

Ephesians 3-20-21

More than Able!

Ephesians 3:20–21 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Introduction:

Frank Lloyd Wright is considered to be one of the greatest architects of the twentieth century. Let's say you were designing a doghouse for your puppy. If he was still alive, do you think Frank Lloyd Wright would be able to help you design Sparky's doghouse? Yes, he would be more than able.

I hate to admit this, but Bill Belichick is considered to be the greatest football coach of all time. Why? He has won more super bowls than any other head coach. Let's say that your flag football team needed a new coach. Do you think that Bill Belichick would be able to help your football team get to the next level? Yes, he would be more than able, he is the greatest coach of all time.

YHWH is the only true and living God. He is the covenant keeping God of the Bible. There are no limits to his power. In light of these facts, do you think that God is able to answer your prayer requests??? Yes, he is not just able, he is more than able.

This brings us to the end of Ephesians 3.

In Ephesians 3:14-19 (last week's text), the apostle Paul prayed that God would help the saints in Ephesus comprehend the greatness of Christ's love. This raises the question, is God able to answer this prayer request? This raises another question, is God able to answer any of our prayer requests?

Maybe you have asked similar questions in the past, especially when your prayers go unanswered.

In Ephesians 3:20-21 Paul makes it clear that ***God is more than able to answer our prayers.***

These two verses are called a doxology. A doxology is an expression of praise to God. This doxology comes at the end of Paul's prayer begun in verse 14. With this doxology, Paul praises God for his ability to answer prayer.

In the midst of this doxology, we are reminded that ***God is more than able to answer our prayers.***

To help us understand this bold claim, we are going to look at three aspects of answered prayer!

The who of answered prayer

The how of answered prayer

The result of answered prayer

First, the who of answered prayer

Who answers our prayers? The God who does infinitely more!

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,...

I hope you noticed what Paul did not write. He did not write,

“now to him who is able to do far more!”

“now to him who is able to do abundantly!”

“now to him who is able to do a lot!”

Instead he says, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly...”

The phrase “far more abundantly” is an extraordinary phrase in the Greek. It includes a compound word composed of two words. One of the words means over and above and the other word means extremely or infinitely.

It means something like-

“exceedingly abundantly” (KJV)

“far more abundantly” (RSV)

“exceedingly abundantly beyond” (NASB)

“immeasurably more” (NIV)

“infinitely more” (PHILLIPS, O'BRIEN, AND OTHERS)

Since human language has failed Paul, he creates his own “super superlative.”

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,...

Here is the take away, Paul wants the Ephesians Christians to know that when it comes to God’s ability to answer prayer, there is no limit to what he can do! None! Why? They are praying to an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, and all-wise God.

He created the universe out of nothing by his word.

He keeps the planets spinning in their orbits.

He controls the decay of atoms on the edge of the universe.

He makes the snow and the rain fall.

He controls the path of the butterfly.

He arranged the 18 trillion feet of DNA in your body. (recent video from the John1010 project).

He knows what happened 3,000 years ago in this very spot and he knows what will happen three million years from now in this very same spot.

When it comes to prayer requests, God is able to do infinitely more! Infinitely more than what?

Let’s keep reading.

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

It is interesting that Paul does not stop with the phrase “all that we ask.” In other words, he could have said that God is “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask.”

But that is not what he says. He says that God is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think....

Why does he add the phrase “or think”?

Paul knows that there are certain things that we are willing to ask of God and certain things we are unwilling to ask of God. As a result, we don't ask them we just think them. This is because, we don't really believe that God is able to answer these requests. We think, “God does not care about this detail of my life, or this is too hard for God, or this is asking too much of God.” I'm thinking it, but I'm afraid to ask it, so I don't ask it. Can you relate???

Sure, there are certain things we think, that God will never grant to us, because they are outside of his will, they won't help us, and they won't glorify his name!!!

For instance, I'm sure many of you have thought, “how awesome would it be to win the lottery?” I know most lottery winners end up bankrupt, but I'm different. I would not squander my wealth; I would give most of it away to charity. Keep dreaming...

On the other hand, you may be thinking,

“It would be awesome if I could reach my whole office or neighborhood for Christ.”

“It would be awesome if God brought revival to Spokane.”

“It would be awesome if I could overcome my anger.”

