

The Power at Work Within Us

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[0 : 0 0] We're going to turn now, though, to our Bibles, and we're reading this morning in Ephesians. As I said, Edward Love is going to be preaching to us shortly, and we're going to read today in Ephesians chapter 3, beginning at verse 14.

If you don't have a Bible, there's piles of them at the front here, at the sides, at the back. Do grab one, either now or before the sermon, so that you can see where we're reading and what we're talking about.

You'll find it much easier to keep track of things. So I'm going to read just a short section here, which is Paul, the Apostle of Christ, praying for the Ephesian church here.

Ephesians 3, then, at verse 14. Paul says, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, 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 the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

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.

[1 : 5 5] Amen. Amen. Well, we'll come back to that. Well, good morning, friends.

Very good to see you all. And I would be glad and grateful if you'd turn up Ephesians chapter 3. You'll find it much more helpful to have the text open in front of you because I'll be looking quite hard at almost every verse here.

So Ephesians chapter 3 and our passage is verses 14 to 21. And my title for this morning is The Power at Work Within Us.

And you'll see I've taken that phrase from the end of verse 20. Now we noticed last week that this third chapter of Ephesians has a rather unusual shape to it.

Because Paul begins verse 1 by saying, For this reason, for this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.

[2 : 5 8] And then he stops, rather like a horse that refuses to take a jump. And he then launches off in an unexpected direction. And in verses 2 to 13, he describes his own role in the growth of the worldwide church.

He wants the Ephesian Christians to know how God has involved him in this work. Now it's not as though he's showing off. He's not saying, what a wonderful man I am.

In fact, quite the opposite. Because he describes himself in verse 8 as the very least of all the saints. But he gives them this little slice of his autobiography to reassure them of the genuineness and God-giveness of the gospel.

He's saying, it was not my idea. I didn't make it up. My role was given to me by God. So look at verse 2. The stewardship of God's grace was given to me.

Given to me for you. How? Verse 3. By revelation from God. The mystery was made known to me by revelation. And he explains in verse 6 what this mystery is.

[4 : 08] This truth once concealed but now revealed. And the mystery is that the Gentiles who turn to Christ are now fellow heirs. Members of the same body. And partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Now this truth about Jews and Gentiles being accepted by God on an equal basis. This was to put it mildly controversial. Many Jewish people on reading this would have been simply outraged.

In fact if they had lived in the modern age. They would have been reaching for their iPads and their mobile phones. And sending messages that would make a sergeant major blush. Jews and Gentiles in the same body.

Gentile dogs on a par with us. How can this be? But Paul is reassuring the Ephesian Gentile Christians that this really is the truth.

And that it is God who has revealed this to Paul. And just as God has revealed this mystery to Paul. So God has entrusted Paul's ministry to Paul.

[5 : 13] Look at verse 7. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace. Which was given me by the working of his power. So Paul did not appoint himself to this ministry.

And what was this ministry? Well he tells us in verse 8. To me though I am the very least of all the saints. This grace was given. Now here's the ministry.

To preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. So Paul is saying to his Ephesian friends. My dear friends. This really is the truth.

And you can trust it. Because its origin is God and not me. And you can be absolutely sure. That you are really part of the body of Christ. Christ enjoying exactly the same status as Jews.

Who have put their trust in Christ. Now having explained all that about his own role. He then goes back in verse 14. To what he was clearly just about to say in verse 1.

[6 : 15] Just look at verse 1 and verse 14. For this reason. Verse 14. I bow my knees before the Father. So he turns to prayer. Now that is his deeply ingrained mindset.

He teaches the truth of the gospel. And he instinctively. And immediately begins to pray. For those he's been teaching. That also was Jesus' pattern.

Think of what he did in the upper room. The record is in John's gospel. He was teaching the apostles. From the end of chapter 13 of John's gospel. Right through to the end of chapter 16.

And then in chapter 17. He immediately prayed for them. It's a pretty good pattern. For any Christian teacher to follow. Teach them. And then pray for them.

That they'll be able to understand. And experience. What they've been taught. So this is what Paul is doing here. He's been teaching them the gospel. And he prays now.

[7 : 10] That they will grasp it. And that it will grasp them. So that. Verse 19. They will be filled. With all the fullness.

