory is that which is spectacular and wonderful about God.

To God

That's what God's glory is, but what does it mean when we say glory be to God?

Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We know that God *has* glory, that he *is* glorious, but what does it mean for you to *give* him glory? You see that about a dozen times in the NT – to God be glory. We sing it - "To God be the glory..." What does that mean? Doesn't God already have as much glory as he could ever have? Yes, God has infinite, perfect glory already. But most people don't know about it. We exist to glorify God, to show him as glorious, and the starting place for that is to simply acknowledge it – to ascribe or attribute glory to him. If you open the shades and your child asks, "Where is all this light coming from?" and you say, "It's coming from the sun," you just *attributed* or *ascribed* sunlight to the sun. You didn't make the sun any brighter; you just gave the sun credit for how bright it already is. And that increases that child's understanding about the sun's brightness. That's what it means to ascribe glory to God. You give him the credit for his glory.

Giving God Credit

We glorify God by making his glory known. He can't become any more glorious in his nature, but he can become more glorious *in our eyes*. When you wipe the mud off a window, you don't make the sun any brighter, but you do make it brighter from your point of view. Glorifying God means wiping the mud away from people's eyes so that God becomes more glorious from their point of view – enabling people to see what is amazing and spectacular about God more clearly. And the starting place for glorifying God is to simply acknowledge it.

This is a very big deal to God. When you look around at the creation – why such a marvelous world? Why is it that whatever you study in nature, it ends up blowing your mind? Why the distances and numbers of stars and galaxies in space that we can't even begin to fathom? It's not a hard question to answer – Ps.19:1 The heavens declare what? The glory of God. God wanted to display his glory, and so he plastered it everywhere.

Isaiah 6:3 The whole earth is full of his glory.

Nothing matters more. Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who do what? What is mankind doing that makes God so infuriated with them? You might expect it to say, “God is angry with mankind because of injustice and oppression.” Or “The wrath of God is being revealed against people who abuse children.” “God is angry because of murder and rape and lying and stealing, and war, etc.” Those things are all bad, but the most fundamental thing that has God furious with mankind is something else. It’s our failure to glorify him.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth ... 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him

We don’t give God credit for the wonderful things in this world. When mankind sees the wonders God has done in the creation, where do we naturally assign the credit? **25 ...they worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.** We give the creation the credit for creating itself and making itself glorious. You say, “Where did the universe come from?” and they say, “Well, all the stuff was already there, then it exploded, and swirled around until eventually there were computers and rocket scientists and nuclear physicists and people writing symphonies.” “Really?” “Yeah, if you start with nothing but hydrogen gas and gravity, if you wait long enough you get humans. – because gravity and the laws of physics make it all come together.” “That seems kind of unlikely.” “Well sure, but if you have enough time, eventually it will happen because of chance.” “So what powers gravity?” “Um ... it just kind of powers itself.”

And they want to try to convince us that this is science. All the high priests of evolutionism have everyone convinced that evolution is synonymous with science, so if you question any of this, you’re against science altogether.

That’s a charade. It’s not a scientific belief; it’s a religious belief. It’s a belief system based not on scientific observation, but based on a desire to avoid having to admit the one thing they really don’t want to admit – that God deserves the credit for the wonders of the creation.

Romans 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, 19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. 21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him

They don’t want to give the glory to God. They won’t give him credit for the creation, so they give the credit to the creation itself. They give the glory to random chance and gravity. Or serendipity. The other day I heard a talk radio host talking about how under-appreciated serendipity is. The dictionary definition of serendipity is this: *when various circumstances come together in a beneficial way by chance.* And she was going on and on about how powerful and wonderful serendipity is, and people should appreciate it more. Serendipity is not powerful. It does nothing. It doesn’t even exist. It’s a concept – not an actual thing that exists. It has no power. And the same goes for chance. Chance does not exist. Chance doesn’t have enough power to lift a feather one millimeter off the ground. It’s nothing. It’s just a word that we use to describe certain situations – not a power that has ability to do things or make things.