But these things just seem like too much to ask of God. I will think about them, but I will not ask God for them.

Paul says that God is willing to do infinitely more than we ask or think...

Let me summarize Paul's logic in verse 20. It involves five steps-

1. God is able to do all we ask of him.
2. He is even able to do all that we think.
3. Yet God can do more than this...
4. Far more...
5. Infinitely far more...

Who answers prayer? The God who does infinitely more!

Illustration:

God is able to do infinitely more than we ask or imagine.

North campus building... I prayed and prayed for years for a facility and I thought the Service Station was it. Conversation with Jeff W... But God did infinitely more... He provided a better building, in a better location, for a better price.

Who answers our prayers? The God who does infinitely more!

Application:

The great hymn writer and former slave trader John Newton writes,

Thou are coming to a King,
Large petitions with thee bring,
For his grace and power are such,
None can ever ask too much,

Is this how we understand God? Or do we think that God is miserly???

Some of us think of God as a really powerful human, but not an all-powerful God.

Please don't misunderstand me, I'm not advocating a mild form of the prosperity gospel!!! At the same time, Paul clearly says that God is able to do infinitely more.

The infinitely more often has nothing to do with health, wealth, and prosperity. The infinitely more in the immediate context has to do with Paul's prayer for the Holy Spirit to reveal more of Christ's love to our hearts.

With that said, pray bold prayers... expecting God to do infinitely more.

Pray boldly for the salvation of your friends.

Pray boldly for healing.

Pray boldly for God to reveal his love to you.

Pray boldly for God to use you to tell your friends and neighbors about Jesus.

Pray boldly for God to reconcile you with loved ones.

Pray boldly for God to restore your marriage.

Pray in faith to the God who does infinitely more...

This raises the question, how does God often do infinitely more in us? This brings us to the second point...

First, the who of answered prayer

Second, the how of answered prayer

How does God answer prayer? Through resurrection power!

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

What is the power at work in us? Based on the immediate context, this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. Let's back up a few verses to the prayer that leads up to the doxology of verses 20-21.

Ephesians 3:16–19 (ESV) — 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Paul prays for the Holy Spirit to work powerfully in our inner being to ensure that we comprehend the breadth, length, height and depth of Christ’s love.

When we back up even further in Ephesians, Paul makes it clear that the Holy Spirit who lives in us, is the same Holy Spirit who raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Listen to his prayer in Ephesians 1.

Ephesians 1:19–20 (ESV) — 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

So far, Paul has prayed twice in Ephesians (Ephesians 1:17, 3:14-19). In both prayers Paul really, really, really wants the Ephesians Christians to understand the greatness of God’s power available to them.

It is not just any power, it is resurrection power. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead, dwells inside our mortal bodies and will give us power to comprehend the love of Christ.

This is the power that enables God to do infinitely more through us, when we go to him in prayer.

Illustration:

A lot of people have a lot of power...

There is sheer physical power

In 2019 Martin Licis (nicknamed the Dragon) was named the World’s Strongest Man. He can bench, dead lift, and squat massive amounts of weight.

There is the power of influence

I recently read a great article titled *“four people influencing your kids who you have never heard of.”* The number one influencer by far is PewDiePie... He is a Swedish cultural commentator in his late teens or early twenties.

Pewdiepie is a YouTube sensation with 104 million subscribers. Currently he has the second most subscriptions on the YouTube subscription list. Number one is an East Indian music network.

Among generation Z he has more name recognition than LeBron James. His influence is vast among millennials and members of generation Z.

There is the power of wealth

Jeff Bezos is worth 180 Billion.... His great wealth gives him the power to acquire pretty much anything he wants.

There is political power

Currently, Donald Trump has the most political power in the world.

While PewDiePie, Trump, and Bezos have incredible power, not one of them have resurrection power. In other words, none of them have power to raise the dead.

This means that Christians have more power than all of these people combined.

Christians have resurrection power dwelling inside of them.

Application:

Ephesians 3:20 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,

The power at work in us, is resurrection power.

When we pray to God, he is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...

This begins with the power to comprehend God's love, our greatest need, but does not stop there.

Prayer gives us access to resurrection power for every area of our lives.

We need power to love the unlovable.

We need power to humble ourselves

We need power to admit when we are wrong.

