

How to Praise During a Pandemic

Ephesians 4:20-21

Jeremy Cagle, May 24, 2020

Good morning, everyone, and thank you for joining us for another Sunday morning service here at our Grace Fellowship YouTube channel. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jeremy Cagle and I'm the teaching pastor here at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. We're a five-year-old church plant, located in Chilliwack, British Columbia. And like it is with a lot of churches right now, we're facing something we've never seen before. We're facing something that's new to us, and that is the Coronavirus, COVID 19. It is forcing us all to adapt and change and adjust our ministries and one thing we started to do as a church is we're recording our sermons on Saturday night, and we're playing them on Sunday morning for you here online so you can be a part of this with us.

I don't know if anyone's counting this or not, but this is our 11th time to meet like this. This is if you put it all together. This is our 11th time to meet this way over the Internet. This virus started on March 15. And here we are on May 23. Nobody knew that we would be doing this for this long. But that's been the timeline, which is crazy to think about. Because for many of us, this is the longest time we've gone without going to church. This is the longest time we have gone without attending a service. And some of us have gone since we were kids. We've attended church since we were a child, but this is the longest break we've had from that experience. And I just want to let you know that it won't last forever. I want to let you know that there is good news because Lord willing, this will come to an end soon; because the elders and deacons met this past week and decided that since the government is lifting some of the restrictions, it's time for us to do the same. Since they recently said that it's safe for 50 people or so to meet, we want to take advantage of that and start meeting again in person as a church.

And so the way this will work is that starting next Saturday night, we're going to invite anyone who would like to bring your Bibles and come to sit in while the message is being recorded. And we'll make a service out of this, so we're going to have some music. We'll have a time of prayer and a sermon so we can all worship the Lord together on Saturday evening. We only ask that you would let the church office know ahead of time so we can prepare for that. We ask you to let us know by Thursday, if you'd like to come. That way, we won't have more than 50 people show up at a time. We can keep it under that number. And we also ask that for you to stay home if you're susceptible to the Coronavirus. We want everyone to be there, but if you're susceptible to being sick, we want you to be safe. And so we just ask that you would stay home for that. And one more detail is we don't know where we're meeting just yet. The deacons are working on that, but we'll let you know soon. But we're going to meet on Saturday night so we can have the message again ready for the Sunday morning, posting online. But this is exciting stuff. I mean, this is good news because it sounds like things are getting back to normal. Sounds like things are

getting back to the way they used to be; from what I can tell this will come in stages. If I'm understanding what the government is saying correctly, this will not all happen at one time. In other words, we're not going to go back to normal right away. But this is a good, positive step in that direction, and we praise the Lord for that.

A major Christian website recently put out an article on the subject of "Church, Don't Let the Coronavirus Divide You" in which they talked about the tendency for churches to attack each other at times like this. They talked about the tendency for Christians to criticize each other and say, "Why don't you do this?" or "Why don't you do that? Why doesn't your church meet this way?" or "Why doesn't your church meet that way?" And the author of the article summed it up this way. He said, "You know there's a time for the church to do that. There's a time for the church to make a stand, but this is not it. This is not a time for the church to turn on each other and fight. This is the time for us to be at peace. And this is a time for us to show grace to one another. And I think we could add that this is the time for the church to pray as well. This is the time for the church to get on its knees and cry out to God, because this has been a hard time for all of us. This has been very unsettling. And the best way to deal with that is to pray, which is what I want to talk to you about this morning.

