

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3

“14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15 from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

The Grand Doxology

I think we have seen that chapter three of this short Epistle is an interesting collection of the Apostle’s passions! As he moves from doctrine to practice, which he usually does in his epistles, he first remembers his own life reminding them that he is the Apostle to the Gentiles and that he is a prisoner of Christ. Paul then prayed for these Saints which gave us a great example of how to pray one for another as we studied last week. This morning we are going to consider what I am calling his grand doxology, but it can also be seen as the final part of the transition to the practical applications of this epistle that begin in earnest in chapter four. In ending this short prayer, the Apostle again gives all glory to God, even when it comes to our obedience, as we serve Jesus through God’s power, walking in the good works we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in...

20 “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.””

So, I want us to look at some specifics of this doxology and to consider how such doxologies are used in the Scriptures and in our worship...

We should begin with the simple question: What is a doxology?

Our modern Miriam dictionary definition is: “a usually liturgical expression of praise to God”

A bit richer definition is found in the good old Webster’s 1828: DOXOLOGY, In Christian worship, a hymn in praise of the Almighty; a particular form of giving glory to God.”

World views make a difference, even with dictionaries! And speaking of older Books and language, we should compare our New King James to the older King James version of the Bible: Verse 20 is virtually the same, but we find a difference in verse 21, where in the King James version we read:

21 “Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”

So children, does world without end sound familiar?

- We sing it each week at the conclusion of our service after we sing Simeon’s prayer!

And so I must ask, what does it mean? Going back to the New King James can help us here...

21 “to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

There is something to liked in both translations, but as usual the KJV is grander, IF we understand what is being said. Compare ages with generations. Compare world without end with forever and ever.

Precision versus grandeur!

- Now we should see this grand doxology as being the final part of the introduction to Chapter four.

In chapter four we are going to learn much about the Church and here we have the Apostle clearly telling us that we, as the Body of Christ, are to bring glory to God throughout all the ages!

- **A mighty tall order! But one for which we are going to be given many detailed marching orders on how to carry it out in the coming chapters!**

Thus it is important to understand the purpose and use of a doxology. We defined it as “a hymn in praise of the Almighty; a particular form of giving glory to God.” That is certainly what the Apostle Paul does here at the end of chapter three:

20 “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” ‘Now to Him’ directs our attention to God Almighty, ‘who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all the we ask or think!’

- **Last week I made the point that as those who have been baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit we have a right to the riches of God’s glory.**

Then I suggested that we should let that sink in for a moment! Well, that is exactly what the Apostle Paul is doing here with this doxology:

“20 “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us...”

What does Paul say about God’s abilities? They are not just more then we might expect or think of, but ‘exceedingly’ and ‘abundantly’ above such requests or thoughts!

For example, how strong is God?

Whatever we might say or think about that, God is exceedingly and abundantly stronger!

- **We could do the same with His knowledge or compassion or any other attribute He might have!**

Where in our lives might we experience such actions by God? The Apostle says it is “according to the power that works in us.” Pondering that we see there is only one thing to give to God Almighty...

“ 21 to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

- **So I hope that this lesson will at least remind us each week to sing our final doxology with greater understanding and gusto!**

And it is not something we should see or hear only in our worship service, nor even at the end.

Yes, we have some great doxologies and benedictions at the end of most Epistles, but this one, and several others come in the middle of what the Apostle Paul is teaching.

In fact, when we consider how Psalm 19 begins we see that all of Creation is a grand doxology: “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.”

IF the stuff of the universe declares the glory of God, how much more should be done by those bearing His Name? We see this in what should be a familiar portion of Revelation.

We should always remember that this books begins by telling us that those who read it will be blessed...

3 “Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near.”

And one of those blessings comes with the grand truth revealed in chapter 7, which of course ends with a doxology:

Revelation 7: “9 After these things

I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!” 11 All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, Be to our God forever and ever. Amen.””

As we read or hear or sing doxologies here on earth, that scene in heaven should flood over our hearts & minds!

- **That is why we have examples like our text where such praise is lifted up even in the middle of the Apostle’s teachings.**

We see the same with the Apostle Peter as he is instructing the Saints in his first letter: I Peter 4: “11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

Again we see all glory going to God and another hearty AMEN right in the middle of the Epistle [that is why an occasional amen is a good thing]

We find another example in the middle of Paul’s letter to young Timothy. It follows the familiar passage that we often read in our time of confession:

I Timothy 1: “15 This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. 16 However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life. 17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

- **And yes, the glory goes to God forever and ever!**

And finally I want to turn to the Book of Romans where the Apostle presents some of the deepest theology found in the New Testament as he explains the sovereignty of God in light of the power of the Gospel and responsibility of all mankind: Both Jew & Gentile.

At Romans 9 the Apostle begins to delve into the depths of God’s Grace, beginning with his concern for his fellow countrymen who have rejected Jesus: “9 I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, 2 that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; 5 of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen.”

- **Here again, Paul cannot help but give praise to God even as his heart aches for the salvation of his people.**

The Apostle to the Gentiles goes on to explain that not all of Israel, the nation, are true Israel, the people of God who have put their faith in the Messiah.

He teaches us that God has mercy on whom He will have mercy and the awesome responsibility that we have to be those beautiful feet that are to carry the Good News to a needy world.

And then at the end of Romans 11 we have what may be the grandest of all the Biblical doxologies:

“33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!

34 “For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?” 35 “Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?”

36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

In this creation ALL things are from God, ALL things are sustained by God and ALL things bring glory to God!

I join with Paul in praying that we would be a people who always lift up our praise to God...

It can be as we heartily sing our praises to God here in worship or as simple as a ‘thank you Lord’ for a parking place that seemed to just appear!

And it should make the Scriptures come alive as we read and study them, especially the Psalms!

Communion Meditation: Romans 11

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Or who has become His counselor?”**

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