**Praying for the Fullness of God**

**Ephesians 3:14-19**

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 We are back in our series, Brought to Life; Brought Together, based upon the New Testament letter of Ephesians. Today’s message is praying for the Fullness of God, from Ephesians 3:14-19. If you have bibles, turn to Ephesians 3:14-19.

Main idea –Paul prays for us to be strengthened by the Spirit (1); to know God’s Love (2) to experience God’s fullness (3). This prayer is progressive and the requests builds upon each other. He prays that God *strengthen us* with his power so we experience Christ’s Lordship in our lives, then the God *strengthen* us to grasp the infinite vastness of God’s love, so that as we experience Christ’s Lordship and his love, we are filled with God’s fullness.

1. The Foundation of Prayer (vs. 14-15)

 Bowing his knee before God is Paul’s way of saying, I pray. He starts by giving the foundation or basis of his prayer. First, prayer is based upon God’s purposes, we see this in the phrase, for this reason (14) which points back to God uniting all things in Jesus who is Lord over all. This has started by reconciling and uniting Jews and Gentiles into one new humanity, the church. This prayer is a means to God uniting us under Christ. Secondly, prayer is to God the Father, from whom the whole family on heaven and earth is named. God is a good Father who provides for his children. One of the devastating results of living in a sinful world is that our relationship with our earthly father leaves an imprint on our hearts and colors how we understand and relate to our heavenly Father. Your experience with your earthly father often influences how you experience God.

1. Be Strengthened with Power (vs. 16-17)

 Paul’s first request is that God would strengthen us with power through the Spirit (16). God exerts his power by his Spirit. The source of God’s power is his inexhaustible resources described as ‘according to the riches of his glory.’ We have seen riches already in Ephesians, we have redemption according to the riches of his grace (1:7); God is rich in mercy that while we were sinners he saved us (2:4-5); and he will show us the riches of his grace toward us in kindness for eternity (2:7). God’s resources to meet human needs are infinite. We pray because God has infinite resources to meet our needs. The place of this strengthening is our inner being, our still sinful but being renewed inner self (Rom 7:22-23; 2 Cor 4:16). Inner being refers is the center of our spiritual and moral life, he will refer to this as the heart in the next verse. The result of this strengthening us is that Christ would dwell in our hearts through faith (17). As we are strengthened, Christ’s Lordship has a progressively greater influence over us by faith. The prayer does not absolve us from trusting Christ. Faith too is the fruit of the Spirit’s strengthening us and leads to faithfulness in life. So, Paul’s first request is that we are strengthened with power so Christ exerts his Lordship on us. His second request is that we are strengthened to grasp the infinite vastness of God’s love.

1. Grasp God’s Love (vs. 17b-19)

 Paul’s *second request* is found in 17-19, 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. Paul reminds them that they are secure in God’s love, described as being rooted and established in love (17). Rooted is an agricultural word pointing to the soil in which love grows while grounded is an architectural word pointing to the foundation in which love rests. It is the picture of a tree with deep roots or a building with deep foundation that stand against the forces of nature. A person who is secure in God’s love is not tossed around by the storms of life; who does not cave in by the pressures of life press. This letter starts out describing this secure love. God chose us before the foundation of the world (1:4); in love God predestined us for adoption (1:5); and he secured our inheritance by sealing us with the Spirit (1:13-14). We are secure in his love from eternity past to eternity future. Nothing can separate us from the love of God found in Christ (Rom 8:38-39). God wants you to know that he has deeply fixed and firmly established you in his love.

 Then he describes the infinite vastness of this love that he wants us to grasp. It is immeasurable and incomprehensible. He describes it this way in v 18-19, what is the breadth and length and height and depth (18), immeasurable, and know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (19), incomprehensible. Those four words in verse eighteen convey one meaning, God’s love is immeasurable. You need, I need, God’s strength to grasp the immeasurable dimensions of God’s love for us in Christ! The particular love of God in Christ knows no boundaries (Ps 103:10-13). God’s love for you is infinitely wide; it is infinitely long; it is infinitely high; and it is infinitely deep. Paul prays for strength to grasp it because we cannot on our own. Not only is God’s love for us immeasurable, it is also incomprehensible. I pray that you may have strength to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge (19) which is really just another way of describing the immeasurableness of God’s love. It is so infinitely vast that it is unknowable apart from God’s Spirit empowering us to grasp it. God’s love for us in Christ is unknowable because it is so foreign to all that we know and have experienced of love. His love is unlike all of our experiences of human love. He loves us in spite of ourselves because it is in the nature of God to love the unlovable, even his enemies.

 We cannot know God’s love in isolation, look at the phrase, together with all the saints. We experience the love of God in two primary ways: through a meaningful relationship with God and meaningful relationships with others. That is why he says, ‘with all the saints,’ knowing God’s love is a community project He wants each of you to know this love. Growth in knowing and understanding the love of God requires that we are involved in community. Notice he says all the saints, not some of the saints, not the saints I like best, that I relate to best, that think the way I do. It is a community that is representative of all the saints, not just the ones I want. We are called to know and experience the love of God in a community.

 This leads us to the climax of this prayer. When God strengthens us with power so Christ exerts his Lordship in our hearts, and God strengthens us to grasp his love for us, we will be filled with the fulness of God. What does that mean? The church is described as the fullness of Christ (1:23) and we are filled with the fullness of Christ so that we are mature and stable (4:11-14). So, the fullness of God is that we are full of his power and his presence in our lives.

**Life Group Questions:**

1. How is your prayer life? Describe your prayer life in a sentence or two.
2. What prompts Paul to pray?
3. What keeps you from feeling desperate to pray?
4. What does this passage teach us about God’s resources?
5. What are the three requests Paul prays? Pray right now through these requests.
6. Why do we need the power of God?
7. What does it mean for Christ to dwell in our hearts?
8. How is the love of God described throughout the book of Ephesians?
9. Why does Paul want us to not only know but deeply experience the love of God?
10. How does the love of God impact how we live today?