All-Ages Adult Life Group Expositional Study

Ephesians Ch. 3:14-21

Rooted in Love, Power to Comprehend

Paul's Prayer for Christ to Dwell in Us and God's Love to Transform Us

Class Reference: Knowing the Bible Series

Week 7: Prayer for Love (Eph. 3:14-21)

August 31, 2025

Version 2

Prepared by Paul Szydlowski

9:05

Introduction – Paul's Prayer for the Church

Ephesians 3:14-21 is one of Paul's most powerful prayers.

- He bows before the Father in humility, asking that believers be strengthened by the Spirit.
- His desire is that Christ dwell deeply in our hearts, rooting us in His love.
- He prays that we might grasp the limitless dimensions of Christ's love and be filled with all the fullness of God.
- The prayer ends in doxology: God is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine—for His glory in Christ and the church, forever.

Theme: God's love and power are more than enough to transform us and glorify Him.

Today's Verses Ephesians 3:14-21

THE SPIRIT'S POWER (3:14-16)
READER #1:

CHRIST'S INDWELLING (3:17a)
READER #2:

LOVE'S ABUNDANCE (3:17b-19a)
READER #3:

GOD'S FULLNESS (3:19b)
READER #4:

THE LORD'S GLORY (3:20-21)

READER #5:

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family 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.

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.

www.esv.org ESV® Bible, Copyright © 2012 by Crossway.

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) THE SPIRIT'S POWER (3:14-16)

¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

- For this reason: Because believers have been made alive in Christ, joined to God's household, and are His dwelling through the Spirit, Paul humbly bows his knees in reverence before a loving Father who welcomes His children without fear. (Ref. Eph. 2:19–20; Ps. 95:1–6).
- Prayer is rooted in God's sovereignty, not opposed to it.
 - Paul bows in prayer because he trusts God's will, not in spite of it. (Ref. Dan. 9:18–19; Matt. 6:9–10).
 - Quote (Calvin): "Nothing is better adapted to excite us to prayer than a full conviction that we shall be heard."
- "Every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" refers to all believers, past and present, who
 share one Father and one spiritual identity in Christ—not universal fatherhood. READ: John 8:39–44

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) THE SPIRIT'S POWER (3:14-16) CONTINUED

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,

- Paul asks God to strengthen believers in the <u>inner man</u> through the Spirit, according to—not merely out of—His limitless riches. This deep work transforms thinking, desires, and will, enabling victory over sin and endurance through trials. READ: <u>2 Cor. 4:16</u>; <u>Gal. 5:16</u>
- Believers are strengthened <u>inwardly</u> by the Spirit. READ: <u>Philippians 4:13</u> (Discuss Context)
 - Paul prays for power in the "inner being."
 - Quote (Lloyd-Jones): "We do not merely need a little help. We need to be strengthened to the very center of our being by the Spirit of God."
- **DISCUSS:** Spiritual growth flows from feeding on God's Word, yielding to the Spirit, and obeying daily. As **your inner being** grows stronger, sin's hold weakens, and hardships lose their power to shake us.
- Work of the Spirit: He notes that the Holy Spirit is the agent. Strengthening is not by our willpower but by divine power applied inwardly.
- QUESTION: If we already possess the limitless riches of God's glory in Christ, what does it reveal about our faith when our "inner man" shows little strength or growth?

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) CHRIST'S INDWELLING (3:17a)

^{17a} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—

- **Christ**—the focus of Paul's prayer—is the living Lord who alone has the right to rule and shape the believer's life.
- Paul prays believers will be strengthened so that Christ may **dwell in your hearts**—not at conversion, but in a sanctifying sense where He is fully at home. **READ**: <u>Col. 1:27</u>
- Dwell (katoikeō) pictures a permanent, welcomed resident—every area of life yielded to Him, not a guest we restrict. READ: John 14:23
- This happens **through faith**—a continuing trust that submits each "room" of our hearts to His lordship, producing holiness and joy.
- God's aim is not just presence but deep fellowship—Christ shaping our desires and character from within.

