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**C0445 -- November 24, 2004 – Ephesians 3:14-19 – Prayer for Strengthened Love**

Paul resumes his prayer here in 3:14 which he started in 3:1 and digressed from in 3:2-13 to explain more about the mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body, the Church. This is Paul's second recorded prayer for the believers at Ephesus. Paul's first prayer is recorded in 1:15-23. Before Paul's first prayer he gave some deep doctrine about the Trinity's plan of redemption in 1:3-14. So, you can see that Paul is following a definite structure. He thinks in terms of doctrine and that doctrine leads him to prayer. This structure probably reflects the way Paul thought all the time. Paul's daily thought process probably spiraled back and forth from doctrine to prayer back to doctrine then prayer again all day long. This was just the way Paul lived his life. He sought to take "every thought captive to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). The structure of this letter is therefore a reflection of what our thought life should be like. Day in day out we should be thinking about doctrine which in turn should lead to prayer and back to doctrine and so forth. Now, in that 1<sup>st</sup> prayer (1:15-23) Paul prayed that the believers at Ephesus would know God intimately (1:17) so that they would grasp three things: (1) their past calling. God called each individual believer out from among the world (1:18); (2) their future as Christ's inheritance. God calls us out so that we will be Christ's future inheritance. You are a part of Christ's inheritance (1:18); and (3) their present possession of God's power. God calls us out and gives us the power necessary to live victorious Christian lives (1:19). We might sum up this prayer by saying that Paul wants us to understand our past, present and future so that we will deepen our relationship with God.

In Paul's second prayer for the believers at Ephesus (3:14-21) he prays that they might know the power of Christ's love which surpasses all knowledge and to express this love toward one another. This prayer is the 5<sup>th</sup> of 8 long sentences in the Greek (3:14-19). As I've said before, prayers/praise are often long, complex sentences as we pour out our hearts before God. After the prayer, in 3:20-21, Paul offers a doxology (praise) to God which serves as a transition from the doctrinal portion of Ephesians (chapters 1-3) to the application portion of Ephesians (chapters 4-6).

## G. PRAYER FOR STRENGTHENED LOVE (3:14-21)

If you recall, 3:1 is Paul's preparation to pray (*dia touto*, **for this reason**, which is the typical way Paul starts his prayers). But, when he reached the end of v. 1 something caused him to digress and explain more about the mystery of Jew and Gentile in one body, the Church. So, he spends 3:2-13 dealing with the fact that he was set apart by God's grace to receive revelation of the mystery and to disclose the mystery. Paul also makes clear that he did not make himself a minister but God made him a minister and that God gave him the enabling to carry out his ministry. Additionally, Paul's ministry of revealing the mystery does not extend merely to the Ephesians but also to the angelic realm. The Church becomes God's vehicle of revealing His manifold wisdom to the angelic rulers (both good and evil). Paul finishes his digression in 3:13 and returns to his prayer in v. 14 as signaled by his typical introductory words of prayer, **for this reason**, (*dia touto* as also in 1:15 and 3:1).

### 1. The Approach to Prayer (3:14-15)

In verse 14 we have Paul's approach to prayer which takes a certain posture.

*Greek Text 3:14 Toutou charin kampto ta gonata mou pros ton patera [BYZ adds tou Kuriou hemon Iesou Christou]*

**Translation 3:14 For this reason I bow my knees to the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ]**

*Toutou charin*, "**For this reason**" signifies the purpose for Paul's prayer. Why is Paul praying? Because Paul wants their positional unity to become experiential unity. Positionally, Jewish and Gentile believers are united in "one new man". But position does not always equal experience. Paul is therefore praying that their positional unity would flow over into their experience. Therefore, in the context, Paul's words **for this reason** refer back to the positional truth in 2:11-22 and 3:2-13. There is to be experiential unity among those who are a part of the "one new man", that is, the Church.

