

Title: Doxologies of praise & glory

Reading: Ephesians 3:20 - 21

Now in our New Testament reading for the day we have within the first of the two chapters from the Epistle to the Ephesians a recorded prayer of the Apostle Paul. Sadly, as this is an exhortation we do not have the time to expound this tremendously powerful prayer. We have done so on another occasion with its companion prayer recorded for us in the first chapter of the Epistle.

This, second major prayer of Ephesians brethren and sisters, is actually the climax of the whole book. As the practical chapters from chapter four to six, explain how this prayer and indeed with the prayer in the first chapter will be worked out in the lives of the saints.

By way of exhortation today, we wish to focus our minds brethren and sisters upon the end of this second prayer, specifically upon **verses twenty and twenty one**.

Verses 20 – 21

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”.

The last part of his prayer is climactic in that it moves from the thought of the love of Christ to that of the fullness of God as the goal of our salvation. The Apostle in this ascription of praise sees two things that run parallel the love of God in **verses 18 & 19** is now set alongside the power of God here in **verses 20 & 21**. A combination that causes him to burst forth in praise, as these two concepts meet in the ecclesia through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verses 18 & 19

“May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God”.

Thus the Eternal Spirit through the Apostle ends this first section of the Epistle with one of the most beautiful benedictions, in all of Scripture.

Now these two verses are commonly termed a **doxology**, which literally means a "*word of glory*". Doxologies are therefore short, spontaneous and highly emotional ascriptions of praise to Almighty God. We meet them throughout scripture and there are around sixteen of them recorded in the New Testament, just over half are in the Eternal Spirit's writings through the Apostle Paul.

This word "*doxology*" comes from two Greek words, firstly "*doxa*" meaning to praise, worship, magnify, or glorify and secondly from "*logos*", meaning word.

It is thought that these various ascriptions of praise were either set to music to be sung or were verbal affirmations that would be memorised and repeated during fellowship.

Brethren and sisters can I make a practical suggestion here, maybe we ought to follow this practice and take one of these beautiful affirmations and learn it over the next week committing it to memory. I would suggest that you possibly do it, as you sit down for a meal?

That would be three times a day, that is how we as a family learn the children's proof passages and it does work. You can either say it out loud or do so in your head, if you're at work. You need not use this doxology, as there are a number of them in the New Testament and many of them are much shorter than this one.

Indeed additionally you could also use any of these doxologies as the basis for one of your daily prayers throughout this next week. For all of the doxologies contained within the New Testament brethren and sisters are greatly encouraging and uplifting when meditated upon.

Commonly then a doxology usually has two or three parts: (1) the One to whom glory is given, (2) the particular ascription of "*praise or glory*," and, in those attributed to the Apostle Paul (*usually although not always the case*), (3) the expression "*forever and ever*." In every case in the New Testament these doxologies are concluded by the word "*amen*", which is thought to be a verbal affirmation announced by the whole assembly.

Now this doxology here in Ephesians three highlights to us both, the Omnipotence of our God and the continuing commitment that our Heavenly Father has too the ecclesia, the body of Christ.

Let us brethren **note** the emphasis of this blessing of our Heavenly Father. Firstly, it is God-centered. The Apostle will, not end his prayer other than with his eyes fixed on our Heavenly Father, and with these words he seeks to turn our eyes upon Him as well. A useful point of instruction and exhortation with regards to our prayers, especially the public prayers of our brethren in meetings, such as this.

Secondly, The Eternal Spirit's words through Paul's focus upon the goal of the ecclesia, and of every true saint, and of all creation—bringing glory to Almighty God. Third and finally, these forceful words focus our attention upon the very power of God, which is at work in us. For our Heavenly Father's power is the means by which His glory is achieved.

These two verses brethren and sisters form what I refer too, as a buffer passage in that like a set of railway buffers. The passage is designed to stop our faith, as saints from crashing to rock bottom or us being crushed under the temporal concerns of life.

Thus our minds are lifted up from the temporal distractions of everyday life and from these vile bodies, which pull us down into sin. Rather we are encouraged to focus not upon ourselves, but upon our Heavenly Father and his provision for us in Christ Jesus. Indeed have we not come here today brethren and sisters to do this very thing, to quietly place our attention for a short while upon these simple emblems of bread and wine?

