

044 - Unto Him Be Glory in the Church - Part 3 - Ephesians 3:20-21 - 2015-05-24

Call to Worship: Psalm 86:11-12

Scripture Reading: 1 Chronicles 16:28-36

Sermon: "Unto Him Be Glory in the Church - Part 3" Ephesians 3:20-21

Benediction: 1 Timothy 1:17

Ephesians 3:20-21 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.**

INTRODUCTION

We have been studying together the doxology of Ephesians 3:20-21, the outburst of praise to God that concludes the apostolic prayer and that concludes the first half of the letter. We've studied this doxology for two sessions, and today will be the third and last. God willing, we will move on next time to the practical application section of Ephesians, beginning with chapter four.

Before we do, let us study together the very last word of this doxology, the word, "amen," which is a fitting conclusion to the doxology and to the first half of the letter. As we do so, may the Lord bring what we have learned in Ephesians so far home to our hearts.

Having heard the doxology, "to God be glory in the church by Christ Jesus," let us say, with our lives as well as our words, "Amen."

TEXT

Ephesians 3:20-21 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.**

BODY

Having heard the doxology, "to God be glory in the church by Christ Jesus," let us say, with our lives as well as our words, "Amen."

- I. See what it means to say, "Amen."
 - A. Charles Hodge (commentary on 1 Corinthians 14:16) "Amen" is . . . Hebrew [for] . . . "true" or "faithful," . . . used . . . to express assent to [agreement with] what is said . . . it was the custom for the people to respond to . . . prayers by . . . saying "Amen," by which they signified their assent and participation in the petitions [prayers] which had been offered.

- B. God taught His people through Moses that when bible teachers teach them His commandments, the people are to answer by saying, "Amen."
Deuteronomy 27:14-16 "And the Levites shall speak with a loud voice and say to all the men of Israel: (15) 'Cursed is the one who makes a carved or molded image, an abomination to the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and sets it up in secret.' "And all the people shall answer and say, 'Amen!' (16) 'Cursed is the one who treats his father or his mother with contempt.' "And all the people shall say, 'Amen!'"
- C. When one leads in worship, giving glory to God, the other worshipers are to join in by saying, "Amen."
1. Old Testament *Psalm 106:48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! And let all the people say, "Amen!"*
 2. New Testament: this practice of saying, "Amen" passed into the NT church *1 Corinthians 14:16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say "Amen" at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?*
 - a) Think what this teaches us: the normal thing in the church was that if someone prays and you agree with what is said, you might say, "Amen."
 3. In Heaven: When you read along far enough in the scriptures, you see that saying, "Amen" to the worship of God is what both men and angels do in heaven.
 - a) *Revelation 5:13-14 And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!" (14) Then the four living creatures said, "Amen!" And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.*
 - b) *Revelation 7:9-12 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."*
- D. When the Lord Jesus makes promises to His church, we are to answer with, "Amen." *Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming quickly." Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!*

- E. So, whether it is the law of God being taught, or the promises of Christ being made, or thanksgiving being offered to God, or doxology being said, giving all glory to God, the people of God voice our assent to what is said, our participation in what is said, by saying, "Amen."
- II. See what a theme this is in the apostles' letters to the churches, and how it is used
- A. notes
 - 1. when you look through the apostles' letters, you see this use of "Amen" many times
 - 2. you see it most frequently as a response to doxology; the apostle writes something about, "all glory be to God forever," then writes, "Amen."
 - 3. What do the apostles mean by writing, "Amen" after their doxologies?
 - a) Do they mean to tell us that they agree with what they have just written?
 - b) No, they mean to tell us that it is our part at that point to express our agreement by saying, "Amen."
 - B. examples
 - 1. Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
 - 2. Romans 16:27 to God, alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever. Amen.
 - 3. Galatians 1:3-5 our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.
 - 4. Philippians 4:19-20 And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.
 - 5. 1 Timothy 1:15-17 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. 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. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.
 - 6. 2 Timothy 4:17-18 the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen!
 - 7. Hebrews 13:20-21 Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

8. 1 Peter 4:10-11 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone serves, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.
9. 2 Peter 3:17-18 beloved, . . . beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.
10. Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, Who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen.
11. Revelation 1:5b-6 To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

III. Think what it is to which the apostle would have you say, "Amen."

- A. Our salvation is not by our choice, but by His, because He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, having predestined us to adoption according to the good pleasure of His will, not our own. Glory be to God for this forever. Amen.
- B. Even our faith in Christ is not to our own credit; we believe in Him only because we were predestined to it by the purpose of God, and faith was worked in us by the Holy Spirit. Glory be to God for this forever. Amen.
- C. I was, to put it one way, dead in trespasses and sins; I did not, in that sense, respond to God or make a choice, but instead, when I was dead, God raised me to new life with Christ, saving me not by any of my own works, but by His grace. Glory be to God for this forever. Amen.
- D. God has been merciful to me, in a way that he has not been merciful to others, because He loves me in a way that he does not love them, as the bible says that God loved Jacob but hated Esau. God does not love all people alike, but loves His elect in Christ Jesus in such a way that He shows them mercy that He does not show to others. Glory be to God for this forever. Amen.
- E. Everything that happens ultimately happens because God has decreed within Himself that it would happen; by His power, working through means He has created, He brings to pass everything that takes place. Glory be to God for this forever. Amen.

