

Ephesians 3 - Mystery: The Church; Paul's Prayer for Apprehension

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Ephesians 3

(b) Revelation of the mystery of the church (3:1-13)

(i) Introduction (3:1)

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

1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

1 For this reason I, Paul, am the prisoner of the Messiah Jesus for the sake of you gentiles.

1 For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

- "For this reason" - refers to what Paul said in Eph 1-2 about God's blessings that are now the possession of both Gentile and Jewish believers

— Since God has blessed us so greatly, Paul prayed that his readers would fully comprehend the extent of God's love for them (1:15-23)

— Paul begins with a statement on this topic, then interrupts and changes the topic to the Church from v2-14 (this conjunctive clause will be repeated in v14)

— He digresses to discuss a mystery...a literary parentheses to explain a *dispensational* parentheses: The Church itself is a parentheses in God's dealings with Israel.

- "...prisoner" - Paul wrote this epistle from a Roman jail while chained to a Roman guard

— Paul calls himself a prisoner, and he connects his imprisonment to the Gentiles (Cf. Acts 22). Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and was making his defense to his people.

— They listened to him until he got to the word "Gentiles," and then a riot broke out (Acts 22:21)

(ii) The mystery (3:2-6)

(a) Administration of God's grace (3:2)

2 if indeed you have heard of the **administration** of God's grace which was given to me for you;

2 if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace which was given to me for you;

2 Surely you have heard about the responsibility of administering God's grace that was given to me on your behalf,

2 If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward:

- This verse begins another long sentence in the Greek text, which runs through v13

- "...administration" - *oikonomia*, dispensation; *oikos*, house + *nomos*, law: "law of the house" or "stewardship." The management of someone else's business (Cf. 1 Cor 9:17; Eph 1:10; Col 1:25).

— Paul viewed God as in the process of dispensing His grace throughout history through various "administrators." Paul's calling was to carry God's grace to all people, but particularly to Gentiles.

— While Paul was in this prison cell, God entrusted Paul with a truth; in fact, God made Paul a steward of this particular truth. Verse 3 explains that this "dispensation" was given to

Paul "by revelation."

— In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus gave a brief introduction of Church Age truth to His disciples (see notes on the introduction to John 13)

(b) Revelation of the mystery (3:3-6)

(1) Its disclosure by revelation (3:3)

3 that **by revelation** there was made known to me the **mystery**, as I wrote before briefly.

3 that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

3 and how this secret was made known to me through a revelation, just as I wrote about briefly in the past.

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)

- "...by revelation" - the revelation that God gave to Paul in the prison cell

— The truth that God revealed to Paul, this mystery, was what He had begun to do after His ascension, at Pentecost

- "...mystery" - *mystērion*, in the NT, *mystērion* denotes, not the mysterious (as with the English word), but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by Divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those who are illumined by His Spirit [Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament Words]

— A "mystery" is defined in v9 ("hidden in God") and Col 1:26: "...for ages has been hidden in God who created all things"

— A truth that without special revelation would have been unknown; previous allusions (1:9-14,22-23; 2:11-22)

— The "mystery" is the Church: God calling out a people from every people, nation, tribe and language, to be the Body and Bride of His Son throughout ages to come, and *through whom He will administer the affairs of the redeemed universe*.

— There are at least four defining characteristics of the Church that are described as a "mystery" in Scripture:

1. The body concept of Jewish and Gentile believers united into one body (Eph 3:1-12)
2. The doctrine of Christ indwelling every believer (Col 1:24-27)
3. The Church as the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-32)
4. The Rapture (1 Cor 15:50-58)

— Each of these mysteries distinguish the Church from Israel

(2) Its comprehensibility (3:4)

4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

- 4 By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,
- 4 By reading this, you will be able to grasp my understanding of the secret about the Messiah,
- 4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
- What Paul wrote about this mystery here revealed his understanding of it

(3) Its timing (3:5)

