

God Can Deliver

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[0 : 00] Amen. Tonight I'm going to have you just look at a passage of Scripture that actually I have!

Ephesians chapter 3 verses 20 and 21. You can open your Bibles to that if you want to since I didn't give you any notes with the Scriptures printed on them.

Ephesians chapter 3 verses 20 and 21 and as soon as you find it you're going to recognize it. It's very, very, one of those popular verses, a couple of verses.

So I'm going to just give you more of a kind of a devotional on this passage. If you might look in your Bibles, if you have it open there, there's another portion of chapter 3 that is also one of my favorites and it is the petitions that Paul lifts up in prayer.

There are four petitions that you'll find in verses 16 through 19 in that chapter. I'm not going to read through those. But it's, I think, interesting to note if you look just before those petitions in verse 14, you see that he says, for this reason I bow my knees to the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ.

[1 : 41] Then he goes into these petitions, these prayers. All right, so there's Paul pray. This is what he's about to pray. And then when you look at our passage that we're going to be focusing on tonight, you have these words, now to him who is able to do.

And then on from there, we'll look at each part of it. So these four petitions, this is important to note, these four petitions, great petitions that Paul lifts up and we're assuming is a part, very much a part of his regular prayer life as he prays for the people of Ephesus, prays for Christians in Philippi, prays for Christians in Corinth, prays for believers in all the churches that God used him to plant. As he lifts up these petitions, he begins by saying, I get on my knees and pray these things. And then after he gives the petitions, then he says, and my God is able, able to do, able to do.

So he's praying and he is testifying to the truth, the wonderful truth, which is the basis of his confidence that all that he prays for, and these are some pretty powerhouse petitions actually. All that he prays for, he is confident that God can do, God can do. And, you know, God can do and answer not just these petitions, but anything that we lift up to him.

[3 : 14] So it's just, I think, a great lesson on prayer and a testimony to the kind of confidence that we all need to have as believers, regardless of what it is we're praying for.

That our God, if I could read the passage now, is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.

To him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. It's a wonderful way to end prayer time. And perhaps we would even do well to maybe use those thoughts, those truths, even these very scriptures in our own prayer.

Great way to close our prayer time. God is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all that we should ever ask or think for his glory, of course. All right.

So you have the petitions sandwiched between those two statements. And these petitions, again, they're a tall order. But then so are some of our petitions.

[4 : 28] Some things we pray for here tonight for some of the people in our prayer list that have horrendous health issues. You know, we sometimes will catch ourselves if we're honest with ourselves and we'll pray for some of these things or maybe for someone that we know who, say, has cancer.

And it's reached a level where, you know, like with Josh, it's been sent home. You know, there's nothing that can be done. You might catch yourself, if you're honest, thinking, well, I'll pray for that, but I don't really believe it'll happen.

Have you ever caught yourself doing that? I pray for some huge thing. And yet, inside, you have tremendous doubts that God will actually do that.

I don't think that we doubt that God, somehow that God is not able to. We doubt quite often that maybe God is just not willing to do that. So we have all kinds of thoughts like that.

But what we ought to be stalwart about is a confidence that God is able to do exceedingly above what we ask or think.

[5 : 42] So God can deliver. That's kind of the title of my little study, the title of devotional. God can deliver. And you can either, depending on where your confidence is, you can either put an exclamation mark after that or a question mark.

And if a question mark, you know, then we need this lesson to give us, once again, a confidence that God is able to do all things.

And so what I want to do tonight with this passage, something very simple, and that is just take it a piece at a time, almost a word at a time.

Because, you know, you really do need to do this with all Scripture. You know, where you take it word by word by word, because every word has tremendous meaning.

And then there are, I mean, you can do that with any Scripture. But there are some Scriptures like this one that just really lend itself to that, where if we will take it, you know, a phrase at a time, a chunk at a time, or as the verse develops and more is added to it, because that really does describe this verse.

[6 : 59] It's kind of like God piling on here. God is able. He's able to do. Not just to do, but He's able to do all that we should ever ask or think.

