

Ephesians 3:14-21

From Theology to Reality

Bruce McIver was lying in a hospital bed, on the eve of his open heart surgery, when he asked his cardiologist, **“Dr. Johnson, can you fix my heart?”**

Dudley Johnson is a skilled cardiologist, but he’s a man of few words. Known for getting right to the point, he said, **“Sure,”** and walked away.

After the 12 hour surgery, again McIver asked his doctor, **“In light of the blocked arteries you bypassed, how much more blood supply will I have now?”**
Again Dr. Johnson gave a quick reply, **“All you’ll ever need.”**

Finally as Bruce was being discharged, his wife had a question for Dr. Johnson, **“How will surgery affect my husband’s future quality of life?”**

Dr. Johnson paused for a few seconds, and then he answered, **“Mrs. McIver, I fixed your husband’s heart. His quality of life is up to him...”**

The Same could be said of us who are believers in Jesus Christ!

A) Jesus has done a work to fix our hearts – in fact the Bible says that He has given us a new Heart. – New Identity

B) That has been a major Focus of chapters 1-3 of the book of Ephesians – Paul has been talking about – Identity

1) Who we are now as believers in Jesus Christ.

C) Here are some of the things he has told us about

Our Identity in Christ”

- I am a saint – set apart for God and from the world.
- I am blessed – all of Christ resources are available to me.
- I am Chosen before the foundation of the world.
- I am holy – declared righteous in Christ
- I am blameless – my guilt has been removed
- I am adopted and accepted into the family of God
- I am redeemed and forgiven
- I am safe in the plan of God
- I am sealed by the Holy Spirit of God
- I am a citizen of the Kingdom of God

- I am a part of the mystery that has now been revealed in Christ – that Jesus established a new humanity made up of both Jews and Gentiles

D) But knowing these truths is only part of the process

E) Our quality of life changes drastically when our Theology becomes a reality in our lives!

As we close out this section today in Chapter 3 Paul prays for the believers in Ephesus – Theology would become a Reality.

A) The things he has been sharing with them about who they are in Christ – would become experience in their lives

B) One of the things – I love about the Prayers of the Bible is they are inspired – God breathed – written down

1) Glimpse of God’s heart for us

C) Not just Paul praying for believers in Ephesus – but it reveals God’s heart for all believers – everywhere – at all times

¹⁴ For this reason (Summing up everything he has been talking about for 3 chapters about their identity in Christ – unity in Christ) **I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵ from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷ that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— ¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Paul’s Posture in Prayer: ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ

A) I bow my knees – that may not get our attention, especially if kneeling is part of our normal prayer discipline.

B) But in fact it is remarkable because it was not customary for Jews to kneel in prayer.

1) Stand at the wailing wall - Rocking – why? Balance

C) Kneeling in Prayer was reserved for an extraordinary event or unusual passion.

1)Solomon knelt at the dedication of the temple – overwhelmed by the occasion

D)Jesus knelt in prayer – the garden of Gethsemane on the eve of his death

1)agonized emotion as he prayed to his father

So the fact that Paul makes mention of the fact that he is kneeling in prayer –

A)denotes a seriousness to his prayer

B)This is something that was important to him and something he is passionate about. – I really want you to get this.

C)"For this reason, **I throw myself** before the Father, through whom all families of the earth are named

Also worth noting – Paul approaches God as a Father

A)Not a 911 operating – run to only in emergencies

B)Or a landlord of the planet – treat prayer as a business deal – making our monthly payment

C)No he picks father – Intimacy and access – never too busy.

Fourfold prayer – 4 aspects to his prayer! –

A)These 4 things – are inter connected and sort of build upon each other

#1 A prayer to be strengthened in the inner man. -¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,

Aa)The inner man: That's where the Holy Spirit does this work that only He can do —

B)The inner man is it at the very center of who you are.

Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day. 2 Corinthians 4:16

C)It is one thing to intellectually know who we are in Christ and what he has done for us

1)it's another thing all together to actually experience these things at the very center of who you are!

This is at the very heart of the beginning of Paul's prayer – we would receive supernatural strength in the inner man.

A)Notice the source and the scope of this strength – Source - **Through His Spirit** – the Holy Spirit is doing the strengthening

B)Scope: according to the riches of His glory – that is a never ending supply. – According to his riches

C)Think of it this way: If you were going into business or ministry – **approached me** – a partner – Sure – excited – happy too

1)Not too exciting – I am good for about \$100 a month. – Plus counsel and phone calls for encouragement

Now let's say that Dan Cathy – the CEO of Chick Fila – strong believer – Goal of their company to glorify God by being a faithful steward of all that is entrusted to us.

