He is Able

Romans 16:21-27

Introduction

Shannon Ethridge recounts a horrific event in her life that ended up ultimately proving to be a spiritual turning point for her. She was a 16-year-old student in High School. One day - driving down a bumpy country road – while attempting to put on some lipstick – she struck and killed a woman on a bicycle.

In a split second it occurred to me that I had hit something…I stood trembling in shock over the body of a curly-headed woman lying face down in the grass next to a mangled bicycle. As we waited for help to arrive, all I could think about was that the woman I had just hit was probably someone's mother…someone's daughter…someone's wife…how would I ever face her family after what I had done?"

The night before the funeral - she forced herself to go and visit the husband –to express her sorrow over the accident - - - she was stunned when he expressed no hatred or resentment towards her but rather said he felt sorry for her in having to go thru something like this.

Shannon kept sobbing the words over and over – 'I'm sorry, I'm so sorry'. The husband was a Wycliffe bible translator named Gary Jarstfer. He spoke to Shannon about the life and legacy his wife left behind. He then added. 'You can't let this ruin your life - God wants to strengthen you thru this. He wants to use you. As a matter of fact, I am passing Marjorie's legacy of being a godly woman on to you. I want you to love Jesus without limits, just like Marjorie did.'

Even though Shannon was clearly at fault for the accident – Gary insisted that all charges against her be dropped.

Shannon later came to see that conversation as something of a burning bush experience. Today she writes Christian women's books – including a highly popular – 'Every Woman's Battle' series – encouraging women to pursue pure relationships in their following of Christ

As we hear of a story like that – we are reminded of the power of God

He is able to take horrific life events and redeem them by his grace

He is able to take the vulnerable / shattered world of a High School teenager – and rebuild it as a trophy of His grace

Ephesians 3:20 – 'God who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.'

Our God is able

Paul speaks of the ability of God in this closing section of the book of Romans

Rom. 16:25 – 'to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ.'

As we come to the close of this letter – we will end on the theme of God's ability

When we see that God is able – we see that He is a God who can be trusted with our lives as well

I. Timothy and the Rest – vv. 21-24

Paul – now – coming to the close of his letter – gives greetings from those who are with him

'So and so says hi'

He is writing this letter from Corinth – in the home of Gaius

He mentions several people by name who are there with him

Timothy is at the front of the list

Paul refers to Timothy as a *fellow worker*

In reading thru the NT – it becomes obvious that Timothy became one of Paul's most trusted assistants over the years in the ministry

He counted on Timothy in the work of the gospel

I Corinthians 4:17 – 'For this reason I have sent to you Timothy . . . he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ Jesus'

I Thess. 3:2 – 'And we sent Timothy, our brother . . . to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith.'

Paul wrote two letters to Timothy giving him instructions on pastoral ministry / spiritual leadership

Timothy was a preacher

Paul told him to:

II Timothy 4:2 - 'Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.'

Paul also told Timothy: Watch your life and doctrine closely

I Timothy 4:16 – 'Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will insure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.'

Pastor John MacArthur once reflected back on an event that he said made the single greatest impression upon him while he was in seminary training to be a pastor. As a student at Talbot seminary he preached a message before the student body – and was evaluated by the professor who was the dean of the seminary – Charles Feinberg – a well respected theologian

MacArthur preached on II Samuel 7. In the text Nathan tells David that he is not going to be the one to build the temple for the Lord. MacArthur says his message began with a zinger and ended with a zapper. It was a practical message that was sure to win over the audience.

He preached on how important it is to not presume upon the Lord – and felt that he had done a fairly good job when he walked out of chapel and received his grade sheet from Professor Feinberg.

On the sheet was one sentence in bold red ink: 'You missed the whole point of the passage.'

He later met with the professor who explained to him the central theme of the Davidic covenant in the passage and that MacArthur had focused upon a tangent instead

It was a lesson he never forgot

It's the same message Paul gave in II Timothy 2:15

II Timothy 2:15 - 'Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.' [kjv]

Perhaps the best statement on Timothy's character was given by Paul in his letter to the Philippians

Philippians 2:19-22 – 'But I hope in the Lord to send Timothy to you shortly . . . for I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare . . . you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.'

