

He is Able

Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, unto Him be the glory in the church by Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever” (Eph. 3:20).

This is a great doxology — a very familiar one; a very great one; perhaps one of the greatest. But unlike most of the others, it does not appear at the end of the letter, and there must be a reason, not only for its utterance, but the position which it occupies. You are familiar with the fact that this letter, like so many others written by Paul, divides itself naturally into two parts — the first being doctrinal, setting forth the vision; the latter part being practical, applying it to the details of life. And it is in this central position that we have this reminder, of the One who is able to *do*.

The revelation given in the first few chapters of Ephesians is indeed a mighty one; it sets forth the ideal of the church — the church, not according to man’s contrivances, but according to the mind of God. While the ink is still wet, as it were; while the power and glory of this supreme disclosure of the mind of God for His people, is with Paul, he falls to his knees, and cried to his Father, not for light about the truth, but that the truth may find expression among God’s people. And that, I think, is the first point stressed by the positioning of this verse, to remind us that all doctrine, all revelation of the mind of God, is for practice, and not merely for contemplation. God intends that it should be *done* — “able to *do* ...”! In many cases that is not difficult for us to receive; in other cases, particularly in regard to this tremendous, breathtaking, revelation of what the people of God are to Him, it is very necessary, for it seems so infinitely remote from what is possible with things as they are. But God means this thing, not merely to be perceived and talked about, but *done*.

The second obvious implication of the verse is that we are not able to do it. We cannot realise this. Indeed, it is not presented to us as a pattern, or a suggestion that we should get busy trying to bring it about. That is not the nature of the revelation. But, in any case, we are bound to terminate this section of the letter by saying: Well, I wish we could do it, but we cannot. I wish it could be done. How wonderful it would be, but it is quite beyond us. It is indeed! And that is why we are now reminded; it is meant to be done; we cannot do it; but there is One who is “able to do”. The first stage is that we perceive and think as to the illumination, or revelation, as to the mind of God. How necessary in the first place, in the first prayer:

Oh, that the people of God should be helped to understand, to glimpse, to gaze upon, and to accept what the mind of the Lord is — to think. The next stage is to ask, to believe that God is serious, He intends it; He is drawing us out in expectation. And while the Lord tests the faith of His people, He never teases it; He never puts before us the unrealisable. He never tries to move us on a few steps by showing us something more remote which we shall never attain to, but which will help us to take those steps. He shows us the end, because He intends to bring us to the end. Do we ask? Well, the promise is to those who think, and those who ask. And notice this is not a general promise, although like a good many others, it may be applied to a good deal in general ways. It is blessedly true that our Lord is able to do, in any matter above what we ask or think. But this is a specific statement, relating to a special revelation, to a matter which is of supreme importance to the Lord. ‘Think on it’, God says through His servant, ‘Don’t evade it; don’t be blind to it; don’t seek alternatives from it; don’t argue about it; and don’t try to do it yourself; but *think* on it!’ And then, do what the writer did — bow your knees to the Father; ask for it; and ask in faith, for He is able to do. Of course, “*exceeding abundantly above ...*”, but for the moment, I think it would be far more helpful for us to concentrate on the simple fact that God can do it. The revelation is not

for mockery; it is not for idealising, though it is God's ideal. Man seldom reaches his ideal; God would not be God if He failed to do so. "*He is able ... able to do*".