- 5 which in other generations was not **made known** to mankind, **as** it has **now** been **revealed** to His holy **apostles and prophets** in the Spirit;
- 5 which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;
- 5 which in previous generations was not made known to human beings as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This is that secret:
- 5 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
- "...made known" - *gnōrizō*, passive voice, meaning that the subject receives the action
 - The knowledge that Paul had about the Church he did not create; he was the recipient of this knowledge from God Himself
 - Paul could not have figured out this mystery if it weren't revealed to him by God
- "...as" - *hos*, Paul is comparing two things: what was known in prior times versus what is known today
 - A giant semantical game is being played with the word "as" in Eph 3:5 on whether this is a "comparison of degree" (Reformed Theology) or a "comparison of kind" (Dispensationalism)
 - A "comparison of degree" is if I say to Michael Jordan, "I'm not as good of a basketball player as you are." I'm a basketball player and he's a basketball player, but he's a better basketball player than I am.
 - A "comparison of kind" is as if I don't play basketball and I say to Michael Jordan, "You're a basketball player and I am not." I'm not comparing degree, I'm comparing kind.
 - It does not mean that God had revealed it previously, but now revealed it more fully in Paul's day, as the context (v9; 2:16) and Col 1:26 make clear. God did not explicitly reveal anything about the Church in the OT.
 - See note: **Bottom Line** below.
- "...now" - *nyn*, in the emphatic position in Greek
 - Same Greek word used, also in the emphatic position, in v10
- "...revealed" - *apokaluptō*, to uncover or unveil
 - Implies that something was once hidden, but has now been revealed/uncovered/unveiled

- Can you think of a book of the Bible that is similarly named? Revelation. Rev 1:1: "The Revelation [*apokalypsis*] of Jesus Christ..."
- "...apostles and prophets" - plural; this is important because hyper-dispensationalists argue that only Paul had knowledge of the mystery
- The mystery of the Church was not only revealed to Paul, as many believe, it was revealed to all of the apostles and prophets
- Even though Paul taught on the mystery the most, and likely had the best comprehension of it, it was also revealed to the "apostles"
- The mystery Paul describes was unknown before God revealed it to the NT "apostles and prophets"; it was not made known in other ages: thus, not in OT (Rom 16:25; Col 1:26; Cf. Matt 13:35)
- This verse refutes the "hyper-dispensationalists"—that only Paul knew the mystery of the Church (this "mystery" is one of 12 in NT)
- The OT predicted the call of Gentiles (Is 11:10; 42:6; 49:6; 55:6-7; 60:3; Zech 2:11; Mal 1:11)...*but not as fellow members of the body*.
- See [Ice-The Uniqueness of The Church](#) for details.

Bottom Line

What is Paul doing in v5 through the comparison "as" to what was known in past ages versus what is known today? He is making a *comparison of kind* due to the supporting context, both near context and correlating verses in his other epistles. The laws of Greek grammar simply do not allow for a *comparison of degree*. This is supported by the context. Those who stand by a comparison of degree are foisting upon the text their theological views, rather than allowing the text to inform their theology. The idea that the Church is found in the OT is not supported at all by some type of comparison of degree that some try to find in v5. This rules out Reformed Theology and Progressive Dispensationalism.

(4) Its content (3:6)

- 6 *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are **fellowheirs** and **fellowmembers of the body**, and **fellowpartakers of the promise** in Christ Jesus through the gospel,
- 6 *to be specific*, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel,
- 6 The gentiles are heirs-in-common, members-in-common of the body, and common participants in what was promised by the Messiah Jesus through the gospel.
- 6 That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:
- The mystery:

