

“More Than We Could Ask Or Imagine”

Ephesians 3:14-3:21

READ THE TEXT

Ephesians 3:14-21

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 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, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 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, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

INTRODUCTION

So here we are at the end of Ephesians chapter three. From the beginning of Ephesians chapter one up until now Paul dealt with the idea of unity between Jew and Gentile in a common faith. Paul gave us a very clear statement that no one is saved by good works. People are only saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul also communicated the end of the temple worship system when he shared that God's people now have become the new temple. That temple is comprised of all God's people who have faith in Jesus Christ. We are a temple of the Holy Spirit as individuals. And when we gather as a local assembly of believers, God the Holy Spirit considers each of us as one stone in a larger spiritual church building.

Beginning in chapter four, Paul is going to take this book in a new direction. He will sum the meaning of Jew and Gentile being one people in Christ, but then Paul will explain how the true church is built and organized. Paul will move into matters of practical living, family relationships and spiritual warfare.

Today we will see how Paul ends chapter three by focusing on God's power and God's love that is available to God's people.

PREACHING THE TEXT

A Prayer for the Ephesians

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.

FOR THIS REASON

In 3:1 Paul also uses the words; *"for this reason."* This is a reference back to Ephesians 2:11-2:22 which speaks to the amazing way that the God of all creation has now revealed a plan in Jesus Christ to bring together people in His creation.

I KNEEL BEFORE THE FATHER

Kneeling before the Father is a statement of humility. A person that

kneels in prayer is likely to have the humility to do whatever God tells him or her to do.

Have you ever kneeled or laid on your face while you approached God in prayer or worship? Paul was so overjoyed by the thought of God's work of grace and mercy and wisdom that he went to his knees. When is the last time we truly allowed God's work of grace to overtake us and brings us to our knees.

EVERY FAMILY IN HEAVEN AND EARTH DERIVES IT'S NAME

This is a reference to an ancient practice where the name of a person reveals a person's basic character. The Father would give a name to his son and reveal something about the son's character. You see examples of this practice when Abraham and Sarah named their child Isaac, which means laughter. Isaac was born to a 90 year old woman and Isaac's birth brought laughter to the family.

God gave His name to His people and He created a new purpose and new character in us.

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

OUT OF HIS GLORIOUS RICHES

Several years ago our family decided that we would not exchange Christmas presents. We were all cash poor that particular year and we did not have the resources to give gifts to one another.

Unlike us, God has unlimited resources. Paul refers to God's wealth as "glorious riches." Not only is God rich, He is generous. He can't wait to give to His family those things that are a blessing. And what is it in this

particular verse that God says He will give us?

POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT

The Spirit gives us power for our new lives in Christ. Here are a few ways that the Holy Spirit gives us His power as a gift to live above our human capabilities.

The Spirit Powers Us Up

1. His power changes us to be more like Jesus: **2 Corinthians 3:18 18**

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2. The Holy Spirit helps us to pray: **Romans 8:26-27 26** ***In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. 27 And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God's people in accordance with the will of God.***

3. God puts songs of worship and joy in our hearts

Ephesians 5:18-20 18 ***Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.***

4. God creates in us good character and behavior

Galatians 5:22-23 22 ***But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and***

self-control. Against such things there is no law.

5. God unites Christians by giving us love for one another

Ephesians 2:19-22 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

ACCESSING THIS POWER (CHARGING THE BATTERIES)

There are several ways God transfers spiritual power to us. Last week I needed to start Shelly's car. There were two ways that I had available to transfer power to Shelly's battery. I could use my charger and plug it in the side of the building at which we were parked and transfer power through the charger unit to Shelly's battery. Or I could transfer power from a car's battery to her car battery through jumper cables.

The Holy Spirit has many ways to transfer Spiritual power into our spiritual batteries. God's power can be transferred to us through spiritual disciplines of prayer or worship, or by serving other people in the name and power of Christ. God's power can transfer to us when we meditate on the word of God. These things don't work if they are done only as a method. They must be done in faith and love. Of course sometimes God just chooses to call our name and fill us with His power just because He wants to for His good reasons.

If God has given us ways that He will transfer His spiritual power to our spiritual batteries why don't we hook up the cables onto the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit? What is stopping us?

Our spiritual batteries do not hold a charge for very long. We have to clamp on the power or we won't run right.

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Jesus Christ takes up residence in the hearts of those who place their faith in Him for salvation and forgiveness of sins.

The word “dwell” carries the idea of a house. God has identified at least three or more areas in which He specifically dwells.

Where Does God Dwell?

1. First God fills the universe with His presence. It is problematic to say that God dwells only in a temple or only in our hearts. God is omnipresent. Omni means all. And so God is able somehow to be everywhere.

A.W.Tozier, an author who wrote devotionals stated that people get the wrong idea when they think of God as living in some far distant place. Tozier states that if God is omnipresent, then in some way God’s creation exists inside of Him. The truth of God living everywhere has been communicated in God’s own word.

1 Kings 8:27 27 “But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!

Jeremiah 23:23-24 23 “Am I only a God nearby,” declares the LORD, “and not a God far away? 24 Who can hide in secret places so that I cannot see them?” declares the LORD. “Do not I fill heaven and earth?” declares the LORD.

2. The second place that God lives is inside of every believer. The bible presents the idea that God moves into us like a person moves into a house that was recently purchased. We belong to God. When we get that right

and are willing to fully surrender His property to Him, then He moves in.

3. The third place that God lives is inside a group of his people when we gather as a unified body. In our individualistic culture we think only of God living inside of each of us when we receive Him. However, many of the references to God creating a dwelling place among His people are a reference to the gathering of believers.

