

Opening Words

Do you want to grow and have your life be mighty for the Lord? If so, you must first dig down to go up. You must let the Lord dig deep into your heart, clear out the rubble of the old life, the old ways, the old sins and let him lay solid foundation stones of His love for you in your heart.

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When Christ dwells in every part of us by faith, then we are ready for the breakthrough of love.

Paul prayed for a strengthening of our inner person by the power of the Spirit according to the riches of Christ so that we would experience Christ in every part of our lives by faith.

This is a crossroads. When we get this far in our prayer – and I don't mean just saying the words, but when we get this far with God and allow him access to every part of our heart, then we will move to the more glorious part of the prayer which is this: experiencing his love and being filled up to the fullness of God.

Remember – this is the goal – to be filled up to the fullness of God. We already have all of God, but we don't experience all of God. We must grow up to experience all of him and the way to grow up is by letting him dwell in every part of our hearts by faith. When we do, the final steps of Paul's prayer will become real for us. Let's look at them again but I want to begin at the beginning of the prayer to set the background for our emphasis today. I'm reading from Ephesians 3:14-19.

¹⁴For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; **and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

Paul shows us that the way to experience the fullness of God, as much as we can in this life before we receive our resurrection body, is by experiencing the love of God. This sounds almost trite. This sounds almost unexciting. I must confess that many years ago as I read this prayer I was a little disappointed. I wanted Paul to talk about great experiences of the Spirit of God. I wanted him to talk about miraculous powers. I wanted him to talk about doing mighty things for God. But he didn't. He talked about experiencing the love of God – which is an experience of the Spirit, which is a miraculous event, which is a mighty work of God. But it all comes back to love, doesn't it? I guess that was my immaturity and fleshliness coming through. God had to show me that the greatest expression of power was to change my life so that I would be a man who learned how to receive his love and who learned how to give his love.

Paul says four things about love in this passage.

First, he prays that we would be *rooted* in God's love. This is an expression from the world of gardening or agriculture and Paul is drawing on the rich tradition of the Old Testament that spoke of God planting his people in the holy land. Listen to these words from Psalm 80:8-11.

You removed a vine from Egypt;
You drove out the nations and planted it.
⁹ You cleared *the ground* before it,
And it took deep root and filled the land.
¹⁰ The mountains were covered with its shadow,
And the cedars of God with its boughs.
¹¹ It was sending out its branches to the sea
And its shoots to the River.

Did you catch the phrase “deep root”? This is what Paul is drawing from in his prayer. He said, “I want you to be rooted in love.” When we go back to Psalm 80 we find that when Israel was rooted in the land it filled the land, and it became so enormous that it covered mountains with its shadow and even surpassed the cedar trees with its boughs. It went as far as the Euphrates River and the Mediterranean Sea. This is supernatural growth for a vine to be that large. But the writer of the psalm is using this metaphor for the people of God and Paul uses it as a metaphor for the supernatural growth that can take place in our lives when the roots of our lives go down deep into God's love for us.

The question is – is that where our roots are placed? Are we sinking the roots of our heart deep into the fertile soil of God's love for us? Or do we let them grow in other places – places of sin, places of pride, places of unbelief? God wants to plant you and make you a beautiful and large plant for him that will bear much fruit and give much shade.

Second, Paul uses a metaphor from the building industry. He says. I pray that you would be *grounded* in love.” When Paul used building industry metaphors, the building that would be uppermost in his mind was the temple in Jerusalem.

The temple in Jerusalem was a wonder of the world. Although the Jews rebuilt the Temple under the direction of Zerubbabel after they returned from exile in Babylon, it was really the undertaking by Herod the Great that made it a wonder of the world. It was originally intended to be 1600 feet wide by 900 long and nine stories high with walls 16 feet wide. To do this required a massive foundation. Builders built a trench around the entire mountain and put huge stone bricks in place for the foundation. Most of these weighed 28 tons but some were over 100 tons large and the largest was somewhere between 560 and 630 tons! Now that is a foundation.

Paul said, “I pray that you would be grounded in God's love for you.” Do you want to grow and have your life be a mighty edifice for the Lord? If so, you must first dig down to go up later. You must let the Lord dig down deep into your heart, clear out the rubble of the old life, the old ways, the old sins and let him lay solid foundation stones of His love for you in your heart. And when that happens then he can make you into a temple of praise for himself and He will dwell in you in new ways and fill you up with His fullness just as he filled Solomon's temple with his glory.

The third thing Paul says about love is this: “I pray that you would be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth” of that love. We live in a 3-dimensional world. Paul speaks of four dimensions – the width, the length, the height, and the depth. When we look at a house we see it in three dimensions. We see its width. We see its length. We see its height. But we normally do not see its depth for that is beyond our vision. We are constantly aware of three dimensions. Paul prays that we would experience four dimensions of God’s love. So once again we have a supernatural element. The vine covered the whole land, was bigger than the mountains and the trees. The building was enormously large, with foundation stones of incalculable weight. The building is in four dimensions as Paul wants us to experience how wide, how long, how high, and how deep God’s love is for us.

Are you beginning to get the impression that Paul wants us to know how much God loves us? Are you beginning to get the idea that God’s love for us is greater than any love we could experience in the world? Paul is praying that we would be overwhelmed with love – not overwhelmed with projects, not overwhelmed with things to do, not overwhelmed with stress but overwhelmed with God’s love.

But he isn’t finished. After praying about the four dimensions of love, he then asks that we come to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. God’s love is so great that we cannot humanly comprehend it just as he presents a four-dimensional figure for us who live in a three-dimensional world. He says God’s love is like standing at the base of a mountain that stretches miles into the sky and you cannot see its peak. And he invites us to start climbing this mountain of love – experiencing it every step of the way – and never being able to reach its summit because God’s love for us is infinite.

Brothers and sisters, when we yield to this love of God, then we will be filled with the fullness of God – but it all comes from God overwhelming our finite minds and hearts with his infinite love.

Are you ready to let God do this in your life? Are you ready to experience this love? Are you ready to start climbing the summits of infinite love? You must start by asking the Spirit of God to strengthen your inner person. Remember, mountain climbers must have a very strong capacity to take in oxygen. They must train. God is training you, empowering your inner man, so that you can climb to the heights of his love.

You say this is impossible for you? You have too much sin? Too much doubt? Too many bad experiences in your life? Too much pain? Listen to the last two verses of this prayer.

“²⁰ 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.

There he goes again. There goes Paul again with his extreme statements. Don’t you love him for that! God can do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask and all that we think. Paul is challenging us to ask God for the strength to scale these heights of love. Paul is challenging us to imagine ourselves in a place of indescribable peace and joy where we experience such love and the pain and hurt and sin and pride and unbelief have disappeared. And then, after we have imagined

ourselves in such a place he says, “God can do more than what you can even imagine.” And then he says he does it according to the power that is at work within us.

This is not some alien power that we attain to after years of spiritual discipline. This power is at work in us right now. The Holy Spirit is inside us right now working us, conditioning us, and moving us toward these heights.

As Paul realized the great, Sovereign love of God it moved him to pray, “To this God be glory in the church.” God is glorified as His people experience this. And then he said, “To God be glory in Christ Jesus.” This can happen for you because of what Christ has done in dying, rising, and being enthroned for you.

Yes, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen!”