Of God. That's the phrase Paul is heading for. But we've got a few other things to think about. Before we get to verse 19. Well I'd like to break the passage down.

Into three sections. And I hope this will help us to follow Paul's thinking. More clearly. First of all then. The basis of Paul's prayer. In verses 14, 15.

And the first part of verse 16. The basis of Paul's prayer. Secondly. The content of Paul's prayer. Verses 16 to 19. In other words. What Paul is actually asking God.

To give the Ephesians. And then thirdly. The glory of God. In verses 20 and 21. Now studying this passage. Should help us in two ways.

- [8 : 0 6] First. It should help us to pray for other Christians. More wisely. If you're like me. You often get tongue-tied in prayer. And you don't quite know what to say. Well Paul gives us phrases.
- In this little passage. And words. And ideas. Which we can incorporate. Into our own prayer life. So he's teaching us. How to pray for the Lord's people. But secondly.
- He's teaching us. What goes on inside the minds. Of Christians. As we grow towards greater maturity. After all. All of us are a bit like a Stilton cheese.
- We start out raw. And young. But as time passes. We grow more mature. And we develop a better flavor. And to put it very simply. We get to know the Lord better.
- So Paul is teaching the Ephesians here. And us. Things about the Christian life. Which we need to know. But naturally don't know. So Paul is educating the church.
- [9 : 0 1] About the Christian life. Well let's look first. At the basis of Paul's prayer. In verses 14, 15 and 16. Now Paul's prayer is not random.
- It's triggered by something. There is something that impels. And compels Paul to pray. There's a reason for his praying. So look at verse 14. For this reason.
- Well what is this reason. That is making him bow his knees. Before the Father. It's the same reason. That made him start verse 1. With the same words. So it's the great truth.
- That he's been opening up. And dwelling upon. In the second half of chapter 2. Look at chapter 2 verse 19. Which sums it up so well. 2.19. So then. You.
- You Gentile Christians. Are no longer strangers and aliens. But you are fellow citizens. With the saints. And members of the household of God. Paul can hardly contain his joy.
- [1 0 : 0 0] As he tells these Ephesian Gentiles. That in coming to Christ. They are no longer aliens and strangers. Who have no hope. And are without God in the world. As he puts it in chapter 2 verse 12.
- No. They belong to the church. They are members of the same body. As Jewish Christians. Now just have a look around here at us. For a moment.
- A load of Gentiles. I imagine. If there are one or two Jewish people here. Praise the Lord. Great to have you here. But I think most of us are Gentiles. And what a mixture we are. Scots.
- Irish. Africans. Americans. Europeans. Middle Eastern. Asians. Even the dreaded English. Are included. Now if.
- If Paul were here this morning. 2,000 years after writing these words. If he were looking at us. He would be dancing for joy. He would say. I knew it would come to this. The Lord revealed this mystery to me.
- [1 0 : 5 9] A very long time ago. And here it is in Glasgow. Under my nose. Visible. Tangible. A wonderful demonstration. Of the international nature of the church. And for this reason.
- Because of this wonderful incorporation. Of Jew with Gentile. And Gentile with Jew. For this reason. I bow my knees before the father. And what is he like?
- The father. Well look at verse 15. Which could be better translated. All fatherhood. In heaven and on earth. Is derived from him. And what Paul means by that.
- Is that God is just as much the father. Of Gentile Christians. As he is of Jewish Christians. The Lord's people are taught by. Not only Paul. But by Jesus. To call God.
- Abba. Father. It's an intimate. And deeply trusting. Expression. And it's a joy to Paul. To be able to tell these. Gentile Ephesians. That they have been brought.
- [1 1 : 5 6] Into this family relationship. This filial relationship. In which they can know God. Not only as creator. But as father. Now at verse 16.

Paul dwells for a moment. On the assets. Of the kingdom of heaven. Yes. God is father. And part of the essence. Of fatherhood. Is of course. To provide.

For children. That's what we do. If we're fathers. Human fathers do it. It's an obvious element. In the role of the father. We provide. Nappies. And cots. And baby grows.

For our children. When they're very young. Then as they grow up. We furnish them with cricket bats. Tennis rackets. Pocket money. Advice about the snares. And traps of adolescence.

And the father provides. For his children. Out of his limited. Assets. But in verse 16. Paul thinks of the limitless. Assets of God the father.

