

GOD!
Message 11
Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

INTRO: The attribute of God we are considering this morning is the omnipotence of God. But before we do that, let me give you a little side line. In Christian circles, we often speak of 'theology'. What we really mean is 'doctrine'. A doctrine is the systematic teaching of a biblical topic like, the doctrine of man, or the doctrine of the Holy Spirit etc... So we call the doctrine of man, anthropology. All these 'ology' words are made up of two words. The 'ology' part has to do with 'logos' which means a 'word'. In anthropology the *anthropos* part means *man*. So it is 'words about man' or we call it anthropology. So it is with all these words. When we come to the doctrine of God it is *theos*, which means God and *logos*, word; and so we have a word about God or theology.

So in Christendom we call both doctrine and the doctrine of God theology. So which one is actually theology? Well, it is the doctrine of God. Because of that we call doctrine theology, and the doctrine of God, theology proper. Now why do we call doctrine theology? I think it is because we like to sound sophisticated. But all that to say this: There are two ways of knowing God. The one way is by what we learn about Him through nature or the Bible, and that is theology. Our messages are truly 'Theology'.

The other way of knowing God is experientially. So, you may be here this morning, and maybe you have heard a lot of doctrine; you have heard about knowing God; you have heard about being born again, but you have never experienced it. You may have a lot of rational understanding, but no experiential understanding of God. You know about being born again in words, but you do not know about being born again in experience. To date, your knowledge is fruitless. Then when we are born again, we experience what the doctrine of the new birth is about in words. After this, we can begin to get to know God in experience.

Now we can stress doctrine, and be dead spiritually. Or we can stress experience and be dead spiritually. But let me say this, you can know God no further in experience than you know Him from doctrine or theology; that is learning about God in the Word of God. When we stress theology without stressing the experience of knowing Him, we get

dead orthodoxy. However, when you overstress experience, you get results like the seeker friendly movement and the offspring of that, the emerging church. No stress on the propositional learning of the Word of God, then you have such things as walking the labyrinth or what we now call contemplative prayer. My view is that contemplative prayer is not prayer in the way the Bible teaches it.

From all this I want to make this point: you can know God no further in experience than you know Him in Biblical doctrine, or as we call it, theology. The problem with the seeker friendly approach is a lack of proper doctrine, and thus a malignant knowledge of God. This only gets worse in the emergent movement. I stress, get to know the God of the Bible from the Bible, and then live what you learn by obedience to Him in experience and then, and only then will do you have true Christianity! Sixty to seventy years ago we began to douse doctrine in the Church and today, it is almost dead.

7. Omnipotent

Well, we have looked at two 'omni' words with regard to God already; His omnipresence and His omniscience. This morning we add His omnipotence. The word 'omnipotent' occurs only once in the Bible and that is Revelation 19:6, "And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, 'Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!'" The original word is 'pantokrator'. It is translated 'Almighty' 9 times and 'omnipotent' 1 time. This word comes from two words, *pan* and *kratos*. The 'pan' on the word means 'all' just like the word 'omni' we are already familiar with. *Kratos* is power, so it means all powerful or Almighty, or omnipotent.

In the OT the word translated Almighty occurs 48 times and for once the KJV is consistent in always translating it the same. You will have heard the name "El Shaddai." Shaddai is this Almighty God, the omnipotent One. When it adds the "El" to it, it is "God Almighty".

The Hebrew name, 'Shaddia' occurs 48 times in the OT. Of those 48 times, it occurs 30 times in the

book of Job. The book of Job, on the divine side, truly is about Almighty God. On the human side, the subject matter of the book, as I see it, is about an almost almighty sin; pride.

The Greek translation of 'Shaddai' is 'Pantokrator'. It means *all powerful*. As I have said, this word occurs 10 times in the NT. It is translated 'Almighty' nine times and once 'omnipotent'. Of its 10 occurrences, it is found 9 times in the last book in the Bible, Revelation. The book of Revelation too, is about God Almighty.

There is probably nothing that shows God's omnipotence to us more clearly than the first chapter of the Bible. The first sentence in the Bible describes His omnipotence like this: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Of the vast immeasurable universe Genesis 1:16 says this, "...He made the stars also." What is included in those five words? Well, consider the amount of space included in those words. Let me quote from the Genesis series I did some years ago and I quote from Dr. Harold Willmington. He says, "Let us say for a moment that the thickness of a paper represents the distance from earth to the sun. (93. mill. miles). To reach the nearest star, 4 1/2 light years away, you would need a stack of paper 71 feet high. To cover the diameter of our milky way, which is 100,000 light years across, would require a stack of paper 310 miles high. To reach the edge of the now known universe, would take a stack of paper 31 million miles high." Well, that quote is from many years ago. The numbers would be much bigger today. Talk about all-powerful!

