THE EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABLE GOD!!!

I want to illustrate my sermon this morning with the fact that God can do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think!

You heard our Senior Pastor say two weeks ago in his sermon that He was in Rehab

You will see in this photo that Rehab is coming along as well as expected - GOD IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL WE CAN ASK OR THINK !!!!

This is a strange construction of words – but human language is not able to bear the thought and the moving and the revelation of the Spirit!

We are in the third chapter of Ephesians- and the message is taken from this prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3, beginning at the fourteenth verse:
MEDIA:

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man;

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth;

And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.
Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding 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.

In this meaningful, so richly profitable Book of Ephesians there are two prayers by the apostle Paul. The first prayer is in the first chapter, beginning at the fifteenth verse.

MEDIA:

Wherefore I also...cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and knowledge; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened;
that you may know what is the hope of His calling, the riches of His glory, the exceeding greatness of His power.

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The first prayer is a prayer for spiritual enlightenment. There are depths in the revelation of God, in the gospel of Christ, that go far beyond what a man could know from ordinary avenues of sensation and experiment and knowledge.

There are deep things in the words of God. And Paul prays that their souls, their inner hearts and minds might be enlightened by the power of the Spirit of God.

Most of us just wade along the shore of the river of life; rarely does any one of us go out into the deep things of God. There is so much that God would have us know, so much God
would teach us, if we were teachable, if we took time to listen, if we opened our hearths in study and in prayer.

MEDIA: People involved in Study in a Bible Class

One of the delights that comes to the hearts of the pastors in this church is the wonderful willingness of our people to study God’s Word. It takes place in Discipleship classes, Friday morning - Carol Storch’s groups - John Tuffs studies – Wednesday ngt Bible Studies and on and on and on

We can see our people grow in grace as they grow in the knowledge of the Word of God.

This is an answer to this great prayer of Paul, the first one, that God would give to us the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened that we
might reach into and touch some of the deep things of God.

Now, the second prayer, the prayer of the message this morning is a prayer for strength; For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the man, that, and all of the things that follow.

We seize upon these great truths of God so feebly, we see them so dimly, we feel them so slightly; their meaning to us is so small that Paul prays that we might be strengthened to lay hold upon these great revelations of God and might implement them in our lives.

Now that’s a magnificent sight here, as I begin in this text: to see Paul down on his knees in
that prison in Rome “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Media: Someone praying lifting His Hands

In the Bible, they prayed standing up - In the Bible they prayed lifting up their hands to heaven-

There are other postures of prayer, I know; but I do not think there is any posture that does more to the heart than to kneel or to lie prostrate before God

Paul says “for this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”

Media: Photo of Jesus kneeling in the garden Of Gethsemane

And I would think that next to the sight of our Lord in Gethsemane, down on His knees and
with His face bowed to the ground before Almighty God –

Media: Paul in prison praying on His knees

next to that sight, I would think the next great noble sight in the Bible is Paul down on his knees in that Roman prison, praying in behalf of the saints of God there in the city of Ephesus.

They have a poem:

Stone walls do no a prison make,

Nor iron bars a cage.....

Media: Someone kneeling in prayer

And how true that is when this apostle kneels in prayer.
The shackles fall from him, his bonds fall away from him, and his spirit is free!

As he says in his second letter to Timothy,
“For the Word of God is not bound” and he could have added – nor is the Spirit of God bound.

Though in prison and behind bars of iron, and though shackled with manacles and feet in stocks, yet is he free-

Free when he bows to pray, there on his knees looking up into heaven looking into glory and the great host of glory looking down upon him!

You know Paul has an unusual interpretation – and this is a part of the deep things of God that the Lord gives us when we go into His word –
Paul has a strange sensitiveness, cognizance of that other spiritual world.

To him it was not far off or removed as it is to us.

We are so bound down by things and by gadgets and by the pressure of present life until the other world, God’s world seems far removed and intangible and unreal, and a part of fiction and imagination; but not to Paul!!!

For example, in this very chapter he says in the tenth verse, that up there in heaven there are orders of angels, of the heavenly host, who look down and learn of the manifold wisdom of god through us down here in this earth.

In the second verse of this pray “Of whom, he says, “the whole family in heaven and earth is named”
In the first Corinthian letter, the fourth chapter and the ninth verse, he’s speaking of himself and his fellow martyrs and apostles, says that “God has sent them forth to be a spectacle before angels.

The imagery that lies back of all this is a Greek Roman amphitheater. And in the arena here, in the earth here, are the children of God, the apostles; and the great galleries around are filled with angels. And they look, they are spectators, upon these of us who fight the battles of the lord like gladiators in the great amphitheater, in the arena below.