He's able to do abundantly, exceedingly above all we should ever ask. It just kind of piles on as you take the verse. And so, if we want to do the verse justice and get all we can get out of it, then let's take it kind of a chunk at a time.

So here's how we begin. Now unto Him who is able to do. That's a good place to start. He's able to do. He's not just simply able.

He's able to do. So this brings activity into it. A confidence that God is able to work. He's not hindered in any way.

He's able to do. He's able to work. He's not idle. I really, you know, we have to guard ourselves, I think, from time to time in our lives, our spiritual lives, because maybe there's a long span of time between when we clearly experience God answering a prayer to when He did the same again.

[8 : 21] You know, sometimes there's just seasons where we don't really see God working. Or we don't acknowledge that He is. You know, we know from Scripture that God is at work all the time, all around us.

And we should assume that. But to be alert to it and see it and experience it. You know, sometimes we have long seasons of time that will go by.

And we might find ourselves getting a little complacent. We might even begin to entertain the thought that, well, you know, God is there, but He's, you know, kind of letting things go the way they are.

Maybe He's not as involved in things as we thought He was, but hope He is. But this passage teaches us that God is able to do. He's not inactive.

He certainly is not dead. He is not idle. And whether or not we're, you know, able to see it all the time doesn't change the reality.

[9 : 31] He's able to do. He's not hindered. I preached, oh, several years ago out of the last verse of the book of Acts.

And you might not remember that. But what's interesting about the very last verse of the book of Acts is that it ends with the word unhinderedly. And it's on purpose.

We wouldn't end a sentence with unhinderedly. That wouldn't be good grammar. But it punctuates the reality that as you read through Acts and you read about all that God did, really, as you start with the Gospels and read about what Jesus did over and over again, the activity of God as God in the person of the Son was here on this planet.

And then you get into Acts and you see what God did through the apostles and other disciples. And it just progresses through that. And then the book ends with that word unhinderedly.

It means God is not finished and God keeps working. God is able to do. All right, let's take it a little further or at least add another element of this.

[10 : 41] I mean, this is all very simple to see. He is able to do what? All that we ask. All that we ask. He's able to do all that we ask.

We could even translate it this way. In fact, I think some versions do translate it this way. He is able to do what we ask. And that even adds a little bit of a different element to it.

Whatever you ask, he's able to do what we ask. Our God is a God who hears our prayers. And contrary to what we sometimes think, he's not hard of hearing.

Now, some of us are. In fact, I've noticed hearing loss, you know, over the years. I don't hear like I used to, especially when Sherry's saying something. You know, I just don't hear. That's that selective hearing loss.

You understand that, don't you, Tom? All right. I think I know what you said. But God is not hard of hearing. I remember a little story.

[11 : 44] It was kind of amusing to me about a little boy. And it was getting close to Christmas time. And he was about bedtime. And Dad was in there praying with him.

You know, it was kind of his nightly prayer before he goes to bed. And so he and his dad are kneeling there at the bed. And the little boy's praying. He prayed for this and that.

And then suddenly his voice got real loud. He said, and give me a new bicycle for Christmas. You know, real loud. And amen. And his dad said, you know, son, God is not hard of hearing.

And the little boy said, I know, but Grandma next door is. So, you know, we sometimes, you know, we'll change something in our voice, the inflection of our voice, maybe even get a little louder.

We just call out. I guess it's okay. You know, sometimes we're just in distress, emotional. And it's a deep, deep need or big, big need that we have. We may lift our voices a little louder.

[12 : 56] But, of course, God is not hard of hearing. And our God is a God who answers prayers. So he's able to do. So he's always active, always working, not idle.

He may wait. And we may have to wait on him. But he's not idle. And he's able to do all that we ask. All that we ask. Third, he's able to do all that we ask or think.

That's kind of interesting to add that to this truth. Ask or think. I mean, we don't always put everything in words.

In fact, I would say sometimes we're not even able to put it in words. And so we have the thought, really, to say I have a thought or what I'm thinking really expresses a deep kind of emotional need that I have.

