

You Are Loved By God

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[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee. For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

If you would, go ahead and take your seats and turn with me to Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians chapter 3. If you've been coming for any length of time, you know that we've been going through the book of the gospel.

We took a break for four weeks for the building fund. We're taking one more break this week, but we're back in Mark next week. And we'll continue for the next five years.

No, I'm just kidding. We'll continue, I think, without breaks to Easter. And that'll land us in Mark 16, Lord willing, and the creek don't rise.

So we are excited, though, to open Ephesians 3 to study God's word. There. By the way of introduction, Karl Barth.

[1 : 0 4] I don't know if any of you have ever heard of the name Karl Barth. And, you know, he wasn't a Simpson or any of those guys. But Karl Barth is one of the most important theologians of the last hundred years.

He wrote many, many, many important books and wrote many, many, many pages. I've heard it said that they asked hypothetically or rhetorically, no, hypothetically, what will Karl Barth be doing during his first millennia in heaven?

to which the joke goes he will be finishing his church dogmatics. On earth, he was only able to complete 9,000 pages and 31 volumes. He had so much more to go. See, that gives you a little bit of an idea, but in 1962, BART spoke on the campus of the University of Chicago. After his lecture during a time of Q&A, Dr. BART was asked if he could summarize his whole theology in one sentence.

Now remember, this is Karl BART. This is a 9,000-page man. He responded, yes, I can. In the words of a song I learned at my mother's knee, Jesus loves me. This I know, for the Bible tells me so. You know, what a fitting summary of theology, New Testament theology, but what a fitting summary of Christianity. Now, though the love of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ is one of the core truths of Christianity, I dare say many of us would not confidently say, Jesus loves me. This I know. We may confidently say, Jesus loves me. This I think.

Or, Jesus loves me. This I hope. Or, Jesus loves me. This I desire. But many of us would not confidently say, Jesus loves me. This I know. In fact, many of us are left daily asking the same question over and over that a preteen ask of her crush. Does he love me? Or does he not?

[3 : 2 2] Life, it seems, is on that seesaw. Does he love me? Or does he not? Life often makes this question even harder to answer. If he loves me, why can I not get pregnant? If he loves me, why did my marriage fall apart? If he loves me, why do I often feel so alone? How can we know that Jesus loves us or not?

Well, this morning, we're going to study Ephesians 3. In this prayer of the Apostle Paul to consider the greatness of God's love for us that is ours in Jesus. Look in verse 14. It says, and I read, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have 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, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. And that's quite a sentence.

Verse 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, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen. Amen. In a word, where we're going this morning, before anything else, God wants your life to be anchored in the incomprehensible love of Christ.

Before anything else, God wants your life to be anchored in the incomprehensible love of Christ. We're going to break open this wonderful prayer with three questions. The first is, who is the audience of the Apostle Paul's prayer? So this, this is the book of Ephesians. This is written by the Apostle Paul. And, and so who is the audience of the Apostle Paul's prayer? Who is he talking to? Now, now the point of the question is not simply to answer God. You know, this is not in like a, like a Sunday school class where Jesus is always right. That's not what I'm trying to get. I'm not trying to pull out the obvious, though I often go there. We know he's talking to the living God, but, but the point is, what kind of God is Paul addressing? What exactly is he like?

What are the qualities of this God? What comes out and helps us understand the posture of his heart towards God? And, and we see immediately in verse 14, he is the Father. For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. Upon the first reading of that verse, you would not expect it to end with the word Father. It begins with great reverence. I bow. I bow in respect and reverence and submission. We have a whole lot of stuff going on about bowing in our culture and what you can or cannot bow to. But, but, but, but what Paul's saying, he's in, I bow and declare, I do not rule myself.

[6 : 54] I bow down in submission to the great King of all. Look at, look at how he describes him. Verse 15, I bow my knees to the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on the earth is named. So he's saying, I bow before him who has called all things into existence. He's a great Father of all. He formed every person. He breathed life into every person on planet earth. He created them in his image. He set them in their time and place, the apostle says in Acts 17, capturing this idea. He, he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man, that is Adam, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined the allotted periods and boundaries of their dwelling place. What, what he's saying is God, God brought them up out of the dust. He set them in their place and time, in their history. God's the Father of all. Yet this great King and author of life to whom Paul bows and before whom we bow is the Father. Now this is total New Testament Christianity.

