

Week Two: The God Who Has No Limits

January 9-13, 2023



THE GRANVILLE CHAPEL

Sharing Our Lives | Sharing The Gospel

Underestimating God

19th century evangelist, George Mueller, was on a ship from England to Canada to preach at services being held there. Midway through the voyage, Mueller noticed that the ship had stopped. Once he found the captain he said, "Sir, I have come to tell you that I must be in Quebec on Saturday afternoon." The captain explained that they had stopped because of the fog and went on to insist that it would be impossible for them to make it in time. To this Mueller responded, "I have never broken an engagement in fifty-seven years, and I don't plan to do so now. Let us go down to the chart room and pray." Thinking he was crazy, the captain reluctantly went with him to pray. But on the way down he remarked, "Mr. Mueller, you do know how dense this fog is, right?" "No," Mueller replied, "My eye is not on the density of the fog, but on the living God who controls every circumstance of my life." He then went down on his knees and simply prayed, "O Lord, if it is consistent with Thy will, please remove this fog in five minutes. You know the engagement You have made for me in Quebec for Saturday. I believe it is Your will. Amen."

When the prayer was finished the captain thought he should pray as well, but before he could begin Mueller stopped him and said, "Do not pray if you do not believe God will do it. For all the years I have known my Lord there has never been a single day that I have failed to gain an audience with the King. Get up, Captain, and open the door, and you will find that the fog is gone." And so, it was. That prayer not only led to the fog being lifted and Mueller getting to Quebec on time, but it transformed that captain's life for the rest of his days.

As we pray together as a church for God's wisdom and blessing on our plans for the future, we continue to turn to Ephesians 3:20-21 to guide us. Last week, we focused on the first words of those verses: "Now to Him Who is able to do...". This week we come to the next phrase: "far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." This week we direct our prayers to the God Who has no limits.

One thing that we often neglect to consider in our prayers is that the God to Whom we bring our requests has a capacity that exceeds our own capacity for asking. Our God is a big God, and He is a God who can answer big prayers! But how often do we bring our big prayers to him? How often do we boldly go to the throne of grace and ask Him to do so much more than we can ask or think? My guess is that - if you are anything like me - you tend to keep your prayers relatively "small and safe". Your prayers become akin to target practice where you aim small to miss small.

Well, let's try something different this week! Let's pray BIG prayers to a BIG God who "is able to do more far more abundantly than all that we ask or think!" Like the captain from the story above, perhaps our lives will be transformed as well!

Monday, January 9

"You are the God Who works wonders; You have made known Your might among the peoples." -Psalm 77:11

The Wonder-Working God

As we focus this week on the God Who has no limits, it seems right to begin by focusing on those times in Scripture where God has done miraculous things for His people. While we do not have time to rehearse every instance in this space, perhaps some come to your own mind right away. Noah and his family rescued from the flood; Sarah's conception of Isaac in her "advanced years"; God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt; the walls of Jericho coming down; the miracles of Elijah; the resurrection of Jesus. How many more can you think of? Let us remember that, in God's Word, we possess a treasured repository of His wondrous works on behalf of His people. Has God ceased doing such wondrous things for us today? Of course not! He is the same yesterday, today, and always! So, let's take some time today to give thanks to our wonder-working God!

Prayer

"O God, as I think upon all the miraculous things You have done for Your people throughout history, I am both thankful and humbled. I am thankful that you have done these wondrous works; but I am also humbled by my often-present lack of faith, and even hopelessness in Your continued ability to do them. My very life, breath, and being is a wondrous work of Yours! My salvation through Jesus Christ is a wondrous work of Yours! And what You have in store for me, and in store for my church, will no doubt also be a wondrous work of Yours. Please cultivate within me both an eager expectation and a hopeful patience for all that You will certainly do among us. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

What wondrous work(s) of God have you experienced in your life or in the lives of others?

Tuesday, January 10

"With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." -Matthew 19:26

The God of the Impossible

The words of today's Scripture are familiar to us, are they not? In fact, we recently considered these same words in Luke 1:37. There the young, virgin Mary learns from Gabriel that she will conceive the Lord Jesus, and she rightly asks, "How?" Well, the same "how?" is put before Jesus in Matthew 19:26. This time, though, the disciples are responding to Jesus' comments about the narrow road to salvation. "How can anyone be saved?" they ask. His answer is the same as Gabriel's: "with God all things are possible." This is comforting. God is the God of the impossible – the God of the unthinkable – the God of the unimaginable! When we are faced with something that seems insurmountable, it is never insurmountable to God! He is more than able to make a way when there seems to be no way. If we truly embraced this, imagine how different our prayers might be!

Prayer

"O LORD, I want to celebrate that You are the God of the impossible. I rejoice in Your sovereign power that makes You more than able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. So, I come before You now on behalf of my church, The Granville Chapel, and I ask that You give us the wisdom, direction, and resources that we need to carry out our vision for You in this community. You planted this church here, and You want us to flourish as we share our lives and share the gospel with others. While we may not be sure what the years ahead will look like, we long to rest in Your goodness and Your power to bring every plan of Yours to pass. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

Do your prayers match the level of confidence you have in God's power?

