

## Responding to God's Glory in Everyday Life (Ephesians 3:21-4:1)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on December 4, 2011

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Ephesians 3:21 "... to Him [God] be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called ..."

The glory of God is something we talk about a lot, but sometimes don't define, as someone mentioned to me last time. God's glory is defined in more ways than one – it can emphasize the weightiness of God, His bigness, His massiveness. Sometimes it means God's attributes, sometimes an emphasis on the visible radiance, majesty.

When it's a verb (glorify) or an expression ("*to God be the glory*" like in Eph. 3:21 or other verses), it doesn't mean making Him more glorious, it means to honor, to exalt, to praise, or lift Him up. It is giving Him what He is worthy of (notice word *worthy* in 4:1).

In this text and context, God's glory in the church is to affect:

1. Our Worship and Praise
2. Our Walk and Practice

In other words, we should respond to God's glory in our lips and with our lives. It should drive what we say and what we do. The first 3 chapters of Ephesians may be the greatest concise doctrinal presentation ever written in 3 chapters, and it requires our response.

You may not think those little words "Amen" and "Therefore" are life-changing words ... but they can be. Paul intends life change in us putting these words back to back, turning the corner from doctrine to doxology (giving glory to God in v. 21) and from doxology to our duty (4:1).

We should respond to theology (Eph. 1-3) with doxology (3:21). We should respond to the doctrines of grace with praise, worship.

**1:11** ...we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,<sup>12</sup> to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ **would be to the praise of His glory.** [that's why He predestined us, to praise His glory!]

God's *free grace*, choosing us for salvation (v. 4), predestining us to adoption (v. 5) should make us respond like end of v. 6, *to the praise of the glory of His grace!* Don't try and figure out a way that God doesn't get all the glory in salvation, but that some of the credit or part must be us. If you've trusted in Christ (v. 11) give all the glory and praise to God (v. 12)!

That's the purpose of predestination also in v. 5-6. Redemption?

<sup>14</sup> *who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

From before there was time (v. 4) till the end of time (3:21 *forever and ever*) we are to praise God's glory. "Amen" at the end of chapter 3 is an expression of praise in corporate worship.

When God is glorified, God's people in the NT respond with Amen in. It seems Paul calls on God's people to join in this doxology, by responding "Amen" after "God be the glory forever"

Galatians 1:5: *to Him be the glory forevermore. Amen.*

Philippians: *Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Romans 16:27: *to the only wise God... be the glory forever. Amen.*

2 Timothy 4:18: *to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

This is not just a Paul thing. It's how Christians spoke and wrote. It seems they can't think or speak *to God be the glory* without *Amen*.

John, in Rev. 1:6: *to Him be the glory ... forever and ever. Amen.*

Peter? 1 Pet 4:11: *in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory ... forever and ever. Amen.*

Jude, even that little book: *to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.* (v. 25)

Hebrews 13:21: *to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Jesus: *deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.* (Matt 6:13 KJV)

This word *Amen* at the end of Eph 3:21 is a word most of us just say at the end of our prayers. But most of us don't know what it means, and most, or at least many, don't use it as Scripture says. *Amen* was a word for celebration at the glorification of God. This is a word for corporate worship or conversation. It's verbalization of an affirmation by God's people to God's truth or God's glory.

Ps 72:19 *And blessed be His glorious name forever; And may the whole earth be filled with His glory. Amen, and Amen.*

Jesus said "Amen" repeatedly, when talking about spiritual truths, "Amen, Amen," as he said something important (translated "truly, truly"/"verily verily"). *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* says: "amen" was used most frequently as the response of an individual or the congregation to corroborate or affirm a word spoken by another ... at the end of a doxology (Rom 1:25), used as the response of the people ... (1 Cor 14:16), employed as an emphatic "Yes" to God (2 Cor 1:20) ... [it] meant something like "Yes, I (we) fully agree" or "Yes, this is true" or "May it most certainly be as you say!"<sup>1</sup>

As I said last week, if you only say Amen when you pray, or if you think "Amen" means "I'm done praying, we can all open our eyes" we're missing a key response God intends from His glory in praise. The biblical word Amen is almost never used at the end of prayer, it is a word used like a punctuation mark for God's truth, and when God is glorified or given glory or praise, all His people say...*Amen*

It's not only used at the end of a statement of praise, but at the beginning, and often after giving God "*glory... forever and ever.*" A good example is worshippers in Revelation 7:12 saying, "*Amen, blessing and glory ... be to our God forever and ever. Amen.*"

Paul's language at the end of Eph 3 is very similar to Psalm 106:47 "... *give thanks to Your holy name And glory in Your praise.*"<sup>48</sup> *Blessed be the LORD ... From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, "Amen." Praise the LORD.*

All the people are called to say Amen. That was not just a cultural Jewish thing. It's an OT command, and it was a common practice of the NT church as well, verbalizing "Amen" to God for His glory and for the truth of His promises in Christ.

