

EXPERIENCING THE VAST DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S LOVE

Ephesians 3:14-21

The **footlocker** (heavy box) => "some things are too heavy for you to carry"

The box is too heavy to carry!

One **quintillion** (kwin-til-yion) 1 with 18 zeros

Cover state of Texas with silver dollars two feet deep

How long would it take you to count that high?

If you start now, and count all night every night, you'd be older than I am before you get there!

That's just too big to count!

Texas

How big is it? How many days do you think it would take to walk it?

It's too big for you to imagine!

How about the U.S.? How about Russia? How about the earth?

It's just too big to imagine!

What about all the **stars in the sky**?

How many do you think there are?

Too many to even imagine!

That's how it is with God's love!

Paul prays that we will understand just how great God's love really is.

He says: ***"I'm praying that you may understand the incredibly vast dimensions of God's love—just how wide and long and high and deep His love is—and that you'll be able to experience all that love!"***

We can't even imagine!

He loves us so much that He sent His Son to die for us.

He loves us so much that He has plans for us that we can't even imagine!

It's just too big to imagine.

Although God's love could never be measured by anything we can understand, He still wants us to know just how great it is!

EXPERIENCING THE VAST DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S LOVE

Ephesians 3:14-21

Paul received word of divisions within the churches.

The divisions revolved around conflicts between Jews and Gentiles.

Hymn of praise because we, who used to be separated, have been made members of God's family.

PAUL'S PRAYER 1-3

Prayer of thanksgiving — summary of God's plan for His people in this age

PAUL'S PRAISE FOR GOD'S PLAN 1:3-14

God has done a GREAT JOB in us!

He has given us *every* spiritual blessing in Christ — WE LACK NOTHING!

He has done it all — He gets all the glory!

PAUL'S PRAISE FOR OUR PART IN GOD'S PLAN 1:15-3:13

He praises God that WE (pagans) have been included in God's plan.

Praise for our faith and love 1:15-23

Thanksgiving: for evidence of faith and love in Ephesian believers — also evident in our lives

It wasn't perfect in them.

It's not perfect in us! --but *thank God we're not what we used to be!*

Based upon that cause for thanksgiving, Paul prays for us:

Petitions:

That we might know Him better

That we might comprehend the greatness of what God has done

Praise for the change in our life 2:1-22

God has transformed us! — from dead in sin; to new life in Christ — by faith in Him

God has removed the barriers

Praise for his ministry on our behalf 3:1-13

Paul is grateful God gave him privilege of proclaiming gospel to us!

PAUL'S PETITION 3:14-21

Paul comes back to prayer he began in 3:1.

Notice the parallel between v. 1 and v. 14

v.1 *"For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles"*

v.14 *"For this reason I kneel before the Father ..."*

This wasn't normal posture for Jewish prayer.

— Only for unusual event or passionate appeal to God.

As when Solomon addressed God at the dedication of the temple.

He makes **THREE REQUESTS:**

1. THAT GOD MIGHT STRENGTHEN US 3:14-17a

That we might be strengthened by His Spirit

This isn't a transformation that we make in ourselves.

God has to do it! Holy Spirit does the work in us.

Holy Spirit applies God's riches to our life to make us strong!

That we might be strengthened from the inside out (internally)

This change isn't a change on the outside.

When GOD changes us, it's an internal change — from inside out!

A ranger told Marilyn Abraham: "when a tree's life is threatened, stressed by fire, drought, or other calamity, it twists beneath its bark to make itself stronger. On the surface, this inner strength may not be visible.... Only when the bark is stripped away, or when the tree is felled, are its inner struggles revealed." God gives us strength from the inside out to face the hard times!

That we might be strengthened so that God's presence in our heart will be obvious

When *God* strengthens us, everyone who observes our life will be able to see the difference — we won't look the same anymore.

We won't be angry like we used to be.

We won't live for ourselves the way everybody else does.

Jim: "God loves you and so do I!"

Several commented how he would be missed —how his life made a difference in that office.

This isn't a transformation we can do for ourselves! God does it; HE gets the credit!

2. THAT WE MIGHT COMPREHEND THE VAST DIMENSIONS OF GOD'S LOVE 3:17b-19

Three parts to this petition:

That we might **totally comprehend its dimensions**

We can't even begin to imagine how great that love is.