*kampto ta gonata mou pros ton patera [tou Kuriou hemon Iesou Christou]*, "**I bow my knees to the Father [of our Lord Jesus Christ]**". The word **bow** is a Hebrew idiom for "worship". Paul is taking the posture of "worship". The word is used only three other times in the NT (Rom. 11:4; 14:11; Phil. 2:10). All three uses are quotations of OT passages and all three are related to "worship". Prayer is a form of "worship". Worship is not just singing. The NT makes singing a very small part of "worship" (Rom. 15:9; 1 Cor. 14:15; Heb. 2:12;

Jam. 5:13; Acts 16:25; **Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:1**). It makes teaching the priority but people don't like teaching today so churches resort to music. This is really sad. What does worship consist of? It consists of teaching (discipleship), preaching (something you do not something you are; action not title; refers to evangelism), scripture reading, praying, exhorting one another, taking the Lord's Supper, water baptism, and singing.

## POSTURE IN PRAYER

Paul takes a certain posture in his worship by prayer here, one of bending down on his knees. I think posture in prayer is important. I think it's too bad that it has become so unimportant to most Christians. I think we're missing something in our relationship with the Lord. "As creatures we ought to assume our place before our Creator..."<sup>1</sup> What is the proper prayer posture? There are four postures observed in Scripture during different situations. All four are legitimate postures for prayer.

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| (1) kneeling (Dan. 6:10; <b>Lk. 22:41</b> ; Ac. 7:40; 20:36; 21:5) | <i>great need, fervency, stress</i> |
| (2) standing (Mr. 11:25; <b>Lk. 18:11, 13</b> )                    | <i>firmness, stability</i>          |
| (3) lying prostrate (Num. 16:45; Josh. 7:6; <b>Ezra 10:1</b> )     | <i>fear, loss, despair</i>          |
| (4) head between knees (1 Kings 18:42)                             | <i>lack of hope</i>                 |

Notice who Paul's prayer is addressed to. He addresses his prayer to **the Father**. He does not address his prayer to the Son or to the Spirit. You might think this is splitting hairs, but the Bible consistently teaches that prayer is always to be addressed to **the Father** (e.g., "Dear heavenly Father...") and in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. (For more on prayer see 1 John: Lesson 26, entitled "Confidence in Prayer.") That we address God as Father should remind us that we are sons of the Father. Turn back in Ephesians to chapter 1:5. Remember, if you are a believer here tonight God **predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself**. We were not adopted as sons of Jesus Christ but *through* Jesus Christ to Himself. **Himself** refers to the Father here upon close analysis. This is how we became sons of the Father and this is why we address our prayers to the Father. So, Paul takes the posture of kneeling to address his heavenly Father on behalf of the Ephesian believers.

At the end of v. 14 there is a difference in some of the Greek manuscripts.

- (1) Critical Text (Minority) reads just like the NASB, NIV
- (2) Majority Text adds the words **of our Lord Jesus Christ**

The Majority Text (2) is the best rendering because of geographic distribution of these manuscripts, it is the majority reading, and it is consistent with Paul's prayer in 1:17. The words signify that Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Father. This points to a doctrine called the "Eternal Subordination of the Son to the Father" which we will elaborate on again when we reach Eph. 3:20-21 (the transitional doxology).

*Greek Text 3:15 ek ou pasa patria en ouranois kai epi ges onomazetai,*

**Translation 3:15 from whom every family in heaven and on the earth is named**

*ek ou pasa patria en ouranois kai epi ges onomazetai*, "from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named". **from whom** (*ek ou*) denotes "origin" of every family. Paul uses a play on words here. The word *pater* in v. 14 refers to the "Father" and the similar word *patria* here in v. 15 refers to "family". Paul means that every family originated with the Father. The real question here is what does Paul mean by "family"? What does Paul mean that God the Father is the origin of every family? I think he's referring to God as Creator of all and therefore the Creator of "family". Indeed "family" is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Divine Institution (1<sup>st</sup> = Labor, 2<sup>nd</sup> = Marriage, 3<sup>rd</sup> = Family, 4<sup>th</sup> = Human Government, 5<sup>th</sup> = Tribal Diversity). But what does Paul mean when he qualifies this statement with the phrase **every family in heaven and on earth**? It is hard to understand what Paul means. Basically, it seems to mean that the Father is the one who names every family in heaven and on earth. God has two ways of naming families (1:21; 5:3; Phil. 2:9-11):

