

Eph 3.14-19 Paul's Prayer Concluded, Part 1

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[0 : 0 0] As we've been working through Ephesians, we're at Ephesians chapter 3, and we're in a section at the end of the chapter, specifically verses 14 to 21.

Now in 14 to 21, Paul resumes his prayer report and he concludes it, and this section can be broken up into different parts, and from that section we can see the posture of prayer, the content of his intercession, and a concluding doxology.

Now this section we're going to break up into two parts. The part that we'll examine today is verses 14 to 19, and part 2, or the second part, will be the concluding doxology.

So if you'll please take your copies of the Word of God in chapter 3 of the book of Ephesians, and we'll read the whole chapter. For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I have briefly written already, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets, that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of his power.

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, 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 that 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, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, 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.

[3 : 1 8] Now 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. Lord, again, we thank you for your word and we pray that you would illuminate your word to us and give us a right understanding and a spiritual understanding. I pray that you would bless your people by giving not only knowledge, but a right knowledge and understanding, a grasp of the truths in it, and that we may know the love of Christ. And I pray, Lord, that by the power of your Spirit, you would give your people understanding of these truths. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So as mentioned, our text today will be specifically Ephesians 3, verses 14 to 19. So in that text, the question is, what is this about? What is he saying? What is this particular text about? Here the Apostle Paul resumes and completes his prayer report that began back in chapter 1, verse 16, that the saints be strengthened in understanding. So as such, we will examine the posture of Paul's prayer, the intercession of Paul's prayer, as well as the fruit of Paul's prayer.

So keep your finger in our text, starting in verse 14, because we'll be continually referring to it. But starting with the posture of Paul's prayer. Now, you'll notice our text starts off by saying, for this reason. So the text is already tied to a thought that's been there before. So the immediately prior verse says, therefore, I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, or it might say, for

what I am suffering. So he says, for this reason, so for the reason, that I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

So for this reason, we see that Paul is suffering, but there's still not a full picture here yet, is there? Well, why is Paul suffering? Why does he have these tribulations?

So that connects us to verse 1 of chapter 3, where he says, for this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles.

So Paul's tribulations, Paul's suffering, he's suffering as a prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles. So we're starting to get a bigger picture, which is for this reason, the posture of Paul's prayer, for this reason, that he is suffering, or his tribulations, which we see now ties to the beginning of chapter 3, for the reason that he's a prisoner. Remember, it's his stewardship, or his ministry of the gospel to the Gentiles. So we're starting to get a bigger picture, but there's still not the full picture yet, is there? Because chapter 3 starts off by saying, for this reason. So there's yet still greater context, a bigger picture, that leads us, for this reason, for this reason, I bow my knees.

[6 : 28] So the reason of chapter 3, verse 1, if you're still following me, is Paul's ministry towards the Gentiles as a unified new creation built together into a habitation of God through the Spirit.

So for the reason of Paul's suffering for the Gentiles, his ministry, the gospel to them, that they would be a unified new creation built together into a habitation of God through the Spirit, for this reason, I bow my knees. So when we think about the context of leading up to the posture of Paul's prayer, keep in mind the posture of Paul's prayer. I think, but isn't suffering bad?

Well, not from a perspective of eternity of God's sovereignty. Proverbs 17.3 says, The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tests the heart. So here, the testing of the hearts by the Lord is likened to an intense fire as a refining pot to silver and a furnace for gold. And then 1 Peter 1.7 says, You have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ. So as gold or as silver becomes more glorious when it is refined by fire, so God's gift of faith becomes more glorious when tested by the Lord. 2 Corinthians 4 says, For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. To hear Paul's suffering for the Gentiles was for their glory, their consolation, and salvation. That is why he tells them, Do not lose heart.

So this gives us the background of the posture of Paul's prayers. Paul's posture in his suffering is, I bow my knees.

Psalms 95.6,7, which we read in our call to worship, was, O come, let us bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our God, our Maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. You remember Job. Remember Job's posture in suffering. Job 1.20 says, And Job fell on the ground and worshipped. Job worshipped God in his mourning while trusting God with a big picture perspective. Keep that in mind. Job 19.27-27 said, For I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth. And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another, how my heart yearns within me.

