

# The infinite God

*Ephesians*

By Rev. David Silversides

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**Bible Text:** Ephesians 3:20,21  
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## Loughbrickland Reformed Presbyterian

22 Main Street  
Loughbrickland, Co. Down  
Northern Ireland  
BT32 3NQ  
UK

**Website:** [www.loughbrickland.org](http://www.loughbrickland.org)  
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Ephesians 3, in verse 20.

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

Our theme this evening is "The infinite God." The Infinite God. The apostle has given the content of his prayer for the church on earth, the Ephesians in particular, and he now thinks of the one to whom he has prayed, what he can do, what he has done, and what he surely will do, and in so doing he adores the infinities of God, his knowledge and his power and his eternity.

First of all, what God can do. What God can do. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." This tells us what God can do, so far as we can understand what God can do, and the apostle multiplies words to describe what God can do. It is as if he is at a loss to fully declare what God can do. And there is a gradation in this. We are taught in these words, God can do all that we ask and God can do all that we can think of, even though we don't ask because there are things we think of, but we fail to ask. And all that we could think of, God can do, but he can do more than we can ask or think, exceedingly more, and exceedingly abundantly more. In other words, more than the things we could think of but don't, or do think of but don't pray for or do pray for so that it is difficult to fully convey the apostle's sense of the almightiness of God, of the limitless power of God and surely this tells us, we can never ask for more than God can do. It is not possible to, as it were, overtax God in our praying. There are things that he will not do, because they are sinful, or because they are not in accordance with his all-wise purpose, but there is nothing beyond his power. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

And this shows us what poor askers we are, how we do not glorify God as we ought in our asking. Does our praying reflect belief in an infinite God, a God who is infinite in

power? Rather, is it not the case that our prayers suggest a low view of God even in the amount of praying? Do not rather pray little, and in praying little, and in giving prayer such a minor place in our lives, does it not suggest a fear of asking too much as if we must spread out our requests, in case God cannot cope with too much at once? I say that reverently, but isn't that the impression conveyed, that we ask so little, as if God has not given us warrant and every encouragement from his promises and from the knowledge of his power, to ask often and for many things? And in the scope of our petitions, do we ask for big things as well as small?

It is true that some are always praying considering the big picture, but they neglect to ask God and to express dependence on God for the more mundane and the smaller things of life and, of course, that does not glorify God. We ought to acknowledge that God is over the details as well as over the big things. But the reverse is also true, that we can be preoccupied with the small things and not ask for the big things, not ask for things that indicate our confidence in the greatness and the power and the majesty of God. David prayed in accordance with God's power when he prayed, "Let the whole earth be filled with his glory." It displayed his confidence in the power of God, that God could fill the earth with his glory, and our prayers should reflect that also, especially all the more so, when we have so many more promises and such a fuller Bible than David had.

So let our prayers be both frequent and wide ranging for little and big matters. This glorifies God, and when we pray for the advance of the gospel, let us pray for much. It glorifies God to display our confidence in his ability to cause his truth to prevail in the earth and to cause the earth to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But then secondly, what God has done. What God has done. "Now to him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." According to the power that worketh in us. You remember chapter 1, verse 19, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The apostle in that place is saying that that great display of the power of God in the raising of Christ from the dead is paralleled in bringing dead sinners to life, spiritual life.

We mourn the feebleness of our graces, the weakness of our faith and of our love to Christ, and of our desire after God and after holiness, and it's right that we should. We do not love him anything like as much as we should and yet, any such faith, any such holy desires, be they ever so feeble, is a display of the great power of him who can give life from the dead. Is it not a marvelous thing that we who by nature have not a flicker of love to God in us, and if we are his then we are found, yes, with an imperfect, but nonetheless real desires after this God, God has done this in us. He's done in us what we could never produce, nor all the ingenuity of the world together could do.

All the great men of this world and all the vast numbers of men in this world cannot produce a single flicker of desire after the living and true God and after godliness and holiness of life in the heart of one human being but God has done it in us so that however imperfect we are, and we are, it should cause our hearts to rejoice that there's any good

thing in us toward the Lord God of Israel because only omnipotence could produce that, only the infinite power of God. And when we consider the people of God as a whole, how easily we become disillusioned with their blemishes, but how difficult it is for us to admire their graces, the power of God's grace in them. And when we consider the history of the world and of the church in it, that in all generations down to this one, there has been a seed to serve him, made willing by his power, his power that worketh in us.

