

What Fuels Your Christian Walk?

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 00] Our sermon text today is Ephesians chapter 3, verse 16, 17, 18, and 19. But I'm going to read a little bit more as we get a context of what Paul is saying in chapter 3 of this wonderful letter to the church in Ephesus.

This is our last sermon in our series on covenant theology. And I just have the luxury in a series like this of picking any text you want. We saw Jeremiah 31 last week and Romans or Hebrews 8, which is very specifically about the new covenant.

So for today, I really was just personally so blessed by the assurance we have in Ephesians 3. And the question before us today is, by what power do we walk with Christ in the new covenant?

So as you're hearing this sermon, this sermon text, as we read our passage today, just keep that in mind. What is the power of a Christian to walk in the new covenant? This is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear and sufficient word.

It's God's very own word for you, his people. Ephesians 3, I'm going to start reading in verse 8. To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[1 : 27] And to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ.

To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places.

According to the eternal purpose, which he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him.

Therefore, I ask you, do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this reason, I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

So he says he bows his knee and what is Paul's prayer beginning in verse 16 of our sermon text? That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his spirit and the man and the inner man.

[2 : 37] That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

To him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. You may be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Let's pray. Lord, you are able and more than able to do all that we could ask or even think.

We ask, Lord, that you will work mightily by your power in the lives of your people today. For your glory we pray. Amen. Well, you need fuel to live.

- [4 : 08] Starving your body can cause anxiety, depression, irritability, mental fogginess, poor concentration, trouble sleeping, loss of interest in food, food, binge eating bad stuff.
- All of those things can happen if your body is being starved of the fuel it needs. Your soul needs fuel just as much as your body.
- And if you are starving your soul of the fuel that strengthens and nourishes it, so many more spiritual symptoms will fall on you. If you look in your Bible, the very next verse that I didn't read, look at what Paul exhorts the church in Ephesus with.
- Ephesians 4.1. He says, I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called.
- So my question for you today, beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, by what strength, by what energy, with what fuel are you to walk as a Christian?
- [5 : 29] What fuels your Christian walk? Just like your body has run out of energy, you've had some of those symptoms maybe for not bringing in the right nutrients to your body at a phase of life.
- It's just as important that you pay attention to your soul. What is it that is feeding and fueling your soul? Because you will run out of energy on your own strength. You won't even get two steps.
- Some of you have shared with me how you've gotten to the point of exhaustion and burnout. And it's heartbreaking when it's in the name of Christ, in the name of ministry. And we are so limited and he humbles us.
- But your encouragement to me has been that if we are walking in exactly those simple things that God has called us to do as Christians, he will supply what we need.
- When we burden ourselves with more than what he's called us to, we should expect to exhaust ourselves. But with what energy, what power, what fuel do we walk the Christian life?
- [6 : 30] Well, you picked up on the theme in these verses and it's the love of God. That's the fuel. It's interesting how in Revelation chapter 2, verse 4, the church of Ephesus of the same city is warned by Christ that they have left their first love.
- That's the same problem. But Paul is giving them all of the fuel, all the ammunition they need up front. To illustrate it, make sure you understand why this is so important.
- We've all been on hikes. And if you forgot to, you know, maybe one of the kids didn't eat a good lunch, didn't eat healthy food. They just wanted a snack. And then we go on a hike. They start getting really weak, really low on energy.
- When a child is running on empty, we feed them. Well, Paul, he knows the need of the church. The need of the church is fuel. And instead of feeding them, he prays for them.
- What a great lesson for us. So here is what Paul prays for. Let's look at this. In verse 14, he says, I bend my knee. I pray that God's spirit will make your inner being strong.
- [7 : 42] Verse 16. The Holy Spirit makes your inner being strong. That's a great way to pray for one another. He prays that Christ will dwell in your hearts through faith.
- Verse 17. That Christ himself may dwell in the hearts of his people through faith. He prays that you may be rooted and grounded in God's love.
- Verse 17. That God's love would be the roots of your life. He says, I pray that you will rest in God's name.
- That you belong to his family in heaven and on earth. With all those who were baptized. Verses 15 and 18. He says, I pray that you comprehend Christ's love.

