

Ephesians 3:20-21

Introduction

We reach the conclusion of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. If any of the readers, then or now, felt they were exempt from the blessings Paul prayed for, if they felt they were too ordinary for these things to be their experience, Paul says No! The problem is your understanding and perception of God. So he concludes with this glorious statement, a final doxology. He stoops to help us in our weakness and unbelief as we ask "Can Christ really dwell in my heart, can I know in a personal way Christ's love for me, can I know the fullness of God? What we need above all else is to know God, who He is and what He can do.

Statement about power of God

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). υπερεκπερισσων Paul coins a new word here, a super-superlative grammatically. N.I.V. translates it "able to do immeasurably more, or vastly more, than all we can ask or imagine". God of superabundance. Infinite ability. God whose power is not limited in any way.

In chapter one Paul prays that they will have their eyes opened to **His incomparably great power** (Ephesians 1:19). In the next chapter he makes further reference to the power of God (Ephesians 2:6). Now he returns to the subject again. Lost for words, he cannot measure the immeasurable. Language is inadequate. Tells us he is talking about one whose power is eternal and absolute and above all things. It is above all we could ask. We often put limit on our petitions we ask from God. Then sometimes let imagination take off. Think of all sorts of things we daren't ask Him in prayer. Imagine all kinds of impossibilities. Paul says God can do more than you ask or imagine, or conjure up in your mind.

God is like a great ocean able to bear us up and support us. Ship of thousand tonnes. Will sea hold it? It can hold a whole navy, without any problem. All sufficiency and fullness in Him. One of our greatest problems is our failure to realize God is not man. So often limit Him to measure of our own minds and understanding. How often unbelief has to be rebuked in the Bible. Mary, when she was told she was to give birth to the Son of God, said it was impossible in her circumstances. Angel's reply, **With God nothing will be impossible** (Luke 1:37). The rich young ruler seemed such a certain candidate for salvation, but went away sorrowful when Jesus corrected him and called on him to follow Him. **Who then can be saved? With man this is impossible but not with God, all things are possible with God** (Mark 10:27).

Eternal and absolute power of God and hence abundance He can supply. The apple tree has more apples than tree can bring to fruition. Lilies of the field are more glorious than Solomon (Matthew 6:29). We have more friends than we can fully appreciate. More books than we can ever need. The Psalmist's cup runs over (Psalm 23:5). He forgives, **he will abundantly pardon** (Isaiah 55:7 A.V.). He washes us whiter than snow (Psalm 51:7). **Where sin increased, grace increased all the more**

(Romans 5:20). **His love that surpasses knowledge** (Ephesians 3:19). **The peace of God, which transcends all understanding** (Philippians 4:7). **Inexpressible and glorious joy** (1 Peter 1:8). And now **He is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine** (Ephesians 3:20). All fullness, all sufficiency, all ability.

*“Thou art coming to a king,
Large petitions with thee bring,
For His grace and power are such
None can ever ask too much”*
(John Newton)

Grounds for making such a statement

According to his power that is at work within us. Paul had earlier spoken of proof of God’s power and he had pointed to the resurrection (Ephesians 2:6). No greater demonstration of divine power than the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His exaltation to the right hand of God. No greater miracle in the Bible.

Now Paul appeals to what they already know of God’s power on their own lives as evidence of what He can do. So he speaks of the power at work within them. No doubt thinking first of himself. “Look at me! I was formerly a blasphemer, persecutor, insolent (1 Timothy 1:13), but I obtained mercy. I hated Christ intensely, sought to massacre members of the church, no one was more opposed to the Gospel, full of hatred and prejudice, proud of my education, learning and self-righteousness. But here I am preaching the very message I sought to destroy. Christ and the gospel now mean so much to me, I would die for them.”

Think of your own experiences. Once dead in trespasses and sins, under the power and tyranny of the devil. Enthralled by the lusts of the flesh. By nature, children of wrath. Completely hopeless condition, without Christ, without God, without hope, lost and ruined. Look where you are now. Forgiven, accepted, cleansed, changed, you love God, His truth, His people and His Son. New desires, new life, new attitudes, new way of looking at things, new values. From the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God’s dear Son. Raised from state of spiritual death. Heirs of God. Joint heirs with Christ.