Even children know better than that. Even a little 5-year-old doesn’t see some cookies on the counter and say, “Oh, look, all these cookies decided to make themselves today. I’m so thankful to chance for doing that.” No, they see the cookies and say, “Who made the cookies?” Even a 5-year-old knows that nothing creates itself and nor is anything created or accomplished by chance. Baked goods come from bakers, gardens from gardeners, paintings from painters, and creations from creators. That’s just so obvious.

And yet, grown adults will give the world the credit for creating itself because people will do anything to avoid giving glory to God. The popular thing in the movies now and in TV shows is to talk about the universe being in control of providence. So they say things like, “The universe just didn’t want that to work out.” “The universe wanted us to get together – that’s why we met.” They talk about the universe as if it had a will and a plan and power to orchestrate circumstances. What that is they want to talk about God, but they can’t bring themselves to acknowledge God, so they just fill in the word universe. Such nonsense! Inanimate objects don’t have desires or a will or a plan. That’s like a little child pretending her teddy bear or dolls have desires and plans and she talks about them like they can actually think. The only people who do that sort of thing are really little children, and people with PhD’s. It’s so infantile, and yet grown adults talk that way and they aren’t laughed out of the room, because the whole society has just kind of agreed to suppress the real truth. They don’t want to have to give God the credit for creation – or for anything else good.

ALL the Glory

Not only does God deserve the credit for the creation, he deserves the credit for everything that he has done and everything that he is. A person’s glory is that which is beautiful and spectacular and magnificent about that person. So the glory of God is not just the fact that he created the world; the glory of God is everything that is true about God.

Everything Attribute of God is Glorious

If I asked you about the glory of your mom or dad or any person you know pretty well, and said, “What is wonderful about that person?” you might have to think a little bit, but you could give me a list of characteristics of that person that really are good and impressive. Then if I asked, “What characteristics does that person have that aren’t so great?” you could give me a list of those too. You might not even have to think quite as hard for that list. But with God, there is no second list. If you ask, “What is wonderful and spectacular and glorious about God?... ” you could throw out any random characteristic about God – make any true statement about God, and it’s something that is spectacular and glorious and beautiful. Every single thing that is true about God is infinitely glorious. So if I ask you to tell me something about God that is marvelous, or I just ask you to tell me any random fact about God – those are exactly the same question. When it comes to people, we try to focus on the good things and not on the bad things. With God, we don’t have to make that distinction. The only struggle is to make sure what we’re thinking about him is true. If it’s about God, and it’s true, then it’s spectacular and marvelous.

Glorifying God

But it may not look that way to you. In fact, most facts about God don’t seem very spectacular or glorious at first. You say, “God exists” – that’s true. But it doesn’t seem very marvelous. God commanded the ancient Israelites to destroy all the Canaanites. That’s true; it doesn’t seem all that beautiful on its face. We look at God’s attributes like a blind man looking at the sun. Until God opens our eyes to see the beauty of them, none of his attributes will seem beautiful to us. That’s what spiritual blindness is all about – inability to see the reality about God’s goodness and beauty. That’s a disease I wake up with every morning, and I pray for healing for every time I open my Bible. I get up in the morning, my Bible reading bookmark is half way through Jeremiah, and before I open it and start reading, I pray Ps.119:18 – **Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things.** Even old, familiar attributes that I’ve seen the beauty of many times before, without special help from God, I won’t be able to see it this morning. You hear in church, “God is compassionate and tender,” you hear that 100 times, and it just kind of goes in one ear and out the other. Maybe you have some shallow understanding of it, “Yeah, God feels for me when I suffer,” but it’s not enough to really grip you or comfort you or fill you up with any special joy. But then one day – it might be in your morning devotions, maybe during a sermon, maybe while

listening to some praise music, or while ministering to someone else and telling them about God's compassion, suddenly your eyes are opened, and God gives you a glimpse. Maybe it happens in a time of acute suffering. God opens your eyes, and at that moment your whole being is gripped with the wonder of this truth of God's compassion. It might bring tears to your eyes. It might give you chills. It might fill you with joy or gratitude. It's like this is the first time you've ever seen God's compassion, even though you've talked about it and sung about it, and even taught others about it for years, but right now it feels like you've never understood it before, because right now your vision of that attribute of God is so clear. And a month from now, that ability to really appreciate and enjoy the beauty of that attribute might be gone – now it's right back to the way it was before.

