

## **Strengthened with Power**

### **Ephesians 3:14-21**

**13 October 2019, Covenant Waterfall**

Pray

#### **Introduction**

How big is your God? What is your view of God? May believe theoretically that he is indeed awesome and all-powerful and can do anything. But it's the types of prayers that we pray that are often a window into our view of God. Only pray small prayers to a God who can do small things. Big prayers of faith – big God.

I find it easy to get into a rut, just praying for things in my comfort zone. What jolts me out of my complacency is a greater vision of who God is. God is not just a more idealised picture of ourselves. Our God is the God of the universe, the one who was, is, is to come, creator of the heavens and the earth. Often lose sight of God's greatness – result – turned in on ourselves, forget how much God can actually do in our lives.

In our text this evening, we see the Apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, praying an incredible prayer. Essence of the prayer is that we'd somehow grasp the magnitude of God's love for us in Christ. It's Paul's perspective of God's greatness and power that really initiates his magnificent prayer. He gets this truth that our vision of God directly impacts how and what we pray for. Specifically for Paul in his prayer, he realises that because of God's greatness, we are able to be strengthened in the magnitude of the love of Christ.

See this in three ways:

- Father of all families
- Strengthened in the love of Christ
- God's glory in the church

#### **A. Father of all Families, vv.14-15**

**“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,”**

Paul starts off by telling us his reason for praying – “for this reason”. What’s his reason? As we’ve seen in the previous weeks, it’s this great mystery of Christ – that God is not only the God of the Jews, but that now people from all nations and tribes of the world are among God’s people.

Paul is so in awe of God’s greatness because of this truth, that he is bowing his knees before the Father – an act of submission and wonder before his Mighty King. God the Father is not just the Father of the Jewish people, but is now Father of every family. Greek = patria = clan. Jews were a patria, descended from their patriarch – Abraham. Other nations have their own patriarchs. So “family” here not in the sense of mom, dad and three kids – instead talking about clans, peoples.

**“Every family in heaven and on earth...”** – v.15 – can see that what Paul has in mind is God’s family – as reference to heaven. Only God’s people are in heaven. Describing all of God’s people – the church – those who are alive on earth now and those who are with him in heaven. That this family, the family of God, is not just the descendants of Abraham, but made up of people from every nation, people and tribe. God’s family, his church, is truly multi-national. He is indeed the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named!

## **B. Strengthened in the love of Christ, vv. 16-19**

**“that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,”**

As a response to this mystery of Christ – that God’s people include both Jew and Gentile – that God is Father of them both, Paul’s eyes are opened to just how great God really is. He is not just some tribal god, but indeed the God of the whole universe!

It’s therefore because of God’s greatness then, that he is able to strengthen us out of the abundance of his power, the “riches of his glory,” through the Holy Spirit. Only a great,

infinitely powerful God has the ability to dish out never-ending “riches of his glory” to strengthen his people through his Spirit.

This is a great comfort to us. We are never on our own as believers in Christ. God is not distant and remote, he is not disinterested in our lives, nor expects us to just get on with our journeys of faith here on earth. No, because he is so infinitely powerful and great, he has chosen to strengthen us by the power of the Spirit. He strengthens us by his Spirit in our faith, he gives us strength to persevere in this life through its many challenges, hardships, losses and tragedies. By the power of his Spirit, he enables us to persevere in our faith in Christ through these dark times, through doubts, temptations to evil, attacks and persecution – he empowers us to endure faithfully to the last day. He also strengthens us in the riches of his glory to be fruitful for his, to bless the work of our hands, in prospering us, guiding us, empowering us to live for his glory, in obedience to his Word. This all can only happen because of his power that is at work in us through his Spirit.

What then is the purpose of the Holy Spirit strengthening us in our inner being? Answer in next verse, verse 17: **“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,”**

It is so that Jesus Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. The reason that God pours out his Spirit on his people is so that Christ dwells in us by faith.

Implication of this truth – it’s impossible to be in Christ and not have the Holy Spirit. There is no such thing as a second class or “carnal Christian” who has Jesus but not the Holy Spirit. That kind of teaching is incredibly destructive, condemns Christians who think they are not spiritual enough – God doesn’t really love them, and creates elite class of folks who think they are more enlightened than other Christians because that may have had a spiritual experience.

Truth of Scripture here is that the Holy Spirit is poured out on us so that Christ can dwell in us. These two things are absolutely inseparable. Can’t say you have Jesus and not the Holy Spirit, or vice versa. The Holy Spirit is also called the “Spirit of Christ” in Romans 8:9. To be in Christ is to have and enjoy the fullness of God’s Spirit in our lives too. Purpose of the Holy Spirit is to always magnify Christ.

The Holy Spirit unites us to Christ – describing our union with Christ.

Perhaps you're thinking – Jesus is in heaven, seated at the right hand of the Father. How then can we be united to him, how can he dwell within us, if we're here on earth? It's understanding our the nature of our union with Christ that helps us here.

We're firstly united with Christ in our justification. Justification? Made right before God, declared not guilty in the courts of God. While we were sinners deserving God's wrath, God in his mercy forgave us our sins through Jesus, clothed us in his righteousness, enabling us to stand with confidence before the Lord, united to Christ.

