

Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

A Prayer for Spiritual Power

Scripture: Ephesians 3:12-21

Code: 49-13

I want you to open your Bible to the third chapter of Ephesians this morning. As you know, we are working our way through Ephesians in a rather staccato fashion; we seem to be being interrupted periodically. But for this morning I want to draw your attention to chapter 3, and in particular, the text is verses 14 through 21. Ephesians chapter 3, verses 14 through 21. This is Paul's prayer for the sanctification of believers. This is a very significant portion of Scripture for that very reason. Listen as I read, starting in verse 14.

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” This is a glorious portion of Scripture, and very, very instructive.

You will notice how it ends. It ends for glory in the church to be given to Christ Jesus. The glory that comes to Christ through His church is because of verse 20—that those who belong to Christ, those in whom He dwells, will be “able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.”

I remember as a seminary student mulling often over that verse and wondering how it could even be true. How is it possible that the Lord could do all that we ask or think, and beyond that, beyond all that we ask or think, and then abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, and then far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think? This is hyperbole, in some ways, unparalleled in the New Testament. The message here is that there is immense spiritual power working in us. That is what it says: It works within us. It works within us as the church for the glory of Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.

And yet most of us, as believers, wouldn't see that reality in our lives and lay claim to it. I don't know that any of us would say, “Yes, it's true. God has done far more abundantly beyond all that I can ask or think, according to the power that works within me.” It seems almost like hyperbole. It seems too far beyond us, too grand, too great, too much.

How can we have such a life? It was that very question, based on this verse, that plagued me when I came out of seminary. Because I could ask a lot of things of the Lord, I could think of a lot of things, and I was trying to understand how the Lord could do everything that I could ask or think, all that I ask or think, beyond all, abundantly beyond all, far more abundantly beyond all I could ask or think;

and I wondered, “How is that even possible?”

And here I am all these many, many years since those musings about Ephesians 3:20 when I was very young, and I have to say to you, I have seen that verse fulfilled in my life for a long time. I’ve seen the Lord do far more abundantly beyond all that I could ever ask or think. It is incomprehensible to me what the Lord has done. And I’m not talking about in an earthly sense; you see some of it. But I’m talking in the heavenly sense because this power is for the purpose of glory in the church—that means the glorified church, to glorify Christ in eternity.

So the real story of your life and my life is kept in heaven, isn’t it? We’re not going to know what the fulfillment of this truth is until we get to glory. We tend to think that we fall far short—not that the Lord doesn’t do amazing things through our faithfulness, through our spiritual gifts, through the life of the Spirit that we live, through our efforts at sharing the gospel, evangelizing, living a Christ-honoring life. We can see that. We can see it in close friends. We can see it in our families, in our children, and the people we influence.

But the full measure of the power unleashed in the life of a believer will never be known until we reach eternity. We are told that we need to be living our lives with a heavenly focus, setting our affections on things above and not on things on the earth. As we saw in chapter 2, we really are aliens and strangers in this world. We are citizens of heaven, and we belong to the household of God. We live in the heavenlies, as we saw last time in Ephesians. So heaven is keeping the real record. That’s why Paul says, “It’s a small thing what you say about me. Even if I know nothing against myself, herein am I not justified. I can’t evaluate my life until the time when the Lord evaluates my life. Then will every man have praise from God.”

So the reality about the impact of our life eternally is laid up in heaven with the rest of our inheritance; and someday we’ll find out the truth about that—whether it’s meager or whether it’s much. But your life as a believer is potentially empowered for eternal impact, literally beyond what you could imagine. But how do you get to that point? Because that’s really the end of the passage, and we have to go back to see how to reach that sort of final point of divine usefulness. There are five steps in this text. They are powerful, powerful steps that take us to the point of a powerful life that has eternal impact.