So Paul here bowed down in prayer lifts up his face to the heavenly hosts, and when he does so the dark ceiling above him turns to a canopy of light, and the stones and the iron bars turn to pure crystal and the glory of God comes through.
And Paul looks up into the glories of the heavens above and there from the battlements and from the palaces and from a thousand shining towers, the angels by the thousands and the tens of thousands look down upon the apostle as he prays.

There are the archangels with their mighty dominions, and the cherubim in their dazzling glory and beauty and the seraphim in their burning love; and they look down upon Paul and Paul looks up to them.

Oh, do you ever do things like that? In moments of height spiritual feeling do you ever look up into God’s heaven and think about God’s great ministering multitudes up there?

Do you?

Media: Photo of Angels in Heaven
You heavenly angels, so highly favored, God’s first of creation what are you like?

What substance are you? In what image were you made? By what language would one address you? What do you know of God? What do you know of sin? What do you know of death? When one of your fellows is more talented than the other, are you envious?

Do you know what it is to stumble, to make mistakes, to fall short, to be weak? Do you ever tire? Do you ever rest? What did Gabriel tell you when he came back from this earth? What did the angels that sang at the nativity tell you when they returned to glory? What did the angels who were at the tomb and at the ascension, what did they say to you when they came back to heaven? What did Jesus tell you when He came back into the courts of glory?
Do you ever think things like that? That great host up there that serve God, who minister to Him by day and night, who look down upon us, who Paul says “learn of us”, the manifestation of the wisdom of God through us is made known to those great orders of heavenly beings in glory. Does something to your heart, doesn’t it? To see this apostle bowed down in chains, in that Roman prison, on his knees, looking up into heaven, and all heaven looking down on him.

Somehow when you begin thinking these thought and reading these word, God doesn’t seem as far away, and heaven doesn’t seem like a strange and a foreign land; but we are close together in Christ, that one family in heaven and earth.

There are five petitions in his prayer: He prays “I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...that He would grant you,
according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.

That’s the real “we” The inner man that God would strengthen us in the inner man; for the power that belongs to a church is never external – it is always internal.

However right our church might be, or however large it might be in quantity, these are not the great strengths of our people.

The strength of God’s people is always interior – it’s the inner man – it’s the inside – it’s the power of prayer - It’s spiritual persuasion.

The outreach of our church is never physical mundane – quantitative, metrical, measurable, physical; but the power and the energy of our church among us is spiritual, it’s on the inside, it’s the moving power of God.
I was so impressed the other day as Joyce a member of our staff shared a devotional and her heart was so set on not being ingrown but on doing personal evangelism beyond these walls.

Jacob was described in the Bible as a man who had power with God and man. And that power was the power of prayer, of intercession.

Our strength and our might is never to be counted in terms of physical properties, but it belongs to the inner man “That God would strengthen you by His Spirit in the inner man – that’s his fist petition.

His second petition is that “Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. Not just visit us, come for a fleeting moment or an inspiring second but that Christ may dwell in our hearts.
The third petition: “that we may be rooted and grounded in love” That’s a strange mixture of figures; To be rooted refers to the agriculture world “rooted” This thing “grounded” refers to architecture ; grounded on a foundation, like a building is grounded, it has foundations.

But oh! What is grammar and what are the mixing of metaphors and similes when a man is trying to say the unsayable and unspeakable things of God? We ought to be rooted , we ought to be grounded in the love of God!!

His fourth petition: that we may be able to comprehend with all of our fellow saints the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge.

But a man cannot enter into; higher than the sky, deeper than space, father than east and west, the love of God in Christ to us. Aren’t you glad?
We’d all be lost if it were not for the outreaching of the mercy of God.

And his last petition: “that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

What is the fullness of God of His love, of His wisdom, of His mercy, of is kindness, of His charity, of His pardoning, forgiving, tender-hearted Spirit? Ah, my soul, God - and he prays that we might be filled with all of the fullness of God.

Then this glorious benediction: “Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly able all that we ask or thing - unto Him be the glory in this church and in all Gods churches through all of the ages, world with end. Amen

Our exceeding abundantly able God - isn’t that a strange expressing – “exceeding abundantly”
“Beyond measure”, yes “overflowing beyond what a man could know, “yes- Exceeding Abundantly Able God!!!

Oh! When you begin to think of our great God like that – exceeding abundantly able what is He like?