[9 : 43] Suffering and mourning isn't about self-help or what ten steps I must do to climb out of this pit. It's about worshipping God in a contrite spirit, with trust and awe, casting our gaze not upon ourselves, not upon our circumstances, not upon the world, but upon God's glorious and eternal plan of redemption, and our Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our peace, and in whom is our hope.

For I know that my Redeemer lives. And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, not another, how my heart yearns within me.

This already gives us a clue about what is in the forefront of the minds in suffering, in the posture of kneeling before God and in worship, which we'll come back to. But for this cause, or for this reason, in Paul's suffering, what is his petition? In the midst of his suffering, Paul's petition here is not for relief. It's not for release of the circumstance, but his petition in suffering is that the saints be strengthened. Now this is pretty convicting, isn't it? When we are suffering, what is your primary focus and supplication in suffering? Mind you, it's not bad nor wrong to pray for relief from suffering, but that should not be the chief end of our prayers, rather the glory of God. Living blessedly in this life and that which is to come will sometimes mean suffering, rather than comfort and ease in this world.

2 Timothy 3 says, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 1 Peter 3, but even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.

2 Timothy 3, but even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. 2 Timothy 3, but even if you should suffer for righteousness, you are blessed. So Paul's posture for this cause, I bow my knees. This indicates something to us both about man and about God.

[11 : 59] He says, I bow my knees. What it indicates about man is it indicates humility and inadequacy. It is a posture of dependence and reverence. I bow my knees. And it indicates something to us about God.

It indicates God's sovereign authority. Bowing to him who is almighty, who controls all things, including hard circumstances and the advancement of his kingdom through hard circumstances. So in other words, when it says, I bow my knees, it indicates a high view of God and an accurate view of self. Our confidence is not in ourselves, but in our heavenly father and his authority. Ephesians 3, 14 to 15 says, I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. That's prostrate before the sovereign creator of every living being.

The one who has called all things into existence out of nothing by the word of his power and sustains all things by his power. But yet not just prostrate before God as the one who has created all things and sustains our life by his power.

[13 : 08] But in Ephesians 3, 12, it says that in Jesus Christ, our Lord, we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in him. This is the privilege of the church of God.

The posture of Paul here as he bows his knees. So Paul reports that he intercedes for strengthening comprehension and that the saints be filled.

Which brings us to our second point, the intercession of Paul's prayer. So as previously mentioned, Paul picks up from where he left off.

In Ephesians chapter 1, verses 15 to 19, he starts to explain or give a report that he prays for the saints. And in there, he reports that he does not cease to give thanks for the saints and prays that God may give them the spirit of wisdom and of the revelation and the knowledge of him.

So notice in chapter 3, verse 16, it says that he would grant you. Consider the implications of that statement, that he would grant you. First of all, it shows us what he prays for, and it also shows us through whom he asks.

[14 : 29] What he prays for, that they be strengthened, that they comprehend, and that they be filled. And that is through the spirit of God. And this, remember his intercession, is all in the bigger context of them not losing heart.

And these, coming to being strengthened, to comprehend, to be filled, is not self-generated, is it? What does our text say? It says that he would grant you. We do not look within ourselves or within the world, or we are not able to bring out of ourselves these things, but that it would be granted. And from whom is it granted? From God, through his spirit. It is that he would grant you according to.

And when it says grant you according to, it means in accordance with God's overflowing grandeur, majesty, benevolence, and infinite power. So according to God, according to that which is God, according to the riches of his glory.

[15 : 39] According to the riches of his glory, to what result? It goes on to say, to be strengthened with might. Or it might say, to be strengthened with power through his spirit.

Now, there are different trains of thought which are heretical, which would try to say that the Holy Spirit is not a divine person, but merely an external effect of the workings of God that is not God, that exits God, or however it may be wording, but basically denying the divine personhood of the spirit.

So to be strengthened with power, or to be strengthened with might, through his spirit, it's important to understand that the Holy Spirit is not merely an effect of God.

The spirit is not merely the power of God exercised, but is a divine person exercising his power. The deity of the spirit is throughout scripture.

We're not going to exhaust it right now, but to quickly go through some of them, in 1 Corinthians 3 and 6. In 1 Corinthians 3, it says, Do you not know that you are the temple of God?