Which passes knowledge. Verse 18 and 19. And as God stretches your mind about Christ's love. Look at what happens in verse 19. You are filled with all the fullness of the Holy God himself.

[8 : 50] Isn't this a great prayer? That's what he prays for. That's the fuel of the church to walk with Christ. Colossians 1.11 is a similar message, Paul.

He wants them to be strengthened with all power. According to his glorious might. For all endurance. And patience with joy. So the fuel.

And the strength. The encouragement for the church. It's the gospel. That is your fuel. That is your encouragement. I want to point out. That this is written to gathered Christians.

Who are joyfully sitting under the word of God. Revealed through Paul. And they're receiving it as Christian people. That want to hear God's word. There's a different category.

Those who truly have no grounds for assurance of the faith. They're not regularly with God's people. They don't want to hear God's word. And they should get a different message. And they do.

[9 : 48] From other New Testament authors. They get law. But to the gathered church. That want God's word. That are regularly with his people. They get gospel. That's the fuel. For the church to walk.

That's what he prays for. Well what does this have to do with covenant keeping? I'm glad you asked that. That's a fair question. Alright. Verses 9 and 11.

Of our sermon text. He says. That it's through the church. That this mystery of God is going to be revealed. He says the mystery that was from the beginning of the ages.

Hidden in God. Is now revealed through Jesus Christ. So he says Jesus Christ. He brings the eternal gospel. That's been God's design. God's eternal decree.

From all ages. It's now in full display. Through the church. So if we trace it back. We can see what was it that God was laying in place.

[10 : 50] So that now it could be in full bloom. Well as we've seen. Genesis 26. 4. The Lord promises that to Abraham. His descendants will be multiplied.

And in your seed. All the nations of earth. Shall be blessed. Galatians 3. 8 interprets this for us. Paul writes that the scripture. Foreseeing that God would justify Gentiles by faith.

Preached the gospel to Abraham. Beforehand. And he quotes that exact phrase. In you. All nations. Shall be blessed. As we saw last week.

This is only possible. This is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The promised seed. So let's connect these dots. Because. The gospel came. Through the line of Abraham.

To the Jews first. And then to all nations. And all the nations are engrafted into Christ. The true vine. And God's eternal purpose. Is realized.

[11 : 47] His everlasting covenant of grace. Is now in full bloom. For all the world. To see. But notice how it's not just. The earth. That sees this.

Look at Ephesians. Chapter 3. Verse 10. There's a cosmic audience. To redemptive history. Verse 10 says.

Now God makes known. His manifold wisdom. By the church. To the principalities. And powers. In heavenly places. According to the eternal purpose.

Which he accomplished. In Christ Jesus our Lord. It's always been. God's intent. That all the principalities.

And powers. In the heavenly places. That means. All of the demons of hell. And twice as many angels in heaven. Would be able to behold. The manifold.

