

Ephesians 3:14-21

Verses 14-15:

--(14) **For this reason.** . . . brings us back to what Paul began in 3:1. This remarkable prayer becomes the fitting cap to the inspired doctrinal section of this epistle.

--In this prayer we see that Paul is praying out of his apprehension of God's character and purposes. What we know of God will determine how we pray to God. That is why he prayed for their wisdom, revelation, knowledge, and enlightenment in his first prayer.

--**I bow my knees.** . . . is reflective of the position of his heart. This is a prayer of humble worship.

--Scripture never commands any prayer position but it does describe many. How we pray should be reflective of our heart—not forced or held back.

--**to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.** . . . Paul is bowing before the Father of our Redeemer and the redeemed. The very One who placed Christ as the center of all His purposes and salvation (Jn. 20:17; Acts 17:28; Heb. 12:9).

2:18: For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

--Paul's prayer for strength, Christ dwelling in us, the comprehension of divine love, and God's very own fullness is fittingly made to the Father in the name of His Son. We are basically asking the Father for what He sent His Son to do!

--(15) **the whole family** should be translated *every family*. The word used in the Greek is *patria* and is used only here and in Luke 2:4 + Acts 3:25 and simply describes a clan descended from the same root (Joseph was of the house of David). I think Paul is describing all those connected to this eternal purpose that are named under the Heavenly Father (See 1:10; Col. 1:20).

Hebrews 12:22-23: But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect.

Verse 16:

--Now Paul begins his specific requests of which there are four—each starting with **that** as seen here in 16, twice in 17, and lastly in 19.

--First, Paul's prayer is requested **according to the riches of His glory**—not our personal holiness, good works, or just dues. These are the types of riches that only our Father has and that will be our inheritance! *What do we pray for? What only God can give?*

--One of our Father's greatest blessings is the Holy Spirit and the power and might only He can give us—particularly in our **inner man**.

2 Corinthians 4:16: Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.

--We can so easily take for granted the strength the Holy Spirit gives us day by day. We are as dependant on His work in us as we are on Christ's work without us!

--If the Holy Spirit stopped working in us we would be totally weak and helpless! Every good thing that happens in our lives after new birth is because of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 2:12-13: *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*

--God always moves first and we respond. What is the controlling power in our lives? Where do we need strength or might? Ask! *Do we really want it? If not, repent!*

--I do not fear the expression of the power of God in personal lives. I do question and doubt the so-called "power of God" that is displayed on a stage in front of a camera and audience. *Jesus and the apostles displayed power in normal life and society. No one was kept at arm-length or turned away.*

--The idea here is that we have been given great heavenly blessings and yet we still need prayer to make good and faithful use of them.

Verse 17a:

--Here Paul introduces his second request with **that**.

--He prays **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**. Now, remember that Paul is praying for believers, so of course, Christ already indwells them. Christ dwells in all of our hearts through the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9-10: *But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.*

--So what is Paul praying for here? He is praying for a greater manifestation and experience of the very presence of God with us.

--After the fall, we are not told that God dwelt with men like Adam, Noah, or Abraham until there was redemption through a Passover Lamb in Egypt. Then God had a dwelling place with His people through the tabernacle and temple. Now the Church, who has the True Lamb of God, is a better dwelling place for God than any material house of worship.

--Is God at home in our lives? What if Jesus Christ knocked on our door?

John 14:21-23: *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that you You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.*

--Faith is how our life with God began and faith is how it continues and grows.

Verses 17b-19a:

--(17b) Here we have the third **that**. This is a request for our establishment and comprehension of God's divine and eternal love.

--First, Paul prays that they would be **rooted and grounded in love**. What love? His for us? Ours for Him? Love to others? Yes! Of course love always begins with His love for us but then moves along those other lines.

--Paul gives two pictures: **rooted and grounded**.

--**Rooted** is the image of a well-rooted plant growing. Effortlessly taking in life and producing what is natural to itself from the life received.

--**Grounded** is the image of a solid foundation that can be built upon. This is the image of work that is lasting and unshakeable.

--Is love the force that makes our life grow and bear fruit and last despite outward circumstances or the lack of other provisions?

--The mature Christian is rooted and grounded in Biblical love and immature Christians have shallow and sandy foundations because they are still looking for and living for worldly love.

How can you tell the difference? What fruit is being produced? Will it stand the fire of judgment day?

--**(18-19a)** When rooted and grounded in love we will begin to **comprehend** the full dimensions of the **love of Christ which passes knowledge**.

--The Greek for **comprehend** is translated variously: *take, apprehend, perceive, come upon, attain, overtake, obtain, etc.*

John 1:5: And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

--We can experience and comprehend the love of Christ, but we will always experience love first and comprehend love later. Comprehension of experience comes with maturity. *Disciples with Jesus + Us and what happened in new birth!*

--Some of the greatest tragedies in this life are related to love not comprehended—Spouse, parent, child, the example of Joseph with brothers, etc.

--Who comes to know and comprehend this love? **All the Saints!**

--Part of the way I come to know the love of God is in company with all the family of God.

