

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory ... for ever and ever! Amen. Ephesians 3.20-21.

We come now in our study of *Ephesians* to perhaps the best known part of this letter, and to one of the gems of the NT.

*I kneel before the Father from whom his whole family in heaven and earth derives its name (v14).*

Does this not speak of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of man? Does it not remind us, with all the deadly divisions in the world, that there is only one God and ultimately only one people, temporarily divided by sin? One day God will join us all together as one in Christ. What a vision! Who doesn't want that - final unity and peace in Christ?

And then Paul prays this wonderful prayer that they may *grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and know this love which surpasses knowledge (vv18-9).*

Finally Paul offers up this soaring doxology in vv20-21:

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

Spend some time this afternoon going over this again, taking it all in. Memorise it, if you can, because everything is in this passage. It all centres on Christ. We are reminded that God is not some impersonal force but our *Father*. Thus we are brothers and sisters to each other. As our Father, he cares about each of us, more than we can ever realise. He loves us, and we need to grasp how wide and long and high and deep that love for us actually is. This wonderful passage of scripture hammers home to us two deep truths: God is on your side, and he is able. He is able to do far, far more than you can ask or imagine.

Sometimes, when we are struggling in life with personal tragedies and unfairness, and everything is going wrong, we might think that God is *against* us. He doesn't care. He isn't able to *do* anything to help us. We're on our own. It is then that we need to read this passage again, to be reminded of how wide and long and high and deep is God's love for us; to be reminded that he is a God who is able to do far, far more than all we ask or imagine. There is an old hymn which I love, but which I rarely choose - sorry! - because I can't get through it without weeping: 'Be still, my soul. The Lord is on thy side'.

Years ago JB Philips, who brought out the famous modern translation of the NT, wrote a little book called *Your God is Too Small*. I think his title gets to the heart of where we go wrong with God. Our God *is* too small, isn't he? We don't really look to him as an *almighty* God. In our minds we think of him as being like us but just a bit bigger, a bit better, and a bit more powerful. When we're really in difficulties, we don't really think he is able, do we? We even look on *prayer* as the last pathetic card in our pack. 'I suppose there's nothing more we can do now but pray!' Friends, it should be the *first* thing!

Too often the God we believe in is an invention, made in our own image, like us but a bit bigger. When people give up believing in God, I say, 'Good. Because *I* don't believe in that man-made God either. Let's now meet the true God'.

And how are we going to meet the true God, not the one we have made in our own image, but the one who has made us in *his* image? In the Bible, of course. And that's where we go so disastrously wrong. We don't *read* our Bible. And when we do, we

find that the scholars have altered it. God didn't *really* part the waters of the Red Sea for Moses and the fleeing Israelites. God didn't *really* become man in Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus didn't *really* feed the 5000 with five loaves and two fishes. He didn't *really* walk on the water to get to his disciples in distress. Jesus didn't *really* rise from the dead. You see, all the time we are rewriting the Bible to make God *small*, to make him compatible with our very limited human understanding. We are making God in our image. Our God is too small.

But if you listen to what the Bible *actually* says, you will meet a truly *almighty* God, who blows our minds. This is an almighty God who *can* walk on water and who *can* raise the dead. We need to up our game, and get rid of this snivelling, pathetic thing we think is God. Jehovah is a God of miracles, a God who is able. I want to hear people stand up to give their testimony of how they have personally experienced God's *power* in their lives. Let's have less of God *moralising* at us, and more of his *power* in our lives. He's a God who can *do* stuff.

Well, you say. *If* he really is a God who is able, why did he not stop the slaughter of the trenches in WW1? Why did he not stop the slag heap falling on the Primary School at Aberfan in 1966 killing 116 children? These are huge questions and all I want to say today is this: if God intervened every time to stop a bullet striking someone or to move the steering wheel to stop a drunk driver killing someone, we would be robbed of our freedom and evil would not be seen for what it is.

So, if God is able, why did he not stop the religious leaders and Romans killing Jesus? Why did God not stop my baby

from dying? Surely we prayed hard enough for him to live?

And here we come to a very curious thing. In my experience, the people who complain most about God allowing terrible things to happen are usually the ones who have never actually suffered anything terrible. It's the people like me and Laura who still look to God as an almighty God. Ah, they say, that's because we're too stupid to see the contradiction, or so weak that we need God as a crutch. Well, I'm many things, but I'm not thick and I'm not weak. A weak person wouldn't have survived what we have had to go through and still be smiling.

One thing Laura and I are absolutely convinced of is that our baby Edgar was a miracle. God is a God who is able. Why he was taken from us we don't know this side of eternity. But the clue in our text from scripture is the little word 'more'. 'He is able to do far, far *more* than we ask or imagine'. (The word in Greek is very emphatic). We know God our heavenly Father loves us with a love wider and longer and deeper and higher than we can realise. He knows about our situation, as he knows about yours. And he *is* able. He is an *almighty* God, a God of miracles. If he can turn Jesus's death into the means of saving the world; if he can raise Jesus from the dead, he can help *you*. He can walk on water to get to you in your storm. He doesn't just do what we ask. That would be just sorcery; abracadabra! God is able to do *more* than we ask. What Laura and I asked for was limited, but he sees the bigger picture. We believe him. And he is able to do for us far *more* than all we ask or imagine. So we wait for his blessings, and we know that he will not disappoint us, because he loves us and is able.