- [12 : 42] Wisdom. Of God. How? Through the church. United to Christ. God. God. God. This is important. Your.
- Sanctification. And your walk. As a Christian. Is. On the most grand scale. Manifold wisdom. If you've been to a military funeral.
- You've seen how. There's a ceremony. For. For placing this blue triangle. On the chest. And I'll explain it in reverse order.
- If you were to take this blue triangle. That has some blue. Some white stars on it. And you unfold it once. Unfold it again. And keep unfolding it. All these. These manifolds. Coming undone.
- You can hold up. The complete flag. Of the USA. And so as we read the Bible. Now we're seeing one fold. After the other. Opening it up. And he's saying to the church.
- [13 : 39] The full picture. The full emblem. Is realized. It's accomplished. In Jesus Christ. And it's being carried out now. And blessings are flowing. To all the nations.
- Through Christ. And all those. He's grafted into him. The manifold wisdom of God. From eternity past. Into eternity future. Is on full display. Through the church.
- In Christ. God is so wise. So as the church. Keeps the new covenant. His eternal purpose. Is being accomplished.
- And that's the object. Really. Of Paul's prayer. We read this in verses. Nine and ten. Which sets up. The actual prayer. Beginning in verse. Fourteen. Fifteen. And sixteen. So that's what this has to do.
- With covenant keeping. Is that God's plan. All along. Is accomplished. In Christ. And carried out. Through the church. So when we pray. For God's kingdom to come. And we pray for. For the will of God.
- [14 : 37] To be done. We are joining our prayers. To the eternal plan. Of God. To bring all nations. Under his kingdom. Through Christ. Whosoever will believe in him.
- Well let's get more specific. It might be helpful. For us to contrast. What Paul does pray for here. With what Paul does not pray for. Because we so often.
- Want to impose our agenda. For God. Upon his church. Don't we? That's what our flesh. Wants to do. And we. We know what that feels like. When the agenda. Of men.
- Is pushed on. And forced on. To the church. And it is exhausting. And so let me just be very clear. What does Paul not pray for? He does not bow his knees.
- In verse 14. And pray that you church. Would approach covenant keeping. Like the Pharisees. That you would find. All the New Testament commands. And then drill them into yourselves.
- [15 : 33] And the people. He does not pray for that. Paul does not pray. That you church. Would take all the Old Testament laws. For national Israel. And try to enforce those.
- On the church either. You're not to pile on. These extra burdens. On God's people. Paul does not pray. That you would work. At dominating a city.
- Or a nation. By Christianizing. All aspects of culture. Until Christ returns. He does not pray. That your work. Would be to transform earth. As if your work.
- Is what will bring. Christ. And the kingdom of heaven. Down for him. He does not pray. That you would constantly question. Whether you are saved. And that you would be always.
- Working harder and harder. To merit more of God's favor. For yourself. He does not pray. That you would expect. Perfection out of yourself. And set yourself up.

- [16 : 27] For disappointment. And vent. Your frustration. By being critical. Of others. The reason I picked. These handful of examples. Is because that is what.
- Man's agenda. Often brings. That is what the Judaizers. Were doing in Ephesus. And the churches in Galatia. And Paul is bringing. A very different prayer. For the people of God.
- Those things can sound spiritual. But we all need to be very careful. If it is not the pride. Of our own flesh. Creeping in. And trying to burden ourselves.
- Or the church. With works. That are not. Ordained. That are not part of this mission. That the Lord has made. Very clear to his church. And if we start to fall for that.
- We need to ask him. To pull us back. We don't want to be fooled. Like the Galatians. Galatians 2. Verses 2 and 3. Paul asked the church. Let me ask you this. Did you receive the spirit.
- [17 : 24] By works of the law. Or by hearing with faith. Are you so foolish. Having begun. By the spirit. Are you now being perfected. By the flesh. And the answer is.
- No. He began a good work in us. By faith. He will perfect us. To use his own word there. He will sanctify us. He will make us more and more like Christ. Through that same principle.
- Grace. Through faith. Well. According to Paul's prayer. What does then. Fuel. Your walk. In the covenant. Of grace.
- If that's what he did not pray for. What does he pray for. What is the true fuel. Of a Christian's walk. In the covenant. Of grace. I've got five points. For us on this.
- Number one. God keeps you. In his gracious. New covenant. Through his spirit. In your inner being. To give you strength. With might. Look at verse 16.
- [18 : 21] He prays that you will be strengthened. With might. Through his holy spirit. In the inner man. The inner man. Or the inner being. That's the part of you that is united to Christ.
- It's your soul. Romans 6. 6 uses this language. He says. Your old self. Referring to the flesh. Or the outer man. Was crucified with Jesus Christ.
- In order that the body of sin. Might be brought to nothing. Be strengthened with might. He says. Or with power. In the original language.
- The word is duname. It even sounds like. Our English word dynamite. That's the same meaning. And that's. That's what God used in Matthew 6. He said. In the Lord's prayer. For thine is the kingdom.
- And the power. And the glory forever. It's God's power. In the inner man. It's the Holy Spirit. Inside. Your soul.
- [19 : 17] That's the source of your power. Your might. Your dynamism. He supplies you. He feeds you. He strengthens you. And the Holy Spirit. And the inner being.
- Slowly overtakes. And replaces. The lust. Of the flesh. That's how God keeps you. In the covenant of grace. It's by the Holy Spirit.
- Strengthening the inner being. Number two. God keeps you. In his gracious covenant. According to verse 17. As Christ. Dwells in your hearts.
- Through faith. The spirit. Unites you to Christ. And then Christ. Christ Jesus. The king of kings. He dwells. In your heart. He graciously.
- Takes. The throne. Of a heart. That is low before him. A heart that repents. Of unbelief. And that has died. To proud. Self-righteousness.
- [20 : 14] That's the kind of heart. That Christ loves to take. As his throne. Romans 6. Verses 8 and 9. Say now. If we have died. With Christ. We believe. We have faith.

