

# “Strengthened to comprehend his love”: Ephesians 3:14-15

First Sunday of Lent – Feb 20, 2021

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## Introduction

1. Last week we introduced the lead in to this prayer: vv.14-15.

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

- The Father has genotypical connection with his family: He and his family made in his image share in his “genotype” (1 Jn 3:1,9).

2. This morning, we will pick up with v. 16.

## Exposition

**<sup>16</sup> “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,”**

**“he may grant you to be strengthened with power”**

- Straightforward request that Paul qualifies with three prepositional phrases.

**“according to the riches of his glory”** – An expression of God’s fullness, the infinite wealth of his limitless plentitude. Note: “according to” or “in proportion to”, not “out of” God’s infinite reservoir of glory.

**“through his Spirit”** – The Holy Spirit is one whose job is to give us this strength. He is the warm, active, personal presence of God the Father and God the Son – our *parakletos* (helper, comforter, advocate, guide).

**“in your inner being”** – *eso anthropos*: “inner man”, interior self, deepest part of you (cf. 2 Cor 4:16, *exo* vs. *eso anthropos*). This is the kind of boldness and faith and confidence that grows inside you to speak up, pray fiercely, take action.

**”so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”**

- **“dwell”** – *katoikeo*: “to settle, make a home, to be at home permanently and comfortably.”
- John 14:23: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

**“—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,<sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones 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.”**

**“being rooted and grounded in love,”**

- Paul assumes that the beginning point for making forward progress in the life of faith is that we have a certain relationship with God’s love. He uses two metaphors:

1. **“rooted”** - Agricultural metaphor: the roots of a tree (Parable of sower, Mt 13:6, 21; Mark 4:6, 17; Lk 8:13)
2. **“grounded”** - Construction metaphor: the foundation of a building (Parable of two foundations, Mt 7:24-27; also Solomon’s temple LXX 1 Kings 7:10)

- Both share common idea: sinking part of you so deep into the ground that you won’t topple over, whether the root system of a great tree or the foundation of a skyscraper.
- And what is the soil? God’s love: the fact that God has set his affection on us as his dearly loved family. When we take this truth to heart, it gives us the strength to not be “tossed about by every wind of teaching” (cf. Eph 4:14).

<sup>18</sup> “may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,”

- “**comprehend**” – *katalambano*: “to seize or capture” (LXX of Josh 8:19; 10:19 capture a city or army); metaphorically, “to grasp an idea” (Peter’s dream in Acts 10:34). So, “to lay hold of something and take it to oneself and make it one’s own.”
- “**know**” – *ginosko*: “to perceive, feel, understand, know by experience”.
- Paul prays that his readers would know down deep in their gut that the Father and Son love them without qualification.

**“that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”**

- Christ alone uniquely embodies the fullness of God. Col 2:9: “In him the fullness of deity lives in bodily form”. But the verse goes on to say: “and you have been given fullness in him.”
- So, as we settle deeply into the soil of God’s rich love and quit trying to earn our salvation or prove our worth, we allow Christ in us to be at home in our hearts and to live out more of his love, patience, power and holiness in us and through us. So we become more and more filled with the fullness of God.
- Two things required for us to settle deeply into this love: one objective, one subjective.
- Objectively: we need to understand and embrace his love through scripture.

**Jn 15:9,13 - Son**

**“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.**

**Jn 17:23 - Father**

**“I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”**

- Subjectively: feel deep in our bones his love through experience.

**John 5:42-44**

**“But I know that you do not have the love of God within you.”**

**Jude 21**

**“... keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.”**

## **Wrap up**

- Paul prays that God would strengthen us deep in our depths to understand and experience his dimension-defying, incomprehensibly vast love for us.
- Why is this so important? Apart from a settled, sure assurance we are loved by God, we will be searching constantly for something to validate our existence and comfort our souls. We cannot love God with the whole of our beings, cannot love others freely without expecting something in return, cannot experience real joy and rest and peace.

## **Three Lenten exercises this week**

1. Every day, set aside the time you need to simply “be” with God, meditate on his Word and enjoy his company. Continually ask to the Holy Spirit to pour out the love of God into your heart in fresh way, so you can “feel” his great love for you personally (Rom 5:5).
2. Continue memorizing Eph 3:14-19 from last week.
3. Read to yourself this love letter from God a couple times this week (by Bonnie Reimers):

**“Before you were born, you were special to Me. I knew you before you were conceived in your mother’s womb. With My own hands I fearfully and wonderfully created every detail that makes you unique. I knit together your body, soul and spirit.**

**“I saw you long before you ever existed. I watched every day of your life. So I know you. I know where you have been, where you are, and where you are going.**

**“If only you knew the thoughts I have toward you. Did you know My thoughts for you outnumber the grains of sand on all the beaches of the world? You are the apple of My eye. When trouble approaches, I hide you in the shadow of My wings. I have even engraved you on the palms of My hands.**

**“It is My love for you that makes you precious and honored in My sight. I created you for My glory, and I will never abandon what I have formed and made. My goodness and love will follow you every day of your life. So do not fret; I will fulfill My purpose for your life. And always remember . . . My love endures forever and ever!”**