

Introduction: Pg. 977 - - Two weeks ago Marsha and I went to a conference called Refresh. The two primary goals of the conference was to provide an opportunity for spiritual renewal and to call for gospel renewal in our churches and cities. When gospel renewal that begins to run through a large group of people, the dynamics are in place for us to experience what many have called “revival” through the years. These are seasons of the clear and powerful work of God on a widespread level.

As the days drew near for us to go, we were asking God to speak to us right what we need to hear. Though we had received much encouragement from the teaching and had jotted down a lot of notes to remember and pray through, I did not necessarily sense an ah-ha moment. That was until during a time of prayer after the final message of the conference.

I felt compelled to get down on my knees. It was easy since I was sitting on the aisle, and as I began to pray that God would give me a greater sense of desperation to see a move of his Spirit in my heart, in our church, and in our city, God spoke to me, not with audible words, but just as powerful by his Spirit and said:

“Tanner, you are pretty driven, but you are not very desperate.” In that moment, I asked God to make me a desperate man.

What does it mean to be desperate?

- It is to want something so bad but see the answer lies beyond you.
- It is to be on a desert journey and to have just sipped your last drink of water.
- It is to resolve to do anything, however extreme the measures, to see that you obtain that for which you are desperate.
- When we are desperate, we feel a deep measure of impossibility and then turn to the one who has the power to conquer impossible.

T: This morning I want us to feel the impossibilities that surround us and I want us to take it God. Ephesians 3:20-21 is going to teach us about . . .

“God & Your Impossible” Ephesians 3:20-21

Would you read *vv. 20-21* with me?

What is happening here? Paul is putting an exclamation point of praise in light of what he just prayed and what he has just shared with the Ephesians in the first three chapters. Not only did Paul explain their identity in Christ, but he has reminded them how God made them alive when they were once spiritual dead, but he doesn’t stop there. He goes on to pray in 3:14-19 that God would “strengthen them to know [his] immeasurable love, so that they might be just like [God].”

If that does not amaze us, then we probably fail to understand God’s holiness, glory, and infinite perfection. You see that? Paul is praying for an impossibility apart from God’s immense grace. It is very hard for us to realize what a miracle it is to be like Jesus, but that is exactly what God is doing in us.

This is why Paul praises God, not in generic terms, but specifically for his ability to perform the impossible. “Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. . .”

T: I want us to look deep inside of our own hearts and answer three questions today as we work our way through this text.

I. Do you believe in the power of God to work beyond your imagination? (3:20a)

Let's break this down phrase by phrase: God is able.

- God is powerful. Whenever we are tempted to question if God can do it, we should remember we are talking about the God who spoke the world into existence and keeps 1 billion trillion Stars in the sky burning for as long as he wants them to burn.
- **"Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases." (Psalm 115:3)**
- This should drive us to pray. There is an inseparable connection between our knowledge of God and the intensity of our prayers.
- Let me put it this way: I don't go to my **3 year old** and ask for some spare change. She's **permabroke**. Permanently broke. If I need some \$\$, I go to my sugar momma. You got \$2, I'm thirsty. :)
- When I need my heart moved, your heart moved, the heart of my friends who don't know the joy of Jesus, I'm not asking you for help; I'm turning to the throne of grace, "to him who is able."

T: So what does Paul say about God's ability?

1. God is able to do *"far more abundantly."*

- God is a God 'of super-abundance.' Paul has coined here in verse 20, what scholars call a "super-superlative." He stretches his handle on the Greek language to tell us that: we can never ask too much!
- Some have translated this as: "Vastly more than more" or "Infinitely more."
- So put that in your notes, underline it in your Bible, and evaluate your life and prayers by it. I hope this statement makes us uncomfortable.
- Here's what I mean: our tendency is to box God in. I really think God will work like this. God can do this but not that.
- Lloyd-Jones says our greatest sin is "limiting the absolute God according to the measure of our minds."
- We need God to give us faith that he is able. That's why Paul goes on and says . . .