That we will also. Live. With him. Christ Jesus. Is alive. And through his word. He reveals. That he lives. He dwells.

Inside. Every true believer. Jesus Christ. Will never die again. And therefore. Death. No longer. Has dominion. Over him. And therefore.

He is the king. Inside of you. God is at home. In that soul. Where he sits on the throne. He makes it his home.

In Christ. You also are dead to sin. Paul wrote. In Romans 6. And you are alive. To God. In Christ Jesus. Let that strengthen. Your inner being.

[21 : 10] Let that be the fuel. Of walking. In the covenant. Of grace. God keeps you. In covenant with him. Because Jesus Christ. Dwells. In you. Number three.

God keeps you. In his gracious. New covenant. By rooting. And grounding you. In love. He keeps you. By rooting you. And grounding you. In love.

Think of a plant. If a plant. Is uprooted. It will die. It doesn't have nutrients. It doesn't get water. And when a strong wind. Or a tornado. Blows through. It's carried away. Think of a child.

That. That has been dislocated. They need to be. Welcomed. Into a stable. Loving home. To feel grounded. To know that they. Belong. God keeps you.

In his new covenant. By rooting you. And grounding you. It's in the passive tense. You are being rooted. You are being grounded. In love. And he prays.

[22 : 10] Because it's God. Who will do that. In your life. He will push the roots. Of your faith. Deeper and deeper. He will give you. That stability. So you don't blow around. And get uprooted. And carried away.

He keeps you rooted. He keeps feeding you. He keeps water. And nutrients. Flowing into your soul. Through faith. Number four. God keeps you.

In his gracious new covenant. By teaching you. With all his people. In heaven. And on earth. That you belong. To his family. You got a true name.

You got a true name. A real identity. And a permanent destiny. From God himself. I love how in verses 14 and 15. He's. He has in view. The whole family of God.

And it's the family of God. That's in heaven. And on earth. So you're part of the family of God. Including the great cloud of witnesses. That have gone before us. From every generation. That's your family.

[23 : 06] And you're also. With the family of God on earth. Not just here in Parker, Colorado. But around the world. You meet someone from South Africa. From India. From China. From Korea.

These are your brothers. This is the family of God on earth. When we meet Christians. When we see those. Even with different convictions. On secondary and tertiary things. These are your family. Let that encourage you in the faith.

This is your sense of stability. This is one of the ways. He encourages you. And provides that strength. You need to keep walking. In verse 18.

He says. He prays that you may be able. To comprehend. God's love with all the saints. Try to understand more and more. Of God's love with the church. It's great to read.

Books that have stood the test of time. Because you're learning more. About God's love with all the saints. From all the generations. And it's great to be able to. Meet in one another's homes. And practice hospitality.