(1) Directly

God named Adam the Son of God (Luke 3:38)

God named Abram...Abraham

(2) Indirectly

(a) God names through the human father who names his own children

Abraham named Isaac (Gen. 21:3)

David named Solomon (2 Sam 12:24)

(b) God tells the human father what to name his children

God told Isaiah what to name his child (Isa. 8:3)

God told Hosea what to name his children (Hos. 1:4, 6, 9)

God told Zacharias to name his son John the Baptist (Luke 1:13; 59-63)

God told Joseph to name God's Son Jesus (Matt. 1:21, 25)

In rabbinic tradition the son is always identified with the father (e.g., Simon Bar-Jonah; Matt. 16:17). This tradition denotes the importance of the father's place in the lineage of the family. The verb **named** is in the present tense indicating ongoing naming. The Father

is still naming families because families are still being created. Therefore, every family has its origin in God as creator. Some limit this to believing families because of the context. Some say that **every family in heaven** refers to departed Christians but neither of these views has much support. **every family in heaven** better refers to angelic beings (cf. 3:10) (*ouranois*; 1:10; 4:10; 6:9). This is confirmed by the fact that elsewhere God is called the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9) and the Father of lights (Jas. 1:17), both of which probably refer to the angelic realm. Both angelic and human families are therefore dependent on the Father.

Since God the Father is the one who is still creating and naming every family on earth demonstrates that God is alive and active in the present time. God is transcendent, distinct from His creation, in that the creation is not an extension of His being, but God is also immanent in His creation, meaning He is not standing aloof from His creation but is actively involved in governing, sustaining, working in, and upholding His creation. This verse therefore proclaims the immanence of God, His sovereignty, and His fatherhood over every family in heaven and on earth.

## 2. **The Appeal in Prayer (3:16-19)**

The structure of the prayer is as follows: there is 1 petition, 2 consequences, and 2 goals Paul wants to see flow out of this petition

**Petition:** to be strengthened...in the inner man (3:16)

*Consequence:* so that Christ may dwell in your hearts (3:17)

*Goal:* you may be able to comprehend (3:18)

*Consequence:* to know the love of Christ (3:19a)

*Goal:* you may be filled up to all the fullness of God

(3:19b)

There is a clear progression in Paul's prayer. His petition is that we "be strengthened...in the inner man". If we are strengthened then "Christ may take a deep seat in our heart". This is required if we are "to be able to comprehend" with the consequence of coming to "know the love of Christ" with the ultimate goal that we "may be filled up to all the fullness of God." This is a progression from one step to the next in the Christians spiritual life. It is important to note that Paul's prayer is for the spiritual life, not the physical life. There is a large failure in the Church today to follow Paul's example of praying for the spiritual. Almost all the Church does is pray for the physical. This failure reflects largely the spiritual condition of the Church.

**a. Petition: To be strengthened in the inner man (3:16-17a)**

In 3:16-17a Paul, kneeling before the Father, states his petition. His petition is that the believers in Ephesus would be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in their inner man. Jewish and Gentile believers are one in position but now Paul prays that there might be experiential unity among Jewish and Gentile believers who have such different cultural backgrounds.

