

THE POWER OF ONE

Eph 3:14-21 – Dave Blough

THEME: The power of prayer to the God of the impossible makes all things possible.

Brian Sullivan will step up to the platform and he will be sharing a story about Annmarie and Kelly

[Slide 1 – Annmarie and Kelly] Thank you so much, Brian, for sharing a crowsome story: that's crazy and awesome.

I have a little game that I would like to play with you and it is similar to a show I used to watch back in the 70's called Name That Tune. You'd hear only a part of a song and guess what it was. One would say, I could name that tune in 7 notes and the other more confidently would say that they could name it in 4 notes and so on. So, listen to this: **[Black/Blank Slide - Play the Mission Impossible song]**. Ok, anyone know that song?

Wait for the responses...

[Slide 2 – The MI Team]. "Good morning, Mr. Phelps. Blah, blah, blah... Your mission, should you decide to accept it blah blah blah.. As always, should you or any of your IM Force be caught or killed, the Secretary will disavow any knowledge of your actions. This tape will self-destruct in five seconds. If I were Jim, I would not be feeling a lot of love and support there.

There were so many great things about Mission Impossible. You'd see the whole show in a 30 second clip right off the bat and, the super cool theme song, and the nerve-rackingness of how were they going to pull it off. For sure they are going to get caught. Then they'd pull their faces off and somehow **the team** [Jim, Barney, Willie, and the best of the names... Cinnamon] would miraculously.. impossibly.. complete the mission.

WE ARE ON AN IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

which can only be carried out with the power of God

which is supernaturally released through the power of prayer!

to a Body that is known as the CHURCH

[Slide 3 – Person on the Mountain] We are going to take a look at a passage in Ephesians 3:14-21. You can find this on the Wintonbury App, your own digital Bible, your own hardcopy of the Bible, or on page 815 of the

Bible under your seat. Let's stand, even those at home, and read this together. Hey, you at home! You're still on the couch and you need to stand up!

[Slide 4 – For this reason...] For this reason I **kneel** before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I **pray** that **out of** his glorious riches He may **strengthen** you with **power through** His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

[Slide 5 – And I pray...] And I **pray** that you, being rooted and established in love, may have **power**, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the **love** of Christ, and to know this **love** that surpasses knowledge—that you may be **filled** to the measure of all the **fullness** of God.

[Slide 6 – Now to Him...] Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His **power** that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

You may be seated.

We just read the second of two prayers in the first half of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Ephesian Church. The FIRST is found in Eph 1:15-23 where Paul:

1. Asks God to give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation
2. Asks they be enlightened
3. He mentions the riches of God's glorious inheritance
4. God's incomparable great power (same power raising Christ from the dead)
5. And the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

Did you notice the commonality between the two prayers? We are going to do a bit of a deep dive to better understand what God is saying to us today.

V14 says - For this reason I **kneel** before the Father. It is not particularly uncommon to see someone kneel when they are praying now and there are churches that have the congregation kneel fairly regularly. However, a couple thousand years ago, it was more common to stand and pray. With Paul, this wasn't the first time he mentions it. When he met with the Ephesian elders the last time, Acts 20:36-37 says: "When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him." It is said of Jesus at the Mount of Olives in Luke 22:41 that "He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed." A man with leprosy came to Him, in Mark 1:40, and begged him on his

knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” Stephen’s response as he was being stoned in Acts 7:59-60 prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” In Daniel 6:10 we see that Daniel three times a day got down **on his knees** and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” even though a decree was made that no one should pray to anyone but the king or be thrown into the lion’s den. You see, kneeling was a symbol of profound respect for the person you’re kneeling before. Significant events happened in the lives of those on their knees before the Father. This is an important prayer by Paul so it bears paying attention to. [Slide 7 – Pastor Kneeling]. This past Thursday, without prompting, this pastor knelt before God, listening, and making his requests known to God. Take a few seconds to think about this: What moves you to fall on your knees before God?

[Slide 8 – First Point] My first point is: We are on an impossible mission and the **Power of One prayer posture** will humble you.