So if you would, open your Bibles with me to the book of Ephesians, because that's the book we're in this morning. If you have your Bibles with you, I want to invite you to open them to a book that talks about prayer. It shows us how to cry out to God for help, and that is the book of Ephesians. And if you would turn there with me and just to get us started, I want to read our passage for today with you. It's found in Ephesians 3:1, Paul says this and he writes,

For this reason I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his Holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me, according to the working of His power. To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him. Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

And we're going to read a little more here in just a moment. But as you read the first part of this chapter, you can tell it's a little hard to follow. It is a little bit awkward, but the point is clear. The main idea is clear. And it's found in verse four, where it says, "When you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ... to be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs." That's the theme of this passage. That's what Paul is talking about. He's saying that the Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jews, they're fellow members of the church. Paul has been talking about the church earlier in chapter 2. He's been talking about it earlier in this book, but now he talks about his own personal involvement in it and what he did for the church. And he tells us that he preached to the Gentiles. He explained to them

the mystery – that was his role in the early church. Paul was a Jew, so he had no interest in the Gentiles or the non-Jews before this; most Jews didn't. They kind of despised them, but Paul says that's changed now. Now that is different, because in Christ Jesus, he says, we're all one. And as a result of that, he goes on to pray about it. As a result of this amazing revelation, Paul talks to God and he says this in verse 14, this is how he goes on in the chapter. It says,

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven on earth derives its name, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

That phrase in verse 14, the way he begins that passage, he says, "I bow my knees," which means "I bow my knees in prayer." This is one long prayer from the Apostle Paul. He says as a result of the things that he's been talking about as a result of God, making the Gentiles fellow heirs with the Jews, he says, "I just can't help myself. I have to pray. I just can't help myself, but the prayer just spills out of me." We talked about this last week, but that should happen to you as a Christian. I mean, there should be times when you read something in Scripture, or you read something in the Word of God and prayer just spills out of you. You should make time for prayer. That should be a discipline of yours, but it should also be a compulsion. There are times when the prayer should just flow out of us.

Or another way to look at this is that after saying all this stuff about the Gentiles, after saying all this wonderful stuff about them being made fellow heirs, you might wonder if God can actually do it. You might wonder if God actually has the power to make people like you and me, filthy dirty sinners like us, part of his kingdom. You might wonder if He has the strength to do that. And Paul says He does have the strength to do that. He absolutely has the strength to do that. That's why we pray to Him as well.

If you look in verse 16, he mentions strength and power, and that means the strength to save us and the power to make us one in Christ. He also mentions in verse 19, the love of Christ in the fullness of God, and that means the love that saves us and the fullness that does this. mean not only are you saved, but you're full of salvation. Not only do you have Christ, but it is overflowing in you. Christ is spilling out of you.

That leads to the passage for today; what I want to talk to you about this morning If you look in verse 20, here's what Paul says now and he says,

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

I'll say a little more about this verse in a moment, but this is what theologians call a doxology, or a statement of praise. It comes from the Greek word *doxa*, which means glory. And you see that down in the verse here, you see it in verse 21, because this is a statement of glory. This is a statement of the splendor and the majesty of God. And the only thing Paul could say after saying everything he did in verses 14-19, is that God is glorious. And that's what he does here. This is also called a benediction or a statement of blessing because this is why Paul said this. He put this in here to bless the Lord. He wanted to honor Him for all that He has done for the Gentiles. Some of you grew up in a church where the minister said a benediction at the close of the service; the pastor would raise his hands or just kind of pause for a moment and say a final word in closing, and that's what Paul does here. That's what this is. This is not a closing of the book of Ephesians. This is just a closing of the first half of it. Paul's not finishing the whole book here, but he's finishing this first section; and he finishes it by saying that God can do all the things he's been talking about so far. He finishes it by saying God can do all of the stuff you've been reading about in Ephesians 1-3 because He's able. He has the power to do it.

Friends, you don't serve a weak God, you serve a strong God. You don't serve a small God, you serve a big God; an infinitely big God who can do all that He said. He can keep all of His promises. You know, if you think about it, all this stuff we've been talking about in Ephesians, chapters 1-3, it wouldn't be worth much if God couldn't do this. It wouldn't be worth much if God couldn't deliver on His promises, if He couldn't do what he said; so Paul says here that God can deliver on His promises. God can do this, so you need to praise Him for that. You need to give Him all the glory.

