



THE GOSPEL TRANSFORMS

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

Grace to Know Christ's Love

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Think about the most loving human relationship you have experienced. Perhaps the relationship is your marriage, a child, a parent, or a friend. Now, think about the most loving relationship you can imagine. You may not know it, but that relationship is the relationship that each member of the Trinity experiences with one another. Everything good exists in good to an infinite extent, and each member of the Trinity expresses this goodness for the good of the other. Now, think on this truth. In John 17:26: "I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." The perfect love that the Father has for the Son is now in us! This is Jesus' prayer in John 17:26, and this is the reality we experience as God's people. Be overwhelmed and rejoice!



The main point of Ephesians 3:14-21 is Paul praying that we would realize this truth more deeply. Let's investigate this truth together, Church family.

PRAYER TO KNOW CHRIST'S LOVE: EPHESIANS 3:14-19

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

Paul prays for the second time in Ephesians in Ephesians 3:14-21. He says he is praying, “for this reason.” The reason is the content of Ephesians 2:1-3:13. In these verses, Paul described how God has brought new creation into the old creation. He has made “one new man” through Christ and in the Spirit. The curse has been reversed in Christ since the Ephesian Christians experience reconciliation with God and with



one another despite their cultural backgrounds. Because God has reconciled the Ephesians to God and to one another in Christ, Paul prays that they would know more the love of Christ more deeply.

Paul's prayer is addressed to the Father who is described as sovereignly in control over all of creation. First, let's rejoice that we can address God as Father. The Father/Son relationship describes how God relates to his children, and let's remember the identity of the Ephesians prior to trusting in Christ. They were spiritually dead, followers of the devil, and children of wrath (2:1-3). Yet, now we can address God as Father. Second, our Father is in control over all of creation. The idea of the word "family," as opposed to nation, communicates the extent of God's control. He is not merely in control of the nations, large groups of people, but he controls even small groups, family units. Moreover, most of your English Bibles have a note that says the word for family is related to the word Father. That is right – the word for family is patria. Paul is playing on the word "father" – pater – in order to highlight that all of creation depends on God. Third, notice that it is not only the families of the earth that depend on God, but also the heavenly families. The idea is not that angels have family units like us (Mark 12:25), but that all of the angelic beings – the good and the bad – depend on God. Paul is praying to God who is the Father of the Ephesian Christians.



Paul's request is that God would give the church power to be strengthened (3:16). Notice that Paul's request is not for the church to be strong. The church is not active here; rather, they are passive. Paul is asking that God would do something – he prays that God would give the Ephesians his glorious grace. This is an important reminder that we are always in need of God's grace. Truly, the first step in the faith was by grace for we were saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9), and likewise, each step in our walk with God is by grace. Paul prays that God would give the church grace to be strong.

God makes us strong through the Holy Spirit (16b). Notice that our strength is not the basis of human power, but on God's power. See that Paul does not say in verse 16, "through your hard work," "through charismatic church leaders," or "through great church programs." Now, none of those things are wrong, but the strength we need is from the Spirit, and he willingly gives it to us. What a comfort!

We learn quickly in the Scripture that each person of the Trinity works together. We learn here that the result of the Spirit making us strong is that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith. Now, the Ephesians have had Christ dwelling in their hearts from the moment they believed (see a verse like Romans 8:10); yet, Paul's prayer is that God would



permit Christ to be deeply rooted in our lives through the Spirit and by faith. Paul's prayer is that the church would experience the full reality of their identity. They are "one new man" with access to God through Christ and in the Spirit. Paul wants them to experience the fullness of this glorious reality.

Church family, this is my prayer too. My prayer for you is that you would experience the realities of being new creation: 1) We have been reconciled to God because of Christ. Therefore, you have peace; this is a reality – Christ is your peace (2:14). You also have hope; you will live forever with God reigning with him in his kingdom. This too is a reality. 2) We have been reconciled to one another. The things that once divided believers, no longer divide. Paul told us we are "fellow citizens," "joined together," and "built together" (Ephesians 2:18-22). Although these are realities available to the church, the church may not always experience them. Thus, Paul prays that God would continue to give them grace to experience these realities. I pray the same thing for you church family, and I ask that you join me and Paul in praying the same thing for our church.

The reason why Paul is praying this prayer is described in verses 17b-19. The purpose is that the Ephesians might comprehend and know God's love. Notice how



each person of the Trinity is working toward this end – you know the love of Christ! God gives grace through the Spirit so that Christ might dwell in our hearts. When I think about this truth, I am tempted in my sin to think, “This is too grand; this truth is too overwhelming to be true.” I think that it may even be blasphemy to think that each member of the Trinity would be working in my life so that I know his love! But this is true, and this truth depicts powerfully the glory of our God. Our God works to overwhelm us with his goodness for our joy and his glory! We will talk about this soon since verse 31 makes this point. For now, rejoice in the character of our God.