And I have all the time, but it's not, you don't address God that way. I mean, this, this is, this is a word that speaks of intimacy and closeness. It's a household word. It's not a word for the, for the worship of God. Another word for the temple of God. It's not a word for God. Right here is one of the profound wonders of the Christian life. The great King, this great King is to be feared by everyone who refuses to bow their knee before him. There's only one appropriate response, if you will not bow, and that is terror. He's a consuming fire. He's holy, dwells in unapproachable light. He will reign, in 1 Corinthians 15, until he puts every enemy under his feet, but for everyone who bows their knee before him. He's our Father. Immediately, at the outset of this prayer, our minds and hearts are directed not to a king we must appease, or a judge we must satisfy, but to a father we're invited to freely receive. What's a father? Now, I know it's somebody who begat you, you know, who, who brought you into this world. Your mama says she can take you out of it, but it's, now there's lots of, of lousy father, but I think in a word, what a father is, one who freely gives what is good to his children.

Now, you don't have to tell a father to overdo it at Christmas. It's the overflow of his, or you know, yeah, I mean, a good father, it's, it's the overflow of his heart. Even Jesus says in Luke 11, not even Jesus, Jesus says in Luke 11, what father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent? If he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion?

What Jesus is saying is, it, it, the overflow of father's heart is give good things, so, so, that would never happen. How much more, our father in heaven? At the beginning of this prayer, what it's saying is, when we pray, there's no reluctance in God to answer our prayers. There's no reluctance in God to answer our prayer. When we pray, our prayer, our request goes straight through the chain of command to the king because of Jesus.

Tim Keller says, the only person who dares wake up a king at 3 a.m. for a glass of water is a child, and we have that kind of access to God. So, he's a father, this incredible king of all.

[10 : 34] But he's also rich in glory. I love the way it's captured. The very next phrase, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory.

Now, those are just loaded with these, these biblical words, and it's such an interesting phrase. According to the riches of his glory, this phrase is meant to anchor all our prayers and our requests of God. But what does it mean? What does it mean that God gives according to the riches of his glory?

And I had to reach for the scholars on this. One commentator, P.T. O'Brien, says it like this. This preposition, that's what that is, according to the riches of his glory. This preposition draws attention, not simply to the idea of source, thereby signifying out of the wealth of his glory, but also indicates that his giving corresponds to the inexhaustible riches of that glory. I'm going to explain this.

It is on a scale commensurate with his glory. He gives as lavishly as only he can. So, so, so it calls attention, on the one hand, it calls attention to the source of all that God gives.

All that he gives, every good and perfect gift comes down from above, coming down from the Father of lights, and it all comes from the riches of his glory. I mean, that should motivate us to pray.

[11 : 50] God is rich with glory and grace, and just knowing that he's rich, though, just knowing he's wealthy may leave us thinking only about how wealthy he is and unwealthy we are. You know, a vast amount of, have you ever watched some of these shows? I actually don't even know the names of a lot of them, you know, keeping up with Joneses type thing. Wealth in our culture is, is, is, is used as a way of gathering things so that you can display or show off the wealth you have, identifying the wealth other people do not have. Does that make sense? So, so if that's the way the Lord was, he, the riches of his glory is really all about him just being rich so that we would be aware of how unrich we are, then we would be in great trouble. But the Lord is not like our culture. The, the phrase, that, that phrase, that riches of his glory is drawn attention to the source of all that God has, but also to how freely he gives. So God is rich in glory so that he can give richly to anyone in need. If you understand true wealth, that's the truly wealthy. They understand wealth is from the Lord, and so they, they use it to give it wherever they can. And that's the way the Lord is. He's rich in glory, and he gives on a level that only he can, because only he is inexhaustibly rich. It's no surprise, end of Ephesians 4, 19.

Apostle Paul says, my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus. I hope that helps capture it. You know, I think we see a similar, or we have an experience, a similar experience when we're around somebody who's uncomfortably generous.