Arminians effectively deny this power. It's such a feeble power that it has to wait on the free will of man, as it were in the wings, helpless. But we don't believe that, that man-glorifying, that pride-flattering error. No, God is not so restricted that he's helpless. He's almighty and he isn't frustrated by the will of man. He's almighty. That's what the historic debate about Calvinism and Arminianism comes down to, is God almighty, or is he not? If he is, then he's sovereign over the will of man. And this text is telling us it's the power of God working in us, and it's a power that is infinite and can do all things, and therefore we should admire the power and grace of God as it shows itself in the faith of other Christians.

You remember Barnabas, we've often referred to him, his example in Acts 11 and verse 23, "Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord." He saw the grace of God. No doubt he saw many blemishes too in these Christians at Antioch, but he saw the grace of God and was glad and doesn't this encourage us too, to pray for the unconverted, to pray for their conversion, that this God is a God of infinite power and he can work in the hearts of sinners, he can quicken the dead, he can answer according to the power that works in us. How then we should come to him with our prayers, how we should cry to him to give this spiritual life to our unconverted family members and neighbors and friends and work colleagues, because he can do it. He's able to answer. He's certainly able to answer what we ask for and what we think and above what we think or could think and far beyond what we could think.

So he can surely convert sinners, he can cause them to seek after him, he can give them a new heart and turn them from darkness to light, and when we pray for the advance of the gospel in all the earth, yes, we're asking something big, we're asking God to fill the earth with his glory, the glory of his grace. "Lord bless and pity us, shine on us with thy face, that the earth, thy way and nations all may know thy saving grace." It's great in its extent when we pray these things, but the power involved is displayed in our being born again and brought to faith in Christ, and in every individual Christian it's that same power that is displayed in them that we're praying that God would display in all the earth. So in one sense we're asking for something great, the turning of the nations to Christ, but in another sense what we already have seen is great; in the conversion of any individual it's the almighty power of God alone that can bring that about.

But then thirdly, what God will do. What God will do, verse 21, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." That phrase, "throughout all ages, world without end," first of all. Literally, it is to all the generations of the age of ages, generations here used not just as literal physical generations, but of the idea of spans of time, sequence of spans of time. And then the age of ages, that is the

endless succession of ages. The eternal world is sometimes called an age and sometimes it's called the ages because it's the eternal age, but it's age upon age upon age, if we may say, and this indicates sequence of events, sequence of time that goes on and on. In other words, this language, the use of the word generations and the use of the word age of ages, it indicates an endless sequence.

The eternal world is not timelessness. Yes, it's timeless in the sense that it is beyond this earthly existence, it's distinct from time in the sense of this world's history, but it is not a standing still, a progress-less existence. Of course it isn't. Our heavenly state has a beginning. Our heavenly state has a beginning otherwise we would be eternal in the same sense as God. It has a beginning so that means there's sequence. When we're in heaven, it won't be because we've eternally been there. We are not from eternity. God is. God's eternity in that sense of always having been, is what we call one of God's incommunicable attributes, that is, one of those things that is true of God that is not and never will be true of a creature.

Christ is in heaven. In his deity he's always been in heaven. That's what Christ meant when he said, "No man hath come down from heaven save the Son of Man who is in heaven." Although the title Son of Man points to his humanity, that which he's speaking of relates to his deity, that he's always been in heaven. But he hasn't always been in heaven as the God-Man-Redeemer. His incarnation had a beginning and his exaltation in his humanity had a beginning. And so there was a beginning, an investiture of the God-Man-Redeemer as Revelation 5 indicates to us.

So this expression means to the endless sequences of eternity and what the apostle prays for and what God will certainly do is that God will be glorified in the church by Christ Jesus. Now that's true on earth. Already the apostle is praying for them that it should be more so that in this world they will glorify the Lord, and chapter 4 to 6 are all about their responsibility and their required activity to glorify God. And as he labored, and as he preached the gospel, as he preached the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles, it was that God should be glorified among the nations.

In Romans chapter 15, he speaks of the conversion of the Gentiles, but he quotes several scriptures which show that this is for the glory of God. Romans 15:9, "And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud him, all ye people. And again, Esaias saith, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he that shall rise to reign over the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles trust."