A)Dan Cathy's net worth – 6.5 Billion dollars – Imagine him getting behind you – according to his riches – now talking

B)**Well when Paul prays –¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,**

1)We are talking about infinite – Power!

C)Power that spoke the world into existence – Power currently that sustains the Universe

1)The same power that brought Jesus forth from the grave

D)Which is why Paul could say – so boldly – in Philippians 4:13 – **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me**

1)Told you this before the idea there is not – that I can do whatever I please – Lift a car – jump off a building

E)But whatever God allows this life to throw at me – I am able to handle through the Power of God's spirit living in me!

1)According to the resources that God has made available to me in Christ!

You know what the key is to being filled with the Spirit's power?

A) Expressing your need of it – Ephesians 5:18 – Be continually being filled with the Holy Spirit

B) Tell the Lord – I can't do this.... You can – help me – I need you.

C) For some reason it is our natural instinctive nature to try and live independently

1) But God wants us to live completely dependent upon him

#1 A prayer to be strengthened in the inner man.

#2 That Christ would dwell in your hearts through faith.

A) Now at first glance this can seem like a confusing prayer – one might be prone to ask – isn't Christ already in my heart... faith

B) The answer is yes – Embrace Christ the work of the Cross

1) The Spirit of Jesus – indwells you – lives in your heart – Numerous verses in the NT tell us that

C) So why is Paul praying that Christ would Dwell in our hearts...?

The answer is in the word Dwell – Write be at home!

A) I think we would all agree that it is one thing to live somewhere and it is another thing to be at home.

B) When I was growing up – Ice cream flowed regularly at my house! – Always Ice Cream – whole separate freezer

1) One time Carnation store – going out of business – Dad comes home with 4 of those 5 gallon tubs – ice cream store

C) So Ice cream was a big deal – Ice Cream in Cereal or Soup bowls

1) Root Beer floats in 16oz glasses

D) So one day – I am spending the night at a friend of mine's house –

1) Ice cream after dinner – Little cocktail bowl? I preceded to pile it on – looked like Handel's single scoop Pic

So that is what my cocktail bowl is looking like?

A) Now why did I do that? Greedy – because I was making myself at Home! – That is what we did at home

B) Ice cream was free flowing! – Generous supply

1) I never made that mistake again at my friend's house – you know why? – His dad got mad at me – embarrassed me

C) Consequently I never really felt at home there.

Listen: Jesus is in all our hearts – His Spirit – indwells us

A) But is he at home in our hearts – Access to every area – or are there doors that are closed off.

B) Hurts that we don't bring to him – Areas of our lives we keep from him.

C) Is he comfortable with all that we watch on TV or movies

Paul is praying that we make a choice to live lives completely yielded to Christ.

A) Any Dallas Cowboy fans in the room? – America's team- never a fan – 1970's and 80s battle the Steelers

B) But I have to admit I did admire their coach and QB – Landry and Staubach. Led them to 2 Super bowl titles

C) Key to those titles? - Submission

1) Staubach admitted, as a player, he often bristled against submission to his coach's leadership.

D) Despite his respect for Landry's genius in football strategy, Staubach wanted the freedom to call his own plays on the field,

1) to lead the team with his own approach.

E) He thought he knew how best to run the Cowboys offense. His way.

Staubach finally came to the point where he realized he needed to decide. **Would he rebel against his coach's authority?** Or would he get on board with the direction his coach wanted him to go? "I faced up to the issue of obedience," Staubach later said.

"Once I learned to obey, there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory." Yes, lots of victories.

A) Same is true in the life of the believer – Victory, fulfillment and purpose are experienced – allow Christ to be at the center Lives

B) **Submit to his leading and not our own!**

C) **It is that submission that really opens the door to receiving and experiencing the Spirit's strength in the inner man.**

Great things occur when Christ settles down in our hearts. Poverty begins to decrease as people become overwhelmed with a generous heart like Jesus. Marriages and families begin to grow strong as people learn to forgive and serve like Jesus. Adoptions begin to occur as people learn of the family of Jesus. Sin begins to be cast off as people learn how much God paid for them: the blood of Jesus. Worship begins to be fervent as people learn the unsurpassed value of Jesus. Prayer begins to align with God's purposes as people learn the priority of the kingdom of Jesus. Justice begins to flow as people learn the just heart of Jesus.