When I got married, I got a bye. Kim's father asked me, my wife is Vietnamese, she asked, he asked me to call him bye, or father, in Vietnamese, and began to treat me as a son. Now, sometimes he uses this for his own humor. We walk into a restaurant, he said, and I call him bye. He said, you hear that? Yeah, that big white boy called me bye. But it had an immediate drastic, dramatic impact on my life, because he began to show me the generosity he reserves only for his children. He's generous to many people, one of the most generous people I've ever met. He's especially generous to his children, and now me, and now my children. If we go to dinner, he demands to pay. If we go to a store, he demands to pay. In fact, he's one of those people. You have to be careful even mentioning a need around him, because he'll find a way to settle or solve that need for you. I remember, we first got married, probably six months into marriage, we were saving for a little Weber grill. I mean, that's the way it was. We had a cash envelope. We're saving for this little Weber grill, and somehow he found out we were saving for it. He went out and bought it right like that. I remember we bought a house, and I came from work, and there was a riding lawnmower sitting in my garage, because he deemed my yard as being too big to mow. So if you want to mock me for riding around, he decided to give. But that's the way it is to be a son of him is humbling. So too with the Lord. That's the way he is. He's rich in glory, and delights to give on a level that only he can. So at the outset of this prayer, when we pray, we realize there's no reluctance in God to answer. When we pray, we also realize there's no limitation in God to answer. Ask and you'll receive. Seek and you'll find. Knock and the door will be opened.

Whatever you ask in faith, it is yours. I mean, what do you do with a statement like that in Scripture? It means you run to him with everything. There's nothing you want that's good that God doesn't want and promise to provide. That could never happen. Not in his heart. So that makes sense. Who is this God that Paul is addressing?

Second question I want to ask is, what is the content of Paul's prayer, the Apostle Paul's prayer? What is the content? What is he asking? I mean, what is his prayer requests about? Essentially, he's asking one thing. He's power to deeply comprehend the love of Christ, but they form two requests, and they kind of fold into one another. The first is that we'd be transformed by the Spirit.

[16 : 35] He prays that we'd be transformed by the Spirit. You see that in the next clause. According to the Spirit of his glory, he may grant you, this is what I'm praying for you, that you may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being. You may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being. If we read through all of the book of Ephesians, we'd see the Spirit's activity all over the place. We're sealed with the Holy Spirit when we came to Christ.

We were given access to God, the Father in the Spirit, Ephesians 2.18. And now the Spirit performs a work in our inner being. So that the Spirit may be, we may be strengthened with power in your inner being. It's a work of transformation. It's a work wherein God changes us from the inside out.

You know, it's the word that begins in conversion. That's what Jesus says in Nicodemus. Unless you're born again, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. That which is flesh is flesh.

That which is spirit is spirit. Because we have to be born again by the Spirit. And so it's a work from the inside out. But it's not just a work of the Spirit. Look at the next clause. That he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you may be rooted and grounded in love. The Spirit brings Christ to dwell.

Now, the past couple weeks we've been studying the church and what God does in the church. God joins people together as a church so that the church might be built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. That's Ephesians 2.20. But here, individuals are the place where God dwells, where Jesus dwells. Romans 8.9 says like this, you, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of Christ dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

[18 : 41] So the Spirit of God dwells. This word for dwelling is profound. It means to take possession and to take ownership, to move in, to take up residence. Years ago, Kim and I bought our first home, the one where I got the right a little more, and it was our house. It's kind of one of those moments, never been that, you know, dead up to our eyeballs. And I don't know what you feel about that, but, you know, it worked for us for right then, for that, limited, whatever. I can say a bunch of qualifications about debt, but we bought this house, but it needed a lot of work. In fact, we began some big renovations. We destroyed the house.

I mean, basically, we ripped down this wall. I'll never forget, one of my friends taking a hammer to this wall. I was like, oh, I just signed for this thing, you know. We pulled up floors. We tore out the kitchen. It got much worse for a little while. The house started looking worse. The insulation was falling down from the attic. I remember one day, I was working late into the night, and I turned off the air conditioning. This was the middle of August.

Turned off the air conditioning. I didn't want to heat the cross, I mean, heat the attic space. And so, Kim came by during the day while I was at my day job, while I was at work, and she said, you destroyed our house. I said, well, I'm going to fix it tonight. You know, I'm coming back. We're going to finish this thing. But gradually, it got a lot better.

Everything was returned to working order. The floors were different and beautiful. The counters were different and beautiful. The lights, all these canned lights were lighting up everything. The walls were different. It was transformed. A different house. You couldn't walk in and see it in the same way. In a similar way, when we come to faith, Jesus comes to take possession.

