

Ephesians 3:14-21 (ESV) – The Extent of God’s Love

Main point: God’s love and power on our behalf are beyond understanding—so we pray for strength to grasp it and live in it.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Paul is in prison in Rome for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Just before the section we’re looking at today, he tells his readers to “not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory,” because God’s wisdom and eternal purpose “might now be made known.”

Focus of the study:

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

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

Questions:

1. v. 14: Paul starts out “For this reason...” What reason is he’s talking about? Where is he?
 - a. v. 13: In prison – and he doesn’t want them to lose heart over it.
2. What does it mean to lose heart?
 - a. Feel sad, feel it’s a waste
3. What is Paul’s response to his condition in prison? What is he doing?
 - a. v. 14: Praying! “I bow my knees”
4. Does that sound surprising? What else could he be doing? What might you or I be doing??
 - a. Crying 😞 complaining, feeling hopeless
5. Who is he praying to? And what is his prayer?
 - a. The Father, who is head of every family on earth in heaven
 - b. v. 16-17: “According to the riches of his glory he may grant you...”
 - i. to be strengthened
 - ii. [how?] with power through his Spirit
 - iii. [where?] in your inner being
 - iv. [why?] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith
6. What happens when our hearts are filled with faith? [generate lots of ideas]
 - a. Scary things don’t look so scary
 - b. Assurance that God is in control, etc.

7. *Why do we need strength to have this kind of faith? How do circumstances look?*
 - a. Things and people around us look like they're in control
 - i. *to Paul in prison, might it look like the Romans are in control? But who's really in control? God and only God!*
 - b. Also: God's love is so huge that we can't comprehend it without divine help
8. Paul then continues and expands his prayer for them:
 - a. v. 17: "that you, being rooted and grounded in love"
 - i. *what does being rooted and grounded mean for a plant?*
 - ii. *So what would it mean for a heart?*
9. v. 18: *Paul brings up strength again! His deep desire is that they'd have the "strength to comprehend with all the saints..." What does he want them to get a grasp of?*
 - a. **God's amazing love: how big is it?**
 - i. the breadth and length and height and depth [use lots of hand motions!]
 - ii. that surpasses knowledge
 - b. *Toward what end?*
 - i. That you may be filled with all the fullness of God. *How full would that be?? What does something that's really full look like?*
10. Then Paul wraps it up with this amazing benediction: "Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think...."
 - a. *Think about what you can think of to ask God; what sorts of things could we ask for? [generate ideas]*
 - b. *How does Paul describe God's power? Is he able?*
 - i. Far more abundantly than all that we ask or think!
 - ii. *How much is that??*

God's love for us is so huge that we actually need strength to even begin to grasp it. God's power is so complete that he is able to do far, far, far beyond anything we could ask or even think. And that love is all for US – that we would know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God. That's a lot!

11. Ask for prayer requests for today.
12. Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
13. End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace