

Ephesians 3:20–21 | “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty!”

Preached on July 27, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 3, verses 20–21 as we finish out chapter 3 of Ephesians this morning. *[pause]*

Here we are at the very end of chapter 3, and after recounting all of what God has done and what we have in Christ, Paul can't help but praise. *[pause]*

Have you ever burst into praise or excitement over something? *[pause]*

It's those moments where something so amazing happens that you can't help but speak about it...

Maybe you ate the most amazing tasting food at a restaurant, and you just have to tell people to go there. *[pause]*

Maybe you went to an amazing event, and you can't help but tell people all about it. *[pause]*

Maybe something exciting happened in your family, and you can't help but tell others what happened. *[pause]*

I think of the moment right after I asked Kate to marry me and she said, “Yes.”

We were both bursting with joy and excitement, and we couldn't help but tell others about the good news. *[pause]*

I remember right after we got engaged, Kate even told strangers nearby us the exciting news of what happened.

And then because we were bursting with excitement, we kept calling family members and friends to tell them the news. *[pause]*

It felt like we couldn't keep it in, but the truth just burst off of our lips. *[pause]*

Likewise, that's what it's like for Paul here at the end of recounting what God has done and what we have in Christ—he bursts with praise. *[pause]*

It's like he couldn't help, but praise and glorify God after contemplating everything that he said. *[pause]*

I can just imagine Paul either writing or dictating this letter, and at this moment, just bursting forth in joy-filled praise to the Lord.

It's like he's worshiping as he's writing. *[pause]*

Listen in as I READ the passage, and just hear Paul worship as he writes. *[READ]*

These verses are often called a “doxology,” and a doxology is really a “word of glory” or a “saying of praise.”

It’s a short expression of praise to God. *[pause]*

So if I were preaching along, and all of a sudden I said something like, “Praise be the Lord, who deserves all honor and glory!” that would be considered a doxology. *[pause]*

Or after we take the offering, we sing a doxology: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” *[pauseeee]*

So here is Paul, in a burst of praise, yet his burst of praise does more than praise, for it also teaches us some things...

First, that...

I. God can do more than we could ever imagine! (20)

Paul just mentioned that he prays for the Ephesians to receive strength from the Lord, but what gives him so much confidence that God can give them this strength?...

Because God can more than we could ever imagine. *[pause]*

He says, “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.” *[pause]*

Paul focuses our attention not on ourselves, not on some celebrity, politician, or well-known person of this world, but focuses our attention on the Lord.

It’s *to Him*—the Lord, that Paul directs our gaze. *[pause]*

He says, “Now to him who is able.” *[pause]*

You could make a full stop right there and marvel at all of what that means — God. Is. Able. *[pause]*

I think of that kids song that goes, “He’s able, He’s able, I know He’s able, I know my Lord is able to carry me through.”

And oh, how often we, Christian adults, need to hear and believe that simple, yet profound truth...

God is able—He has the power and ability to do things. *[pauseeee]*

In life, we are often confronted with our *inability*, and many times we are confronted with it *daily*. *[pause]*

When we are sick, we are unable to function well. *[pause]*

At the workplace, we are unable at times to fix something on our own. *[pause]*

With others, we are unable to change their hearts.

We are limited, but God is fully able. *[pause]*

He has the power, skill, means, opportunity, and resources to accomplish what He sets out to do. *[pauseeee]*

Job admits to God, “I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.”¹

And the psalmist declares, “Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.”² *[pauseeee]*

Christian, we serve a God who is able—do you remind yourself of that? *[pauseeee]*

God being ‘able’ would be good news in itself, but Paul goes on further to say that He’s “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.” *[pause]*

So God isn’t *just* able, but able to do infinitely more than we ask or think! *[pause]*

Think of it this way, it’s one thing to be able to do something, but it’s another to be able to do it far abundantly. *[pauseeee]*

Let’s say that I was out somewhere with another person, and there was a place that took only cash to pay for things.

So my friend asked me, “Can I please borrow \$10? I’ll pay you back.” *[pause]*

I reply, “Sure, as long I have \$10 in my wallet, let me check.” *[pause]*

So I look in my wallet and instantly realize that it’s going to be pretty close...

I find a \$5 bill, four \$1 bills, and then I have a bunch of coins. *[pause]*

I see 75 cents in there, here’s another dime, 2 nickels, and then I start counting out the pennies—one, two, three, four—is there another penny in there? *[pause]*

Finally, I find that last penny, and hand it all over for him to use. *[pause]*

I just scraped by, and was able to give him \$10.

