

The Epistle to the Ephesians

“United by a Moment”

Comprehending what we have in Christ

Eph. 3:14-21

“For this reason” – takes us back to what he had been talking about – that the gospel ended religion (this very religious man rejoices to be set free – not only from sin but also from the bondage of religion).

You should expect and seek profound life-changing experiences of the love and joy of God.

A. Why we need it

This is a prayer for Christians. In verse 16 he prays that God will dwell in their hearts (yet in chapter 2 he has said that Jesus does dwell in their hearts through His Spirit). He prays for them to know the love of Christ – yet you can’t even become a Christian if you don’t know the love of Christ. He prays for them to be filled with the fullness of God – but look at ch 1: and Col 2:9-10.

Why is Paul praying that they would get what he says elsewhere they already have?

It is one thing to believe in the love of Christ, it is another thing to experience the love of Christ in your inner being (your heart of hearts – your inmost self). You may believe all the right things and think you know it – but Paul says we don’t know it! We don’t fully get the reality of it.

B. What it is

3 petitions

1. To be strengthened in the inner man that Christ would dwell in our hearts (v. 16-17) - inner being a synonym for heart. The heart is not the center of the emotions – the heart is the control center of the person (your motive and desire center – what you base your happiness and joy upon). The heart centers mind, will, and emotions.
2. To grasp and to know the love of God (v. 18-19a). Don’t Christians already know this? Yes and no. Paul’s prayer is not just that they would know the fact of Christ’s love but to experience the actuality of it. This is an inward experience by which Christ becomes as real to you as any other person – in fact where His approval and love means more than anything else – financial or vocational achievement, parent’s love, whatever. – where you experience the sweetness of the love of God in your heart.

Nobody has it all the time – but it is real.

3. Filled with all the fullness of God (v. 19b). Here’s how you know you didn’t just have an emotional experience. It changes the way you actually live. You can be moved and walk out just as anxious, just as driven, just as greedy. We must experience God – not just an emotional experience.

C. How we should receive it

1. Prayerful seeking

Love of God must go from the mind to the heart. This is a prayer not a list of how to's. It is a gift and you must pray for it and seek it. Pray for your own heart. (Lord, help me to comprehend and experience your love.)

2. aggressive wrestling

#1 is passive in prayer and #2 is active grasping – grasp is an active word – lit. to overtake someone, grab and wrestle them to the ground and rob someone. Think and reason and meditate and pray and apply the Scripture texts. Look at these truths wrestle and ponder and search and dig so these texts burst open and melt you and stir you. Go get it! Not let go and let God.

3. communally

Must do these things – prayer and wrestle in the Scripture with all the saints – communally – and you will get things from the text that you would never see on your own. – more than you would get out of it by yourself.

“together with all the saints” – suggests this will happen in community – not alone.

4. Christo-centrally

Not just abstract “love of God” - but personal and real in the story of the gospel of Jesus Christ. (“...of the love of Christ”) It is the story! God dying for us – is the most transforming story.

- The breadth of His love – to even a poor Gentile like you.
- The length of His love – the endless centuries – nothing changed the plan – and forever we will enjoy His love!
- The depth of His love – to the uttermost. Just hearing the phrase God loves us deeply – over and over in many volumes – would be too abstract to move you; but tell the story of Jesus – though He was equal with God – He did not hold on to that glory, but He condescended to come as a human and be crushed under the infinite justice of God.
- The height – Exalted as sons – brought to the heights of heaven – a joint heir with Christ - ponder this and it will give you a nose bleed!!!

D. Closing Doxology

Paul closes with this doxology (word of praise) in v. 20-21! In it he reminds us that the ultimate purpose of our lives and our prayers is that God might be glorified.