

## **SERMON: A DOXOLOGY IN THE MIDDLE**

### **Ephesians 3:20**

**(20) Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. (21) Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen**

### **Introduction**

These two verses of our text are a doxology. A doxology, originally, was a poem written to praise a king. The term doxology literally means “praise words” or “glory words.” It was customary when one was allowed an audience with the king, to recite a doxology upon entering and another doxology upon leaving. It was a rare occasion and an honor to speak directly to the king; therefore, upon anticipation of the meeting, a subject would spend much time getting the doxologies “just right.” While reciting the exiting doxology, the subject was not allowed to turn his back to the king and walk away. He had to walk backward away from the king, bowing repeatedly, as he recited the second doxology. He had to “respect” the king. To put it another way, he could not turn his back side to the king. That would have been insulting to the king and would have resulted in the subject being dragged off to prison or even executed. He had to keep looking at the king as he made his exit by backing humbly and adoringly away. Our English word “respect” literally means to look at continually. Remember, the Romans called their kings emperors. The “emperor” was the king of the “empire.”

The Romans had a great road system that rivals anything built today. This road system allowed the empire to have a great mail system, so that the emperor could get current information about the state of the kingdom. Civilians also used the mail system to send letters to friends, family members, and business associates. To uncover any attempts to overthrow the emperor or to start an insurrection, all of the mail from civilians was read by inspectors whom the emperor trusted. The civilians took advantage of this procedure and would write doxologies paying homage to the emperor. To curry favor with the emperor, one was placed at the beginning and one at the end of their correspondence. This implied that the writer was a loyal subject and would, hopefully, alleviate any suspicion about the purpose of the correspondence.

The early Christians also used the Roman roads, but not the Roman mail system. They literally smuggled their correspondence between themselves and the various New Testament churches. Had they not smuggled them, we would not have the New Testament epistles, especially Paul’s prison letters. The early Christians also put doxologies in their correspondence. Instead of paying homage to Caesar, the emperor, they write doxologies to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Most of the correspondence of the early church that did not become part of the Bible also included doxologies.

Here is the question that has baffled theologians and Bible scholars for centuries. Why did Paul put the doxology in the middle of this letter? He put the doxology at the conclusion of the book of Romans. Jude put the doxology at the end of his short letter. Again, why did Paul put this doxology in the middle of his letter to the church at Ephesus? It is somewhat trivial but yet intriguing. There is much theological speculation. Maybe Paul suffered from Attention-Deficit-Disorder. If that is so, it proves that God can use us in spite of our weaknesses and limitations. Maybe he was like many Black preachers, who when about to close, receive new inspiration and keep on preaching and have multiple conclusions to the sermon. I like to think he just got happy and could not wait to give God praise. This doxology comes after Paul relates how he constantly prays for them. It does more than praise God. It edifies believers. Let's look at three of the many points that can be extracted from this doxology in the middle.

### **Exposition**

#### **1. God's Blessings Will Always Exceed Our Asking, Our Wishes, Our Thoughts, And Our Imagination.**

**(Despite All Of The Evil And Cruelty In The World, God Will Take Care Of Believers.)**

#### **2. God Works In And Through Believers – We Must Be Receptive To His Bidding And To His Will.**

**(We Must Be Willing Vessels)**

#### **3. Sometimes We Need To Put A Doxology In The Middle.**

**(In The Middle Of Our Day, Our Week, Our Trials, Our Victories.)**

### **Closing Thoughts**

A man did a great service to a Grecian king and the king told him to ask for any type of reward he wished. The servant made such an enormous demand that the king had to renege on his promise because it would have bankrupted the kingdom. The king died in dishonor and the kingdom still failed because none of his subjects had confidence in him anymore. His army and court officials abandoned him. It was unheard of for a king to renege on his word. Our King has inexhaustible resources. He will never renege on

His Holy Word. No fulfilled request can bankrupt His kingdom. He shall reign forever and ever! His kingdom will never fail.

A bricklayer looked at verse twenty from his perspective. Each sentence is a brick and he stacked bricks on top of bricks.

“God is.

God is able.

God is able to do.

God is able to do abundantly.

God is able to do exceeding abundantly.

God is able to do exceeding abundantly all.

God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all.

God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask.

God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.”

Give God Glory! Give God All The Glory!

### **Related Scriptures**

**Matthew 6:13b**

**Romans 16:25-27**

**Jude 24-25**

### **End Notes**

1. There are many doxologies recorded in the Bible. Many have been set to music. In fact, The Lord’s Prayer, which is our model, ends with a doxology.

2. Doxology comes from two Greek words. *Doxa* which means glory or praise and *logos* which means word. Doxology means praise word or glory word. For the nerds who want to dig deeper into church music history as it relates to doxologies, please Google the following terms:

Gloria Patri, Greater Doxology, Lesser Doxology, Bishop Thomas Ken, and the Old Hundredth Hymn Tune. Remember, nothing should supersede your study of God’s Word.

3. You know I like to study the origin of words. If you remove the prefix “re” from respect you have the morpheme “spect” left. It is from the Latin word *specere*, which means to look. From this we get spectator, one who looks at an event; spectacular, which describes something exciting and worth taking the time to view; spectacles, which are eye glasses; and speculate, which is the mind’s eye viewing possibilities.

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