[12 : 52] And he uses a striking phrase. To describe them. They are the riches. Of his glory. Not the riches. Of a slender bank balance. But the riches. Of God's glory.

The very reservoirs. Of heaven. Reservoirs. Of power. And beauty. And strength. And sheer goodness. And willingness. To bless. And Paul goes straight on. To tell the Ephesians.

What he's asking God. To give them. From this limitless resource. And we'll come on to that. In a moment. But let's learn from Paul here. The basis of Paul's prayer.

Is the fatherhood of God. And the glorious riches. Of heaven. And the apostle is teaching us. That we too. Can base our prayers. In these two things.

God is father. He is a good father. Who knows exactly. What his church needs. And exactly. What each individual. Christian needs. Jesus. Puts it like this.

[13 : 49] In Matthew's gospel. What father among you. If his son asks for a fish. Will instead. Give him a snake. Or if he asks for an egg. Will give him a scorpion.

If you then. Who are evil. Know how to give good gifts. To your children. How much more. Will your father in heaven. Give good things. To those who ask him. God is.

So Paul knows. How good and merciful. A father. God is. And how endless. Are the glorious riches. Of heaven. And that's why he dares. To ask his father. For such big.

And life-changing things. As he speaks of. In verses 16 to 19. And in these verses. He's not asking. For piffling things. For trivial things.

He's asking. For life-changing blessings. Blessings. So glorious. So deep. That only the riches of heaven. Could provide them. There's a line.

[14 : 44] In the old hymn. Which says this. Thou art coming. To a king. Large petitions. With thee. Bring. Asking for big things. Paul is teaching us here.

To ask for things. Which only the king of heaven. Can provide. Things which only. The glorious riches of heaven. Can furnish. These are big things. These are life-changing things.

So that's the basis. Of Paul's prayer. God is father. And at his disposal. Are all the glories. Of heaven's riches. So now secondly.

Let's look at the content. Of Paul's prayer. In verses 16 to 19. What is Paul. Asking God the father. To do. For the Ephesian Christians. What is he asking God.

To give them. There are four things. That he speaks of. In these verses. And each of these things. When God gives them. Will help the Ephesian Christians.

[15 : 38] To grow greatly. Towards maturity. Now these Ephesians. Remember. Are Christians. They're saved. Men and women. They've left the broad road.

That leads to destruction. And their feet are firmly set. On the narrow road. That leads to life. But they're still young. The New Testament's message. Is designed.

Both to save the sinner. And to develop the saint. And this teaching. Is designed. To develop the saint. To increase. Christian maturity. Now think of a new believer.

Aged. Something like 20. Something in that region. A young man. Or young woman. Who has recently. Put their trust. In Christ. Some of you are like this. This time of life.

So there they are. Fresh as a daisy. The bloom of young adulthood. Is upon them. Now think of that same person. At the age of about. 65. The bloom of youth.

[16 : 36] Has vanished. The forehead. Has a thousand wrinkles. The hair is gray. If there's any left. That person. At 65. Has been round the block. Many times.

Has endured. What Shakespeare calls. The slings and arrows. Of outrageous fortune. But in those intervening. 45 years. Or so. Bible shaped.

Faith. And Bible taught. Understanding. Have grown. Immeasurably. Because that Christian man. Or woman. Has been blessed. With the four things. That Paul is. Praying for.

And teaching. In these verses. So let's look at these four things. First. In verse 16. Paul prays. That the Ephesians. May be. Strengthened.

With power. Just look at Paul's. Actual words there. That God may grant you. To be strengthened. With power. Through his spirit. In your inner being. Now where or what.

[17 : 33] Is your inner being. Is it your heart. Is it your belly. Sometimes. When a man finishes. A good meal. He sits back. And pats his belly.

And he says. That has fortified. The inner man. But Paul is not thinking. In crude. Gastronomic terms here. He's talking about. The real person. You might say. The real character.

That is being formed. In us. Over the passage. Of many years. Now in Paul's thinking. And this comes out. In other places. But he makes. A clear distinction. Between what he calls.

Our outer nature. And our inner nature. He puts it like this. In 2 Corinthians. Chapter 4. He says. We do not lose heart. Though our outer nature.

Is wasting away. Our inner nature. Is being renewed. Day by day. By outer nature. He means the human body. That is what is wasting away.

