

Article of the Month
May, 2022

"Exceeding Abundantly"

Ephesians 3:20

Every once in a while it is refreshing just to stop to consider some little thought that inspires us to praise and wonderment about our Heavenly Father.

God supplies in His Scriptures many deep things for the hungering spiritual minds of His saints. He supplies chronology, history, prophecy, types & shadows, laws, and complex admonitions. All of these things put together help us to understand how God thinks. When we know how HE thinks, we can begin to copy how He thinks, and thus develop the mind of the "New Creature" in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17) which we need to do.

But sometimes it is just very strengthening to consider a little promise from Him, or to meditate on some little phrase in Scripture which ultimately makes us gasp as we realize its intent and implications. Such is the Ephesians text above. Here it is as quoted from the New American Standard Bible:

Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us...

This verse is the beginning of a "benediction." That means good words spoken about God because we have come to realize something about Him. Verse 21 finishes the benediction. But we will focus just on verse 20 to see why the Apostle Paul is so very enthralled with God.

EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY

Begin with "abundantly." It means more than is necessary -- an over-supply. Ordinarily, abundant is the extreme anyone could want or hope for. But God has Paul add the modifier, "exceeding," in front of "abundantly." In our modern day speech, this verse is saying, "a whole lot more than too much!"

Note also that it is not just what God gives, but the verse says He is able to "DO" a "whole lot more than too much!" We not only have gifts from God, but we have His actions on our behalf.

If the verse said no more than this, we would be overwhelmed. But it DOES say more.

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BEYOND

This is only a little word, but it packs an important impact. As we go further into the verse, we will see WHAT it is that is "beyond." But the word, itself, can be of help to us.

In conversations, we may often hear expressions like, "He went BEYOND the call of duty." This is the concept here in Ephesians. "Beyond" implies something that is not only not necessary, but extravagant due to love and concern. God is extravagant because it feels so good to Him to bless His saints. This lesson about our Father is so heart-warming!

God is creating a "New Creation" -- something which has never existed before. He is creating a personal family for Himself to whom He intends to give the Divine Nature -- death-proofness, among other things (John 5:26). God, from "before the foundation of the world," (Ephesians 1:4) has intended to have this intimate group of beings ON HIS OWN LEVEL, with whom He can have an everlasting close fellowship and camaraderie - - virtually His own "family" who will be JUST LIKE HIM. (Hebrews 1:3) The thought is staggering, but that is EXACTLY what "the High Calling of God in Christ Jesus" amounts to. (Philippians 3:14)

When God said of Adam in Eden, "It is not good that the man should be alone," He was reflecting His own situation. (Genesis 2:18) Just as Adam had no one on his own level of existence with whom he could communicate, likewise, God, Himself, had no being on His own level of being. When Jesus was raised as a Divine being from death (Acts 13:33), God finally had the first member of this "New Creation" come into existence. It was, for God, a moment of exhilaration. God all of a sudden had someone on His own level with whom He could communicate without boundaries of understanding.

Jesus had existed for myriads of ages "at the right hand of God." But until his resurrection, he did not have God's Divine nature (John 5:26; Hebrews 1:3; Philippians 2:9-12). This is why God's exclamation in Acts 13:33 is so powerful. Everything from the remote past ages had been only a prelude to this moment -- "THIS DAY." Therefore, God exclaims (as properly translated), "*Thou art My son. THIS DAY have I brought you to the birth!*" The Divine family was, at that point, beginning to become a reality. At that point, TWO Divine beings existed.

God's intention is to have His "family" consist not of one being like Him, but a total of 144,000 and one Divine beings. (Revelation 14:1; Hebrews 2:10) What a family! Developing that family is the purpose of the 2000 years between the two advents of Jesus.

THIS is why God, in our Ephesians text, goes BEYOND "a whole lot more than too much" on behalf of the saints! It is a very personal thing with Him! But it IS His family, and for it He will not only DO "a whole lot more than too much," but He even goes BEYOND that amount! Are we yet dizzy with astonishment?

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In support of this, we find in Hebrews 1:14 that Paul says that ALL of the angels -- and Revelation 4:11 suggests over 100 million of them -- ALL of the angels are "ministering spirits" ("guardian angels") sent out to render service" on behalf of the saints. This "family" which God is creating is important enough to Him to enlist all of the spirit beings in existence on their behalf. THAT's going BEYOND!

ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK

Here the Apostle Paul shows that God goes BEYOND "all that we ask or think." Think about that! Prayer (asking) is important, and it can be remarkably inclusive of our needs and our giving of thanks. What we THINK is even greater in scope. But Paul is telling us that we cannot think big enough to even approach what God is doing on our behalf. Our Father clearly has thought and does think of EVERYTHING that affects us -- WAY BEYOND what we could possibly think of. Let THAT sink in! As it does, our tendencies to worry will melt away.

ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKS WITHIN US

The final words of this verse show that the influences (power) of God ("the holy spirit") are what watch over us in all circumstances. We may recall that Jesus said that it was expedient for him to go away so that he could send a comforter (the holy spirit). (John 16:7) "Comforter" is the Greek word *parakletos*. It literally means "called along side." It is like asking a friend to walk beside us when we feel the need for support and comfort. But the holy spirit is more than a friend. It is all of the resources of God -- not a single being. And it is *called aside* us as we walk in the "narrow way."

It should be noted that most Bibles refer to the holy spirit as "he." This comes from the dark-ages' concept that the holy spirit is a sentient being. A careful study of the matter proves this to be incorrect. The holy spirit is not a "he." It is an "it." It is all of the power and influence of God which, consequently, can be omnipresent anywhere in the universe -- unlike a personal being.

Jesus, even since he was glorified, is yet a single being. As such he has limitations as to how and when he can be somewhere. He said his glorification was expedient for us BECAUSE the holy spirit, not being an individual, but rather the vast powers, influences, and resources of God, CAN be with each of us all the time and everywhere. Those 100-million angels are only a small part of the resources of God. All of those resources can work together for all the saints on earth, all at once, and everywhere. Yes, it IS expedient that Jesus sent this vast power when he departed. It was the only way there could be no cracks in our defenses. Thus this phrase, "according to the power that works within us," is SO worthy of much meditation and gratitude!

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The holy spirit works IN us so that we can grow in the spirit. It works AROUND us so that no external force can threaten our spiritual well-being. It works THROUGH us so that we may serve others and be living witnesses for our Father and His Son.

If you are one of the Lord's fully devoted servants, you can REST in the assurances that Scriptures like this one give. And He WANTS us to "enter into His rest." (Hebrews 4:11)

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