[24 : 03] And just ask that simple. Open-ended question. How has God shown you and your family. His love. What an encouragement. That's what it is to be a Christian. Comprehend God's love.

With all his saints. Do it together. It strengthens our faith. Because God first loved each of us. Because he keeps us in his covenant.

With his love. Because his Holy Spirit. Makes you. In the words of Romans 7. 22. Delight in the law of God. In your inner being. So as his family.

We walk in his grace. We encourage one another. We pray for one another. We serve one another. We build up one another. We wash one another's feet. Because he first loved us.

And we're in his family. And this is the strength. The energy. The love. The desire. He puts inside of us. To live. And fulfill what he's called us to do. God teaches us to share.

[25 : 02] His covenant. Faithful love. With his church. It's going to take each of us a lifetime. To learn that truly. And to practice it. But he's our strength.

With every attempt. And it's his pardon. That covers us in our failings. But we learn. To practice his love. One with another. And it takes a lifetime. The fifth point.

Is that God keeps you. In his gracious new covenant. I love how he uses. Two different words. That sound like they oppose each other. It sets up a paradox. In verse 18 and 19. By helping.

You comprehend. Verse 18. That which. In verse 19. Passes knowledge. Comprehend. That which passes knowledge. To comprehend.

Break down those words. Come. The prefix. Come. Means all the way around. Like. Wrap your mind. Around the full circumference. Of God's love.

[26 : 01] Try to do it. Try to stretch your. Your understanding. Of God's love. All the way around. Just try. But realize. That it passes knowledge. You'll never. Get to the bottom.

Of God's love. The Athanasian Creed. Says God. Is incomprehensible. So try to. Try to. Wrap your mind. Around an incomprehensible.

God. And his love. All three persons. One. Uncreated God. Incomprehensible. Almighty. Eternal. Our Lord. Lord. Well.

James Dolezal. He helped me. With. With this language. He explained. How it is possible. For us. As finite human beings. To. Apprehend. Those things. We can't.

Comprehend. Even though. We can't. Comprehend. God. Because he's. Incomprehensible. We can still. Truly. Apprehend him. He told a story. About a friend of his.

[26 : 56] Who was a police officer. From high school. And he got to do. A ride along. And he saw his friend. Go and. Apprehend. The criminal. And put the criminal. In the back of the car. He truly. Apprehended.

This criminal. So we can. Grab hold. And truly. Have God. Through Jesus Christ. In at least. Four ways. That we can highlight. From our sermon. Text today. Paul says this.

To the church. I pray. That you will. Grab hold. Of how. Wide. Christ's love. Is for you. Psalm 103. 13. Says. As far. As the east.

Is from the west. So far. He has removed. Our transgressions. From us. So that we can be with him. That's how wide. His love is. He has removed.

Both the power. And the guilt. Of your sin. You can see how wide. Jesus love is. By how wide. He opened his arms. On the cross. And he calls.

[27 : 49] Whosoever will. Come. To me. And find. Find rest. For your soul. How wide. Is Christ's love. For you. He also prays.

That you will. Grab hold. Of how long. Christ's love. Is for you. To you. Who belong. To God. In his covenant. Of grace. The Lord Jesus. Says. In the words of.

Jeremiah 31. Three. I have loved you. How long. With an everlasting. Love. Therefore. With loving kindness. I have drawn you. It's like.

Jesus is saying. I love you today. I love you tomorrow. I love you next year. I love you the very last year. Of your life on earth. And I love you for all.

Eternity. How long. Is Christ's love for you. It's an everlasting. Love. His love for you. Will never. Run out. It abounds to you.

[28 : 43] Like an ever flowing. River. Supplied by an endless. Spring. It's always. Flowing. At you. And never going to run out. And he prays.

That you will grab hold. Of how deep. Is Christ's love for you. It's like. Jesus. Wants you to know. My love for you. Is so deep. In Mark 14.

He was described. As being deeply. Troubled. And distressed. And he was distressed. And deeply moved. Because he was preparing himself.