V15 says - from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. God is not the source of some life or some part of life. He is life... for all of us... for all of the heavenly beings. We are God’s own. If we go way way way back in the first verse of the Bible, Gen 1: 1, it says that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In another way, Ps 146:6 “He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—He remains faithful forever.” He is the Maker and the Creator. Phil 2:9-11 says – “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” God has power and authority. He alone grants life and power. On Thursday night, I saw two posts from friends from Ps 24:1-2 “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for God founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.”

V16 reads: “I **pray** that out of his glorious riches He may **strengthen** you with **power** through His Spirit in your inner being...” What a statement Paul makes here. The prayer is to make you stronger, gain strength with power from the Holy Spirit. So, there are these riches and some of the idea of this I can see in Rom 2:4 which talks about the riches of God’s kindness, forbearance and patience. So I picture this vast, inexhaustible, dispensary of resources that He is giving out and we need power. Back in Eph 1:19, which is in the middle of the first prayer, there is “God’s incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength God exerted when He raised Christ from the dead. The Holy Spirit, for every believer, takes residence in you and this was such a different way of seeing things back in that time. Power was impersonal but the Spirit is personal.

Your heart or “inner being” needs supernatural power from God. The kind of power to defeat. The kind of power to reign. The kind of confidence that the power exists. My twin boys, Isaac and Silas, like to wrestle each other. [Slide 9 – Wrestling] Wrestle in the Living Room. Wrestle in the Family Room. Wrestle in the kitchen. I’m a fan of it. They get tangled up in each other and sometimes one has the advantage and then other times they swap. I picture this when it comes to power. There is a wrestling going on with the power of sin. Rom. 7:22–23 says “For **in my inner being** I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.” Back one chapter in this letter, we are talking about formerly walking in the ways of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, and indulging in the lust of the flesh.” We wrestle, don’t we? On our own, we’re easily entangled by sin and we tap out. With the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring sin under submission.

[Slide 10 – Second Point] My second point is: We are on an impossible mission and it is the **Power of One God** that overcomes evil.

V17: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I **pray** that you, being rooted and established in love..” As followers of Jesus, how does that happen? “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you **forever**—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know him, for **He lives with you** and will be in you (**John 14:15-17**) AND “**Christ’s love compels us**...that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for [us] and was raised again (**2 Cor 5:14-15**). We are established and firmly rooted. Think of agriculture “like a tree planted by streams of water” as it says in the first Psalm. Think also of construction and the laying of a strong foundation like we see in Matthew 7:24: “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. Establishing “provide[s] a secure basis for the inner life and its resources; the strengthening of believers, whom God establishes (BDAG).” My fellow followers of Jesus, “[We] have been crucified with Christ and [we] no longer live, but **Christ lives in [us]**. The life [we] now live in the body, [we live by faith in the Son of God, who loved [us] and gave Himself for [us]. Gal 2:20

The Spirit brought to mind one of my close friends Bob Blomberg. About 10 years ago Bob fell on the ice and hit his head. Even now, Bob still struggles with pain. After the accident, Bob spent two months in darkness because any light was painful. What would you do? Bob was a camp counselor at Camp Berea in 1977 (new math says that is almost 45 years). Bob had a prayer partner who shared that he memorized the NT book of James. Encouraged, Bob started memorizing James on his bus ride back and forth to work. One of

the benefits he realized was that the Word of God was IN HIM and it was different. It brought rest to his soul. He could have time in the Word without even looking at it. In the darkness of his room and with God's Word in his heart, Ps 23 was all his brain could take in and he spent time meditating on that. It makes me think of Ps 119:9,11 "How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You." Have the Word of God dwell in your hearts and establish love as that feature presentation of your life.

[**Slide 11 – Third Point**] My third point is: We are on an impossible mission and the **Power of One Word**, firmly establishes you in Christ.