I think if we were honest about it, one of our greatest struggles in the Christian life is that we don't always get this, do we? One of our greatest struggles is that we don't always believe that God can do all these wonderful things in chapters 1-3. Bless us like this, save us like this, redeem us like this, and bring us in because we think we're too sinful. We think we're too bad for Him to

save. We've done too many terrible things. We've committed too many awful crimes against heaven. And friends, Paul says that's foolish because this isn't about you, this is about Him. That's silly, because this isn't about what you have done, this is about what He has done; and He has done more than enough for you. He has done way more than is required, and so you can trust him in that.

This may be why our prayer lives are so weak as well. You know, we talked about prayer last week and the importance of it. But this may be why we spend so little time talking to God and praying at the end of the day, because we don't think He's strong enough. We don't think He can help us, so we say "Why bother? What's the point?" Well, the point is that He is strong enough to help you. The point is that He can do all of these things, more than we ask. That's why we talk to Him. That's why we pray to Him.

You know, when you read the Bible, this is one thing you see over and over again, you can kind of see it on every page that you serve a powerful God. You serve a strong God. You can see it in the titles that the Lord receives, such as the "Most High" and the "Almighty," and the "King of kings" and the "Lord of lords." Those are all titles of power. I mean, God is not just a king, but He's the King of kings. He's not just a lord, but He's the Lord of lords. And you see it in the great events in the Bible. The great stories that are mentioned in here like the creation of the world and the 10 plagues over Egypt. You see it in the flood and the way the Lord stopped the sun in the sky in the book of Joshua. You see it when He killed 185,000 Syrians in one day, and when Daniel was spared from the lion's den and when Jesus walked on water and when the apostle's raised the dead. That's all evidence of the power of God, and it's all given to remind you that this is the kind of God you serve. This is the kind of Savior you have. This is the kind of Lord you cry out to. He can do anything. He's a mighty God.

The great Puritan Richard Sibbes used to say that there is more mercy in Christ than there is sin in us. And we could even say it this way, we could add that there is more power in Christ than there is sin in us. Which is why we're saved. Friends, this is why you are going to heaven. It's because there's more power in Him than there is wickedness in us. That's what we trust in, that's what our hope is in. And that's what we're going to talk about this morning. That's what our passage is about for today.

So this morning, if you're if you're taking notes in Ephesians 3, we're going to look at three things that Paul praises God for in this passage. It's a simple outline. It's a simple text here, although it's very deep, but in Ephesians 3:20-21, we're going to see three things that Paul praises God for, and they all revolve around the idea of power. They all revolve around the fact that God can actually save us. God doesn't just talk about saving us, He can actually do it. He doesn't just talk about forgiving our sins, it can actually happen. It's a very real thing, so you can trust in Him. If you think about it, we live in a world today where it's hard to trust people. We live in a

world where it's hard to believe what people say because they don't keep their promises. They don't do what they say; you see all kinds of evidences for that. And Paul backs up the truck for a minute here, and he says "God can do this. You don't need to doubt what He says, because He is faithful." And we see that with three things Paul praises God for in this passage. The first one is God's sufficiency.

The first thing he praises God for in this passage is the Lord's sufficiency, which means that God is enough to save you. He's enough to bring you into heaven. He's all that you need. You don't need to go to another god. You don't need to go to another Savior. You can trust in this one. And if you read in verse 20 it says this,

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think,
according to the power that works within us.

Just to walk you through this passage, if you notice, Paul starts out with the word "now" here, which means "Now I'm coming to the point of all this, now I'm coming to the main idea of the letter. And this is why I wrote the first couple chapters to you." And he says, "Now to Him who is able." So in other words Paul says, "This is why I'm writing this. This is what I'm telling you. I'm telling you 'God is sufficient to save you.'" The word "able" here, it's a good word, because it's the Greek word *dynameno* from which we get the word, "dynamite." It means power or strength. You see the word power already in the passage, just a few words into it. It doesn't just refer to the ability to do something, but it refers to the strength to do it. It doesn't just refer to the fact that you're competent enough or smart enough to do something, but it means you can actually do it. It means you can actually get the job done. We've all known people who were smart enough to do something, they were they were competent enough; but they couldn't actually do it. For whatever reason, their hands were tied; And that's not what this is referring to. God is not like this, Paul says that he is able to save us in every sense of the word. And just to make sure that you that you get that, to help you understand. He goes on to say, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." So now, not only is God able to save us, but He's able to do far more than that. Not only is He able to do what He said, but He's able to go above and beyond it. And the way this is worded is interesting here because Paul uses so many adjectives to say this, he uses so many descriptions here in one verse.