You could say that I was *able* to provide him with \$10, but just barely. *[pause]*

Well when it comes to the Lord, His ability to do things is not a “just barely” or “just scraping by” thing.

¹ Job 42:2.

² Psalm 115:3.

He doesn't reach His capacity by helping us, where He says, "Whew, I just barely got that one done for you."

He doesn't *just barely* do ANYTHING! *[pause]*

It's not luck or chance, or some good circumstances that lined up at just the right time...

He is "able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think"! *[pauseeee]*

The word translated as "far more abundantly" really means that He can do infinitely more or beyond all measure.

So this isn't merely hitting the mark, but blowing past the mark by so much that you stand there amazed at what you just saw. *[pauseeeee]*

We all know people who are able to get a job done, but have you ever been impressed beyond measure by what someone did? *[pause]*

There are many people who can make a cake—they are capable of the bare fact of making a cake.

But go to one of those speciality, professional cake makers and look at the cakes that they make, and you realize, "They did far more than just make a cake, they made a piece of art!" *[pause]*

They did far more abundantly than make a mere cake, for it looked spectacular and tasted absolutely amazing. *[pauseeeee]*

In an infinitely better way, God "is able to do", but more than that, He can do "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." *[pauseeee]*

God can do anything and do it abundantly—just remember the examples all throughout Scripture...

Faced with the Babylonian exile, God communicated to Israel that someday they would return to their land, for He said, "Is anything too hard for me?"³ *[pause]*

Confused as to how she will give birth to Jesus, since she was a virgin, the angel encourages Mary with the truth that, "nothing will be impossible with God."⁴

And when the astonished disciples ask Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replies with, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."⁵ *[pauseee]*

We serve a God who can do what seems too hard or impossible! *[pause]*

³ Jeremiah 32:27.

⁴ Luke 1:37.

⁵ Matthew 19:25–26.

What we deem hard to God is actually easy to Him, and what we deem as impossibilities are possibilities to the Lord! *[pauseeee]*

Notice what else Paul says of God—He is able to do “far more abundantly than all that we *ask* or *think*.” *[pause]*

So God can do infinitely more than we ask. *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes we feel like we are coming to God with a “big ask,” but do you think that what you are asking for is really big to *Him*? *[pause]*

We think that we are pushing the limits with our request, but do you really think that God has limits on what He can do? *[pause]*

We think that we are laying before Him a tall order, but is anything too hard or high for God to do?

He can do more than we can ask! *[pause]*

Our prayer requests lay way lower than what He is actually capable of doing because He can do anything!

So we might think that we are asking a lot of God, but what He is able to do is infinitely more than we are asking. *[pauseeee]*

Sometimes we ask people to do things that they are incapable of doing, but that is never the case for God.

Our appeals *never* exceed His ability. *[pauseeee]*

That’s not all, for He can do far more abundantly than we think. *[pause]*

Now that’s really amazing to me...

It’s one thing to do more than we ask, but He can do more than we think, and not just more, but *far more abundantly* than we think. *[pauseeee]*

We can think up a lot of things, way more things than we are capable of doing. *[pause]*

I can think of running for 50 miles, but I can’t do that right now—yet Paul is saying that God can do way more than I even think! *[pause]*

I can think of God doing some amazing things, but what He can do blows those out of the water, and makes them look like the thoughts of a 2 year old. *[pauseeee]*

Doesn’t that just blow your mind?! That’s the God we serve!

He can do infinitely more than we could ever imagine. *[pauseeee]*

Oh, how often we doubt God’s abilities. *[pause]*

We doubt that He can change that situation, change that other person, or even change us.

Oh, *we of little faith!*⁶ Why do we have such a low view of God?

Really, any view of God is probably lower than how high He really is! *[pauseeee]*

Some people picture God as being hindered by circumstances, where He is like, “Ah, I really wish I could do something about that, but I can’t, sorry.”

Get rid of that picture of God in your mind—discard it as fast as you can, for it’s not true!
[pause]

He is not like us in our limits, but He is limitless!

He can do far more abundantly than *all* that we ask or think! *[pause]*

More than you are asking, He can do.

More than you are thinking, He can do.

