

In a SPIRIT *of*
PRAYER

Sermon Growth Guide

May 18, 2025

He Is Able



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He is Able - Ephesians 3:14-21

Key Verse: Ephesians 3:16

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.”

Big Idea: He is Able

Foundations

Ephesus was a jewel among the cities of Asia. It was one of the largest and most famous cities in the ancient world. The Temple of Diana (Artemis in Greek), one of seven wonders of the ancient world, was located in Ephesus as was a small group of Jewish disciples who followed Jesus.

In Acts 19, the story of Paul's time in Ephesus is described in delightful details. It's a must read. Paul begins his time by teaching in the synagogue until Jewish dissidents, opposed to the teaching of Christ, cause him to move to a lecture hall where he continues to teach for two more years. According to Luke, Paul's teachings spread "so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia hear the word of the Lord." Masses of people turned away from the worship of idols and followed Jesus. So much so that the silver-smiths who made the idols of the goddess of Diana caused a riot. That's another story to read also in Acts.

Paul leaves Ephesus and travels a bit more but before heading to Jerusalem, where he risks imprisonment and hardship, he meets again with the elders of the church in Ephesus to encourage and share his love with them. It is believed that the letter Paul wrote, he wrote from prison.

This is the backdrop of the prayer Paul prays for the people of Ephesus. Paul experienced the power and the love of God. He understood the grace that makes the impossible possible, the unmeasurable and unimaginable seen. This prayer that he prays, he is praying throughout all generations. Paul prayed this prayer for us, for our church in CO Springs in 2025. Be encouraged. Be bold.

Understanding God's Word

Read Ephesians 3:14-21 together. Read it in the NIV. Then read it in the Message. What is the power of the Spirit that Paul speaks? Did he experience it his life? Do you experience it in yours? What does it mean to be rooted and established in love? In the Message, Eugene Peterson separates the end of verse 21 into a doxology. What stands out to you about his four last lines?

Applying God's Word

We are learning to pray again. God is able, so very, very able. What deeply matters to you? Tim asks us if our prayer would be answered would it change the world. Would they?. What deeply matters to you? Paul prays that we might "grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Jesus." Lean in. Lean in to the one who is able to do more than we imagine, more than can measure. Pray boldly believing in God's great love for you. Choose to pray one outrageous prayer and share it with your group.

Witnessing God's Word

Listen for God's leading as you pray. Think back over your life and remember God's faithfulness. If you haven't yet signed up for the 40 Days of Prayer, consider it. Definitely mark your calendar for Pentecost Sunday, June 8, when we will encircle our church in prayer.

If you know yourself well, you know there are things you can do and things you can't do. Me, for instance, you can ask me to do a lot of things for you. You can ask me about the Bible, or theology, or the original Greek words of a lot of the New Testament, but if you ask me to explain why the Rockies are doing so bad this year, I'm not your guy. Or who will join the Broncos coaching staff. Not me. Or to describe someone. Abigail and I know a lot of people and run in different circles so I'll say, "Do you know, so and so?" She'll say, "What does she look like?" "Well, she has, you know, hair, eyes...let me find a picture." We are in a sermon series called In A Spirit of Prayer. We are learning to pray again, to live connected to that great power, the God who created us, sustains us and redeems us. What could you ask Him to do? When it comes to God, He Is Able. There is nothing God cannot do. Our God is able to more than you could ever ask or imagine. Do you believe that? Do you pray as if that were true?

I don't. I bet you don't either. We don't pray big prayers. William Carey, the great missionary to India from the 1800's preached, "Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." Do we? We pastors have been reading Tyler Staton's book, "Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools." One of the points he makes early in the book is that we don't really pray bold prayers. He said, look at the last week. What did you pray for? Here is the convicting part. Were they things that would have happened anyway? Were they things that you would not notice if they did happen? If all your prayers were answered, imagine every prayer you prayed was answered. Did the world change at all? "Lord, bless this food. Lord, bless my kids. Lord, bless my church." If God answered all of those prayers, would we even notice?

Paul did not pray small prayers. He wanted the young church plant in Ephesus to know, those who put their faith in Christ, by what Jesus has done for us, we are connected, plugged in,

to the greatest power there is. So, in his letter to them, he prayed. We get here an inside look at the prayers of the Apostle Paul, an internal view of his prayer life. "For this reason I kneel before the Father." (Ephesians 3:14) Do you know, the most ordinary posture for prayer was not kneeling. It was standing. Here's an ancient relief of women at prayer in a synagogue. Paul went to his knees. Years ago, I was in Kenya walking to church with one of the Elders of the Church of the Torch. They typically had one nice suit to wear to church. My friend motioned to an elderly gentleman walking to church and the knees of his suit pants were threadbare and faded. My friend said, "If you want to find a man of God, just check the knees." At the heart of it, prayer is little more than asking God for help. Jesus taught us to ask the Father for our "daily bread." God cares to take care of us. God cares to hear our needs. Paul takes a posture of reverence, supplication and humble request.

