

## EPHESIANS 3:20-21

### INTRODUCTION

This final section in this chapter is a great doxology, perhaps it is the greatest in the whole Bible. In the verses just before this doxology Paul reached a height beyond which neither reason nor imagination can go. He had been speaking of God's purposes for his church and the in particular the purpose Paul mentions is that we might be filled to the measure of the fullness of God (v 19).

This idea I said last time is hard for us to communicate and understand; it is really beyond our wildest imagination, how can we be filled with God's own fullness? We stand on the edge of something infinite. Paul has really prayed for something that is beyond our imagination therefore Paul now bursts forth into praise to God in this doxology. He confirms in it that God is able to do more than we can ask or imagine.

### 1. GOD IS ABLE TO DO THE UNIMAGINABLE (v 20)

Paul says that God is able to do much more than we could ever ask him for or imagine. What would you really like God to do; well God is able to do much more than that. Now as we read this sentence in English it seems as if Paul is really struggling to find the words to use, he is trying to describe the indescribable but this is even more noticeable in the Greek Language. The idea behind the word 'able' in the Greek is the idea of being 'able above and beyond all things.' Perhaps the sentence could read like this. "Now to him who is able above all things to do exceedingly abundantly beyond all we can ask or think or imagine." Paul simply does not have adequate language to say what he wants to say.

He is struggling to find enough adjectives to describe God's power. Let your imagination run wild for a minute and dream the dream concerning what we would love God to do. Well Paul says God is able to do even more than that. So that hardened sinner you imagined was saved; God is able to do more than that. Our nation completely transformed for God, God is able to do more than that. The world won for Christ; God is able to do more than that.

World peace well God is able to do more than that. That is Paul's point here, God is able, and God is powerful,

Now can you see how this helps our prayer life? Although we probably don't like to think that this is true of us but I suspect that we all only ask God for what we think is possible or what we can perceive to be possible. On those occasions when we go beyond that and ask for something, which we wish, would happen but we simply can't see it happening then doubts begin to creep into our mind. We often have doubts about what we consider to be impossible requests. Have you ever spoken to someone who is so hardened against God that we think to ourselves even if we never say it "O she will never be saved?"

He is a hopeless case he will never change. Or perhaps there is a professing believer who simply displays attitudes that are so unchristian and has done so for so long; that we write him off saying to ourselves he is never going to change.

That is just the way he is. Paul is saying to us that we must not harbour such thoughts because our God is able, he is eternal and absolute and is able to do more than we can ask him for or even imagine him doing. That's why every time we come to our God in prayer it's good to remind ourselves of whom we are praying too, it's good to read this verse before we pray just to cast out of our minds and hearts any doubts that we might have.

It's good to be reminded of God's ability to answer and to do all that we ask and request. He has the power and the ability to do all that we ask of him or even imagine him doing.

Therefore let's be bold and courageous in our praying. Let us bring what we consider to be our most impossible requests to God; let us be bold to bring all our wildest dreams to God for there is no danger of exhausting God's ability or power to answer. His power and grace is beyond all that we can ever ask. He is able to do what is beyond the bounds of possibility; he is able to do what seems to be unattainable. I am labouring this point I know so please do forgive me but I am trying to get us to understand and to realise just how powerful our God really is.

We naturally try to limit the eternal and absolute power of God to our own understanding or to our own concepts or to our own imagination but God's power is beyond that. That ought to first of all encourage us to pray and it ought to encourage us to believe when we pray.

This truth if only we could grasp it would cast out doubts from our hearts. In case you think that this is just a statement about God without any substance then let me turn you to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. Could you imagine God becoming man? Could we imagine this God being born into this world through a virgin?

I don't think you would ever imagine that happening and yet that is exactly what God did in the coming of his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Being God he became man and was born of the Virgin Mary. That is an example of God doing more than we would ask for or ever imagine and then there are all the miracles of Jesus and then there is his death when God died and then there is his resurrection and I could go on and mention the conversion of Paul and so on. There is plenty of proof in the Scriptures of God's power at work, at God doing the impossible, going beyond what we even considered asking for.

So let me encourage you never to give up praying for people who seem to be getting harder to the gospel, never give up praying for those who seem to be getting weaker in body, and never stop praying for one whose circumstances seem to get worst by the day not better even though you have prayed for them for years. Encourage your heart with this truth that God is able to do more than we can ask for or even imagine.

## 2. GOD IS AT WORK IN HIS PEOPLE (v 20)

This God of power is the same God who is at work in his people. It's easy to read Paul's marvellous statement about God's power and yet feel that it is all very remote it is all far removed from daily life and experience. But Paul is actually saying that our

own experience of God's power demonstrates that he is able to do more than we can ask of him or even imagine. No doubt Paul could not help but think about God's power at work in him here.

If anyone had any doubt about God's power look at the Apostle Paul. He was a blasphemer, a persecutor of the church, he hated Christ and he showed it by seeking to destroy all who followed him. He hated Christianity he loved Judaism yet God in his power came and saved and transformed such a man. The God who is so powerful that he can do the impossible did the impossible in Paul. Paul could never change himself even if he wanted to which he didn't of course.

No one would convince Paul he was wrong he was far to self-righteous for that but God came to him in power and made him into an apostle and not any apostle but an apostle to the Gentiles the very people he despised as a Jew. Who and what made Paul a new man, God did it and he did it by his immeasurable power? But Paul's point is that God's power was not only at work in his life but it was at work in the life of these Ephesian believers as well.

