

**God Can
Ephesians 3:14-20**

What a wonderful week we had at Vacation Bible School as we went “*To Mars and Beyond.*”

Our task was to help the Starship Galaxion. The Starship Galaxion had been exploring planets beyond our solar system and they overused their ship’s resources and were stranded. Their fuel cells were depleted and needed help to locate the five special elements that would get their starship up and running. So our mission was to find the five needed elements. To do that we had to go beyond our solar system to other planets - Planet Truth, Planet Courage, Planet Love, Planet Praise and Planet Promise. On each of those planets we found a special element - just what the Starship Galaxion needed - and in the process we discovered some keys to what could help us when we are discouraged and struggling.

Our Vector Verse - our key verse of scripture - came from our passage this morning. You heard the children repeat it earlier. “*Glory to God, who is able to do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us!*” Notice that the first key thing is that it is God who is able to do amazing things. You heard the children sing “I can’t do it but God can do it.” And God can do amazing things...just think about the galaxy - the stars and the planets and the whole solar system is a reminder that God’s creativity is amazing. God can imagine things and create things we never thought of. His ability is far beyond everything we can ask or imagine....and yet...God wants us to be involved in his creation. And that is why God sent the Holy Spirit into the world to work within us to enable us to be God’s helpers.

Igor Stravinsky, considered by many the greatest and most versatile composer of the 20th century, is said to also be known for writing extremely difficult passages into his works. There is a story, probably apocryphal, that says one time he created a violin interlude so formidable that a master

violinist declared to Stravinsky that it was impossible to play.

"Of course," Stravinsky replied. "I don't want the sound of someone playing the passage. I want the sound of someone trying to play it."

God is like that. God doesn't just want to see people playing with creation. God want to hear and see each one of us making the effort - even if we sometimes play a wrong note - to be part of creating the world and all that is in it as God imagined it.

The apostle Paul, when writing to the church in Ephesus, wanted the same. And so he wrote this powerful prayer. He started by saying

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name."

Paul's prayer is for everyone on earth and throughout the solar system and even in heaven. Because Paul believed that God could give us what we need to do far more than we think we can. All we need to do is have the courage to keep trying to find what we need. To keep practicing until we get it right.

And so he prays for some specific things - and they are the same five things we sought to find in VBS this week. First, he prays for faith. Faith is knowing that even when we can't see what's going to happen, we can trust God to be with us and to help us through. Paul said it this way - "*I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit.*" That inner strength comes from trust and faith in God. We know that kind of faith is not always easy when life gets crazy and the bottom seems to drop out. But it is the power of the spirit within us that reminds us through experience that God is always with us even when we don't feel or see God's presence. And there are stories in the Bible that remind us over and over that God acts in powerful ways to help us. The story the children heard about faith this week was Daniel in the Lion's Den - a story that reminds us that even in the face of real danger - even when the lions roar - God hears our prayers and gives us strength.

This inner strength that God gives us through the Holy Spirit gives us the ability to be bold in the face of danger. Boldness is being brave to go beyond our limits to what God asks of us, even when we think we can't because we know God is with us - working within us. We might feel like we can't do it but we trust that God can do it working through us. Boldness, our second element, is called for especially when our faith is questioned. More and more in our society today boldness is needed. For many people have become skiddish and timid about talking about faith when with people we do not know. Because we do not know what kind of reaction we will get and so instead of being bold we just avoid the subject altogether. My friends, we need to be bold and to talk with others about why our faith matters to us. We need to share the times when God has been present with us in the face of trials and how our faith sustained us and helped us through troubles. If we are willing to tell our stories our stories could help other people. So we pray for boldness for through boldness our faith can change lives.

Paul also prayed "*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.*" One of the things Christians experience is that when Christ dwells in our hearts - when our faith is strong and we are rooted and grounded in love as Christ loved us - we develop a desire to be kind to others. And what we discover is that one small act of kindness can create a chain reaction that ends up making a big difference in our world and relationships. Kindness, our third element, becomes second nature when Christ has come to dwell in our hearts - when we are rooted and grounded in Christ's love. We admit that is not always easy and in our world today kindness seems to be a lost art. And yet we as Christians are called to help others, to be kind, even when we don't feel like it. And I believe this element may be one of the clearest indications of a mature Christian and something our world desperately needs to see and experience from the Christian community. My friends, I saw kindness in great measure this week as adults cared for children and as children interacted with one another offering help and caring for one another. Our world needs more

kindness and it begins with each one of us.

Paul also prayed that this community would have “*the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*” What Paul knew was that when we come to comprehend how much God loves us, how deep Christ’s love is and are filled with the power that comes from the Holy Spirit at work within us then our hearts are filled with thankfulness. For thankfulness, our fourth element, has a special power to transform our lives. The more we remember to thank others for what they have done for us, the more good feelings and actions grow in the community. My heart is full of thankfulness this week for all those who helped with VBS. Friends, this community is amazing. We may be older but when it comes to sharing love and kindness we excel. My heart is full of thankfulness for those who planned and carried out the centers, those who shepherded the children from their stations, those who led music, those who helped to create our sets and ran the sound system and for those of you who provided snack items and prepared them daily and for all who prayed for our success this week. We experienced the fullness of God this week and our hearts are full of thankfulness!

Paul’s prayer ends with a doxology - maybe one of the most powerful doxologies in scripture - “*Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*” Note that this doxology names the church and Christ Jesus. For it is through Christ within the community known as the church that we experience the power at work within us to do far more than we can ever ask or imagine. For when we know that God is with us and will help us - when we know God can do anything and everything - when we trust God can do it even when we can’t - then we can go beyond to do amazing things. We have experienced that here at Covenant for God’s power is present and active in this place. And because of that we have Hope - hope for the future in God’s

hands. And this week we experienced one reason to hope as we watched the children who entered our doors soak up God's word, exude enthusiasm as they sang praise to God who can do far beyond all that we could ask or imagine by his power at work within us, and saw them share kindness with one another and offer thanks for all they experienced. For friends, God can do it - God can open doors and open hearts - through his power at work within us.

My prayer this day, as the children sang this morning, is that God will give us compassion when we see someone in need. Courage in the face of enemies. And that God will change our hearts and our minds to love as God loves us.

We can't do it alone but God can by God's power at work within us. That is the good news found in our scripture this day!