IV. APPLICATION

- A. Understand that this is what Reformed Theology or The Doctrines of Grace or Calvinism is all about, saying "Amen" to the doxology.
 1. The word of God teaches us what God has done, and how He has done it, and that we are to give Him all the glory for it.

2. But many people in God's churches, from the first century until now, have repeatedly and widely tried to interpret His Word into something that gives some of the glory to man
 - a) to the doxology, "Glory to God," they don't say, "Amen, all glory to God." They say, "Yeah, but some glory to man."
 - b) when the bible says, "He chose us before the creation of the world. All glory to God," they don't say, "Amen." They say, "Yeah, but He chose us because He knew we would choose Him, so some glory to man."
 - c) when the bible says, "We were dead in our trespasses and sins, and God made us alive with Christ. All glory to God," they don't say, "Amen." They say, "Yeah, but the difference between someone who is a Christian and someone who is not is that the Christian has made a choice to follow Christ, so some glory to man."
3. And so there has been controversy in God's churches, and in His church at large over what the bible really means by what it says; these controversies typically are, at heart, over whether God gets all the glory or man gets some
 - a) Paul versus the circumcision party in Galatia, Antioch, and elsewhere
 - b) Augustine versus Pelagius
 - c) Martin Luther and the other reformers versus the Roman Catholic system
 - d) The Calvinists versus the Arminians
 - (1) not only in the controversy in Holland leading to the Synod of Dort and Canons of Dort
 - (2) but also in the Church of England, when Archbishop Laud was persecuting the Puritans in the 1630s
 - e) Many other smaller, less-well-known controversies
 - f) Personal to us, the present widespread interest in Reformed Theology, including the Reformed Baptist movement, over against the strange theology that has developed in many of the Southern Baptist and other churches around us today.
4. We would rather there be no such divisions in God's churches, but we accept that there have to be such to show who has God's approval. And the ones who have God's approval are those whose points of doctrine ascribe all glory to God in His church in Christ Jesus.
5. So, please understand that to the extent we agree with Calvin and the Reformed churches, it is in giving all glory to God for His power in saving His elect people through Christ Jesus. By holding to Reformed theology, we are saying, "Amen" to the doxology.

- B. Would you please understand some of the things done in this church in light of this? By these things we do or don't do, we mean to be saying, "Amen" to the doxology.
1. This is why the Second London Confession of Baptist Faith, the "1689" was chosen to be this church's constitution and confession of faith. The way of understanding the bible laid down in that confession of faith is the most God-glorifying system of theology yet devised. We do not mean it is something equal to or superior to the bible itself. No, we mean that the right way, the most God-glorifying way of understanding the bible is written down in that confession of faith. We consider it an excellent guide to understanding the bible, one that no one has managed to improve on so far. We hold to the 1689 Confession primarily because it leads us to understand the bible rightly, to the humbling of man and the glory of God.
 2. This is why we strive to remember the Lord's Day to keep it holy.
 - a) We believe that at creation God ordained one day in seven for us to rest from our usual labor and worship Him.
 - b) We believe that when the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week, He showed us that the day of rest and worship was to be, from then on, the first day of the week.
 - c) We try to get everything done by the end of Saturday or scheduled for Monday, so that all the thoughts, words, and actions of the Lord's Day can be worshipful.
 - d) We do this so that all glory may be to God in His church.
 3. This is why we have only a minimum of programmed activities.
 - a) Not that we think that all church programs that other churches do and we do not do are evil or something like that.
 - b) Instead, we judge that when people get something started in God's church, it tends to take on a life of its own and distract from rather than fulfilling this purpose of giving glory to God.
 - c) So when you see that we don't have this program or don't do that activity, please don't imagine reasons why we don't.
 4. This is why the worship service of the church is kept simple
 - a) including those things God has commanded His church to do in worship
 - b) not doing things that God has not commanded His church to do in worship, even if they seem innocent, or seem like a good idea
 - c) in theological terms, this is referred to as the "regulative principle"
 - d) we don't put on a drama skit or pledge allegiance to the flag or applaud veterans or sing "happy birthday" or give a gift to the graduates

