

Ephesians 3:14-20

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[0 : 00] Amen.

I pray these things in Christ's name. Amen. Hidden in this passage is everything we need to live as Christians.

Everything. It has everything we need to abandon sin. It has everything we need to love and serve one another.

It has everything we need to deal with the pressures and the sorrows of life. It has everything that we need to live lives that are marked by the good works God prepared in advance that we should walk in them.

And it has everything we need for our joy. It is a climax of sorts, this passage. If you look up to this point in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul has been talking about what God has done, what God is doing, and what God will do.

[1 : 34] The focus has been on God and what he does. Next week, he will pivot. He will turn a corner. We'll see that he's going to talk the rest of this letter about what we do.

And he's going to start it with the word, therefore. And so, we've come to the pinnacle, to the whole point of what he has been saying about what God has done, and what he is doing, and what he will do in our lives, so that the rest of the book can unfold what we do in response.

He begins today saying, for this reason. Well, for what reason? If you remember last week, Paul had actually cut himself off to get first things first.

And that's how we entered into last week's passage. But at the beginning of Ephesians chapter 3, he actually says, for this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, on behalf of you Gentiles.

And then, he cuts himself off, starts first things first, and now we actually find him, in verse 14, resuming his thought. He says, for this reason, once again.

[2 : 53] So, we need to think to ourselves, what reason? Where have we come? What reason is he giving for all the things he's about to say today? So far, in the book of Ephesians, what he has done, in the second half, in the first half of Ephesians 1, he introduced just a hymn of praise.

That hymn of praise was based on three truths that we saw in the second half of Ephesians 1. The hope of God's calling, the riches of God's inheritance, and the greatness of God's power at working us.

And that is the same power, Paul said, that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in heaven above all names. Ephesians chapter 2 was an exploration of what that power, that third truth, what that power in us looks like.

It has, in the first half, raised us from the dead, and in the second half of Ephesians 2, it has brought together, in one man, people who are separated from each other, around Christ.

And so, those three truths, and the outworkings of them in our lives, dead, made alive. Enemies, made one around Christ. For this reason, something's going to happen.

[4 : 16] And Paul is going to bow his knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. It's interesting that all of these things prompt Paul to pray.

And actually, that's not unusual for Paul. To the church in Thessalonica, he said, We pray most earnestly, night and day, for you. To the church in Rome, he said, Without ceasing, I mention you always in my prayers.

To the church in Philippi, he says, Always in every prayer of mine, for you, I am making prayer with joy. And to the church in Colossae, he said, We have not ceased to pray for you.

Paul's life was marked by unceasing prayer for the church, everywhere. And that really shouldn't surprise us. Last week, we saw just how valuable the church is.

It's so valuable that Christ died for her. So valuable, he calls her his body. So valuable, he calls her his body. And last week, we saw how is God's glory primarily displayed in the world today?

[5 : 26] It was through the church. No wonder Paul prays for the church. And I wonder, do we follow that example? Do we pray for the church?

Do we pray for the members of the church? Do we pray for our spouses, our family, our friends? Do we pray for those who don't yet love Jesus and need to be brought into the church? Do we pray for other church congregations?

Do we pray for those who don't yet love Jesus? Do we pray for those Let's take a moment right this moment to follow Paul's example. Let's pray for the church. This church and all the churches in Eastern Connecticut.

We pray for them. Lord, we pray for Shoreline. We bring before you all the churches in Eastern Connecticut.

as they join as one man as we saw last week to praise your name this morning. I pray that their hearts would be set on Christ.

[6 : 36] We ask, Lord, that as we see in this passage they would be strengthened in their inner man. Lord, we pray that we and they would reach outside our walls to share the message of your love.

Father, I pray that you would help us and them know that Christ dwells among us. Father, I pray that you would bless us and bless the churches around us with vibrant passionate worship that we might know what is the breadth and length and height and depth to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Father, I pray that I and everyone in a pulpit this weekend would faithfully preach your word. Lord, that every church would treasure the unsearchable riches of Christ above all of us.

Father, we pray these things to your glory and for our good. Amen. Amen. Amen. And so that prayer I think is to a degree modeled on what Paul is going to pray for us for the Christian church and for us as well.

Verse 16 he says that he may grant you to be strengthened with power. And he says that this is according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

[8 : 09] It's so interesting that Paul says I fall to my knees a position of weakness and asks for power. The question is how will we get this power?

How will we get the strength that the Lord provides? Will he improve our self-esteem so we can fully realize our potential and self-actualize will he empower us by meeting our material needs so that we can focus on spiritual things?

