

# 'Impossible With Man, Possible With God'

by Andrew Murray

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*The sermon emphasizes the contrast between human inability and God's omnipotence in achieving salvation and living a holy life.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 17:1, Matthew 19:26, Luke 1:37, Luke 18:27, John 15:5, Romans 7:18, 1 Corinthians 2:3-4, Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 3:20, Philippians 2:13

**Topics:** "Absolute Surrender", "Divine Omnipotence"

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## Description

Andrew Murray emphasizes the profound truth that while salvation and living a holy life are impossible for man, they are entirely possible with God, as stated in Luke 18:27. He illustrates the journey of a believer from self-reliance and despair to recognizing their utter helplessness and the necessity of divine power to achieve a victorious Christian life. Murray encourages believers to embrace absolute surrender to God, acknowledging that it is through God's omnipotence that they can overcome sin and live in holiness. He calls on Christians to trust in God's ability to work in them, transforming their lives and enabling them to fulfill His will. Ultimately, the sermon is a reminder that with God, all things are possible, and believers should rely on His strength rather than their own.

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## Transcript

"And he said, the things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

Christ had said to the rich young ruler, "Sell all that thou hast ... and come, follow me." The young man went away sorrowful. Christ then turned to the disciples, and said: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" The disciples, we read, were greatly astonished, and answered: "Who, then, can be saved?" And Christ gave this blessed answer: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:22-27).

The text contains two thoughts—that in the question of salvation and of following Christ by a holy life, it is impossible for man to do it. And then alongside that is the thought—What is impossible with man is possible with God.

These two thoughts mark the two great lessons that man has to learn in the Christian life. It often takes a long time to learn the first lesson—that in the Christian life man can do nothing, that salvation is impossible to man. And often a man learns that, and yet he does not learn the second lesson—what has been impossible to him is possible with God. Blessed is the man who learns both lessons! The learning of them

marks stages in the Christian's life.

## MAN CANNOT

The one stage is when a man is trying to do his utmost and fails, when a man tries to do better and falls again, when a man tries much more and always fails. And yet, very often he does not even then learn the lesson: With man it is impossible to serve God and Christ. Peter spent three years in Christ's school, and he never learned, it is impossible, until he had denied his Lord, went out, and wept bitterly. Then he learned it.

Just look for a moment at a man who is learning this lesson. At first, he fights against it. Then, he submits to it, but reluctantly and in despair. At last, he accepts it, humbly and rejoices in it. At the beginning of the Christian life, the young convert has no conception of this truth. He has been converted; he has the joy of the Lord in his heart; he begins to run the race and fight the battle. He is sure he can conquer, for he is earnest and honest, and God will help him. Yet, somehow, very soon he fails where he did not expect it, and sin gets the better of him. He is disappointed, but he thinks: "I was not cautious enough. I did not make my resolutions strong enough." And again he vows, and again he prays, and yet he fails. He thinks: "Am I not, a redeemed man? Have I not the life of God within me?" And he thinks again: "Yes, and I have Christ to help me. I can live the holy life."

At a later period, he comes to another state of mind. He begins to see such a life is impossible, but he does not accept it. There are multitudes of Christians who come to this point: "I cannot." They then think that God never expected them to do what they cannot do. If you tell them that God does expect it, it is a mystery to them. A good many Christians are living a low life—a life of failure and of sin—instead of rest and victory, because they began to say: "I cannot, it is impossible." And yet they do not understand it fully. So, under the impression, I cannot, they give way to despair. They will do their best, but they never expect to get on very far.

But God leads His children on to a third stage. A man comes to take, it is impossible, in its full truth, and yet at the same time says: "I must do it, and I will do it—it is impossible for man, and yet I must do it." The renewed will begins to exercise its whole power, and in intense longing and prayer begins to cry to God: "Lord, what is the meaning of this? How am I to be freed from the power of sin?"

It is the state of the regenerate man in Romans, chapter seven. There you will find the Christian man trying his very utmost to live a holy life. God's law has been revealed to him as reaching down into the very depth of the desires of the heart. The man can dare to say:

"I delight in the law of God after the inward man. To will what is good is present with me. My heart loves the law of God, and my will has chosen that law."

Can a man like that fail, with his heart full of delight in God's law and with his will determined to do "What is right? Yes. That is what Romans, chapter seven teaches us. There is something more needed. Not only must I delight in the law of God after the inward man and will what God wills, but I need a divine omnipotence to work it in me. And that is what the apostle Paul teaches in Philippians 2:13: "It is God which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Note the contrast. In Romans, chapter seven, the regenerate man says: "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Romans 7:18). But in Philippians, chapter two, you have a

man who has been led on farther. He is a man who understands that when God has worked the renewed will, God will give the power to accomplish what that will desires. Let us receive this as the first great lesson in the spiritual life: "It is impossible for me, my God. Let there be an end of the flesh and all its powers, an end of self, and let it be my glory to be helpless.