2 Corinthians 1:20 says "*For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory.*" (ESV)

It's assumed there: *Believers utter Amen to God for His glory.* The Bible shows again and again that we are to say Amen when God is glorified. This is the normal natural response all God's people were expected to join in for God's truth and promises, as he says in Corinthians, we utter "Amen" (meaning *yes!*) to His glory.

When God is glorified and praised our hearts should resonate and our lips should respond by saying "Amen" at times in our worship. The NT even seems to assume churchgoers say "Amen" in church in 1 Corinthians 14:16 (ESV) "... *if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying?*"

The context is in corporate worship; if you're praising God in your spirit or in another tongue, and a visitor comes in, that's a problem, because how is he going to know to say "Amen" when he doesn't know what you're saying? Implication: nothing is more normal than for Christians to say "Amen" when God is glorified at church.

Some think it's unusual when someone says "Amen" after a song or during a sermon, but Paul implies it's unusual to *not* say Amen in 1 Cor. 14:16. Foreign languages/tongues weren't for a worship service because if they don't understand it, they can't say "Amen." Better to prophecy or preach, Paul says, so they can all say Amen. People need to be able to resonate, respond, reaffirm it with Amen.

It was refreshing to be in churches in Africa several weeks where they do this based on the biblical text (even the "Alleluia/Amen" responsive language from the Psalms, "Alleluia" = "praise the LORD"). This combination of praise continues till Jesus returns, Rev 19:

<sup>1</sup> *After these things I heard something like a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God ..."* <sup>4</sup> *And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who sits on the throne saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!"* <sup>5</sup> *And a voice came from the throne, saying, "Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great."*

<sup>6</sup> *Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.”* <sup>7</sup> *“Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him ...”*

And all God’s people in this multitude here said ... Amen! This is how believers should think and speak when they hear a testimony of salvation, anything that gives God glory: *Amen, hallelujah, praise the Lord! Maranatha, come Lord Jesus!*

As one who’s spent a lot of time on the mission field, I’ve learned that some of our narrow brands of Western Christianity have much to learn from other cultures and countries and Christianity as well. My missionary mom emailed me from Malaysia: ‘We attended a worship service of an aboriginal native group in a remote part of the rain forest and I was surprised to hear the same “Alleluah , followed by Amen” sequence that Phil talked about in the Congo. The Pastor later told me that is how Christians identify each other when strangers meet...[to respond *Amen*] means you’re a Christian ...’

That word at the end of v. 21 has a rich history within Christianity. I bring this up because this “Amen” is a word we gloss over and I want us to understand every word God inspired and what Paul is building towards and how he wants the church to join in the praise and glory of God by saying *Amen*, not just for “I’m done praying.” Then we can come to v. 20-21 with the fullness intended originally and understand God’s truth should make us respond, even out loud

It’s not just an OT thing or pattern from ancient times, this is how the people of God are to speak at all times, and will to end of time. Here’s the last 2 verses of the Bible, Revelation 22:20–21: *He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming quickly.” Amen. Come [Maranatha], Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.*

This is a Scriptural pattern from the first book of the Bible, Torah. In one chapter it says 12x “*All the people shall say ‘Amen’*” (Dt 27) in response to God’s Word. In Nehemiah 8 God’s people ask Ezra to “bring the book” (v. 1) and it says “*Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. Then Ezra blessed the LORD the great God. And all the people answered, “Amen, Amen!” while lifting up their hands; then they bowed low and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.*” (Neh. 8:5-6)

May God do the same in our midst today as we open the book! As I seek to “bring the book,” to bring it on, and bring it to you today, may we reverence and bow at least our hearts if not our bodies and faces as God’s glory is lifted up. And I give you permission to do any of those things we just read, with your voice or hands or lips!

And I want to urge you to, and not to let your praise be restrained. God wants us to respond to His truth, not just read it. Praise Him! As Paul takes us to this “Amen” at the end of this chapter, may we lay aside traditions that tell us “good Christians never say *Amen* or raise their hands in church or their voice or make any movement or facial expression – the less we move or respond to great truth, the more spiritual we are.” We might as well be Catholics if we let tradition trump the text and want to just go through the motions.

