

BIG BUTS OF THE BIBLE

1 JOHN 4:18

PART 2

Is God able?

READ EPHESIANS 3:14-21

INTRODUCTION

When we look at 1 John 4, we see that the context speaks of having assurance on the day of judgement (v. 17). This is where we are to see God's perfect love casting out all fear. Through that casting out of all of our fear, we can have confidence to stand before Him knowing that Christ has shed His blood for us and forgiven our sins. This should give us confidence as we live our lives as well that, just as He said He would, God has provided us a way to pursue the things of God and to experience His love, grace, mercy and blessing. There are many who believe that they are not truly forgiven or that God is not able to forgive them for their sins though He may forgive others. The passage in Ephesians addresses this errant way of thinking.

Paul is writing to the Ephesians and encouraging them to continue on in their faith and their love for God and for one another. In these few verses, we see that having our hearts grounded in love and that we would be able to understand the "mystery" of God in our forgiveness and His love for us. (v. 17-19) When we marry the passage in 1 John to the passage in Ephesians that, God is love, and we are to be rooted in that love, knowing that He can take care of our fears and our doubts about the forgiveness of our sins and our standing before Him in judgement. We can be confident (strengthened) and sure that, not only have our sins been forgiven but that our salvation is in His hands and His desire is for us to walk in that confidence.

Finally, we see that Paul encourages the Ephesians that God is able to do more than we even realise when it comes to His love and mercy. He is not in need of anything and is able to forgive anything that we can come up with in our flesh. (This excludes the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, Matthew 12:31-32) He does "abundantly above all that we ask or think" and desires to see us follow Him. Our salvation is not based on our works but, we need to be clear, we are to follow and obey God and His Word. Jesus said that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments and so that requires us to change who we are and be "transformed by the renewing of our minds". (Romans 12:1-2) This requires that we pursue holy living and change our opinions to match what God wants and not necessarily what we are comfortable with. This can be a scary prospect but, when we look at Ephesians 3:17-21, we see that He is with us and we need not be afraid.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean that God is love? (1 John 4) How can we read Ephesians 3 knowing that He is love?
2. What makes it difficult to trust that God is able to forgive all sins? What can we do to remind ourselves of His capabilities and willingness to love us?
3. What are some examples in Scripture that show God's willingness and ability to forgive sins? What about examples in your own life?
4. Read Matthew 12:31-32. What does the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit look like? Do you think that it is possible to commit this sin before death? Why or why not?
5. Why can it be scary to live our lives after Jesus Christ? Why does He ask us to live holy lives? How is He able to give us confidence while we pursue Him?

WRAP UP

We can have confidence in our faith. We can be confident that God is able to forgive and to save. We can have the confidence to know that He not only cares for us, but that He is love and that He is able to work in us to become new creations, righteously living for Him in all that we do.