

Eph 3:20-21

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[0 : 00] The word church means different things to different people. To some it's just a building of bricks and mortar.

To others it's a denomination, the Church of England, the Church of Scotland and so on. And of course the New Testament many times over refers to the church.

Sometimes the reference is to the local church, a local fellowship of believers in the Lord Jesus.

Paul the Apostle wrote to the Church of God which is at Corinth.

He wrote to the Church of the Thessalonians. At other times the Bible writers have in mind not the local church but the universal worldwide church.

The word church literally means the called out ones. It is the people of God who have been called out by God himself from sin and from the world and from the clutches of Satan.

[1 : 08] Called out from all that and called as it were over there to righteousness and to holiness and to Jesus Christ. The one and only Saviour.

They've been called out from all that, from that realm, from that sphere to a completely different sphere. The opposite sphere if you like. From one thing, from one extreme to the other.

They're called out. That's the Church. The people of God. Paul's letter to the Ephesian believers has quite a lot to say about the Church.

And I suppose one of the most wonderful things about the Church in that particular letter is found in chapter 5 and verse 25. And it's a challenge not only to each one of us, it's a challenge particularly to the husbands here.

Because in chapter 5 and verse 25 Paul writes, Husbands, love your wives. Well that's okay. That's what we ought to do. But then he continues in this way. Just as.

[2 : 09] Just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her. Which is an awful lot, isn't it, to try and do. It's okay to love our wives.

But to love our wives just as Christ loved the Church. That's an awful lot. And we stand in awe and we say, Can't do it. With God's help I'll try to do it, but I can't do it in my own strength.

I mean what a thing for us to be told to do as husbands. Love our wives as Christ loved the Church.

But notice what Paul says here about the Church. And what Paul says here about Christ.

Christ so loved the world that he gave up himself. And you'll notice the word himself. So he didn't just give his life. He didn't just give his blood.

He gave himself. All of himself. So that he had nothing left. Nothing kept back. All of himself as it were laid upon the altar. He so loved the Church.

[3 : 14] And let's make it personal. If you're a believer here tonight, he so loved you that he gave himself for you.

What a tremendous and glorious truth. What love for the Church. What love for you. What love for me. But that's not our text this evening.

We turn back to the chapter that we read earlier. Chapter 3. Right at the end of the chapter, the Apostle breaks into a doxology. He has prayed a great prayer from verses 16 to 19 for the Ephesian believers.

But now comes the doxology. And having prayed, Paul refers to prayer in the doxology. Verse 20.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us. But it's the next verse. The last verse in the chapter which is our text this evening.

[4 : 20] Verse 21. To him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.

It's a verse about God. It's a verse about glory. It's a verse about the Church. It's a verse about Christ. It's a verse about time and eternity.

So let's have a look at our verse believing that the Lord has something to say to each one of us here this evening. We're going to make a few points about it. And the first is this. God's glory. God's glory.

To him be glory in the Church. All things were made by him and what? For him.

Isn't that what the Bible says? All things were made by him. He is the great creator of all things. But also, the Bible tells us, all things were made for him. That is, for his glory, for his honour.

[5 : 24] There's a very good children's catechism which asks the question, why did God create you and all things? And the answer is, for his own glory.

God's glory is the end for which he created the world and everything in it. That is the purpose for everything. That is the reason for everything.

All the created order, all the things that grow in the earth, all the animal kingdom, mankind, the sun and the moon and the stars, the galaxies, everything that you can think of, everything that there is, is for God's glory.

That's why it all exists. The glory of God is the theme of the whole universe. Everything that God has ever made, everything that God has ever done, is ultimately for his own glory.

We must penetrate into this a little deeper. Our text speaks of God's glory, but what exactly does that mean? Glory speaks of the manifestation of God's true nature, of his perfections, of his holiness, his likeness.

[6 : 46] God's glory is God's person. God's very being. The glory of God is the beauty and the brightness of his infinite perfections.

Someone said this, he is glorified when he is allowed to be seen as he really is. He is glorified when he is allowed to be seen as he really is.