Our small minds aren't capable of dealing with anything as great as God's love for us!

We can't explain how a black cow can eat green grass and produce white milk! but we drink it and are nourished by it!

Most of our minds can't think through all the processes that take place when you plant a small flat black seed that produces a huge vine bearing luscious red and green watermelons. But we eat them and enjoy them!

Few understand how you can put millions of on/off switches into a little box and hook a keyboard and screen to the box and it can tell you far more than you could ever hope to understand about any subject!

That's how it is with God's love. We'll never totally understand it, but God wants us to experience that love and enjoy it!

That we might fully **experience its effects.**

That we might be **totally controlled by all that God is**

He wants us *FILLED* to the measure of all the fullness of God.

To be “filled” in biblical sense isn’t to be filled like you fill a glass—keep adding more until no more fits

To be “filled” is like being filled with wine: you’re controlled by it.

Eph. 5:18: “*Don’t be filled with wine, which will ruin your life, but be filled with the Spirit!*”—let Him control your life!

To be “filled” is like being filled with rage; or filled with jealousy or greed.

To be “filled” is to be controlled

Paul wants us to be filled *to the measure of all the fullness of GOD!*

“*All the fullness of God*” describes ALL that God is.

Paul wants us to be totally controlled by all that God is.

Result of that control: same desire: *so that it might be obvious to anyone who is observing us that God is at work in our life!*

3. THAT GOD MIGHT BE GLORIFIED THROUGH US 3:20-21

The final result Paul wants to see is **God glorified**, both through the church and through the work of Christ.

All 3 of these petitions work together:

When God’s Spirit strengthens us from the inside out, ...

When we really grasp the dimensions of God’s love for us, ...

When all that God is totally controls our lives, ...

THEN God will be glorified through us – church and individuals!

God can do much more than we ever imagined.

God delights in giving more than His people expect:

Abraham: Desired an heir—God made a nation

Jacob asked for bread and clothes—God gave thousands of sheep and cattle

Solomon asked for wisdom—God added wealth, possessions, and a great kingdom

NT: Sick from palsy, asked for healing—Jesus gave healing, AND forgiveness of sin

Prodigal son asked father to take him as a servant—father brought the best robe, the family ring, and killed the fatted cow.

Spurgeon: God gave his mother more than she asked for: “I recollect my mother saying to me, ‘I prayed that you might be a Christian, but I never prayed that you might be a baptist.’ Nevertheless I became a Baptist, for as I reminded her, the Lord was able to do exceeding abundantly above what she asked or thought!

I think the Lord gave my mother more than she bargained for also!

J. Wilbur Chapman repeated story of a man in one of his meetings: “I got off at the Pennsylvania depot as a tramp, and for a year I begged for a living. One day I touched a man on the shoulder and said, “Hey, mister, can you give me a dime?” As soon as I saw his face I was shocked to see that it was my own father. I said, “Father, Father, do you know me?” Throwing his arms around me and with tears in his eyes, he said, “Oh my son, at last I’ve found you! You want a dime? Everything I have is yours.” Think of it. I was a tramp. I stood

begging my own father for ten cents, when for 18 years he had been looking for me to give me all that he had."

God delights in giving us more than we expect!

Notice *where* He wants to do more than we imagine!

He *can* do more in the world, and in circumstances around us.

But that's not the focus in this verse! *Where* will he do it?

He "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, **according to his power that is at work within US**.

Therefore, He is glorified "*In the church*"

God wants to do more than you ever dreamed possible *IN YOU!*

Are you ready for that?

When He does it, it will be obvious that He is in your heart.

HE WILL BE GLORIFIED IN YOU, IN US, *IN HIS CHURCH!*

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF PAUL'S PRAYER FOR YOUR LIFE?

God wants US to grasp – to really understand – just how great His love for us is.

Counseling ministry: Neil Anderson's list: Who Am I? "*I am ...*" One of most difficult things for people: to understand just how much God loves us. We struggle with that: "How could God love ME?"

When we truly understand how much God loves us,

- ... we will realize that we don't have any basis for our manmade distinctions and divisions!
- ... we will want Him to control our lives so that His presence in our hearts will be obvious.
- ... we will begin to expect God to do much greater things than we have ever imagined possible before!
- ... we will give GOD all the glory for *anything* worthwhile that may be accomplished.