

STAMINA AND RESILIENCE

MARCH 19, 2023 | EPHESIANS | EPHESIANS 3:14-21 | PASTOR SCOTT TURANSKY

[PRAYER] Lord, we are called to be your disciples. We know that. We want that. So we ask, Father, that you would grant us your grace to know how to do that in the practical areas of our lives that are challenging. You know our hearts. You know every nook and cranny of our hearts. So we ask that you would speak to us, guide us, strengthen us, and use us. As we look at your word, use that today in our hearts to inspire us as well. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

I find that men and women communicate differently or they often think differently about communication.

For example, my wife comes home with all of these shopping things that she brought in. She comes in the house and she says, "I saved us a lot of money today." I'm trying to figure out where am I going to put that in my brain? Because my brain, like a lot of men, works with drawers. If I know where the drawer is, I know what to say. If I don't know where the drawer is, I don't know what to say. I can't find a place, a drawer to put this in my brain. I feel like saying, "I saved us money today too. I didn't go shopping." But that's in the drawer that says, "Never say that." That's a big drawer of things never to say and I know that, so I don't want to say those things. But what do I say? It doesn't seem like it fits in the "congratulations" drawer, or the "thank you" drawer.

Women are different. They don't have drawers. They have buckets. Big ones. Big buckets. So when they talk, they just got all kinds of words. Really what can happen for a woman is that she can throw some words out in one bucket and they'll just go into another bucket so she can keep talking and talking. Us guys have a hard time exactly knowing what bucket to put it. When she says, "I saved us a lot of money today," I feel like she's saying, "This is the beginning of a good news/bad news report." But I only get the good news. What's the bad news? I don't get that. So I don't know exactly what to say in that situation.

I'm really grateful that I have a wife who doesn't spend money on things we don't need. She buys the things we need. She's very frugal and thrifty. But communication is definitely a challenge.

Today, we're going to spend some money...some riches. That's what we're going to do. We're going to spend some riches in our passage today. In Ephesians 3:18, we're going to spend some riches. Before we do, we're going to look at the last two verses of Paul's prayer.

This is Paul praying from verses 14-21. I want you to stand with me while we read these last two verses of his prayer. These are the words that we love. Many of us memorize these words. We love them. They're inspiring for us. So let me read them for us.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

That's a lot of big words or expansive words in those two verses.

You can sit down.

I want to draw your attention in those two words to these very important highlighted words. Because these words we're going to look at first before we get to these last two verses.

Think – we're going to look at that. *The power* – we're going to talk about that. How God *works within us* in our hearts. We're going to talk about *glory*. That's where we're going. We're going to look at those things first and then we're going to come back to these two verses that culminate and are the capstone of the prayer that Paul makes in these verses.

Let's go back to verse 14, which is the beginning of the prayer. You have to realize that this passage of verses 14-21 culminates the whole section of Ephesians 1-3 where he's talked to us about our identity in Christ. What our identity is and how it's established. A very important part of who we are. We need to understand who we are in Christ because it helps us on a daily level.

Paul gets done with all of that and now he's going to pray. It says – *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.*

It's interesting here that God is the Father of every person, but there's some who don't know Him as a personal heavenly Father. Paul now is going to pray this important prayer. He's going to pray for two things. But before he does, he tells us about the riches again. This is what we're going to pray out of.

He prays – *according to the riches of his glory*. So he's going to take all the riches that we've talked about so far in the book and now he's going to cash them in. We're going to do that too as we look at this prayer of Paul.

We talked about the riches of God's grace in Ephesians 1:7. In Ephesians 1:17, he talked about the glorious riches we have in the inheritance of Christ Jesus. In Ephesians 2:7, he talks again about the riches of God's grace. In Ephesians 3:8, he talks about the riches in Christ. So he's been talking about riches continually. Now he refers to it this way: *the riches of his glory*.