1. "...fellow heirs" - Gentiles and Jews are fellow heirs of God's riches that He presently bestows on believers (Cf. 2:19; 1:13-14; Gal 3:29; 4:7)
 - Paul already had mentioned the concept, but now he explains the tremendous impact of this "sacred secret" (1:10; 2:11,22)
2. "...fellow members of the body" - Gentiles and Jews are fellow members of the body of Christ, which is the Church (Col 1:18)
 - Fellow members of one body: No distance or disadvantage now (4:4)
3. "...fellow partakers of the promise" - Gentiles and Jews are fellow partakers of the promise concerning Christ in the gospel (John 3:16)
 - Fellow partakers of the promise: Holy Spirit (Acts 15:8; Gal 3:14)

See links below for additional details:

[Church in the OT?](#)

[The MYSTERY of the Church](#)

[The Church is NOT the Kingdom](#)

[24 Differences Between Israel & the Church](#)

[Gentiles in the Old Covenant](#)

[Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit](#)

(iii) Paul's ministry (3:7-12)

(a) Paul's placement into the ministry (3:7-8a)

7 of which **I was made a minister**, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the **working** of His **power**.

7 of which I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.

7 I have become a servant of this gospel according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power.

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

- God graciously gave Paul the opportunity to serve Him by proclaiming the gospel, aided by God's supernatural enablement (the "working of his power")

- "...I was made a minister" - v7-13 describe Paul's own ministry—the Church; God's revelation to Paul made him a minister

— "minister" - *diakonos*, deacon; service

- "...working" - *energeia*, energy

- "...power" - *dunamis*, dynamic

— Paul has already mentioned the mighty resurrection power of Christ is available to us for daily life and service (1:19-23; 3:20; 4:16)

(b) Paul's performance in the ministry (3:8b-9)

(1) To preach the riches of Christ (3:8b)

8 To me, **the very least of all saints**, this grace was given, **to preach to the Gentiles** the **unfathomable riches** of Christ,

8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

8 To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given so that I might proclaim to the gentiles the immeasurable wealth of the Messiah

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

- "...the very least of all saints" - Paul was the last of the apostles, and in his own words, the least of the apostles

— Unlike the other apostles, Paul wasn't converted until after Jesus' ascension and after the inauguration of the church

— Paul considers himself the least of the apostles because of his former life as Saul, a persecutor of the church

— "Chief of sinners" (1 Tim 1:12-15); memory of persecutions (Acts 9:4; Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6)

- "...to preach to the Gentiles" - God's mission for Paul was to preach the good news to the Gentiles, who for centuries had been alienated...that they are now part of this "new man" called the church, and are now on equal footing with the Jews

- "...unfathomable riches" - literally "untraceable riches"; you cannot detect the mystery of the one body concept in the OT Scriptures; it was a mystery hidden in Christ.

(2) To enlighten the mystery (3:9)

9 and to enlighten all people as to what the plan of the mystery is which **forages** has been **hidden in God**, who created all things;

9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things;

9 and help everyone see how this secret that has been at work was hidden for ages by God, who created all things.

9 And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ:

- "...for ages" - the Church was never a "Plan B" for God...it was in His plan from the foundation of the world

- Paul had the opportunity and the honor to reveal something in God that had never been revealed before

- "...hidden in God" - Paul gives us a definition of the word "mystery"

(c) Content of Paul's ministry (3:10-12)

(1) God's wisdom (3:10)

10 so that the **multifaceted** wisdom of God might **now** be made known through the church to **the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places**.

10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*.

10 He did this so that now, through the church, the wisdom of God in all its variety might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

- "...multifaceted" - *polupoikilos*, variegated, made up of many different kinds

— God's manifold wisdom is reflected in the Church's variegated construction. The angels marvel at God's wisdom as they observe Jews and Gentiles united in one body.

— No other human community in the history of the world resembles the multi-racial, multi-cultural tapestry that is the Church

— The precise line of thought is this: God from eternity, had a purpose to put Jew and Gentile on precisely the same footing, but concealed it for many ages, until He revealed it in the apostolic age, when He appointed Paul as His minister to announce it.