Praise God for the divine teaching that makes us helpless!

When you thought of absolute surrender to God, were you not brought to an end of yourself? Did you not feel that you could see how you actually could live as a man absolutely surrendered to God every moment of the day-at your table, in your house, in your business, in the midst of trials and temptations? I pray you learn the lesson now. If you felt you could not do it, you are on the right road, if you let yourselves be led. Accept that position, and maintain it before God: "My heart's desire and delight, O God, is absolute surrender, but I cannot perform it. It is impossible for me to live that life. It is beyond me." Fall down and learn that when you are utterly helpless, God will come to work in you not only to will, but also to do.

## GOD CAN

Now comes the second lesson. "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. "

I said a little while ago that there is many a man who has learned the lesson, it is impossible with men, and then he gives up in helpless despair. He lives a wretched Christian life, without joy or strength or victory. And why? Because he does not humble himself to learn that other lesson: With God all things are possible.

Your Christian life is to be a continuous proof that God works impossibilities. Your Christian life is to be a series of impossibilities made possible and actual by God's almighty power. That is what the Christian needs. He has an almighty God that he worships, and he must learn to understand that he does not need a little of God's power. But, he needs-with reverence be it said-the whole of God's omnipotence to keep him right, and to live like a Christian.

The whole of Christianity is a work of God's omnipotence. Look at the birth of Christ Jesus. That was a miracle of divine power, and it was said to Mary: "With God nothing shall be impossible" (Luke 1:37). It was the omnipotence of God. Look at Christ's resurrection. We are taught that it was according to the exceeding greatness of His mighty power that God raised Christ from the dead.

Every tree must grow on the root from which it springs. An oak tree three hundred years old grows all the time on the one root from which it had its beginning. Christianity had its beginning in the omnipotence of God. In every soul, Christianity must have its continuance in that omnipotence. All the possibilities of the higher Christian life have their origin in a new understanding of Christ's power to work all God's will in us.

I want to call on you now to come and worship an almighty God. Have you learned to do it? Have you learned to deal so closely with an almighty God that you know omnipotence is working in you? In outward appearance there is often little sign of it.

The apostle Paul said: "I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and ... my preaching was ... in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (I Corinthians 2:3,4). From the human side there was feebleness; from the divine side there was divine omnipotence. And that is true of every godly life. If we would only learn that lesson better, and give a wholehearted, undivided surrender to it, we would learn what blessedness there is in dwelling every hour and every moment with an almighty God. Have you

ever studied in the Bible the attribute of God's omnipotence? You know that it was God's omnipotence that created the world, and created light out of darkness, and created man. But have you studied God's omnipotence in the works of redemption?

Look at Abraham. When God called him to be the father of that people out of which Christ was to be born, He said to him: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17: 1)'. And God trained Abraham to trust Him as the omnipotent One. Whether it was his going out to a land that he did not know, or his faith as a pilgrim midst the thousands of Canaanites-his faith said: "This is my land." Whether it was his faith in waiting twenty-five years for a son in his old age, against all hope, or whether it was the raising up of Isaac from the dead on Mount Moriah when he was going to sacrifice him-Abraham believed God. He was strong in faith, giving glory to God, because he accounted Him who had promised able to perform.

The cause of the weakness of your Christian life is that you want to work it out partly, and to let God help you. And that cannot be. You must come to be utterly helpless, to let God work. He will work gloriously. It is this that we need if we are indeed to be workers for God. I could go through Scripture and prove to you how Moses, when he led Israel out of Egypt; how Joshua, when he brought them into the land of Canaan; how all God's servants in the Old Testament counted on the omnipotence of God doing impossibilities. And this God lives today; and this God is the God of every child of His. And yet some of us want God to give us a little help while we do our best, instead of coming to understand what God wants, and to say: "I can do nothing. God must and will do all." Have you said: "In worship, in work, in sanctification, in obedience to God, I can do nothing of myself, and so my place is to worship God, and to believe that He will work in me every moment"? Oh, may God teach us this! Oh, that God would by His grace show you what a God you have, and to what a God you have entrusted yourself-an omnipotent God. He is willing, with His whole omnipotence, to place Himself at the disposal of every child of His! Will we not take the lesson of the Lord Jesus, and say: "Amen; the things which are impossible with men are possible with God"?