Chapter 2 explains this clearly; they were dead in their sins and now they are alive in Christ Jesus and members of God's household and family (Ephesians 2:1-3 & 11-12). What happened to change such people? God did it by his power. No one believes the gospel by themselves, it takes the power of God by his Spirit to convince us of his truth and to convert us and transform us. If you are a Christian then you are a Christian because of God and his power at work within your life.

He is the one who has convinced you of his word and has regenerated your heart, so that you humbled yourself before God and believed in Him for salvation. Your conversion is evidence that God is powerful that God is able to answer the prayers of his people for someone somewhere prayed for you while you were still in your sin and rebellion of heart. You and I give clear evidence that God is able to do more than all we ask or imagine, for some people could never have imagined us being saved.

Paul's point is if God can do that for you and continues to work in your heart to change you, if he can do that then he can do anything, he can do everything. There is no limit to the power of God.

Can I ask do you know this power in your life? Have you experienced God's power in giving you new spiritual life in Christ? If not then you are not a Christian; I can say that because that is what the bible says. You are still dead in your sins and you need the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus to raise you up to spiritual life in Christ Jesus. You can have such an experience but it does not come from yourself.

There is nothing that you can do but you must plead with God that in his power he might be merciful to you and in his power he might come to you and give you the gift of faith to believe and enable you to repent. If you are a Christian then you do know this power of God in conversion then are you walking with him? If you are then you will know the power of God at work in your heart. You ought to be making progress in your Christian faith, God's power ought to be working in us revealing our sins to us and revealing the truths of his word to us.

God's power within us will be creating spiritual desires, desires to pray, desires for holiness of life, desires to read his word and meet with his precious people.

All these things are evidence of God's power at work in your life. Are you aware of God dealing with you, do you know the moving of His Spirit within your life? If so then you must conclude that God is at work by his power and if he is doing that for you then you must go on and ask for God's power to continue working in the lives of all his people. You and I ought to be convinced that there is no one beyond the reach of God's power; if God has done so much for us by his power then he can do it for others.

It's good to look for the evidence within our own lives but we must do it not so that we can boast about it but so that we will be encouraged to ask God to do in others what he is doing in us. We can also have confidence to ask God to do in us what he is doing in others. We can ask in confidence because we know that he is so powerful that he is able to do all that we can ask for or even imagine. Let God's work in us be our spur to pray for the impossible in others.

### 3. GOD IS TO RECEIVE ALL THE GLORY (v 21)

It is no wonder that Paul finishes this doxology with this statement "to him be the glory" Paul has highlighted the fact that God is powerful that he can do more than we could ever ask him for. Paul's says God can do more than we can ever imagine because God is powerful. His power is seen in his people by saving them and by his work of sanctification by his Spirit. This work is all as a result of God's power so no wonder Paul says to him be glory.

But notice where God's glory is seen, notice where God is glorified.

**a) He is glorified in the Church** – The church is a miracle. Paul has taken some time in this letter to explain not just how these spiritually dead Ephesians were made alive in Christ but how those who were strangers and aliens to God and to his covenant promises and are now members of his church. As a result they receive the same privileges and benefits that believing Jews receive. They are now one with all believing Jews they are now part of the body of Christ.

The barrier between the Jew and Gentile has been broken down as a result of Christ and his work of redemption. The church is one in Christ Jesus. Now its as this oneness is displayed and worked out in the church that the glory of God becomes manifest. That's why a church that is not united brings dishonour to God rather than glory. That's why in 4:3 Paul urges the church to make every effort to keep the unity of the church because the glory of God is at stake.

If there is one area of the church that Satan seeks to attack more than others it is its unity. If he can get discord to rein in churches then he knows that God who is powerful is robbed of the glory due to his name. Disharmony comes into churches not usually over some doctrinal issue but over some small thing some personality class or some disagreement over the building or over styles of music or dress.

It's not that those are not important issues but they ought not to be issues over which we allow discord to come into the church. We are blessed in our church with unity, we have our moments like all churches but the unity in this church I think is impressive. So we need to beware, that we do not let our guard drop for Satan is seeking an opportunity to bring discord into our church and if he succeeds then God will not be glorified in our church.

But if people see our church functioning, as it should function then Glory will be brought to God.

**b) He is glorified in Christ Jesus** – Some translator's think that this phrase should read "through Christ Jesus." So that this verse means that God is glorified in the church through Christ Jesus. Well that would be true of course but I don't think that is what Paul is saying. He is saying that God is glorified in the church when people see his power at work there. God is also glorified in Christ Jesus when people see God's power at work in Him.

Of course the church only comes into being because of Christ Jesus but Paul's focus is upon Christ and God's power at work in him. I have already said that Christ's whole work was a work of power from his incarnation to his ascension but we must not miss the point of Christ Jesus life and ministry. Ultimately it was to bring glory to God. As we look and examine his life, his words, his actions, and his passions then we must simply see God's power at work and as a result we must bring glory to God.

Sometimes we can view Christ work for what he has done for us and that is right but ultimately Christ's work should lead us to glorify God. Although at times the church robs God of his glory we can never say that of the life and ministry of Jesus, Jesus always brought glory to His Father, God's name is honoured and glorified through the work of his Son, which of course was accomplished in the power of the Holy Spirit.

God is not just to get the glory, as the power of God is manifest in the church and in Jesus in this generation but in every generation. He is not just to be given the glory now but forever and ever, for all eternity God will be glorified and his glory will be seen and manifest in his church and in his Son. That's why we ought to live lives pleasing to God so that he gets the glory in this our generation.

That's why we ought never to think lightly of the church for it manifests the glory of God. Finally that's why we should ponder and contemplate Jesus Christ for in him we see the glory of God.

"To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations for ever and ever!"

Amen