The bread that speaks to us of the Master, as the word made flesh, the very embodiment of what our Heavenly Father is endeavouring to achieve in each one of us. Then we have this cup of wine, which likewise speaks of our beloved Master's sacrifice, of his pouring forth of his life, as an act of service and worship. That pouring out, which culminated in his death upon the stake.

Thus we see in the wine brethren and sisters the outpouring of our lives as living sacrifices in heartfelt thanksgiving, for the provision of our God.

So then these verses elevate our minds upon the eternal realities of our lives in the Lord Jesus Christ, particularly within the context of ecclesial life. For the focus of the glory within this doxology here in Ephesians three is the glory that is to be manifested in the ecclesia, both now and throughout the ages of eternity.

For as verse twenty one reads “*unto him be glory in the ecclesia by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen*”. The ecclesia then is the main arena in which the redemptive work of Jesus Christ can take full effect. One of the main reasons that our Heavenly Father created the ecclesia, the body corporate of Christ. Is so that He would have a sufficiently diversified yet unified system of mirrors with which to reflect the glory of his many-sided wisdom to his created universe. One aspect of the destiny of the ecclesia brethren and sisters is therefore to be a **living, corporate, visible** and **audible** doxology to Yahweh our Heavenly Father throughout the ages of eternity.

This then is the corporate goal of not only the whole ecclesial body to glorify our Heavenly Father, but also each individual saint within that body to do all to the glory of God, day by day.

Yet if truth were told most of us sit week by week and feel anything but capable of fulfilling this incredible goal in any shape or form. We all are very much aware of our shortcomings, as we compare ourselves with the standard we see upon the table in the emblems of bread and wine. Now as we sit here feeling very much alone in our personal examination of our walk over the last week and in our weakness before the table of our Father’s love.

Let us realize brethren and sisters that although our individual circumstances maybe different there is a commonality to our experience that binds us not only together, but also binds us together with our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was himself touched with the feeling of our infirmities having suffered the same types of temptations. Yet thankfully in the mercy of the Father he was without sin and is therefore able to succour us who are yet tempted.

Another key reason for the creation of the ecclesia is that the glory of our Heavenly Father may be magnified through the compounding interest of numbers.

For we read in Revelation of “*the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands*”, praising him.

The ecclesia to us brethren and sisters becomes then a living organism of glory and a mechanism. Whereby we might be supported in developing that glory in our daily lives, as we shine our light before men.

So then having had our minds lifted up to consider the one who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light and who fervently desires to translate each one of us into the kingdom of his dear Son. We see then, that the focus in the first half of this doxology in Ephesians three is upon **the power of God** to perform his desire and develop this glory.

Philippians Chapter 1 and verse 6

“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”.

One of the purposes of this beautiful doxology then brethren and sisters is to inspire us with confidence and trust that our Heavenly Father not only desires to give us the kingdom. But rather that he is more than able to fulfil his desire through the continuing work of Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Heavenly Father wants to develop our trust in him and in his purpose with us, in order that we might walk forward confidently in faith day by day. Glorifying him in our body and spirit, as we await our Lord’s return. Now this confidence is not something, just based upon blind faith brethren and sisters. No not at all in fact the evidence placed before us in the word is powerfully summarised for us within the first prayer in Ephesians.

Ephesians Chapter 1 and verses 18 - 22

*“The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And **what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe**, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the ecclesia.”*

Here then we see the extent of the power ranged on the ecclesia's behalf brethren and sisters. Our Heavenly Father does not want us to be in the dark concerning his mighty power and its impact in our lives, so He provides us with the supreme example from his creation. The raising of his beloved son and our Lord and Master.

The Eternal spirit goes on to focus upon two effects of the working of this mighty power in **firstly** it brings life to the dead, and **secondly** it exalts those who have been brought low. Now these wonderful truths have already been realized in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ and it is this same realization that we all earnestly await brethren and sisters.