One commentator said, "When you read this, you can almost picture Paul sitting down with a pen in his hand and saying, 'Let me see, how do I put this? Is God able to do what we ask? Yes, yes He is. He is most certainly able to do what we asked. But that's not enough. That doesn't cut it. So how about this? Is he able to do *beyond* what we ask? Well, sure, yeah, He can do that. No big deal to Him. But that's not enough. So is He able to do *abundantly* beyond what we ask? Yes, but we need more. So is He able to do *more* abundantly beyond all that we ask? Yes, but that's not it either. Is He able to do *far* more abundantly beyond all that we ask? Yes, but I need one

more; one more step. Is He able to do far more abundantly beyond *all that we ask or think*? Yes, that's it.' He says. 'I've got it now.'" You can see how that just builds and builds and builds in this passage. It took him 15 words to say this; 15 different tries to tell you very clearly without a shadow of a doubt without any hesitation whatsoever, God is enough for you. His power is sufficient. He can handle anything, Paul says, anything.

He gives us one of the most powerful statements in the Bible to tell us that. Whatever you're struggling with, God can handle it. Whatever you're going through this morning, He will take care of you because He is strong enough to do it. I told you last week, nothing overwhelms God. Nothing is too much for Him. No prayer requests, no thought you'll ever have, so you need to trust Him with that. To say it another way, kind of tying this into the rest of the book of Ephesians, if you think about it, you know sin is the most powerful thing in the world. And I mean, sin is the greatest force known to man because everybody has it. Everybody's infected with it. Everybody's enslaved to it apart from Christ. I mean, you can beat cancer, but you can't beat your sin. Right? I mean, you can beat the Coronavirus, you can beat some other illness, you might be able to beat something like the struggling economy and the stock market, something like that; but you can't beat your own nature. But Paul says God can. God can beat anything. In fact, He's already beaten sin on the cross. He's already defeated it at Calvary, and so God is the most powerful thing in the world. God is the greatest force known to man. Jesus Christ is so you need to trust in Him.

You know, when I'm flying on an airplane, I don't worry about whether it's going to crash or not because I'm not the one flying the plane. I mean, I don't have the power. I don't have the control, the pilot does. The captain does, so I put my trust in him. It's the same way here. When I'm thinking about salvation, when I'm thinking about eternity, when I'm thinking about the next life, Paul says, "I don't worry about whether I'm saved or not because I put my trust in Him. I'm not afraid of what's going to happen to me because I'm not the one flying the plane anyway; I don't have the power, God does. And I give it all to Him. He is the one in control."

When I was being trained in biblical counseling, I came across the testimony of a doctor who was counseling a young woman who had doubts about her salvation. She couldn't tell if she was saved or not because her past was so bad, and she committed so many sins; she just really had a rough life. And after listening to her for a couple hours, the doctor said to her, "Dear lady, I don't care about your past. The only question I have for you is what do you think of Jesus Christ now? Are you trusting in Christ now?" And he went on to say to her that a patient does not prove their health by checking their pulse all the time. A patient does not improve their chances of living by constantly checking to see if they're alive. They just need to live. They just need to stop thinking about themselves all the time, and it's the same way with this. It's the same way with the Christian life.