When I think of the riches of God's glory, I think back on that story of Moses, all the disappointing things that happened when he came down from the mountain and he saw that they were worshipping the golden calf. Now we're back on the plane trying to figure out what to do and recover from the tragedy. This is bad. The Bible tells us that Moses set a tent out on the side outside the camp. It was called the tent of meeting. He would go out there and he would talk to the Lord. Other people could go out and meet with God there as well. But when Moses went out there, the cloud would come down. The Bible says that God would speak to Moses as a friend

speaks to a friend. In their dialogue, it says in the text there in Exodus 33 that Moses says to God, “Lord, I know you want me to lead these people throughout this land, but who's going to go with me to help me?” God's response is this: *My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.* Oh, I love those words. *My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.* Wow, we need those. Because it's not going to be easy as Moses leads those people through the wilderness. They're going to go in the wilderness for a long time.

It's God's presence that takes us through the wilderness sections of our lives, and allows us to experience rest, even in the midst of the struggle. The presence of God is there with us.

In fact, Jesus even said those last words before He rose up to heaven – *I will be with you always, even to the end of the earth*” It's the presence of God that we appreciate that comforts us and that we enjoy.

I just think of a child who is sad and actually anxious about going to bed and it being dark. Dad says, “Here, let me turn on the light for you.” The light comforts the child and the child can go to sleep. I think in a similar way, it's the presence of God, the light of Jesus Christ that we have in our hearts that gives us this rest. This presence of God in our lives gives us this peace. That's what we're seeing taking place in Exodus 33.

So the dialogue continues. Moses boldly says, “God, show me your glory.” And God says, “Okay, I'm going to take you over here to this rock, and put you in the cleft of the rock there. My goodness is going to pass by you (which is His glory) and I'm going to put my hand over you, so you can't see my face. But after I pass by, you'll be able to see me from behind. You'll see the glory.” Moses experienced the glory of God. He experienced the riches of God's glory in that moment.

In the next chapter, God calls him up onto the mountain to get the Ten Commandments again on the new stone tablets. The Bible tells us when he came down from the mountain, his face shone with radiance, but he did not realize it. That's the glory of the Lord.

I'm convinced if we understand the riches of God's glory, it will change our countenance, it will change how we live. Because we're living in the riches of God's grace.

I said to a woman who was a cashier... I just watched her for a while, as I was in line. She was so bubbly and she was so sweet. She was engaging people in dialogue. When I got up to her, I just said this: “Are you a Christian?” She looks at me and she says, “Yeah, how did you know?” I said, “I can tell just by the way you interact.” That's the radiance.

That's what we want other people to see. When we spend time with the riches of God's glory, it'll be transferred to us so that other people can see it as well. It's the riches of glory.

I think sometimes we live poverty-stricken in our spiritual lives in a 12x12-foot room with a dirt floor. If we would just open the door, we'd see that we're in this huge mansion with all of these riches. It's in the midst of the riches and experiencing those riches of God's glory that Paul's going to pray now for two things. But it comes out of this riches that we all want to spend now,

because we're coming to the Lord and saying, "Lord, because of these riches, I'm going to ask you for two things."

Those two things: Number one – *to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being*. Number two – *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*.

They're both talking about the inside of a person, not just their behavior. One uses the word *heart*. The other uses the word *inner being*.

Let's look at the first one. This idea of being strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, in this core. This place where you make decisions, where we feel things, where we often feel weak – weak against temptation, weak against emotional struggles that we face, the weakness that we have inside. Paul is praying that prayer that we all need. "Lord, I just pray that you'd give them strength with the power through your Spirit in your inner being."

We need that in each of our lives. It's the inner being that we have that produces this... I like the word integrity. It's like when you have a bridge, we say the bridge has integrity because it can withstand the trucks and the cars that are going over it. It can withstand the wind and the pressures from the storms that come in. It has enough integrity to withstand those things. That's what Paul is praying for. That we would have enough internal strength, internal integrity, to deal with the waves of challenges that we face out there. We all face them. Paul's praying that we'd have strength to face the challenges of life.