Now I want to take you to my most favorite passage on this subject. Turn to Ephesians 3:20-21, "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, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." Now I want you to notice what He is able to do. The word 'able' is the Greek word 'dunamis'. It means

ability. You will have heard that we get our word *dynamite* from it, because what nothing else can do, dynamite can. It is able. And so how much is He able to do? Plainly stated our text says God is able to do ALL we ask or think. Tell me, how much is that? What all could you ask, or what all could you think? That is how much God is able to do.

But, in the Greek language when they want to heighten the intensity of a word they add a preposition to it. First in our passage the word *all* is described by one separate adjective, and that is the word *above*. So, not only is He able to do 'all' we ask or think, He is able to do 'above all' we ask or think. How much is that?

But that is not sufficient. This expression in Ephesians is hard to translate, nor can you easily exaggerate it. When Paul has said God is able to do above all we ask or think, then he adds the comparative word, *huperekperisou*. That comparative word has an additional three prepositions. So, let us add those. First, God is able to do 'all' we ask or think. No, He is able to do 'above all' we ask or think. No, that is not enough. He is able to do 'above', above all we ask or think. How much is that? But that is not yet sufficient, He is able to do abundantly above, above all. But that still does not fully express what Paul said. He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above, above all we ask or think. He is omnipotent. He is almighty. He is all powerful.

Now someone just recently pointed out another interesting fact in this great passage. Here is Almighty God. The Apostle has described for us the extent of what God is able to do. But listen now especially to the last several words, "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..." It is this massive power that now works in us.

Let me show this great truth from another passage in Ephesians (read 1:15-21). Paul prayed for the

Ephesian believers that they might understand the exceeding greatness of God's power towards the believer. It is the same power that He used to raise Christ from the dead. Now how much power does it take to do that? We now have the ability to keep people alive longer and longer, but we have no power to resurrect people yet. Not only was it the same power He used to raise Christ from the dead, but the same power that took Christ back to heaven and seated Him at God's own right hand. It is this power that works in us!

When Ephesians 3:21 speaks of this power working in us, I believe it speaks of the Christian. Now you might ask, what is there in me that requires that much work? Well, it takes all that power to conform me to the image of Jesus Christ. If I understand the book of Job aright, it takes much more power and time to make proud people humble than it does to create the universe!

So let us consider yet another truth with regard to God's omnipotence. God is all powerful, but there are some things He cannot do. Titus 1:12 says that God cannot lie. He is not able to lie! Why is that? Because He, like man, behaves according to His nature. God's nature is 100 percent righteous and if He lied, He would cease to be 100 percent righteous. God made man a free moral agent. If He forced him to anything, He would act contrary to that principle. So God cannot force anyone to become a Christian. God cannot humble man! He can bring many circumstances into man's life to cause him to become humble, but He cannot force man to become humble.

So 2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves..." Man must humble himself. So God says in 2 Chronicles 7:13, "When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among the people..." Those are things God can do. When God puts His mighty power to work and the earth quakes mightily, or the tsunamis come, or the hurricane comes, or fires blaze over the land, men begin to see the mighty

power of God. And sometimes God allows these because in these circumstances man becomes willing to humble himself. But to humble man, that God cannot bring about by force. Man must choose it. God cannot force us to righteous living. We must choose it ourselves. You see, some things God cannot do.

Now I want to draw one more truth out of Ephesians 3:20. Notice it says, "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ASK..." There we have the subject of prayer. Prayer is a mighty incredible thing. It seems so weak, so impotent, so simple that we hardly see it necessary to pray. Yet prayer can move heaven! Sincere godly prayer can cause Almighty God to move on our behalf! James 5:16b says, "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." The word translated 'effective fervent' is *energeo* from which we get our word 'energy'. So this needs to be first, energized or energetic prayer. Then it needs to come from a righteous person.

Now I want you to see what happened. Verse 17 says, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months." But that is not all. You will remember the story of Elijah's contest with the prophets of Baal and how Elijah won a wonderful victory over them. For 3 ½ years it had not rained, but he then told that wicked king, Ahab, "Go and eat and enjoy yourself, because I hear the abundance of rain." Then Elijah went and prayed again, and it was again an energized prayer because then it rained again.

Now what we need to see is that one tiny, puny little man on earth got on his knees and prayed, and heaven responded. God Almighty was moved and he sent it as soon as Elijah prayed, it just took a while for nature to bring it there so Elijah prayed until it came, but come it did! Earth moved heaven! Isn't that incredible!

On our Wednesday prayer meetings, sometimes we wonder if anything will ever happen. We pray and pray and sometimes it is a long time before things happen. On some requests we have prayed for for over two years, as far as we can tell, nothing has happened. But then a short time ago a prayer request was miraculously answered after 8-9 months of prayer.

