

Doxology
Giving Praise to the God Who is Able
Ephesians 3:20-21
Sunday, November 3, 2019

Introduction

A doxology is a short hymn of praise that exalts God and gives Him glory. Or, it could be said this way: A doxology *describes* the character of God and *ascribes* glory to Him for who He is and what He has done. These short hymns of praise can be found throughout the Scriptures, but they are especially prevalent in the Psalms and in the Epistles.

As we enter November and head toward Thanksgiving we are going to spend four weeks considering four different doxologies. During this month that is often set aside for giving thanks, we are going to take some time to consider the character of God and how worthy He is of all our thanks and all our praise. He is truly the One to whom all glory is due.

Context – Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians

While the doxologies of Scripture are well known and are often quoted, it’s important that we pay close attention to the context in which they are found.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians can be divided into two parts: in the first half he describes God’s work of salvation and His establishing of the church and in the second half of the letter he helps us understand how God’s work of salvation should change the way we live and function. The doxology of chapter 3 serves as the end or the climax of the first half of Paul’s letter.

More immediately, the doxology is in the context of Paul’s prayer for the spiritual growth and strengthening of the Ephesian believers.

The Declaration of Praise – Praise to the God who Able (Ephesians 3:20)

- In Ephesians 3:14-19 Paul has prayed for the Ephesian believers and their spiritual growth, and his requests are significant. But while Paul is asking God to move in significant ways, the doxology is reminder of God’s power and ability.
- **God is Able** – It is common for us to look at our lives and wonder if change is possible. We know the depth of our sin and the depravity that exists within us, but in this verse we have this reminder: that God is able (He has the power) to do the work in us that needs to be done.

- **The Extent of God’s Change** – Paul doesn’t stop with the acknowledgement that God is able to change us. He goes on to explain that the changes that God makes in us are beyond what we could ask or imagine. Our questions and thoughts are feeble and finite compared to God ability and the change He can bring (Is. 55:8-9).
- **The Means of God’s Change** – We tend to think of change in terms of our own strength and ability, but God works in us according to His power. This power comes from the Holy Spirit who lives within us (Ephesians 3:16) and is the same power that God employed in raising Jesus from the dead (Ephesians 1:16-20; Romans 8:11). It’s because of this power that we can be confident in God’s ability to change us!
- **Application** – Are there things in your heart (patterns of sin or heart struggles) that you have decided are simply never going change? Remember that God is not limited by our ability or expectations. He is able and has promised to continue the work of sanctification in us.

The Ascription of Praise – To Him be Glory (Ephesians 3:21)

- **To Him be glory** – Paul’s primary aim in describing the power of God in verse 20 is to ascribe glory to Him. He is giving God glory and calling others to join Him in honoring and praising God.
- **To Him be glory in the church** – The phrase ‘to Him be glory’ is common in the Scriptures, but the designation of ‘in the church’ is unique to this verse. That said, it is very fitting in the context of Ephesians. After three chapters of describing God’s work of saving sinners and forming His church Paul calls for God to receive glory from and through those whom He has saved (Ephesians 1:11-14).
- **To Him be glory in Christ Jesus** – The means by which the church is saved and formed is through Jesus Christ. It’s only through Him that God is able to receive glory through the church.
- **The duration of praise** – Paul ends his doxology with a common refrain, but it must not be overlooked. God has always been and always will be worthy of glory. As we join in the chorus we are joining with all the generations who have come before, and this praise will continue forever.

Summary: In our own strength and through our own abilities we have little hope of change, but we don’t have to rely on our own strength and abilities. God is powerful and He works in us according to His power to change us in ways that we could never ask or imagine. To Him be the glory.