Disciples begin to develop as people learn to have the mind of Jesus. Those enslaved to sin begin to be loved as people learn of the compassion of Jesus. Churches begin to be planted as people embrace the mission of Jesus. When Jesus is famous the core motivations of our hearts are deepened. The applications are endless.
Nate Holdridge – Calvary Monterey

The 3rd thing that Paul prays for we could classify as the Motivation for all of this

A) #3 Paul prays that we might comprehend how immeasurably we are loved by Jesus

that you, being rooted and grounded in love,¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what *is* the width and length and depth and height—¹⁹ to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge;

B) Paul mixes two metaphors here to express the same idea – **rooted is from the world of agriculture – idea is firmly planted**

1) **Grounded is from the world of architecture – means established**

C) Paul praying that they would be firmly planted and firmly established in Christ love for them.

He prays that we would be able to comprehend – fully grasp - what *is* the width and length and depth

and height—¹⁹ to know By experience the love of Christ which passes knowledge;

This is almost contradictory

A) It is a love that is beyond knowledge - - but I am praying you would comprehend it

B) I am praying that you might experience it – more and more in your life.

C) Motivation for Paul's life – **The Love of Christ compels me!**

1) Moved him – motivated him – Not his love for Jesus but his being overwhelmed by Jesus love for him.

D) **Enemy #1 a Christian Killer – Jesus had forgiven him and was using him – blew his mind. – 1) From Sinner to the Chief of sinners**

What about you? When is the last time you really contemplated Christ love for you?

A) He loved you when you were at your absolute worst! – Think for a minute that time. – He loved you.

B) His love doesn't fluctuate – Bad week this week – He is not less in love with you today.

C) Faith faltered – neglected an opportunity to share about him – He doesn't love you less.

1) **Lazy in your devo's – He loves you still.**

Consider the Cross – Great indicator of His Love

A) Loved you enough to take your place – take the punishment – endure the wrath

B) He loved you at the moment – even though he knew – rebel against him – years chasing you down.

1) **He loved you despite all your flaws and personality quirks**

C) Ever meet someone – Really like him/ her or that couple – love to get to know them better

1) Spend a day or go on vacation – I can't handle another minute with them – I need a break from him/her – them

D) Jesus never feels that way about you! – Awesome – 1) **He loves you anyways – He loves you despite the hang ups**

Paul prayed for us to comprehend the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

A) To him, the love of Christ was a vast expanse in all directions.

B) The love of Christ has breadth, for Paul has taught us it is **wide enough for the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike,**

1) and no one is beyond the scope of His love.

C) The love of Christ has length, for Paul has shown us it is as long as eternity, **having been established from the foundation of the world.**

D) The love of Christ has height, for Paul has taught us **it has raised believers to being seated with Christ in the heavenly places.**

E) The love of Christ has depth, for Paul has shown us how, though we were dead in sin and followers of the flesh, the world, and the devil,

1) We are now alive and set free in Christ = blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

Paul caps off this prayer with one last request – culmination of the first 3 – V.19 #4 that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

A) Now this is an interesting request that is hard to fully explain

B) *Colossians 2:9-10 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him*

1) The fullness of Christ dwells in us – Full Christ – not ½ not a ¼

C) So what does this mean – being filled with the fullness of God

This is what is interesting about all of these request – they all are for things the Christian already possesses in Christ

A) But Paul is praying that we would experience these things in a fuller way.

B) We already have the Spirit's Power- but Paul is praying that we would experience it according to the riches of God's glory

C) We already have Christ living in our hearts – but Paul is praying that He would be at home there

D) The Love of God has already been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit – but Paul is praying that we would comprehend it in a greater dimension

We are full of Christ but now he prays that we would be filled with the fullness of God-what mean?

A) Here is what I think he means here –

➤ that our lives would be so full of Jesus – it would ruin us to everything else and anything else this world would have to offer.

B) That our lives would be so full of Jesus that everything else in the world would pale in comparison

C) I think this prayer is an invitation to Holy discontentment –

1) **here is what I mean – we would long for MORE.**

D) MORE LOVE, MORE POWER, MORE OF JESUS IN OUR LIVES

Prayer for our Church – More – Lord let us long for more of you!

A) Lives personally – our gatherings corporately – families individually

B) Imagine the impact – we all showed up here today – More

1) Expectation to experience your glory – your presence –

C) Imagine how our spheres of influences would be affected

1) Lives would be changed

D) Is that even Possible? – I think the way Paul ends this chapter and this first section – tells us it is

The possibility – The motive

²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us,

The motive

²¹ to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.