Will he balance the chemicals in our brains? Will he fix our self-talk so we tell ourselves empowering messages? Will he get us networked really well in the church so we have the right connections?

What does God do to give us power? Now interestingly enough some of those things might actually happen as he strengthens us but those aren't how he strengthens us they're only byproducts what does Paul pray?

He asks that God he asks God to grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit he asks that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith how are we strengthened?

[9 : 34] in the inner man in the inner man in the inner man the spirit and we know he is there right with us because back in chapter 2 verse 22 you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the spirit how are we strengthened in the inner man verse 17 because Christ dwells in our heart how are we strengthened in the inner man?

because the fullness of God fills us verse 19 what Paul is using different language to say to us in all sorts of different ways he's running out of ways to say that our God is dwelling with us how he takes up residence with us and so Paul's message is this he's praying that we would be strengthened because God is with us we don't have strength because we have the right self-talk we don't have strength because we have the right hormone balance we don't have strength because we have it all figured out or because we have the right connections we have strength because our God lives with us the one who made the stars stands with you Christian whether you feel like it or not your king stands with you today and everyday that's why

Paul told the Ephesians last week not to lose heart over his imprisonment Christ stood with them to strengthen them and he stood with him so that he was strengthened as well what's this power for what are we to do look at verse 18 it's not what you think that you may have strength to comprehend the love of Christ we would think that you'd be strengthened to go to battle with the devil to do great works of service to build a church to build hospitals to serve orphans to love Christ to know his love for you that is a strange thing to ask for power for is it not he says being rooted and grounded in love those are really interesting words rooted is a botanical kind of a word talks about agriculture our roots dug down deep where are we getting our food where are we getting our energy grounded it's an architectural word where do we stand what is our footing where do we get our stability here he's painting Jesus as the true vine he's painting

Jesus as the house built on the foundation of rock so how do we get there that's the question how do we use this strength to know the love of Christ a few weeks ago Jordan preached on the second half of Ephesians chapter 2 he said something that has stuck with me and I hope it's stuck with you do you want to see the power of God at work then dive into the church that's exactly what Paul says here that you have strength to comprehend with all the saints you see seeing God's love is a community project we all see different facets of his love as we go through life in different ways we comprehend his love when we try to love others and see just how hard that is we see what it costs we come to comprehend his love when we allow others to love us because vulnerability is very difficult as well it's uncomfortable it's scary and what's crazy is as hard as it is for us to love each other it's actually harder for God to love us and we'll get there and as hard as it is to allow others to see what's true about us and still love us

God knows us far better than even our spouses than even our families and yet he knows so Paul continues saying what is the breadth and length and height and depth of Christ's love some ancient pastors in the very ancient church saw these as the dimensions illustrated on the cross its upright pole reached down into the earth and pointed to heaven while its crossbar carried the arms of Jesus stretched out as if to invite and welcome the whole world that's probably not what Paul is actually saying here but man it's true and it's beautiful so it's an encouraging thing but what I think we can say about the breadth and the length and the height and the depth is that the love of Christ is broad enough to encompass all mankind long enough to last for all eternity deep enough to reach the most hateful sinner and high enough to exalt him to heaven what do we do with that knowledge first it should prompt us to love for one another it should prompt us to love the lost it should also prompt us to return that love

[15 : 59] Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote a very famous poem how do I love thee let me count the ways I love thee to the depth and breadth and height she said the depth and breadth and height that my soul can reach we can't love Christ with the perfect love that he loves us but we can give him our all we're actually about to sing a song here is love that also mirrors this passage it's the insert in your bulletin that'll be the song we sing after this after we read through this passage but here's the most incredible verse 19 his love surpasses knowledge we're supposed to comprehend love that is incomprehensible and that's why Paul is asking that we are strengthened with God's strength because there's no way to grasp his love for us until he gives it to us in what way does

Christ's love surpass knowledge what does that even mean I think there are at least two reasons that we don't fully grasp his love and even today we don't still grasp it it won't be until we see him in heaven that we will first we don't understand how bad sin is if you're not a Christian today you're like you're probably sitting here thinking I'm not that bad I mean sure I mess up every once in a while but I'm a good guy I'm a good girl like leave me alone if you are a Christian today I'm sure you know people just like that they're trying to get by they're just living life they're not evil horrible heinous people are they the problem is that no sin is acceptable in God's sight no matter how seemingly small seemingly harmless