[16 : 53] Now, of course, a temple is a habitation of deity. And it says, So you are a temple of God. And then further, in 6, he says, Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit being

God, temple of God, temple of the Holy Spirit.

The baptismal formula. Scripture attributes the attributes of deity to the spirit. It is the spirit who gives divine gifts.

The spirit does works of deity, for example, creation, regeneration. The Holy Spirit is God of the same essence and power with the Father and the Son.

This is absolutely crucial to understand before moving on to the works of God. It is proper to take what scripture says about who God is, to build the doctrine of God, and take that with us to better understand how scripture uses particular language, so that we can understand the works of God towards his creatures.

The working of the person of the Spirit, who is God, effecting the purpose of the Father, accomplished by the Son, is here, in our text, effected in your inner man.

[18:10] Now, the work of the Spirit is the invigorating power of God. Luke 1.32 says, The power of the highest. Now, if scripture uses the word spirit, we see spirit, as the English word, as we understand it, used in different ways.

Sometimes it's referred to divinity. Sometimes it's referred to other things. Sometimes spirit in scripture is used in a way in which it means the motion of air or of vapor.

Now, God's effecting purpose is described as God breathing out, or as God speaking, or by his word, or by the word of his power.

Now, we can all, of course, imagine breathing, because if you're here, and you're hearing this, you, of course, are breathing. And when you step outside, and it's cold outside, you see your breath. You see the movement of air, the movement of vapor. Or if you go up to a window on a cold day and breathe on it, you see the movement of vapor form on it. Or you can put your hand in front of your mouth, and you feel the movement of air.

[19:20] You feel the motion of vapor. We all get it. So you can imagine it. Now, God is spirit. We know that from scripture, right? We understand from scripture the doctrine of God, and we take that with us to properly understand the workings of God.

So God is spirit. Spirit. So if God, the affecting power of God, is described as God breathing out, or God speaking, and we imagine, when we go, or when we walk outside, and we see our breath, what's happening?

What's happening is our lungs are exhaling and pushing air up our windpipe and out of our mouth. But God is spirit. Right? So we need to take our understanding of God with us. So, if God is spirit, and God doesn't have lungs, or a windpipe, or a mouth, then what does it mean when it says God breathes out?

God is spirit, and therefore does not have lungs, and a windpipe, and a mouth. This is metaphorical attributions of creature-accommodating language.

This is explaining to us to creatures the works of God towards creatures. So it's using language that we creatures can understand.

[20:27] It's creature-accommodating language. So what does this mean? Real briefly, first of all, no created intellect can comprehend God in the first manner. Isn't this true? God, in his existence and in his knowledge, cannot be comprehended by his creatures.

We are created intellect. We are his creatures, so our created intellect cannot comprehend it in the first manner. Second of all, we don't have the mind of God. So, God speaks our language in the manner of finite life.

Third of all, scripture is analogical or uses analogy or metaphor. Scripture is analogical in its descriptions of the work of the Almighty.

That is, it's not a one-to-one understanding but metaphoric. You've read in scripture under the shadow of his wings. This is an example but it's an easy example.

When we read that, you say, well, of course God doesn't have wings. This is metaphoric but it helps us to understand because it's not that God has wings but it uses language which finite beings can understand.

[21:31] It tells us something else. This isn't just used when it speaks of God having wings. It also is used in the sense of God having body parts that a man has but it goes further than that still.

But for today's purposes, take for example the finger of God. When scripture speaks of the finger of God, God is spirit so God does not have a body or finger. So the spirit, the Holy Spirit is not the finger of a body.

The finger of God is the effecting power of the Holy Spirit who is God. The spirit, the Holy Spirit breathes being, life, and motion into all things by invigorating power.

scripture attributes the final end or the final goal, the power of God with the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son and through whom the work of redemption is applied. Right? If you remember in Ephesians verse 1, so the work of redemption is according to God, purposed by the Father, accomplished by the Son, applied by the Spirit.

[22 : 50] Now, the content of the Word breathed out by God is the external means. So, the proclamation of the Word of God is the external means, for example, the hearing of the Gospel, but with the Holy Spirit, being attended by the Holy Spirit is the effecting of motion by the power of God in the eternal means.

