

**“A Grand Doxology”**  
**Ephesians 3:20-21**  
Pastor David Frampton

*Introduction:*

1. Last summer in Montana, Sharon and I visited Glacier National Park. The entire park is beautiful. I sort of wish that we could visit it every year, but there is so much of God’s creation to see and enjoy with him! One part I especially enjoyed was Logan’s Pass. It was July 14, but snow was still abundant. Behind the Lodge (a.k.a. a gift shop tourist trap) is a trail, heading up the mountain. I wanted to climb at least part of it. Sharon decided she’d rather videotape me climbing. So I set off. I said that I’d climb up to a large rock. It didn’t look very far away, and I thought I’d make it in a few minutes. But I forgot that I was in high altitude. Uh unh, yes, you know what happened. Soon I was out of breath and having to stop every couple minutes to gather my strength. My inexperience of climbing and the relative lack of oxygen combined to make me stop.
2. In the same way, this passage can make us come to a stop. Most of us lack the spiritual experience to lay hold of all that the apostle Paul is writing. Even if we did, we would eventually reach the limits of our spiritual ability. It seems that in his prayer, he has reached the heights of human expression in this world. He has prayed that we might be strengthened by the Spirit’s power and Christ’s indwelling, that we might have power to grasp and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, and that we might be filled to all the fullness of God. He has reached the summit of what he can ask for! There remains nothing to do on the mountain peak but to bow in worship. So he concludes with this grand doxology.

*Exposition:*

- I. In our spiritual growth, we must grasp the unlimited nature of God’s power.
  - A. Basic truths in an advanced context.
    1. We worship a personal God: “to him”. We do not seek to use or manipulate a mighty force or power. We come to a Person, indeed, to a tri-personal God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
    2. We worship an able God: “who is able to do”. God acts constantly in our world in ordinary ways we don’t usually notice, and sometimes in extraordinary ways that demand our attention. God is the true and powerful God (Is 46; Jer 10).
    3. We worship a God who is sufficient to meet our every need: “all”. It doesn’t matter what difficulty we get into. He can act to do all that is needed for his glory and our good.
    4. We worship a God who understands our prayers: “we ask or imagine”.

Yes, God can communicate with mankind, and he can understand what we say or think. God is able to have a personal relationship with us today by the Word and the Spirit.

*Point:* A subtle idea that affects our thinking is the error of existentialism that the spiritual cannot have any certain contact with the physical. It presents an impassible barrier between the two. It says you can’t know, but if you want to take a leap of faith and pretend that you can, then that’s your choice, silly though it may be. Against this, the Bible says **everybody can know**, because God is able to make us know.

*Apply:* Now you may want to return to a rather startling concept. **God can** talk to you today through his written word, and **you can** talk to him through prayer.

B. An advanced truth that is actually very basic: God can “do infinitely more than all we ask or imagine....”

1. At this point the apostle bankrupts human vocabulary. He uses the very rare word υπερεκπερισσου, which means something like “quite beyond all measure” or “infinitely more than”. According to the lexicographers Arndt and Gingrich, this is “the highest form of comparison imaginable”.

2. “Having exhausted all the forms of prayer, he casts himself on the infinitude of God, in full confidence that he can and will do all that omnipotence can effect. His power, not our prayers nor our highest conceptions, is the measure of the apostle’s anticipations and desires. This idea he weaves into a doxology, which has in it more of heaven than of earth... God is not only unlimited in himself, but is unrestricted by our prayers and knowledge.” [Hodge]  
*Apply:* Have you been “measuring God” according to your own abilities? Develop a Biblical concept of God. Get in the Bible, asking God to teach you who he is.

II. In our spiritual growth, we must understand that God’s unlimited power **is already** at work in us.

A. This passage alone should correct our poor views of what it means to be a Christian.

1. Perhaps the blame should lie in part on preachers and teachers. Do we clearly present the good news of Christ? Do we forget that the all-surpassing power is in Christ, and not ourselves? Do we become distracted and wander from what we ought to be the joy of our hearts and the theme of our song?