Remember what we have said about Peter, his selfconfidence, self-power, self-will, and how he came to deny his Lord. You feel, "Ah! there is the self-life; there is the fleshlife that rules in me!" And now, have you believed that there is deliverance from that? Have you believed that Almighty God is able to reveal Christ in your heart, to let the Holy Spirit rule in you so that the self-life will not have power or dominion over you? Have you coupled the two together- and, with tears of penitence and with deep humiliation and feebleness, cried out: "O God, it is impossible to me; man cannot do it, but glory to Your name, it is possible with God"? Have you claimed deliverance? Do it now. Put yourself afresh in absolute surrender into the hands of a God of infinite love. As infinite as His love is His power to do it.

## GOD WORKS IN MAN

But again, we come to the question of absolute surrender, and feel that that is lacking in the Church of Christ. That is why the Holy Spirit cannot fill us, and why we cannot live as people entirely separated unto the Holy Spirit. That is why the flesh and the self-life cannot be conquered. We have never understood what it is to be absolutely surrendered to God as Jesus was. I know that many earnestly and honestly say: "Amen, I accept the message of absolute surrender to God." Yet they think: "Will that ever be mine? Can I count on God to make me one of whom it will be said in heaven, on earth, and in hell, he lives in absolute surrender to God?" Brother, sister, "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." Do believe that, when He takes charge of you in Christ, it is possible for God to make you a man of absolute

surrender. And God is able to maintain that. He is able to let you rise from bed every morning of the week with that blessed thought directly or indirectly: "I am in God's charge. My God is working out my life for me."

Some are weary of thinking about sanctification. You pray; you have longed and cried for it; and yet, it appeared so far off! You are so conscious of how distant the holiness and humility of Jesus is. Beloved friends, the one doctrine of sanctification that is scriptural and real and effectual is: "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." God can sanctify men. By His almighty and sanctifying power, God can keep them every moment. Oh, that we might get a step nearer to our God now! Oh, that the light of God might shine, and that we might know our God better!

I could go on to speak about the life of Christ in us—living like Christ, taking Christ as our Savior from sin, and as our life and strength. It is God in heaven who can reveal that in you. What does that prayer of the apostle Paul say: "That he would grant you according to riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16)? Do you not see that it is an omnipotent God working by His omnipotence in the heart of His believing children, so that Christ can become an indwelling Savior? You have tried to grasp it, understand it, and to believe it, and it would not come. It was because you had not been brought to believe that "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

And so I trust that the word spoken about love may have brought many to see that we must have an inflowing of love in quite a new way. Our heart must be filled with life from above—from the Fountain of everlasting love—if it is going to overflow all day. Then it will be just as natural for us to love our fellow-men as it is natural for the lamb to be gentle and the wolf to be cruel. When I am brought to such a state that the more a man hates and speaks evil of me—the more unlikable and unlovable a man is—the more I will love him. When I am brought to such a state that the more obstacles, hatred, and ingratitude surround me, the more the power of love can triumph in me. Until I am brought to see these, I am not saying: "It is impossible with men." But if you have been led to say: "This message has spoken to me about a love utterly beyond my power. It is absolutely impossible"—then we can come to God and say: "It is possible with You."

Some are crying to God for a great revival. I can say that this is the unceasing prayer of my heart. Oh, if God would only revive His believing people! I cannot think of the unconverted formalists of the Church or of the infidels and skeptics or of all the wretched and perishing around me, without my heart pleading: "My God, revive Your Church and people." It is not for a lack of reason that thousands of hearts yearn after holiness and consecration. It is a forerunner of God's power. God works to will and then He works to do. These yearnings are a witness and a proof that God has worked to will. Oh, let us in faith believe that the omnipotent God will work to do among His people more than we can ask. "Unto him," Paul said, "that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, unto him be glory" (Ephesians 3:20,21). Let our hearts say that. Glory to God, the omnipotent One, who can do above what we dare to ask or think!

"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." All around you there is a world of sin and sorrow, and Satan is there. But remember, Christ is on the throne; Christ is stronger; Christ has conquered; and Christ will conquer. But wait on God. My text casts us down: "The things which are impossible with men", but it ultimately lifts us up high—"are possible with God." Get linked to God. Adore and trust Him as the omnipotent One, not only for your own life, but for all the souls that are entrusted to you. Never pray without adoring His omnipotence, saying: "Mighty God, I claim Your almightiness." And

the answer to the prayer will come. Like Abraham you will become strong in faith, giving glory to God, because you account Him who has promised able to perform.

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