Our requests, thoughts, and imaginations are miniscule compared to what our mighty God can do. *[pauseeeee]*

What’s amazing is that we request and think in ways that we think are high, but God can blow you away with an even better thing that He does. *[pause]*

He has grown me and used me in ways that I never prayed for or even thought of. *[pause]*

Can’t you say the same about certain things in your life? *[pause]*

He’s able, church!

He’s able to do far more abundantly than we ask or think in and through our lives and in and through this church, but do we know and believe that?! *[pauseeee]*

He can save that person that you have been praying for for years, and save more people that you haven’t even been asking for. *[pause]*

He can change that person that you have been praying for, and in ways that you never dreamed of. *[pause]*

He can change *your* heart and life in ways that you never thought were possible, and you will stand amazed. *[pauseeeee]*

⁶ A slight adjustment to a saying found in multiple places. See Matthew 14:31 for an example.

Think of the hardest moment that you could possibly face in the future—it seems daunting and like you wouldn't have the strength to endure it...

He can give you exactly what you need and more for that moment. *[pauseeee]*

It would be easy for us to think, “What could God do through our little church in central Pennsylvania?”

But He can do far more abundantly than we are asking or thinking! Do you believe that?!
[pause]

What could happen through our church isn't limited by what we can do, but it's open to what God can do and what He chooses to do through us.

So we pray big, we think big, we dream big—for we have a God, who can do all things. *[pauseee]*

How would you pray differently, think differently, and live differently knowing this truth?
[pause]

Wouldn't you be encouraged? *[pause]*

Wouldn't you trust Him more?

Wouldn't you step out in faith more—live with more hope? *[pause]*

Wouldn't you be strengthened to face the day? *[pauseeee]*

Now how is it that we can be recipients or experiencers of His matchless power?...

Paul says that it's “according to the power at work within us.” *[pause]*

This demonstrates that Paul is talking primarily about God's work in and through us here.
[pause]

Right before this, Paul was praying that the Ephesians would be strengthened within and that they would know the love of Christ more deeply.

And now he shows us that we can be confident of those things because God can “do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us.” *[pauseeee]*

His power at work within us can do more than we ever thought possible! *[pause]*

He can help you resist that temptation that seems to be too strong. *[pause]*

He can give you the power to serve in a way that you don't feel qualified to do. *[pause]*

He can save the most unlikely person, or change our hearts in ways that we never thought possible. *[pause]*

He is able to cause you to endure intense suffering, or to be a godly co-worker, parent, spouse, or child—even in some of the most difficult times. *[pauseee]*

So Paul is really pointing to God’s ability to do far more abundantly than we ask or think *in our lives*.

And that means as Christians the phrase, “I can’t,” shouldn’t be in our vocabulary when it comes to something God has called us to do. *[pause]*

Instead, we say, “I can, through the power of my Lord, who is able to do far more abundantly than all that I ask or think.” *[pauseeee]*

Not only do we see that God can do more than we could ever imagine, but also that...

II. God deserves all the glory! (21)

In life, people are seeking after the glory of *something*. *[pause]*

Many people are seeking their own glory, so they promote themselves, boast about themselves, and shine the light back on themselves. *[pause]*

Others are seeking the glory of their business—they will do anything to get ahead and be “the best”. *[pause]*

Some people are all about sports, so they seek the glory of their team above all...

They will do anything to put the spotlight on their team and how amazing their team is. *[pause]*

Still others are all about the glory of a politician or political party, and so don’t criticize or say anything about that, or you will hear about it. *[pause]*

The list could go on and on—we are glory-seekers and glory-givers. *[pauseeee]*

If you asked Paul what (or who) we should glory in, what would he say?

Well just listen to what he says in verse 21, “to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” *[pauseeee]*

Now let’s first tackle what Paul means when he says, “to him *be glory*.” *[pause]*

If I said, “Who should get the glory for this amazing piece of art,” what am I asking?

I’m asking, “Who ought to get the praise, recognition, and honor for making this piece of art? Who should get the credit?” *[pause]*

So also, that’s the meaning of “glory” here—the Lord ought to receive praise, recognition, and honor. *[pauseeee]*

No matter how much we think it, we don't deserve the glory, nor do any other things or people in this world.

No, God deserves all the glory—to him be glory. *[pauseeee]*

In Paul's mind, everything begins and ends with the Lord—He does the work and He ought to receive the praise. *[pause]*

In the end, Paul does not lift us up, nor prayer up, nor anything else, but the Lord.