And I can't express it in words. Or maybe I haven't yet expressed it in words. There are all kinds of implications to this.

[14 : 06] Either I don't know how to put it in words. Or maybe it's a need I have that I haven't really been able to define.

I just sense an emptiness or something. And God, you know, there's a yearning in the heart that can't even define it. And yet God knows. And he's able to do not only what we ask, but even what we think.

What we're meditating upon. What little kernel of thought is in our minds he's able to do that. And I think I would add to that he's even able to do what we don't ask.

And even what we're not thinking. But it is what we need. And God is able to do that. Sometimes we have something in our hearts and we're afraid to ask God for it.

You know, maybe it's something that we're not quite sure if it's even scriptural. Maybe we're not quite sure if it's even right to ask it.

[15 : 15] And, you know, and so we may struggle with that. And that's why Bible reading is so important. Bible study is so important as a combination prayer. Because some of those questions that we have, whether or not that we even have the right to ask a certain thing, can be answered when we read scripture.

But God is able to do all that we ask or think. As we take it a step further, and, you know, kind of going back and picking up a word that I bypassed for a time.

And that is he is able to do all. All that we ask or think. All that we ask or think. Is there anything too hard for God? We know there's nothing too hard for God.

We know that, don't we? I mean, just try to name something that's too hard for God. And my thought is, you know, at least I think this is one of my struggles.

For me, it's not always the issue of whether something is too hard for God. I know there's nothing too hard for him. But maybe the issue is, maybe it's just not significant.

[16 : 38] Not important. You know, some little thing. Or we think it's a little thing. And we maybe tend to think that God, maybe that's just too little.

Maybe it's just something where God says, I'm not going to answer that. You know, it's not important. And we know that can't be true. I remember, I quote Adrian Rogers so many times. You might think he's the only preacher I've ever known. But he used to say, and it's just common sense. If it's important to you, it's important to God. And so no matter how insignificant it may seem. So he's able to do all we ask. Remember Mary, the mother of Jesus, when the angel informed her that she would be with a child.

And the child was of the Holy Spirit. And all of that passage, all of what the angel said. And Mary's first reaction was, how can this be possible?

[17 : 45] Well, with man, it is impossible. With God, nothing is impossible. And the rich young ruler also thought about that particular passage. And though, you know, we tend to think about the problems with the ruler, you know, that he went away sad because he was a very wealthy man.

Jesus said, you know, sell everything you have, give it to the poor and follow me. Take up your cross and follow me. And he walked off and didn't get Jesus that day. And the disciples made the comment, you know, who can then be saved?

And Jesus said, well, with God, all things are possible. So with God, it's possible. Only with him. All right, so he's able to do all that we ask or think.

Let's take another step. As the apostle Paul piles on here, he's able to do above. I kind of skipped over that word earlier.

He's able to do above all that we ask or think. Above, that means more than. More than we ask.

[18 : 53] You know, his expectations. You know, the outcome of what we're asking and needing are always higher than ours.

And, you know, we ask for a certain thing and maybe we really sold ourselves short. We didn't ask for all that we should have asked.

God's expectations way up here or his plans way up here. His purpose is a way up here. And what we need to try to do is match our prayers with the bigness of God.

He's able to do more than. Way more. We'll get to the way more here in a minute. Someone said, you know, what we need to do is dream big. You know, I just don't think we naturally do that.

I don't know why. Maybe for a number of reasons. We don't have big dreams when we bring big requests. We think, well, God's not going to give me that. Not necessarily that we think he's unable.

[19 : 57] He just doesn't. He's unwilling to do that. I mean, I couldn't ask for that. But we need to dream big. I remember a story that was told. Actually, it was apparently a dream that a man had had.

And he dreamed that he died and went to heaven. And, you know, as many of those kind of dreams go, he's, you know, walking the halls of heaven and walking by rooms.