2. God is able to do far more abundantly *"than all that we ask or think."*

- From the smallest detail in life to the biggest challenges and opportunities, God's ability to give exceeds our ability to ask or imagine what he is capable of.
- We should not pray; then step back and wring our hands wondering if God can do it. HE CAN DO IT!
- When we peer into the glory of God and the power of God, we should have ultra-confidence.
- It's okay to be a little cocky for God. Not cocky in who we are, but a little spiritual swagger because Jesus is runnin' this thang. In prayer, we invite Jesus into the equation, and he shows up and says, "I got this."
- Can I ask you some questions?
 - How daring are your prayers? How audacious?
 - Do you live your life with great faith or microscopic faith?
 - Some of you might say, it's decent but I want to be great. Some of you might say, it's microscopic but I want it to increase. Good, let's pray for it. "God, we believe, help our unbelief."
 - God is calling us to live with great faith!
 - **A. W. Tozer** said this: **"Pseudo-faith always arranges a way out to serve in case God fails it. Real faith knows only one way and gladly allows itself to be stripped of any second way or makeshift substitutes. For true faith, it is either God or total collapse."**

T: Let me share a story from the Old Testament that gives us a picture of desperate prayer. Turn to 1 Kings 18 or follow along on the screen: I'm going to break this down as we go.

Story of Faith: Elijah (1 Kings 18:41-46)

- *Look at Verse 41:* Why is this a big deal? Because it had not rained for three and a half years (that's 1,278 days!)! And if that isn't big enough for you, we are going to discover that there was not a cloud in the sky!
- So when Elijah says: "I hear the sound of rushing rain." Ahab and his servant must have thought he was a mad-man!
- Desperate times call for desperate measures. Check . . .
- *Verse 42.* Do you see this picture? On the ground with his head buried between his knees. You really can't get lower than that. (Hey, did anyone get on their knees last week? You didn't regret it did you? Me neither. Can't wait for this week!)
- *Now 43.* Elijah: Go, look toward the sea. Servant: Nothing. Elijah: Go again. Servant: I got nothing. Elijah: Again: Still Elijah, "there is nothing." A fourth time, A fifth, a sixth. Does that take some faith? Does that take some earnestness, some boldness, some audacity. Your head is buried between your knees and nothing is happening...
- *Verse 44 (-46).* I can just picture Elijah when his servant returned and said: "A little cloud is rising from the sea." He starts shaking his head: "Yep. That's my God. My God is able."
- God wants to know if we are desperate enough to smell the carpet, desperate enough to make our knees ache, desperate enough to return a 4th, 5th, and 6th time?
- Does anybody see a cloud in here this morning? We would have never moved here to start a church in Medford, if we did not see a cloud. We wouldn't be ordering 15,000 mailers and 10,000 invite cards for Easter if we didn't see clouds in this city.
- Let's be moved to desperate prayer. Let's do away with alternate routes and pseudo-faith. Cast everything on God. He is able. P

T: Now . . . Does this kind of faith remove us from the equation? No! It compels us to action. True faith casts everything on God *and at the same time*, recognizes he uses us in the process. So here's question #2...

II. Are you willing to allow God to display his power through you? (3:20b)

"According to the power at work within us"

- This should cause us to stagger. This amazing power of God is working *within us!*
- Did we read that right? Wow! God's Spirit is "working," actively energizing us for all that he calls us to.
- When we pray for God to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, he looks back at us and says [don't miss this], "You are my instruments. I am going to change you, and then I am going to use you to bring my change to others." Let's take those one by one:

1) "I am going to change you."

- In the words of v.19: "I am going to fill you with my fullness."
- Here's what I want you to do: Identify the one sin you can't shake. What is the one thing change you want God to produce in your heart? Freedom from anxiety? Self-control in your battle against lust? Humility in the place of pride? Diligence in the place of laziness? Kindness in place of impatience and anger? What is it? Do you believe God is able? He says, "I am going to change you, *and*

2) "I am going to use you to bring my change to others."

- Do you believe God can use you to help bring others into the treasure that is following Jesus?
- Man, I'm just telling you: you are shortchanging God and putting him in a box, if you say, "That's not for me."
- Don't miss out on the incredible adventure and blessing it is to be on mission with God.
- I want to challenge you to pray this simple prayer: "**God, what would you have me do?**" It is a dangerous prayer of surrender.

