

Ephesians 3: 14-21 (ESV) – 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: The apostle Paul, St. Paul, was in prison in Rome for preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. Just before the section we’re looking at today, Paul tells his readers, the young believers in the town of Ephesus, to “not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.”

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 God’s glory God 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 God who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹to God 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 Paul talking about? Where is Paul?
 - a. v. 13: In prison – and Paul doesn’t want his readers to lose heart over it.
2. What does it mean to “lose heart”?
 - a. Feel sad, feel it’s a waste, get discouraged, depressed
3. What is Paul’s response to his condition in prison? What is Paul doing?
 - a. v. 14: Praying! “I bow my knees before the Father”
4. Does that sound surprising? What else could Paul be doing? If you or I were in prison, what are some of the things we might be doing??
 - a. Crying, complaining, feeling hopeless
5. Who is Paul praying to? And what is Paul’s prayer?
 - a. He is praying to the Father, who Paul says is the head of every family on earth in heaven
 - b. v. 16-17: His prayer is that “according to the riches of God’s glory, God may grant you...”
 - i. to be strengthened
 - ii. [how?] with power through God’s Spirit
 - iii. [where?] in your inner being
 - iv. [why?] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith
6. What happens when your heart is filled with faith? How do you feel when your faith is strong? [generate lots of ideas]
 - a. Scary things don’t look so scary
 - b. Assurance that God is in control
 - c. Peace even when circumstances aren’t peaceful

- d. Joy and anticipation in God working things out ... etc.
7. Why do we need strength to have this kind of faith in God? A lot of the time, how powerful 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? Sure! But who's really in control?
 1. God and only God!
8. Paul then continues and expands his prayer for them:
- a. v. 17: "that you, being rooted and grounded in love"
 - i. Let's think about that. If you're a plant, what does it mean if you're rooted and grounded?
 1. Healthy, getting nourishment, not swayed or weak.
 - ii. So what would it mean for your heart to be rooted and grounded?
 1. The same: strong, not swayed by circumstances
9. v. 18: Paul brings up strength again! His deep desire is that these young believers would have the "strength to comprehend with all the saints..." What does Paul want his readers to grasp?
- a. **God's amazing love: how big is it? What are the words Paul uses?**
 - i. the breadth and length and height and depth [use lots of hand motions!]
 - ii. that surpasses knowledge: *how big is that??*
 - b. Why does Paul want them to grasp this love's magnitude? What is the outcome he's praying for them?
 - i. v. 19: "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?*
 1. Overflowing, abundant, infinite
10. Then Paul wraps up his words with this amazing benediction, or blessing: "Now to God who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think..."
- a. Think about what you could possibly think of to ask God. What sorts of things could we ask God for? [generate ideas]
 - b. How does Paul describe God's power? Is God 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!

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

Ephesians 3: 14-21

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