

Exceeding

Among the many wonderful virtues of the true, eternal, and living God is that He is exceeding. We might be inclined to think of the word “exceeding” merely as some ordinary adverb or adjective. But in Scripture, ‘exceeding’ is a perfection of God. God exceeds in everything (except sin and unrighteousness, of course). And although Scripture applies “exceeding” to many different things and activities, it also makes clear that ultimately only God is exceeding. Whatever or whoever else Scripture may call exceeding is always exceeded by God Himself. Whereas nothing can or does exceed Him.

The word “exceeding” is akin to our superlative suffix –est. It describes something of outstanding quality, beyond measure or limits, to the extreme, maximum, or that which surpasses all others. So the waters of the flood prevailed exceedingly upon the earth (Gen. 17:9). The fornicating men of Sodom were exceedingly sinful before the Lord (Gen. 13:3). At Sinai, the trumpet calling the people to meet God was exceedingly loud (Ex. 19:16). And Solomon was exceedingly wise (I Chron. 2:22). But when describing God, “exceeding” refers to His absolute superiority, greatness, and even infinitude. Although the term “infinite” appears only three times in Scripture (and only once with the meaning we usually associate with it), God is indeed infinite (B.C., Art. 1). And His infinitude is clearly and repeatedly taught by this word “exceeding.”

Although God is exceeding in everything He is and everything He does, Scripture directs our attention to two particulars. First, God exceeds in grace. Scripture says the grace of God is exceedingly abundant with faith and love in Christ Jesus. And we are directed to pray for this exceeding grace of God in us (II Cor. 9:14). Secondly, God exceeds in might. The apostle Paul prayed that the church might know the exceeding greatness of God’s power and know what makes this power so exceeding. And what especially makes it so exceeding is not simply that it is inexhaustible, but that God uses His power for our benefit (Eph. 1:19), it is the only power by which we believe, and God uses it to show us His exceedingly great love and the riches of His kindness toward us through Jesus (Eph. 2:17; 3:19).

The apostle Paul also teaches that God’s power exceeds even all that we can ask or think (Eph. 3:20). Think of any power—muscular, creaturely, nuclear, electrical, gravitational. God’s power exceeds it. Think of how God has used His power in the past—to create all things in six days by His Word (Rom. 1:20); to move holy men of old to speak (and write) His Word (II Pet. 1:21); to send His only begotten Son in our flesh

to die for our sin and be raised up again (Luke 1:5; Rom. 1:4). God's power exceeds all that. Think of how God uses His power now to uphold and govern the universe, to maintain the stars in their courses, to send forth continual heat from the sun, and to establish or overthrow nations. God's power exceeds that. And now think of all we could possibly ask God to do with His power—to save and sanctify us from sin; to help us in any distress and adversity; to overthrow any sin and even Satan in this world; to perfect all things in the everlasting kingdom of Christ. God's power exceeds all that too.

Scripture also reminds us that God is exceedingly generous. Our Lord's beneficence is exceeding because essentially what God gives is Himself. So He said to Abraham, "I am...thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. 15:1). His covenant promise, therefore, was not simply to bless this father of all the faithful, but to do so exceedingly, both personally and in his generations. Explicitly God said, "I will multiply thee exceedingly; I will make thee exceedingly fruitful; and I will multiply thy seed exceedingly" (Gen. 16:10; 17:2, 6). And being exceedingly faithful to keep His promises, God made the children of Israel exceeding in might (Ex. 1:7), gave them an exceedingly good land (Num. 14:7), and ruled them by exceedingly honorable and glorious kings (I Chron. 19:25; II Chron. 17:12). Jesus, however, exceeds them all and in every way.

In Jesus God gives. He gives with exceeding power, grace, and generosity. He gives far above all that we can ask or think. By the exceedingly gracious working of His exceedingly great power, God through Jesus Christ adopts us as His children and heirs with Abraham. He gives to us exceedingly great and precious promises that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature (II Pet. 1:4). The result is that although at times we might fear exceedingly (Matt. 17:24), He gives us a faith that grows exceedingly (II Thess. 1:3). Although we might tremble exceedingly before His presence (Heb. 12:21), He also makes us exceeding glad with His countenance (Ps. 21:6). Times of exceeding sorrow (Matt. 26:22), He turns to exceeding joy (Ps. 43:4). If reviled, persecuted, and spoken against falsely, we rejoice exceedingly, for great is our reward in heaven (Matt. 5:12), and our momentary afflictions work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory (II Cor. 4:17). Although we often faint, we can pray exceedingly (I Thess. 3:10). And although by the commandment sin becomes exceedingly sinful to us (Rom. 7:13), so also by His justifying grace and sanctifying power each believer can say, "My soul has kept thy testimonies and I love them exceedingly" (Ps. 119:167). Therefore, unto Him that is exceedingly able to keep you from falling and present you faultless before His exceedingly glorious presence with exceeding joy; to the exceedingly wise God our

Savior, be exceeding glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen
(Jude 1:24-25).