Friends, you need to stop thinking about yourselves all the time. If you're a believer in Christ, you need to stop checking your pulse and saying, "Am I saved or not? Am I in or am I out of heaven?" You need to trust in Him; you need to put your faith in Him. The focus is not on you in this passage, the focus is on God. And that's where we should put our attention. I make a point of this because I meet so many Christians who don't get this today. There are so many who don't understand because they're constantly wondering if they're saved or not. They're constantly checking their pulse to see if they're alive, and they're miserable. They're so unhappy. In fact, I've been told that in some circles, this is a badge of honor. In some Christian circles, this is a mark of humility to say that "I don't know if I'm saved or not because I could never be proud enough to think that, I could never be arrogant enough to know for sure that I'm elect." Friends, the Bible doesn't say it's a mark of humility is to say that; it says it's a mark of pride. It doesn't say it's a badge of honor to say, "I'm not sure," it's a badge of shame because you're thinking about yourself all the time. Your mind is constantly focused on your power and your ability and your goodness when you need to be looking at His. Our hope is in him.

The Scottish pastor Andrew Bonar wrote in the 1800s. He said, "Many Christians are disposed to evade the question about their salvation. Some of these even spurn the suggestion that anyone can have assurance on that issue because they brand the idea as arrogance. They believe it's presumption to make such a claim. However, it's not presumption to take something that has that you have been invited to take. It's not presumption to claim something that God has invited you to claim." And that's what we've done here. That's what Christians do. We're simply taking something God has invited us to take, we're claiming something He's invited us to claim. Friends, there is an open invitation to this, the offer's on the table. We simply take it in faith.

Which leads us to the next part of this verse. It leads us to the next thing that Paul praises God for in this passage, and the first thing is His sufficiency, which means that he praises God for being enough for us. We don't have to worry if we've done enough, we don't have to worry if our sins were too much, anything like that. God is enough for us. Christ is enough. That's how he starts off this passage which brings us to the next part of the verse.

A second thing that Paul praises God for and that is His creativity. First he praises God for His sufficiency; and second thing he praises the Lord for is His creativity, which means he praises God for coming up with ways to save us. He praises God, not only for being able to save us, but for finding away when we never could. And if you read in verse 20, again, this is a little bit of a mysterious thing, but I'm going to do my best to explain it to you. If you look back in verse 20, he says,

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.

If you notice, as you read back over this verse, you can tell Paul is talking about two separate things here. He's talking about two separate attributes of God, and one is His power, which we just talked about, His great sufficiency. And the other is His creativity, or His imagination we could say. We don't often think about this, but God is a creative God. He likes to make new things that we've never seen before. It's one of his attributes. It's one of the things that He does. He created the world and the world had never been seen before. He did that. He created a new heart in you when He saved you; that had never been seen before. One day He will create new bodies for us. He will create the new heavens and a new earth. He will create a new Jerusalem. He creates and creates and creates and that's what you read about here. This is one of the ideas in the passage. Paul says, "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." This simply means, Paul is simply saying, God is able to do things that we can't even think about. When it comes to, just follow with me here, when it comes to the issue of salvation, he says God can do things that we can't even imagine. I mean, friends, not only is salvation not about your ability, but it's also not even about your intelligence. It's not even that you got to be smart enough to do it. Paul says here, you're not smart enough. God can do beyond what we can think, which is why we're saved.

I mean, so many times when we pray, you know, we can only think about one or two ways to deal with a problem. We can only think about one or two solutions. And when we're in sin, when we're struggling with our flesh and our evil nature and all these things, it's the same way. We can't find a way out of it. We can't think of a way to help us. Paul says God can; He can think of millions of ways, He can think of billions of ways because He can think beyond all that we can ask or imagine. Paul says you don't even have to ask God and He can help you. You don't even have to think of a way to help yourself. He can come up with one because He's creative. Are you tracking with me here? It's a great passage.