We need power to for self-control.

We need power to control our anger.

We need power to control our fear.

We need power to be content with what we have.

How do we tap into this power every day? We pray! In other words, we ask for it, and when we do, we expect God to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.

How does God answer prayer? Through resurrection power.

But, What happens when God answers prayer??? This brings us to the third point...

First, the who of answered prayer

Second, the how of answered prayer

Third, the result of answered prayer

What is the result of answered prayer? God is glorified in the church and in Christ Jesus!

Ephesians 3:20–21 (ESV) — 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

When God answers prayers he is glorified. *Let's look carefully at verse 21.*

Ephesians 3:21 (ESV) — 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

In one real sense, God is glorified in all that he does...

God is glorified in the creation of the universe (Psa. 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God.")

God is glorified in beautiful sunsets

God is glorified in Beethoven's 9 symphony, don't forget God gave Beethoven those gifts!!!

God is glorified in the petals of a rose.

God is glorified in the sonar of bats.

God is glorified in the love between a mother and a child.

God is glorified in the rise and fall of nations.

With all of that said, the church has a unique capacity to display the glory of God. We learned about this in Ephesians 2-3.

Ephesians 3:9–11 (ESV) — 9 and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, 10 so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. 11 This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord,

In eternity past, God devised a plan to display his wisdom or glory in the church of Jesus Christ. How does he do this?

He chooses broken, sinful, people from every tribe and nation, then he forgives them and reconciles them to himself and to each other.

The more and more the members of the church love and serve each other, the more and more God is glorified.

Ultimately, the church displays God's glory, because the church of Jesus Christ is the fruit of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Verse 21 clearly makes a connection between God's glory, the church, and Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 3:21 (ESV) — 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

When individuals become Christians by repenting of their sins and trusting Jesus, they are joined to the body of Christ, that is the church.

As individual Christians comprehend more and more of the love of Christ (Paul's previous prayer) they become more and more like Jesus.

When more and more individuals in a local church become more and more like Jesus, God is glorified.

This implies that the church is God's masterpiece displaying his manifold wisdom and glory.

Illustrate:

"When it comes to the High Renaissance, the artist known as Michelangelo (1475-1564) is as high as it gets. A peerless sculptor, expert draftsman, and reluctant but skilled painter, he was not only one of the best-known artists of his day but probably remains one of the best-known artists ever." (artnet.com)

He was so good at his craft that his contemporaries called him "the Divine one."

Art historians like to debate which work of art was his masterpiece. Was it his breath-taking painting on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel's, was it one of his many statues of Mary and Jesus, was it his statue of Moses, or the statue of the slave?

Most art critics agree that the statue of David was his masterpiece. (show image) It was carved out of Marble between 1501 and 1504 in the city of Florence Italy when Michelangelo was only 26 years old. It stands 13 feet tall.

One art historian wrote,

"To be sure, anyone who sees this statue need not be concerned with seeing any other piece of sculpture done in our times or in any other period by any other artist,"

The statue of David was Michelangelo's masterpiece. It displays all of his glory as an artist.

What is God's masterpiece?

God's masterpiece is the church of Jesus Christ. Through the church of Jesus Christ, we see the glory of God shine the brightest as forgiven sinners love and serve each other.

Application:

When God answers the prayers of the saints, he is glorified in the church...

Since God wants to be glorified, he is committed to answering prayer...

This should encourage us to pray even more God honoring prayers, confident that he is willing to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think. Why? His glory is at stake!!!

If you are not a Christian, you are missing out on what God is doing.

God is taking broken people, forgiving them, transforming them, placing them in his church, and answering their prayers for his glory. This is what God is doing...

Who would not want to be a part of this???

He wants you to be a part of it. preach gospel here....

Conclusion:

John Mayer is an insanely talented singer song writer. He can play a variety of music (blues, jazz, rock, pop, folk rock, and even country). Everywhere he goes his shows sell out. Every time he drops a new song, it reaches the top of the charts. Even though he has been doing music for twenty years, he is still cool.

Let's say you wanted to start a band in your garage. Do you think that John Mayer would be able to help your band succeed? Yes, he would be able. In fact, he would be more than able.

In a similar sense, God is not only able to answer our prayers. He is infinitely more than able to do all that we ask or think. Let's pray.