*Greek Text 3:16 hina do humin kata to ploutos [BYZ reads ton plouton; both BYZ and NA27 claim accusative case] tes doxes autou dunamei krataiothenai dia tou pneumatos autou eis ton eso anthropon, 3:17a katoikesai ton Christon dia tes pisteos en tais kardiais humon,*

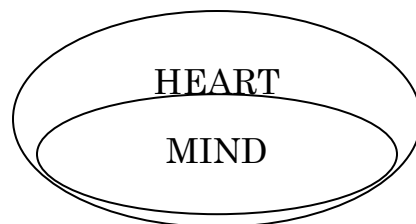
**Translation 3:16 in order that he may grant you according to the wealth of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, 3:17a so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,**

*hina do humin kata to ploutos tes doxes autou, “in order that he may grant you according to the wealth of His glory”.* Beginning in v. 16 Paul introduces the purpose or content of his prayer with the words **in order that (that in the NASB)**. Paul wants God to grant or give them something he has yet to ask for. But first, he appeals to God’s essence. He uses a *kata* with the accusative to denote the standard or the measure (probably the measure here). Paul wants the prayer to be answered **according to the wealth of God’s glory.”** He’s not asking God to answer out of His glory but in proportion to His glory. We have looked at the glory of God several times in this epistle (e.g., 1:7). Do you remember what **glory** means? How do we define **glory**? **glory** is the summation of one’s attributes. God’s essence is His glory. Paul wants believers to be strengthened in proportion to God’s glory. Now the request itself...

*dunamei krataiothenai dia tou pneumatos, “to be strengthened with power through His Spirit”.* Two words are used for “power” here. **strengthened** is the Greek word *krataiothenai* which means “to strengthen” as when exercising. Of course, Paul isn’t concerned with physical strength here but inner strength, strength of mind in the inner man; spiritual strength. The Christian’s life is a decay of the body and a growth in the inner spirit. The old is passing away, the new is growing (experiential). As we put to death the deeds of the body the spirit grows. For the unbeliever both his body and his human spirit decay. So, Paul says that the inner man can be strengthened. It can grow. This same word is used of Jesus growing and “becoming strong” in Luke 1:80 and 2:40. Like Jesus grew strong

our inner man can grow stronger. The verb is in the passive voice so it's not by our own work that we grow stronger but it is God who gives us strength. The second word **power** is what Paul wants us to be strengthened with. Paul wants us to be **strengthened with power** (dative – instrumental). The Greek word for **power** is *dunamis*, which we've seen several times before (e.g., 1:19). We get the English word “dynamite” from this word. It means potential energy. We used the example of a car battery. The car battery has potential energy when the car is just sitting there in the driveway. The moment you turn the key that potential energy is converted into kinetic energy or energy in motion. We are to be strengthened with the potential energy of God toward us. This potential energy that we have which strengthens us in the inner man comes **through His Spirit**. God's **Spirit** which indwells every believer is the means by which we are strengthened with God's power. Where are we strengthened?

*eis ton eso anthropon*, “**in the inner man**”. What is the inner man? Paul uses this phrase **inner man** in **Rom. 7:22** of the location of the law of God. Paul uses it again in **2 Cor. 4:16<sup>ii</sup>** as that part of man which is being renewed day by day in contrast to the body which is wasting away. The **inner man** therefore refers to the born-again self, the regenerate aspect of our being. The **inner man** is composed of the “heart” or “mind”. Christians are prone to making a sharp distinction between “heart” and “mind” but the Bible never makes such a sharp distinction. That's a false distinction that most Christians picked up from Greek philosophy. Biblically, “heart” is a broader term than “mind” but “mind” is always included in the term “heart”. IIIII The Bible does not make a distinction between “head” and “heart” knowledge like many Christians do. Now, I know what some Christians are trying to do, they are trying to account for how so many Christians can know doctrine but not apply doctrine. The way people try to explain this is to say that they have “head” but not “heart” knowledge. Well, that's not the biblical answer at all. The biblical answer is that they never knew the doctrine to begin with. True knowledge (that's what the Bible calls *epignosis*) always works itself out into practical application.



So, you can't separate “head” from “heart” knowledge. You simply have to say with Paul, John, and Jesus that they never knew the doctrine to begin with. This is why Paul is praying that believers will come to know the doctrine (ch1-3) and it will work itself out in their

lives (ch4-6). IIIII Notice the emphasis in Paul's prayer on "knowledge" in vv. 18-19. "knowledge" and "comprehension" lead to loving others and loving Christ. You can't get too much knowledge and you can't get to loving Christ and others apart from knowledge. Paul prays this for how many of the saints in v. 18? ALL the saints.