[18 : 29] It is. Isn't it? You can try a thousand tricks. To conceal this wasting away process. From other people. Even perhaps from yourself. But those thousand tricks.

Don't work. Do they? Hair dyes. Moisturizing preparations. For the skin. There used to be a brand of soap. Around called Kameh. Can you still buy Kameh?

Kameh. Ah. Nobody's heard of it. Ha ha ha. Well anyway. Kameh. In the 1960s. When I was a young lad. A boy avidly watching television adverts.

There was a little jingle about this type of soap. Which went like this. You get a little lovelier every day. With wonderful pink Kameh. But you don't actually get lovelier every day.

Whatever soap you use. Because the rot sets in. And I speak from experience. When you get to about the age of. Nineteen. And after that. It's downhill all the way.

[19 : 26] Now says Paul. Two Corinthians. Though our outer nature. Is wasting away. Our inner nature. Is being renewed. Day by day. And here in Ephesians 3.16.

Paul's prayer is. That our inner being. That person that we are deep inside. Should be strengthened. With power. Through the Holy Spirit. And we see this so often.

In older Christians. So although the memory begins to fade. And the joints become more painful. Walking becomes more difficult. Even climbing a flight of stairs. Becomes a challenge.

But the inner being. Is given power to. Endure. To be radiant. To be happy. To be more trusting. In God's providence. To be less interested.

In oneself. And more interested. In other people. Especially younger people. So Paul's prayer. In verse 16. Is that this inner ability. To be happy.

[20 : 21] And trusting. And God-centered. Should be strengthened. Now secondly. From verse 17. Paul prays. That Christ.

Should dwell. In their hearts. Through faith. And that request. Is closely connected. To the previous one. Because. You'll see verse 17. Begins with.

So that. Christ. And the logic. Is this. That as the inner being. Is strengthened. With the Holy Spirit's power. So Christ. Will dwell. In their hearts. The power of the spirit.

And the dwelling of Christ. Are part and parcel. Of each other. Now this raises a question. We read verse 17. And we say. But aren't these Ephesians.

Christians already. And if they're Christians already. And clearly they are. How can Paul be asking God the Father. To cause Christ. To dwell in their hearts. Isn't he there already.

[21 : 18] Well an illustration. May help here. Just imagine. That you have just bought. A new house. You've bought it cheaply. Because it's not in a good. State of repair.

The roof leaks in places. The interior decor. Is disgusting. It needs a new bathroom. A new kitchen. A total rewiring. And the garden is a jungle. Now it's yours.

It's yours. And you've moved in. You actually live there. But there's a great deal of work. To be done. But you set about it. You do the roofing. You do the electrical wiring. You install a decent kitchen.

And bathroom. You even tame the garden. You get farmyard manure. You begin to grow roses. After a decade. Or two. You are thoroughly.

At home. You've refashioned. And refurbished the place. So that you're now living there. Comfortably. And it's yours now. In a way that it wasn't when you first moved in.

[22 : 14] Although it was yours even back then. Now look at our verse 17. Our hearts are to be the dwelling place of Christ. The place where he is at home.

Yes. He moves in. The moment we first turn to him. In repentance and faith. But when he moves in. He moves into a house. Which is in a bad state of repair. A great deal needs to be done to it.

To put it right. But he immediately sets about the task. Of improving his residence. So he brings order. Out of disorder. He brings beauty.

Out of ugliness. He replaces confusion. With conviction. He replaces perplexity. With understanding. What Paul is asking for in verse 17.

Is that through the Ephesians. Ongoing faith and trust. Christ should set his mark. On their hearts. That it should become increasingly obvious. That he is in residence.

[23 : 13] That he has made their hearts. His own dwelling place. Paul puts it slightly differently. In Galatians chapter 2. He says. It is no longer I who live. But Christ who lives.

In me. If I can use a different metaphor. This may help as well. Before we become Christians. Our hearts are a bit like a walled city. The walls are strong.

And they are designed. To keep invaders out. We don't want some intruder. To get in and run up his flag. Up the flagpole. And claim mastery. But when Christ comes to us.

We lower the drawbridge. We open the gates. And in he comes. And everything changes. And he runs up his flag. Up the flagpole.