Secondly, united to Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Explicitly what our text is describing. Jesus, though he is in heaven, in a mysterious way, dwells in our hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes Jesus present in our lives, he makes us more Christ-like, makes us like sin less (sanctification), grows us in our faith, that as verse 17 says, we would be "rooted and grounded in love."

Thirdly, we are also united to Christ "with all the saints," as verse 18 says. Describing incredible truth that in Christ, not only united to him by his Spirit, but also united spiritually to every other believer in Jesus who has ever lived. United spiritually as one body of Christ, the church. This is why it is absolutely impossible to claim to be a Christian, but not be part of his church. The two things are inseparable. If we're united to Christ, we're also united to his body, fellow believers.

Verses 18-9 continue, **"may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."**

Here we see that one of the main reasons Christ dwells in us by his Spirit is so that we can know, along with all the saints, the extent of the love of Christ – its breadth, length, height and depth! Describing four dimensions of it. Who will ever be able to fully grasp the love of Christ? No one. That's the point of what God saying here through Paul. The love of Christ cannot be measured and understood in its breadth and height and depth and length. It cannot be grasped by the mind of man. It really does surpass all knowledge and understanding.

It can only be grasped through faith, as verse 17 says. In faith we can begin to grasp something of the limitless love of Christ. It can't be described, it can only be experienced. That's why verse 19 says that we may **"know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge..."**

"Love of Christ" spoken about here needs to be seen in context. Not just gushy feelings love. But love that is rooted in truth about God. Remember in our first sermon on chapter 1:4-5, it says, **"In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will."**

What this reveals to us about the love of Christ is that the motivation for his love for us is two-fold. Firstly, it is because his love for us that he predestined us unto salvation, he saved us from the wrath of God and eternal destruction. His love for us drove him to raise us from death to true, everlasting life – now and forever. 1 John 4:10 confirms this, **"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."** (he faced God's wrath instead of us).

Secondly, it is because of his love that he adopted us as sons into his family. Because of his love for us, included us in his family, the church, with God as our Father.

Meditate on these things that Christ has done for us, when you think of his love. Not some general, wishy-washy ideas of hearts and chocolates. The height, depth, breadth, length of his love for us drove him to the cross where he accomplished our salvation – had mercy on us as sinners who were deserving of eternity in hell, forgave us our sins, washed us clean, filled us with his Spirit, now calls us his own sons who share in the many blessings of his family.

Verse 19 ends by telling us the purpose of knowing the love of Christ – **"that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."** Paul prays that we may be filled with all the fullness of God – filled to the brim with God's love, which can't be measured. That we would hunger and desire to be continually filled with his love by the Holy Spirit, which our great God freely pours out on us and strengthens us through it.

### **C. God's glory in the church, vv.20-21**

**“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,** At the beginning we saw how our vision of God affects the way we pray and what kind of things we pray for. Here we see the connection between our view of God and what our expectation of what God can do. Because of God’s infinite greatness and power and might and strength, as the God of all the nations of the world – he is able to do far more abundantly than all that we can ever ask, or think, according to the power at work within us.

Blows your mind! How small a view of God we often have! How often we doubt his faithfulness, goodness and provision! “Our God is in the heavens, he does all he pleases!” He does abundantly more than we can ever possible conceive or imagine!

Expand your vision of God! It’s very easy to domesticate him, make him in our own image and tame him. No – he is the mighty God of the universe, sovereign, all-powerful, who will destroy satan by the breath of his mouth (2 Thess 2:8), who will always achieve his purposes, who melts the heart of stone, raises the dead to life, grows and establishes and sustains his church across the face of the earth. We need to see God as Scripture reveals to us, and not according to our own imaginations. That’s why Psalms especially are NB to get into our DNA – lift up our eyes to the Lord himself. Psalm 95:1-7

Final verse 21, **“to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”**

Speaks of God’s glory in the church – not only within us as individuals – this text has been showing us how Christ dwells within us by his Spirit. Not just a personal thing, but also a corporate thing. God’s promise to us is that his glory – his presence, his Spirit – now dwells in the church across the world. Whenever Christians gather to worship him, like we are doing now, his promise to us is that his glory is here.

Same glory that dwelt in the Temple in Jerusalem, concealed in the Holy of Holies, only accessible to the High Priest who made animal sacrifices for the sins of the people by shedding blood. That glory of God now fills the church across all nations, even here in Waterfall, South Africa, because God is not just the God of the Jews in Jerusalem, but indeed “the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.”

And we can approach him as our Father, with his glory present among us tonight for one reason and one reason only. The blood of Jesus has been spilt for sins once and for all. No need for any more sacrifices. The curtain separating the Holy of Holies from the people has been ripped down, God's glory now fills the church and we can, as Hebrews 10:22 says, **"draw near to God with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from and evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."**

### **Conclusion**

Brothers and sisters, if you trust in Jesus Christ, you can know his love for you. In this is his love – that he died on the cross – dying a death we deserved for our sins, and living the perfect life we could not live. And because of this, presenting us as clean, righteous and spotless before God our Father.

Amen