

Ephesians 3:20-21 (Robert Kerr) 71824

Bible Treasury: Volume N9, Ephesians 3:20, Notes on (3:20-21)

How large and comprehensive is this scripture! Here is a vast amount of truth compressed into a small compass. This grand doxology grows naturally out of the prayer preceding it. The apostle had prayed for the deep things of God for the Ephesians (vers. 16-19)—vast and all-glorious realities. Having uttered such things it is not surprising to have such an outburst of praise. These words are full of all that is encouraging to our faith. God is revealing Himself and unveiling His glories. This is a wonderful scripture—the words are piled up as if the Spirit of God labored to express the vastness of what He wanted to reveal. The language is perfectly marvelous. Notice it is not what we can ask or think, but what we do ask or think. There is no measure to His ability—the measure is in our apprehension.

“Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask, or think.” There are times when our minds and hearts seem enlarged, and we then ask for great things—and we think more largely than we ask. Thoughts sometimes come into our minds which we should be afraid to put into words before the throne of grace. Has the question never come up, “May I expect God to do such great things for me?” Look at this word—“Able to do exceeding abundantly.” His abilities surpass all our words and all our thoughts. It is not a question of what we are able to do; God is making known what He is able to do. His resources are infinite. We may feel as weak as water spilled upon the ground.

Just so. But we must not carry that thought up to God. It is bringing Him down to our level. You may think, “I could not expect the dearest friend I have in the world to do that for me! How can I ask it of God?” We cannot compare God with the creature. In Him all fullness dwells. We need to pull ourselves up sharply. Our thoughts and askings should be formed according to His revelation of Himself and His promises.

“Exceeding great and precious promises.” Are we to deduct fifty per cent from them, and think that God cannot mean as much as He says? It is not so at all. He has spoken in the sincerest reality. We little know the depths of unbelief in all our natures. “Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.” See how important it is! “Take heed,” says the apostle. All unbelief is of the flesh there is nothing spiritual about it. It is very profitable for us, when asking something direct from God, to pause and ask ourselves this question: “Do I believe that God will give me what I ask for?” “Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.”

Oh, what a great God is our God!—He who built up the universe, who spake and it was done, commanded and it stood fast, and who sustains the worlds! As is said in Jeremiah, “If heaven above can be measured!” implying in the most emphatic way that it cannot be measured. And God says, “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” Can we measure His resources? Our scripture not only unveils His ability, but His willingness. “If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, we know we have the petitions that we desired of Him.” “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.” That is very emphatic.

It is said in connection with Elijah that the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. It does not say how much. It is as large as it can be. Elijah is given as an illustration. We are carefully told that he was a man of like passions with us. After the mighty conflict and victory at Carmel we see him under the juniper tree wishing he might die! What a collapse! Why is it brought before us in that way? Just to show us that our weakness cannot hinder His power.

A remarkable statement closes the verse. What is the power that worketh in us? It seems that the apostle refers to it in his prayer—“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” The power that worketh in us is the Holy Spirit of God. “By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.” “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” The Lord was quickened by the Spirit, and that is the power that worketh in us. “Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.” Satanic power is not omnipotent. But this power that worketh in us is the power of the Holy Ghost. How mightily He works! Do we not read in this epistle how Christ was raised from the dead by God's almighty power, and that this very same power has wrought in regard to us—giving us life, drawing us to Christ, subduing our rebellious wills and bringing our hearts into subjection to God and to Christ? Surely this was a mighty work—only God could do it, and, as we learn elsewhere, it is by His Spirit, so that now we can say, We “know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you.” “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?” Have we not by His power been led into the truth, been comforted, cheered, encouraged, helped, kept from temptation? How little we enter into His power! But God worketh in us by that power. He is able to give spiritual wisdom, the comfort of love, able to strengthen us in weakness and to arm us for the fight. Oh! this power that worketh in us. Would we might realize it more! There would not then be the cry of weakness that we so often hear. “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Is there any deficiency in Him? Surely not. All the weakness and deficiency are in us; we fail to take hold of Him; there is apathy; or perhaps the Spirit is grieved. The blame must be in ourselves, for the Holy Spirit has not taken His departure. We are sealed until the day of redemption. “He shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever.” If we realize that He is grieved we must get down on our knees before God about it. Sin in thought, word and deed must grieve the Holy Spirit of God; and if unjudged by us His working is hindered. You see then how to get rid of weakness.

Having such things as these, how they should deepen our desires and increase our faith! The faith of the Thessalonians grew exceedingly. We should judge every unbelieving thought. We should seek to have faith like Abraham; or, rather, our faith should be greater than Abraham's. Have we not greater promises than he? These exceeding great and precious promises! “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, also freely give us all things?” He is waiting—seeking an opportunity to enrich us more and more, to strengthen us. We should have larger thoughts and expectations concerning it. Regarding the gospel—I know there is much infidelity about, but it was the same in those days. Yet the power of God rested on them. Eloquence is no good without that. “All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me.” Wonderful indeed His working! He works in strange ways sometimes. We should have that confidence in Him that although we do not know in what way, we yet expect Him to do something.

“Able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.” What then? “Unto him be glory in the church throughout all ages.” Again I say, it is what we might expect. You will observe that it is in “the church” or assembly not the world. That will come some day under the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ; but in the present condition of things it is in the church. “Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” Surely this is our desire—to give glory to God. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.” Do we think of that? We should be very much occupied with it. Let us give praise—praise, and glory, unto our God.

It is by Christ Jesus—only through Him—and it is continuous throughout all ages. It never loses its freshness—never becomes stale. The world's songs will be hushed; but when we shall see Him as He is, our praises will burst out afresh.

“To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end, Amen.”

May He enable us to hide this word away in our hearts and to ponder over it!

R. K.

ERRATA

Page 36, col. 2, line 6 from the bottom—For Elijah read Elisha.

Page 39, col. 1, line 3 from the bottom—For sounds read sound.

clickbible.org