Now there are three specific manifestations of the outworking of the power of our Heavenly Father here in Christ that should brethren have a dramatic bearing upon our lives.

The **first** is that the Master having been redeemed from out of death now sits at the right hand of the Father. Enabled to perform his high priestly service for those styled his brethren. **Secondly** we are given the full extent of the Master's exaltation. "*All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth*" and as such all things have been put under his feet.

Then **finally** we find that our beloved Master in this exalted position has been given as a gift to his saints, the ecclesia. "*Christ to be the head over all things to the ecclesia.*" The ecclesia then has authority and power to overcome all opposition, because her High Priest and Head is Lord of all.

Now then brethren and sisters we have a picture of the Father and his Son working together in the lives of each one of us. These combined agencies of the spirit word, our fellowship one with another and through providential angelic care working together to develop the ecclesia, the body of Christ. So that it might be conformed to the image of the Son and thereby manifest the glory, which is our Father's due and our goal.

Now none of us doubt brethren and sisters that the Lord Jesus Christ has indeed risen from the dead. Nor do are we sceptical about the current position and work of our beloved Master.

We are all absolutely assured that the kingdom of God will shortly appear on the earth at the return of the Master. Those things all being true, why is it then, that we doubt that our Heavenly Father is not then capable of performing that good work that he has personally chosen to accomplish in us individually. Oh we are absolutely sure that many of our brethren and sisters will be in the kingdom, but when it comes to our selves we become less sure.

More than this our carnal thinking constantly tells us that it is impossible and that our weaknesses are just too great. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, all the while seeking to keep our minds upon our failures and often seemingly feeble efforts. In many cases our hearts condemn us, yet our Heavenly Father is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.

Our Lord himself was no different brethren and sisters he too was plagued by these same weaknesses, temptations. We can see that clearly in the turmoil he endured within the garden of Gethsemane.

Luke Chapter 22 and verses 41 – 44

“And he was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done. And there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground”.

We must follow our Master’s example then brethren and sisters and look to our Heavenly Father, for with him is the power to overcome. We must develop our relationship with the Father through prayer. For it is the strength of that connection, which will make all the difference in our daily lives with regards to our confidence and trust.

We need to see our God truly as a Father who is capable of mending our partially healed wounds and overcoming all our negative experiences. We need to be able to trust him completely with regards to our lives and truly believe that because of our Master, the Father indeed loves us. Even as we currently are, but more importantly because like the great artist that He undoubtedly is. He loves us because of what he is able to achieve and create in us.

That is why our Heavenly Father takes the long-term view of each one of us and we should do likewise brethren and sisters, for we are all individual works in progress. Small, but essential parts in a much larger and infinitely more beautiful work, yet to be revealed to his glory and our eternal well being.

Our Father has not finished with us yet and we likewise brethren must not give up on him. Now back in the first prayer in Ephesians chapter one. We are given three instances, whereby the Father has already magnified his glory in the saints, to inspire our confidence and trust.

Ephesians Chapter 1 and verses 6, 12 & 14

“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory”.

All three of these verses highlight for us brethren and sisters just how much has already been achieved to manifest this glory, even in us in that we have been made acceptable in Christ Jesus by that sacrifice we are shortly to remember. More than this we have come to trust Christ our Lord and we have each been sealed with the spirit word.

Since these things have already brought our Father glory it is reasonable for us to believe and have confidence that those things which are yet to follow will likewise be fulfilled to his eternal glory.

Now another of our problems brethren and sisters with regards to having this complete confidence and trust in our Father’s ability is that due to how well we are aware of our own individual shortcomings and weakness. We find it difficult to see firstly how the Father can perform this work in Christ, because of the scope of the work needed.

Secondly as we all have some incline of just how radical the change needs to be in each of our lives, we fear that change. We all fear it brethren and sisters due to the fear of the pain that we know this divine surgery will create in our lives to bring about this tremendous transformation in us all.

It is then our fear that causes us to resist the change our Heavenly Father brings into our lives, rather we prefer a little remedial change that is less uncomfortable, just a little tweak here and there.

We need believe our Heavenly Father is capable brethren and sisters? That this gracious and omnipotent God, who created all that we know and understand around us in six literal days, is more than able to conform, each and every one of us to the image of the Master?