“If you can’t say “Amen” at least say “ouch”! Say *something*, do something to show you’re alive and that God’s truth resonates with you so that you respond in some way. Those who have the highest theology should have the highest doxology and praise to God and it should have the greatest impact on their lives (4:1ff). So let’s worship our God who is great and greatly to be praised. *Alleluia?! Amen!*

#1. God’s Glory Should Affect our Worship in Praise

**#2. God’s Glory Should Affect our Walk in Practice**

[discuss glory in the gospel, our walk, repentance]

This month of December we celebrate the Christmas message from the angels to shepherds: “*glory to God in the highest.*” This highest glory of God was first revealed to the lowliest of people, ordinary people, doing everyday tasks, keeping watch over flocks by night. Shepherds were considered unclean commoners by society, and yet Luke’s gospel says “*the glory of the Lord shone round about them*”

They were told they’d find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, in a trough that animals would eat out of every day, not a glorious or glamorous place you might expect the King of Glory to be born in. He wasn’t born in a big palace, but in a little town of Bethlehem. It wasn’t in mansions of glory, but in a manger probably more gross than glorious. He was born to a very normal couple, not nobility. He didn’t have any special treatment ... or even a sanitary place. The glory of God in the face of Christ wasn’t obvious to those who first saw Him. There was no glow or halo, contrary to the paintings

Isaiah 53 says there was nothing special about the appearance of Jesus that was unusual or attractive. It says He was “*like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him*” (v. 2 NIV).

And the manger and stable wasn’t appealing to the eyes or to the nose, probably there was a whiff of everyday manure of animals. In a stinky smelly stable came the pure and Holy One of Israel. Animals that He had created watched on at this very strange scene. Cows, chickens, and a human couple saw their Creator in a manger

The glory and majesty of God in Christ meets man in the mundane. That’s a theme we see in the gospel that Paul also highlights in this passage for the everyday life of every person in the church. Eph. 3:21 says to God *be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus ... 4:1 Therefore walk worthy...*” The biblical word “walk” is a very mundane everyday sort of word, for every step of every day of life.

Walking in the Bible is a synonym for living, lifestyle, way of life. In Bible times, as you walk, your feet would become dusty, dirty, and stinky, so a gracious host would wash the feet of his guests. R.C. Sproul has an excellent series called “From Dust to Glory” (he takes us from man’s creation from the dust in Genesis to final glorification in Revelation), but here Paul takes us “from glory to dust,” from the glory of God in Eph 3:21 to the dust of our walk in 4:1, in the down and dirty, nitty-gritty, everyday walk of daily life, where the sandal hits the ground, or “the rubber meets the road.”

And it is here that God's glory is to affect every step of every day, in what seems very unglamorous, un-glorious, as v. 1 says we *walk*. The verb tense is ingressive, meaning our walk is to be *changed*.<sup>2</sup>

When we walk, when we sit at home, when we lie down, when we rise up (Deuteronomy 6 says), biblical doctrine is to permeate our lives, every aspect. Mothers changing diapers or raising little ones, dads whether doing work during the day or disciplining/discipling their children, older people with more free time deciding how they will use their time, young people in the everyday choices that will shape their lives ... what we watch or read or talk about or choose to do when we have the choice, all of that falls under Eph 3:21-4:1. Even food or drink is *to be done to the glory of God* (1 Cor. 10:31). I hope Didier's message helps us think spiritually about food/drink.

Paul goes from the highest subject (the glory of God) to the lowest littlest things of everyday life. Some of us would like to stay at the end of Eph. 3 ... at the top of the mountain. But the view of God's glory from the peak is actually intended in Scripture to be what we then live in light of as we come back down to the valleys of our everyday life we walk through, so that we would walk worthy (4:1)

Moses had a glorious mountain-top experience with God literally. He asked God to show him His glory. Moses came "face-to-face" with God as much as is humanly possible without dying, and when he came back down from the mountain his face was glowing. But as Moses comes back to real life here below, from down the mountain to walk around the camp of Israel, Moses was no longer on holy ground. He was back with unholy unclean people walking in sin.

God revealed His glory to affect how God's people were to live. I would much rather stay on that mountain-top enjoying God's glory but God calls us down here to live for His glory in sinful everyday. Moses comes down from that mountain-top experience of glory to tell God's people how they must walk and live (Exodus 34). He was not supposed to stay there; he was to come down to the sinful real world, with God's Word which was to be applied in their lives.