*katoikesai ton Christon dia tes pisteos en tais kardiais humon*, "so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." so that indicates the results that Paul is looking for from his prayer. Paul wishes that when his prayer is answered in the Ephesian believers **Christ** will **dwell in their hearts through faith**. The word **dwell** is *katoikeo* (*kata* meaning "down" and *oikeo* meaning "house"), therefore the word means to settle down permanently. The individual believer is not to be a temporary house of Christ but a permanent settling place for Christ. This is similar to God building a temple out of church saints in 2:21-22 to be a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit. The difference is that in 2:21-22 the corporate church is in view as a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit whereas here the individual believer is to become a dwelling place of Christ.

In other words, Paul's prayer is that they might be strengthened with power in the inner man so that there can be a deep indwelling of Christ by means of faith. Paul is praying that Christ may..."be at the very center of or deeply rooted in the believers' lives. Christ must become the controlling factor in attitudes and conduct. The "heart"...is the core of a person...the center of a person" where illumination takes place, true worship takes place, and obedience takes place. When we harden our hearts, we are alienating ourselves from the life of God (4:18). So, as Christians we not only have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit but we also have the indwelling of Christ at salvation. But more than this when we are strengthened by power in our inner man, the very core of our being becomes a deep dwelling place of Christ. Christ becomes the core of every aspect of our lives. Our lives become His lives, lives in submission to Christ; lives that are not our own but His own, to be used for His glory to fulfill His plan in His time. Not autonomous lives, but minds that take "every thought captive to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Notice that the Trinity is mentioned in these last four verses. The Trinity is not explicitly stated in Ephesians but it is embedded throughout. The Father is the one we pray to (v. 14). The Spirit is the one who does the strengthening (v. 16). The Son is the one who is to be deeply rooted in our lives (v. 17). The means through which this takes place is through faith (v. 17). And faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). So, this whole thing goes back to knowing the word of God. IIIII And do you know what the biggest struggle Christians have is? Studying the word of God. This is the #1 problem with Christianity and Christians today: they struggle to study the word of God. We have



lots of problems in Christianity. We've got Preterism, Open Theism, Process Theology, not to mention problems in Christendom, such as Liberalism and Neo-Orthodoxy, but the major problem is really quite simple: Christians don't study the Bible. This is why they are tossed about by every wind of doctrine that comes down the pike (Eph. 4:14). If you want the new, the flashy, the trendy doctrines being taught in Christianity today you are in the wrong place. I study them so I can discern them and understand what they are saying but I don't jump on the bandwagon. The reason Christians *are* jumping on these bandwagons is because they don't have a clue what the Bible teaches because they don't study it for themselves. Most Christians never crack a Bible. Never, hardly ever do they crack a Bible throughout their entire lives. Some take a Bible to Church. Woohoo, big deal! So, we should not be surprised at all that this country is falling apart. We should not be surprised that every denomination has gone apostate. Not a one of them can even get the gospel straight! We are a Bible church and yet I know that there are many people here who do not study the Bible daily. And there's just no excuse, the bottom line is that God just isn't that important to you. If you need help or you have questions, I'm available anytime. All you have to do is call or come in or e-mail me. If you won't come in because you've got too much pride and you don't want to feel embarrassed all I can say is get over yourself. That's ridiculous. There is nothing to be ashamed of if you are struggling to understand biblical truth. Paul says we are not to remain children in the faith. We are to grow up in every aspect in Christ. The time for playing games is over. IIIII

**b. Purpose: To comprehend Christ's love and to be filled with God's fullness (3:17b-19)**

*Greek Text 3:17b en agape errizomenoi kai tethemeliomenoi, 3:18 hina exischusethe katalabesthai sun pasin tois hagiois ti to platos kai mekos kai upsos kai bathos [BYZ reads bathos kai upsos] 3:19 gnonai te ten uperballousan tes gnoseos agapen tou Christou, hina plerothete eis pan to pleroma tou theou*