Now, we all know that we have received the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:8, and that we have power. Jesus said that. “You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me.” So we know that. At the same time, it’s not visible how powered we are—how Spirit-powered we are, how divinely energized we are—because John writes in 1 John 3:2, it doesn’t yet appear what we shall be; it’s not manifest to the world. They don’t see us this way. They don’t understand that we have living in us the God of the universe—Father, Son, and Spirit—and that we have this immense power to affect people’s lives everlastingly. But that is exactly what this is saying. But it doesn’t appear yet. It’s not manifest. It’s not visible for the world to see. But we are called to live the kind of life, whatever this world thinks of the impact, that leaves an impact on eternity. And that’s what this passage is about.

Now remember, last time we talked about verse 8 in particular— that we have at our disposal unfathomable riches in Christ. We looked at that from a number of angles. The riches that are ours in Christ, chapter 1, verse 3: We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies. We live in the heavenlies. We are not creatures of the earth; we’re creatures of heaven. We have been given all the

treasures of divine wisdom and knowledge and revelation. We have been given everything we need for life and godliness. And Paul is talking about all that we have. In chapters 1, 2, and 3, he's laying out all our riches.

In chapter 1, you remember he went down a litany of the things that are ours by way of the divine grace that God has bestowed on us in Christ. And because we have all of this, and because deposited to our account are the unfathomable riches of Christ, he comes down to verse 12 in this third chapter and says, "We have boldness and confident access through faith in Him." Everything in the divine treasury, everything that God has delineated to be given to His children, is available to us, and we have access. The writer of Hebrews says we can even come boldly before the throne. And that's why in verse 13 Paul says, "[I don't want you] to lose heart at my tribulation on your behalf, for [even that is] for your glory." No matter when things go bad in life; even that works out for the glory of the saints in heaven.

So Paul has been laying out our riches; and we looked with some detail at that last time. Now in verse 14, he prays that we will go down the pathway to access those riches. He started the prayer back in verse 1, didn't he: "For this reason I, Paul—" and then he stopped and said, "You don't know enough." And so from verses 2 to 13, he added to our understanding of divine revelation. And now he's back where he started, verse 14, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father."

What is the reason? What is the reason? It's laid out in a series of purpose clauses tied to the word "that." "For this reason I am bowing my knees before the Father"—implying prayer—"in order that—" and then he goes through a sequence that leads to final power and eternal glory.

You know, we're the only people in the world who have any kind of eternal impact in the good sense. Evil people have an eternal impact in the hellish sense. But nobody has an eternal impact in a heavenly sense except a believer in Jesus Christ—one who is enabled by the Holy Spirit, one who is part of the kingdom of heaven, one who is empowered by God.

Our lives matter everlastingly. Paul is stunned by this. He even asks a rhetorical question to the Corinthians, "Who is adequate for these things?" Whose life can matter that much? But yours does. And you have at your disposal, and you have access with boldness to all that is necessary to live a life that is so powered by God that you will find yourself doing far more abundantly above all that you can ask or think with the power that is working in you.

It's hard for us really to see that power at work because we struggle so much with the flesh, isn't it? And because we don't have some kind of out-of-body experience when supernatural power is operating in our lives. We don't have any way to know that there is divine power in operation, as if there was some feeling or some sense or some way to experience the flow of that power. We know the power operates when we see the result of it, not when we feel it—because we don't. But your life should be a life that has an impact. It should be an impact that exceeds what you would ever have imagined for yourself. That is accessible to you because you have all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies and all the unfathomable riches of Christ available to you. So Paul prays that we would be able to access that.

So what this prayer is, is a prayer for sanctification. One of the doctrines that I'm concerned about, and have been for many, many years, is the doctrine of sanctification. Doctrine of divine sovereignty

is popular. The doctrine of justification is popular. The waiting and hoping for glorification is popular. But sanctification isn't quite so popular—but sanctification is where we live and move and have our being in between our justification and our glorification. And it is the very issue that concerned Paul, and it concerned him so much that he prayed.

And he didn't just pray. Verse 14, "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father." Why is he bowing down? Why is he kneeling down? Is that a commanded posture for prayer? No, it's never commanded in Scripture. In fact Abraham stood before the Lord in Genesis chapter 18 when he prayed for Sodom. And in 1 Chronicles 17 David sat before the Lord when he prayed about the future of his kingdom. And Jesus actually, in the Garden of Gethsemane, fell on His face. So there were a lot of postures; and those are just some examples of prayer postures. The most common custom for Jews was to pray standing, with their hands uplifted, as if to symbolize receiving blessing from God. But occasionally you find someone kneeling, like Paul.