In his burst of praise, he displays that it all culminates in the glory of God. *[pauseeeee]*

Paul says specifically that to him be glory “in the church and in Christ Jesus.”

So the church is one of the focal points of God's glory—it's the place where God showcases His glory, and therefore, the place where He receives glory. *[pauseee]*

Certainly God's glory is seen in all of creation, yet think of how in the Old Testament, a focal point of His glory was the Temple.

So likewise, now the church is the focal point of displaying His glory and receiving glory. *[pauseeee]*

May we never diminish the need and importance of the church, for it's where God has chosen to *especially* receive glory—in and through the church. *[pauseeeee]*

As the church is united, so God gets glory. *[pause]*

As the church becomes more like the Lord, so honor is due Him. *[pause]*

As the church goes and spreads the good news of Jesus, so the spotlight is put back on Him. *[pauseeee]*

When we go to Him in prayer and dependence, He is seen for who He is.

When we rely upon His strength, reflect His love, and serve others, He is highlighted for all to see. *[pause]*

As Jesus said in Matthew 5:16, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” *[pauseeee]*

Any good we do, any changes to be more like Christ, any growing in knowledge—all showcase His glory.

All of the work He does *in us* rebounds back *upon Him* and His greatness. *[pauseeee]*

The reason is because only *He* could do this in our lives, for we were condemned sinners, living in sin, and without hope in this world.

Yet God reached down in love and saved us through Jesus Christ, and made us His. *[pause]*

He has not only made us His, but He has been changing us from the inside-out, and has given us all that we need and more to live in this world for Him. *[pauseeee]*

This reminds us that as a church, we should never accept or direct praise to ourselves, but to God. *[pause]*

As the first line of our church's purpose statement says, "The purpose of this church is to glorify God."⁷

That is the most important thing that we do here. *[pauseeee]*

Paul continues and says that God be glory, not only in the church, but also in Christ Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

Because of who Christ is and what He has done, so God deserves the glory. *[pause]*

Because of Christ's dwelling in our hearts through faith, so God deserves honor. *[pause]*

Because of Christ's amazing love that surpasses knowledge, so God deserves praise. *[pauseeee]*

God the Father receives praise in and through Christ and what He has done.

That's why Jesus says in the gospel of John, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do."⁸ *[pauseeee]*

God deserves all the glory, how could He not? *[pause]*

Just think of all that He has done in and through the church.

Just think of all that He has done in and through Christ.

And just think of what He will do in the future, too! *[pauseeee]*

Paul doesn't stop there, but adds that he deserves glory "throughout all generations, forever and ever."

So God deserves *eternal* glory! *[pause]*

This is not some short-lived, temporary praise like the praise that the world gives, but it's *eternal* praise. *[pause]*

Through every generation and into forever, He deserves glory and will get glory.

Amen! So be it! Let it be done! *[pauseeee]*

⁷ First Baptist Church of Clearfield, PA's constitution, Section 1.02 Purpose.

⁸ John 17:4.

And so we say like that hymn: “Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!

All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.

Let the Amen sound from his people again; gladly forever adore him.”⁹ [pauseeee]

Like Paul here in this doxology, you are to...

Give glory to the Lord, who can do way more than you can imagine!

What a passage, what a doxology, what a Lord we have. [pauseeee]

Do you believe that God can do far more than you could ever imagine? [pause]

Do you believe that He deserves all the glory? [pause]

What would be different in our church, if we truly believed these things?

Wouldn’t our faith grow, our love deepen, and our praise to Him be emboldened? [pause]

Wouldn’t it help remind us that though we are small, God can do some big things in and through us?

That though we feel unimportant at times, we can glorify the Lord, which is the most important thing in the universe? [pauseeee]

Knowing our God and His deserved glory, let’s be about His glory, and not our own—His kingdom, and not our’s.

So we don’t seek to grow to put the spotlight on how great we are, but we seek to grow to glorify Him. [pauseeeee]

What about your individual, Christian life?

What difference would it make if you truly and deeply believed that you have a great God, who deserves great glory? [pause]

Wouldn’t your faith grow, where even in the darkest, most hopeless-looking times, you knew that He could do far more abundantly than you were asking and thinking. [pause]

Wouldn’t what you were about *change*, so that your ultimate aim in life was the glory of God, not the glory of self, or anything else? [pause]

Let’s give glory to God, who can do way more than we could ever imagine.

⁹ “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” by Joachim Neander, 1680.