**Translation 3:17b [in order that you] being rooted and grounded in love, 3:18 might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 3:19 and so to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, in order that you might be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

*en agape errizomenoi kai tethemeliomenoi*, “[in order that you] being rooted and grounded in love,”. We discussed love in Eph. 1:4 and there we concluded that **love** is that which seeks the highest good for the one loved. Love is seeking the best interest for

someone else. Of course, God is love and all human love is sourced in God. Therefore, believers love for one another is rooted in God who set us apart by His gospel.

Paul uses two metaphors here to describe our connection to this love. The first word **rooted** is agricultural and the second word **grounded** is architectural. The first word **rooted** (*rhizoo*) refers to the roots of a plant or tree that are firmly rooted in the ground (substrate which is love). As Christians we are firmly rooted in God's love. The second word **grounded** (*themelioo*) refers to the foundation of a building. A similar idea is used by Paul in Col. 2:7 where he says that we are being rooted and built up in Christ. The important thing about these two words is that they are both perfect tense and passive in voice. The perfect voice refers to a completed action having present results. The emphasis is on the present results. We have been **rooted** and **grounded in love** and we presently are **rooted** and **grounded in love**. Paul includes in his prayer positional truth. We have this standing by position. If you recall Paul included positional truth in his 1<sup>st</sup> prayer in chapter 1 verse 18 "*having been enlightened...*" a once for all act that has ongoing results. They are both passive in voice meaning that the Ephesian believers were acted upon. We don't root or ground ourselves but God roots and grounds us at the moment of our salvation. And He keeps us **rooted** and **grounded in love** forever.

In the present context Paul states that believers are firmly rooted and grounded in love. This root and foundation of love refers to God having chosen them, predestined them, bestowed them in the beloved, redeemed them, made them a heritage, sealed them with the Holy Spirit, made them alive, raised and seated them in the heavenlies, and placed them equally in one new person in the body of Christ.<sup>iii</sup>

**3:18 *hina exischusetate katalabesthai sun pasin tois hagiois*, "in order that you [being rooted and grounded in love] might be able to comprehend with all the saints"**. This is part of Paul's purpose in the prayer. It relates back to the previous phrase in v. 17. In other words, "because you have been rooted and grounded in love" you might now be able to comprehend with all the saints the truths of verse 19 about Christ's love. Paul's prayer is basically about your sanctification. It's not enough to simply be rooted and grounded in love positionally. Paul wants us to experience the benefits of being rooted and grounded in love. The benefits occur as we grow up in Christ by coming to a deeper comprehension and knowledge of Christ and His love.

Notice that Paul's prayer is for **all the saints**. Paul does not carry the misconception that the deep truths of Christ: election, predestination, redemption, forgiveness, being made an inheritance, sealing with the Holy Spirit, being made alive, raised, seated in the heavenlies,

put in a new body are to only be understood by professional theologians on the seminary campus. Indeed, he conceives of them as comprehensible by all saints.

Indeed, Paul's intention is also to communicate to the Ephesian believers that true growth cannot occur in isolation, but must take place in association with other believers. No Christian is a lone ranger and can comprehend it all on his own. The Bible abhors the lone island approach where we get out on a desert island all by ourselves and try to comprehend the Scriptures. That idea contradicts the unity of the body of Christ. "Furthermore, true growth cannot occur by association with only certain believers, ones preferred because they are of the same socioeconomic, intellectual, or professional status. Paul prays that it might be accomplished in association with *all* the saints."<sup>iv</sup> What does Paul want us to comprehend with all the saints?