Elijah had his own "mountain-top" experiences with the Lord. In 1 Kings 19:11, God says to him: "*Go forth and stand on the mountain before the LORD.*" *And behold, the LORD was passing by!* [kind of like Moses in Exodus 33-34] *And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake.*<sup>12</sup> *After the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.*<sup>13</sup> *When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle ...*<sup>15</sup> *The LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus ..."*

God called him to the wilderness not just wonderful experiences. Elijah would have much rather stayed on the mountain-top with the Lord than go back to Ahab and Jezebel and the sinful Israelite idol-worshippers who seemingly had all bowed the knee to Baal.

But we're not called to just dwell on His glory in mountain-top experiences; we are to live for His glory in a sinful world below. That's why Paul doesn't stop at Eph 3:21 ... there is a *Therefore*. Everything in the first 3 chapters of Ephesians is there for this, 4:1 and following.

It's interesting that both of those OT prophets, Moses and Elijah, had another mountain-top experience with the Lord in the NT, too. The Lord Jesus had revealed His glorious identity to Peter as the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And He promised to build His church, the church Paul says in Eph 3:21 He is to be glorified in.

And then in Luke's gospel he talked about His glorious 2<sup>nd</sup> coming in Luke 9:26 "...when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."<sup>28</sup> Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and **went up on the mountain** ... [Mark's gospel says "up on a high mountain" – this is another literal "mountain-top" experience about to happen in v. 29] ... *the appearance of His face became different* [one gospel writer says it was like the glory of the sun], *and His clothing became white and gleaming.*<sup>30</sup> *And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were **Moses and Elijah,***<sup>31</sup> *who, **appearing in glory,** were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*<sup>32</sup> *Now Peter and his companions ... **they saw His glory** and the two men standing with Him.*<sup>33</sup> *And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not realizing what he was saying ...*

Jesus didn't want them to stay up on that mountain-top. They saw the kingdom of God in its glory before tasting death. They saw the King in glory with Moses and Elijah who were privileged to see Christ's glory in the OT in some way. Peter wanted to stay! 'Let's build 3 tabernacles here, let's setup camp, let's put stakes down and setup the kingdom here and live with the Messiah on this mountain-top! Let's stay up here and not go back down there?'

But God comes in a cloud so the disciples don't listen to Peter and God says of His beloved Son "*Listen to Him.*" Stop talking, let the Lord do the talking, then you do the walking in obedience to Him. Jesus didn't come the first time to setup a tabernacle like in the OT – John 1:14 says He "*became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us and we beheld His glory...*" Israel had a temporary tabernacle for the Lord in the OT and later a temple, but Jesus explains in the next chapter of John's gospel that He is the temple. All the fullness of God and His glory dwells in Jesus, and they beheld that glory.

But they weren't to stay on that mountain-top in some tabernacle. Jesus takes them down from that glorious experience to everyday life below, to minister and to apply what He'd been teaching them. There's needy messy messed-up people like a demon-possessed boy right as they get to the bottom of the mountain. At the bottom of the mountain were also people Jesus called to follow Him who began to make excuses showing they were not fit for the kingdom of God, but Jesus came down to minister. And not just unbelievers, the same chapter talks about the disciples arguing about who was the greatest (some of the greatest everyday struggles are with other Christians) and the disciples complaining about others casting out demons who weren't in their circle, or the disciples asking Jesus if they can call down fire from heaven on a Samaritans village that rejected them – all this in the same chapter after the mountain-top.

Sometimes Christians talk about "mountain-top experiences," like a life-changing mission trip, or a retreat at a beautiful conference center, or at Lake Tahoe, or for some, Hume Lake.

The fellowship, the worship in song and sermon, was so glorious, we didn't want to leave ... But it was all there for the purpose of the *Therefore* in Eph 4:1, to go back to everyday life.

Maybe after the first 3 chapters of Ephesians we would like to stay in these glorious truths. 'Let's setup 3 tabernacles, one for chapter 1, another for chapter 2, another for chapter 3.' But the *Therefore* in Eph 4 won't let us. God's glory must affect our walk down here.

God's glory must affect:      Our worship *and* our walk  
    Our praise *and* our practice  
    Our lips *and* our life  
    What we say *and* what we do

Paul goes from God's majestic glory to man's mundane walking and messy lives with the word *Therefore* at the beginning of Eph 4. We need to walk worthy of this glory, and the glorious truths Paul has been talking about for 3 chapters, capped off by the mountain-top doxology at the end of chapter 3. Now for the next 3 chapters Paul is going to show us how those glorious doctrines of grace and the gospel meet us in the valleys and foothills of life, and even in the prison Paul writes from in v. 1. What glorious truth, Amen?!

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<sup>1</sup> Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, p. 504.