Timothy was faithful to the gospel / Paul knew he could count on him / entrust responsibilities to him

The United States Marines – uses the slogan *semper fi* – to describe their duty / calling

The Latin phrase means – always faithful / always loyal

One of the events that occurred during the Reagan presidency that perhaps was an omen of things to come was a terrorist bombing of U.S. Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon [1983]. 241 Americans were killed by the blast

Marine Corps Commandant Paul Kelly [4 Star General] visited some of the wounded survivors who had been airlifted to a hospital in Frankfurt, Germany. Among the wounded was Corporal Jeffrey Lee Nashton who had been severely injured from the blast. Nashton had so many tubes running in an out of his body that a witness said he looked more like a machine than a man, yet he survived.

As Kelly came near to him – Nashton struggling to move and racked with pain – asked for a piece of paper and a pen. He wrote a brief note and passed it back to the commandant. On the piece of paper were two words: 'Semper Fi' – the Latin motto of the marines meaning, 'Forever faithful'.

That was the kind of soldier for Christ that Timothy was

Timothy – like his mentor – the apostle Paul – was also willing to suffer for the sake of the gospel

Hebrews 13:23 – 'Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I shall see you.'

Tradition says that he was martyred for his faith later in life – trying to disrupt a procession of pagan idol worshipers – worshiping the goddess Diana / Artemis [Greek name]

Some of the other people listed here

Gaius – Paul was in Corinth when he wrote this letter – staying in the home of Gaius

Paul mentioned baptizing Gaius

I Corinthians 1:14, 15 – 'I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, that no man should say you were baptized in my name.'

In Corinth some divisions had occurred – and people were splitting up into parties – some saying – 'I am of Paul / Apollos or Cephas'

Paul says he was glad that he did not give any encouragement to that party spirit – in his lack of baptisms

Tertius – was the scribe / amanuensis - whose job was to write down Paul's letter as he composed it

Jason – may be referred to in Acts 17:5-9 – being in Thessalonica

II. He is Able – vv. 25-27

Here Paul takes note of the ability of God to accomplish His purposes

James Boice once preached a series of message on the 'able' passages

Romans 16:25 – 'Able to establish' – to make something stable / firm

If He wants us to stand – we shall stand!

Jude 24 – 'Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy.'

I believe that with all my heart

What about a Steve Lawson who stumbled morally?

When we stumble – it is not because of God's unfaithfulness to us - - - but because we rushed headlong into sin

It's only by God's grace that we don't stumble so as to fall

Remember when Jesus told Peter: 'Satan has asked permission to sift you like wheat'

Peter would deny the Lord 3X - - - - Then Jesus added:

Luke 22:32 – 'but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.'

If we are going to ignore our conscience / ignore the warnings of Scripture – hide our actions from fellow believers - - - then we are in the devil's playground – and give him an opening to all kinds of temptation and sin – and a world of hurt!

We are told to discipline ourselves for godliness
To watch and pray that we not enter into temptation
We are to pray: 'Deliver us from evil'
We are to meditate on Scripture

Charles Spurgeon: 'There is nothing that you need between here and heaven which is not provided in Jesus Christ.'

We are assured: Jesus is <u>able</u> to come to our aid in temptation

Hebrews 2:18 – 'For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.'

But – we have to look to Him

Hebrews 12:1-2 – '. . . let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus.'

It's when we get distracted / our focus is misplaced – we feel self-sufficient - - - we get distracted by the cares of the world / deceitfulness of riches / lusts of the flesh / etc.

How many markers / warning signs / barriers – does a person have to plow thru to stumble into sin and defeat?

John Piper received a letter from a young lady - - - who wrote to him - - - she had been involved in a church - - - was experiencing joy in her walk - - - but was eventually led astray by an unbelieving boyfriend. They had a sexual relationship for a while - - then the boyfriend was gone. [as so often happens] She now felt broken and wounded - - - her life was a mess - - - and she was not sure where she stood with God

Like Adam and Eve – she's out there hiding from God / she's putting on the fig leaves

Does God even want her back – she wondered?

Piper's response: Whatever your relationship with God was before - - - it was not a close relationship - - - and God wrecked it - - - and He is now inviting you - - - not back to the faith you think you had before but to a deeper and more abiding faith

No return to the old religious you - - but forward to a new 'Christ -focused / Bible saturated / clinging to the cross of Calvary kind of faith

God is able to bring beauty from ashes / the oil of joy in place of mourning

One of the great 'able' passages in the NT

Ephesians 3:20-21 – 'Now to Him who is able to do exceeding 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.'