- There was a man who prayed this prayer in the middle of the 19th century, about four hours from here, in New York City named Jeremiah Lanphier.
- God gripped his life to the point that he was desperate to see spiritual awakening come to people in his city. So he prayed: “God, what would you have me do?”
- God answered that prayer by leading him to start a “drop-in prayer meeting” for businessmen every Wednesday from noon until 1:00pm. He created and passed out hundreds of flyers along the busy streets.
- The first Wednesday the clock struck 12:00pm and no one was there. About 30 minutes later the first person joined him, and the meeting ended with 6 people.
- The next week, 20 people gathered. The third week they had 30-40. Those who gathered decided to begin praying daily. On October 14th, over 100 people gathered. It was not long before they were praying in multiple rooms, then multiple locations. It is said that six months later, 10,000 businessmen were meeting daily in New York City, while thousands more prayed in other cities.
- **“God, what would you have me do?”**
- This was part of what some historians have dubbed the Third Great Awakening in America, and today: we are waiting on the fourth.
- I’m saying: why not us? Why not now? Who wants in on that?
- You may be thinking I’m a mad-man, but let’s *not* get caught on the sidelines of a movement of God.
- I’ll be here next Sunday at 7:00am to pray for one hour until our serve teams begin setup. Feel free to join me.
- *“God, what would you have me do?”*

If you are like me, you know you are nothing more than an unworthy instrument in the hands of God. AND YET, if you are like me, you really, really want to see your friends and family and neighbors, and coworkers, and acquaintances scattered across your relational networks come to experience the power of Jesus to make us new.

That is why we put this card in your hands today: **THE LIST** - Story - When we started RHC . . .

- Every one. Reach One. Is that impossible to you? Who is the person that you feel apart from a miracle, there is no way they would come on Easter?
- I want you to grab a pen and put them at the top of your list! For real, like right now!

T: Are you willing to allow God to display his power through you? The Third question . . .

III. Why would we pray and live like this? (3:21)

Verse 21 We are pursuing the glory of God, the fame of God, the praise of God!

- “To him be the glory.” God will be glorified in us, and he will be glorified in his Son.
- To not pray boldly and not live boldly is to fail to give God maximum glory with our lives.
- You may be thinking: What if we pray and he doesn’t answer in the ways we expect? What if he doesn’t answer in the time we expect?
 - He may not choose to answer every request as we desire, but we can trust that he is working to build our faith and glorify himself.
 - And consider this: When we wait for God, we show that we are depending on him, and that brings him glory.
 - **“Waiting on God ascribes to God the glory of being all to us.” - Andrew Murray**
 - Keep praying, keep on going...
 - Give glory to God by your faith-filled prayers and your faith-filled life.

And for How long?

- “Throughout all generations, forever and ever.” From the periods of human life into the ages of eternity. God will receive glory forever and ever.

- And don't miss that last word: "Amen."
 - That's Paul's way of saying: "Let it be." "This is true. "Yes!" He puts his stamp on everything he just prayed.
 - I hope you will put stamp your "yes" on these truths today.

Conclusion:

The Point: God's power should move us to desperate prayer and joyful service all for his glory.

We will put our yes on the table by 1) the way we pray; 2) the way we step out in faith to see God to the impossible.

PRAYER TIME.

- *This morning we are going to do something a little different. We are going to hit pause right here before we sing, and we are going to pray.* Some of you probably already know exactly what you need to pray about. Others are not as sure. For those who would like some guidance.... And if you are brand new to Christianity, feel free to use the prayer we included in the worship guide (Point to the worship Guide);
- So we are going to take about 5 minutes here to pray. You may want to pray right where you are sitting. You may want to kneel where you are. You may want to pray with someone beside you: Would you pray in the following ways:
 - Ask: **"God, what would you have me do?"**
 - **Pray for something in your life that seems impossible.** Ask God for something you desire the most that aligns with his will for your life.
 - What is the one area of your life that needs the transforming power of God?
 - Use your List Card and **Ask God to use you to invite that friend who you feel would never come.**
 - **"God, I pray that every one at Redemption Hill would reach one person for your fame. Give us wisdom, grace, and boldness. Amen."**
 - You might want to pray: **"Lord, I believe, help my unbelief."**

Pray & Sing