

## **WHAT A MIGHTY GOD WE SERVE!**

### **EPHESIANS 3:20-21**

#### **Introduction:**

**The British scholar J. B. Phillips indicted the last generation in a little book entitled, “Your God Is Too Small!” He presented the modern understanding of God and demonstrated that God was greater than man’s understanding of Him.**

**His book could be written in any generation, especially this one. Our tendency is to always envision God as being more limited or smaller than He really is. If you want to check out your understanding of God, let me encourage you to measure your understanding by the doxologies that are found in the Bible. It is in the doxologies that you find a condensed statement of the greatness of God. This is especially true in those scattered throughout the letters of Paul.**

**The doxology that we are considering is the climax of the doctrinal section of the letter. It comes as the final outburst of a bold and moving prayer for the people of God. True doctrine should always produce a doxology. As the Apostle considered the people of God and their many needs, his heart overflowed in an outburst of praise—surely the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was more than able to meet**

**whatever need that they might have and to finish the good work that He had begun in them.**

**The doxology praises the power or the ability of our God. It should help us to get our attention off of ourselves and our limitations for a while and to consider together the ability of our God.**

## **I. THE MEASURE OF HIS POWER IS LIMITLESS.**

**His power cannot be measured—any more than His love. Every thing about God is infinite—including His power. But how do you express such an understanding of the power of God? Given the limitations of human language, Paul does as good a job as you will find in all of literature.**

### **1. It is beyond our understanding.**

**The King James Version has forever imbedded the passage in my mind. While I enjoy the modern attempts to translate it, the older version does a better job of setting forth the original text.**

**It begins: “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all.” Look at these words carefully and let us attempt to outline them.**

**The verb is “is able”. He is able to do. He is able to do all. He is able to do above all. He is able to do abundantly above all. He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all. What Paul is obviously declaring is that**

**our God’s power goes beyond our understanding of His power. No matter how much of His ability we understand, it goes beyond our best understanding of it. It goes beyond the understanding of the most trusted and able theologian who ever studied the things of God. Will you accept this as being true? Will you agree that your understanding of God does not do justice to who He really is in Himself?**

**2. It is beyond our prayers.**

**To stretch us even more in considering the measure of the divine power, Paul adds that: “He is able to do above all—that we ask.” Ask is a common word for prayer, and has in it the indication that we are asking for ourselves. No matter how much we ask from God, He is able to do more than we might ask.**

**The implication is that He will indeed do more than we ask. While God delights in hearing and answering the prayers of His people, He does more for them than they ever ask. Agreed? How many blessings have come to your life that you never asked for?**

**3. It is beyond our expectations.**

**The text takes it one step more: “He is able to do above all—that we think.” Our imaginations might conceive things we would be reluctant**

to put into words. We ourselves might be inclined to label our thoughts “unthinkable”, but the “unthinkable” thoughts do not limit the power of God. He is able to do more than our thoughts could ever conceive. This is a reminder to us of just how limited we are. Our pride is so vain and misguided. Our boasting is so empty. We are dealing with a God whose power goes beyond our wildest imaginations. So to God be praise! His power is limitless in its measure! But what about the manifestation of His power?

## **II. THE MANIFESTATION OF HIS POWER IS SPIRITUAL.**

Where and how is this immeasurable power manifest? Paul points to within: “according to the power that works in us.” This means that the power is essentially spiritual, which should not surprise us since God is essentially spirit. So it is the Holy Spirit working in us that manifests the limitless power of God.

While it is not exhaustive, and what could be, there are hints about this power working within us throughout this letter from Paul.

### **1. It is manifest as quickening power in us.**

While in the first chapter Paul points to the resurrection of Jesus as the supreme demonstration of this power, in the second chapter he points to our experience of this resurrection power in the quickening of our

**spirits. “Quickened” is the word of the old version, but the word means to make alive. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” (Ephesians 2:5) Just as the Spirit of God raised to life the dead body of Jesus that Easter morning, He has raised to life our inner spirit that was just as dead as the body of Jesus. Our sin had produced in us spiritual death. We were unable to do anything about our situation since we were dead. But now we live within.**

**What is the sign that we have been quickened? There are two basic ones—we have faith in God and we love God. Only a quickening by the Spirit could have enabled us to believe God and to love Him. Don’t take your faith and your love for granted! They are evidences of the limitless power of our God.**