In Ezra, for example, chapter 9, Ezra kneels in the confession—a very emotional confession of the sins of Israel. In Daniel chapter 6, Daniel kneels as he pours out his prayer to God in supplication. In Acts chapter 20 the elders who are meeting with Paul are weeping, and they're kneeling as they pray together with him. And these are prayers of deep emotion and passion. In Psalm 95, verse 6, we read, "Let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Kneeling was reserved for those times of deep emotion, passion, and worship.

So Paul is in that posture. He is profoundly concerned. And about what is he concerned? The sanctification of his people. As he says in Galatians 4:19, he's "in [birth pains] until Christ is fully formed in you." This is a pastoral concern for the sanctification of the people. A pastor who has no concern for that or who has a minimum concern for the sanctification of his people is unfaithful, unqualified, and has to some degree prostituted his calling—because that is our calling: to be the instrument that God uses, with the Word and the Spirit, to bring about the sanctification of the church.

That's what Paul prays for. And he's praying to the Father—obviously God, the one who created every family in heaven and earth; and they all are from Him. But in particular, he's thinking about the family of the redeemed. God has created all. That is to say, there's only one God, so there's only one God to pray for if every family in heaven and on earth derived its name from the Father, because He is their Creator. Then there is no other God; so he comes to the one true God, who is the source of every family, and particularly the family of the redeemed. God's special family, identified in chapter 2 in verse 19 as God's household.

So his prayer is on behalf of the household of God, speaking of the one family of God made up of Jew and Gentile—the one family of God. And about what does he pray? He prays concerning their sanctification. It is a very bold prayer, as it should be, because it's consistent with the will of God.

Notice what he says in verse 16, "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory"—we'll stop there. We talked about that. That's been his theme: "the riches of His glory." He mentions that in chapter 1. As we saw in chapter 3, verse 8, again, "the unfathomable riches of Christ." So on the basis of that, according to the available riches of divine glory, he prays for God to grant us his petition.

What is this that he prays for? What is it that he wants to draw down out of these treasures, these unsearchable riches, all spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ? What is he wanting to bring down into the believer's life? Well, the end is in verse 20: power. Power "to do far more abundantly above all [you can] ask or think, according to the power that works in us." He wants the church to be powerful with divine power. And so his prayer lays out five aspects of this, and they are sequential; they're in progression. That will show as you look at the use of the word "that," which is the purpose clause.

So he's praying, first of all, "that [God] would grant you"—verse 16—"according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man." So let's start with this: inner strength. First thing he prays for is inner strength, inner strength. Sanctification starts at this point. Before anything gets to the outside, it starts on the inside. This is a progressive kind of sanctification, as you know, but even an understanding of its dynamics has a certain progression to it as well, and it starts with being strengthened with might in the inner man. This is a critical beginning point. You have no hope of maximizing your power on the outside unless your life on the inside is strong. It's the inner strength that starts everything in the direction of a powerful life.

A weak inner man results in sin, transgressions, frustration, strain, disappointment, despair, ineffectiveness. Doesn't matter what you try to be on the outside; what you are on the inside is what you really are. You can't hide that from God. What you really are is what you are on the inside. In the dark, when nobody's watching, that's what you are. And you have to ask the question, in your most innermost being, are you under the strong continual influence of the Holy Spirit? We work hard on the outer man; we take care of that, and we show whatever version of the outer man we want people to see, but the inner man is the issue. And that was Paul's focus.

In 2 Corinthians chapter 4 there is a particular verse, verse 16, that I think sums this up very well. He says, "We do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day." Our outer man is decaying; our inner man is being renewed day by day. They go in an inverse order. I mean, we all know about the outer man decaying; we all understand that. The older we get, the fewer mirrors are hung in our home. We get it. We all suffer the increasing reality of physical weakness as we age. But while you are getting physically weaker, you should be getting spiritually stronger. That's the inverse reality.

Think about it for a young person. A young person has all kinds of physical stamina, physical strength, but a young person struggles immensely to be victorious over temptation and sin because while they are strong physically, they are weak spiritually. But as you grow older and as you get weaker physically, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:16 your inner person is getting stronger and stronger and stronger and stronger—the inner man, who you are on the inside.

Paul's inner man was strong. He said to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians chapter 1—they were criticizing, and he said this, chapter 1, verse 12: "Our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience"—that voice, that inner voice—"that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you." He is saying, "On the inside, whatever you may think about me, I have conducted my life in holiness and godly sincerity in the grace of God. You may criticize me on the outside, but my conscience is not condemning me on the inside."

That's where the battle has to be won. And it's not easy, and it is progressive. I mean, I've noticed in

just living my own life that as I have grown older and become relatively weaker physically, I have consistently become stronger spiritually. And this is what the Spirit of God does as we draw down the resources of heaven.

Look at Romans chapter 7, and see a little bit about Paul and his facing that reality. In chapter 7 he discusses what it's like to face the sin that is in you. Down in verse 14 of Romans 7 he says, "[I] know that the Law is spiritual"—"I know that"—"but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I'm doing, I don't understand; I'm not practicing what I would like to do, but I'm doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." So "I'm having this battle with what I want and with what sin wants. And I know that in my flesh"—verse 18—"nothing good dwells . . . for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil I do not want. If I'm doing the very thing I do not want, I'm no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.

So "I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good." That's the battle. That is the battle. There's a war going on inside with the inner man. Verse 22, "I joyfully concur with the law of God"—the inner man loves the Word of God—"but I see a different law"—or a different influence—"in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin." This is the battle. And when you're young, the battle rages very hot because while you have temporal, physical strength, you are weak spiritually as you begin.

Paul didn't leave us there with that dilemma. In chapter 8 he opens up the answer to this. Go down to verse 9, "However," he says, "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone doesn't have the Spirit of Christ, he doesn't belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness."

Down in verse 13: "If you're living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you're putting to death the deeds of the [flesh], you will live." And that is true of Christians. We are all, verse 14, "being led by the Spirit of God [because we] are the sons of God."

So Paul says, "Look, the battle is won by the power of the Spirit in the inner person." The key is to be filled with the Spirit, dominated by the Holy Spirit. What does that mean? Well, it paralleled to Colossians 3:16, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." So when your mind—your inner person, your mind; therefore, your meditations—are dominated by the Word of God, that is how the Spirit of God controls you. It's not something mystical; it's something not subjective, but objective. It's that your mind is filled with divine truth. And when your mind is filled with divine truth, the Spirit is directing through that truth.

And Galatians 5:22 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." And then he goes on to say, "Now [to] those who belong to Christ Jesus [we] have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one

another, envying one another.”

So we live in the Spirit; let's walk in the Spirit. And when we're under the control of the Spirit, our life is marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, humility; and there's a lack of confrontational anger and an absence of envy. And at that point, the Spirit of God is controlling your inner man. That's what it means to be filled with the Spirit. So Paul prays for the inner man; that's where it all starts. It's where your sanctification has to start. It's not just a question of coming and hearing a sermon; it's not just a question of occasionally reading a good book. It's a question of the domination of your thoughts by divine truth, divine truth.

When I was young in the faith I thought the impulses were strong enough that maybe I would never conquer them, that some spiritual goals would never be reached. But as I yielded a little each day and was refreshed day by day in the Word, the inner man was being revitalized and strengthened and strengthened, and I was building spiritual muscle, until there was spiritual strength even in the midst of physical weakness. In fact, Paul says, “When I'm weak, then I'm strong.”

So sanctification begins on the inside of the believer. It begins on the inside. Let's just say inner strength, it's being dominated on the inside with holy truth, holy thoughts, holy desires, ambitions, aspirations, longings. You are what you are on the inside; the rest is just putting on some outer cloak. And sanctification would be making you on the inside everything that would make you Christlike on the outside. But if you put on a show on the outside without a strong inner man, that's what hypocrisy is. You are what you are on the inside. So it all starts with inner strength.

