

Week of Sept 2-8

CRESC.

Scripture Reading: Read Ephesians chapter 3

For all you musicians out there reading this, you probably recognized today's devotional title. For the non-musicians, though, *cresc.* is an abbreviation for the musical term "crescendo." It's used in a musical piece to indicate a gradual and steady increase in loudness or force. When properly placed and played, a crescendo can bring a piece of music to a climactic moment that triggers a strong emotional response in an audience.

In today's chapter reading, Paul reaches a crescendo of sorts within his letter when he provides a doxology in the concluding verses of this chapter. And, his crescendo leaves us breathless. But, let's look first at what precedes it.

Chapters 1-3 have been filled with declarations of our blessings in Christ and what God has done on our behalf. Verse after verse in these chapters, Paul trips over himself mentioning one blessing after another that flows to us by faith. It was a message of hope and encouragement, especially to a church that was despised in its day by the Roman authorities. Rather than being weak and lowly, the church, according to Paul, was part of God's cosmic plan for the universe. God's wisdom was on display in the church and was observed not just on earth but in the heavenly realm as well (3:10). What was true in Paul's day is equally true of ours. But, as blessed as we have been so far, it's only a foretaste of a rich inheritance to follow this life in the age to come.

Paul pauses twice in these chapters to offer up prayers for the church in order that believers might see these truths for themselves. Paul recognized that he was going deep with what he was sharing. He wanted us to see the magnitude of God's love, provision, power, and grace, for ourselves, as well as our inheritance in Christ and the church's role in God's plans. It's just too precious to miss. That's why Paul prays powerful and uplifting prayers for the church. He hasn't reached a crescendo yet, but it is coming.

It finally arrives in verse 20. "*Now*" signifies its arrival. It's time. Time for Paul to build to a climactic conclusion and evoke an emotional response in his listeners. "*...to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine...*" Beyond our imagination. Beyond our ability to ask. God dreams that are bigger than we are. "*...according to his power that is at work within us...*" God's powerful Spirit at work within. The crescendo builds. "*...to him be glory...*" It's about him. It always has been and it always will be. God's glory not ours. "*...in the church and in Christ Jesus...*" Yet, the privilege is ours for the glory to be manifested through us and through his Son. "*...throughout all generations for ever and ever!*" Glory, not just for a day. Not just for a week, a year, or even a lifetime, but for ever and ever and ever. "*Amen.*" Nothing more needs to be said. With the chapter complete, we are left simply to soak in God's presence and be awed by who he is and what he has done.

Action Step & Prayer Focus: Reread Paul's final two verses of this chapter. Slowly. Don't rush it. Listen for the crescendo. Let it produce a response of prayerful praise from your lips and heart.

Take-a-way: *To God alone belongs a crescendo of praise!*