

Opening Our Eyes to the Real World

Thomas Robinson, *Ephesians – Growing Up Into Christ 11*, * May 26, 2013

Ephesians 3:8-19

⁸ To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this **grace** was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable **riches of the Messiah**, ⁹ and to **bring to light** for everyone what is the plan of the **mystery** hidden for ages in **God who created all things**, ¹⁰ so that now may be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, **through the church** the manifold **wisdom of God**, ¹¹ according to the **eternal purpose** that he has realized in the Messiah Jesus our Lord, ¹² in whom we have **boldness** and **access** with **confidence** through his faithfulness. ¹³ So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason **I bow my knees** before **the Father**,
¹⁵ from whom **every family** in **heaven** and on **earth** is named,

¹⁶ that he may grant you according to the **riches of his glory**
to be **strengthened with power** through **his Spirit**
into your **inner being** (*anthropos*),
¹⁷ so that **the Messiah may make his home**
in your hearts through faith –

that you, being **rooted and grounded in love**,
¹⁸ may have **strength to comprehend** with all the saints
what is the breadth and length
and height and depth,
¹⁹ and **to know the love of the Messiah**
that surpasses knowledge,
that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**.

Matthew 5:48; 7:24

⁴⁸ “Therefore, you shall be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.”

Ephesians 1:17-20

¹⁷ I pray that the **God** of our Lord Jesus Messiah, the **Father of glory**, may **give** you a spirit of **wisdom** and **revelation** as you come to **know him**, ¹⁸ so that, with the eyes of your **heart enlightened**, you may know what is **the hope** to which he has **called you**, what are the **riches** of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of **his power** for us who believe, according to the **working of his great power**. ²⁰ God put this power to work in the Messiah when he **raised him from the dead** and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 4:13, 15

¹³ ... until we all attain to the unity of the **faith** and of the **knowledge** of the Son of God, to **mature adulthood**, to the measure of the stature of **the fullness of the Messiah**. ...

¹⁵ We are to **grow up in every** way into him who is the head, **into Christ**.

The Apostle's Prayer

Ephesians is a challenge to our minds, imagination, heart. It's written by Paul from prison to be read by a variety of churches. Some know him; some not. Jew/Greek/other. Free/slave. Intentionally challenging. For grown-ups. Long sentences. Every word carries weight. People living a new faith in a hostile society. That faith is the pivot of lives and history. The aim is growth, for all these people to become fully alive, shaped by Jesus Messiah.

We focus on 3:14-19, a complex one-sentence prayer. "*For this reason*" looks back to what went before and forward to three main petitions/purposes, filled out with supporting purposes.

In 3:8-13 Paul looks with personal wonder at the Grace he has received, though suffering in prison, to participate in God's revealing of his wisdom and eternal purpose for all people through Jesus in the church. We can live with bold confidence because of his faithfulness.

Then he prays for what matters most. Prayer, because God must do the work. He focuses not on church activity, repentance, healing, outreach, but for a deepening relationship with God – Father, Spirit, Messiah – for open eyes, hearts, vision to see the real world of God, to realize how God as Father unites all reality as his creation, his family, named, loved.

Deep into Our Deepest Selves

We all know our weaknesses, our failures, our secret sin. We fear exposure, embarrassment. We drive ourselves, hide ourselves, mask ourselves, defend ourselves, avoid vulnerability.

Paul prays knowing that not even our inmost selves are out of reach of God's powerful grace. The Spirit takes God's power, Jesus' life as deep into our innermost life as it is possible to go–deeper than we can go–to heal brokenness, sin, self-deception, loneliness, to empower us to live fully, authentically, without masks and fear. Vulnerable, learning how to love.

We participate by faith/trust, opening ourselves to the Spirit's work. Jesus makes his home in us. This is not just a warm feeling. Sometimes it's a new owner makeover. Old distorting values and defensiveness get ripped out like old plumbing. New love, service, healing.

What do You See? What do You Know?

But what is that faith/trust? It is experiencing the reality of God's world, in all its solidity.

Paul prays for strength to comprehend it. (We know too well our old world of fears.)

Paul gives various metaphors of how we perceive it. Like trees we find ourselves with roots going down into nourishing soil – into love, Jesus' love for us, seen in all he has done.

Like a house, our foundation is in bedrock, unshakable – that self-giving love of God.

We find ourselves in the midst of a vast, beautiful landscape. We look all around, no end to the beauty, adventure. We feel down into the rich earth, look up into shining heavens.

This is where we live. This is the Messiah's love. We're inside it, surrounded, welcomed.

It's inexhaustible, always more to explore together with a vast family. It protects us with an unbreakable security, which makes it possible to take risks, be bold, be vulnerable.

Can God Really Do That?

Paul prays for the impossible. We can't fill ourselves with God. But God can. Amazingly, God wants to fill us with his fullness. He created us to live fully and without fear, with his Spirit, his work, his story, his love, his healing. He sends us out to live boldly in love.