Just as breathing moves air and vapor, so the breathed out Word of God attended by the Holy Spirit effects motion of the power of God internally. Herman Witsius said, the moral efficacy of the Word depends entirely on the supernatural and efficacious operation of the Spirit.

So, the Spirit, as God, as a divine person, is an active effector, not merely an instrument by which divine work is accomplished. For example, He is an active effector in regeneration, in adoption, and in sanctification.

Now, the saints, remember, this is written to the saints. The saints are inwardly sealed and fortified, which means strengthened with power, with the Holy Spirit.

In Ephesians 1, chapter 13, it says, in Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit promise.

[24 : 30] promise. So, Christians, believers, saints, when we are in situations in all of life, whether it even be points of suffering, where do we find, where do we access the Spirit of God for the power to be strengthened?

Again, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. The Christian life is lived in dependence of the same power that called dead sinners to new life. We know that from Ephesians 2 that we were born in sin.

We were sinners. We were dead in sin. And this is an explanation of the demonstration of God's power. You remember when Paul begins his prayer report, a part of his prayer report is that you may know the exceeding greatness of his power.

And then he explains his power as it raised Christ from the dead. And then he goes on to say, and you who were dead in trespasses and sin, he made alive. The power of God raised Christ from the dead.

The power of God raised dead sinners from being dead. That power of God, which is the power of God of creation that called all things into existence out of nothing.

[25 : 47] The power of God that sustains all things. The power of God that raised Christ from the dead. The power of God that raises dead sinners out of a state of death and causes them to be born again.

The power of God and the spirit which seals believers is the power of God which Christian life is lived in dependence upon that same power which calls dead sinners to new life.

Ephesians 3.16 in our text says to be strengthened with might or to be strengthened with power through his spirit in the inner man. Again, this is not self-generated which is contrary to culture, isn't it?

to the world. The world will try to say you are powerful, you are strong, look within your inner self, you will find the strength. The worldly wisdom is that self-help that's looking to yourself, looking within yourself.

You are capable, you are strong. This is not a message of self-sufficiency. The world seeks to build themselves up upon self-sufficiency.

[26 : 48] It's all about myself, what I can do. That's not what this is about. This is the power of God. This is the power of God effected by the spirit of God and the people of God.

Back to our text, it goes on to say that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Now, if you remember back to the Reformation, there are five main points that are characterized of the Reformation.

One of them is by faith alone. And faith alone is that we are justified by faith alone in Christ and not by works. In our justification, what we do in our works do not contribute, do not procure, do not purchase, do not merit our justification.

It is faith, the instrument, faith is a gift from God as an instrument by which we lay hold of Christ, by which we embrace Christ, by which we receive Christ, by which we rest upon Christ.

But it doesn't just end there. It's not just for the moment of salvation. It's not just for the moment of conversion. Strengthened by the indwelling of Christ, our firm foundation through faith.

[28 : 08] Now, this indwelling of Christ, Christ, of course, does not dwell within us in bodily form. The body of Christ was raised from the dead, ascended on high, and is seated on high with all power and with all authority.

So Christ is not in bodily form indwelling within us. Rather, by the Holy Spirit, which proceeds from the Father and the Son.

It goes on to say being rooted and grounded in love. And what do we know about love? We know that love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.

So enduring suffering for the glory of Christ and the unity and fortification of Christ's body. Now, we think of a tree.

What would happen to a tree without roots? It would fall over, wouldn't it? And we see this all the time where we live. We live in the Canadian Shield where there's exposed rock everywhere and maybe there's a crack in the rock or a ledge and moss or dirt starts to form there, a seed gets in there, and a tree takes root and starts to sprout.

[29 : 17] But what happens? There's no root. So because there's no root, it gets uprooted and falls over. A tree without roots cannot stand. What about a building?

Let's say you purchase a whole bunch of property and you're walking out of that property and there's a lake on it. You walk out to the lake and there's a nice beach and it's just a calm day and it's glass calm out on the water and the loons are calling and you think this would be a great spot to have a house.