God is able to exceed our expectations – surprise us even

One of the tv networks runs a show called: 'America's Got Talent.' On the show a number of amateur performers take the stage - - - some of them juggle or do a magic act - - - many of them sing – sometimes opera / sometimes pop or rock music

One guy came on the show – Richard Goodall [55 yrs old] - - - his wife had died a couple years earlier - - - he was a janitor at a middle School - - - Terra Haute Indiana. Richard had sung with a few praise bands in church – and for a Christian band called 'Crystal River'. - - - but had never achieved any degree of commercial success. The kids heard him sing at school one day – and told him he had talent.

He had tried to get on AGT back in 2009 but was rejected

But – this time around – some kids saw him singing at school and made a video / posted it on Tik Tok – it went viral - - and Howie Mandell saw it – and said – tell this man to contact us - - - we want him on the show

Richard went on the show in Los Angeles [2024] – and sang 'Don't Stop Believin' by Journey - - - and sounded just like the original singer – Steve Perry – one of the judges hit the 'golden buzzer' - confetti coming down all around - - - Richard was in tears! - - - tears of joy

Later on – he got to perform with the actual band –Journey - - - and he became the season 19 winner – which gave him a $1M cash prize

Richard acknowledges that he is not likely to become the next Carrie Underwood – but that this was far more than he ever expected!

Paul says, 'God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we ask or think

Martha and Mary wanted Jesus to heal their brother Lazarus from his sickness
They had seen Jesus heal people – they believed he could heal Lazarus

Jesus waited several days before leaving to go to Bethany

By the time he got there Lazarus was dead

They said to him – 'Lord – if you had been here – my brother would not have died.'

They just wanted him healed – Why didn't Jesus come?

It was confusing / painfully disappointing – Jesus said to Martha:

John 11:25 – "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies.'"

He had greater purposes for Lazarus

Jesus said: 'Where have you laid him?' – they went to the tomb

John 11:39, 40 – 'Jesus said, "Remove the stone." Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there will be a stench, for he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you, if you believe, you will see the glory of God?'

Jesus then cried out: 'Lazarus – come forth'

The man who was dead - - - to the shock and awe of all present – came walking out
It was a powerful miracle – demonstrating Jesus' power to raise the dead

John 5:28-29 – 'Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.'

You and I will be resurrected – some to a resurrection of judgment / some to a resurrection of life

There is a day on God's calendar – raise up the body of [You / me / so and so.]

Will it be to judgment or to eternal life?

It all depends on what we did with Jesus Christ – and what we did with Paul's gospel

Paul makes mention of the gospel one final time in this great letter – v. 25

Romans has been a detailed exposition of this gospel

R.C. Sproul: 'Romans is Paul's fullest, grandest, most comprehensive statement of the gospel.'

The doctrine of justification by faith – was the great rediscovery of Martin Luther while studying this book

The gospel of the crucified and risen Christ - - - who saves those who trust in Him

William Newell: 'Throughout church history, to depart from Paul has been heresy. To receive Paul's gospel and hold it fast, is salvation.'

A 'mystery' in the NT was something hidden in former times but now made known – v. 25

The mystery of the church – Jew and Gentile together – both saved thru Christ

I Corinthians 15:51 – the mystery of the rapture

I Corinthians 15:51, 52 – 'Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.'

What if Christ were to return today?
What would He find us doing?
Would He find us faithful – or dabbling in some sin?

I John 2:28 – 'And now little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.'

God – throughout time has progressively revealed His purposes in the unfolding plan of redemption

Jesus Christ is the centerpiece of that plan – the cornerstone

'The entire Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ. The OT says, "He is coming," the Gospels say, "He is here," The book of Acts proclaims Him, the Epistles explain Him, and Revelation says, "He is coming again."

Conclusion
When Corrie Ten Boom was a young girl – her first experience with death came after visiting the home of a neighbor who had just died. When she thought of the fact that her parents would die someday, her father comforted her by asking, 'Corrie - When I go to Amsterdam – when do I give you your ticket?'

'Just before we get on the train'
'Exactly – just so your heavenly Father will give you exactly what you need when we die – He'll give it to you just when you need it.'

He is able to give us what we need

I remember an old chorus from a few years back

He is able – more than able – to accomplish what concerns me today
He is able – more than able – to handle anything that comes my way
He is able – more than able – to do much more than I could ever dream
He is able – more than able – to make me what He wants me to be

Psalm 138:8 – 'The Lord will accomplish what concerns me.'