To proclaim his residence. So Paul is praying that Christ. Should dwell in their hearts. Through faith. It's a lovely picture. Now thirdly.

[24 : 11] Paul is again praying. That the Ephesians should be given power. Though in our verse 18. The word strength is used. But it's the same idea as power. And his prayer here.

Verse 18. Is that they. Being rooted and grounded. In love. Should have the strength. To comprehend. In other words. To grasp.

Or to understand. Not simply as individuals. But together with all the saints. What is the breadth. And length. And height. And depth. And to know the love of Christ.

That surpasses knowledge. So Paul is talking here about. The love of Christ. He does not mean. Our love for Christ.

He means. Christ's love. For us. And while he wants the Ephesians. To grasp. How great and huge. Christ's love for them is. He's admitting. That they're never going to grasp it fully.

[25 : 06] Because as he says in verse 20. The love of Christ. Surpasses knowledge. It's too big. For our limited capacity. To understand. So on the one hand.

Paul is confessing. That our. Our emotional. And intellectual capacity. Is far too small. To comprehend. Christ's love for us fully. On the other hand.

He is praying. That together. With all the saints. It's a corporate activity. We will be enabled. To grasp. A great deal. Of the strength. And depth. Of Christ's love. For us.

Now friends. This is a wonderful. Subject. But you look here. At verses. 17. 18. And 19. And you say. This is such. Big territory.

Do I dare. Explore it. It's a bit like. Standing on the lip. Of the Grand Canyon. And thinking. Can I possibly go down there. It's so big. It seems here. That you're on such. Hallowed ground. Christ loves me.

[26 : 01] He loves me. Paul speaks in Galatians 2. Of the Son of God. Who loved me. And gave himself for me. And you wonder. If you've got. The same kind of.

Emotional capacity. As the Apostle Paul had. To. To understand. The love of Christ. Let me just risk a few. Ethnic stereotypings.

At this point. Don't take this too seriously. It's. It's. My tongue is in my cheek. If you're English. Or Scottish. You're reserved. Aren't you? I'm thinking of our emotional capacity here.

If you're English. You're buttoned up. You have a stiff upper lip. If you're Scottish. You're door. If you're Irish. You're talkative.

The tears come to your eyes quickly. If you're French. Or Italian. Or Spanish. You're more emotionally demonstrative. Ooh la la. You say. If you're African.

[26 : 55] You're ready to dance. At a moment's notice. As soon as you hear some music. If you're Indian. You're cricket mad. If you're from the Far East. You're businesslike.

You're purposeful. If you're from Antarctica. You're a penguin. But. Whatever our ethnic mindset is like.

And more seriously. Whatever our individual temperament. Is like. Paul is wanting every Christian. To become deeply aware. Of how much we are loved.

By Christ. So how has the Lord Jesus. Shown his love for us. Where do we see his love. Where do we begin to get our minds. Around it. Well listen to these words.

That we sang a few minutes ago. Lord. You were rich. Beyond all splendor. Yet. For love's sake. Became so poor. Thrones.

[27 : 51] For a manger. Did surrender. Sapphire paved courts. For stable floor. Lord. You were rich. Beyond all splendor. Yet.

For love's sake. Became so poor. Now that's a hymn about his incarnation. How he became. Why he became man. Why he was willing to lay aside his glory.

Willing to be brought up. In a poor carpenter's household. In Nazareth. And he was willing. For love's sake. To teach the world. The glorious truth. About the kingdom of God.

And he was willing to bear the reproaches. Of those who hated the truth. That he was teaching. They hated him. But he kept on teaching the truth. Knowing full well.

Where it would all end. And then finally. He set his face towards Jerusalem. He allowed his enemies. To subject him to a mockery. Of a trial. And then to lynch him.

[28 : 48] On a cross. But he did it out of love. Love for each one of us. As he puts it. Greater love has no one than this. That a man should lay down his life.

For his friends. Or as John puts it. In his first letter. By this we know love. That he laid down his life. For us. Paul again.

Galatians 2. I live by faith. In the son of God. Who loved me. And gave himself for me. In all the history of the world.

There has been no demonstration of love. Like the love of Christ. Showed to us. By going to the cross. Where he bore. In our place. The dreadful judgment of God.

Against the sin of the world. So that we should be forgiven. And eternally set free. From our debt. From our burden. Can we ever comprehend.

