

Residence  
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Allen Power

Ephesians 3:14-21

Opening: Some things are so big you can only truly comprehend their size if you see them with your own eyes. **Can you think of some examples of that?**

For the second time in this letter Paul paused to pray some specific things for the Christians in Ephesus. He prayed for them to understand and access the fullness of what it means to be a follower of Christ. To take hold of everything God has made available to us through Christ.

To understand the vastness of the Grand Canyon or the California redwoods you need to see them with your own eyes. The fullness of God's power and love is so big we have to experience it deep in our hearts.

Big idea: Because Christ lives in the hearts of believers through His Holy Spirit, we have access to the vast fullness of His power, strength, and love. If you want everything that is available in the Christian life the Father invites us to just ask.

Let's begin by reading verses 14-19 then we'll look at what they say, what they mean, and how they should change us this week.

Ephesians 3:14–19 (ESV)

**Prayer for Spiritual Strength**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God

- Paul begins in verse fourteen with the words, "...for this reason."
- His motivation for this prayer refers back to what he told them in the last two chapters. To summarize:
  - 2:4 - But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!)
  - 3:6 (and following) - And this is God's plan: Both Gentiles and Jews who believe the Good News share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. Both are part of the same body, and both enjoy the promise of blessings because they belong to Christ Jesus.\*
- Because we've been saved by grace, and because God's plan of salvation is for all people (Jews and Gentiles,) Paul was motivated to make some specific requests to God for these believers.
- Verse sixteen: Paul's requests are "According to "the riches of [God's] glory." The NLT: "from his glorious, unlimited resources."<sup>i</sup>
- A truth to grasp: We serve a Heavenly Father with unlimited spiritual resources/riches available to every believer in Christ.
- In many organizations there are pay grades for various positions. **What are pay grades and what do they define?**
- When it comes to the riches God grants to followers of Christ there are no pay grades where some are eligible for more than others based on status.
- Every believer has access to God's unlimited resources. That's exciting!
- God also does not grant his power and love as a function of our poverty giving only as much as we need, but out of his glorious, unlimited resources (riches) giving us access to everything He has to offer!
- What riches/resources for Christian living was Paul praying for?
  1. That they would be strengthened through the Spirit (V16)
  2. That they would be rooted and grounded in [agape] love (V17)

3. That they would comprehend the immensity of Christ's love (18-19)

4. That they would be filled to God's own fullness (V19).<sup>ii</sup>

- What does it mean to be “empowered” with inner strength? Let's start with the word empower. **How would you define “empowering” someone?**
- Empower in the Greek is a combination of “to give” and “power.”
- God makes His power and strength available to every believer by His Spirit living inside us.
- Wiersbe: *“In [Paul's] first prayer (1:18,) the emphasis is on enlightenment; but in this prayer, the emphasis is on enablement. It is not so much a matter of knowing as being—laying our hands on what God has for us and by faith making it a vital part of our lives. Paul is saying, “I want you to get your hands on your wealth, realize how vast it is, and start to use it.”<sup>iii</sup>*
- **Why would it be important that we have “inner“ strength?**
- Followers of Christ don't have to “fake” outer strength when we have God's power deep inside. (Illustration: Singing ‘from the diaphragm.’)
- Verse seventeen: Paul prays that, “Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.”
- Christ comes to dwell in our hearts when we trust Him through His Spirit.
- *“The verb dwell literally means (according to Dr. Kenneth Wuest) “to settle down and feel at home.” Certainly Christ was already resident in the hearts of the Ephesians, or else Paul would not have addressed them as “saints” in Ephesians 1:1. What Paul is praying for is a deeper experience between Christ and His people. He yearns for Christ to settle down and feel at home in their hearts—not a surface relationship, but an ever-deepening fellowship.”<sup>iv</sup>* We should hunger for that deeper relationship.
- Paul prays that our “roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong.” He is praying for followers of Christ to have deep Spiritual roots. We can't grow to be a “strong oak” as a Christian without deep roots.