V18. "may have **power**, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the **love** of Christ." [**Slide 12 – Breadth, Length**] Interestingly, the words "love of Christ" are not in the Greek and I see that in the NAS translation. However, I see how the translators were using it as the object of the four dimensions, in this slide, because of verses 17 and 19 having love within the context. The prayer is for power, in the fellowship of our community to grasp, get the meaning of, comprehend the vastness of the power and love of God. If we understand this, love is unleashed with the power to carry out the plan and purposes of His love. In Paul's first prayer from Eph 1:19 it is for us "to know what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe with the working of the strength of His might." Contrary to where worship was directed in all sorts of places for those that didn't know Christ, we are now directed to the One True God where power and inseparable love can be tapped into. "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **neither height nor depth**, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (**Rom 8:38-39**).

[**Slide 13 – Fourth Point**] My fourth point is: We are on an impossible mission and the **vast love and Power of One, Resource-Filled God**, will allow you to carry out His plan.

V19. "and to know this **love** that surpasses knowledge—that you may be **filled** to the measure of all the **fullness** of God." This intercession is a tall order and can only be realized supernaturally. We are one with the fully alive and resurrected Jesus where "in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form (Col 2:9). As Christians, we already possess the divine fulness and at the same time we are not yet there; we are still attaining. In chapter 4, it is said "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ." [**Slide 14 – O'Brien**] Theologian Peter O'Brien sums it up well: "They are to become what they already are." Mature in the faith.

I was talking to Brian Sullivan's daughter, Bethany, about filling and fullness and what are you being filled with. Bethany likes sweets and I like sweets. If I were to be filled with all sweets then I would experience a certain amount of "ahhhhh" and temporarily feel good... until my sugar crash. Bethany has been working on eliminating sugar and filling that space with fasting and the fullness of God. She is looking to replace with something better and become what she already is.

V20. "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His **power** that is at work within us..." We need to remind ourselves, listen carefully, whether we believe He actually does do immeasurably more! The question is not about us, that leads to failure and discouragement. It is Him doing more than we ask or imagine. At Wintonbury, we have a way for you to discover your Servant Profile, consisting of spiritual gifts, personal style, and ministry passion. Understanding each of those in your life gets you closer to hearing from God where He may be leading you to serve. There is a question that we ask you to think through. If you could snap your fingers and know that you couldn't fail, what would you do for others? Think about it, if it was impossible for you to fail at the very thing you most desire to do for others, what would that be?

I've read and heard some really good Impossible to Fail strategies and have tweaked them a little bit. What if we took baby steps to living with this mindset in everything we approached. For instance, weight loss. It's January, so how many companies are asking you to join their gym? How many of you are using your stationary bicycles, ellipticals, or smart home gyms purely to hang your future "I am going to fit into these clothes someday" on? I am not judging any of you. I am with you and I need the Impossible to Fail **-with God** strategies to motivate me enough to do better. For example, asking God for help: In the entire year of 2022, I will do one push-up. Here goes... Ok! I reached my goal. Now I can make a stretch goal. I already am an achiever because I did it. What if I did this tomorrow? I exceeded my goal and I stretched myself. This is not a joke. Many of us have tried and it is hard to take a small step so if we do succeed, all thanks is to God who strengthens us. What if I made it a spiritual goal? I will read one verse in 2022. Well, you just read a bunch of verses with me so you achieved that goal. You could exceed that by reading another verse tomorrow. While you are in there reading a verse, keep on going. You are not a failure because you already achieved this goal and you did it in community. Who gets the credit? God does. Who benefits? We all do.

Back to Annmarie and Kelly: Long before Annmarie needed a kidney, God spoke to Kelly that she would be giving her kidney to someone. Really, God. That seems impossible. Then there is a match with Annmarie in the same church. C'mon, God! How is that possible? God knew. Kelly heard. It is impossible to fail with God's plan and it is cause for celebration! We also know that not every outcome fits what we want. I have lived

through difficult and painful times. With many of you, we have gone through pain together. What I am trying to show you is a different lens to see God through. What is my first reaction when hear so-and-so has pancreatic cancer or stage 4 of something? Do I write it them off as a person without hope? Or, do I seek the awesome God that does immeasurably more than what I am asking or imagining and trusting God in? Believing this activates your faith right away. It's kind of like Kelly's kidney in Annmarie. It took what was just about dead, connected with something new, immediately the kidney started to function. And, since we are on the topic of kidneys: **[Slide 15 – Kidneys]**, "Because the areas around the kidneys are sensitive, the Hebrews believe the kidneys were the seat of emotions and also used figuratively as the source of the knowledge and understanding of the moral life (Holman Bible Dictionary)." I am sharing with you straight from my kidneys.

