

To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace

Ephesians 3:20-4:1

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Now unto him. What we initially observe in this verse is that the emphasis is on the Lord, and on what He is able to do above and beyond whatever men might foolishly presume He cannot do. Ultimately the Lord's ability to do, is greater and surpasses what any human thinking and/or natural reason, believes is available. The placement of the verse in the epistle is critical, in that it includes all the great spiritual revelations that have preceded it. This encompasses all that God has spoken concerning the believer's being chosen in Christ,¹ his adoption to as a son,² as well as the believer's promised spiritual inheritance.³ The degree to that which the Lord is able to do is both expressed and emphasized here: it is *exceeding abundantly above*.

The Greek word for *above* is *huper* #5228. Strong's defines the word "for, on behalf of, above, beyond, more than." HELPS Word-studies defines the word "properly, beyond (above); (figuratively) to extend

benefit (help) that reaches beyond the present situation." By these definitions it is made known that regardless of our present condition on the earth, and/or future place in heaven, and whatever we might ask or think we need of God, the Lord reveals that He is able to do *above* and *beyond*, and *more than* anything our human natural perception is able to comprehend. Ultimately God's spiritual ability to do, is out of the range of what any unbelieving and/or even believing man believes He can. Understandably, the natural laws that limit God's creatures, do not limit their Creator. This is also why human thought and/or reason should never restrict or limit what the Lord both can and will do for the saved, especially when prayers of faith are directed towards Him. And although God's ability to do whatever is necessary for both the believer's blessing and survival, is not limited to their direct prayer life, prayers will open the door for the Lord to accomplish in their life, things thought humanly impossible. "In thinking of God it is as if we thought of space—however far our conceptions may travel, there is still infinity beyond. Paul had asked much in this prayer, and thoughts can always travel beyond words,

1 Eph. 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

2 Eph. 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. I John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

3 Rom. 8:16-17 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

Col. 3:24 Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ.

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yet the excess of God's power beyond both was infinite."⁴

Exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. The revelation given that God is able to do *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think* is practically proven at this point in the study of Ephesians. This is because being chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world,⁵ being adopted as sons through the Son of God,⁶ being given an acceptance,⁷ and granted redemption through His blood,⁸ culminating with being gathered together unto Him,⁹ and provided a heavenly inheritance through Him, is far above and beyond, and outside any reasonable thought of even the most spiritual man. Since God has already revealed what He has done, which exceeds even the most imaginative human mind, is there anything beyond His power to do whatever is needed of Him, and especially so in regards to what He has promised for all those chosen in Christ in the future?

(*Benson Commentary*, Eph. 3:20–21) *Now unto him, &c.*—This doxology is admirably adapted to strengthen our faith, that we may not stagger at the great things the apostle has been praying for, as if they were too much for God to give, or for us to expect to receive from him. (END QUOTE)

Another revelation that speaks of the spiritual ability of God to go beyond what men perceive as spiritually possible is I Corinthians 2:9—*But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither*

have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

Even with all the great revelation previously presented to us in Ephesians, still God has prepared even more than this for those that love Him. Not only then is God's ability to do above man's understanding, but also *the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him*, have not even entered the heart of man. This is why not until revelation is given from heaven, as has been beforehand revealed in Ephesians, can even a glimpse of the believer's future come into view.

(*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, I Cor. 2:9) *Eye hath not seen*—This is the same as saying, that no one had ever fully perceived and understood the value and beauty of those things which God has prepared for his people. All the world had been strangers to this until God made a revelation to his people by his Spirit. The blessedness which the apostle referred to had been unknown alike to the Jews and the Gentiles.

Nor ear heard—We learn the existence and quality of objects by the external senses; and those senses are used to denote any acquisition of knowledge. To say that the eye had not seen, nor the ear heard, was, therefore, the same as saying that it was not known at all. All people had been ignorant of it.

Neither have entered into the heart of man—No man has conceived it; or understood it. It is new; and is above all that man has seen, and felt, and known. (END QUOTE)

4 *Pulpit Commentary*, Eph. 3:20

5 *Eph. 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:*

6 *Eph. 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

7 *Eph. 1:6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*

8 *Eph. 1:7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*

9 *Eph. 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

According to the power that worketh in us. Because of the Holy Spirit and Its resident spiritual power abiding in the redeemed, what God has said He can do, He shall do, through the instrument of His own divine spiritual nature abiding within the saved. Since the Lord's supernatural ability is not limited to any mortal man's narrow view of what he believes the Lord can do, then human reason should never be elevated above divine revelation. This is also why to relegate God to shallow human assumption, is to practically destroy any realistic possibility of growing in any real belief in Him. To think that God is restricted by human thought, and/or human reason, is as silly as if we were to limit human power and ability to that which is considered one of the most foolish creatures on the earth, the North African, or red-necked ostrich—a dull-witted creature that buries its head in the sand in times of crisis, presuming that if it cannot see predators, then predators cannot see it. Because also man exceeds in abundance, this natural creature in all intellectual power and ability, why cannot God be as contrastingly superior in wisdom, power, and intellect, than man? Hence, if there are clearly degrees of power and intellect of creatures that abide on the earth, then is it unreasonable to conclude that there cannot exist a similar separation between those on the earth, and He Who resides in heaven? If one reality is clearly and undeniably confirmed to be accurate, why, it should be asked, cannot the other also be? This is also why the apostle prayed for the Ephesians, that the Lord might, by divine illumination, open the spiritual understanding of the saints at Ephesus. In order that they might graciously come to know—like the Father of all those that

believe, Abraham,¹⁰—that all that God has promised for the saved, He is more than able to perform. (Rom. 4:21) *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.* In respect to Abraham, Matthew Poole writes, “He looked upon God as one that was perfectly able to do whatever he had promised, and as one that was most faithful, and sure never to fail in the performance...”¹¹

Other translations of Ephesians 3:20 provide even more confirmation of God's exceedingly great spiritual power.