- "...now" - *nyn*, emphatic in Greek

- "...the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly *places*" - the angelic realm

— Many passages indicate that the angels are watching and learning from events on the earth (Cf. 1 Peter 1:12)

— However men may scorn the salvation of Christ and all that belongs to it, the highest intelligences regard it with profound interest

— Not only was mankind completely ignorant of the Church in the OT, up until it was hinted at by Jesus and fully detailed by Paul, but the angels in heaven were also unaware of this facet of God's plan

— The angels know all about God's creative power (Job 38), His holiness, His judgment, but they do not understand the grace, mercy or love of God because they haven't experienced it

— The angels learn about these traits of God by observing His relationship with the Church

If there is but one covenant of grace operating uniformly in every age, to what must the Apostle be referring when he asserts (in Eph 3:1-10) that a dispensation respecting a hitherto unrevealed program was committed to him? [Chafer]

(2) God's purpose (3:11)

11 ***This*** was in accordance with the **eternal purpose** which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

11 *This* was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord,

11 in keeping with the eternal purpose that God carried out through the Messiah Jesus our Lord,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

- "*This*" - the Church

- "...eternal purpose" - the church was part of God's plan and purpose in eternity past. The church is not God's "plan B" after Israel rejected the offer of the kingdom and their Messiah.

— The church was not a reaction to Israel's rejection of Christ...the church was as much a part of God's plan as is national Israel. To ignore this truth is to sin against the Father who planned it, the Son whose death made it possible, and the Spirit who today seeks to work in our lives to accomplish it.

— *God's plan is singular, carried out in stages. That related to Israel was previously revealed, while that related to the Church was hidden until after the birth of Christ's Body.*

[J. Dwight Pentecost]

— This is why dispensationalists have never taught that the Church is God's "Plan B." This is a straw man fallacy often stated by those who oppose a dispensational view of Scripture. The Bible is clear that there is a single plan of God, carried out in stages.

God's foreknowledge and counter-strategy: incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and the glorification of Christ. Satan knows the Scriptures; by keeping His program for the Church hidden, God prevented Satan from hindering the plan. Satan took Christ to the Cross, and by so doing sealed his own doom! It is tragic today when we see pastors and churches wandering about aimlessly in their ministries because they do not understand God's purpose for the Church in this age. ***If they would move out of the message of Acts 1-6 and into that of Ephesians and Colossians, they would not be wasting time, talent, and money "building the kingdom" but instead would be building the Church.***

- How He has sent heaven's best for the earth's worst
- How He has redeemed His enemies at enormous personal cost
- How He has conquered them by love...and prepared them as a Bride for His Son

And they see that through the work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross, more glory has come to God and more blessing has come to believing Jews and Gentiles than if sin had never been allowed to enter. God has been vindicated, Christ has been exalted, Satan has been defeated, and the Church has been enthroned in Christ to share His glory.

(3) Our access (3:12)

12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him.

12 in whom we have boldness and confident access through his faithfulness.

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

- We can address God boldly and approach Him confidently because our Savior's work has brought us near to God (Cf. Heb 3:6; 4:16; 10:19,35; Eph 2:8; Rom 5:2)

— Forgiven sinners don't need to come to God hesitantly, wondering about our reception. They don't rest on their own achievement, but on what Christ has done for them, and for that reason they come full of confidence.

(iv) Concluding exhortation (3:13)

13 Therefore I ask you not to become discouraged about my tribulations in your behalf, since they are your glory.

13 Therefore I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory.

13 So then, I ask you not to become discouraged because of my troubles on your behalf, which work toward your glory.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

- The Ephesians were grieved and upset about Paul's imprisonment; Paul comforts them by saying his current situation in a Roman prison was for their glory