- At our house we hold our breath in every windstorm as we watch those tall pine trees sway because pine trees have shallow roots.
- **What does Paul say (v.17) is the fertile soil for those spiritual roots?**
- The soil is God’s love for me and self-sacrificing love for other believers.
- If I believe deep inside that God loves me, I can stay strong when the winds of earthly problems and trials are blowing.

Jeremiah 17:7–8 (ESV) says, 7 “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD,  
whose trust is the LORD. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

- To trust in God’s love for us, we need to understand “...how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is.”
- Verse eighteen uses the word “comprehend” which is similar to a less familiar word, “apprehend.”
- The word *“comprehend carries the idea of mentally grasping something; while apprehend suggests laying hold of it for yourself. In other words, it is possible to understand something but not really make it your own. Paul’s concern is that we lay hold of the vast expanses of the love of God.”*<sup>v</sup>
- **What effect does it have on a child when they know deep inside how much they are loved by their parents?**
- Paul used the terms “width and length and depth and height of God’s love” because God loves us so much it’s beyond anything the normal human can comprehend. We can only comprehend God’s love through his Spirit.
- It’s more than just intellectual comprehension. A person can only comprehend God’s love if they have experienced salvation.
- “[J]azz great Louis Armstrong when he was asked to explain what jazz is [replied:] *“Man, if you gotta ask, you’ll never know.”* Jazz isn’t something that’s dissected, measured, described, and explained. It’s something that’s heard, felt, and experienced. The same is true of the love of Christ.”<sup>vi</sup>

- The Life Application Study Bible: *“God’s love is total...It reaches every corner of our experience. It is wide—it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world. God’s love is long—it continues the length of our lives. It is high—it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is deep—it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God’s love.”*<sup>vii</sup>
- Verse nineteen: When I understand God’s love, “Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”
- That should be the goal of every follower of Christ; to be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.
- Knowing your heavenly father has made limitless riches of power and love available to you don’t you want your cup to be filled to overflowing with that power and love? His fullness is available to us but we have to claim it by faith and through prayer.
- Paul began to wind down his prayer by giving glory to God in a doxology.

<sup>20</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

- It’s as if Paul is saying, *“Even though I’m wrapping up this prayer I want to make sure you got the point: God is able to do far more than we can ask or think according to His power at work in us!”*
- Do I believe that? Do I live, pray, and trust like I believe it?

So, What’s the Takeaway?

Chuck Swindoll says, *“In these four requests, I see Paul covering four dimensions of human need: psychological, emotional, mental, and spiritual.”*

- Psychological – *“Confidence that God the Spirit is dwelling in us.”*
- Emotional - Rooted and grounded in love – *“As believers tap into and rest upon the unconditional love of God flowing in and through them, they find themselves emotionally balanced and stable.”*
- Mental - Comprehending the immensity of Christ’s love
- Spiritual – Filled with the fullness of God – Paul *“prays that to the fullest extent of our human capacities, we would overflow with God’s strength, love, and knowledge.”*<sup>viii</sup>

Warren Wiersbe writes, *“These four requests are more like four parts to a telescope. One request leads into the next one, and so on. He prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to “apprehend” (get hold of) God’s great love, which will result in their being “filled unto all the fullness of God.”*<sup>ix</sup>

- Because Christ lives in the hearts of believers through His Holy Spirit, we have access to the vast fullness of His power, strength, and love.
- Here are some questions to ponder this week:
  - When I need inner strength will I turn to the limitless love and power God has made available to believers through His Spirit?
  - Will I ask God for a deeper relationship with Christ?
  - Will I trust Him to do “far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work in us?”
  - Will I live expecting Him to do that?
  - Remember: If we want everything that is available in the Christian life all we have to do is ask.

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<sup>i</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Eph

<sup>ii</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 221). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>iii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, pp. 30–31). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid*

<sup>v</sup> *ibid*

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<sup>vi</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 223). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>vii</sup> Tyndale. Life Application Study Bible NKJV (LASB: Full Size) (Kindle Locations 173350-173354). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

<sup>viii</sup> Swindoll, Charles R.. Insights on Galatians, Ephesians (Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary Book 8) (p. 223). Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

<sup>ix</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 2, p. 31). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.