And, you know, Angel Gabriel's leading along the way. It's always kind of that scenario. Angel Gabriel's taking him on a tour of the mansions of heaven. And he walks by and looks in a room and there's just all of this stuff piled in there and dust caked on the top of it.

And it's kind of like it's been sitting there for centuries and centuries. And walked a little further in another room just like that. Another one. And he kept seeing all these rooms full of stuff that looked like they'd been there for centuries.

And he finally asked the angel, what is that? Well, those are all, he said, those are the things that God wanted to give his children, but they never asked for it. Now, that's not theologically correct.

[21 : 13] Okay. But it does maybe illustrate a reality that God desires to give us so much more than we ever asked for. And we need to ask.

Now, God can always say no. And he can always say you don't need that. Not really. I have another plan, another purpose. But that doesn't keep us from asking because he's able to do more than.

In fact, that leads us to the next part of that. He's able to do exceedingly abundantly above. It's not just simply above, but exceedingly abundantly.

That's why I said that this is one of those verses in the Bible that lends itself to really examining every word because it's packed full of superlatives.

And that's what this is. In fact, exceedingly abundantly, those two words in the English text really just come from one word in the Greek. And it is a, this word is meant to be what they call a superlative, but it's really a super superlative.

[22 : 21] Okay. And we could translate it immeasurably more. That's really the idea. You can't measure what God can do.

You know, when you ask in what God gives you according to what you ask and even think. It's immeasurable. Vastly, in fact, vastly more than more. I don't know what more than more would be. I mean, that's, that's redundant. But that's the nature of a superlative. And in this case, a, what we would call a super superlative. It measures more, more than more God is able to do. And according to his grace.

In fact, God's grace doesn't have any limits. I was thinking about that reality, that truth, and thought of a hymn. And I could remember the title of it.

[23 : 19] The title of it is, He Giveth More Grace. It's always been one of my favorites over the years. We never sing it because it's not in our hymnal. In fact, I looked at, I have in my library a number of hymnals, old hymnals, kind of, you know, the Broadman hymnal and the old Baptist hymnal and the, oh, I always grin at this one, the modern hymnal.

And it probably was written back in the 40s. I don't know what's modern about it now. But it was when it first came out, you know. So I'm looking at all of these various hymnals, trying to find this hymn. And I couldn't find it until I finally picked up the hymnal of worship and celebration.

I don't know how I got this. It's from the first Southern Baptist church. You know, I probably stole it, actually. You know, we laugh about that. But hymnals were one of the most stolen things in the church.

Probably not as much anymore because most churches don't even have hymnals anymore. And we still have them, but we don't use them. But anyway, He Giveth More Grace. Are you familiar with this hymn?

Never. I know Sherry is because she has sung it a number of times. And sometimes by request, I've asked for it. And it's really, you know, very short. But let me read it to you.

[24 : 35] And then maybe you'll recognize it. He giveth more grace when the burden grows greater. He sendeth more strength when the labors increase.

To added affliction, He addeth His mercy. To multiplied trials, His multiplied peace. Then the second verse, and I'll give you the refrain here.

Remember the second verse. When we have exhausted our store of endurance, when our strength has failed, ere the day is half done.

I mean, it's failed before the day is over. When we reach the end of our hoarded resources, our Father's full giving is only begun. And then the chorus is my favorite part.

His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power has no boundary known unto man. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

[25 : 36] I love that. You recognize now when I, especially the refrain, this is a tremendous hymn. But it really, I think, punctuates a tremendous truth.

That God's grace has no limit. He is able to do abundantly above all we should ask or think.

His infinite ability. And then that leads us to the latter part of it, according to the power that works in us. That's a power that works in us.

It's not our power, of course. It does all this according to a power that resides in us. And that's the Holy Spirit. The presence of God in our lives.

And then finally, let's pray unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world, without end. Amen. So, it's all for His glory.

[26 : 38] Just in case, I think the Holy Spirit is saying, just in case as you read this, that somehow, you know, just in case you start looking inward and becoming self-consumed by this great truth, let's just remember it's all for His glory.

All for His glory. To the church, in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world, without end. Amen.