24 Differences Between Israel & the Church

1. Marriage: Israel is the Wife of Jehovah (Is 54:5); the Church is the Bride of Christ (Eph 5:22-33)
2. Christ: Israel birthed Christ (Rev 12:1-5); Christ birthed the Church (Matt 16:18)
3. Return: Jesus will return for Israel ("until," Matt 23:39) at the Second Coming; He will return for the Church at the Rapture (John 14:1-4; 1 Cor 15:51-54; 1 Thess 4:13-18)
4. Leader: Jesus is Israel's "King" (Is 33:22); He is the Church's "Head" or "Groom"
5. Beginning: Israel began in Gen 12; the Church began in Acts 2
6. Scripture: 80% of the Bible deals with Israel; 20% deals with the Church
7. Covenants: Israel is a "direct party"; the Church is a "third party beneficiary"
8. Nation: Israel is a political nation; the Church is not a nation (Rom 10:19), but a people group
9. Wars: Israel fought physical, political wars, with body counts; the Church fights spiritual wars (Eph 6:11-18)
10. Timing: Israel has a calendar, with specific feast days, time periods (Cf. Dan 9:24-27); the Church has no calendar and is given no dates or time periods

11. Priesthood: Israel *had* a priesthood (tribe of Levi/line of Aaron); the Church *is* a priesthood (Rev 1:6; 5:10)
12. Temple: Israel *had* a physical temple (1 Kings 6:1); the Church *is* a spiritual temple (1 Cor 6:19)
13. Resurrection: Israel is resurrected after the Second Coming (Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29; 11:23-24; Acts 24:15; Rev 20:4-6); the Church is resurrected at the Rapture (1 Cor 15:20-23, 51-54; 1 Thess 4:13-18)
14. Judgment: Israel will be judged on earth, after the Tribulation (Ezek 20:33-38); the Church will be judged in heaven (*Bema* Seat, after the Rapture, 1 Cor 3:10-15; 2 Cor 5:10).
15. New Jerusalem: Distinction between Israel and the Church will last into the Eternal State in the foundations (apostles, Church) and gates (12 tribes of Israel) of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:12,14).
16. Entrance: Israel: a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; includes both believers in Christ and unbelievers; Church: a believer in Jesus Christ, from any race or ethnic group, including Jews
17. Governing Principle: Israel is governed by the Mosaic Law (Ps 147:19-20); the Church is governed (primarily) by the NT epistles (Rom 6:14; Cf. Gal 6:2; Rom 8:2)
18. Relation to the Holy Spirit: The relationship between the believer and the Holy Spirit is vastly different between Israel and the Church.
19. Farewell Address: The Lord gave a farewell address to Israel (Matt 24-25) and the Church (Upper Room Discourse, John 13-17).
20. Designation: Israel is designated as God's "Firstborn"; the Church is designated as the "Bride of Christ"
21. Revealed in the OT: Israel is the topic throughout the OT, Gen 12 through Mal 4, as well as throughout the Gospels, Acts, Rom 9-11, and Rev 4-19. The Church is nowhere found in the OT, only hinted at in the Gospels, and not revealed in full until Acts 2.
22. Evangelism: Israel's evangelistic strategy was "Come and See"; the Church's strategy is "Go and Proclaim"
23. Blessings: Israel's blessings are material/earthly (Deut 28:1-14); the Church's blessings are spiritual (Eph 1:3)
24. Composition: Israel consists of believers and unbelievers, physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; the Church consists only of believers in Jesus Christ.

(c) Prayer for comprehension (3:14-21)

(i) Paul's humility in prayer (3:14-15)

14 For this reason I bend my knees before the Father,

14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,

14 This is the reason I bow my knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah,

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

- This is the second prayer in this epistle (Cf. 1:15-23). As he did in 1:15-23 when he prayed that his readers would understand the incredible riches they have in Christ, Paul now prays that we would understand full ramifications of God's grace.

