

Ephesians 3:17b-19a

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The New Testament only knows of one kind of a believer, and that is the believer that is called to progress in their understanding of the true matters, of the true reality of our faith.

So from verse 14: For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit, in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and the length and the height and the depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now, to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to Him be the glory in the church, and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever, Amen.

So as we come to this third section, or this third request that Paul's lifting up, we remind ourselves that these requests that Paul was praying for, we talked about the grammatical construction and how this clearly shown to us, that these are requests that are built one upon another. In other words, Paul is lifting up request (a), that will be the foundation for request (b), that will be the foundation for request (c), and (d), and then finally, (e). And so each one rests on the previous one, in such a way that we can't even really take them out of order—one leads to the next which leads to the next.

And so the first request that Paul lifted up was this request for strengthening in their inner man through power, by way of the Spirit. And so as we looked at that request, we talked about how it is that the Holy Spirit strengthens his people. And the Holy Spirit strengthens his people in a number of different ways. He strengthens his people through His Word, He strengthens his people through his people. He strengthens his people through obedience—as we obey in faith, we are strengthened—but the greatest and the clearest. And the most powerful way that the God that God strengthens his people is not by strengthening us, by making us stronger, but He strengthens us by making us weaker. He causes in our life, those things that we rely upon other than him those things that we look to other than Him, He takes those away, carefully and gently, forcing us to look to Him and Him alone. And as we do that, Paul says, as he says to the Corinthians, we are strengthened in our weakness, because we are weak, he is strong in us.

And so that's how the Holy Spirit primarily strengthens us through this, mainly through adversity through trials and difficulties. He will take from us those false crutches that we have, that cause us to rely on ourselves rather than him. And by so doing, were strengthened in that way.

That led to the second request. The second request was that being strengthened in this way, Christ would indwell in our hearts through faith. And we talked about that last week, how it is that Paul is praying for these believers that he's already confirmed that they are indwelt, by the Spirit of God. Nevertheless, he prays that Christ would indwell them. And so we look carefully at that word, translated dwell. And we saw there that what

Paul is really saying, as we look closely at that word, he's speaking of a deeper, more powerful, more forceful, more effective type of so in other words, that Christ would really find a home in your heart, that Christ would really come and have this relationship of great fellowship and great favor.

So he's not asking for a salvific kind of indwelling of Christ. Instead, he's asking for a deeper fellowship, a deeper communion. And we saw how that was, led the, what led the way to that was the strengthening of the inner man by removing from us our crutches that we depend upon, as we depend upon ourselves and then the faith through which Christ would give this, this more effective type of dwelling, then is strengthened.

So we saw how the first led to the second so today, we look at the third and the third request is this beginning from verse 17: so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that and there's the third one right there, in order that or so that you being rooted and grounded in love.

So first, let's take that phrase right there: being rooted and grounded in love. We recognize that as a participial phrase. So in other words, Paul is describing their condition or their state or their situation. In other words, Paul is not asking that God would root them and ground them in love. Instead, he's basing the request upon the fact that as Paul says, You are being as you are now your status, your spiritual condition is that you are rooted and grounded in love.

In other words, that's a restatement of the second request. The second request was that Christ would really dwell in your hearts through faith, that by the strengthening of the inner man, your fellowship, your communion with Christ would be made more vibrant, more clear, deeper, more profound communion, which he then says: being rooted and grounded in love.

So we know that God is love. And so we know that this deeper fellowship, that was the second request, is what Paul just stated. So now being rooted and grounded in love, Paul is gonna say, based on that, here comes the third request.

So just a moment here about this, you really have to appreciate I think, Paul's mixing up of metaphors here, rooted and grounded. So he's taking, first of all, a horticulture kind of metaphor—rooted. And he's putting it together with a construction kind of metaphor—grounded or founded upon.

So rooted and grounded upon or built upon or founded upon both of these founded upon love, or rooted in love. So love is both the soil into which the roots of their spiritual life have grown deep. And love is also the foundation the rock upon which the spiritual life of theirs has been built upon. And so Paul says, both of these are love: rooted, and grounded upon love.

As Romans five and verse five tells us that God has poured into our hearts, the love of Christ, by way of His Spirit. So we know that even life in Christ is rooted and grounded in love. But Paul's now saying that this, this being rooted and grounded in love here, that's going to serve sort of as a foundation for what He's about to ask that God would do.

So this idea of love. We know this to be all encompassing of the Christian life. We know that, that Paul has said that this love that he's speaking of is the source of our salvation, the very source of our life in Christ. He said in chapter two, verses four and five: but God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses has made us alive together with Christ.

So the very source of our life is this love of God. Likewise, this is also the means by which the dividing wall of hostility was broken down. You remember in chapter two there, verse 13, and 14, he talks about this dividing wall of hostility between the believing Jew and the believing Gentile, how that's broken down. And the dividing wall of hostility between all of us and God is broken down, all of that poll said was done, by way of love.

Likewise, this love, the power of speaking up is going to also be the motivating power that Paul is going to speak about in chapter four, five and six—the power of motivation, that's behind all of the directives that Paul is going to give, in the last three chapters, the last three chapters, which are this application to the lives of these believers—all of this is going to be based upon the motivation of the love of God that is in hearts and in their lives.

For example, chapter four, verses one through three, here's what he's gonna say there. I therefore prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity and the Spirit in the bond of peace.

One chapter later, chapter five, he's going to begin that chapter saying this: therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.

So this love is the is the foundation of our salvation, the fountain, from which our salvation comes to us. It is the basis of the breaking down of hostility between us and God. It is also the motivating source, the motivating factor for all of the directives that Paul will give us in our life. We also know that it's also the fundamental mark of the Christian, aside from of course, faith itself. We learned that back in chapter one, when Paul says: I have heard about your faith and Lord Jesus and the love for all the saints.

So remember, back then this was this was a few months ago, but you remember, we took the time to go through the entire New Testament, and we saw how every book of the New Testament teaches us that the two fundamental marks of a true believer are: of course, faith and love for the brethren, love for one another.

And so that is this fundamental mark of the believer, this love that is now in our hearts as Paul is (I'm sorry), as Jesus is gonna say, in John 13 verses 34 and 35: A new commandment I give to you that you love one another as I've loved you.

But Paul here is not talking about human love, as Jesus was talking about. Paul is not talking about love between one another. Paul's talking not even about their love for God. Paul is talking about God's love for them.

The love of God, that is, as he says to the Romans, poured into their heart. So this rooting and grounding in this love, it's not love for each other. And it's not love for God, it's love for a for them by God, the God's love for them. This is the basis: you being rooted and grounded in, we could even say God's love for you.

Verse 18, here's the request: may have strength to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breath, 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.

That is a very poetic, very eloquent, eloquent way of Paul wording, this request. The request is basically this—if I may take out some of the wordiness of it and sort of get to the nuts and bolts of it—the request is: being rooted and grounded in the love of God, I ask, I plead with the Lord, that you may be strengthened that you may have strength to comprehend the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

That's the that's the core of it right there. So that's what we'll be dealing with this morning, is the love of Christ for His people. So what better topic for us to spend our time on than the love of Christ for His people, it is indeed, the most profound topic that we could turn to: God's love for His people, specifically the love of Christ shown to his people.

So Paul prays, first of all, that you may have strength to comprehend, with all the saints, the love of Christ. So that is a very unusual way to word the request that you may have strength to comprehend. I tried this week to think of another example in the human experience in which we talk like that, in which we talk about being strong enough to comprehend or having the strength to understand. And I was unable to come up with any example, in the entirety of the human experience, in which we use language like that, in which we talk about being strong enough or being strengthened in order to understand or to comprehend.

So this is quite an unusual request. And he puts it in quite a startling sort of way: that you may have strength to comprehend. So this word translated strength here, it's, it's not the same one as he used earlier, which is the word that we'd get our word dynamite from. But instead, this word really has a close alignment with: an ability, being able to or being sufficient.

So this is kind of what it's getting at: it's sort of an ability, a sufficiency. You are able, or you have the strength to comprehend. So here's this topic of comprehension. Put here together, understanding comprehension put together with one of the other pillars of the passage, which is the love of Christ, the comprehension, the strength, to comprehend the love of Christ, all three of those things are put together right here in this request.

So this comprehension that he speaks of this strength or this ability, this sufficiency to comprehend the word here that's translated comprehend. It's—kinda like we talked about last week—it's another one of those compound words in which Paul takes two words and puts them together to make a third word. And the word is 'katalambano.'

It's, the root word is not the word for 'comprehend' or 'understand', as we might think. Instead is the word for 'take' or 'grasp.'

So 'lambano,' which means 'to take,' Paul adds this prefix to it. And you'll recognize this from last week. And this is one of the reasons why we sort of went through that whole thing last week, you might be asking, why did we sort of go into that much detail last week? One of the reasons is because it also applies equally to today.

So the prefix that's added is this this prefix 'kata.' You'll remember that from last week, means essentially the same thing which is this as a prepositional prefix, which means down or, or to put it another way, coming from a source above, coming downward from above coming into us from above.

And then by adding this prefix, it does the same thing that we talked about last week, which is gives it force, gives it intensity. So what Paul is saying here would really, if we wanted to translate it, super-literally, he's saying that you may have the strength to seize. I looked through all the translations, I didn't see any that translated that literally, but that's literally what Paul says that you would have the strength to seize—the only place that shows up in the entire New Testament, that you would have the strength or you would have the ability, or you'd have the sufficiency, to seize upon the love of Christ for His people. That's it. That's what Paul's saying that you being rooted and grounded in the love of God for His people would have the strength to seize upon the comprehension, or the love of God's people, for his people.

So, let's sort of flesh this out just a little bit. Because this is this is a grammatical construction that specifically means you are doing the acting, and you are also the one that's being acted upon. Here's what Paul's saying the same thing that he said to us before. We've talked about this recently, in the sense that when we talked about not too long back about how the Spirit of Truth works, so that we may comprehend the things of God—remember talking about that? And you remember how we said that the Spirit of truth doesn't understand the scriptures for you. It doesn't teach you what the Scriptures say, so much as what it what it does is, is it verifies what's true. And it teaches you what is true, and it teaches you to value the truth.

So God has made us with the capacity to understand his word, but the Spirit of Truth is needed in order to testify to us of its truthfulness, and teach us of the value of its truthfulness. In the same way here, what Paul is saying is God is not going to just, he's not praying that God just hands the comprehension of the love of God over to you on a platter, "here you go, here's the comprehension of the love of God for you."

Instead, Paul is saying, I pray that you would have the strength, to seize upon it, to reach out, if you will, and seize upon the love of Christ for His people. So this is Paul's prayer, that you will be strengthened in such a way that you can seize upon it.

So now, even now, I believe that we can kind of see how these requests have been building upon one another. So the first request was to be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner man. And we saw how the primary way that God strengthens us is not to make us stronger, but to make us weaker, so that we look to Him as our strength. And by so doing we are strengthened.

So in this, causing us or granting to us that we turn from the false crutches or the idols of our life, to be strengthened by reliance upon the spirit, that then leads to this faith, through which this greater, this more

intimate, this more effective dwelling of Christ comes to us. As Paul would then say, in other words, being rooted and grounded in love. Now, the third request is being so strengthened, being so indwelt by Christ having such a relationship of intimacy and favor with Christ, you may now have the strength, have the ability, have the sufficiency to grasp, to seize the understanding of Christ's love for His people.

Then he says: with all the saints. So I want to talk about this phrase 'with all the saints', I want to talk about two times. I'll come back to a little bit later. But right now I want to look at it, for I think Paul means a number of things here.

So let's look at the first: that you would have the ability, the strength, the power, being strengthened in your inner man, being in fellowship with greater intimacy with Christ, you may have the sufficiency, the power to seize upon the love of Christ for His people, with all the saints.

So in other words, what Paul is talking about here—this is you may be familiar with, with to two types of understanding two types of knowledge. One would be sort of an intellectual knowledge. And another would be an experiential knowledge. Paul's talking here about an intellectual, about a cognitive understanding—not an experiential. Here he's talking about a cognitive and intellectual a mental understanding that you, in your mind would have the sufficiency, to have the power to seize upon this reality, this truth, of the love of Christ for His people and that you would do this with all the saints

So one of the things that this teaches us is that Christianity has always been and always will be a thinking religion. So Paul, has no concept—neither does the New Testament—have any concept of two categories of Christians. One is more the a deep thinking category in which they ponder the deeper truths of our faith. And the other is the category of Christians that's more motivated by the emotional aspect of our faith. They're more in tune with the emotional side of being a child of Christ, right?

The New Testament knows nothing of that. The New Testament knows nothing of any believer, who is not a thinking believer, who applies the power of the mind that God has given to all of us to understand more of greatly, more truly, more rightly, the matters of our faith, the realities of our faith. The Christian, the Christian religion, or the New Testament only knows of one kind of a believer, and that is the believer that is called to progress in their understanding of the true matters, of the true reality of our faith.

So as, for example, Romans 12, verse two, one of the prime directives that teaches us how it is that we grow, says to us: Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your emotions? No of your mind. Or we can look to many other places in the New Testament and see that the New Testament has no concept of one type of believer who is really spiritually motivated by the deeper realities of faith and another kind of believer that's motivated only by the emotional realities of our faith. Instead, the Scriptures teach us that our faith has a very distinct emotional component to it. But the emotions of our faith are the result, or the outcome, of the realities that we know to be true.

And so growth in Christ is always presented to us in the context of growth in understanding. Remember, that's how we talked about the sanctifying work of the Spirit back in chapter one, that that's how the spirit sanctifies u.

The spirit sanctifies us or grows us in Christ's likeness, by teaching us by revealing to us, opening the eyes of our heart that we may understand more precisely, and more correctly, the blessings that are ours in Christ, the privileges that are ours in Christ.

And so, the New Testament teaches us that our faith is always a faith that is a thinking faith, because Paul says, This is not just for some for all the saints, it's Paul's desire that all the saints would come to this fuller understanding of Christ's love for us.

Or a little bit later in the letter, we're going to see that Paul is writing this letter to a whole variety of people. He's addressing this letter in chapter five to children, he addresses this letter to two wives, to husbands to bondservants, to slaves. And in his mind, he's writing these—remember all those profound truths of chapter one?—he's writing all these things to every believer in Ephesus. He's writing to housewives in the first century, profound things such as: before the foundation of the world. We were chosen in Christ and adopted. To children. He's writing such things as and you when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and were sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.

So the New Testament knows nothing of a flavor, a type of following Jesus in which we just turn our brain off and just submerge ourselves in the emotional aspect of our faith. Instead, Paul says you, It's my prayer that you with all the saints, would have the power the sufficiency within you to reach out into grasp to comprehend this thing called the love of Christ for His people.