So you look down at the beach and you stomp on it and yep, seems pretty firm to me. So you start laying bricks and build your house. Well, what happens as soon as the storm comes? What's going to happen to that house?

A building without a sure foundation is unstable. So a tree without roots cannot stand. A building without a sure foundation is unstable and a spiritual house that is not rooted and grounded in love cannot stand and will not last in suffering.

Paul prays that the saints would be strengthened being rooted and grounded in love. They may be able to comprehend. Paul's intercession for the saints is that they may be strengthened in understanding which brings us to our third point, the fruit of Paul's prayer.

[30 : 35] The fruit of Paul's prayer is threefold to comprehend, to know, and to be filled. Now the object of Paul's prayer is their strengthening.

The intent is that it be God granted. The intent is God granted fruit according to the riches of his glory. The fruit is knowledge. The Christian life is not just conduct, it is first contemplation.

The Christian life is not just conduct, it is first contemplation. Right conduct flows out of right knowledge. The Christian life is both theoretical and practical.

Consider the book of Ephesians. We went over this more of the introduction of it, but chapters 1 to 3 speak of orthodoxy, which is what we ought to believe, and chapters 4 to 6 is orthopraxy, which means what we ought to do.

So the first three chapters start off with what we ought to believe, and then the last three chapters are what we ought to do. Thomas Aquinas said that theology is taught by God, teaches of God, and leads to God.

[31 : 59] What is the goal of theology? The goal of theology is to live blessedly in this life and the one that is to come. So ask yourself the question, is living blessedly in this life and the life to come important?

Yes. Then, a right knowledge and wisdom concerning divine things is important. Ask the question, why do we exist? Why were we even created?

The end of creation is the glorification of God by his creatures, both in this life and the life to come. Now, Paul writes so that the saints can perceive, chapter 3, verse 4, he prays that the saints may be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him, chapter 1, verse 17, hearts enlightened that you may know, chapter 1, verse 18, and knowing God entails contemplation.

Psalms 119, 15 says, I will contemplate your ways. So ask yourself the question, what do you think of when you think about God? Does he have the attributes of a finite creature?

When you think about God, is he just like you? When you think about God, is your contemplation informed by your finite intuition and imagination?

[33 : 29] Paul's prayer is that the saints' contemplation would be by divine strengthening. Comprehension being to process information, to understand, and to grasp.

That is to process, understand, and to grasp what is the width and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. To comprehend, though limited it may be, is to know God and enjoy his presence.

Furthermore, this comprehension is one of unity. Look at the text. It says to comprehend with all the saints. This comprehension is one of unity.

To comprehend with all the saints. Unity is agreement on truth. This is something important to understand. Take, for example, the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith.

How did it come to be and what were the circumstances around it? The reason why the Second London Baptist Confession of Faith came to be was in a setting where accusations were made of them based on other denominations.

[34 : 50] So, the confession was to demonstrate unity. the confession was to demonstrate that we are not rogue thinkers. Rather, the confession, the Second London Baptist Confession was to say that we particular Baptists have much unity and doctrine with you Westminster Parliament Puritans.

Now, the ecumenical movement, as of recently, the ecumenical movement, when I say recently, I mean since the times of the Puritan Parliaments, the 1600s and Confessions, the ecumenical movement says to reduce doctrine so we can all agree.

But what is doctrine? Doctrine is the teaching of the Word of God. So, do we really want to do this? Do we really want to reduce doctrine so that we can all agree?

Do we want to reduce knowing God? Do we want to reduce enjoying God? Do we want to reduce living blessedly? Do we want to reduce the glorification of God by his creatures both in this life and in the life to come?

No, we don't. And the church is the pillar and the ground of the truth. Church is to preach the whole counsel of God for the building up of the church, not for the reduction for the building up of the church in doctrine.

[36 : 10] And we'll get more to this in the next chapter in Ephesians chapter 4. So not to get ahead of ourselves in Ephesians 4, but take, for example, Acts chapter 2.

Now in Acts chapter 2, specifically thinking of 42, but going back, starting around Acts chapter 36, what's occurring? Preaching. From the preaching, what occurs?

Those who received the word, so there's the reception of the word, were baptized, and 3,000 souls were added to the church. The ecumenical movement might say, reduce for the sake of numbers, but that's not what we see in Acts chapter 2.