He comes to take ownership. And He comes to do some renovations. That's the reality behind this prayer. When we come to Him, we're not complete. We have weaknesses that need His strength. Sin that needs true repentance.

[20 : 53] Shame that needs to be removed. Wonderfully, this accents the passive work of transformation. The emphasis is not, clean up the house. Jesus is coming.

The emphasis is, Jesus has come and we'll finish cleaning the house. Jesus came. I love the way a buddy of mine in Sovereign Grace rewrote those lyrics to Oh Holy Night. So that's why you thought, where did those come from?

Come then to Him. Let Him not remain a stranger. In reverent worship, make Christ your adored. Jesus comes to reign in your heart. That that would be the command center of your life, of what He's doing to shape everything you do. If you understand this, you'll make this the greatest prayer of your heart. Come, comfort me.

Conform me. Change me. Transform me. You'll never say, I know all I need to know. I see all I need to say. I understand all I need to say.

If you understand this prayer, you're aware. You're just seeing through a mirror dimly. You need to see face to face. The Puritans had a doctrine called the doctrine of self-suspicion.

[22 : 15] I doubt you'll be touting that around the house this week. A doctrine of self-suspicion. Because if Jesus is coming to do a work that's not yet complete, then I'm suspicious of myself, lest I assume I understand all I need to understand.

And it's what the Psalms say. Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. Because I want to be transformed.

If you don't want to grow, if you don't want to press into Jesus Christ, and become more like Him, then this is not going to be a comfortable church for you. Because we long to know Him more, and to see Him more clearly.

And so that's exactly what Paul prays for. And then it folds into this next request, that we would know the incomprehensible love of Christ. That we'd be granted this power through the Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts.

Verse 18, And have the 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, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

[23 : 25] And that's a mouth full of brilliant phrases. The idea is, the effect of that first request, Christ dwelling in your hearts, that you're rooted and grounded in love, presses into you a longing to know the love of God more and more.

Interestingly, this is a prayer for strength to know that which is incomprehensible. A prayer for strength to understand the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Now, obviously, we need the power of God to understand something that surpasses knowledge, right? We need the power of God to gain knowledge of that which is incomprehensible. We cannot gain insight on our own.

No skill or expertise or careful investigation can reveal the mysteries of God. We need strength. We need the spirit. We need to be born again. But the emphasis is not merely that we need this from a distinction between us and God, that we need this spiritual wisdom.

We need the power of God to gain understanding of the love of Christ in such a way that it fills us, changes us, and transforms us. There's a way of understanding the love of God in Christ that's merely theoretical.

[24 : 45] And that's not enough. There's a way of understanding the love of God in Christ that is not theoretical, that is true knowledge that fills us, changes us, and transforms us, that fills our mind with what is true, our hearts with delighting in what is true, and our steps in walking in what is true.

For this, we need the power of God. In the midst of the 1905 revival of Wales, God rescued a man named Howell Harris. I read this book about revival and stuff.

And used him mightily to proclaim the gospel in Wales. The gospel of God's love for sinners. And listen to the way he describes what happened to him.

It's almost in a way that the language doesn't make sense. I felt suddenly my heart melting within me like wax before the fire with love to God my Savior.

And also felt not only love, peace, etc., but longing to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Then was a cry in my inmost soul, which I was totally unequated with before, Abba, Father.

[26 : 08] Abba, Father. I could not help calling God my Father. I knew I was his child, and that he loved me and heard me.

My soul being filled and satisfied, crying, 'Tis enough, I am satisfied. Give me strength, and I will follow thee through fire and water.

That's amazing. It captures that collision of a mind. I knew that I was his child, a heart being melted like wax, and a determination to follow you through fire and water.

So some people talk a lot about the love of God, being captured in these emotions, and yet their will remains their own. They refuse to bow down their lives to Jesus Christ, and that cannot be the love.

So how do we pray this prayer and gain true knowledge of God's love for us in Jesus? And I know of no other way than by repeatedly setting the love of God in Jesus before us.

[27 : 18] Scriptures say, In love he predestined us for adoption as sons. We need strength to understand a love that began before time.

John 3 says, For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. And so we need strength to truly understand a love that began in the heart of the Father.