Secondly, the indwelling Christ. Let's say inner strength and indwelling Christ. Go to verse 17, “So that”—again, here is one of the reasons he's praying: that God would grant you inner strength through the Spirit, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Now, this isn't talking about salvation because you already have the Holy Spirit; you already have the inner strength. What does this mean?

Well, take the word “dwell,” *katoikēsai*. It's made up of two words: *oikeō*, to live in a home; and *kata*, down. It means to settle down in a home. The way to understand this is if your life is strengthened with power by His Spirit in the inner man, Christ can settle down in your heart. I guess the question is, is Jesus comfortable in you? Could you say that about yourself: that Christ could settle down, live in your heart, and not be disappointed? Christ could know everything about you on the inside and be comfortable?

An illustration of that might be you go to the Old Testament and remember that Abraham had a visit from heaven. It was God and two angels. God was going to bless Abraham with a son, so the Lord came down and came into Abram's home, into his tent with two angels; and He ate and talked with Abram. They felt very much at home. Abraham was a man of faith, a man of obedience. Lot, on the other hand, lived in Sodom. And God had a message for Lot; but God didn't go to Lot's house, He sent two angels. The Lord didn't go to Sodom; that was not a place where He would be comfortable.

A number of years ago there was a book called *My Heart—Christ's Home*, written by Robert Munger, and it tells the fictional story about Christ visiting someone's heart like visiting their home. And in the little book, there's a library. And the library in the home, which is the heart, is the control room—it's the brain; it's where the information is stored. And when Christ comes into this library He finds evil

things, trash, worldly things, and demands that it be replaced with His Word. And then there's a dining room in the human heart, and this is the room for appetites and desires. And it talks about what it is that you long for, what it is that you desire; and he finds riches and prestige and earthly commodities, and he says you have to exchange that for the heavenly bread that satisfies the will of the Father.

Then he comes to the living room, where the activity and socialization goes on. And it's all the wrong people and all the wrong relationships; and there's the absence of genuine true fellowship, so much so that the Lord feels like a stranger, not a welcomed guest, and says, "You've got to clean up the living room." Then He goes to the workshop and finds the workbench with all the tools, and all that's being made is toys, and He says, "You need to use your tools to make things that last. You need to use your tools for the kingdom." And so He cleans out the workshop.

So He cleans out the library, and the dining room, and the living room, and the workshop in the little book. And then He has a foul smell coming from somewhere, and He finds a closet, where the source of the peculiar odor originates, and He finds in there something dead and something rotten. And it's the secret closet where all the secret sins are kept, and He says to the man, "Open the closet," to which he initially responds, "Look, you have everything else; leave that alone." And the writer says that the man was angry; "How much do You want? I gave You everything else." But the point of the book is only when He gets it all can He settle down and be at home.

The lordship of Christ extends to every part of your life. So when you are yielding to the Holy Spirit and strengthened by the Spirit in your inner man, the Spirit controls your life. The result is you are Christ centered, you are clean, and Christ settles down into every dimension of your life; and He's at home, and you become Christlike, you become Christlike. John 14:23, Jesus said, "I'll make My abode with you, and My Father will make His abode with you." The Lord Himself wants to settle down and be at home in your heart. In some hearts, He can't really settle down; He's busy opening up all the closets and revealing all the wickedness.

So the path of sanctification starts with inner strength by the Spirit—being filled by the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, being controlled by the Spirit. It then moves to the indwelling Christ. When your life is in the Spirit, in full commitment, Christ settles down in your heart, and then you begin to manifest Christlikeness.

And that leads to another purpose for Paul's prayer—another "that," another purpose clause—verse 17, "That you, being rooted and grounded in love . . ." You might think that this would say that you be rooted and grounded in truth. But the goal of our instruction is always love. And what the Lord wants to accomplish in sanctification is love. So let's call it incomprehensible love. You go from inner strength to the indwelling Christ to incomprehensible love. You literally become rooted and grounded in love. In other words, it's not something on the fridge, it's not something isolated, it's not something occasional; you are literally—the foundation of your life is love. The root system of your life—if you see it as a building, its foundation is love; if you see it as a tree, its root system is love. What controls you when Christ is at home in your heart and you are manifesting His virtue: you'll be a person who is known for love. His love will flow through you at every point.