- "For this reason" - goes back to v1, from which Paul departed in v2-13 to give more information about the mystery

- "...I bend my knees" - Paul was humbled by God's grace in his life

— What really blew Paul's mind, not the fact that God forgave him, a persecutor of the church and murderer, but the fact that God chose to use him in such an incredible way, as apostle to the Gentiles, and writer of 13 books of the NT

15 from whom **every family in heaven and on earth** derives its name,

15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,

15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its name.

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

- "...every family in heaven and on earth" - Paul made a word play from the word "Father" (*patera*, v14)

— A father is the head of a typical family (*patria*). God is not only the Father of "the family" in which Jews and Gentiles are one (the Church), He is the prototypical Father. Every human family exists as a "family" with a father, because of God's relationships as a "Father."

— Believers are "sons of God" by *rebirth* (1 John 3:1-2; John 1:11-12)

- There are four petitions in Paul's prayer—each one is sequential; each one leads into the next one: Strength, Depth, Apprehension, Fullness

(ii) Content of the prayer of (3:16-19)

(a) Strengthening the inner man (3:16)

16 that He **would grant** you, according to the riches of His glory, to be **strengthened with power** through His Spirit in **the inner self**,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

16 I pray that he would give you, according to his glorious riches, strength in your inner being and power through his Spirit,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

- "...may grant" - *didōmi*, active voice, subjunctive mood, meaning that God does the granting

- "...strengthened" - *krataioō*, passive voice, meaning God does both the the granting and the empowering
- The *presence* of the Holy Spirit is evidence of salvation (Rom 8:9), but the *power* of the Spirit is enablement for mature, stable, intelligent Christians (Acts 1:8)
- Jesus performed His ministry on the earth in the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:1,14; Acts 10:38)
- "...with power" - *dynamis*, strength, power, ability
- "...the inner self" - notice that ***all of Paul's prison prayers*** (Phil 1:9-11; Col 1:9-12, and these) ***deal with the spiritual condition of the inner man, and not with the material needs of the body***. The outer man is passing away daily (2 Cor 4:16).
- What does it mean to have the Holy Spirit empower the inner man? Our spiritual faculties are controlled by God and we are exercising them and growing in the Word (Heb 5:12-14)

(b) Christ would be at home in their hearts (3:17a)

(c) Comprehension of God's love (3:17b-19)

17 so that Christ may **dwelt** in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being **rooted** and grounded in love,

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

17 and that the Messiah would make his home in your hearts through faith. Then, having been rooted and grounded in love,

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

- But isn't Christ in our hearts already, once we're saved? Yes, but as Paul will explain later, we can grieve the Holy Spirit, we can live in rebellion to the Holy Spirit as Christians.

- "...dwell" - to settle down and feel at home; He indwells every believer (1 Cor 12:13), but is especially at home in the lives of those believers who let Him be first in their attitudes and activities (John 15:14)

— As the believer keeps trusting and obeying, Jesus can continue to occupy this place in their life

— The Lord did not come to us as temporary visitor, but a permanent resident, with unrestricted access to your life...

- "...rooted" - a tree must get its roots deep into the soil if it to have nourishment and stability (Ps 1:1-3; Cf. Jer 17:5-8)

18 may be able to **comprehend with all the saints** what **is the width** and **length** and **height** and **depth**,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

18 you will be able to understand, along with all the saints, what is wide, long, high, and deep—

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

- "...comprehend" - should be "apprehend," lay hold of; both stem from the Latin *prehendere*, "to grasp"

- It is possible to understand something but not really make it your own

- "...with all the saints" - without the others, our comprehension is *incomplete*

- Truths often emerge from *within* a small group...

- "...is the" - *ho*, this article shows that the four dimensions (width, length, height, breadth) are all viewed as a single entity, meaning Paul wants the Ephesians (and us!) to grasp the vastness of Christ's love.