When you see something really special about God's compassion, or about his wisdom, or his power or patience or wrath or creativity or fatherhood or complexity or any other attribute – when you see what's so amazing and delightful and beautiful and awesome about one or more of his attributes, what you're seeing is his glory.

The glory of God is what's magnificent about his attributes. And so to glorify God means to enable others to see that magnificence. You don't make God any more glorious in his nature – he's already infinitely and perfectly glorious in his nature, but you do make him more glorious in the eyes of the people around you. That's what it means to glorify God. The worst thing in our lives is the cloudiness that prevents us from clear vision of God's attributes. And the best thing that ever happens to us is when someone comes along and glorifies him – that is, they help clear some of that fog away, so we can see a glimpse of his glory.

Another word the Bible uses for that is to magnify God. God is like this massive, breathtaking galaxy way out in space, but when you look up at night all you see is a little speck of light. So someone puts a super-powered telescope in front of you, and shows you that galaxy with strong magnification. You still don't see anywhere close to the actual size, but at least now it's much more spectacular than when you didn't have the magnification. The telescope brings your vision closer to reality. That's what it means to magnify God's glory. Do or say something that makes one of his attributes go from looking like a speck to looking more like the galaxy that it is.

The Benefits of God Being Glorified

Now, I mentioned earlier that this is a big deal to God. Why is that? C.S. Lewis, before he became a Christian, really struggled with that. He said it made God seem like an insecure egomaniac who constantly needs compliments from people. No one likes being around people who are like that, so why is it OK for God?

Lewis finally realized that it's different for God, because part of the enjoyment of a great thing is in praising it. In fact, praising it actually increases the enjoyment of It. When you see an awesome flash of lightening, or a meteor or a great movie or anything that is really spectacular, why do words come out of your mouth: "Wow! Did you see that? That was incredible..." Why are you praising it – to prop up the lightening bolt's self-esteem? No. You praise it because your enjoyment of an amazing thing increases when you talk to someone about how amazing it is.

That's part of the answer, but I would take it even further than that. Giving God credit for his glory is good because that's the ideal relationship between us and God. Think about a little baby who is agitated and upset, and his mother her mother picks her up and the baby is instantly at rest and snuggles in her mother's arms. And when that happens, both the baby and the mother love it. Why? Why does the woman love it so much? Is it because she needs a boost to her pride and self-esteem? She needs some proof that shows that she really is soft and snuggly? No. She's happy just because this is the way it's supposed to be. It's the ideal kind of relationship between mother and child.

When a father is teaching his son how to be a man – both father and son are happy. If a woman is afraid and she finds security and comfort in the arms of her husband, both of them are happy. Not because of some ego trip on the father or husband's part, but just because this is the ideal kind of interaction. It's the right kind of relationship which is satisfying to everyone. And that's how it is with us and God. There

are certain kinds of interactions between us and God that are ideal – interactions that make everyone happy, and one of the most important is this one - glorifying him.

What if there is a woman who would make a great mother – she can care for and love a baby, but she doesn't have a baby? What if a man would make a great dad and a great husband, but he doesn't have a wife or a son? What if there is a world-class pianist, but everyone in the world is deaf? What if there is an amazing restaurant but no one knows about it? What if there is a glorious God, but no one can see his glory? That's why the most urgent task in the world, and the best thing you can ever do for the world, is to publish God's glory. Seeing his attributes clearly, helping others see them clearly, acknowledging him to be the source of good things – nothing will do you more good, nothing will do this world more good, and nothing is as fitting and right and ideal as doing that.