[29 : 45] The breadth and length. And height. And depth. Of the love of Christ. Well never fully. But thinking about that love. And thanking the Lord Jesus.

For what he has done for us. That is a major part of growing. In the joy and assurance. Of the gospel. And let me just add this. As a bit of practical advice.

Whenever you find yourself. In a really deep hole. Of trouble. Perhaps on the brink of despair. Perhaps wondering. If the Lord Jesus does love you. Think about the cross.

And think about the love of God. The father. Which lies behind the love of Jesus. Think of John 3 16. That God. So loved the world. That he gave his only son. That whoever believes in him.

Might not perish. But have eternal life. Now isn't that love? That God the father. And the Lord Jesus. Have not wanted you and me to perish. But rather to have eternal life.

[30 : 41] And to share their eternal home. With them. Here's another. Another verse. From Romans chapter 5. Paul writes. God shows his love for us.

In that. Now what a way to begin a sentence. God shows his love for us. For us in that. Dot dot dot. And this is a declaration of love.

Isn't it? Do you know what a declaration of love is? Let me just remind you. He loves her. I'm thinking of two young people. He loves her. He thinks she's absolutely wonderful.

And he has taken her out to Starbucks. Three times. But he doesn't really know. What she thinks of him. That's the problem. And he says to her.

Eventually. Eventually. His heart is doing 120 beats to the minute. He says to her. He says. I. I. I. I. I. I. And she says to him.

[31 : 39] Come on Sebastian. Out with it. And he does. He says it. He says it. And 45 years later. They've got seven grandchildren. And a static caravan on the Ayrshire coast.

So it worked. Didn't it? Now. That is trivial by comparison. In the end. There is only one declaration of love. That really matters.

And here it is. Romans 5. Verse 8. God shows his love for us. In that. While we were still sinners. Christ died for us.

So he didn't die for the morally squeaky clean. He died for the morally foul. And vile. Me. You. Sinners. He didn't say to us.

Come on. You must brush yourselves up. Smarten up. Polish your shoes. Get a haircut. And I might let you in. He died for sinners. And in those moments. When we look into the dark depths of our hearts.

[32 : 34] And recognize the moral corruption. That is somehow natural to us. It helps us to see how much we have been loved. And how much we are loved.

Now here is another great wonder. This is the fourth thing that Paul prays for the Ephesians. And it comes at the end of verse 19. As they come to know the love of Christ.

As they begin to comprehend the breadth and length. And height and depth of it. They will find that they are being filled with all the fullness of God.

Now what could Paul mean by this rather strange phrase. Filled with all the fullness of God. Paul quite often writes of fullness. It's one of his characteristic words.

So for example. He says to the Colossians. That the whole fullness of deity. Dwells bodily in Christ. But he immediately goes on to say. And you. You Colossians.

[33 : 32] Have been filled in him. In other words. The transforming power. Of God's nature. Is now pervading. Your own being. And Paul's idea is surely this.

That as Christ dwells in our hearts. Through faith. His living presence. Which is really the presence of the Father. The Son. And the Holy Spirit. Increasingly.

Pervades us. And fills us. And changes us. To go back to that picture. Of the dilapidated house. Which Christ moves into. As soon as he moves in.

He begins to instigate changes. He takes our character. And he works on it. He works on our self-centeredness. And turns it into concern for others.

He works on our prayerlessness. And he teaches us to pray. He works on our deaf ears. And he opens them up. So that we begin to hear his voice. As we read the Bible carefully.

[34 : 29] He takes the most unpleasant. And gross. Parts of our character. Our temptations to anger. And laziness. And lust. And greed. And vanity.

And he teaches us self-control. Being filled with all the fullness of God. Means. Becoming more like him. As he takes over our life.

Think of those great Bible commands. Be holy. As I am holy. Or in Jesus' words. Be perfect. As your Father in heaven. Is perfect. Perfect. Now we mustn't think.

That in Ephesians 3.19. Paul is teaching some kind of sinless perfection. In his thinking. It's not as though the fullness of God. Fills a person right up.

And that person then becomes a perfect human being. Paul doesn't think of himself. As a perfect human being. He knows that despite the profound changes.

[35 : 25] That his conversion. Has brought into his own life. He remains a sinful man. Who has to struggle day after day. With temptation. And that's how it will always be for us.