But not just the challenges that come at us from the outside. It's those challenges from within. The temptation to be dishonest is that temptation that says, "Well, I don't like to be corrected. So I'm going to make up a reason why I did this thing that I did, instead of admitting that I did something wrong." Paul is saying, "I just pray that you'll be strengthened in your inner being, to be able to admit when you did something wrong."

It's a temptation to cut corners or to get something we couldn't get in an honest way. So we do it dishonestly. Paul is praying, "I just pray that you will be strengthened in your inner core, so that that strength that you have will help you to be honest."

It's this integrity that Paul is praying for inside of their inner being. It doesn't come from willpower. It doesn't come from reading a self-help book. Where does it come from? It comes from *the power through his Spirit in your inner being*. That's what he's praying for, that God's Spirit will help us.

So when you set a goal... "I want to accomplish this goal in my life for the next 30 days," or "I want to get to this place in my life in the next year." When you're praying for that, it's not just your willpower that's getting you there. You're saying, "Lord, I'm praying that I would be strengthened by the power of your Spirit in my inner being to be able to do what I need to do to proceed toward that goal." That's the prayer that Paul is praying here. Our inner being. Very important.

The second one that he's talking about here is *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*. Is he talking about getting saved? No. He's talking to Christians, people who are already believers.

The key is in the word *dwell*. There's two words for *dwell* in the Bible in the New Testament. One is that word that describes “coming to visit with no intention of staying long.” Just coming to visit. That's not the word used here. The word used here is coming to dwell, to live, to become an inhabitant, to feel at home, to be comfortable in this place. *So that Christ may dwell in our hearts*. So that He may be comfortable in our hearts. Is Christ comfortable in your heart? That's what Paul's praying for. That we would have hearts that are so open to God that He would feel comfortable coming inside and being there.

It's as if Christ comes to the door of our house and He knocks on the door. We look through the peephole and say, “Uh oh, it's Jesus. I better go get myself cleaned up. Wait just a minute. I got to get dressed.” So you get cleaned up with your fancy clothes and you open the door and say, “Come into the living room.” Christ feels at home in the living room and you feel comfortable having Him there. The Holy Spirit goes and knocks on the entertainment door. He says, “I'd like to come in there.” “Oh. Well, excuse me just a minute.” So we go into the entertainment room. We stuff everything in the closet that we wouldn't feel comfortable with Christ seeing. “Okay, come in and feel at home in the entertainment room of my house.” So Christ comes into that area of our house. What does the Holy Spirit do? He goes right to the door of the entertainment closet. Why? Because He wants to feel comfortable in every nook and cranny of our hearts. That's what He wants.

This only happens, notice, through faith. *So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*. You have to be able to trust God. God, I want you to come into every area of my being, I want you to come into every area of my heart and I want you to feel at home there. I want you to strengthen my inner being. I want you to feel at home there.

Why? Because we're going to go down to the last sentence. Let me take you down there. *That you may be filled with all of the fullness of God*. Wow. That's an amazing statement.

The human being is like a sponge with all kinds of holes in it. But when it's crunched and put in water, it just absorbs all of the water. In the same way, the fullness of God comes over us. It fills up every nook and cranny of our lives. We're able to then experience the satisfaction that we need. He feels every longing that we have. He deals with every regret that we experience. He helps us in every challenge that we have in our lives. Because we have the fullness of God. He gives us mission. He gives us purpose. All of these things that God does for us. Because it is the very fullness of God.

So he says, “I'm going to pray for you out of the riches of God's glory, that you will be strengthened in you with power of the Holy Spirit in your inner being. And that you will have Christ at home in your heart through faith so that you can experience this fullness of God.”

We need this. This is really big.

That's why in the next verse he's going to talk about *more abundantly than you can ever ask or think*. That's what we're getting to here. First, we have to see how God wants us to experience all of His fullness.

