

“He is Able”
Ephesians 3:20-21
(Preached at Trinity October 19, 2014)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we come to the end of **Chapter 3** Paul once again offers up a wonderful doxology. Our English word doxology comes from the Greek word δόξα which means glory or praise. It is the word used in **Verse 21**
Ephesians 3:21 NAU - "to Him *be the glory* in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen."
2. Paul offers similar doxologies elsewhere:
Romans 16:25-27 NAU - "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, ²⁶ but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, *leading* to obedience of faith; ²⁷ to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, *be the glory forever. Amen.*"
3. God is worthy of all praise and honor and glory.
 - A. Paul adds: "in the church" – All that the church is and all that it does is for God's glory. The church reflects the glory and excellence of Christ
 - B. Everything God does upon the earth is done through Christ. Jesus is the full expression of God's redemptive purpose. He is the fullness of the Gospel. It is all to the glory of God. The church reflects this glory.
 - C. God is to be praised from generation to generation and into eternity.
4. This morning I want us to focus upon **Verse 20**.
Ephesians 3:20 NAU - "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"
 - a. Paul uses a superlative: ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ - It means "superabundant" "beyond all measure" The KJV translates it, "exceeding abundantly above"
 - b. Paul uses the same word in **1 Thes.**
1 Thes. 5:12-13 NAU - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."
 - c. Paul loved the use of superlatives.
1 Timothy 1:13-14 NAU - "even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. Yet I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief; ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord was more than abundant, with the faith and love which are *found* in Christ Jesus."
Romans 5:20 NAU - "The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more"

2 Corinthians 7:4 NAU - "Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction."

5. These words form the conclusion to Paul's prayer, but they also serve as a grand conclusion to all that he has stated in Chapters 1-3 regarding God's purposes and our redemption. It can be summarized in three words, "God is able."
 - a. The word for "able" is from a root form referring to power. We get our word dynamite from it.
 - b. The word translated power is also from the same root form. It is a play on words that isn't conveyed in the English.
"according to the power that works within us"
6. Paul has asked much in his prayer—that we would be filled with the fullness of God. Now he is reminding us that God is able to do even more than this. He "is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think"
 - I. God is able to accomplish all of His purposes
 - A. God's sovereign dominion over His creation is all encompassing
 1. Mankind has long denied this blessed truth
 - a. The Deists believed that God created all things and but now He has stepped aside and everything is unfolding according to the laws of nature without any Divine involvement. This has sometimes been referred to as the
 - b. Open Theism says God does not actually know the future and thus not sovereign over how it unfolds.
 2. The reality declares God's sovereignty as absolute. He has ordered every detail of history.
Isaiah 46:9-10 NAU - "Remember the former things long past, For I am God, and there is no other; *I am* God, and there is no one like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, 'My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure';"
 - B. Not only has He ordered every detail of history by His sovereign decree, He has the power to bring it to pass – He is able
Daniel 4:35 NAU - "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, 'What have You done?'"
 1. This brings great comfort to God's people who rest in His power to save them from the curse of sin
2 Timothy 1:12 NAU - " I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day."
Hebrews 7:25 NAU - " He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them."

2. There are countless details in life that God superintends
There are trips to the store, doctor's appointments, bills to pay, repairs to make, classes to attend, exams to take, resume's to prepare, countless decisions.
God is "able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think"

II. God is able to answer the prayers of His people.

- A. Paul makes this amazing statement in the context of prayer
Ephesians 3:14 NAU - "I bow my knees before the Father"
Ephesians 3:16 NAU - "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man"
 1. The God who is able to govern every aspect of creation has ordained that His people would pray and that He would hear their prayers
 2. This is one of the great wonders of the Christian life.
God is not bound by our prayers. Nor do we pray in order to change God's wise direction in our life. Yet, God is pleased when we cry out to Him as a little child cries out his parent.
 3. God's purpose is that we WILL pray
 - a. James tells us that we lose much by our prayerlessness
James 4:2 NAU - "You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask."
 - b. He then tells us the powerful effect of prayer
James 5:16 NAU - "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."
James 5:16 ESV - "The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."
James 5:16 KJV - "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."
- B. Paul says here that God is able to do far above what we can even ask or what we can even imagine
 1. Our problem is we often don't know how to pray or what to pray for
Romans 8:26 NAU - "In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words"
 2. We don't have complete knowledge of every situation. Our wisdom is often weak or clouded by sin. We don't see as God sees.
Isaiah 55:8-9 NAU - "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. ⁹ "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts."
 3. We sometimes pray foolishly because we think foolish thoughts.

4. Paul says we cannot even imagine the blessings God bestows upon us
 - a. God is able to work all good things for His people
1 Timothy 6:17 NAU - "Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy."
 - b. He blesses us richly in life. He works in ways we will never know.
 - c. But the things He has laid up for us in the future is beyond imagine
1 Corinthians 2:9 KJV - "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."
- C. Our problem is we don't really comprehend just how much God loves us
1. We are the objects of His eternal delight.
 2. He does good to us because He delights to do so. It isn't because of anything in us that causes Him to love or stirs Him to love. He loves us because He chooses to love us. His love for us is an infinite love.
 3. As His child He bestows upon you all manner of gifts. He blesses you in ways you do not know, nor are even able to imagine.
 4. Are there things you don't pray for because you think it's too bold? He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think
 5. Are there things you have quit praying for because you think it is too late or perhaps too great for God to do.
 - a. Example: the life of Zacharias and Elizabeth
Luke 1:11-13 NAU - "And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense. ¹² Zacharias was troubled when he saw *the angel*, and fear gripped him. ¹³ But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John."
 - b. How many years before had Zacharias prayed this prayer? He most likely had long ago ceased praying for Elizabeth to bear a child.
Luke 1:7 NAU - "But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years."
 - c. Is anything impossible with God?
 He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think

III. God is able to work mightily through His people

Ephesians 3:20 NAU - "according to the power that works within us"

- A. This abundance of God's power is at work in us
1. Paul has described the indescribable – that we can comprehend the incomprehensible; that we can know the love of Christ. And that through this love we can experience the fullness of God.
 2. Paul is saying that this mighty power is at work in us
Ephesians 3:16 NAU - "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man"

- B. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit dwelling within. He equips us with all that is necessary to live out the Christian life. He equips us for good works.
1. This is at the heart of **Ephesians 2:10**
Ephesians 2:10 NAU - "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."
 2. Christians have no excuse for not doing ministry
2 Corinthians 9:8 NAU - "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed"
 3. Paul understood this mighty power in his own ministry
Colossians 1:29 NAU - "For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."
 4. This mighty power is also at work in you
Ephesians 3:20 NAU - "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,"

Conclusion:

1. God is able to do. There is nothing He cannot do. Our problem is we don't believe He will. Our problem is we don't comprehend the vastness of His love for us.
2. May we approach His throne in a new manner.
 He is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think