

### Ephesians 1 (3) – The Blessed God

The renewing of our mind is a central part of our worship, and it requires diligent study. Basically stated, theology is the study of God; doxology is the worship of God. This is where all theology should end up, in praise to God. Study without praise is pride. Praise without study is shallow. Knowledge without a heart surrendered to God is empty of God's life. All true worship is a response to the revelation of God in Christ and Scripture, and arises from our reflection on who God is and what he has done.

For example, the first 11 chapters of Romans are concerned with doctrine. And then it ends in doxology. Romans 11:33-36 – *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! "For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?" "Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.*

Theology leading to doxology. That's how it's supposed to be.

Now, in chapters 12-16 of Romans, Paul turns to application. The first word in Romans 12:1 is "Therefore." Paul didn't teach 11 chapters of doctrine to fill our heads, but to change how we live our lives. So, now he calls for a response. And the first part of that response has to deal with worship.

Romans 12:1-2 looks back at Romans 1-11, and it answers the question, "How should we respond to God's great mercy to us?" The answer is to become living sacrifices, using our lives to serve God and his purposes as an ongoing act of worship. This is not about earning salvation; it is about properly responding to salvation. To do this, we will need to have our minds changed in order to be able understand what God wants.

Vs.1 says that presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice is a spiritual act of worship. Paul's original audience, both Jew and Gentile, would have understood the imagery of animal sacrifices. Animals were sacrificed as an

offering to God. Paul uses this image to say that we are to give ourselves as a living sacrifice. Of course, this does include death for martyrs. But it means every Christian is to die to any sinful self-interest and to live for God's interests. God wants more than token sacrifices and rituals; he wants our hearts. Presenting our bodies means giving God our entire selves.

The commitment we are to make is to say, "Here I am, Lord, use me as you will." But what does he will that to be? And following that will is going to look different for different people in different places at different times. Our particular service to the Lord will probably have seasonal changes. So, telling God you're "all-in" is one thing, and living that out is another.

But how do you know what to do? That is where vs.2 comes in. And this is where you see study as a form of worship. Vs.2 tells you that "*the renewal of your mind*" leads to living your life as an act of worship. So, it is clear that study, properly pursued, leads to worship. And that means study for the purpose of worship is also a means of worship in itself.

Now let's look at our main text today, and a passage that shows you how properly focused study is indeed a form of worship. Ephesians 1:3-14 is all one sentence in the Greek, and it is rich in theological truth. And this big, theologically rich sentence starts out with, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*", before it talks about all that the Trinity has done for us. So, this whole sentence, this whole section, is in the context of blessing God, praising God, worshiping God. Paul doesn't simply teach us. He leads us in worship as he brings us through a theological study.

Studying the Bible is meant to be worship, as we learn about God, who he is, what he has done, is doing, and will do, through the narratives of redemptive history, and through the teaching and instruction of the Scriptures. We marvel in awe as we behold the nature, character, and attributes of God. We see his wonderful works on our behalf, and we adore him. We read, we study, we worship. And Paul is demonstrating that, and showing us exactly how this works. Let's get our minds ready for worship.

Now, looking at Ephesians 1:3, we read – *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.* The words *blessed* (an adjective), *blessed* (a verb) and *blessing* (a noun) are all forms of the same Greek word. This Greek word is where we get our English word “eulogy” from. It basically means a good word, like how you hear someone at a funeral give a eulogy; they are saying good things about the deceased. Now, you might say, why tell us this, it is just unnecessary information. But I tell you this because it actually demonstrates the truth that context is so important, and how study is meant to lead to worship, and that study *is* worship.

This passage makes it clear that how God blesses us (as seen in the following verses, 4-14) and how we bless God are different. God blesses us by redemption. We bless him by worship. And Paul could have used different words instead of the same word in vs.3. He could have said we are grateful to God. He could have said God bestowed gifts upon us. Paul could have written – We give thanks to God, who has enriched us with every spiritual gift. But he didn't. And there are good and important reasons for this.

*God has blessed* (verb) *us in Christ with every spiritual blessing* (noun). God is *blessed* (adjective) and his graceful actions toward us results in worship from us. Paul uses forms of the same word to show us the connection between God being blessed in himself, and giving blessings to us, and the blessing of worshipping God. Paul uses the same word because they are all related.

Paul starts out the section of Ephesians 1:3-14 by saying that God is blessed. He starts out by praising God. He starts out by recognizing the truth about God. Then we study the depth of that truth as it relates to our redemption. And then we see that all God has done to bless us proves that he is blessed in the first place.

Here it is all fleshed out. God is blessed. That's why he bestows blessings upon us. And that's why studying how he has blessed us reveals how blessed he is. And so, study is a blessing to us, and it is worship.

God has given us his word, and as we study it, we see how he is blessed. His word proves that he is blessed, it demonstrates that to us. Truly, the proper study of God's word leads to a proper understanding of the blessed God, and we worship as we do this study and discover this blessedness.

Every good and gracious act of God reveals something of his blessedness, and results in our recognition, our praise, our worship. The proper study of the word of God reveals the blessedness of God and results in the worship of God. Study is meant to be a form of worship. The study of God leads to the worship of God. Theology leads to doxology. Amen.

All that God has done for us is to the praise of his glorious grace (vs.6, 12, 14). That is his will, his purpose, to redeem so as to demonstrate his glorious grace, and to be worshiped for that glorious grace. And we find out just how glorious his grace is when we study his word as a means of worship. And as we have already seen, this true worship is more than mere words, it is a lived out living sacrifice, a renewed mind that leads to a renewed life.

Worship without theology is bound to degenerate into idolatry. That is why Scripture is so important in both public and private devotion. On the other hand, worship is not about a purely academic interest in God. Theology without worship is also a form of idolatry. The true knowledge of God will always lead us to worship. Good theology should sound like doxology, like we see in Ephesians 1:3-14. Doxology is fueled by theology and theology is made more potent by diving into the depths of revealed truth. Certainly, by the end of his life the Apostle Paul had come to a higher place, he didn't stay on that Damascus Road.

The Bible paints a picture of theology and doxology together, deep roots in the soil of the Scriptures matched with the fervent fruit of fired up worship. We need to see both, not one to the exclusion of the other. Unfortunately, some who have deep roots in theology don't express the outgrowth of that enough in their corporate worship or lifestyle.

Also, some Christians think going deep means exploring the depths of their own feelings, without any study, and therefore “God” becomes a projection of their best thoughts, and they practice idolatry without realizing it. The problem is when we don’t progress beyond those feelings and then we go searching for that feeling as the tell-tale sign if we are worshiping correctly or deeply or not. We fail to dig deeper into things we may at first have a hard time understanding because they don’t give us a feeling yet. We become satisfied with feeling what we think is “fullness”, but the better we understand God from the Scriptures the better we are able to worship. It doesn’t mean the better we *will* worship but the deeper our thoughts of God become, the higher our worship of God can become.

God is blessed. That’s why he bestows blessings upon us. And that’s why studying how he has blessed us reveals how blessed he is. And it results in our adoration of God. And so, study is a blessing to us, and it is worship.

Biblical study, for the purpose of worshiping God, will lead to the proper worship of God. And that proper study is worship in and of itself. Theology leads to doxology. Study is worship. Amen.