This appeal can be made to every Christian. May not be as dramatic as in Paul’s case or so dateable, but every Christian can say “Whereas I was blind, now I see”. Attitude to God, Christ, people of God, Bible, sin, holiness – all have been radically changed. Reason? The power of God. The Christian has been dealt with by God. If never known God or His power, then this argument carries no weight. But if you know the power of God in your life, then it is logical to argue – God, who has done this for me already, is a God who will do all He has promised. No end to His power and no limit. So I can be strengthened by His Spirit, Christ can reign in my heart, I can be sure of His amazing love, I can experience His fullness of power. The past is a foretaste and pledge of the future. Already experienced change, which is above all we once asked or imagined.

Could take this argument further. Very existence of Christian church – despite repeated attempts over two thousand years to suppress it – more people who call on

the name of the Lord Jesus Christ than ever before. Miracles in changed lives, breaking down walls and barriers, reconciling people who by race, colour, culture and outlook were once worlds apart. How often enemies of Christianity here uttered their funeral oration over Christianity, and God's answer was to send revival and resurrection for the dead.

“We are living in a time of the largest ingathering of people into the kingdom of God this world has ever seen. Astonishing growth in Africa and Asia more than counterbalances the serious decline in the Western world.” (Operation World p.25)

Why then do we not believe these great and glorious truths about God and His power? **Again and again they put God to the test. They vexed the Holy One of Israel** (Psalm 78:41). **If my people would but listen to me, if Israel would follow my ways** (Psalm 81:13). God's promises were too much, they could not believe God's word, they were doubtful, hesitant and fearful. His words were all too good to be true. They staggered in unbelief. What a sorry figure they cut.

If not unbelief, sometimes unconfessed sin, insistence on going own way, causes us to doubt His power. Communication link with God is affected. Not getting through. Painfully true that **apart from me you can do nothing** (John 15:5). Therefore still need to pray for the Holy Spirit's ceaseless activity in our lives.

How can we rest on our oars and imagine we have arrived? To the church at Laodicea - **You say 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing'. But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked** (Revelation 3:17). We have come so far, but much further to go. Need to have eyes opened. Hence Paul's prayer **that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know... his incomparably great power for us who believe** (Ephesians 1:18,19).

Spurgeon said, “We ought to make it our daily prayer that the Blessed Spirit would frequently bear us right out of ourselves and lift us above the trifles which obsess us, till we are conscious only of God and His exceeding glory. Oh that He would plunge us into the Godhead's deepest sea till we are lost in His immensity and can only exclaim ‘Oh the depths’”.

Doxology response to power of God

To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:21). He alone can make dream come true. Power is from Him; glory is to Him. In the Church and in Christ Jesus – in body and in head, in bride and in bridegroom, in history to all generations, and in eternity – forever and ever, Amen. The Apostle pours out his heart in adoration and glorifies His name. O that His name might be magnified in generation after generation and throughout eternity.

Do we join in this doxology? Can we give it a hearty ‘Amen’? Do we share this selfless passion for God's glory? How often we want God's power for our church – that it will grow big and people will sit up and take notice – or for ourselves – that people should notice and realize our importance and significance, and be aware of

what we have done and achieved. Paul's doxology corrects all this. Here is a man with a passion for God, His glory, His wonder, His majesty. "Unto Him be the glory".

Conclusion

Do we feel unrestrainable desire to praise God and magnify His grace? Are we moved and thrilled about all the possibilities there are for us in Christ? Have we begun to taste and see? **To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honour and glory and power for ever and ever** (Revelation 5:13).

*"Great God of wonders, all thy ways
Are matchless, Godlike and divine,
But the fair glories of thy grace
More Godlike and unrivalled shine.
Who is a pardoning God like thee
And who has grace so rich and free"*