

# *“Ascribing Glory to God”*

## *Ephesians 3:20,21*

INTRO:

Leading up to our text today the Apostle Paul prays for the Ephesian believers. He is praying an enablement for us. He wants us to grasp the incredible theological realities in **chapters 1-3** and to apply these truths to our lives. His prayer has had three requests. First, he has asked that we might be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit in the inner man, that being accomplished by Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Second, he asked that God might give us the spiritual strength necessary to grasp Christ’s love, which is far too vast to be fully understood. Finally, Paul wants us to be filled with all the fullness of God --To be fully submitted to the Spirit of God who lives in us that He might produce the fruit of the Spirit in us.

Now Paul is going to close his prayer. He does this by breaking into a session of praise to God. He praises God not just for His tremendous attributes, but especially for His infinity! He does that because he understands that if we just get a small glimpse of the wonder of who our God really is, we will never be the same again! The closing section of Paul's great prayer falls into two parts.

*I. Praising God's Infinity (v. 20)*

*II. Ascribing To God His Rightful Glory (v. 21)*

*I. Praising God's Infinity (v. 20)*

A. Who is this God to whom Paul and we pray? Who is this God of whom Paul has made these enormous spiritual requests? He is the God ***“who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”***

1. Some may wonder why it is important to praise God in prayer. No doubt you have heard the famous "ACTS" pattern for prayer?

A - adoration and praise  
C - confession  
T - thanksgiving  
S - supplication (requests)

2. Praise is a vital part of the discipline of prayer. Some may wonder why, but the answer is found in this very text. Praise, the reciting to God His attributes and what He has done, reminds us vividly of the nature of the One to whom we are praying.

3. As they heard this letter and this prayer read, some in the Ephesian crowd probably wondered if Paul had asked too much from God. After all, these are not puny spiritual

requests. **(1)** Would we be bold enough without Paul's example to ask for strengthening in the inner man? **(2)** Would we have the audacity to request the spiritual were-with-all to comprehend Christ's love that is so vast we cannot understand it? **(3)** Would we even think to ask that we might be filled with all the fullness of God? How is it that Paul had the spiritual spunk to boldly ask these blessing for us?

B. Paul's boldness is rooted in his knowledge of who God is and how big God is! God is infinite. He has no boundaries. Just look at Paul's expression of praise to God.

1. ***"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).***

The heart of vs. 20 is a descriptive phrase that tells us how Paul thinks of this God to whom all glory ought to be ascribed. Let me literally translate vs. 20 for you so you get the full force of the Greek.

***"To the One being able to do beyond all things superabundantly above the things we ask or think, according to the power working in us."***

2. Do you see the piling up of adverbs to make his point? First, he says that God is able to do beyond all things that we could ask or think. In other words, God can do anything! No matter how great things you could ask from God, He can do greater. We teach a song to our children that says, ***"My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing my God cannot do."*** Paul would amen that statement loudly.

3. But he says more. Paul says if we sit and think about what great things God can do, He is far greater than that. In fact, He can do **infinitely more** than that! The Greek word translated "exceedingly abundantly" is a word made up of a root and two prepositions.

The root means **"over and above"** that which is necessary. To this Paul adds the first preposition which makes this mean, **"exceedingly over and above."** But that is not enough for the Apostle, for God can do above all that we could ask or think. He can do exceedingly above all that we ask or think. But that does not even come close to how the Apostle Paul thinks about the Lord of Glory. He adds one more preposition to this word to make it even stronger. It is a preposition which means **"to go beyond."** So, Paul says God is able to do far beyond exceeding above all that we could ask or think. God is infinite! Paul is trying to describe an infinite God in human language.

C. Do we think of God in this way? Why don't we? Doesn't the Scripture show us a God who is this great and majestic? Yes it does. But we often forget how great our God is and settle for a God who is far too small.

1. God is so majestic and great that we cannot comprehend how great He is. We cannot conceive of the power that created the universe and called worlds into existence.

2. We cannot fully comprehend the wisdom of the One who devised the plan of redemption and sent His Son, God the Son, in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, to become incarnate in human flesh and to die on a cross that we might have life and salvation in Him.

3. We cannot comprehend because this One is infinite in power, wisdom, holiness, and love. But we can rejoice in the fact that He is ours, if we belong to Him! I love  
**Isaiah 40:10-11.**

***“Behold, the Lord GOD shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him. He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young.”***

D. Although God is infinite and thus beyond our ability to comprehend, He is not abstract. This infinite God is working in our lives. He does all this by ***“the power that works in us.”*** That power is a person. He is the Holy Spirit of God.

## ***II. Ascribing To God His Rightful Glory (v. 21)***

A. Having seen how Paul thinks about this God, now let us understand His final prayer request in this prayer. He wants this God to receive all the glory due Him through His church! “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, **vs. 21** to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

B. How is God glorified in His church?

1. First, corporately, we give glory to God in His church by making sure it is His church. He must have the pre-eminence. He must call the shots. His will and His alone must be done in it. This is precisely why we have talked about congregational government being each one of us seeking the Lord's will and voting accordingly.

We also make sure He is glorified in His church when we do church His way! Church must be God centered. It must be about what we can do for Christ and what glory we give to Christ, not about what Christ can do for us.

2. Second, individually, we give glory to God in His church by making sure that we give glory to God in each of our lives. We noted before the emphasis in this book on **“all in all”** Christ fills the corporate whole because He fills each individual part. The requests that Paul made in this prayer are for each one of us. The motive is so God may be glorified by the Son in the Church as a whole!

Remember the *Sermon on the Mount* and the Lord's words in **Matthew 5:14-16?**

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***“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”***

Is God being glorified in His church here? That is our purpose.