

Don't Limit God
Ephesians 3:20-21 (12/17/17)
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Eph 3:20-21 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

We all like power. Power gave us lights and hot water for our showers this morning. We like powerful devices and high speed internet, and powerful cars! Just last year Bugatti came out with the most powerful street-legal vehicle on the planet, the Bugatti Chiron, with a top speed of 260 mph, a 16 cylinder engine with four turbos producing 1500 horsepower. You could get or to Philadelphia in three hours. Or from Newburgh to USI in three minutes...if it wasn't for red lights. So how much power is that? Three words: more than enough. You don't need any more.

Let's read our two verses this morning, Ephesians 3:20-21. How much power is God talking about for every believer in these verses? More than enough. You don't need any more. God is providing you with all you need to live your life to His glory. Friends, this is an amazing conclusion to the first three chapters of this amazing epistle to the Ephesians. In fact, I asked Marianne to include a 3x5 card in your bulletin this morning. I would like you to write these two verses on that card and read them to yourself until you have them memorized and then repeat them to yourself maybe once an hour every day this week, and meditate on it while you are falling asleep each night and especially when you are tempted to react with an unkind word.

GLORIOUS TRUTH

How did we get here? Paul has just finished writing the most towering, breathtaking piece of literature anywhere in all history. Ephesians chapter one is all about what God Almighty has planned for us from eternity past. It just doesn't get richer than this. He blessed us with all spiritual blessings, He chose us, adopted us, redeemed us, sealed and secured us, and made us His inheritance. He joined us with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection and made Him head over us, the church.

In chapter two God reached into the stinking graveyard of depraved and guilty humanity and in greatest love, mercy, and grace He made us alive in Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly places, all by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. He made us new creations in Christ Jesus. Where would you read anything like this in other human literature? Then He joined two age-long enemies, Jews and Gentiles, into one body and reconciled us to Himself through the work of Christ on that cross and made the church us His temple.

In chapter three Paul explains how God revealed all this in that first century to apostles and prophets and how blessed he was to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ so that all of heaven and earth would hear and be amazed at this glorious work of God. Friends, have you ever heard anything like this? Read those three chapters again, slowly, prayerfully, thankfully!

Last week Bryce brought us to the end of this section where Paul prays that we would grasp something of all of this soul-ravishing truth, especially to know Christ's unknowable, four dimensional love – its breadth, length, height, and depth. Not just a little box in the back seat of your new car, but to know something of Christ's unfathomable love for us. The result in verse 19 is that we would be filled with God's fullness, transformed into the image of God's Son.

DOCTRINE LEADS TO DOXOLOGY

Now Paul fairly explodes with doxology, glory, praise, and adoration to the God who planned and executed all this. He is about to turn to the very practical half of Ephesians, chapters 4 to 6, but first he wants to remind us of something very important – the great power of God at work in your life. And that

power, my friends, is more than enough. Be sure to memorize these two verses and recall them throughout your days this week.

Let's read these verses again, but drawing them out like a multi-tiered staircase of praise and worship. Words fail Paul here, like loading a ton of steel on a go-Kart. There's a sesquipedalian word right in the middle – far more abundantly. It has two prepositions in front of it – huper-ek-perissou. It means to overflow way out beyond. Follow along as I read.

- *Now to Him who is able...*
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more...*
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly...*
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all...*
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask...*
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think...*
- *Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,*

MORE THAN ENOUGH POWER

God is able to do far more in your life than you can ever ask for or even imagine. Plug your faith into this awesome reality! When God redeemed Israel out of Egypt and brought them into the Promised Land, He did far more than they could ever ask or imagine! Israel was a weak and puny people, but God gave them a front row seat to see His super-exceeding power, from those ten plagues all the way to smashing the walls of Jericho. All of it was God's power on full display.

What are you seeing God doing in your life? Have you ever said, "I just can't do what God wants me to do." Or "I tried the Bible but it didn't work." Or "I'm too old to change." Or "I'm a choleric and you know what they're like." Or "You don't know what I've gone through in my life." Or "You don't know how much I've been hurt." Or "You don't know what it's like to live with him." Or "You don't know what my kids are like! They are constantly getting on my nerves and driving me up the wall so no wonder I keep flying off the handle and getting beside myself." Wait a minute. God is able to do far more than enough in your life so you can be pleasing to Him.

What do you need? What do you even wish God would do for you? We're not talking about health, wealth, and prosperity here. We're not talking about God doing weird things, shining lights in the dark, even getting you to talk in tongues or perform acts of healings. What does God want to do in your life? He wants to change you from the inside into the likeness of His Son, and that's exactly what this power is for. What would you like to ask God for? "Father, deliver me from my anger, from my lust, from my hardness toward others, from my bitter spirit, from my anxiety and fear." What can you ask that God can do way beyond? "I'm guilty, help! I'm struggling with doubt. My marriage is going down the drain. Help me be a better husband. I'm depressed; I feel like ending it. I'm addicted. I'm just tired. Give me joy, purpose, motivation. I need power to love my enemies." God makes great and mighty promises and He backs them with great and mighty power! Live in that confidence.

Let's think about what kind of power God is talking about here.

This is a unique power for your life, which means one of a kind. Friends, this is God's power for His people and you will never find this power anywhere else. This world does not have this power to give you. No one else, nowhere else, and nothing else in this world even comes close to this power. It's unique. God Almighty's awesome and death-destroying power that is greater than anything you can ask or imagine is the power that is at work in you. That's because this is resurrection power! The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power at work in you (Ephesians 1:19-20).