Wednesday, January 11

"This is the confidence we have toward Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of Him." – 1 John 5:14-15

Asking According to God's Will

Today's Scripture is revealing. We've considered God's miraculous power, and we've been challenged to pray accordingly, but now it seems that we've come across some "fine print." Did you notice it? Here it is: "if we ask anything according to His will". How can we know if something is part of God's will or not? If it hasn't been made clear in His Word, we cannot know for certain, can we? But we can rest in the truth that, as God's children, we have His Spirit living inside of us. And as we come to Him, we can pray as the Spirit leads us, and we can say in those prayers, "if it is Your will." We can pray, "Your kingdom come; Your will be done." This is not a mere practice in wordsmithing. Done rightly, it is actually a right practice of heart-bending. You see, bending our hearts to God's will is an act of faith. It is our declaration that we understand that only God knows what is best for us - and that whatever He wants for us will be more than enough to satisfy our souls.

Prayer

"Dear God. I freely confess that I often only pray according to my will, while neglecting to seek Yours.. Forgive me and help me to not only bring my requests to You, but to trust that You will respond to those requests according to Your good purpose and plan for me. I also confess that at times I assume that Your will does not include my request. I say 'no' for You, and so, I never ask. Break that habit in me, God, and lead me to pray with bold faith that finds its trust in You alone. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question(s) for Reflection

What prayers are you withholding from God? Why are you doing so?

Thursday, January 12

"If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." -Matthew 17:20

Moving Mountains

It's one thing to profess that nothing is impossible for God. It's another thing altogether to hear what Jesus says here in Matthew 17:20: "nothing will be impossible for you." That is, of course, if it is accompanied with faith. Not arrogant, irrational, stubborn, or selfish faith. No, it's faith that is in accord with Hebrews 11:1 – faith that is certain of God's promise and faith that is confident in God's power. It is faith manifested in prayer – prayer offered in faithful obedience to our Triune God. It is prayer that was once described by pastor and author, E.M. Bounds, as that which "goes by faith into the great orchard of God's exceeding great and precious promises, and with hand and heart picks the ripest and richest fruit" (From "Possibilities in Prayer"). Oh, that we would pray with such faith! May God grant each of us such faithfulness and zeal in our own prayers!

Prayer

"LORD, I long for my prayers, and the prayers of my brothers and sisters, to be filled with faithfulness and zeal. I long to walk with You in faithfulness – in absolute certainty of your promises and absolute confidence in Your power. Where I am weak, make me strong. Where I am timid, make me bold. When I doubt, give me assurance. LORD, I believe; help my unbelief! In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question(s) for Reflection

Are your prayers often too "small and safe"? How might you grow in your prayerful boldness?

Friday, January 13

"Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and feed on faithfulness. Delight yourself in the LORD, and He will give you the desires of your heart. -Psalm 37:3-4

Delight Yourself In the LORD

There is a direct connection between "the desires of your heart" and God's will. It might not always be as obvious as we'd like to admit. But the connection is quite clear in Psalm 37:3-4 above. If we trust in the LORD; if we do good (i.e., what is pleasing to Him according to His Word); if we consider faithfulness to Him to be as necessary as food itself; and if we delight ourselves in Him - in His character and works; then He will give us the desires of our hearts. Not whatever new gadget has caught our fancy or whatever earthly power we covet; no, God will give us what our hearts are already being aligned to: Him. God will overwhelm us with Who He is and all that He has done, is doing and will do. We will know and experience Him as our greatest treasure. It might seem odd to end the week here, but I cannot imagine a better place. For if God truly is the God who has no limits, and if we delight ourselves in that truth (along with all the other truths we've encountered), just imagine what He can -and will - do among us!

Prayer

"Dear God - my God - the God who has no limits. I delight in You, and You alone. I long to be faithful to You and Your Word. I long to live in obedience to You and Your Law. I love Who You are and all that You have done, are doing, and will do for me. Make me more like Christ who said, "my food is to do My Father's will." Help my church to follow You just as I long to follow You. Grant us the desire of our hearts: to have a permanent home in our community. I know you can do it. In Jesus' Name. Amen."

Question for Reflection

What are some ways you can grow in "delighting in the Lord"?

A Closing Thought

In his book, "If God Already Knows Why Pray?" Douglas Kelly shares the story of two elderly ladies living in the 1950s on the Isle of Lewis, off the northwest coast of Scotland. These two ladies had become burdened about the worldliness and spiritual deadness of the island's youth. So, for almost four years they met three times a day to pray. According to one of the community's pastors, Duncan Campbell, the Lord answered those prayers in a mighty and unexpected way.

One Saturday evening, while a large group of young people were gathered in a dance hall behind the local pub, the Holy Spirit moved in power through the place and many souls were broken down and regenerated by the power of God right on the spot. The movement of God's Spirit spread throughout many parts of the island, and large numbers of people were saved over the next few years. The Isle of Lewis has never been the same. And it is thanks to two elderly ladies who believed that God was able to do far more abundantly than all that they could ask or think.

What BIG prayers are you ready to pray - for you and for our church? Let's pray them and let's expect God to do powerful and wondrous things among us!



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