It's an ongoing process. Paul says in Ephesians 5.18. And it's the theme of fullness again. He says 5.18. Be filled with the Spirit.

But his Greek verb there means. Go on and on. Being filled with the Spirit. There was a famous American evangelist. In the late 19th century.

Called D.L. Moody. Dwight L. Moody. And somebody once asked him. Mr. Moody. Are you filled with the Spirit? And he said. Yes. I am.

The trouble is. I leak. Well he was right. We need to be filled. Again and again. We will be filled. Right up finally.

[36 : 21] In the world to come. As John puts it in his first letter. We know that when he appears. We shall be like him. For we shall see him. As he is.

We will be fully like him. One day. But in the meantime. Paul's prayer. Is that increasingly. We should be filled. With all the fullness of God. The Christian life.

Is about profound change. Progressive. But profound. Well let's allow Paul then. To teach us. Some lessons.

In how to pray. For other Christians. And indeed for ourselves. We have these four requests. And they are big. Petitions. First. That Christians be strengthened.

With power. Through the Holy Spirit. In our inner being. Second. That Christ should dwell. In our hearts. Really dwell. Ever more deeply. Through faith. Third.

[37 : 15] That we be given. In power. To comprehend. With all other Christians. The vast dimensions. Of the love of Christ. And fourth. That we be filled. With all the fullness of God.

Does this sound like. An over ambitious. Program. It's a big ask. Certainly. But Paul shows us. Beyond any doubt. That it's not too big.

Just look back again. To verse 16. Does God have. Slender resources. Does he have just a limited. Supply of power. No says Paul. He has all the riches.

Of his glory. It's a limitless. Reservoir of power. And what kind of God. Is he. Verse 14. He is the father. And the father's.

Utmost concern. Is for the growth. The blessing. And the usefulness. Of his children. Well now thirdly. And very briefly.

[38 : 12] Look on to verse 20. And perhaps as you look at verse 20. I could ask you to follow the words of the verse. Rather carefully. There are seven things here. Brief things.

Seven things. About the glory. Of God. First. Verse 20. First. God is able. To do. Able. He's not absent. He's not weak.

He's not inactive. He is able. Second. He is able to do. What we ask. Because. Loving father that he is. He listens.

He listens to our asking. Third. He is able to do. What we think. Sometimes our longings. Are too deep. For actual words. But he knows our thoughts.

Fourth. He is able to do. All. That we ask. Or think. Nothing that is good for us. Is beyond his power. Fifth.

[39 : 07] He is able to do. More. Than all that we ask. Or think. Because his view. Runs further than ours. And his expectations. And plans. Are greater than ours.

Sixth. He is able to do. More abundantly. Than we ask. Or think. Because abundance. And generosity. Are at the heart. Of his nature.

And seventh. He is able to do. Far more. Abundantly. Than all. That we ask. Or think. Could we have.

Asked. Or thought up. The gospel. Could we have asked. For a gospel. Like our gospel. What human being. Could ever have dreamed. Of a salvation. That rescues. The sinner.

From hell. You and I. Could never have thought. Of these things. Let alone. Asked for them. But God. Has done them. And he does them. At the end of verse 20.

[40 : 05] Paul speaks of. The power. At work. Within us. This whole section. Has been about. The power. That is at work. Within us. It is a mighty power.

That takes sinners. Like us. And subjects us. To a profound. Transformation. And that's why. Paul ends. With such praise. To this God.

He says. Be glory. In the church. Because the church. Demonstrates. The transforming power. Of God. Glory to him. In the church. And in Christ Jesus.

Throughout all generations. Forever. And ever. Amen. Well let's bow our heads. And we'll pray. To him.

We do praise you. Our dear. Heavenly father. For the riches. Of your glory. And for this power. That is at work. In our inner being.

[41 : 10] The power. That takes a human being. So often. Immature. And weak. And confused. And makes us. Into a dwelling place. For Christ himself. Give us the strength.

We pray. To comprehend. With all the saints. What is the breadth. And length. And height. And depth. And to know. The love of Christ. For us. A love.

That surpasses knowledge. That we may be filled. With all the fullness. Of God. And we ask it. In Jesus name. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I am here.

I am here. Amen. Amen.