2. But then, don’t you have a Bible? Have you forgotten what God has done for you? Have you tried to rely on yourself rather than on Christ? Whatever happened to Christians that sang, “All that thrills my soul is Jesus! He is more than life to me!” Return, return to your first love.

B. What the apostle writes is very striking! You see, God’s power, which can do infinitely more than all we ask or imagine, is presently at work in us.

1. You have resurrection power, ascension power at work in you (2:6)! God’s power is already working in us. What a difference there is between the sons of God and unbelievers! We fail to grasp how much is ours. But we should and it ought to change our lives.

2. Ah, but do I sense a little doubt here? Perhaps someone might say, “All this seems unreal compared to what I see in the lives of today’s Christians!” Let’s think about this for a moment...

a. What happened the moment God saved you? Did you pass from death to life? Were you born again? Did you become a new man in Christ? Did God give you the righteousness of Christ? Did he make you his son and heir? Did he baptize you with his Spirit and put you into the church? Yes, he did. He did this all by his infinite power.

b. Perhaps the problem is that either other things distract us or we lack spiritual strength to grasp and to know.

*Point:* Make the Scriptures the rule of your experience. Stop trimming down the Word and the power of the Holy Spirit. The way to do this is through the pattern of this prayer.

III. In our spiritual growth, we must focus on God’s ultimate purpose.

A. God has willed to receive glory through eternal ages in the church.

1. Here is an overwhelming concept that Paul cannot lose contact with. The whole redemption of the church shows the surpassing glory of our God and Father (cf. 1:3-14). Through all ages he will display the riches of his glory to the church. O Lord, what kind of grace is this? You take selfish, greedy, hateful, murderous, twisted, fearful, lying, perverted rebels and make them the expression of your grace! Why do you do this? How high and long and deep and wide is your love!

2. The church should always adore God for all his attributes: his grace, love, mercy, power, wisdom, and patience. In eternal ages, we will display the greatness of all that he is.

*Point:* Christian, you have a high calling! Think of what it means that the infinite God has set his redeeming love on you—yes, on you! Like the river from the temple in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezk 47), the church will experience its increasing fullness—ankle deep, knee deep, waist deep, and then so deep one must swim in it.

B. God has willed to receive glory through eternal ages in Christ.

1. All this can be true of the church only because of the saving work of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. We depend wholly and fully on his righteousness. The focal point of true Christianity is the Lord Christ. He is supreme; he is all in all. “I will arise and go to Jesus. He will embrace me in his arms. In the arms of my dear Savior, O there are ten thousand charms!”

2. By the Scriptures we have a vision of what it will be like in that day. Consider Rev 1:12-18. As Rutherford wrote long ago, “The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel’s land.” Rev 5:12-14 One day every knee in heaven and earth and under the earth will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. God will say, “Behold my Son, my Chosen One, in whom I delight!” And we’ll all fall in worship to God. To him be the glory forever. Amen.

*Conclusion:*

1. Do we feel impelled to join with the apostle in this grand doxology? Surely our willing participation discloses something about our knowledge and grasp of the love of Christ. At this point we come to sort of a fork in the road of life. Either you agree with the apostle and fall on your knees in worship, or you walk away with a shrug of the shoulders wondering, “What in the world was he so excited about?” I say this because we have reached the pivotal point in the letter. The next chapter begins with a “therefore”. The problem with many Christians is that they fail to grasp “the left side of the therefore”, and their life degenerates into legalism or a substitute experience.

2. So we ask, “Are you doubtful about these things? Do you really believe that Christ can dwell in your heart by faith? Is he dwelling in your heart by faith? Have you been able to ‘comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height’, and have you known the ‘the love of Christ which passeth knowledge’? Have you felt it, have you known it in an experimental manner? You may believe it, you may have accepted it by faith, but there is the deeper question of our experiential knowledge of these things.” [Lloyd-Jones, p. 305] The good news is that in Christ you may know God, his love and grace, and his presence with you by the Spirit. You have all you need in Christ! Now lay hold of it by faith!