What we see is the preaching of the word, and as such, the word is received, they're baptized, 3,000 souls in one day are added to a church.

Can you imagine that? Now with all these numbers, 3,000 souls added, what did they do? What was their priority? The next thing in Acts 2.

[37 : 14] 42 says they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine. They continued, which meant they were already steadfast in the apostles' doctrine. And even with this addition of 3,000 souls to the church, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine.

this comprehension is not just for pastors, theologians, and seminary students. Back to the text, what does it say?

With all the saints. With all the saints to comprehend, to comprehend the dimensions of Christ's love.

That is to comprehend the breadth and length and height and depth. The love of Christ and the riches of his benevolence is broader than the span of the sea.

It is longer than the ends of the earth. It is higher than the reaches of heaven, and it is deeper than hell. Yet, in the unsearchable, unfathomable, incomprehensibility of the ways of the Almighty, the saints may be divinely strengthened to know, process, understand, and grasp, to the degree that we can attain it, the love of Christ, to the praise of his glorious grace.

[38 : 30] It says that Paul prays that we may know. This knowledge that we may know is not merely academic, it is personally and experientially, that we may know personally and experientially the love of Christ.

Now, this love is not reactionary. Again, we don't want to think of this in terms of ourselves or of our creaturely understandings. This love of Christ is not reactionary, it is not deserved.

The way in which we use the word love is quite different than what's going on here. When I was in high school, I had a friend who worked at the local grocery store, and he loved watermelon. Shipments of watermelon would come in and they would have to move it onto the shelves. One time he told me that a shipment or a big crate of watermelons came in and he was picking them out and putting on the shelves and as he picked up a big watermelon, as he picked it up, it was actually rotten from the bottom, so it collapsed in his hands and rotten watermelon went all over him. He said that after that experience, he hated watermelon. He couldn't eat it, he couldn't smell it, he couldn't talk about it, he just hated it. When we say love, sometimes our understanding or our use of love is something in which it rises up to a level or it can be moved away from that level.

[39 : 53] Now, when we talk about the love of God, God is eternal and God is unchanging, and when we think of the perfection of love, God's love doesn't change, and some people have a hard time with this because they think if God's love doesn't change, that means that he can't rise up in his love for me, but the issue with that is that first of all, it puts God in time, that there's a before, from the point of God loving them, that there must be a before.

The second problem is that that before stage would imply a negation of love, that he does not yet have that love. So, they struggle with it because they think that God's love is down here, and does not rise up to where they want it to be, but that's the wrong perspective of the unchangeable perfection of God's love.

God is the fullness of love, which means God's love is up here. God's love is his perfection, the fullness of it, which means that God's love doesn't decrease, it doesn't come down from his perfection and fullness of his divine love.

Now, the love of Christ does not change, does not move to love us and move away to love us, it's not reactionary and is not deserved.

Now, God doesn't look out into a multitude of people and think, wow, that's such a wonderful person, he's moved me to have affection, I love him.

[41 : 20] Our love of God isn't deserved. When God looks out, he sees that nobody follows after the God, that nobody does what is right. God's love is not deserved.

God's love is God's perfection of love, of the love of the Father for the Son and our being by the mercy and the grace of God in the Son. Take, for example, Romans 5, 8.

But God demonstrated his own love for us, and this, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Consider 1 John, this is a good text, let's turn to it, John 1, keep your finger in Ephesians 3.

1 John, sorry, I think I gave the wrong reference there, 1 John 4, verses 9 to 10. 1 John 4, 9 to 10 says, in this, the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.

And this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. the love of Christ in his incarnation, being born under the law, suffering, dying, being buried, the love of Christ in the work of redemption.

[42 : 49] In Ephesians 5, 2, it says, Christ also loved us and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God. And this is according to the purpose of the Father, who is the wellspring and fountainhead of love.

So Paul prays to know that, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Remember back to the Old Testament, remember when Moses had finished extracting and arranging the tabernacle according to God's terms in Exodus chapter 20.

What happened? What happened in the tabernacle? Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Again, in our text, you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Keep that word filled in your mind. So this is when Moses finished the tabernacle. What about Solomon?