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) LOVE'S ABUNDANCE (3:17b-19a) CONTINUED

Spurgeon Quote: "When Christ enters the heart, he comes not as a lodger, but as the master of the house."

The Spanish Inquisition Prisoner's Cross

When Napoleon's soldiers broke into an old prison during their conquest of Spain, they found a skeleton in chains. On the wall nearby, the prisoner had carved a rough cross. Around the cross were four words in Spanish: altura, profundidad, anchura, longitud—height, depth, width, and length. These were the dimensions of Christ's love he clung to in suffering. Though the world had forgotten him, he left behind a testimony to the reality of Ephesians 3:18–19: "to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge."

The Point: Even in the darkest confinement, Christ's love sustains his people.

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) LOVE'S ABUNDANCE (3:17b-19a) CONTINUED

^{17b} 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,

- Rooted and grounded in love When Christ dwells freely in our hearts, His self-giving agape love becomes the foundation of our lives, producing a steadfast, Spirit-empowered commitment to love others. READ: John 13:34.
- Able to comprehend Immersed in God's love, believers grow in understanding together with all
 the saints; love is not for a select few but is the normal Christian life. READ: Rom. 5:5.
- **Breadth, length, height, and depth** God's love reaches all people, spans eternity, lifts us to the heavens, and stoops to the lowest sinner; it is limitless in every direction.
- Surpasses knowledge Christ's love transcends human understanding; it is known through personal experience with Him, not merely by intellectual study.
- QUESTION: If Christ's love is as boundless as Paul describes, how should that change the way we
 respond to people we find most difficult to love?

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) GOD'S FULLNESS (3:19b)

^{19b} that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

- Filled God's goal is that His children be completely dominated by His presence and character—every thought, desire, and action shaped by Him. To be filled means nothing of self remains in control; all is surrendered to Him. READ: Eph. 5:18
- Fullness of God This is God making us like Himself, filling us with His love, wisdom, power, holiness, and mercy, so that His attributes shape our entire being. Though we now see only "the fringes of His ways," the Spirit works toward the day we will be fully like Christ. READ: Ps. 17:15
- This fullness is not partial possession of God, but His total lordship over the believer's life—
 a life emptied of self, saturated with His Spirit, and reflecting His glory to the world.
- QUESTION: If God's supreme goal is to fill us completely with Himself, what areas of your life would need to be emptied for Him to have that kind of total rule?

9:53



Abraham Asking for a Son, Receiving Nations

Abraham longed for just one heir. In Genesis 15, he pleaded with God about his childlessness. God promised not only a son but descendants like the stars of heaven. Abraham asked for one child; God gave him nations. Hebrews 11:12 says his offspring became as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

The Point: God does "immeasurably more than all we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). Our prayers are small, but God's purposes are vast.

Moses Facing Pharaoh

When God called Moses from the burning bush, Moses protested: "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" (Ex. 3:11). He feared he would fail. Yet God promised his presence, and through Moses, unleashed plagues on Egypt, parted the Red Sea, fed Israel with manna, and gave them his law. What Moses thought impossible became history's great display of God's redeeming power.

The Point: When we feel inadequate, God's Spirit works far beyond our weakness—again echoing Ephesians 3:20–21.

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) THE LORD'S GLORY (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.

God does immeasurably more than we ask or imagine.

Paul erupts in doxology: "Now to him who is able..."

Additional References: Eph. 3:20-21; Jude 24-25; Isa. 55:8-9.

Jonathan Edwards Quote: "God is the highest good of the reasonable creature; the enjoyment of him is our proper happiness."

The Fullness of God (3:14-21) THE LORD'S GLORY (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.