For paying your penalty. On the cross. Because his love for you. Is so deep. On the cross. And in his death. And burial. Our Lord Jesus. Descended.

To the depths. Of hell. To save you. The Old Testament. Prophets. Were. Were calling out. The kings of Israel. For. And the false prophets.

[29 : 40] For not. Truly shepherding. God's people. And for healing. Their wounds. Only lightly. Only a surface treatment. But God loves you. So deeply. He doesn't just do.

A surface treatment. Of your wounds. And your sin. And your problems. He heals your. Your wounds. And your sin. At the root. If we can use this word picture.

It's like he's replacing. The poison. In our system. With his very own blood. The deepest level. Never to grip you again. How deep is his love for you.

And number four. He prays. That the church. Will grab hold. Of how high. Is Christ's love. For you. In Luke 19.

38. The people in Israel. See Jesus. Coming. On the colt. Like a king. Entering in. A time of peace. And they say. Hosanna. And they say some words.

[30 : 33] That they'll turn back on. But the words are right. And when he ascends to heaven. He fulfills this. That he is the king. From on high. Who makes peace. In heaven. They say. In heaven.

And brings glory. To the highest. The manifold wisdom. Of God. Being opened up. And exalted. And bringing the church. With them. Into the highest. Heavens.

Forevermore. That's how high. Is God's love for you. Well the last. Question. I invite you to ponder.

With me this morning. How does such. Knowledge. Of God's love. Change you. You. Comprehend.

And you apprehend. The love of God. In Christ. And how does such. Knowledge of God. Change you. What does it do to you. In verse 19.

[31 : 27] He says. He prays that the church. Will get filled. With the fullness. Of the holy God. The church gets. Filled. With the fullness. Of God.

God. The holy God. Fills you. Christian. With all his fullness. Just as the holy God. Filled the temple. So he fills you.

Galatians 2. 21. The life. You now live. In the flesh. You live by faith. In the son of God. Who loved you. And gave himself. For you. His fullness.

Fills you. And he lives. Through you. The weight. Of his glory. Pushes. Into your heart. Through your mind. Nothing. Unclean.

Can stay. In you. Permanently. All. Gets. Increasingly. Reordered. Your loves. Get better. Settled. Your thoughts.

[32 : 21] Are more. And more. Biblical. Your habits. Are gradually. Recreated. This is how God. Fuels your walk. In his gracious covenant.

We just sang this beautiful hymn. Here is love. Listen to that last verse. One more time. That you sang. In thy truth. Thou dost direct me. By thy spirit.

Through thy word. In thy grace. My need is meeting. As I trust. In thee. My Lord. Of thy fullness. Thou art pouring.

Thy great love. And power. On me. Without measure. Full. And boundless. Drawing out. My heart. To thee. I started this sermon.

By having you look at. Ephesians 4 verse 1. The next. Logical step. In what he's writing. To the church. Which is to walk. In a manner worthy. Of your calling.

[33 : 25] But notice. What's in between. This prayer. And that calling. In verse 20 and 21. Paul does this often. As he hears the objection. That the flesh.

That the flesh. Or that the Christian. Is going to be asking. In their mind. And he beats you. To the objection. Look at verse 20. The Christian is thinking. I'm not going to be able. To do this. You're right.

By your own strength. You and I are not. Verse 20. But to him. Who is able. To do. Exceedingly. Abundantly. Above all that we ask.

Or think. According to the power. That works in us. To him. Be glory. In the church. By Christ Jesus. To all generations. Forever.

And ever. Amen. Isn't that comforting? The same message. As at the end of Romans. Romans 11. 36. For. From him.

[34 : 17] And through him. And to him. Are all things. He is your fuel. For the Christian walk. Let's learn to pray this.

For ourselves. And for one another. And then walk in the grace. Knowing that. He who commands this. He is the one. Who is able to do. Far more exceedingly. Than we could even ask. Or think.

Let's spend some time. In prayer. Reflecting on the message. You've heard today.