And not only that, if you look at the end of the verse here, Paul says that God never gets tired of doing this, because the end of the verse says this, "according to the power that works within us." And what that means is that God never gets tired of thinking about ways to help us. He never gets tired of contemplating this because He does it according to his great power. You know, if you think about it, you and I, we get tired after thinking about something for 10 or 20 minutes, right? We get tired after praying for four or five minutes. Paul says God never gets tired. He never grows weary because He does it according to His great power. And you see this in creation. I mean, just to think of an example of this. You see it in the way God created the world. He created the world with endless beauty, endless intricacy. He didn't just create a caterpillar he created it with 228 muscles in its head. I looked that up this week. It's wild to think about. You know, He didn't just create an elm tree, but He created an elm tree with 6 million leaves on it just showing His creativity, showing His great ingenuity. And He saves us the same way. He saves sinners with the same amount of creativity and power and beauty. We think about all the different people that have come into the church, all the different souls that God has saved. All of

them with their own story, all of them with their own background. I mean, God has saved murderers, rapists, and thieves. God has saved adulterers, liars, and drug users. He saved the worst types of people, He saved the worst types of sinners, those at the bottom of the barrel, and He's also saved those that society would say are at the top. God has saved legalists and churchgoers. He's saved Pharisees and hypocrites who looked down their noses at everybody. Some of you may have come from that side of the tracks. God broke you over that sin, brought you to repentance. And He was endlessly creative and how He did that. He showed an endless amount of imagination to save people from so many different walks of life, and the point is a God can do all of that. He can save people from all kinds of places because He never gets tired. Isaiah 40:28 says,

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable.

There you see a connection again between God's power and His understanding, between His strength and His mind. God has an inscrutable mind, an endless mind and here's the application to this friends, here's what this means. This means that you may not be able to think of a way out of your problems this morning, but God can. This means that wherever you're at, you may not be able to think of a way out of your sin, but God can. Your trials, your temptations, all that's nothing to Him. That's no problem. So you can trust Him in that as well. You know, so many times when people are struggling with sin, when they're struggling with problems, they like to say, "Nobody gets me. Nobody understands. I'm all alone." Friends, this verse says you're not alone because God understands you. God understands everything. He made you. He created you. He's been with you every step of your life, so He understands, and you can talk to Him. Or they say, this is common as well, "I can't see a way out of this. I don't know what to do. I'm trapped in a corner." Well, you may be trapped in a corner, but God is not. You may be in a cage this morning or you feel like you're in a cage, but He isn't. He knows what to do. He always knows what to do, so you can talk to Him. He will help you every step of the way.

In the early days of a Dallas Theological Seminary, the school was in trouble financially. They were they were almost out of money, so they had a prayer meeting in which one of their leaders H. A. Ironside prayed, "Lord, you own the cattle on a thousand hills, so would you please sell some of those cattle and give us \$10,000. That's what we need. We need that much money, \$10,000 to stay afloat. And after praying that, several weeks later, a cheque arrived in the mail and a note came with it that said, "I don't know if you need this or not, but I'm a rancher. I own a lot of cattle, and the Lord has laid it on my heart to sell some of those and give this to you." It was a check for \$10,000. Now, I'm not saying the Lord always does that in answer to our prayers. I'm not saying He always gives us money or a cheque in the mail, something like that. But what I am saying is that that's nothing to Him. What I am saying is those kinds of things are

nothing to Him. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills; He owns everything. And more importantly this morning, what our passage says is He can save you if you call out to Him. He can save you if you pray.

Which leads to a final point of this verse, it leads to the last thing Paul praises God for here. Just to review these other ones, the first thing he praises the Lord for in this passage, it His sufficiency. Which means he praises God for being enough; God is all you need. He is sufficient for you. And second, he praises Him for His creativity, which means he praises Him for the endless ways that He saved sinners. You know, you may not be able to find a way out of your problems, but God can. He can do beyond what we can ask or imagine. Brings us to one more point to consider for today, and one more thing that Paul praises God for, and if the first two weren't enough, this one's even bigger than that one. And that is His eternality. The third thing, Paul praises God for in this passage is His eternality, which means that he praises God that He doesn't just save us once, but He saves us for all eternity.

God doesn't just do all of these wonderful things in verse 20 in our lifetime, but He does it in the next lifetime, and the next, and the next, and the next. He does this forever. Because He's that kind of God. And if you look in verse 20, just to read the whole text again, it says,

Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Just to walk you through the last verse here and explain this to you, the scholar A. T. Robertson said that this passage is so rich that by the time you come to the end of it, there's nothing more to say. I mean, it's so deep, that by the time you get to verse 21, there's simply nothing more to add to it; so Paul talks about eternity. So Paul talks about heaven here.

