

Series Title / The Blessed Life
A study through the letter to the Ephesians
11-04-18 A Fearless Doxology

Recap of Where We've Been Thus Far

Chapter 1 begins with our position in Christ—we are co-heirs of his Kingdom, seated with Christ and blessed in heavenly realms.

Chapter 2 defines the means of that great salvation. We are saved by grace through faith in the message of his cross—the heir of Abraham's bloodline, the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world by dying and shedding his precious blood on a cross; saved by grace through faith and for a life of **sanctified action**.

Chapter 3 is an attempt at a conclusion to the first section defining our position, our possessions, and privileges. Three times in this chapter alone, Paul has tried to summarize the purpose of his calling from Christ.

He begins chapter 3 out by saying, **"it was for this reason that I Paul, prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles...if in fact you have received the stewardship of his grace..."**

I get the sense, as Daniel so excellently explained last week, that Paul's pace in writing is frenetic. Other letters seem like they've been crafted and shaped with rhetorical precision. But not so with Ephesians.

Ephesians looks like a letter that was written fast as the ideas and truths about the Gentile believers came flooding into Paul's active mind. It feels like he can hardly keep up with inspired thoughts rushing through him by the Spirit. And he is burning up the page—pecking and scratching away at the coarse papyrus with his reed pen.

Chapter 3:14-20 is a summary prayer and doxology.

He brings it all to a prayer, and a closing doxology—which will close the worshipful and theological section of the book.

The Main Text: Eph. 3:14-19

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on the earth is named. 16 I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person, 17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, because you have been rooted and grounded in love, 18 you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and thus to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

The Main Idea: We are spiritually strengthened to the degree that we are founded on, and grounded in God's love.

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1. We pray in reverence and humility

Eph. 3:14-15 “For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on the earth is named.” **Kneeling was not normal for Jews in prayer.** That was more typical of Greeks and Romans who knelt before more distinguished and honored men. Jews typically would bow by pulling their *tallit* or their prayer shawl over from their necks over their heads, singing the prayers with hands lifted. But these truths which flood Paul’s mind have brought him to his knees under the weight of God’s majesty and glory.

The story of God’s glory. The word “glory” means “weight of presence”. It is often used in Scripture interchangeably with “power.”

- **Glory of God in the OT:** Moses and the glory passing before him; glory in the tabernacle and temple. Shikinah glory. What does that mean?
- **The glory of the Lord departed the temple—Ichabod.** As they were hauled off into exile in Babylon, the radiance of God’s glory had departed.
- The people returned on schedule. They returned according to Jeremiah’s timetable—70 yrs later, rebuilt their temple, their city, their homes.
- **But the glory did not return as they had expected.** And it was just as the statesman Daniel had been told by the angel—there would be 7 sevens, or 7, seven-year cycles before the coming of the ruler who will be opposed, be cut off from his people, be despised and rejected by men.
- **490 years after that, the glory did return but in a most unexpected way. Born to a humble family, placed in a horse feeding trough, pursued by Herod the king.**
- And God’s glory, hidden in Christ, lived a non-descript life. No miracles, no education to speak of. Just the apprenticeship in his father’s carpentry trade.
- **Then one day, Jesus from Nazareth bursts onto the scene, anointed in baptism by John the last prophet.** Rumors began to swirl around him immediately. The rumor that a voice from heaven had affirmed him, the Spirit of God had anointed him; that he had vanquished evil in the wilderness—and that the year of the LORD’s favor—Jubilee has come. The Messiah has come to set captives free.
- **Jesus was mistaken for the prophets Jeremiah and Elijah; but he did not minister the way they did. When he teaches, he does not quote previous authorities.** He doesn’t cite rabbinic rulings or interpretations—only solemn pronouncements—daring to speak with God’s authentic voice. Daring to assert that when he speaks, it is not on God’s behalf but is God speaking.
- **He does not pray for miracles,** perform any rituals or incantations to summon God to intervene—he simply speaks and gives the word. And at his word and in his name diseases are cured, the dead are raised, and the demonic forces tremble. **John’s Gospel tells us that “In this way he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in his name.”**
- **And a prophet who preaches with this singular, godlike authority, who wields legislative miracle working power—**will not be tolerated. Not for long. He is tried before the Sanhedrin, he is accused of Blasphemy, and sentenced by the Romans to crucifixion.
- **But on the third day rumors of resurrection are stirring.** Women have found the tomb empty; angels or “men dressed in white” are said to have announced his bodily resurrection—and Mary herself has encountered the risen savior.
- **At first the disciples are incredulous—**they can’t buy it. This just doesn’t happen. But soon Jesus appears to them in resurrected form—displaying his glory, his power and might.

John the Apostle puts it this way Jn. 1:14 “Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory—the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.”

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Reverence and humility—When Paul contemplates our position in Christ, our possessions in the heavenlies, and now our privileges in Him, **bowing before the Father of all creation is the natural response of a soul that has been deeply moved by his glory.**

2. We pray for a rich experience of Christ in our inner being

Notice the wording here. it is an abundant encounter of Christ's person through the indwelling Holy Spirit, in our inner man. That is a reference to the soul.