Ephesians 3:20 (New International Version) Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,

Ephesians 3:20 (New Living Translation) Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.

Ephesians 3:20 (International Standard Version) Now to the one who can do infinitely more than all we can ask or imagine according to the power that is working among us—

Ephesians 3:20 (Amplified Bible) Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us,

Ephesians 3:21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

¹⁰ Rom. 4:11 *And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*

¹¹ Matthew Poole's Commentary, Rom. 4:21

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(Barnes' Notes on the Bible, Eph. 3:21) *In the church*—Or, by the church; Ephesians 3:10.¹² The church was to be the instrument by which the glory of God would be shown; and it was by the church that his praise would be celebrated. (END QUOTE)

It is *in Christ Jesus*, and through His church that the celestial glory of God has been purposed to be made even more visible. So significant is the church and her redemption, that God has purposed His own heavenly glory to be revealed through her. Just as the heavens declare the glory of God,¹³ so is that spiritual and holy assembly formed through God's Son, likewise to be an instrument purposed to bring even greater awareness of God's celestial glory. So that in the end, all of God's created beings will unanimously, and with one unified harmonious voice, happily and without compulsion testify that *unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end*. It is also not simply that the Lord has saved a remnant of the race of man, but that through those whom He has saved, His own glory, goodness, and forgiving nature shall be revealed. This act of heavenly kindness and generosity, the scriptures reveal, and the Lord testifies, shall remain eternally visible *throughout all ages, world without end*.

(Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, Eph. 3:21) *in the church by Christ Jesus*] Lit., *in Christ Jesus*. "The glory" is ascribed "in Him" as the Father is manifested in Him, and "in Him reconciled the world to Himself."—But very strong evidence favours the

reading *in the Church and in Christ Jesus*. If this is adopted, and it is nearly certain, the meaning is that the reasons of eternal praise to the Father lie both in the Church and in the Saviour; in the Church, as chosen and glorified by Him, in the Saviour as His supreme and all-including Gift. (END QUOTE)

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Ephesians chapter four begins the practical part of Ephesians. Whereas chapters 1–3 form the doctrinal portion, chapters 4–6 primarily reveal how believers are to *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith [they] are called*. To have favor and grace bestowed upon your life is one thing; to respond to this great spiritual favor, is another thing. What this teaches us is this, that it is insufficient to be favored and blessed by God, if those blessed remain unwilling to seek to walk worthy of the grace shown to them. With divine favor comes spiritual responsibility. If any refuse to seek to obey this, then you can be certain that God's Spirit does not presently abide within them. Ultimately no true child of God will resist the heavenly revelation, that it is both proper and right for them, to walk worthy of God. The reason that the apostle Paul is beseeching the Ephesians to walk worthy of their heavenly call, is because it is now their religious duty to do so. The more enlightened also the Christian becomes to the hope of heaven,¹⁴ the more eagerly he should strive to entire into it.¹⁵ This is also why

12 Eph. 3:10 *To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,*

13 Ps. 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.*

14 Eph. 1:18 *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,*

Phil. 3:20 *For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: II Cor. 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

15 Phil. 3:13-14 *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*

there is no such thing as truly being saved by the Son of God, if a person refuses to take up his cross to properly follow his Savior. It is this that Jesus has instructed all His disciples to do, and if they do not, then they are practically denying the very One sent to save them. To not take up one's cross, is to put in jeopardy fellowship and union with the One Who died upon it. (Matt. 16:24–25) *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

(*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, Matt. 16:25) A true disciple of Christ is one that does follow him in duty, and shall follow him to glory. He is one that walks in the same way Christ walked in, is led by his Spirit, and treads in his steps, whithersoever he goes. Let him deny himself. If self-denial be a hard lesson, it is no more than what our Master learned and practised, to redeem us, and to teach us. Let him take up his cross. The cross is here put for every trouble that befalls us. We are apt to think we could bear another's cross better than our own; but that is best which is appointed us, and we ought to make the best of it. We must not by our rashness and folly pull crosses down upon our own heads, but must take them up when they are in our way. If any man will have the name and credit of a disciple, let him follow

Christ in the work and duty of a disciple. If all worldly things are worthless when compared with the life of the body, how forcible the same argument with respect to the soul and its state of never-ending happiness or misery! Thousands lose their souls for the most trifling gain, or the most worthless indulgence, nay, often from mere sloth and negligence. Whatever is the object for which men forsake Christ, that is the price at which Satan buys their souls. (END QUOTE)

(*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, Matt. 16:24) *Let him deny himself, and take up his cross.*—Our common thoughts of “self-denial,” *i.e.*, the denial *to* ourselves of some pleasure or profit, fall far short of the meaning of the Greek. The man is to deny his whole self, all his natural motives and impulses, so far as they come into conflict with the claims of Christ. If he does not so deny himself, he is in danger, as Peter was (it is significant that the same word is used in both instances), of denying his Lord. The self-denial here commanded has, accordingly, its highest type and pattern in the act by which the Son of God, in becoming man, “emptied Himself” (see Note on Philippians 2:7¹⁶) of all that constituted, if we may so speak, the “self” of His divine nature. The words “take up his cross,” which the disciples had heard before (see Note on Matthew 10:38¹⁷), were now clothed with a new and more distinct meaning, by the words that spoke so clearly of the death of which the cross was to be the instrument. (END QUOTE)

Luke 13:24 *Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Heb. 4:11 *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*
 16 Phil. 2:7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*

17 Matt. 10:38 *And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.*