When God wants to display his glory, he displays himself. He says, this is what I'm like. This is me, the living, eternal, sovereign God.

And when he reveals himself, when he discloses himself, he gets glory. He reveals himself and so he reveals his glory. God is glorious and when we look at him as he reveals himself to us in the Bible, in creation, we see his glory.

God reveals what he is like. His glory is who he is. His being is glory. His nature is glorious. His character is glorious.

[8 : 02] His attributes are glorious. So whenever you look at God in any way or see any part of him or any attribute of his, you see his glory. To give glory to God is not to add something to who God is or what he is.

Rather, it is an active and real extolling of the very nature of God. So you stand back in awe and you say, this God and all I know about him is glorious for he is glorious.

Now, we've said that everything that exists is designed and intended to glorify God and that, of course, includes you and it includes me.

So it makes it very personal, doesn't it? think about yourself and why you exist. You do exist.

You have self-consciousness and you know that you're in this building here tonight. and as you sit there, your body is living, your heart is beating the blood around that body and you're breathing in and out and you're thinking and you're looking and you're hearing and you ask, why am I here?

[9 : 34] And the answer, according to the Bible, is this, for the glory of God. That is why. It's a sobering thought, isn't it?

But this is the purpose for your existence. This is the reason for your living in this world in the 21st century.

It shouldn't surprise us that the Apostle Paul in this same letter repeatedly insisted upon the fact that the purpose for redemption and salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ is the glory of God.

I want to read just a few verses to you from chapter 1. What are we saying? We're saying that God saves sinners for his glory. Ephesians chapter 1 verses 5 and 6.

He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

[10 : 40] Why has he done this? Why has he saved you? For his glory. To the praise of his glorious grace. Verse 12 in that same chapter.

In order that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be for the praise of his glory. If you're here tonight sitting in this building as a saved child of God know this it was for his glory.

And lastly in verse 14. Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

See Paul in a sense can't stop saying it. He says it here. He says it there. He repeats it again to the praise of the glory of God. Coming back to our text we read to him be glory.

To God be glory. Nor is it surprising I suppose to remember that the Lord Jesus when he taught the Lord's prayer not the prayer that he prayed it's the prayer that he taught his disciples to pray it almost ends with these words doesn't it?

[11:52] To God be the glory. Yours be the glory. So that's our first point tonight God's glory. Our second point is this in the church in the church coming back to our text to him be glory in the church.

The Bible tells us the heavens declare the glory of God. But it is particularly the church in which the glory of God is to be seen.

Someone said this the church lies at the very centre of the eternal purpose of God. It's the instrument by which God glorifies himself in this world.

The world is silent. Unbelievers don't give glory to God but the church does. Believers do. I've got one or two quotations tonight because so many other people put things better than ever I could.

Here's another quotation. Only in the company of the saved is the grandeur of God recognised. You go out into the street tonight and you meet the first person that comes along the road and you say do you understand the grandeur and the glory of God?

[13:12] They all scratch their heads and say no I don't know what you're talking about. But you go to a believer and you say to them that same question do you understand something of the glory and the grandeur and the beauty of God?

And they say yes I do not as much as I ought to I don't appreciate him as much as I ought to but I see something of that grandeur of that glory. I see it in God I see it in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the church is the highest and most supreme manifestation of the wisdom and glory of God. The church is not an end in itself it's not a purpose in itself it's a means to an end and the end is the glory of God.

The reason for the church is not merely to save people now that's a good and nice means but it's only a means the end is the end of all things the glory of God that's why there is a church for the glory of God that's why you've been saved for the glory of God not just to do you good not just to make you happy not just to take you to heaven when you die no it's end is it's reason is the glory of God famous people get recognition and glory in their own particular spheres for example pop stars get their glory in the pop world film and television stars they get glory and recognition in those spheres it's the same with athletes we know don't we that very big meetings are held these days and honours are given out to various people celebrities and all the rest of them and they get their Emmys they get their Oscars and someone is announced to be pronounced to be the sports personality of the year so all these people you see they get glory in their own specific realm now God gets glory he gets glory from his creation in the world but especially he gets glory in the church that's what Paul is saying here to him be glory in the church and so this brings us into it a great deal doesn't it we are those who belong to the church and therefore something of the glory of God is to be seen in the church and in us

Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones said this nothing so shows the power and glory of God as the Christian church nothing so shows the power and glory of God as the Christian church and nothing in this world gives so much glory to God as the church someone put it like this and think about this it's a wonderful illustration like a sufficiently diversified yet unified system of mirrors with which to reflect the glory of his many sided wisdom look at the church like that the worldwide church and you've got the picture here of all these mirrors in the church reflecting back to God his own glory so God looks at this church and sees something of his glory reflected back and he looks at another church and he sees the same all these churches you see all over the world reflecting something of the glory back to

[16:41] God and he's pleased with that that's why he made the world that's why he made the church that's why there are churches to reflect back to God something of his glory you may have seen the shard building in London it's a statement it glorifies the architect it glorifies the sheik who put up the money for it and it glorifies those who built it and the church glorifies God for he is the

architect of the church he purchased the church with the blood of his own son and he's building the church as well the church glorifies God because the church exists in this world of sin and shame a world which is according to the Bible under the sway of the wicked one it glorifies God because each person who belongs to the church displays to some extent the image of Jesus

Christ and that again glorifies God God looks down upon the church and each member of the church and sees something of Jesus in each one did you ever really seriously think about that that the father looks down on you as a believer and he looks for something of Jesus Christ's character in you and he sees it to some extent not perfectly he never will see that image perfectly until the last day until you get to heaven but he nevertheless sees something of Christ in you and what he wants to see of course is an increasing likeness and conformity to Christ that brings glory to God and the church glorifies Christ because each member of the church worships and praises the Lord in that sense you see it's not surprising that the church is the one thing in this world which particularly and especially glorifies God the people of God have experienced the blessing and grace of God no wonder we glorify

God we ought to someone said that in every human being there is a need and a longing to sing a doxology many people sing it to athletes or footballers or rock stars or celebrities or politicians not so much politicians I don't think but anyway they've got their songs they've got their doxologies to all these famous people we were made to worship and we were made to sing we were made to have a hero to brag about and we as believers join with the apostle Paul and we sing our doxology to God to him be glory in the church not to the pop stars and all the rest of them to him to our God we've got a hero to boast about our Lord Jesus the universal church is manifested in the world of course by local churches and so now we bring this down to this particular local church here what is this this is

Whitby Evangelical Church why is it here to glorify God why are we gathered here tonight to glorify God there is this church here for the glory of God ultimately no other reason that's the end in view now there's another verse in this chapter that we must notice which takes us along the same lines as our text but it adds I suggest to our wonder and to our amazement you want to be amazed well let's read verse 10 we're in Ephesians 3 verse 10 his intent was that now through the church notice we're still talking about the church through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms who are they who are the rulers and authorities angels these are terms used in the

Bible in the New Testament for angels those words are used in chapter 1 and verse 21 to describe the angels far above all rule and authority power and dominion and so on so the reference is to angels it's the same in Paul's letter to the Colossians what was God's eternal purpose why did he make the church why the church according to verse 10 that the angels might see the wisdom of God by looking at the church the purpose of all this preaching the purpose for which God made the church is that the angels might know how manifold is the wisdom of God it is in us in the church they see as they see it nowhere else the wisdom as well as the power and the grace of

[22 : 09] God again let me quote to you the words of Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones what is happening in the church is so stupendous so glorious that even the bright angelic beings who have spent their entire existence of the presence of God even they are staggered and amazed at what they see in and through the church what takes place in the church is something that even they had never thought of nor imagined it surpasses sorry it surprises even their knowledge their comprehension and even their imagination now we've never seen an angel have we we can't imagine seeing an angel but we know they exist the Bible tells us that and the angels have always been the good angels the elect angels they've always been in the presence of God and yet they have never seen never thought of never imagined something like this that

