

Epistle to the Ephesians: Identity, Intimacy, and Influence

Ephesians 3:14–21 – Week 8

Teaching Outline & Summary

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Introduction

In Ephesians 3:14–21, the Apostle Paul records his second great Apostolic prayer for the Church. This passage is one of the deepest and most beautiful prayers in all of Scripture. Paul reveals God’s desire for believers to live from a place of spiritual strength, intimacy with Christ, and fullness in the experience of divine love.

This prayer contains seven major movements:

1. Paul’s approach to God
2. Prayer for spiritual strengthening
3. Christ dwelling within believers
4. Experiencing the love of God
5. Exploring the dimensions of Christ’s love
6. Being filled with God’s fullness
7. The doxology of glory to God

The central theme is that believers are called into deep relationship with God that transforms identity, shapes intimacy, and releases influence.

1. Paul’s Approach to God (Ephesians 3:14)

“For this reason I kneel before the Father...”

Key Insights

- Paul begins with humility and gratitude despite imprisonment in Rome.
- His suffering did not produce discouragement but deeper devotion.
- Paul viewed discipleship and sacrifice as participation in God’s glory.

Word Study

Greek: kamptō — “to bend the knee, bow in worship.”

Kneeling symbolizes:

- Reverence
- Surrender
- Dependence
- Devotion

Biblical Examples of Kneeling Prayer

- Solomon
- Ezra
- Daniel
- Stephen
- Peter

Application

- Our posture in prayer should reflect humility before God.
- Prayer is not merely religious activity; it is relational surrender.
- True spiritual authority flows from intimacy with God.

2. God the Father of All Creation (Ephesians 3:15)

“From whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name.”

Key Insights

- Paul continues emphasizing unity between Jew and Gentile believers.
- All creation originates in God.
- The Father created through the Son and by the Holy Spirit.

Supporting Scripture

- Genesis 1:1
- Colossians 1:16
- Luke 20:35–36

Important Clarification

Paul is not teaching that angels marry or have families. Rather, all created beings find their origin and identity in God.

Application

- Our identity is rooted in God as Creator and Father.
- Unity in the Church flows from recognizing one divine origin.
- Every believer belongs to the same spiritual family.

3. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:16)

“That He would grant you... to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner person.”

Key Insights

- God gives strength out of His “glorious riches.”
- God is extravagant in generosity, grace, and love.
- Spiritual strength comes through the Holy Spirit.

Word Study

Greek: esō anthrōpos — “the inner person.”

This refers to:

- Soul
- Conscience
- Inner spiritual life

Supporting Scripture

- Galatians 5:16–18

Application

- Christian maturity is learning to live by the Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit empowers holy living.
- Spiritual transformation begins internally before it manifests externally.

4. Christ Dwelling Within Us (Ephesians 3:17a)

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

Key Insights

- The Spirit strengthens believers so Christ may fully inhabit their lives.
- Christianity is fundamentally relational, not performance-based.
- Christ dwells in believers through faith, not works.

Word Study

Greek: katoikeō — “to settle down, inhabit, govern, permeate.”

Christ desires:

- Access to our thoughts
- Influence over our emotions
- Lordship over our decisions

Application

- Jesus desires residence, not visitation.
- Faith creates room for Christ’s influence.
- Our lives should become expressions of Christ to the world.

5. Rooted and Grounded in Love (Ephesians 3:17b–18)

“Being rooted and grounded in love...”

Key Insights

Paul uses two metaphors:

1. Rooted

A tree with deep roots that cannot be moved.

2. Grounded

A building resting securely on a foundation.

The believer’s stability comes from experiencing God’s love.

The Love of God — Agapē

God's love:

- Seeks the highest good
- Is sacrificial
- Is transformative
- Empowers us to love others

Love Experienced in Community

The love of Christ is revealed through the Church.

Supporting Scriptures

- John 15:12
- 1 Peter 4:8
- 1 John 3:14

Application

- Spiritual maturity cannot happen in isolation.
- Community is essential for experiencing God's love.
- The Church should reflect the nature of Christ's love.

6. Exploring the Dimensions of Christ's Love (Ephesians 3:18–19)

Paul reveals that Christ's love is multidimensional.

The Dimensions of Christ's Love

Width

How far does His love reach?

Length

How long does His love endure?

Depth

How far will Christ descend to rescue humanity?

Height

How high does His love lift us spiritually?

Spurgeon's Insight

Charles Spurgeon described this as “spiritual geometry,” where believers continually discover deeper dimensions of Christ's love.

Word Study

Greek: hyperballō — surpassing, transcending, exceeding.

The love of Christ surpasses natural understanding and must be spiritually revealed.

Application

- God's love can never be exhausted.
- The deeper we know His love, the more we reflect His character.
- Spiritual revelation comes through relationship and surrender.

7. Filled with the Fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19)

“That you may be filled to all the fullness of God.”

Key Insights

Paul speaks of both:

- Personal fullness
- Corporate fullness

Personal Fullness

Believers individually reflect God's nature.

Corporate Fullness

The Church collectively re-images Christ to the world.

Application

- God desires complete transformation, not partial change.
- The Church is meant to reveal God's nature on earth.
- Spiritual fullness is connected to living in divine love.

8. Paul's Doxology Declaration (Ephesians 3:20)

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all...”

Key Insights

- God specializes in the impossible.
- Human vision and prayer are often too limited.
- God works through His power already active within believers.

Application

- Faith should stretch beyond natural limitations.
- The pursuit of God should become a holy obsession.
- God’s power grows in yielded believers.

9. Glory Through the Church (Ephesians 3:21)

“To Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus...”

Key Insights

- God receives glory through His Church both now and eternally.
- The Church participates in heaven’s eternal worship.
- The mission of the Church extends into eternity.

Supporting Scripture

- Revelation 7:9–10

“Amen”

Meaning:

- “So be it”
- “It is true”
- “Let it be established”

Application

- The Church exists ultimately for God’s glory.
- Our lives should reveal Christ across generations.
- Worship is both present reality and eternal destiny.

Major Themes of Ephesians 3:14–21

1. Identity

Believers find identity as children of the Father.

2. Intimacy

God desires deep relational communion through Christ and the Spirit.

3. Influence

Spirit-filled believers reveal Christ's love to the world.

4. Community

The fullness of God's love is experienced corporately.

5. Transformation

God intends believers to be filled with His very nature and character.

Discussion Questions

1. What does it practically mean for Christ to “dwell” in our hearts through faith?
2. How can the Church better demonstrate the width, length, depth, and height of Christ's love?
3. What areas of your life need strengthening by the Holy Spirit today?

Key Takeaway

Paul's prayer reveals that Christianity is not merely about knowledge, duty, or religious activity. It is an invitation into transformative intimacy with God through the Holy Spirit, where believers become rooted in love, filled with God's fullness, and empowered to reveal Christ to the world.