God's goal is nothing less than a pure heart and clean hands Christ said if you are not for me you are against me there is no middle ground and so if we aren't radically for him we are radically against him it's not just we screw up sometimes it's we are seeking as treasonous traitors to upset the God of the universe to overthrow him so there's pollution and there's animosity that go into sin that we don't really think about day to day but Christian that is a really important thing to recognize when you sin your sin is costly because it worships something other than

Christ it's interesting Paul has already used this word surpassing of God's power in chapter 1 verse 19 and he's used it to talk about God's grace chapter 2 verse 7 now he uses it for God's love it's an

unknowable love his riches are unsearchable we look back to verse 8 we're going to spend eternity exploring his inexhaustible riches of grace love and power because in his surpassing power he has raised us from the dead of Jesus Paul asks that you may be filled with all the fullness of God verse 19 this is the third time he's talking about the nearness of God's us verse 16 he said the Holy Spirit in our inner being verse 17

Jesus dwelling in our hearts through faith verse 19 filled with all the fullness of God he here emphasizes this one more time the nearness of God your God is with you and this is how the rest of the book plays out your God is with you therefore chapter 4 verse 1 he's going to urge us with all humility and gentleness with patience to bear with one another eager to maintain the unity of the spirit and the bond of peace every instruction he gives us has to be written like this the next three chapters are going to be instructions it's going to be what the Christian life looks like what the church looks like none of it can be done on our own spirit all of it is done because we are strengthened in our inner man because our God is with us he is present that's why we read [21 : 32] Psalm 46 today he is a very present help in times of trouble the only response to this is praise that's why Paul turns in verse 20 to a song of praise but I want us to remember that praise isn't just what we do with our lips it's what we do with our lives and that's literally what he's going to be talking about the rest of the book worshipping with our lives and I want to point to something specifically in our church we've been doing a lot of work lately the location committee has come to one of its final steps very very recently and I think I think it's so important for us to remember that the stuff that we're doing all the hard work that we're investing they're they're worship because they're serving God and so as Paul in verses 20 and 21 sings a song of praise let's remember that all the work that we're doing in our families in our workplace and here in the church can be done as worship now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all 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 if you've been here for a little while you know this is my favorite benediction in the whole Bible I use it a lot it's just so beautiful Paul explains for us once again who our God is he is powerful to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think the NIV translates this not a him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine both think and imagine are good translations of the word but I think the NIV using imagine gets us just a little closer to what Paul is trying to communicate to us here a little closer to his heart we never imagined that God would die for us we never imagined that we were dead in sin we didn't even know it but God raised us up from the dead with Christ we never imagined that God could make one new man from Greeks and Hebrews but that's exactly what he did when he made them his own in Christ we never imagined that the dead could walk the blind could see the proud could repent the homeless could be immeasurably wealthy that we bored anxious

Americans could have life and have it to the fall but God did and he is able to do immeasurably more than all of those things now this isn't just flowery language he's not just blowing smoke at us God is powerful to do all that we ask or imagine and as we've seen he has done that already but don't think for a moment that he's done do not settle for an ordinary life when Paul on behalf of Jesus offers to us in the book of Ephesians a life that is far beyond ordinary this isn't just the halfway point pause take our breath this is he is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine and as we walk into the rest of the book in the coming weeks we are going to see beautiful things happening in our lives where we can't imagine fixing a broken marriage God can do more than all we ask or imagine we can't imagine killing a lifelong sin or even wanting to God can do more than all we ask or imagine when we can't imagine what a healthy church really looks like God can do more than all we ask or imagine when we can't imagine what a parent-child relationship that isn't broken looks like God can do more than all we ask or imagine or we can't imagine something as simple as joy in our lives.

When life looks completely bleak, God can do more than all we ask or imagine. And so the rest of this book is not going to be do this, do this, do this.

[26 : 33] The rest of this book is going to be more than all we ask or imagine in our lives to Christ's glory and for our benefit. One last time, Paul says, according to the power at work within us, just so we don't forget, our God is with us.

Now to Him be glory. In the church, this church, and every church, in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. Will you pray with me? Lord, I pray for myself.

I pray for this whole church. I pray for all the people that we come into contact with. I pray for all the churches in this church. Lord, we ask that according to the riches of your glory, you may grant to us to be strengthened with power through your spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith, that we would be rooted and grounded in love.

Father, give us strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, to be filled with all the fullness of God.

[28 : 26] And Father, we pray to you, knowing that you are able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine, according to the power of your Holy Spirit at work with us.

Lord, we say to you, be glory. In the church, every church, and in your Son, Christ Jesus, throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen. Amen. Let's stand. Just as Dave said, this is the song, Here is Love. First line, Here is love vast as the ocean.

He's been saying this as grace in thanksgiving.