- "...width" - *platos*, breadth; suggesting great extent

- God's love is broad enough to embrace both Jews and Gentiles in the Church

- "...length" - *mekos*, duration

- God's love is long enough to stretch from eternity past to eternity future

- "...height" - *hupsos*, elevation; of place (heaven) or rank

- God's love is high enough to raise both Jews and Gentiles into the heavenly places

- "...depth" - *bathos*, depth, height; deep things of God

- God's love is deep enough to rescue both kinds of people from sin's degradation and from Satan's grip

19 and to **know** the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the **fullness** of God.

19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

19 that is, you will know the love of the Messiah— which transcends knowledge, and will be filled with all the fullness of God.

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

- "...know" - *ginōskō*, to know intimately; more than just a knowledge of facts or data, but an intimate knowledge (Cf. Gen 4:1)

- The end result of the granting (v16), being strengthened (v16), dwelling (v17), ability (v18), and the comprehending (v18) is this: "to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge"

- "...fullness" - fully saturated to the point of overflowing

- Can one even imagine “being filled with the fulness of God”?! (Col 2:9-10). The means is the Holy Spirit (Eph 5:18), the measure is God Himself (Eph 4:11-16).
- It’s not so much the thoroughness of the comprehension as it is the vastness of the thing to be comprehended

The ultimate goal of Paul’s request was that his readers might be so full of the knowledge of Christ’s love and appreciation for God, that they might allow Christ to control them fully (Eph 4:13).

The Christian life is about God. It is rare to hear a sermon in a church about this reality. True, we are not puppets on a string; the Christian life involves our obedient response. But the granting and being strengthened and dwelling and empowering comes from God through Christ. Instead of the Christian life being a burden to be carried, it is a joy to be celebrated.

But what we really need to understand here is Paul’s conclusion. The end purpose of all this is “to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.” The end of all study is to not knowledge; the end of all study is love, a love that moves through knowledge to love.

(iii) Ascription of praise (3:20-21)

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,

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,

20 Now to the one who can do infinitely more than all we can ask or imagine according to the power that is working among us—

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

- God's *modus operandi* in answering prayer is that we have to wait, often longer than we want to, but when He answers, He answers and then gives us a bunch of other things that we never asked for or even fathomed

— Solomon wanted wisdom, which God granted, but also gave him extravagant wealth and long life, neither of which Solomon asked for

— Daniel asked God for next steps for Israel, and after waiting three weeks, Gabriel arrived and gave Daniel a complete blueprint and timeline for God's program with Israel (Dan 9:24-27). It is the most comprehensive prophecy about national Israel in the entire Bible and is a foundation for all of end times prophecy.

- This is illustrated by another of Paul's "pyramid" sentences: "Able...to *do*..." translates the potential to the actual...We *ask*...or *think*:
 - ...*all* that we ask or think
 - ...*above* all that we ask or think
 - ...*abundantly* above all that we ask or think
 - ...*exceeding* abundantly above all that we ask or think
- Paul seems to want to use every word possible to convey to us the vastness of God's power as found in Jesus Christ
- Again, note the Trinitarian emphasis in this benediction: Paul prays to the **Father**; concerning the indwelling **Spirit**, made available through the **Son**...

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

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

21 to him *be* glory in the church and in the Messiah Jesus to all generations, forever and ever! Amen.

21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

- "to Him *be* the glory in the church" - one of the three purposes for the Church: to Glorify God (the other two are "Edify the Saints," Eph 4:11-16 and Fulfill the Great Commission, Matt 28:18-20)

— This is called the doxological purpose of God; God's purpose in history is not to save souls...although that's very important, when a person gets saved, God gets the glory. But His ultimate purpose in history is to glorify Himself.

— Since God's purpose in human history is to His glory, one of the purposes of the Church is to glorify God

The Church cannot succeed until they understand their purpose...why do they exist? What need, want or desire is fulfilled in the world by the Church? If you can't answer these questions, how do you decide what programs or activities within the Church you should be involved in?

3 Purposes for the Church

1. To glorify God (Eph 3:21)
2. To edify the saints (Eph 4:11-16)
3. To fulfill the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20)