Why would you look for answers for your struggles and issues anywhere else but to this God of our Lord Jesus who has blessed you beyond measure? Al Mohler this week spoke about the bankruptcy of the world's therapy for all these sex offenders. The world's therapy doesn't work and they don't know what to

do. Can you imagine Moses going back to Egypt to get anger management counsel from one of Pharaoh's magicians? Or Joshua making an appointment with a Canaanite to help him be a better husband? How very foolish. One king of Israel did send for help from a pagan idol and God sent Elijah with a message, "Is there no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?"

This power that Paul speaks of is the unique power of God that is more than enough for whatever your personal life issues are. And you desperately need this power. Jesus said, "Without me you have power to do nothing, nada, zilch, zero." (John 15:5) Don't expect to live your Christian life in your own strength. You will get really tired and weary and after a while you may throw in the towel. God didn't intend for you to struggle on your own. God said in Isaiah 40, "Wait a minute. You've forgotten who I am! I am your Creator and holy God who never wearies or gets tired. I'm the source of strength for you." For those who lack strength He increases power! His was a unique power for Israel! He urges us weak and puny people to wait on Him. Then what happens? You'll renew your strength. You'll quit living like turkeys and mount up with wings as eagles. He'll empower you to run and walk and fulfill His will in your life (see Isaiah 40:29-31).

Second, this is sufficient power – more than enough! Can God really give me what I need to deal with this long-term anger habit? I just fly off the handle so easily; just ask my family. This power is more than sufficient to help you replace that anger with gentleness and kindness. "Can God heal my marriage? Is His power really sufficient for this? We've tried and nothing seems to work. We can't talk without ending in a big fight. Can God fix this?" First, He is able to do way beyond what you can even ask or think, so start there. Ask God for His help. And then keep thinking and counting on the fact that God is working in and through your marriage, not to change your spouse, but to change you! When you start crying out to God and humbling yourself and admitting wrong and asking forgiveness, you may be amazed at how God's power will surge and flow and sweeten and bring a song into your marriage.

Friends, this is more than enough power. It is way beyond, exceedingly abundantly more than enough. It is sufficient. Live on that this week!

Third, this is exclusive power – reserved for God's people. This is one reason some people will try to fix their lives from some habit and not succeed and then they'll go around saying the Bible doesn't work. The Bible is not a lucky charm or instant fix for everyone. Only God's people have this power at work in them. This is that resurrection power God gives every person who comes to Christ. Every believer is joined to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. When we come to Christ we are joined to Christ, united with Christ, in union with Christ. And that means the resurrection power of Christ is working in us. Romans 6:4 says we now walk in newness of life. This is an exclusive power, a blessing reserved for God's people.

Let's stop right here and let me ask you a question. Do you belong to Jesus Christ? The gospel is the power of God to save all who believe. Have you come by faith to Christ, trusting in Him alone to save you from your sin? One of the evidences is a new inner life God calls regeneration, which is the beginning work of the Spirit! From there this exceeding abundant power begins to transform you from the inside out. This power is not some super zap, like Iron Man putting on that power suit, or Captain America and his phenomenal feats. It's got nothing to do with externals, or performing miracles, or getting messages from directly from God.

This unique power for believers is an inner heart transformation seen beautifully in the beatitudes of Matthew 5. This power changes the self-sufficient into beggars, careless sinners into mourners, harsh people into gentle, self-righteous into hungering and thirsting for righteousness, bitter and unforgiving into merciful, sexually unclean and hearts full of self-serving idols into pure hearts, troublemakers into peacemakers, compromisers into persecuted. These are the great works of God's power.

We're talking about the power to stand for Christ even when the fiery furnace is heated up seven times hotter. That's power! The power to keep on loving when your love isn't returned. The power to be so filled with that love of Christ, so aware of Christ's love for you, that it pushes out those ugly lusts and selfish demands to please yourself. This doesn't mean you're perfect. But when you sin and mess up, this

power brings you to repentance and sets you back on the path of loving and clinging to Christ, refusing to let go. This is the exclusive power in you if you belong to Christ.

Fourth, this is doxological power – power that brings God all the glory. As you are growing and seeing God work in your life, and you are putting to death the deeds of the body and putting on godly habits, and you see joy and peace and patience growing and increasing in your life, who gets the credit? Whose power is it? How do you respond? God warned Israel, “After I bring you in there and do these great and awesome things for you, don’t say your own hand did this!” Listen, give God all the glory and credit and honor and worship for whatever is happening in your life. If the fruit of the Spirit is growing, even little by little but it’s growing, give God the glory.

And notice, “to God be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus.” God is glorified in the church as the church is in union with the Son. The Father never thinks of the church outside of the Son, or the Son without the church! And the church and His Son have the one purpose to bring God maximum glory! Wow! What does this say about your purpose on earth? Bring Him maximum glory with your life as you walk in faith and obedience to Him.

Be like Paul and let your hearts burst forth in praise and thanksgiving to this amazing true and living God who chose you to be in His Son and is now working powerfully to transform you into the likeness of His Son. How long should you praise Him? Forever, and ever, and ever, world without end.

What’s the alternative to this life of praising God? To be left in your sin and under judgment forever and ever. Why would you not turn immediately to Christ? Bow the knee of your heart now and receive Him.

So What?

Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” But sometimes we just don’t seem to tap into this overflowing power. Why not? This summer a friend and I ate at the local Culvers. It was dark and raining when I went out to start my car. I slipped in behind the wheel, turned the key, and nothing happened. Nothing. What? I just drove it into this parking lot a few minutes ago. I opened the hood and sure enough, there over the battery terminal was a pile of corrosion that looked like a couple inches of dirty snow. Even the wire connector was broken. What happened? Neglect. What about your Christian life? Are you neglecting your walk with God and corrosion is piling up and nothing is happening? You need to take action. You will not be living in this glorious power of God if you aren’t plugging into the disciplines of prayer and Scripture reading and corporate worship into your life. Be connected to the God who strengthens you.