But we skipped some verses in the middle, which are the how. How are you going to do that in your life? How are you going to be able to experience this inner being strength and this at home in my heart with Christ? How? It's going to come in these verses in the middle.

He's going to talk about the love of God. *That you, being rooted and grounded in love*. Now he's going to talk about love for these verses 17, 18, and 19. He's going to talk about this love that we need. It's a very big love that he's going to describe for us.

Let's go down to the last part of this, first of all. Because he talks about this love in a multidimensional fashion. He's going to talk about *the breadth and length and height and depth*. Because God's love is so big, it's much bigger than we could ever imagine.

We live in this box and we say, "Oh man, I don't know how I'm going to do this." But God's love is bigger than that box. It's so big that we can just enjoy basking in it.

This week, I was down in Baltimore to visit my grandsons because we're planning a trip to Egypt together. I'm taking my grandsons to Egypt. I'll be gone a little bit later in April. More on that another day. But anyway, I'm down there. After that meeting, before another meeting I had in Baltimore (it was such a pretty day here and it was even warmer down in Baltimore), I went out to a park. I was hiking around in this park for a little bit and then I got to some grass area. I didn't get to go to the gym, so I was doing some of my floor exercises on this grass. And then I just laid down on the grass, enjoying the sun, basking in the sun for a little while, just resting in that. It felt really good in the wintertime to be able to do that.

I think that that's what God is saying. This love is so big that we can bask in it, we can experience it, we can love it, we can enjoy it. He describes it with all these dimensions. Keep those dimensions in mind, *height and depth and width and breadth*, as we go to the two illustrations he starts with. Paul must be thinking in big terms as he's grappling with this. He thinks about a tree and a foundation. That's what he's thinking about, that we'd be *rooted* in this love. *Grounded* is this word that has to do with a foundation of a building. It has width and breadth. A tree has roots and branches. Its depth and its height, its width and its breadth.

Paul is trying to draw attention to this love of Christ that's so big, it's so high. It's so high that when I am feeling like I don't have purpose, I don't know what's going on in my life, I don't understand all these things are putting together, then we call on the scripture in Philippians 1:6, which says – *You can be confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ*. That's God's love in such high form. We go, "Yes, I can bask in God's love."

Jeremiah 29:11 – *I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans not to harm you but to prosper you*. I go, "Yes, I need the love of God so big in my life that I can appreciate that it gives me hope to go forward because of how big God's love is." His love is deeply rooted. It goes

deeply into my life to deal with the despair, the discouragement, and the disappointments that we have in our lives. It's so challenging sometimes to experience those things.

I think of Ruth in the Bible, a young married woman. Her husband dies. Just a sad story. But she connects herself to Naomi. Through Naomi's faith, Ruth starts to follow the Lord and trust Him. They go back to Israel. God is going to do something great. He's going to provide her with another husband, Boaz. But I'm convinced that Ruth would have been satisfied and fulfilled just in the fact that she was following the Lord and found this experience, even with the tragedy, despair, and the discouragement that she had in her life. The love goes so deep that it deals with our disappointments in life.

It's also wide and broad. When I think about how broad it is, I think about how it goes so far to even deal with the relationships we've had that have been disappointing but even hurtful. Where people have hurt us, we've been mistreated, we've been damaged. It's unfair what's taken place in our lives. That love goes so far.

We can think about Joseph and experience his mistreatment of his brothers. His brothers felt regret as they went before him. Joseph says these words to his brother: "*You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.*" Joseph had experienced the love of God so much that he could pass that on to his brothers and help them see how big God is. He's bigger than your little regrets. He's bigger than the mistreatment. He is so broad.

When I think about the width of God's love, I think about the anxieties that we experience in our lives, the challenges that we face. We feel like we got this pressure over here and this problem over here, and we're caught between a rock and a hard place and we don't know what to do. God's love is so big that it can embrace us in the midst of that.

I think about the Israelites who were backed up against the Red Sea with nowhere to go. They see out in the distance the Egyptian army coming at them. They're feeling anxious. Moses stands up and he says, "Be still. God will fight for you. These Egyptians that you see now you will never see again."