But Paul also knows when he hits his knees, he is hitting his knees before the Father of all fathers. There's a play on words in the Greek. The "pater" of all "patria." "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." (Ephesians 3:14-15) This is not an appeal to someone who may or may not be able to make a difference. This is not sending good vibes out in to the universe. Jesus has brought us into the very presence of the Father God, the Almighty God, the very source of all that is and all that ever will be. When you hit your knees before God, you are in touch with a God who is able. Paul prays that they would know and understand that. "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 3:16-17) There is a place inside of you, if you know Christ, there is a place inside of you where God dwells, where God enters. That you may have power through his

Spirit in your inner being, your inner man, your inner woman. Though your outer person might be wasting away, Paul wrote to the Corinthians, your inner person, inner woman, inner man, is being renewed. “Therefore we do not give up. Even though our outer person is being destroyed, our inner person is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16) There’s a space inside of you where God dwells. Do you visit that space? Prayer is taking time in that inner sanctum where God dwells. If God is inside of you, what do you fear from the outside?

“And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:17-19) There’s that word again. Power. Do you think of prayer and power as connected? Paul prays that they, that we, might have power to grasp, to understand, to comprehend something. What is it? The love of God. How wide it is. Wide enough to stretch across all borders and boundaries, to all families under Heaven. How long it is. Long enough to carry on through every turn in life; the longstanding, enduring, faithful love of God. How high it is. High enough it raises the lowest from the depths all the way into the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. How deep it is. So deep you will never find the bottom of God’s love. This is love that surpasses knowledge. Did you catch that? The prayer is that we would know something that is beyond any capacity for knowing; that we might understand something that is non-understandable; that we might grasp something that is beyond grasping entirely. How can we do that? Watch this now. How can we grasp the depth, the power, the fullness of God’s love? You would just as soon hug a sunset, or hold the oceans in your arms. How? Here’s how. God sends His Holy Spirit

into your heart. God comes inside of you. The Holy Spirit is interior, in your heart, so you can feel God’s full love, the love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Trinitarian love, you are pulled into that with God inside of you. “And to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:19) Prayer is knowing; not facts, not ideas. Love. Prayer is knowing the all surpassing love of God who is within you. Again I ask: if God is inside, what do you fear from the outside?

Now here is our verse: “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...” (Ephesians 3:20) Now, hold on. To Him who is what? Who is able. Able to do what? More than we ask. More than we imagine. How much more? Immeasurably more. According to His power that is at work, where? Within us. Within us. God is working within us to change this world. When we pray for God to bring Heaven down to Earth, “on Earth as it is in Heaven,” we are praying that down in us and through us into this world. The interventions God is making to bring about His Kingdom, God is resolved to bring about through you and me, through us, through His church. His power is within us. Are you praying like that?

If God answered every prayer, would it make a difference in this world, in this city? If not, our prayers are too small. Pray big prayers. Not just, “Lord, bless this food,” but “God, according to Your great riches, pour out Your provision on me, on my family, on my church, that we might be an outpouring of generosity to others in Your name.” Not, “God, bless my kids.” “God, I pray, by the power of Your name, that my children would be dangerous, bold, courageous followers of Jesus in this world, bearing Your light into their schools and friendships in manifest ways to the glory of God.” Not just, “Lord, bless First Pres.” “Lord, light this church on fire for Your glory; move

through this great body of believers to make your Gospel known to the lost of this city in every generation; use this church for Your Glory, O God.” Big prayers. Because it isn’t about us. “To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (Ephesians 3:21)

What if we prayed like that? Can you imagine releasing a people on this city who are so confident that God is on the inside, they have no fear of the outside? So rooted in God’s love it overflows freely all around them. So grounded and at peace with the future Kingdom Christ has secured, they pray boldly and courageously to see God move, knowing the battle has already been won. What would that look like? I remember when my friend Hubie on my staff at a prior church—actually, now the Lead Pastor of that church—Hubie threw out his back. I mean, on the couch. Can’t move. Groaning in pain for weeks. He saw doctors, he saw specialists, he was getting shots. Nothing. We called the Elders together, prayed for him on his couch and anointed him with oil. That afternoon he was at the doctor and they realized they were injecting his spine in the wrong place. He got a shot in the right spot. The next day he walked into work. “Woah! What a coincidence! Right after we prayed.” I said. “Tim, you don’t believe that.” He said. “I don’t believe that. We gathered the Elders, we prayed, I was healed.” Amen. Our God is able. He is able. Will He do it? That’s another question. Is He able? Yes.

In this series, we don’t just want to talk about prayer; we want to pray. The Pastors are leading us all on a 40 Day Journey of Prayer. Catch a prayer walk or a Friday fast. Let’s be a praying church. On June 8, Pentecost, just after church, we will circle up and hold hands right around the church and pray for the power of God to come down.

When I first came to Christ through Young Life, someone handed me a Navigator’s pamphlet written by Bob

Foster called “7 Minutes with God.” Little did I know I would one day be the Lead Pastor of his church. It outlines a 7-minute daily office, daily practice of reading and prayer. My leader said, better to spend a little time with God every day than put off a long engagement with God until there’s time (which we all know there never is time), so if you usually set your alarm to 6:30, set it back to 6:23 and spend seven minutes with God. My alarm was set at 6:23 for years. A few minutes in Scripture, then a pattern of prayer under the acronym ACTS. It is a pattern of prayer I still use. ACTS: Adoration, recognizing just who God is; Confession, recognizing just who I am and asking forgiveness for the things I’ve done against God’s law; Thanksgiving, lifting up gratitude for all the blessings God has poured into my life; and Supplication, asking God on my knees for the things I need, or I know others need, and imploring Him to bring His power. I want to lead us in that pattern of prayer now. Let’s pray.