Yet we so often act as if it such change is just not possible for us and that God does not know what he is doing. Our Heavenly Father specializes in the impossible for with him “*nothing shall be impossible*” we read elsewhere. Let each of us brethren and sisters learn to pray for that change to come into our lives no matter how unstable and painful it makes our reasonably comfortable existence.

Ephesians Chapter 3 and verse 20

“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us”.

So then brethren and sisters let us for a few minutes before we remember the Master in the way appointed once more focus our attention upon the ability of our God to perform. In that we read that He “*is able*”, this Greek word means that, “**he has the resources, the capability, the strength, to do**” what He wills out of his own resources. Now more than this in the Greek we find this word is a present middle participle. So it is speaking firstly of a conscious personal choice that He invokes of every day and a principle our Heavenly Father lives by.

In 1st Thessalonians Chapter 5 and at verse 24

“Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.”

Now the next phrase in this doxology describes this fullness of power brethren and sisters in that He is able “*to do exceedingly abundantly above*”. Now this phrase apparently, is the highest form of comparison in the Greek. Each of the words carries the meaning of performing and supremely more than is necessary, to fulfil his will and purposes.

Not only is our Heavenly Father, **able** brethren and sisters He is also **willing**.

This description continues now to include us “above *all that we ask or think*”. Here we see the love of a Father in the provision for his children. **Note** carefully beyond all that we could either ask or think both individually and collectively, as the whole body of Christ. This power that operates daily, as He chooses the Greek indicates to work efficiently and effectively among us, the ecclesia. Here we see the focus and direction of this awesome power in the final clause of this verse “*according to the power that worketh in us*”.

Again **Note carefully** brethren and sisters that the limiting factor of this power is not what we can ask or imagine. The limiting factor is the power that is **working in us**. The point here is the limit to which we allow the Father to work in our lives, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no limit to our Father's power, it is infinite and limitless. Our problem is only our ability to comprehend this power and to desire its blessing in our lives. We have an Omnipotent Heavenly Father who desires above all things to give us the kingdom and since He is Omnipotent then to him there can no degrees of difficulty.

This prayer teaches us that our individual and ecclesial lives could be so much more brethren and sisters if we would let the love of our Father through Christ overcome our weakness and fears. What an incentive this gives us to pray big brethren and sisters with regards to the ecclesia and one another. To expand the scope of our prayers beyond the very limited way most of us indeed pray.

How great then is the work of this incredible power, which is at work even today in the ecclesia that we each may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. We are given an insight brethren and sisters in:

Ephesians Chapter 4 and verses 13 & 16

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love”.

This beautiful doxology brethren and sisters exhorts us not to either limit the power of our God, nor even more importantly limit his love and willingness to use that power in our individual and ecclesial lives to his glory.

Ephesians Chapter 3 and verse 21

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

The idea here is of a constant stream of unbroken praise and glory manifested to the Father in all ages and generations by the saints and throughout the millennium and all the ages of eternity. Surely brethren and sisters we all desire to be among that great throng of ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands praising our Heavenly Father alongside our beloved Master in the great congregation. Situated within that glorious temple of the future age described in Ezekiel’s prophecy.

As we come now brethren and sisters to partake of these emblems, a clear evidence of our Heavenly Father’s love and of our Lord’s sacrifice and his continuing intercessory work for us. Let us **realise** not only the power of our God, ranged on our behalf, but also the love and determination of our Heavenly Father to see this great work in Christ Jesus fulfilled.

Let us then reciprocate that love and likewise resolve along with this great Apostle to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. For we see in this bread the means, even the engrafted word, which is **able** (*same word*) to make us wise unto salvation.

Finally in the wine we see the spirit (*pardon the pun*) of sacrifice required of us to likewise pour out our lives, as living sacrifices, which is our reasonable service and worship. That our lives in the truth, might become, a sweet smelling odour a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to our Heavenly Father.

Let us end brethren and sisters with the words of another of these great doxologies recorded for us in:

Jude verses 24 & 25

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen”.

Wayne Marshall