In so many ways, Sinclair Ferguson says it well. Christ died for us because the Father loves us, not in order to induce or persuade a reluctant Father to love us. So the Father does not love us because Christ died for us.

So there's no God of wrath in the Old Testament and a God of love in the New Testament. God does not love us because Christ died for us. Christ died for us because the Father loves us.

And so there is to be anchored in our reality a God that loved us before time and before we were born. Ephesians 2 says, But God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, made us alive together with Christ.

[28 : 27] So we need strength to understand a love that intervened in the depths of depravity. And the reason we need strength to comprehend that, to understand that, is if he loved us when we were unlovely, then he will not begin to love us less now that we still have unloveliness in our lives.

Because his love is not tied to our earthly estate, not tied to our status before him. And so Psalm 103 says, For as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love toward those who fear him.

So we need strength to understand a love that has no end, that goes on forever and ever. God is infinite in every way, and so too is his love.

1 John 4.10 says, This is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins. So we need strength to comprehend a love that moved first, and did all that was necessary to satisfy the wrath that stood in between us and God.

Romans 8 says, Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? We need strength to comprehend a love that cannot be severed.

[29 : 48] No matter what death, or hell, or the devil throws at us. Oh, to know more deeply the love of God, the height, width, length, and width. So I hope you see by now, this prayer is not a prayer about your love for God.

It's a prayer about God's love for you. It's not a prayer meant to leave you longing to love God more. That's a wonderful thing, and you should. But it's meant to leave you longing to understand more and more about how much he loves you.

It's God's deepest prayer for you. It's the deepest end, to the deep end of what God wants for you, to know his love. You know, we have this little book in our house. I can't even remember the name, but it's written by John Piper's wife, Noel Piper.

It's super simple. You flip it, and it just says, it's kind of telling the kid, all the people love him, your grandparents love you. And you see grandma with the baby.

Your uncle loves you. Your aunt loves you. Your sister loves you. You keep flipping the play. Your father loves you. Your mother loves you.

[30 : 59] But most of all, God loves you. And sometimes I'll go through that ritual with my son at night, lean right up in his ear. Who loves you the most? It's not daddy.

It's not mommy. It's not any of these people in his life. It's God. God loves you. God delights over you. That's what he's trying to get across. That's the reason Paul is stumbling for words, because God's deepest prayer for you is that you would know his love.

I say this because of the full testimony of Scripture, but also because of how this prayer ends. Did you notice this collision of phrases? The Spirit comes to transform.

Christ comes to dwell that we might be filled, verse 19, with all the fullness of God. All three persons of the Trinity are there to help you know how much God loves you.

This is God's prayer for you. This is his desire for you. He loves you. He's zealous for you. He sings over you. He's your heavenly Father. You bring him the greatest delight. I know the will of God for your life.

[32 : 01] You need to know that God loves you. The greatest display of the deep work of God in your life is not when you figure out how to make it through the week without blowing it.

The greatest display of the deep work of God in your life is not when you stop getting angry and impatient. The greatest display of the deep work of God in your life is when you believe he loves you. One commentator says, Every Christian can say, I am loved by the Father.

And standing on the authority of Scripture and the finished work of Jesus Christ, you can say with all your heart, I am loved by God the Father. Grab your soul by the shirt and say, I am loved.

I am a man who is deeply loved by God the Father. I have loved you with an everlasting love that began before time. I remember praying this prayer one time, reading it aloud, just before leading worship.

And someone said, God, I just want to love you more. I just want to say, Stop! That's not the point of the prayer. God, I just want to know how much you love me.

[33 : 22] I don't want to be a swing thought anymore in my mind. But you're just waiting for me to do something right. Not the way God is. So, what do you do when you don't sense this love?

It's not always Sunday morning, is it? Say two things. Doubt your feelings, not God.

Doubt your feelings, not God. The great preacher, Martin Lloyd-Jones, says, I'm quoting from the top of my head, but he says, one place, do you not realize that most of your unhappiness is due to listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?

And that's what you must doubt. The self-talk, not the God-talk. So go to the scriptures for where God has spoken clearly and authoritatively. Set your mind to heart upon these truths.

I remember a friend of mine, he believed God gave him this first, during an especially dark season, and he had it up on his screensaver and things like that, and in his car dashed, and his wife found out about this verse that's going to lead him through this season, and he said, she put it all over the place.