And this will be the truest representation of who you are, and that's consistent with what our Lord said: "The world will know you're My disciples, if you have love for one another." A love that is deep and secure, unwavering, unchanging—this is the love of Romans 5:5, that God has shed abroad in

our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And this love is so glorious that Paul has to add to it verse 18, “That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.”

One thing about love: You can’t understand it by a definition. You can only understand it by—what? By an experience. If I have to explain it, you ain’t got it. That simple. And Paul is saying here, “When your life is rooted and grounded in love, you will be able to comprehend the fullness of that love of Christ which surpasses knowledge.” It’s not a love that anyone can understand, except a believer who is literally Christlike. And if you don’t have that love, then you’re nothing but a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. The thing about love is you have to experience it to comprehend it.

Now “comprehend” is a very strong word—*katalambanō*; it means “to seize”; it means “to take possession of.” So when you live in the love of Christ, you literally comprehend that love in all dimensions. It doesn’t show up once in a while. It doesn’t show up for certain people. It’s not a sometimes love, and other times there’s hate, or other times there’s bitterness, or other times there’s jealousy, or other times there’s envy. No, it’s a dominant love. It’s rooted in the life of one in whom Christ is settled down and at home, and it is understood by that person experientially so that they can comprehend it in all its dimensions. And that’s the point of “breadth and length and height and depth”: the limitlessness of love. You get around a person with inner strength, you get around a person with the indwelling Christ, get around a person with incomprehensible love, and you will feel that love.

Could we define what he means by breadth? Yes. Chapter 2—it is broad enough to include Jew and Gentile—right? Jew and Gentile. Can we define length? Yes. We saw that it encompasses Jew and Gentile in chapter 2, verses 11 to 18. But what about its length? Well, we found that in chapter 1, verse 4, where it talked about us being chosen before the foundation of the world. And chapter 2, verse 7, where it says, “That in the ages to come He [will] show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ.”

So the breadth of it includes Jew and Gentile. The length of love: from eternity to eternity. What about the depth of love? Well that’s chapter 2, verse 1: You were dead in your trespasses and sin; you were walking according to the course of the world, the prince of the power of the air, spirit working in the sons of disobedience. You indulge the flesh and the mind, lusts, were children of wrath. “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in . . . transgressions, made us alive together with Christ.” That’s the depth of love: It reaches to the depth of sin.

The breadth of love is Jew and Gentile are one. The length of love is from eternity to eternity. The depth of love: It reaches to the deepest pit of sin. And what about the height of love? That’s chapter 2, verse 6, “[He] raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” It takes us all the way to heaven. So we understand the fullness of the love of God, that creates of all of us one body, that determines our eternity from eternity past to eternity future, that reaches down to rescue us no matter how deep the pit of sin, and ultimately enthrones us in heaven.

Your life will be marked by love, and that love will be manifest. That’s part of the fruit of the Spirit; it’s where it starts: love. Inner strength, indwelling Christ, incomprehensible love—leads to a fourth feature in this progression, verse 19, “That you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” That’s just

staggering: “That you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.” This is another purpose clause, the word “that,” “in order that.” So this happens in order that, this happens in order that, this happens, and this—it’s all sequential. “Filled up to all the fullness of God.” What would that look like? Godliness, wouldn’t it? Godliness. He’s been talking about being filled with the Spirit, in verse 16; filled with Christ, in verse 17; and now filled with the fullness of God.

In Colossians chapter 2, verse 9, we read concerning Christ, “For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” So all the fullness of God dwells in Christ. And then verse 10, “In Him you have been made complete.” So what should characterize our lives? The things that characterize the Holy Spirit: the fruit of the Spirit. What should characterize our lives? The things that characterize Christ, particularly His limitless love. What should characterize our lives? Godliness. In other words, all of those communicable attributes of God become visible in some lesser way in us. Not talking about omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, or immutability, those incommunicable, eternal attributes of God; but all those attributes of God that can be summed up in love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control, wisdom, knowledge, mercy, compassion. You know those.

This is real spirituality: You walk in the Spirit, you love like Christ, and you act like God. That’s sanctification; that’s sanctification. Now, you’re not going to be God, but you begin to manifest the characteristics that are true in their perfection of God. You are doing what Paul said to Titus in Titus 2:10—you’re adorning the doctrine of God by your life. Somebody could actually look at your life and see something of what God is like, look at your life and see something of what Christ is like, look at your life and see something of what the Spirit is like.

Inner strength leads to indwelling Christ, leads to incomprehensible love, which should dominate our lives, which results in infinite fullness—and that’s godliness. And then you come to number five: internal power.

After all of this, now verse 20, you’re ready to hear, “To Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us.” When we’ve gone down the pathway so far, we have reached the point where the power that is in us is working in us—internal power, let’s call it; internal power. And again, most of us feel we would fall far short of that, and we all do fall far short of what we should be. But each of us, based upon the truths of this passage, can see things happening in our lives that are only explained by the presence of God.

Listen to what Jesus said in John 14:12: “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father.” What? Greater works than Christ? Not greater in kind, but greater in extent. Christ went to the Father and said, “It’s better that I go to the Father and send the Spirit, because when the Spirit comes, you’ll be empowered.”

Christ said to the disciples, “I have been with you; I will be in you.” The internal power of God is in the believer—super-abundant power, the kind of power that I think Isaiah wrote about back in the wonderful words of familiar fortieth chapter of Isaiah, verses 28 to 31: “Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth doesn’t become weary or tired. His understanding is inscrutable. He gives strength to the weary, and to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, and vigorous young men stumble badly, yet those who wait for the Lord will gain new strength; they will mount up with wings

like eagles, they will run and not get tired, they will walk and not become weary.” This is spiritual strength.

What power? Colossians 1:29, as we saw last week, Paul said, “That’s the power that works in me.” “For this purpose I labor”—to make every man complete in Christ—“striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.” He experienced that power. And as I said, you can see it in some measure in the influence of your life in this world, but the fullness of it awaits the revelation of heaven.

You’re to live like this. Why? So that verse 21 can be a reality—that “to Him,” to the Lord Himself, would “be glory in the church.” If we’re going to bring glory to Him in the church, this is how we have to live. Sad to say, the visible church is far off from this. There’s glory for Him in the church if the church is sanctified.

So the end of it is, “To Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen”—through the church to demonstrate the unfathomable riches of Christ—which we saw last time—to the holy angels and the eternal saints. But until then, to demonstrate to the world in the church the glory of Christ to generation after generation after generation. That’s the kind of life you can live. And again, you won’t know the fullness of its fruitfulness until you reach heaven.

Our Father, we thank You for the instruction of Your Word. We thank You for its clarity, its divine, supernatural simplicity. We thank You that You have granted to us all the things that pertain to life and godliness, all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies; and we have confidence in accessing these unsearchable, unfathomable riches in Christ. I pray that You will move us inexorably down the path of sanctification to the place where our lives have power, power that allows us to accomplish far more abundantly all that we can ask or think. I pray for this congregation, that they might be Spirit-filled, that they might radiate the love of Christ, and that they may be filled with all the fullness that belongs to You, O God, so that they are powerful in their evangelistic testimony, in their living example, in the fellowship of the saints, in the use of their spiritual gifts, in their wisdom and understanding, so that it may be evident to all that You are the power behind these lives.

Lord, we thank You that this is possible because You saved us by going to the cross and dying in our place. Now as we come to Your table, we ask that You would show us Christ again, the crucified one. It would have been enough for Him to die in our place and take our punishment and give us forgiveness and everlasting life; and He did that. But He did that so that He could live in us, and live through us, and earn for us an eternal reward, which in the end would be to His glory. We are overwhelmed by the reality of this plan from eternity to eternity. But we want to stop for a moment and go back to the cross, because it is about the cross. The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost; come to die, that we might live. May we remember the sacrifice that He provided for us, and may it motivate our sanctification to show our loving gratitude to Him. Amen.

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