

DOXOLOGIES

SERMON #2: ABLE TO SAVE AND STABILIZE BY INITIATING A FAITH THAT OBEYS

Doxologies: To him be glory....

Introduction

The title is too long, but every word is important. Consider the title carefully.

I want to begin by saying something about glory

In Pentateuch, these five books have approximately 10% of occurrences in Scripture

- God will gain glory, Ex 14:4,17,18
- God has an innate glory, Ex 15:11; 16:7
- The presence of God's glory consecrates a location, Ex 29:43; 40:34,45
- The glory of the Lord appears, can be located and can be seen (theophany?), Ex 16:7,10; 24:16,17; 33:18,22; Lev. 9:6,32; Num 14:1nly 0,22; 16:19,42; 20:6; Dt. 5:24
- The glory of the Lord fills the whole earth, Num 14:21

God is glorious, to gain glory means to have his glory recognized, he reveals himself and his presence

I mention only two NT passages in this lesson: Lk 9:32; 2 Pet 1:17; Jesus Christ shared God's glory, visibly.

In future lessons, we will study more biblical passages that help us understand "glory."

"Glory" is a common word used to translate several Hebrew words, including hod and kabod; in NT it is used to translate the word doxa. The Hebrew kabod originally meant weight or heaviness. The word is then used to express importance, honor, or majesty. LXX translated this word with δόξα, used extensively in the NT. Doxa originally meant judgment or opinion, then by extension, reputation and honor. A single underlying concept: that which has glory or honor is worthy of praise.

Glory (Latin gloria, fame) is used to describe God's visible presence. Divine glory is an important theme, God is the most glorious being, human beings are created in the Image of God and can thus share or participate in divine glory as image-bearers. Glory is not connected with the word glow.

Text and Context

We are in the conclusion of Romans. Doxologies and blessings are often used as introductions and as conclusions. Such words can be spoken to God; here the words are written to the Christians at Rome. The text is an eloquent conclusion. Worthy of study, memorization, understanding. I have found Stott's comments helpful.

What a great text, where else could one go and preach the entire book of Romans in three verses? Paul takes up the major themes of the book, summarizes, connects them. Difficult grammatically, but rich, profound. Must study before we can appreciate the depth, the truth.

The sequence of the doxology is (1) God's power, (2) seen in the gospel of Jesus, according to the gospel and the preaching, (3) seen in God's unique plan for evangelizing the world, according to the revelation of the mystery, (4) evidence of a wisdom without equal, according to God's eternal command. What shall we say? Wow! To such a wise God be glory!

Rom 16:25 *Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages*

FIRST, God's power, he is one being able to establish/stabilize us (confirm, uphold, support, sustain). This he will do by initiating a faith and faithfulness that always unquestioningly leads to obedience, but that gets ahead of the text and skips to the end of the next verse.

The doxology has an awkward beginning, would seem better to begin with "glory be." Paul has a dual purpose. Romans begins and ends focused on God's power through the gospel, power to save, power to establish. This is the power of the gospel, Acts 14:21-23, this is why we establish churches and then revisit them. To uphold them, when we revisit them we preach the gospel. God's power is at work and has been at work to establish evangelistic, multi-ethnic churches that fulfill God's purpose in the world.

SECOND, this is “according to the gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” The message of the gospel is Jesus Christ. The power of God is in the gospel. The two clauses that follow the one preposition are parallel. Paul will use three clauses, two of them are controlled by the first “kata” (according). The gospel is the proclamation of Jesus. God’s power to establish the church through the gospel is an element of the message Paul has been preaching. I am reminded of the first three verses of the letter, set apart for the gospel. Now we learn that the gospel not only saves, it also serves to stabilize.

THIRD, the third clause emphasizes that the gospel is revealed truth, previously a mystery. God’s secret was Jesus Christ himself. More than that, it was that God sending his Son provides an incredible, unbelievable, unforeseeable, now visible, unique plan for evangelizing the world, for taking the saving and confirming gospel to the world. “According to the revelation of the mystery...” Gentiles have an equal part, good news is for all, Israel is not only a physical nation but a spiritual nation, being part of spiritual Israel is salvation for all, by the Deliverer from Zion. The mystery begins and ends with Jesus Christ.

Rom 16:26 *but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—*

The third point continues in v. 26, that God has a unique plan for evangelizing the world. The mystery was hidden, then revealed, then made known through proclamation. The good news is to be preached. The mystery was made known to the nations. Through the prophetic writings refers to the Old Testament.

FOURTH, “according to the command of eternal God.” We must hear Paul’s doxology—God’s power, according to the gospel and its preaching, according to the mystery now being made known, according to God’s command. All of this with a singular purpose—to make possible obedience that results from faith rather than fear. Not unthinking obedience, not robotic, but in faith and faithfulness. To bring about the obedience of faith. Faith that leads always to obedience. The “faith of Christ,” faith that imitates Christ.

All of this provides strength for faith and obedience; we have no indication that other actions move people toward faith and obedience. How shall one obey without knowing what is to be done? Here is an echo of Romans 10. The gospel is proclaimed so the world will believe and obey. The command mostly likely refers to the Great Commission.

Note the sequence again: make known the gospel through Scripture, by God’s command, to all nations, to develop obedient faith. Have you read Romans 1:1-7 recently?

As we conclude we come to the doxology proper. Who could have developed such a plan? All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, foolishness to human beings, God’s wisdom, reflecting last week’s doxology that concludes Romans 9-11. How can everything be united in Christ? Only by the gospel, the preaching, the revelation of the mystery made clear in Scripture, heeding God’s eternal command.

The major themes of the letter are here, God’s desire and power to save and stabilize, the awfulness of the human condition without Christ, Christ crucified and risen, the message preached, obeyed, Christ followers imitating him in spiritual death, burial and resurrection. Universally available. A summons to the nations. To him who is able—to the only wise God be glory through Jesus Christ! Through Jesus Christ, your salvation and mine, our faithfulness. Give glory to the only wise God. Give glory to Christ by faithful obedience.

Rom 16:25-27 -- Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.