Eph. 3:16 "I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner person."

- **Illus. Old car restored, new engine roaring to life.** My brother received, for his 16th birthday, a gift from my dad. It was a 1973 Plymouth Barracuda; He had intended to work on it with my brother, but tragically he died before they had a chance to sup the car up together and turn it into the muscle car of their dreams. This didn't stop my brother from trying though. He parked the car in our front yard, locked it up on jacks, and begin to tear that motor apart. Laying all the various pieces of it out on the front lawn. Then, he attempted to put it back together—hooked up some parts the wrong way—and when he went to fire it up the engine exploded into a grass fire surrounding the car. My brother quickly got it out. The next year in high school, he took the old car to his shop and mechanics teacher and asked if he would help him restore it, as a project. They did. My brother cashed in part of his trust fund and began to dump thousands of dollars in the vehicle. After a school year of working on it, it was ready. The outside still looked the same—a faded light blue. The tires and rims were still stock. Nothing to right home about there. But the Engine! He and his shop teacher had rebuilt it from a stock 383 to a roaring 440. I remember the day he got it all done and pulled into our neighborhood with it. It sounded like a beast "plop plop plop..." He took me for a ride and the thing took off like a fighter jet and pinned by head to the seat. We only a couple miles and he drove back by the house and said, "you wanna drive it?" I said, "no. I'm good." And I went back to the house.

The outside just looked the same. But what had transformed the car is what was under the hood.

2 Cor. 4:16-18 "Therefore we do not despair, but even if our physical body is wearing away (paint fading and rusting out), our inner person is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our momentary, light suffering is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison ¹⁸ because we are not looking at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen. For what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal."

I don't care whether you're a young person or old person or somewhere in between. Whether you are the picture of health today, or whether you have a life threatening diagnoses, or a chronic situation. Paul wants you to be strengthened in your inner being through the Power of the Holy Spirit. He wants you and I to know what power is lurking under the hood. **God's power is there to save you, heal you, hold you when answers are delayed.**

Whatever the situation you face, you've got a roaring source of power under the hood. You may look humble, bowing in reverent awe. You may seem like an unassuming engineer, school teacher, businessman, husband or wife. But there is a power you have access to that is there to strengthen your inner being.

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Eph. 3:17 “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, because you have been rooted and grounded in love,”

A life strengthened by the power of the Spirit...

It is a life that is long-nourished in the Word of God, being strengthened powerfully in the presence of God.

3. We pray to comprehend the scope of God’s limitless love. Now this is an interesting part of the prayer for us because it looks like a paradox.

Eph. 3:18 being rooted and grounded in love, that you may be **able to comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and thus to know the love of Christ that **surpasses knowledge**, so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

- a love that surpasses knowledge (3:19b): **hyperbole means to throw past**.
- The Greeks craved secret knowledge. They prided themselves on the “insider” esoteric knowledge revealed by their cultic mediators.
- **And Paul is not here contrasting love and knowledge.** He is simply making a statement about the surpassing quality of love.

Knowledge is helpful, is necessary. But without a commensurate growth in love and compassion and grace, we morph into Christian Pharisees. Without love we are nothing more than a noisy band around the block. No amount of clamorous, frenetic spiritual activity will ever replace a life of growing through knowledge to love.

- Knowledge alone inflates our egos. Instead of serving people with our knowledge we beat them with it as if it were a blunt object.
- Knowledge without love causes us mutate into fussy religious types who spend our time taking shots at the saints rather than loving each other in the power of the Spirit.

But when we understand the dimensions of this love—how high and how wide and how deep is the Father’s love for us—when we catch a glimpse of his glory, we can’t help but be enamored with Him, and less and less impressed with ourselves.

In the same way that God’s glory—his effulgent, radiant glory—his infinite character and nature—has now been located in bodily form—incarnated in the God-man—Jesus from Nazareth. All the fullness of the deity tabernacles in bodily form—Christ revealing God and we have beheld that glory—the glory of the one and only Son.

But in the same way—the vastness of his great love has also been located, encapsulated in a symbol. The incomprehensible love and grace of God so high and wide that it cannot be measured; so bottomless that its depths cannot be plumbed nor sounded. The incomprehensible is captured in one enduring symbol. So if you want to grasp this limitless love (which Paul prays you will), just measure the width and breadth of the cross beam, where his arms were tied and hands were pierced—for you. **Just measure the length and height of the vertical beam, where he feat were nailed and his back ran red**—for you. This is the measure of his love. This is the depth of his heart for us.

Worship Team Returns/Final Prayer

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I pray that according to God's reserves in glory, that you will be strengthened for the challenges that you are facing in your marriage, in your body, in your career, in your ministry.

I pray that you would experience the abundance of his comfort and encouragement, as your soul is long-nourished in His Word, as you practice his Presence in your, having been rooted and established in his infinite love.

That you would apprehend the measure—the scope of that Love in the cross. An instrument of death, but the enduring symbol of our life and union with God Almighty.

Doxology (3:20): Let's all read it together.

(Daniel Read and Lead Congregation) Eph. 3:20-21: Now to him who by the power that is working within us is able to do far beyond all that we ask or think, ²¹ to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.