V21. "to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." One of the pastors that I meet with is from Harlem. We started connecting a good couple years ago after he heard me on a podcast. He is an XP, reached out to me, and that's how we began a friendship. He now meets monthly as part of an XP Roundtable for New England pastors. We met on Thursday afternoon talking about what church looks like now and what are some of our plans ahead. We broke out into groups of 3 and my friend and I landed in the same group. Our format was to share what was heavy on our heart and then the other two pastors would pray over the third. He started out by saying that he was looking at Eph 3:21 and he kept on thinking about "forever and ever". I'm thinking to myself, did he just say Eph 3:21? When we give glory to God, we hold Him in this state of high honor and it is something that the church should never get tired of. I know this has been a long season, that has been dark and depressing. Many have just been sick and tired of this whole mess. I don't like it either, AND YET...

WE ARE ON AN IMPOSSIBLE MISSION

which can only be carried out with the Power of One Prayer Posture to humble us,
supernaturally released through the Power of One Spirit
firmly established in Christ in His Word entrusted to the CHURCH
enabled by the vastness of His love and limitless resources

[Slide 16 – All Points] What is that impossible mission that God is asking you to participate in this church that is beyond what you can do? Maybe it is a testimony, and you are frightened to get up in front of the church. Maybe it is making a call to someone, but you can't stand being on the phone. Maybe it is helping people find a seat on a Sunday morning, but you're nervous about messing up. Maybe you'd like to teach a

class to kids on a Sunday, but you don't want to make a weekly commitment. Maybe it is making a meal for someone, but you don't know who needs a meal. You don't need to be stuck anymore. Whatever it is, God can do immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine.

Before we go, I would like everyone here and the live stream to go to our new website, wintonbury.org. Click on Messages and then under the Resources, click on the IMPOSSIBLE MISSION W/GOD. What do you do for a living? What interests you? What skills do you have? Filling this out is not a commitment today because I am asking you to pray and hear where God is leading. This does help us to better understand our community as we hear from you.

“The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.”

QUOTES AND REFERENCES

PRIMARY PASSAGE

Eph 3:14-21. For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

BDAG. Establishing “provide[s] a secure basis for the inner life and its resources; the strengthening of believers, whom God establishes.”

Holman Bible Dictionary. “Because the areas around the kidneys are sensitive, the Hebrews believe the kidneys were the seat of emotions and also used figuratively as the source of the knowledge and understanding of the moral life.”

Peter O'Brien. “They are to become what they already are.”

Gen 1: 1. in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. In another way,

Num 6:24-26. “The Lord bless you, and keep you; The Lord make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; The Lord lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.”

Ps 119:9,11. “How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. Your word I have treasured in my heart, That I may not sin against You.”

Ps 146:6. “He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—He remains faithful forever.”

Ps 24:1-2 “The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for God founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.”

Daniel 6:10. “Daniel three times a day got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before.”

Mark 1:40. “and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

Luke 22:41. “He withdrew about a stone's throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed.”

John 14:15-17. “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know him, for He lives with you and will be in you.

Acts 20:36-37. “When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed. They all wept as they embraced him and kissed him.”

Acts 7:59-60. “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.”

Rom. 7:22–23. “For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.” Back one chapter in this letter, we are talking about formerly walking in the ways of this world according to the prince of the power of the air, and indulging in the lust of the flesh.”

Rom 8:38-39. “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Cor 5:14-15. “Christ's love compels us...that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died for [us] and was raised again.

Gal 2:20. “[We] have been crucified with Christ and [we] no longer live, but Christ lives in [us]. The life [we] now live in the body, [we] live by faith in the Son of God, who loved [us] and gave Himself for [us].

Eph 1:19. “to know what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe with the working of the strength of His might.”

Phil 2:9-11. “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Col 2:9. “in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.