God displaying his glorious attributes in saving guilty sinners and bringing them to the Lord sent the Son they must have well I don't suppose they ever queried the will of God and the express purpose of God but they must have wondered to themselves what on earth is the Father doing I mean here is his son his precious son who's always been at the right hand of the father and now the father is sending him to that world to become a man and they must our Jesus dying upon that cross and it was the father's will for that to happen they must have staggered must have been amazed at it all astounded but as they saw that and as they saw the working out of God's will in saving you and saving me they were amazed at the wisdom of

God you see they see his wisdom as they see it nowhere else they see it in Jesus Christ saving sinners the angels see the power of God in creation they see the wrath of God in hell they see the love of God at Calvary but God says they're going to see my wisdom in the church and even fallen angels must have realised how stupid they were to disbelieve God and turn their backs upon him he is glorified in the folly and in the foolishness of the fallen angels the angels are checking out the church did you realise that they're watching us they're watching you they're watching me and God tells them to watch us and as they watch us as they watch the church they see the wisdom of God and they say how wise God is we never thought he was that wise we knew he was wise but this is amazing they say to themselves they watch us with wonder and with awe and the more we fulfil God's plan the more they praise him so God's glory we thought about that we thought about God's glory in the church now thirdly God's glory in Christ God's glory in Christ coming back to our text to him to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus the Lord Jesus Christ came down to this world from heaven he came from the glory he came from the glorious kingdom he had before he came down here a glory up there when Jesus was praying in John chapter 17 that glorious high priestly prayer as we sometimes call it in John 17 and verse 5 Jesus says this and now Father glorify me in your presence with the glory which

I had with you before the world began so Jesus could look back to his existence his pre worldly existence when he was up there with the father and he said I had a glory with you up there he remembered it of course he did he knew all about it he remembered it and how he was surrounded by glory in heaven before he came to this glory of divinity it was the glory of God the writer of the letter to the Hebrews puts it in very remarkable terms in Hebrews chapter 1 and at the beginning of verse 3 the writer says this the sun is the radiance of God's glory and that's how it was before he came to this world the radiance of God's glory so you see the glory of God in Jesus Christ he came down from there to this world of sin and sinners did he leave that glory behind in one sense he did but not in another when

[27 : 29] John began to write his gospel in chapter 1 and verse 14 John looks back we've thought about Jesus looking back to eternity John couldn't do that but he did look back to when Jesus was here on earth and in John 1 14 he said the word became flesh and lived for a while among us and then he says this we have seen his glory the glory of the one and only son who came from the father full of grace and truth have you seen God's glory yes says John I saw it I saw him and all the other apostles joined with him and saying yes we saw it now it's interesting John is the only one of the gospel writers who doesn't mention the transfiguration you remember the story of Jesus transfiguration there he went up on the mountain he became radiant shining like the sun but

John doesn't mention that and when he's writing that verse in John 1 14 he hasn't got the transfiguration in mind he's just got the normal day by day glory of Jesus Christ in mind the glory of his character the glory of who he was it's as though John says we didn't have to go up the mountain to see it we saw it down here in the valley we saw it when he preached we saw it when he worked miracles we saw it when he healed and when he preached the gospel we saw it the glory of God Spurgeon said this you Lord Jesus you are he alone among men eloquent enough to express the glory of God no one else could do that as Jesus did it and when John saw this Jesus he saw the glory of Jesus person the glory of his character the glory of his grace now coming back to our text we might think there's a contradiction here because

Paul writes to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus so is the glory of God in the church or is it in Christ Jesus and the answer is yes it's in both God's glory is to be seen in the church and also in Christ Jesus and it's interesting that Spurgeon when he was speaking of this he referred to the fact that according to the New Testament the church is the body of Christ and Christ is the head now you see if Christ is the head and he's glorious the body is glorious too you can't separate the body from the head if the head is glorious and he is some of that glory is to be seen in the church as well or look at it like this the church is in