*ti to platos kai mekos kai upsos kai bathos*, "**what is the breadth and length and height and depth**,". It's hard to know what these words refer to and there have been countless wild interpretations of them.<sup>v</sup> Without being dogmatic, I think the best interpretation is that these four words refer to what follows, namely, the immensity of the love of Christ. Abbott says, "the four words seem intended to indicate, not so much the thoroughness of the comprehension as the vastness of the thing to be comprehended." Christ's love is enormous. It is simply something that cannot be measured. Further support for these four words referring to Christ's love is found in **Romans 8:39** "*nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Notice that two of the four words; height and depth are used here in connection with the love of God in Christ.

*gnonai te ten uperballousan tes gnoseos agapen tou Christou*, "**and so to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge**,". The word for **know** here is *ginosko* and refers to acquiring *theological* as well as *experiential* knowledge of **the love of Christ**. Interestingly, both of Paul's prayers in Ephesians so far have stressed knowledge. The object of knowledge is **the love of Christ**. **love** is seeking the highest good for the one loved. **the love of Christ** is described as **surpassing knowledge**. The word for **surpassing** is *huperballo* which means "over" "to throw" or simply "to overthrow" or "throw beyond". The **love of Christ** is so immense that it is beyond the capability of any human being to fully know. We know truly but we do not know exhaustively (Doctrine of Incomprehensibility of God coupled with the Doctrine of Revelation).

The very fact that Christ's love expressed itself in his willingness to die on behalf of sinners is in itself beyond one's comprehension. The reality of Christ's love is

overwhelming to all believers, from the point of conversion and continuing as growth in the knowledge of Christ progresses. No matter how much knowledge we have of Christ and his work, his love surpasses that knowledge. The more we know of his love, the more we are amazed by it. Paul is not denigrating knowledge, for it is greatly emphasized in this epistle (1:9, 17, 18; 3:3-5, 9; 4:13; 5:17). He even requests it in this very prayer (vv. 18, 19a), but here he wishes to stress Christ's love as that which is beyond human comprehension.<sup>vi</sup>

*hina plerothete eis pan to pleroma tou theou*, “**in order that you might be filled up to all the fullness of God.**” The *hina* introduces the final purpose of Paul's prayer which is that they **might be filled up to all the fullness of God**. This is similar to the ending of Paul's first prayer where he concluded by referring to *the fullness of Him who is being filled entirely* (Eph. 1:23). There Paul meant that God was filling Christ and Christ was filling the Church with God's moral excellence. Here Paul's prayer is aimed at filling that which is absent. Christians are complete positionally at the moment they are saved but experientially they are not complete. There is still growth and change that must take place. Here, **to be filled up to all the fullness of God** is to know experientially the love of Christ. The fullness of the Godhead is only in Christ and through Christ a believer is made complete (Col. 2:9-10). Positionally we have this divine fullness but Paul's prayer is that we might, as individuals, experientially realize this. That Christ loves us is a fact, but to experientially know God's moral excellence, His power, and His perfection will result in love between Jewish and Gentile believers. Remember the context here and the main theme of this letter: unity of Jew and Gentile in one new man, the Church. Positionally, we were formerly enemies but now made one in Christ. Positionally, Jew and Gentile believers have been reconciled. But Paul is interested in more than mere positional unity. He is interested in the experiential unity of Jewish and Gentile believers. “This prayer paves the way for the practical outworking of their position in Christ, which is outlined in chapters 4-6 of this letter.”<sup>vii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> McGee, J. Vernon, *Ephesians* (Pasadena, CA: Thru the Bible Books, 1977), 98.

<sup>ii</sup> “Therefore, we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.”

<sup>iii</sup> Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 484.

<sup>iv</sup> Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 486.

<sup>v</sup> Bengel holds that they refer to the dimensions of the spiritual temple, the church. Some hold that it is a merism where the parts signify the whole. Others claim they refer to a mystery of grace in redemption, a spiritual temple or heavenly city (Rev. 21:16), the shape of the cross of Christ, a Gnostic idea of Christ's crucified body which fills the earth, the love of God, the wisdom of God, the power of God, or the love of Christ. I think the best view, in light of the context, is that these four words describe the immensity of Christ's love.

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vi Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 490.

vii Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 491.

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