## **2. It is manifest as unifying power in us**

**The underlying concern of the Apostle in this section of the letter is the unity of the people of God—especially the unity between the Jewish and Gentile members of the body. It was a statement concerning this that occupied the Apostles attention before he prayed the great prayer we have been considering. It was a mystery hidden through ages until God was prepared to make it happen.**

**Everyone in that ancient world would have agreed that some kind of unity between Jews and Gentiles that would allow them to function in unity as the body of Christ was unthinkable. They would have agreed that no one except God himself could do such a thing. And yet through the death of Christ at the Cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit, this is exactly what happened. God has just one people—and they are diverse, but they are one.**

**It is the work of the limitless power of God that makes us one. Jew and Gentile is a matter of history, but what about white and black? What about brown and black? What about people with racial and ethnic differences, can they be one? Yes! As unthinkable as it may be to the world, it has happened and it continues to happen where Jesus is Lord and the Spirit is able to manifest the power of God. Why couldn't this congregation be a living testimony to the power of God as He produces a spiritual unity among you, and draws even into this body all kinds of people, and then makes them one?**

**3. It is manifest as transforming power in us.**

**Is this not the burden of the prayer we have just studied? When Paul prays for the infusing of lives with power in the inner man by the Holy Spirit, and persons being the dwelling place of Christ, and their being**

**filled with the fullness of God as they root themselves in His love—is this not transforming power? Is this not making new creatures out of old selfish sinful human beings? It is that limitless power at work in us. Do you not feel that transforming power in your life? Is he not drawing you into a new way of life? Has he not made you dissatisfied with life as it is and filled you with a passion for a better life?**

**4. It is manifest as completing power in us.**

**There is yet another dimension to the working of this limitless power in us. It is completing power. It will not cease working in us until the very purpose of God has been completed. Paul references this when he writes, “that He might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Ephesians 5:27) He encouraged the Philippians to believe in this power at work in them when wrote, “Being confident of this one thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)**

**Aren’t you glad that the Lord Jesus does not give up on us? He never grows weary and moves his membership. He knows that He has the power to finish what He has begun. This is the power that is even now being manifest in us. It is spiritual power.**

**There may be signs and wonders along the way, but they are not the most important displays of the limitless power of God. It is transformed sinners who are enabled to walk and work in this world in faith, love, and hope that provide the best evidence of this power being at work in the world. It is at work in us individually and collectively.**

### **III. THE MOTIVE OF HIS POWER IS PERSONAL.**

**Now we come to the questions about why God does what He does! Sure, as God He has the power to do more than we could ever understand, ask, or think. But why does He choose to manifest this power by working in sinners like us? Why the church? This doxology provides us with the answer. God does what He does for a very personal reason—His own glory. “to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (HCSB)**

**The newer versions agree on this better translation—glory comes to the Father through the church and through Christ Jesus. What an association! What an honor to the church to be placed in this setting!**

#### **1. He glorifies Himself in the church.**

**This is not a new idea. It is a basic understanding of Paul that God does all that He does for the church and in the church for His own praise, pleasure, and glory. In the hymn of praise that opens this letter he**

**makes reference to it three times. God does everything in connection with salvation and redemption for the praise of his glorious grace. And now he states it again.**

**It is the intention of God to get glory to Himself by the manifestation of His limitless power in us and through us. Do you catch the implication of this? It means that God has put his reputation on the line. His reputation is connected with the project of bringing the church to glory as the elect bride for His Beloved Son. In the ages to come it will be obvious just how powerful God is when the church stands holy and without blame in His presence.**

**My concern is not in the ultimate outcome, but in the experience of this day. It should be obvious through us in this community that our God is a mighty God. Not because they see signs and wonders, but because they see us. We are exhibit number one for the limitless power and grace of our mighty God.**

## **2. He glorifies Himself in the Christ.**

**Along side the church stands the Lord Christ as the other exhibit. The exaltation and final triumph of Jesus, the Son of God, is a testimony to the limitless power of the mighty God and our Father. Jesus shall reign,**

**even as He does now. But before God is finished, every eye will see just how powerful He is.**

**This church faces some challenging days ahead. You face what men would call an uncertain future. But I am here to remind you that your God is more than sufficient for whatever the future may hold. Before long you will choose a new pastoral leader. Doubtlessly he will challenge you to do things you have never attempted before. Will you fail? Not if you move forward with your faith firmly placed in the mighty God we serve. He is more than able to finish what He has begun and to bring you through the days ahead.**

**Let's keep our eyes on the mighty God we serve.**