Let me tell you what happens sometimes in prayer as I see it. We begin to pray for something. And we need to realize when we pray that there are some things even God in His omnipotence cannot do, and that is answer our prayers by violating the free will of any person we are praying for. For example, on our prayer list are some people for whom we are praying and they are living in deep sin. Now God cannot force them out of their sinfulness. They must cooperate with Him by their own free will. But before they will cooperate with Him, hundreds, maybe even thousands of things have to happen. Maybe God has to move 50 people and arrange a thousand circumstances before the person even begins to consider his or her state. And then, maybe again as many things have to happen before a change comes. Now when we pray and believe, never fear, God does go to work. But we may have prayed for a week, a month, maybe even a year and then we give up. But before He can answer, He may even need to change things in me. And then, maybe just before God has everything worked out, we give up and quit praying and He is hindered from completing His work.

Turn with me to Psalm 78. Let us read verses 34-41. The translation of verse 41 is a bit difficult but if it stands as translated here, Israel had set a limit to what God could do. Rather than trust God in faith and let Him do what He wanted to do through them, they tempted Him again and again. We may do the same, and limit what God can do.

Recently my wife ordered a book written by Watchman Nee on the prayer ministry of the Church. I glanced through it and saw an

interesting sub-heading which said, 'The Earth Controls Heaven.' He talks in this section of his book about the time when Moses was leading the children of Israel out of Egypt and they came to Rephidim. Turn in your Bibles to Exodus 17 (read 8-13). And there the people of Amalek met them for battle. Now the Amalekites are said by many to be a picture of our battle with the flesh and the flesh is a mighty enemy. And Moses being up on the hill with the rod of God is often referred to as picturing prayer. God wants to destroy Amalek, just as He wants us to overcome the flesh. But He cannot do so unless prayer is made to Him for that. Listen to the words of Watchman Nee: Who decided the victory at the bottom of the mountain? Did God decide or did Moses decide? Brothers and sisters, we have to see God's principle of work and the key to His move. God cannot do what He wants to do unless man wants it. We cannot make God do what He does not want to do, yet we can stop God from doing what He wants to do. The victory was decided by God in heaven, but the victory was decided by Moses before men. Truly God in heaven wanted the Israelites to win, but if Moses had not raised his hands on earth, the Israelites would have lost. When he raised his hands, the Israelites won. The earth controls heaven."

I want to mention one more thing about our omnipotent God. Turn with me to the last occurrence of the name, Almighty God. I mentioned earlier that the phrase, 'God Almighty' occurs 11 times in the Bible. Five are in the OT and six in the NT. Of those six in the NT, they are all found in the book of Revelation, and I want to show you the very last one, but let me explain a few things first. Between Revelation 20 and 21 is the dividing line between the time when there is sin on earth, and when all sin is removed. In Revelation 21, we have what I would call the eternal state. It begins with a vision of the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven onto the new earth. And then the whole chapter is given to a description of this new Jerusalem, the city of all cities. Let us read from verse 9 (Rev. 21:9-27). Now in verse 22, we have the last occurrence

of the phrase 'God Almighty' and the name 'Shaddia' or 'Pantokrator.'

I want you to notice where Almighty God is. Let us read verses 1-3 (read). You see, the tabernacle, not temple, is with men! It has come down from heaven to the new earth! And it says God will dwell with them, that is saved man, forever! God is coming to earth some day and He wants to dwell with man! Ultimately and finally it is not man who goes to dwell with Almighty God. It is Almighty God who comes down to dwell with man!

Now I want you to notice something else. We sometimes think the sun and moon will disappear but the Bible does not say that. Notice what it says in verse 23 (read). It is not that the sun and moon disappear. It is just that this city does not need them for light because God Almighty will be there and His glory will be the light of the city!! This is Almighty God!! And that is a good note on which to bring this message to a close.

CONCL: So let us briefly summarize by way of conclusion. Our subject has been God's omnipotence, or His 'Almightyness'. We saw that this means he is 'all able'. But we also have seen that there are some things He cannot do. It is not due to a lack of ability but due to such things being outside His character. If He lied, He would cease to be God, so He cannot lie.

We saw that it may take more power to conform us to the image of Christ than it did for God to create the universe. We considered also that when we want to tap into God's power in prayer, we need to prevail. We need to give Him opportunity to work. We may need to continue to pray for quite some time. This is called persistent prayer.

So let us close with this word of prayer: "Lord, I want to speak to You on behalf of at least the majority of us here. We want, above all else, to please you. We will not fear man so much that we will put You second. We acknowledge You as God Almighty! We will put our every effort into showing ourselves approved to You. We will be mindful of the way we dress; of the way we do business; of the way we work for

our boss; of how we treat businesses when we buy from them or hire them; we will be mindful of how we treat our teachers in school; of how we talk to our parents; of whom we consider for marriage; of how we fulfill our responsibilities in church. We have one overriding desire. It goes above all else. It is to bring glory to You. We want to please You. We will fear You above people. We will read Your Word. We will seek to please You above people. We will remember above all else that You are Almighty God. We will love our wives because You are our commander. We will honor our husbands, because You are our commander. We will let nothing have greater importance in our lives than You. So we ask Your blessing as we leave this place to live another week if the Lord Jesus carries that long."