--**Width** (breadth): So interesting that Paul begins with width and not depth or height. We are all so self-focused and self-conscious. What will we comprehend of the love of God when all the saved from every nation, tribe, kindred, and tongue is present?! What of their testimonies? What of their life witnesses?

--**Length**: How long suffering, patient, merciful, and long will the everlasting love of God be when we see every son of Adam or daughter of Eve from Eden to the last babe born at the end of the millennial age where Christ hands the victorious kingdom back to His Father?

--**Depth**: How deep will the love of God seem when we see our sins—all sin—from God's point of view? When we see the glory Jesus Christ had with His Father before the foundation of the world and then begin to comprehend how far He came to be born of a woman? How deep His love must be to meet us in our sin and rebellion!

--**Height:** How high and glorious will the love of God seem when our mortality is swallowed up by life, and we enter into the glory of the Lord as heirs of immortality, incorruptible, powerful, heavenly, and glorious. How high and holy will His love be when we are where He is and when our bodies are fashioned like His glorious body.

--**(19a) The know the love of Christ which passes knowledge.** This is speaking about our experience of love which is always to be greater than our comprehension of it. The mental is included—it is part of love’s joy—but it is not exhaustive. He who commands us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength has brought us into a covenant with Himself and promises to do the same.

*St. John (The Collected Writings of Harold St. John): *“In the Ephesian Epistle, love is as broad as the ocean and as limitless as space. The word occurs ten times as a noun (agape, 1:4, 15; 2:4; 3:17, 19; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2; 6:23), ten times as a verb (agapao, 1:6; 2:4; 5:2, 25, 28, 33; 6:24), and twice as an adverb (agapetos, 5:1; 6:21)—twenty-two in all. The love travels in seven different directions, ascending, descending and exploring:*

1. God’s love for Christ (1:6).
2. God’s love for His elect (1:4; 5:1).
3. Christ’s love for His chosen (2:4; 3:19; 5:2, 25).
4. The saint’s love to Christ (6:24).
5. The saints’ mutual love (1:5; 3:17; 4:2, 15, 16; 5:2).
6. Paul’s love for His colleagues and for all saints (6:21, 23).
7. A man’s love for his wife (5:25-233—five times).*

--His love is eternal and so we are always going to be coming to a greater understanding of its infinite dimensions and He cannot wait to have us before Him faultless with the disability of sin removed. *On some level we are all like children with a handicap or disability when it comes to our Heavenly Father and how He loves us—blindness/mental comprehension.*

--The experience and comprehension of love makes life worth living. Without it, life becomes meaningless. Only within an eternal love can we truly have eternal life.

Verse 19b:

--Here Paul makes his final and highest request for their believers.

--***That you may be filled with all the fullness of God.***

--This is the very purpose of our lives. We were made to be filled with the fullness of God. We are not God, but we are filled with all that He is—like cups of different sizes flowing over!

--He, as infinite, is ever-giving and we, though finite, are ever-expanding to hold more of all that He is! There can be nothing beyond this.

Matthew 5:6: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

--How many today are living on, or through, the love of another faulty, sinful human. Limited human love quickly shows its boundaries and limits. No human can meet all our needs—they were never made to. Stop expecting to be filled by the creature. You were only made to be filled by the Creator. *The minute we are seeking satisfaction from another source—broken cisterns—we are in sin (we have missed the mark).*

Verses 20-21:

--(20) Paul knows two things here: First, that he has asked a lot. Second, that God is able to give much more. God is even better to us than our prayers—even this prayer of Paul's!

--God is able to reveal His love for us in a way that is above all that we can ask or think. In giving His Son for us, the Father has already proven that He is more willing to give than we are to receive.

*Hodge (Ephesians): *"No definite bounds, therefore, can be set on what people in whom Christ dwells may expect and who are the objects of His infinite love."**

--All this is meant to raise our expectation and hope in **Him who is able**. God does not tell us that He is able and then at the same time hide the fact that He is also unwilling. Refusing to come to Him and ask is only unbelief play-acting as false modesty. *Think Prodigal Son*

--How does God do this? **According to the power that works in us**. Paul bases his prayers and aspirations on God's power—not human ideas, dreams, or logic. God is full of love and power.

--(21) Having asked for God's gracious work Paul turns and gives God glory. Having expounded on the revealed mystery of the Church in Christ—Paul prays that God's plan of glorifying Himself in the church would be true. ***1:6+12+14: to the praise of His glory.***

--The Church—every individual living stone—should praise His excellencies now, but will also glorify Him when:

- 1) The whole family is glorified in resurrection like the Firstborn from the dead.
- 2) When He takes His Bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb.
- 3) When the King of Kings returns with ten thousands of His saints and His kingdom is established on earth as it is in heaven.
- 4) When the New Jerusalem is populated with heavenly citizens.
- 5) When we rejoice in our incorruptible, undefiled, never-fading inheritance for all eternity.

--So the Church will glorify Christ Jesus **to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

**When we've been there 10,000 years, Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise, Then when we first begun.**

--God wants us to pray this prayer as the Church in every age.

1 John 5:14-15: Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.