So then, it is for God's glory that the gospel advances, that the kingdom of grace advances in the conversion of sinners, and in the advance of the work of grace in believers. And for this we long. And it shall be, his word shall accomplish that whereto he has sent it and God will be glorified in the church by Christ Jesus in this world but the full extent of the fulfillment of this prayer and this desire is in heaven. And in Revelation 5, you remember the redeemed and then the angels worshiped God. Revelation 5:9, "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals

thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."

So there we have God in Christ glorified by means of the church forever. There is a conscious glorifying of God by the church. They worship him to all eternity and with perfectly holy hearts, thankful for his grace and his power displayed to them. The people of God in heaven, they worship God both in gratitude and thankfulness that God's power and grace have been displayed to them and also because they admire that power and grace in itself as it displays God's glory irrespective of their personal interest and benefit in it.

And so God is glorified by means of the church both in their conscious adoration of him for thankfulness and thankfulness, and also their adoration for his glory displayed. And that adoration for the glory displayed, the power of his grace in the salvation of his church, that aspect of the worship is shared by the angelic world. God's glory displayed by Christ Jesus through the church in their salvation will cause sinless angels who needed no salvation to adore God for the glory displayed in it. You remember back in chapter 3 and verse 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, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

So God displays his glory in Christ by means of the church to the principalities and powers to the angelic world, and so the angels who desire to look into redemption accomplished and applied, they shall worship God, and they do worship God, and they will worship God as his glory is manifest in the salvation of his people. And even Satan will know, though he shall still utterly hate the fact that God is glorious and glorious in the salvation of his people. Satan is defeated not only in that he will be judged and punished for all his wickedness but also by the kingdom of grace and glory of the people of God. God displays his sovereignty in delivering a multitude of sinners through Christ, a multitude of those who were taken captive by the devil at his will. They are delivered by Christ and by the power and grace of God and that's why Satan hates the kingdom of grace so much and God's saving power in the hearts of men, because it demonstrates the power of God, that he is able not only to punish Satan but according to his sovereign good pleasure and the riches of his grace in Christ, he is able to turn back Satan, to destroy him, to spoil Satan's works by the power of his grace.

How God in Christ will be glorified through the church. We see it in this world and it will be perfected in the world to come. Many of the people of God are insignificant in this world. They are of the poor, the base, the despised, the weak. But God will be glorified in them, in his saving of them through Christ Jesus. God will display his power and grace in the salvation of such and while they are in this world they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, and in heaven they are not ashamed of their hope; they behold his glory and they

are reflectors of that glory. They reflect the glory of God, his power and his grace in their salvation is displayed through them even to the principalities and powers.

And how our then perfectly sanctified hearts will be satisfied to see God alone glorified. In this world, we have the sorrow of seeing God contradicted, and in this world because we are not perfectly sanctified, we are not as utterly devoted to the glory of God as we shall be, but in heaven we will see God vindicated forever in Christ Jesus. We will see God honored as he ought to be honored, and we will have hearts that perfectly delight in the glorification of God so that both our hearts and the reality we behold will be perfectly at one.

What joy to love God perfectly and to see the God whom we love perfectly glorified. What satisfaction of soul to be without pride and therefore to love God as we ought and to see his name forever glorified in Christ Jesus. And even through us, what satisfaction to know that our salvation displays the glory of God even to principalities and powers. No wonder the psalmist says, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." Satisfied with a perfectly holy heart full of holy desires, completely satisfied in the vindication of God's name so that there will be nothing to mar the joy of God's people. There will be no contradiction of God. The damned men and angels will still hate him but will be utterly subdued unto his wrath, and there will not be any contradiction of his truth. How we should long for that, when there shall be no contradiction of God and of his truth, when he shall stop the mouths of liars and those who swear by the king shall glory. How we should long after that. "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." That's the desire of God's people because even we ourselves then will have no contradiction of God in us and there will be no contradiction of God in the hearts of anyone in heaven, and the contradiction, the desire to contradict God in his enemies will be utterly brought down. And so all that the Christian longs for will be his. God will be glorified. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day and the people of God will have hearts that altogether delight that this is so. So this joy will indeed be exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Amen.