[34 : 44] She put it behind the ketchup. In the refrigerator, she put it inside the cabinet, so when he reached for a glass of water, he saw that promise. Well, that's what God wants you to do. He wants you to wallpaper your reality with these truths.

These verses proclaim a love that is based on what God has done. They don't ask you what you think. They don't ask for your opinion. They don't ask you for your...

to bear witness. They ask for you to receive. And pray this prayer. I think the idea is to be rooted and grounded in the love of God requires the power of God.

John Owen, one of the great Puritans, he said, be not contented to have right notions of the love of Christ in your minds.

Now, this will get work done in your heart if you press it in. Unless you can attain a gracious taste of it in your hearts. No more than you would be to see a feast or banquet ritually prepared and partake of nothing of it unto your refreshment.

[35 : 51] So you wouldn't make a Thanksgiving dinner to look at it. Right? Don't let the love of God be like that. Christ is the meat, the bread, the food of our soul.

Nothing is in him of a higher spiritual nourishment than his love, which we should always desire. So take it. Eat it.

Pray to receive it. that it might be what you should always desire and long for more than anything else. Thirdly, what is the effect of this prayer? What's the effect?

This is what we see in verses 20 and 21. One of the greatest benedictions in the Bible. Now to him is able to do far more abundantly than all we may 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. Unsurprisingly, Paul just breaks out into praise. I mean, how could you not? This prayer is so amazing.

[37 : 02] These truths are so amazing and he just, he breaks into doxology. He's stunned at the invitation of God to call him Father and amazed at the riches to transform him and to root him and ground him in the incomprehensible love of Christ and so he breaks out into worship and we will too in a minute.

But it's not all praise. It underlines even more about the generosity and grace of God. We should pray.

We should pray. But, God does more than we can ask or think. God knows what you need before you ask.

Don't be like the Gentiles just heap up phrases up to God. God does more than we can ask or think but not only that. Did you notice God does far more abundantly than all we can ask or think.

The Christian life is not a life where you're tugging God's chain to give you what you want. The Christian life is one where you live with a constant expectation that he gives far more abundantly.

[38 : 20] You cannot comprehend all the ways he plans to work in your life. You had all afternoon to fill all the journals you have in your house. You cannot comprehend all the ways he plans to give you grace.

You cannot conceive the future circumstances, relationships, trials, blessings that he has planned for you. You cannot imagine all the ways he plans to work in you. His heart is brimming and he is brimming with an expectation with a longing to do far more abundantly than all you can think or imagine.

There's not categories to understand all that God is going to do for you because of who you are in Jesus Christ. And so Jonathan Edwards says when we get to heaven we're going to get new senses to taste and see more and more about what God has done.

So I encourage you to apply this to your prayer life. Pray what you need, you know, pray what you want and then say, Lord, I know your heart.

It's to do far more abundantly than all I can ask or think and so I entrust it to you. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations. So before anything else, God wants you, your light to be anchored in the incomprehensible love of Christ.

[39 : 32] That you can say with call Bart. Not because of some experience but because of the Bible.

Jesus loves me, this I know. How do I know that? For the Bible tells me so. One day faith will give way to sight in another way that you've never known it before.

And I encourage you to take this season of Advent to press this truth home. Advent, as they said, you know, it's a season in the life of the church where we celebrate the, anticipate and celebrate the coming of Jesus at Christmas.

but take through it the lens of love. That the goal all of Advent is so that the love of God might be displayed.

Not to people that have earned it. Definitely not to people that deserve it. But because of the Father's delight to fill the earth with love.

[40 : 56] So what I'd like to do is conclude by praying this prayer together. as not merely the passage we study.

I think we'll have it up for you. But as the prayer of our hearts. For this reason, why don't y'all join me?

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

That according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being. So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have 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 that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[42 : 11] 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. Let's stand together. Father in heaven, we give to you our lives. We offer to you our hearts.

We pray that you'd come and reign there. Come and transform us more clearly into the image of Jesus Christ. We pray that you would root us and ground us in this love that is beyond comprehension that we might know you even more truly.

Perfect love cast out fear. Lord, we pray that you'd drive out the fear that fills our hearts of displeasing you or making you embarrassed in some sort of way that the love of God would draw us in.

We pray. We thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen. You've been listening to a message given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.

[43 : 31] For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at