

The Ability of God.

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The inability of rulers and governments to deal with existing moral and physical problems is sadly apparent on every hand. Lawlessness, violence and anarchy itself are increasing with startling rapidity under the cloak of what is called "self-expression." The believer in Christ is not taken by surprise; such Scriptures as Mark 7: 21-23; 2 Timothy 3: 1-5, and many others plainly indicate what follows when the unregenerate man "expresses" himself. Neither does the believer look for any improvement as a consequence of human administration; a well-known Christian writer (now with Christ) commenting on the passage in 2 Timothy says ". . . the wicked will go on growing worse and worse; nevertheless *the hand of God in power* will demonstrate their folly" (J. N. Darby).

Gladly then do we turn from the evil and impotence of man and, in the faith of our souls, find comfort and peace in the knowledge that "God *is* able."

Let us first consider the ability of God in relation to His own "eternal purpose." In Ephesians 3 we are let into the secret that the blessed God, long before the foundation of the world, purposed to establish a realm in which He would express the greatness of His own eternal purpose and desires. Contrary to the scene in which man vaunts *his* "self-expression," a scene filled with hatred and corruption, this realm is filled with and expressive of the love and glory of God. In this sphere of manifested glory both Jew and Gentile, separated now by racial hatred which no human administration is competent to remove, are brought together as "fellow-heirs . . . in Christ by the gospel." What power is thus displayed! The Greek word "*dunamai*" would give an idea of its dynamic strength. No power in the universe can hinder the consummation of God's purpose nor prevent the display of it to His eternal glory. Yet what is perhaps more marvellous still is that, as possessing the Holy Spirit — "the power that worketh in us," we are capacitated to know and enjoy and reflect the features of that scene of love and glory *now*. Adoringly we enter into the apostle's mead of praise — "Now unto Him that *is able* to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." Man's expression of himself, and the resultant scene of chaos fade into insignificance as we contemplate the sphere of love and glory which has been brought into view consequent upon God having revealed Himself in Christ.

Whilst God is able to bring into eternal display every thought and purpose of His great heart of love, He is also able to fulfil every promise made to His people in their pathway through this world. Not one of these "exceeding great and precious promises" (2 Peter 1: 4) are in any wise dependent upon man, nor can the expression of man's will affect their being carried out. All are established in His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Corinthians 1: 20). Abraham was "fully persuaded that, what He (God) had promised, He was *able* also to perform" (Romans 4: 21). In the face of the most impossible circumstances Abraham's faith rested in God, and the whole of Galatians 3 shews us that the blessings and the fulfilment of promise are not Abraham's alone, but are the possession of "all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." The details of the conversion of Cornelius as related in Acts 10, 11 shew the *ability of God* to bring this about; neither the prejudice of the Jew, nor yet the demurring of Peter could prevent the gift of the Spirit being poured out upon the

nations. "For the promise is unto . . . all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2: 39). How choice is this precious gift, and what power accompanies it! God Himself dwelling in us; our hearts filled with His eternal love, enabling us to stand as overcomers in a world dominated by the will of man under the control of Satan; giving to us power to withstand the fleshly desires of our own hearts in their movements towards "self-expression."

The opposition may be severe; the furnace heated "one seven times more than it was wont to be heated," but Hananiah (God is gracious), Mishael (who is like our God?), and Azariah (helped of God) though but youths can face the absolute power of a Nebuchadnezzar with the triumphant assurance "our God whom we serve *is able* to deliver us" (Daniel chapter 3). Paul too, as he faced the edict of a cruel Nero could say "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He *is able* to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

As knowing our Lord Jesus Christ ascended and made Priest "after the *power* of an endless life" may we not say with the writer to the Hebrews, "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him." God is able; Christ is able; the "Spirit also helpeth;" the Scriptures also are able (2 Timothy 3: 15, the same word *dunamai*) — God's word has the same dynamic power as Himself (see Psalm 138: 2); and as taking "the whole armour of God" we too are "able to withstand in the evil day."

Jude in his short letter speaks of the failure which marks both angels and man, corruption and rebellion against dominion and against God Himself. Four times in one verse (15) he uses the word "ungodly," indicating thus the universal effects of man's self-expression. Precious indeed, in the face of such conditions, is his beautiful closing doxology — "But to Him that is *able* to keep you without stumbling, and to set you with exultation blameless before His glory, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might, and authority, from before the whole age, and now, and to all the ages, Amen." (New Trans.). "Even from eternity to eternity Thou art God" is the language of Moses the man of God (Psalm 90). Jehoshaphat, faced with a mighty multitude of enemies, could say "O Lord God . . . art not Thou God in heaven? and rulest not Thou over all the kingdoms . . . so that none is able to withstand Thee" (2 Chronicles 20). Nebuchadnezzar, the most mighty human monarch the world has ever known, was moved to declare "I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation . . . none can stay *His* hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" (Daniel 4).

Beloved, "this God is *our* God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48). Resting peacefully in the known and proved ability of our God, may we in the face of all the unrest and violence around, value the four times repeated exhortation "Fret not thyself" (Psalm 37: 1, 7, 8; Proverbs 24: 19). Let us "confide in Jehovah;" delight in Him; commit our ways to Him; wait patiently for Him" — "for yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be . . . But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace" (Psalm 37: 10, 11).