Another author calls this Paul's prayer staircase because it keeps going higher and higher and higher as you go. He calls it his doxology ladder that goes up and up and up and up and up until you get to the throne of God Himself. It's where salvation always leads by the way; it always leads to the throne of God. It may start down here on Earth, it may start with your sin and your problems, but salvation always leads to heaven.

And like I said earlier, when Paul says "To Him be the glory" in verse 21. That word is *doxa* in Greek from which we get the word "doxology." It means glory and splendor, but in some cases, it can mean brightness, because that's what Paul is ascribing to the Lord here. That's what he's praising Him for is His brightness in saving us, His brilliance in doing that. We live in a dark world, don't we friends? We live in an ugly world, in a world where oftentimes there's nothing bright about it. There's nothing good to see. Paul says, this is something good to see. This is the

brightness of God in saving us and something he talks about a lot in the book of Ephesians, by the way, and this is something he mentioned several times. For example, back in chapter 1:5 Paul says

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself,
according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

So there Paul says that He predestined us to the praise of the glory of His grace. In other words, He predestined us to show us off to the world to show the brilliance of His grace to anyone who can see. In chapter 1:13 he says,

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

So there the word is again, Paul says we were sealed to the praise of his glory. We were redeemed to that, so the world could see it; so the world could see the majesty of God. And he puts all that together here in chapter 3, he puts all those things from chapter 1 into verse 21 of chapter 3, to say “To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.” Paul mentions the church there because that's where you see these things happening. He mentions the church because that's where you see salvation occur. You don't see it in the world, you see it in the church, so that's where God is glorified the most. He mentions Christ Jesus because these things are seen in our relationship to Him; we're saved on account of what Christ has done. And he says here that this will occur in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever, which means that this is how long this will last. This is how long God will save us – forever and ever. From now until eternity it will never end; our salvation will go on and on and on forever.

Some people worry that they're going to lose their salvation. Maybe they're not asking, “Am I saved or not?” but they're wondering that they might mess up and they'll lose it; but friends eternal life is eternal, and you can never lose it. It didn't come from you anyway, it came from God. And so it's yours forever. He will save you for all generations.

You know, you hear a lot of people say today, a lot of older people, they say, “You know, I'm so worried about my children, or I'm so worried about my grandchildren because I don't know what the world's going to be like when they get older. I mean, if it's this bad now, I don't know what it's going to be like then. If it's this ugly now, I can't imagine how ugly it's going to be 10, 20, or 30 years down the road.” And I tell you, I don't know what it's going to be like either. Nobody does. But I know the One who's going to be ruling the world in 20 years. Amen? I know the One

who is going to be in charge of it. God is and I put my trust in Him. I put my kids in Him, I put my grandkids in Him, because He'll take care of them. That's what this says here. You also hear people say, "I'm so worried for the church as well. I'm so worried for the body of Christ in the next generation of Christians because if it's this bad now for the church, what's it going to be like then? I mean, if it's this ugly now in the church, what's it going to be like, in 10 or 20 years?" And friends, I don't know the answer to that, nobody does; but I know the One who will be ruling over the church as well. I know the One who will be in charge of the church. He will always be in charge of the church and we put our trust in Him. Friends, there's nothing to fear when you read a passage like this. There's nothing to be afraid of because God rules over everything.

You know, it's been said, "I don't know what the future holds, but I know the One who holds the future." That's true. God holds the future and I don't. God holds the future and you don't, so you need to believe and trust in Him. It's also been said, "I have no faith in my faith, but I have faith in my God." I don't believe in my belief. I don't put my hope in that, I put my hope in Him. He will take care of me. He is able.

