

Sermon Series: The Blessed Life
Sermon Title: Imaginative Worship
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Sermon Text: *Ephesians 3:20-21*

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

Introduction

Paul ends this section of Ephesians and specifically this prayer with a Doxology (an expression of praise to God). As he has done before in this book, he goes out of his way to be over the top with his descriptions. He is so excited and passionate about what he is saying, he can't seem to find adequate words to describe what he is feeling. As he is praising God, he's also making a point to his readers. The point is this essentially; **God is bigger than we think He is**. They aren't just selling him a little short, but Paul insists that He is able to do far more abundantly than what they could ask or imagine.

When we read this scripture, there are a lot of different ways people would try to interpret what it means. Here are a few examples of what I'm talking about:

"God owes me because I need to be happy". He's like a celestial Santa Claus and if I'm good enough and I ask Him enough, He has to give me what I want. Honestly, I grew up around some people that believed this. There were no limitations to what God would supply for them including their neighbor's car, house, or even wife. We always get into trouble when we choose one Scripture and pull it out of context. Here is another passage that helps us to find the balance in this kind of thinking:

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

James 4:1-3

"I tried that and it didn't work". How many times do we put limitations on God based on our own experiences? We put God in a box and only go to Him when absolutely necessary because we don't really believe that He is able to do what we need Him to do.

And when they came to the disciples, they saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all of the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" And someone from the

crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into fire and into water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse, so that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Mark 9:14-29

"I'm going to play it safe and just let whatever's going to happen... happen" This is really a defeatist mindset. We are commanded to ask. He wants us to ask. Here's an illustration from the Old Testament to help us understand this concept more fully: One story shows the world what it means to have "Far more than what we can ask or think".

Isaiah 7:1-2...The Battle is set! *In the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, Rezin the king of Syria and Pekah the son of Remaliah the king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to wage war against it, but could not yet mount an attack against it. When the house of David was told, "Syria is in league with Ephraim," the heart of Ahaz and the heart of his people shook as the trees of the forest shake before the wind.*

The enemy came up against Judah (Praise). Satan works overtime to try and steal our joy and ultimately our praise because he knows its inherent power. The two enemies were named well. Rezin=firm (I'm not moving, I'm like a rock in your way), Pekah=Open-eyed (never take a nap, never sleeps).

What was the Challenge for Judah? Be firm in faith...Rock and a hard place. Judah was wondering, "How can I be firm when I'm afraid?" Isaiah 7:10-12-*Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, "Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test."* Isaiah says, "Ask for anything". When God asks us he looks for a proper response. Judah didn't give a proper response. He gave a religious response: I will not test the Lord...Religion looks safe, but it indirectly blames God and lacks genuine firm faith.

God's about ready to blow Judah's mind. Isaiah 7:13-14-*And he said, "Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.*

Jesus is the answer to "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or imagine"

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The Questions below are for House Church Group Discussion.

- 1) What is a doxology?
- 2) How has this passage been misinterpreted?
- 3) What has led up to Paul's explosive praise and worship?