I need the love of God to be so wide in my life that He takes my anxieties and He embraces them so that I don't have to experience them. I can give them to Him. That's how big God's love is. We need to come to this place where we experience that love in our lives.

I'm talking a lot here about experiential love. I know we talk about the academic kind of love of God. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever perish can have everlasting life.* Okay, I got that verse. That's an academic understanding of God's love. But God wants to make it very personal in our all lives. He wants us to experience it.

Why am I emphasizing the experiential side of love? It's because that's what Paul is doing. Let me take you to the word down here. He says – *and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.* What does that mean? It's like an oxymoron statement. How can you know something that surpasses knowledge? Because you're going to experience it.

There are two Greek words for knowledge. But Paul doesn't use *oida* here. *Oida* would mean understanding in your head. He uses the word *ginosko*, which is experiential knowledge. The idea that you would experience God's love that it wouldn't envelop you. You experience that in such a way that that you've never experienced before.

So Paul is praying that we would get this, that we would experience it, that it would do something to us. Because this knowledge that we have is a knowledge of the love of Christ. It surpasses knowledge, the human understanding of life. It's big. It's this *ginosko* kind of idea.

When we get the understanding of God's love, it means a lot to us because it's like that tree. When we have our hearts rooted in God's love and we get it, then we're able to have some fruit on the tree, we're able to say, "I'm really rich in God's glory. I've got so much riches, I can give some away to you. I know you're struggling here. Let me give some of the riches in the form of kindness. Let me give some riches of God's glory to you, by giving you an encouraging word or listening to you tell a story." Any of those things that we do out of God's love are the fruit that comes on this tree when it's rooted deeply in God's love.

God's love is so powerful and big that Paul doesn't want us to miss it. He's praying that we'll grasp it and understand it in our lives.

That's going to bring us to the capstone verses that we read earlier. *Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.* He's talked about *to know* that which surpasses knowledge *according to the power.* He's talked about the power of the strength within us. He's talked about the *riches of God's glory.* All of those things he's discussed and talk to us about. Now let's read the verses and see what they say.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever.

He's using what we call hyperbole, which is the use of words that are biggest and best words. When he puts these words together, *far more abundantly*, we really don't know how to translate that into English. Because it's three Greek words that are big words. One of them is *huper*. So you could say it's the super duper, hyper love of Christ that we're understanding. This power of God is just the ultimate. Whatever word you want to put in there. It's only used this place in scripture, this grouping of these three Greek words because he's trying to explain that this is very big. It's so big that it changes who we are. We must grasp this.

That's why Paul is praying. So let's go back to the beginning and realize this is a prayer that Paul is praying. He's praying this for the Ephesians. It's a prayer that we can pray ourselves. In fact, what I'd like to do now is I'm going to read the scripture and change the pronouns. I'm going to pray it back to God for us as a prayer. I'm going to ask that you personalize this prayer with me and that you ask that God would do the same things in your heart that Paul is praying for the Ephesians as they're reading this.

Bow your heads, please, and I'm going to read this and reframe the pronouns.

For this reason I bow my knees before you, Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of your glory you may grant me to be strengthened with power your Spirit in my inner being, so that you may dwell in my hearts through faith—that I, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know your love that surpasses knowledge, that I may be filled with all your fullness. Now to you who is able to do far more abundantly than all I ask or think, according to the power at work within me, to you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

[PRAYER] Father, we do thank you for your riches in grace. We spend it before you and ask for things. Lord, most importantly, we want to ask for the depth of character in our children, in our marriages. We want to ask for the integrity in our personal lives at work, at home. Lord, we want to pour out our hearts to you. We ask that you would engulf us and saturate us with your love, so that we can experience it in ways we've never experienced before. We can enjoy you in special ways. Lord, we ask that you would do that. Fill us with the fullness of who you are. In Jesus' name, amen.