Paul prays that the church would know Christ’s love better, but this does not mean that they do not already know it. Let’s look at the end of verse 17 – the church is rooted and grounded in love. They have already experienced and know this love; yet, the purpose of Christ dwelling in them more deeply is that they would comprehend and know this love more profoundly and notice how Paul describes this love – in terms of dimensions, breadth and length, and height and depth. The purpose of this description is to depict the vastness of God’s love. The image of dimensions without limit indicates vast, immense, and infinite love!



The second description of Christ's love forces us again to contemplate the vastness of God's love – he says it “surpasses knowledge.” Church family, Paul is praying that the church would know the love of Christ.

Therefore, it is entirely appropriate for us to learn about Christ, to reflect on his love, and to read about his love in Scripture. Paul definitely had this mind since he is written to them about Christ's love. However, we must understand that the knowledge we have of Christ's love is not the depth of his love. His love exceeds even the deepest degree of knowable love. This means that the love of Christ is deeper than any other love you know: the love for a spouse, a parent, or the love for a child – Christ's love is deeper. This is one reason why the comprehension of Christ's love always leads God's people to amazement and awe. The search for seeking out the deeps of Christ's love is good, but to the bottom we will never plunge. Thus, we stand amazed!

Finally, Paul tells the Ephesians the final purpose of his prayer. Paul asks that God would give strength to the Ephesians so that they would be filled with the fullness of God (19). The fullness of God indicates his moral excellence, perfection and power, and Christ alone is the fullness of God as Paul made clear in Colossians 2:9-10. The amazing reality is that Christ – who is the fullness of God – dwells in us by the Spirit and through



faith. The realities of being in Christ is that we are reconciled to God and to one another. Paul, therefore, prays that these realities would be experienced by the Ephesian Christians.

PRAISE FOR CHRIST'S AMAZING LOVE: EPHESIANS 3:20-21

“*20 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, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

There is only a blurry line between Paul's prayers to God and his praises of God. Look how Paul describes God in verses 20-21. First, Paul describes God as powerful. He says that “God is able to do far more abundantly.” Our knowledge of God must be characterized by the doctrine that God is all powerful. The all-powerful God breathed this world into existence, and he accomplished new creation in Christ is our Father. He is able to answer our prayers.

Second, Paul explains that God uses his strength for our good. He loves to answer our prayers. Our God is able and willing to give us grace so that we experience the realities the define us as the church of Jesus Christ.



When we think of God, we must think in this way: God is powerful, and God loves us. To forget one of these truths is devastating. If we think God is powerful but not kind, his power will terrify us or make us non-emotional toward God because he is just going to do what he wills. That is anti-Christ and not the God of the Bible. If we think that God is kind but not powerful, we will assert ourselves and rely on our own power. This too is not the God we serve. We serve the God who controls all things, and yet, he loves us.

Third, Paul proclaims that God satisfies us with good for his glory. Paul cannot stop himself. After stating in verse 20 how good God is to us – he uses his strength for our good – he prays that God would be glorified. Church family, God's glory is the display of his worth and Paul is begging that God would be glorified in the Church and in Christ Jesus forever. God is glorified in the church because God is the author of the church. We are his workmanship (Ephesians 2:9), and without him working for us, we would still be dead in our sins. Moreover, God is glorified in Christ Jesus because his death made the church a reality.

Church family, God is at work in us and in Christ, who is the head of the Church, for his glory. Let's think about that. When the God of this universe uses his power to serve us, what is proclaimed to the universe.



The universe hears a mighty message of God's overwhelming reputation. God is good to us despite us. When we hear this, we worship. When the angels hear this, they worship. When the demons hear this, they shutter. This is all for the glory of God!



CONCLUSION

Church family let's pray for one another this week. Let's pray that we would experience the realities available to us as God's people. We are reconciled to God and to one another because each member of the Trinity has worked toward this aim. Let's be dedicated to learning about the love of Christ and let's rejoice that all eternity will not be enough time to reach the bottom of this vast love. Finally, let's rejoice that we get to be caught up into the overflow of this love. Indeed, "God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us... made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:4). How unexpected and how glorious!

Non-Christian, come to the God whose riches are his grace. Come to the God who delights in doing good to you despite you. Come to God today by trusting that Jesus died for you and by turning from your sin.





LET'S PRAY

God give us grace to be strengthened with your power that we might know Christ's love more today. Help us to grow in this love, and let this love transform us to be who you made us to be: a community where we all experience unity in Christ amid our God-glorifying diversity. Do this for the salvation of the lost in our community and around the world and for your glory. In Jesus name we pray, amen

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