Media: Big Ship on the Ocean

Able like the sea, like the great ocean to buoy up, to hold up a ship. Why, that’s nothing to the sea- the great ableness of the ocean to bear the ship up – that’s nothing to the ocean – and God’s greater than the sea that He mad – Or I think of the sun – we have a little house here, or a little room there and it’s dark and it needs lighted up and that able sun could just light that little room and it would be nothing, just nothing to that sun, it’s so great and exceeding abundantly able. Or a man would be thirsty, and the whole Mississippi River is flowing down
to quench that man’s thirst; the great Mississippi is exceeding abundantly able – Oh, you just can’t say it – the ableness of our God!

That ought to greatly encourage us “O Lord, am I ever discouraged”? Why should I be? And are there obstacles that I think are insoluble? And are there mountains and rivers uncrossable? And am I discouraged? Why should I ever be? The reason: our task is so great and our barks are so small, and our little ships are so frail and the great hosts and powers and institutions of darkness that assail us and work against us are so mighty and great until we just say “O Lord, we’re not equal to the task – We’re going to fail. We’re not going to succeed - Oh how mistaken can a Christian be?

And when we fall into those despairs and discouragements, Lord, that’s not pleasing to Thee. God is looking down whose great arm bared to work for us - O God – we ought never
to be discouraged - There are mountains out there that confront us, but God can touch the mountains and they smoke and they rise like incense before Him. There the great stone is rolled, and how am I to roll it away? And it is sealed, and it is watched and guarded; and am I to go up the hill wearily and despairingly, hopelessly and helplessly? No - when I get there, an angel has rolled that stone away, and sits upon it. That’s the way we ought to be. Our exceeding abundantly able God, to do all above that we ask or think.

Sometimes does anyone of us ever rise from his knees and think – I have asked of God more that God could give? Have you ever? Have you ever? That’s too much to ask of God. I’m presumptuous thinking that – I ought not to ask God for that!”

“To Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”
Who would ever have thought to ask in redemption for Jesus Christ and the atonement on the Cross? Would you? Would you have asked? Would you? Above all that we ask or think, who would ever have thought to ask in our sanctification for the Holy Spirit? Would you have? Would you? To send the Spirit from God in heaven? Who would ever have thought to ask in our adoption that we be an equal to the elder Son in the household of faith?

Lord, make us as one of the hired servants. Lord, put me to washing pans and put me to carrying out garbage, and make me a hireling in Thy house. But, O Lord not a son – not a son - Above all that we ask or thing and God says “Here, don’t give him a stone- give him manna from heaven. Don’t give him ashes – give him the palace itself - Bring the best robe and the fatted calf and the banquet table of the lord and set before him - This is my son – This is my
daughter - Who would have thought to ask for that? Above all that we ask or think!

Isn’t that we? Our prayers are so little, they are stunted. Our prayers are so limited. We don’t even compliment God by asking something that only God could do - Ask Him for a resurrection and see if He doesn’t give it - ask Him for the ends of the earth and see if He doesn’t give it. Ask Him for having itself and see if He doesn’t give it - Able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think cannot even enter into the mind of a man, God’s ableness to bless. We can’t fathom that depth of God’s ableness to answer and to help.

Media: A Young Shepherd boy in the fields

Who would ever have thought that out of that little shepherd boy, David – God’s great king, out there in the back end of the wilderness – why even his own father didn’t’ send for him-
I’ve got a teenage boy, a beardless boy, a red-headed boy, a ruddy faced boy,- but he’s keeping the sheep and Samuel said – We’ll not break bread and we’ll not move from this place till I look on his face – And when they brought in that boy – God said to Samuel - This is he: I have chose Him - and Jesus is called the Son of David - Who would have thought for that? That’s God. That’s the Lord. God does that?

He brings water out of the hard flint rock in a desert and weary land - He gives manna from heaven when men are famishing - He opens the prison doors of their own accord - He walks with His children in the fiery furnace – He delivers them from the mouths of lions - Our exceeding abundantly able God who can do all above what we ask or think.

I must close this message: Unto Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages,
world without end. Amen - Amen - Let the young, let our sons and daughters, let them say, Amen Amen - Let our men and our women in the strength of their lives, let them say, Amen - Let the venerable of our brethren and of our sisters, let them say Amen - Let the church triumphant in glory say with a thousand voices Amen – Amen

Let the church militant, we who are below let us say Amen Amen – And could there be a lost man or woman her this morning who would say in his heart  Amen, Pastor Don Amen - so make it be - So let it be  Amen

Unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think- to Him be glory and majesty and power and honor in the church by Christ Jesus, world without end throughout all ages.
And I too, pastor and I say amen - Would you? Would you? Amen pastor - all glory to Jesus my Savior now, amen - All glory and praise to Him

Media: Communion Setting

Receive communion this morning – and may you take knowing that in serving Him He can do exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask of think