It leads me to ask a couple questions for you this morning friends, a question that we often ask in our passages on Sundays. But do you believe this today? Do you believe that God will take care of you? In a crazy time like this, do you believe He's able? Do you believe He's sufficient? Do you believe He is creative enough, eternal enough to take care of you? Are you putting your hope in all the things we talked about this morning? Or are you putting your faith in your faith? Are you putting your belief in your belief and in yourself? If you are, I want to tell you this morning, there's no peace that way. I want to tell you today there is no hope in trusting in yourself. You need to trust in him,

You know, to ask this another way, do you read a passage like this and do you say, "Yes, I know that. Yes, I believe that. This is my God; He is able to save me, He is able to deliver me, or are you checking your pulse all the time? Are you constantly wondering, "Am I saved or not?" I ask you that because Paul doesn't want you to do that. I ask you that because God doesn't want you to go around checking your pulse all the time. He wants you to turn to Him. He wants your attention to be focused on Him. He wants you to be so caught up in Him that you can't think about yourself. You can't be looking two directions at once. You can't be looking over here and over there. God wants you to look at Him, and only in Him.

He gave you this passage so you would do that. He gave you this text, so this would be a settled thing for you, so this would be a settled issue. So will you believe in Him today? Will you trust in Him and not in yourself?

You know my studies this week I came across a story of a group of scientists who found a rare flower at the bottom of a deep ravine in the mountains. It was at the bottom of a big cliff. And so they asked if the guide would climb down to get it for them. They asked if the guide would go down to the bottom and retrieve it for them. And he told them to wait for a moment, he told them to hold on for a second while he went away and finally came back and he brought an older man with him. And the guide said, "I will get your flower on one condition, and I will do it if this man holds the rope for me because he's my father. I put my life in his hands and no one else's."

Friends I want to tell you this morning, that's what Paul wants you to do. After you read a passage like this, I want to tell you, this is what he wants you to do with your life. This is what he's asking you to do. This is what he's pleading with you to do. He wants you to put your life in the hands of your Father, and no one else. He wants you to put your life in the hands of Jesus Christ because He will take care of you. He will watch over you because He's able, will you do that this morning? Will you put your life in the hands of the One who can hold on to you forever? Let me close us in a word of prayer.

Heavenly Father, when we come to passages like this, we kind of tremble. And we have to put our hands over our mouths and just say "We're not worthy." We can't even scrap the tip of the iceberg and something like this. And yet, we have to try. Lord, we have to dig deep, so that we can mine what is being said in here so we can dig it out.

Lord, salvation is a deep thing in the Bible. It is not a shallow topic. It is endless. It is eternal. It is infinite. It is glorious, because that's who You are. That's who Jesus Christ is. So Father, I pray this morning as we go out from hearing all of this, that our hearts and our minds would not be shallow on the topic of eternal life.

I pray for our church family. I don't think we've covered anywhere near enough subjects on this. We haven't talked about this from enough angles, but I pray that in some way that maybe we've applied this to the hearts that need to hear what You've said here today. Lord, I pray for our family. I pray for our church, I pray for the church all over the world, anyone who might be listening to this Lord, that they would not be doing all the things we talked about this morning, the negative things, questioning salvation, questioning whether You care for them, questioning whether You're enough, Lord, I pray all that would be a settled thing after they read this text. I pray that their hearts would be set firmly on the rock that you've given us.

Lord, thank You for Christ. Thank You for what He has done, that He has been sufficient. Thank You for Paul, who wrote these words to us and spelled it out for us in clear, unmistakable terms, that You've done everything, and we've done nothing. Oh, Lord, our hope is in that, our joy and our salvation is in that. May we go out today and live in light of this Father. May we have a very firm foundation to stand on this week. Through all the trials and sins and troubles in life.

We thank you for our Savior. We cling to Him, we cling to the cross. We cling to the promises in this passage and in Your word. Thank You for being a big God for us. Thank You for being a God who's bigger than anything we can face this week and this month and this year. We pray this in your name, in Christ's name. May He be glorified. Amen.

Well that concludes our sermon for this morning. If you would like to hear more from us, you can find us on our YouTube channel, just type in Grace Fellowship Chilliwack or you can find us online as well at gracefellowshipchilliwack.com May the Lord bless you and bless your studies in His Word, and have a great afternoon.