God wants our attention on him, not because it helps him or benefits him, but because it's the ideal way of us relating to him. And the alternative will only harm us. Focusing on the creation, or on ourselves will ultimately take away our joy. The center of the universe is a miserable place to be if you're not God. Think of this life as being like a movie theater. A movie theater is no place for a mirror. And if someone stands up in the theater and says, "Hey everybody, look at me!" that is disruptive and unloving. "But don't we all naturally enjoy being the center of attention?" Not in a movie theater. If you are in a theater and all eyes are on you for some reason, you're not having a good day. The best experience at a movie – if you really want to get your money's worth - is if your eyes are so glued to the screen that you forget about yourself for 2 hours. And the way to have joy in this life is to forget yourself and fix your attention on the glory of God. The more you become so enraptured with his glory that you forget about yourself, the happier you'll be.

Seeing God receiving glory in heaven will be the most pleasurable sensation you will have ever felt or could feel. The jihadists look forward to 70 virgins – this will be a million times more pleasurable than anything they are imagining. And not only more pleasurable, but also more interesting than anything you've ever experienced. And more spectacular. And more awesome – in the literal sense. When a bolt of lightning strikes 5 feet away from you and it's the loudest thing you've ever heard and it knocks you down, you feel a sense of awe. Seeing God's glory will rattle you with 1000 times more awe than that little spark. Seeing the glory of his love will warm your heart more than the most moving expression of love you've ever experienced. It will give you more hope than you've ever felt or thought you could feel. It will purify you like it did Isaiah in Isa.6, and you will feel utterly clean and pure on the inside.

It will do all those things for ever and ever in ever-increasing measure and intensity in the new earth, but get this – it will do all those things now. It happens now in very limited measure because our view of God's glory is so sketchy now. But the clearer the view, the more those things happen, even in this life.

For Ever and Ever

And so God's idea of heaven is for that to go on for ever and ever.

Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

There are some things that have a temporary purpose. This is not one of those. There are some things that have no application in eternity - they're only for this life. This is not one of those. This is something so great so big so important so massive so beneficial that it will outlive this world, it will outlive everything else that's going on, it will always be happening, God will see to it because it's the most important thing there is – even in heaven.

The Greek phrase for *forever* is *into the ages*. And if you look up that phrase in the Bible, you'll find that there are only about 10 things that are said to continue forever:

1. The glorification of God
2. The reign of Christ
3. The ministries of Christ
4. The punishment of the wicked
5. The Word of God

6. The life of believers
7. The righteousness of believers
8. The reign of believers
9. Our nearness to Christ
10. Our fellowship with the Spirit.

Those are the things will continue forever – into the ages. But what about this phrase for ever *and ever*? The Greek behind that is into the ages *of the ages*. What's the point of that? The word *forever* is already as unending and eternal as you can get. So when Paul doubles it up and says for ever and ever, it's like he's saying, "Here's the most eternal of all eternal things. If it were possible for some eternal thing to outlast other eternal things, this would be it." In other words, of all eternal things, these are the greatest – the preeminent reality in eternity. And of all the things that are in the eternal category, there's only one thing Paul speaks of as going for ever and ever: ascribing glory to God.

Galatians 1:5 to him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

2 Timothy 4:18 ...To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And not just Paul.

1 Peter 4:11 to Jesus Christ be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 5:11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

Hebrews 13:21 ... to Jesus Christ be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 1:6 ...to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Revelation 5:13 ..."To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"

Revelation 7:12 Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

That's the foreverest of all eternal things. It's the central reality of heaven. It will always be a step ahead of our eternity, so we will always be reaching for it.

It will never get old. If it sounds boring to you, it may be because you think of glorifying God mainly in terms of singing. You think, "I like singing as much as the next guy, but sitting around singing songs all day every day for eternity – I don't know about that." If you think that way, don't worry, because glorifying God is not about singing praise songs. Praise songs are the reaction to God being glorified. You will never sing in heaven except when you feel like it. You won't sing except for when you are so happy that you can't help it.