Ephesians 2:21

21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

Hebrews 10:25 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

If we think we have experienced all that God offers but we have no Christian fellowship we are deceived. Spiritual gifts and encouragement and preaching the word of God and communion and many other means by which God uses to fill His people with His power only occur when we gather.

**17 continued...And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 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,
ROOTED AND ESTABLISHED IN LOVE**

The words rooted and established bring to mind the image of a large plant or tree.

ILLUSTRATION: A friend of mine owned a property that had a lot of open farming land. However, the wind really came across that land and that created some problems. So he purchased a huge machine with a sharp claw that could dig into the ground, cut the roots of a tree and pull it up all with the same tool.

He started going into the heavy woods on the back of his property and pulling trees and replanting them around his open fields. He could take a 20 foot tall tree and pull it out of the ground and then pick a new location and put it back into the ground.

Before the newly transplanted trees grew roots they could be pushed over by a small child. They had to be staked and tied. But once those trees were rooted, you could run into that tree with your car and the tree might even survive.

The passage we are studying today is not speaking to theology or head knowledge, but of experience.

We experience the love of God each time we pray and worship and truly seek His face. And the Spirit of God by a miracle ushers us into the presence of God. The bible speaks of being filled with the Spirit of God. When we are filled with the Spirit of God the love and joy of God is experienced in our hearts and in our lives. This type of love can be experienced by all believers. The more we experience the love of God, the more God's love takes root in us and grows strong. The more we practice loving behavior toward others the more the love of God takes root.

HAVE POWER TOGETHER WITH ALL GOD'S PEOPLE

This passage intimates that the love of Christ can be experienced in

it's fullness alongside other believers. Paul's prayer is that together we would know the power of God along with all of God's people. God's love is so great that it takes the testimonies of many different people who have been shown the love of God to get even a glimpse of how great the love of God truly is.

The world offers love as a quid pro quo. If you do something my way then I will show you love. But God's love is given to us as a gift, and then we give love to others not with strings but as a gift, the same way it came to us. After you giving love with strings, or are you giving love the way it came to you?

TO GRASP THE LOVE OF CHRIST

To "grasp" the love of God means we reach out and take hold of this love. I think that is an admirable goal for each of us. The love of God is available to us personally. It begins with knowing Him. And it continues to grow and be renewed by seeking His presence. And we take hold of it both as individuals and together.

19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Often the answer to every problem in the church is to start a bible study or class or program. If only people had more information they would come around. It is the same way in the world. The answer to all acts of violence and hatred is supposedly education and information. But giving people more facts does not change the amount of love in their heart.

But we have the type of love from God that surpasses knowledge. Ephesians 3:18 said that we could *grasp* the love of God. Now this

passage tells us that we can *experience* the love of Christ. The love of Jesus Christ that comes to us through our relationship with Him is beyond words and explanations. After all, how do you explain a miracle? How do you explain that as you seek God - the power of God moves upon our hearts and souls and suddenly we find that we love others in a way that we could not come up with on our own.

20 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,

Paul uses superlatives to describe God's abilities and God's power. The terms; "Immeasurably" and "more than" shows that we can not even measure how much God is capable of doing. In fact we don't even fill our imagination with all that God is able and willing to do.

Our imaginations are usually filled with the stuff we want or that we want to see happen. We think step by step in our minds about what we want or how things should be done. But God can do even more than what we could imagine.

Often we limit our prayers to gizzards and gout and broken vehicles when God wants to take a city. Yes God cares about our aches and pains. I am thankful because I have had my share of aches and pains. But he is able to use frail people like us to do things bigger than what we could imagine.

One of my mentors shared that we should have goals that are impossible to reach except with God's intervention. So how big are your dreams right now? Are your dreams and vision and imagination filled with God sized stuff?

VISIONARY MOMENT

Speaking of big dreams; I believe we have four basic things that we need to accomplish before God will begin growing this church like crazy and turning our hearts and efforts to build a new church. You will hear about these four things in the preaching series and in our meetings in January. If everyone of us turns our hearts to the lost and focuses our efforts at inviting the lost or those who need to get back to the faith, and if we join together to help grow up these new spiritual children we will have to build a much larger structure. Not just to have a new a cool looking church, but to house a great movement of God.

21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

GLORY THROUGH THE CHURCH

This is a powerful doxology (or closing statement). Notice that this doxology is about glory. First, it is about God receiving glory through the church. Does our activity in the church bring glory to God or to an individual? Does our attitude toward others in the church bring glory to God?

GLORY IN JESUS CHRIST

And then Paul prays that God would be glorified through Jesus Christ. We often think God came up with a plan of salvation because he felt sorry for us. He did, but that is secondary; there is something bigger at stake. God did all of these things mentioned for the sake of His own glory and to share His own glory with His Son, The Lord Jesus Christ.

THE CHIEF END OF MAN

The Westminster Shorter Catechism asks, "What is the chief end of man?"

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.

1 Corinthians 10:31 *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.;*

Isaiah 43:6-7 *6 I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Do not withhold; bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the end of the earth, 7 everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

Ultimately we are saved as a reflection of God's glory. The amazing word of Jesus Christ the Son of God is on display through us and through His church. When we get a little cocky or selfish we can remember that we are here for God's purposes. The chief end of man is to bring glory to God. We are not the center of the universe. It is all about God! God is not the afterthought.

TAKING IT HOME

1. What is your plan to take grasp and take hold of God's love?
2. How is God's love being renewed in you?
3. How is God's love seen by the way you are loving others in the body or in the community?
4. What would you say the chief end of your life is right now? To glorify yourself or to glorify God?
5. Is your imagination filled with God sized dreams and prayers?