- Far more abundantly God's power surpasses all we ask or think when we yield to the Spirit, Christ's indwelling, and God's fullness. READ: John 14:12–14
- According to the power at work within us The resurrection power that saved us actively shapes
 and energizes believers for God's purposes.
- To Him be glory All spiritual power and fruit exist to honor God; true ministry depends on His Spirit so results point unmistakably to Him. READ: 1 Cor. 2:4
- In the church God's glory is displayed in the redeemed community, uniting believers to manifest His power through shared faith and life.
- In Christ Jesus God's glory in believers is grounded in union with Christ, sustaining His work across
 all generations, forever.
- QUESTION: How can we better cultivate a daily openness to God's power working "far more abundantly" in our own lives?

Some Practical Applications

- Pray Dependently: Approach God in humble confidence, knowing His power is at work within you.
- Strengthen the Inner Life: Feed on Scripture, walk by the Spirit, and let Him shape your desires and will.
- Welcome Christ Fully: Yield every "room" of your heart to Christ's lordship; don't keep Him as a guest.
- Love Radically: Extend Christ's limitless love, even to the most difficult people, reflecting His boundless grace.
- Expect God's Power: Pray big prayers, trust His purposes, and look for Him to do far more than you imagine.



Key Take Aways

- The Spirit's Power: God strengthens us in the inner being through His Spirit, not by our willpower.
- Christ's Indwelling: Christ dwells in our hearts as Lord, not as a guest, shaping every part of our lives.
- Love's Abundance: Rooted and grounded in His love, we grow to grasp the limitless breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love.
- God's Fullness: God's goal is to fill us completely with Himself, leaving no room for self-rule.
- The Lord's Glory: God does immeasurably more than we ask or imagine; all glory belongs to Him in the church and in Christ forever.

ESV Commentary Outline

- VI. Paul's Situation, Stewardship, and Service (3:1–13)
 - A. Paul's Situation (3:1)
 - B. Paul's Stewardship of the Mystery (3:2-7)
 - C. Paul's Service in Proclaiming the Mystery (3:8-12)
 - D. Paul's Encouragement to the Ephesians (3:13)
- VII. Paul's Second Prayer (3:14–21)
 - A. Adress to the Father (3:14–15)
 - B. Prayer for Strength (3:16–17a)
 - C. Prayer for Understanding (3:17b–19a)
 - D. Prayer for Filling (3:19b)
 - E. Praise to God (<u>3:20–21</u>)

JM Outline

```
The Mystery Revealed (3:1-13)
     THE PRISONER OF THE MYSTERY (3:1-4)
     THE PLAN OF THE MYSTERY (3:5-6)
     THE PREACHING OF THE MYSTERY (3:7-9)
     THE PURPOSE OF THE MYSTERY (3:10-11)
     THE PRIVILEGE OF THE MYSTERY (3:12-13)
The Fullness of God (3:14-21)
     THE SPIRIT'S POWER (3:14-16)
     CHRIST'S INDWELLING (3:17a)
     LOVE'S ABUNDANCE (3:17b-19b)
     GOD'S FULLNESS (3:19b)
    THE LORD'S GLORY (3:20-21)
```

■ Ephesians 3:17 ▶

Ephesians 3 - Click for Chapter



Christ dwells in our hearts as the rightful owner.

We are rooted and grounded in love.