Seeing God's glory and responding will be the opposite of boring. Earlier, when I was describing what it's like in those moments when God opens your eyes to see one of his attributes more clearly. When that happens, it can captivate your whole soul, bring tears to your eyes, give you chills, even change the whole direction of your life. That happens when God gives you a little tiny telescope and gives you a little bit better glimpse of his glory. But imagine what it will be like when you see that attribute not through a telescope but you stand right next to that galaxy and God enables you to see the whole thing up close. In this life we see as through a mirror dimly. So you start out totally blind, then the Holy Spirit opens your eyes a little bit and it's like looking through a window that's completely crusted with dirt but you can see a

tiny bit of light through it and it's exhilarating. But then it won't be a tiny bit of light. The window will be gone altogether and you'll stand right in front of the reality and see it perfectly clear.

We get that kind of exhilaration from getting insight into one attribute at a time, which is usually as much as we can handle. But then it won't just be one attribute. Imagine that happening - that kind of clarity with three or four hundred attributes of God all at once. Or three or four thousand that haven't even been revealed to us yet.

And that will just be the starting point. It will become clearer and clearer as time goes on forever and ever. It will keep getting better. Imagine heaven as being like the most captivating, intense movie you've ever watched - you're totally lost in it, and then it keeps getting better and then better and better and better.

We are finite beings, and so even if we had a million times more accurate vision of God than we do now, and then that tripled every second for a million years, we would still never get it all. No matter how much it increases, will never have the capacity for infinite perception, which means there will always be more.

Amen

Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

We typically use the word “amen” to signal to everyone that we are done praying. But I don’t know of any time in the Bible where “amen” was said at the end of a prayer. They didn’t use it to end prayers, but they did use it – 57 times in the Bible. Where you see it is at the end of doxologies – statements designed to give glory to God. According to 1 Corinthians 14:16, one of the measures of good praise and worship is when people say “amen.” Amen is a Hebrew word that means “Yes – so be it!” It was used in the Old Testament mainly as a congregational response to give a strong affirmation or agreement. Nehemiah 8:6 Ezra praised the Lord, the great God; and all the people lifted their hands and responded, "Amen! Amen!" Then they bowed down and worshiped. “Amen” is an exclamation that means, “From the bottom of my heart I agree with what was just said. I agree with it and I love it!” God has given us this special word that we can all use as shorthand when we want to affirm and celebrate something that was just said. It’s like God has given you a verbal exclamation point that you can use at any moment to join in with some wonderful affirmation about God. Amen is an exclamation. I think it should probably always have an exclamation point after when it appears in print.

And you should know that saying amen has absolutely nothing to do with Charismatic or non-Charismatic. It’s is not about personal taste or tradition. It is about giving glory to God. It is about the way God has told us He wants to be worshipped, and the way he wants us to interact with each other as we worship. He does not want us to be isolated, silent, encapsulated individuals in corporate praise. If something resonates in your heart at all, you should give expression to that out loud.

That does two things. It encourages the people around you and increases their joy, and it amplifies and increases your own joy. This is the way God designed praise – it is greater when it is corporate. And an important part of making it corporate is responding with the word “amen” when something resonates in your heart. If a family member came bursting in the door one day, all excited about some amazing thing he just saw, and you just respond with dead silence – that is bizarre and unnatural. Especially if you really are impressed with the thing he is talking about. How much more important to share in the enthusiasm of people who are talking about the greatest things – a point in a sermon that you feel especially passionate about, or a line in a praise song – or a prayer. When God designs exalted creatures who are created just for the purpose of worshipping Him, those creatures say, “Amen.”

Revelation 5:13 “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!” 14 The four living creatures said, "Amen"

We exist to glorify God, and a big way to do that is to throw out an exclamation point when someone else shows God’s glory.

Conclusion

How does it make you feel to realize that you exist for the purpose of clearing the fog from the window so God's glory can be seen more? He made you for his glory. How does it make you feel to realize that you are in the world, the reason you came into existence, is to be a telescope? The fact that you exist makes it so that God is seen to be what he really is more clearly than if you didn't exist. That should just give us tingles down our spine if we had any concept of that fact. I don't know how you measure your life. You think you're a big success or a big failure because of something about your career or your accomplishments or skills or whatever. It's so much bigger than that. You're here so that more of God's glory will be seen.

20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen!