

INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Ephesians 3:14-21**.
- B. The apostle Paul has many prayers found in the NT. Paul prays for four things.

I. FIRST, "TO BE STRENGTHENED BY THE SPIRIT" (Eph. 3:16).

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;

A. Strength for the soul.

1. Jesus said that man is a 2-fold creature; body and soul (Mt. 10:28).
"And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."
2. Later, Paul would say man is a 3-fold creature; body, spirit, and soul (1Th. 5:23).
Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
3. There is an outward man who is "perishing day by day" and an "inner man" who must be "renewed day by day" (2Cor. 4:16). God supplies strength for the inner man.
Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

B. This "inner man" is the seat of our conduct.

1. The Xian's "inner man" consists of his/her faith, love, and humility (or lack of).
2. If the inner man is weak and insipid, the works done by the outward man will not be such as to glorify God.
3. Mankind looks upon the outward appearance and makes a judgment. But God looks upon the heart (1Sam. 16:7).
But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."
4. As Xians, we receive the wonderful gift of the HS (at baptism). This Spirit is a helper and comforter, the earnest of our salvation (Ac. 2:38; Eph. 1:13; 4:30).
(Ac 2:38) Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
(Eph 1:13) In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,
(Eph 4:30) And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

C. Allow God's Spirit to help you in your struggle against sin (Rom. 8:11-13).

II. SECOND, "TO HAVE CHRIST DWELL IN OUR HEARTS BY FAITH" (Eph. 3:17a).

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

- A. Faith comes by hearing the word of X (Rom. 10:17).
So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.
- B. A similar text says that the word of X is to richly dwell w/in us (Col. 3:16).
Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
- C. The indwelling of Christ.
 1. Paul prayed for "Christ to dwell in their hearts by faith"
 2. The prayer tells us that X is to dwell in "the heart." Seldom in Scripture does the word *heart* mean the blood pump. Rather the heart is:
 - a. The intellect... which means X determines **the way you think**.
 - b. The affections... which means X determines **what you love**.

- c. The will... which means that X determines **the controlling motive**.

III. **THIRD, “TO BE ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE” (3:17b,18).**

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,...

A. Rooted and grounded in love.

1. Paul prayed that our love for X must be “rooted and grounded.”
2. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke of living life with a strong foundation (Mt. 7:24-27).
“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them, may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. **25** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. **26** Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell--and great was its fall.”

B. The love that “passes knowledge” is 4-dimensional. Let’s consider all four in greater detail:

1. Breadth.

John 3:16 says that “God so loved the world...” and this love includes every race, all social classes, and both genders. Our love is often too narrow. We are prone to love those of our own family, our friends, and those of our own race.

2. Length.

Love is God’s nature, because “God is love.”

a. His love is seen in the *past*.

The eternal past speaks eloquently of the love of God. It is seen in God creating man in “His image.” This love reached its climax when it “because flesh and dwelt among us” and then died for our sins upon Calvary and was raised from the dead for our justification.

b. The love of God is ever seen in the *present*.

It endures rejection. It spares and bestows blessings upon all (Mt. 5:45).

in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

c. His love shall reach into the eternal *future*.

As faith becomes sight and hope becomes fruition, love alone will bridge the chasm of death and still be love in the eternal home for the soul.

3. Depth.

The depth of X’s love for us is seen in Rom. 5:6-8.

For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. **7** For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. **8** But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Christ did not die merely for the flower of manhood or unstained childhood. We would applaud one who died for a friend, and we would applaud more vigorously one who died for a stranger, but the greatest manifestation of love is for one to die for his enemy.

4. Height.

The height of the love of X is proclaimed by the lofty purpose it creates. No man ever amounts to very much until he realizes that he has become the object of a love that is above him.

C. God’s love is as broad as the world. It is as long as eternity. It is as deep as our blackest sins. It is as high as the heavens.

IV. **FOURTH, “TO HAVE THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSES UNDERSTANDING” (Eph. 3:19).**

and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

A. Paul asked that his brethren may “be filled with all the fulness of God.”

B. Filled with God’s fulness. Our God is the God of fulness:

1. The Xian age is described as the dispensation of the fulness of time (Eph. 1:10).
...with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things

- in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him...
- 2. Christ our Savior and example, had dwelling in Him, all the fulness of God (Col. 1:19).
For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him,
- 3. The church which is His body is "the fulness of Him that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23).
And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.
- 4. X ascended on high that He might fill all things (Eph. 4:10).
He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)
- C. He has assured that one who "hungers and thirsts... shall be filled" (Mt. 5:6). He has promised that "the God shall fill with joy" (Rom. 15:13).

CONCLUSION AND INVITATION.

- A. In review:
 - 1. The "inner man" is most important; and is to be guided by the HS.
 - 2. Having X dwell in our hearts by faith gives life the proper root and foundation.
 - 3. The love of God is all encompassing (broad, long, deep, and high).
- B. Paul closes his prayer with a great benediction giving glory to God (Eph. 3:20-21).
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, **21** to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.
Amen.
- C. Plan of salvation for non-Xians; erring Xians.