Christ and Christ is in the church they are inseparably joined and no one can pull them as under and so the glory of God is to be seen yes as Paul says in the church and in Christ Jesus so God's glory in the church and in Christ we've got one last point and it's this in all ages in all ages the stars of this world are here one moment and gone the next we're always reading aren't we in our newspapers or hearing on the news of some well known person some famous person who's just died quite naturally it happens doesn't it some drugged up pop star some well known actor someone important in the government they've died and we know their names and we know a little

bit about them but they've gone they light up the world sky for a little while and then they've just gone it's the same with the great

Christians of the past isn't it we know some of these names so well and yet of course they grew old they died some of them maybe didn't grow very old but they still died they've gone that's how it is what about the church the church goes on it will continue to go on our verse says this to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever there is always always going to be a church there's going to be a church of the Lord Jesus Christ in this world until the end of the world but that's not the end of the church the church goes on it is God's eternal church it is Christ's never ending church there will always be a church and there will always be a church in which the glory of

[32 : 48] God is to be seen and it's quite true of course also that as our verse says this glory is to be seen in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever there is going to be no end to Jesus Christ he is eternal he always has been always will be so there's no end to the glory of God to be seen in Christ Jesus Christ himself continues and his church continues and Christ of course never fades in his glory he still shines with the full glory of God and now stretch your mind beyond time to eternity I quoted a little while earlier from chapter 5 of Ephesians I read verse 25 I want to read verse 27 now so stretch your mind go to the future and what do you see chapter 5 verse 27 and to present her that's the church to himself as a radiant a glorious church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless on that great and grand day the church will express the glory of

God as never before then in every sense and with no limitations whatsoever will the glory of God be seen in the church it will be a glorious church and so it will continue the church is forever as Christ is forever and we shall be magnifying and manifesting the glory of God forever and ever to be where God is will be glory to be what God intended will be glory to do what God purposed will be glory and the angels will continue to look at us in astonishment and amazement and seeing us they will ascribe to God all the praise and all the glory and all the honor and all the majesty and all the might and all the power and all the dominion they will look at us and say oh this glorious God how wise he is they'll do that forever and ever they'll never come to an end and the Lord Jesus Christ of course will continue to all generations and the father will find his pleasure in the Lord Jesus throughout all eternity so what a vista what a vision it's enough to take your breath away isn't it when you begin to grasp it when you stretch your mind and stretch your imagination to think about it you're left speechless from the past to the present and on to the future and never ceasing without any end the glory of God in the church and in Christ Jesus now as we begin to close what should be our response to these things let's sum up our response just now in one word it's the very word that Paul uses do you see what he says verse 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever then what's he say amen so be it let it be in others

I wholeheartedly agree with this I've got no arguments with it this is God's truth this is what God has purposed that the church and Christ might exhibit God's glory and what it means in practical terms is this because we're not just thinking about wonderful doctrines up in the skies it were we're thinking about practical outworkings what it means is this if God created all things for his glory what should you be doing tomorrow glorifying God isn't isn't that why God made you isn't that why you exist that's what we were saying earlier you see not just pie in the sky and great theological arguments and all the rest of it this is practical we understand the doctrine and then we see the outworking of the doctrine and the outworking of the doctrine is that you and I tomorrow and the next day and the day after that live for the glory of God that you wake up tomorrow and think why am I here oh yes to glorify God that's the practical outworking of it what a great truth this is what a great text isn't it so take this home with you think about it and let God affect you by his truth so that you glorify God but it could be there's someone here and you're not a Christian you're not a believer we've been talking about the church and maybe you're not a member of the church I don't mean a member of this particular local church I mean a member of the worldwide church of the Lord Jesus Christ that worldwide church is composed of those who know and love Jesus Christ they've repented of their sins and they've trusted in him that makes a person a member of the church the worldwide church are you a member of that church have you recognized that you're a sinner and have you gone to the one and only saviour

[38 : 50] Jesus Christ if you've never done it before you need to do it urgently don't put it off say to God I need to belong to you I need to fulfill the very reason for my existence to glorify you I want to do it I've not done it so far in fact I've tried to glorify myself I've been a sinner but I need you come and change me I turn from my sin with your help and I trust Jesus Christ and his death upon the cross you need to do it tonight if you've never done it before so what does our text say to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever Amen