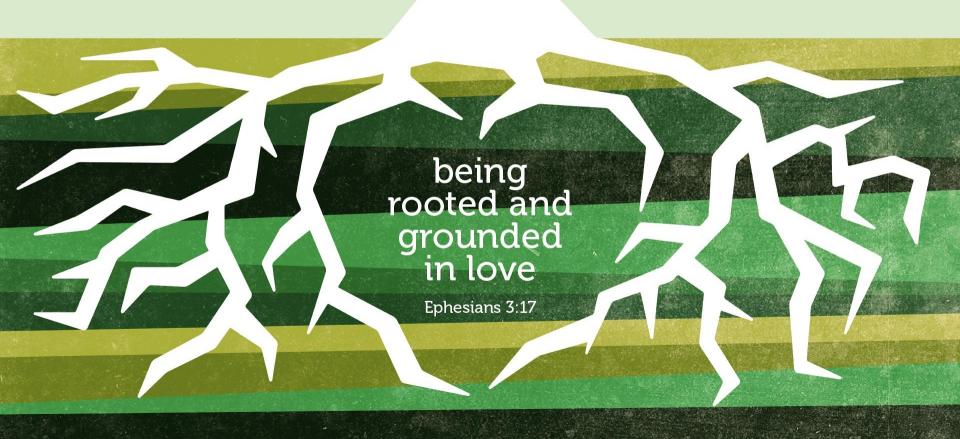
The verb *katoikeō* = permanent residence, not a passing guest.

READ: John 14:23; Col. 1:27. (Additional References: Col. 2:6–7; 1 John 4:19)

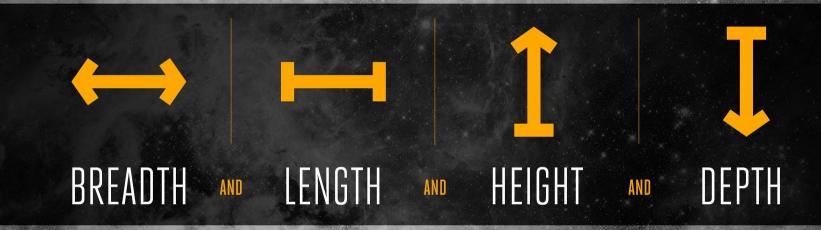
Love is both the soil (roots) and the foundation (grounding).

Spurgeon Quote: "When Christ enters the heart, he comes not as a lodger, but as the master of the house."

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you,



.. may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the

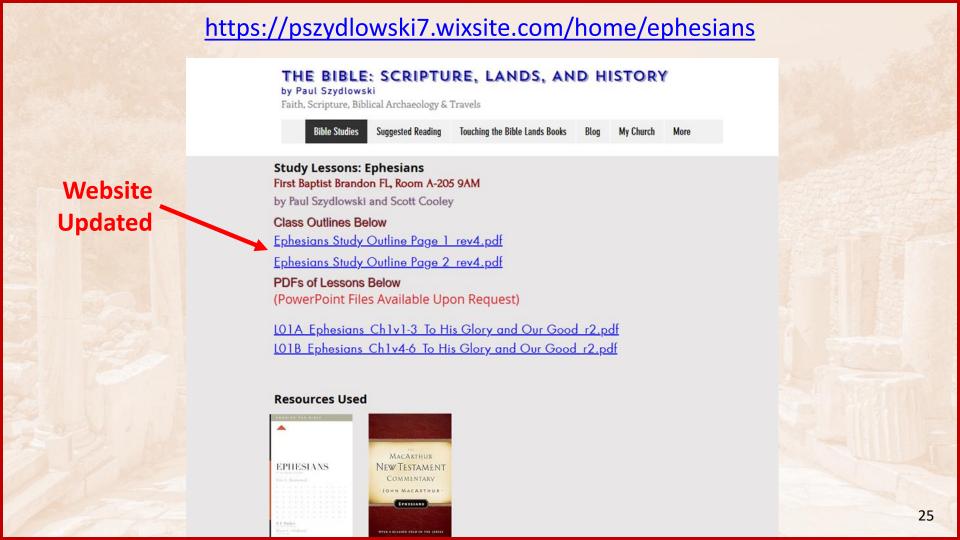


and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

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, TO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH AND IN CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL GENERATIONS, FOREVER AND EVER. AMEN.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21



A Review: Why Study Ephesians?

- It has been called the "Queen of the Epistles" or the "Crown of Paul's Theology"
- Rich in:
 - Trinitarian theology
 - ecclesiology
 - and soteriology

QUESTION: What are these?

- Offers a heavenly perspective on earthly living
- "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:3)