[43 : 51] When Solomon had finished the temple? When Solomon dedicated the temple, 2 Chronicles 7, when Solomon had finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices and the glory of the Lord filled the temple.

And the priest could not enter the house of the Lord because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. And all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down and the glory of the Lord in the temple.

They bowed their faces to the ground on the pavement and worshipped and praised the Lord, saying, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever. Now, what's in common with the temple? You probably remember the title of the sermon, Temple Stematics. A unified new creation built together into a habitation of God through the Spirit.

And Paul here reports that he prays that the fullness of God may permeate it. So, to sum that all up, the tabernacle, the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle, the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the temple, the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house, the church is the New Testament temple, and Paul reports that he prays that the fullness of God may permeate it.

[45 : 47] New creation harmony with God, living blessedly in this life and that which is to come, knowing God more fully, loving him, and enjoying his presence and communion. So, in conclusion, the Apostle Paul completes his prayer report that he started in chapter one.

With a humble and reverent posture, he bows before the Almighty to plead on behalf of the saints. His prayer is that the saints be strengthened in understanding, that is, to process, to understand, and to grasp the love of Christ personally and experientially by the power of the Holy Spirit, who is God.

So, ask these questions. Do you know the true God? Do you know that is the triune God? Do you know, understand, and grasp the love of God in Christ and joy and commune with him?

Does Christ dwell in you by faith? Have you laid hold of Christ and his love as manifested in his incarnation, suffering, and death? For the Christians, is your Christian walk one of contemplation, that you might be filled with the fullness of God?

Or are your thoughts occupied and governed by the finite and temporal, that which is fallen and fading? Or, to ask it another way, whose power do you look to for strengthening in suffering?

[47 : 23] That which you look to for power, for strengthening and suffering will probably be that which consumes your contemplation, which consumes your thoughts.

But whose power do you look to for strengthening and suffering, and trials, and temptation, and tribulation? What about everyday life, everyday living, all the struggles which we face, whether it be how we deal with, how we process health struggles, or the reality of temptation, whether that be what power we look to for strengthening, either in temptation, or to overcome temptation, or to stay away from temptation, because temptation in this life, while we are in this life, in these bodies, with remaining corruption, will always be a reality.

And we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, there is a spiritual battle. So which power do you look to for strengthening in all of this? It will probably be influenced largely by which we spend the majority of our time contemplating.

If we are always contemplating the things of myself, or the things of the world, or the things of our circumstances, that is where our thoughts will be consumed, that is where our attention will be going.

But when we often cast our gaze upon Christ, Christ crucified, ascended, our mediator, our prophet, priest, and king, the almighty power of God through the Spirit at work in believers, this should be forefront on our minds, whether it be in temptation, whether it be in suffering, and as such, our posture should be to bow before the Almighty in humility, in reverence, and in worship, and to look to God for his power and strengthening.

[49 : 07] 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, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his power in the inner man, 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.

Now, when saints are strengthened with might through the Spirit, comprehend the love of Christ, and are filled with the fullness of God, the immense and gracious power of God at work in them overflows in the form of doxology.

And that's Ephesians chapter 3, verses 20 to 21, which is the last section of Paul's conclusion of his prayer report. Let's pray. Our great God, Lord, we thank you for your word.

We thank you for all that your word tells us, what it tells us about you, your perfections, and who you are, and your promises. Lord, I pray that you would help us to grasp these truths and all the more that we would indeed grasp, that we would process, comprehend, understand, know, to perceive the love of Christ and the extent of it, particularly to us, that we would know it experientially

and personally.

We thank you, Lord, that by your almighty power, through your spirit, you are at work and believers, that we are not alone, that we are not to look to our own strength.

[50 : 45] Help us, I pray, to look to you. I pray that you would strengthen the saints, that you would strengthen your people. Help us in all, whether it be struggling from tribulations or even struggling in prosperity and all of the difficulties and trials that we face in life, whether it be in temptation or avoiding temptation, or in all that we do, Lord.

I pray that you would help us to contemplate your excellencies, your wondrous works, and to live lives in a contrite spirit of worship. I thank you, Lord, that indeed we can come boldly, that we have access with confidence.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Take your hymnal. Amen.