- e) by observing the regulative principle, doing in worship only those things the bible commands us to do, we intend to be saying, "Amen" to the doxology.
5. This is why you find the elders and the church insisting on hearing a "credible profession of faith" before baptizing someone or accepting someone as a church member
 - a) talk of what you have done does not really constitute a profession of faith in Christ, and so does not give glory to God
 - b) talk of trusting in what the Lord Jesus Christ has done on the cross does constitute a profession of faith in Christ, and so does say, "Amen" to the doxology
- C. Examine your own thoughts and words and conduct in God's church, when the church is not assembled
1. by what you think, say, and do at home with your family, are you saying, "Amen" to the doxology, "Glory be to God," or are you saying, "some glory be to me."
 2. by what you think, say, and do at work with your co-workers, are you saying, "Amen" to the doxology, "Glory be to God," or are you saying, "some glory be to me."
 3. if an examination of yourself reveals that your heart is not saying, "Amen" to the doxology, then repent of such sin and give all glory to God in His church
- D. Examine your own thoughts and words and conduct in God's church, when the church is assembled
1. during the morning bible study hour; in this worship service; during lunch; after lunch
 2. do you do what you do because you are trying to get people to notice you: how good you look, how cool you are, how knowledgeable you are, how funny you are, how important you are, how talented you are
 - a) if so, understand that you are not saying, "Amen" to the doxology
 3. are you eager to talk,
 - a) but your talk is about yourself, because you want people to glorify you for all the great things about you
 - b) or maybe your talk is all about other people or against other people, because you want people to glorify you in comparison with those people you are criticizing
 - c) or your talk is all about the things of the world, because that is where your heart is, and you give glory to all the glittery people and things of this world
 - d) or your talk is about theology, but not for edifying the brothers and sisters; instead it is for the sake of showing how much you know

- e) the tongue is a restless evil, and very hard to control; yet it has an effect on things all out of proportion to its small size
- f) if your talk has been for your own glory rather than God's
 - (1) repent of such, seeking the forgiveness that is so abundant in Christ Jesus
 - (2) clap your hand over your mouth rather than speak to your own glory in God's church
 - (3) let your new favorite subject be the grace of God shown to us in Jesus Christ our savior; determine that you will know nothing but Jesus Christ
- 4. as we worship, are your thoughts
 - a) all about how you like this but don't like this or how you like him or her but don't like him or her
 - b) maybe are your thoughts miles away from this worship gathering, as you wish you could be somewhere else doing something else
- 5. If your thoughts and words and actions in God's church, when it is assembled, are not glorifying to God, then you are not saying, "Amen" to the doxology. When the bible says, "Glory to God in His church," you are saying, "and some to me."
 - a) Humble yourself before the Lord and repent of such sinful pride.
 - b) Cry out to the Lord for mercy, for He abundantly pardons.
 - c) Be transformed by the renewing of your mind, to think God's thoughts after Him

CONCLUSION

Having heard the doxology, "to God be glory in the church by Christ Jesus," let us say, with our lives as well as our words, "Amen."

Hear the things to which we are taught in the bible to say, "Amen."

Rom 1:25

Rom 9:5

Rom 11:36

1 Timothy 6:16

Adopt a high view of God and a low view of yourself

If I think I am something people should glorify, but they don't seem to be glorifying me,
I will then try to get their attention so they will glorify me.

Let me instead see myself as nothing people should glorify

Instead, let my efforts be to influence people toward glorifying God

On every question of your own speech

Is what I'm about to say glorifying to God or to myself?

I. APPLICATIONS

- A. See that Jesus Christ is only thing you know
 - 1. of course it is not really the only thing you know, as it was not the only thing Paul knew when he went to Corinth
 - 2. but He is so much the center of all our existence that He is the banner over everything for us
 - 3. Put theological learning in its right place and keep it there
- B. Put all your confidence in Jesus Christ rather than in human religious leaders
 - 1.
- C. Continue to make use of the 1689 2nd London Confession
 - 1. Those of us who have done some study in it find ourselves repeatedly pointed to God in Christ
 - 2. Screven, 1699: Be sure you take care the person be orthodox in the faith, and of blameless life, and does own the confession put forth by our brethren in London in 1689.
- D. Grow in your faithful, obedient observance of the Lord's Day
 - 1. the ahead-of-time planning
 - 2. the all-day thinking, speaking, acting
- E. Continue to put down selfish, carnal thoughts in yourself regarding the church's worship services in favor of giving glory to God in Christ Jesus
- F. In all things think of yourself as a member of the body of Christ, His church
- G. Look closely in the mirror and understand just how silly, how foolish you look when you try to bring praise to yourself in God's church
 - 1. when you try to look or act cool
 - 2. when you try to look beautiful
 - 3. when you try to look religious
 - 4. when you try to seem knowledgeable
- H. Be committed to the necessity of a credible profession of faith in Christ
 - 1. not, "I did this" but God did this in Christ, and I trust in Him
 - 2. in yourself
 - 3. in your children
 - 4. in candidates for
 - a. baptism

b. church membership

- I. See the question of Calvinism as one of glory being to God for His power in the church in Christ Jesus