

“More than All We Ask or Imagine”

Thomas Robinson, *Ephesians – Growing Up Into Christ 12*, * June 9, 2013

Ephesians 3:14-21

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,**
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.**
²⁰ Now **to him** who is **able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think,**
according to his **power at work within us,**
²¹ **to him be glory in the church and in Messiah Jesus**
throughout **all generations of the age of ages.** Amen.

Matthew 5:48

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

Ephesians 1:18-20

¹⁸ May you know ... ¹⁹ 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.**

Romans 5:5-6, 8

⁵ ... **God’s love** has been **poured** into our hearts through the **Holy Spirit** who has been given to us. ⁶ For while we were still weak, at the right time **Christ died for the ungodly.** ...
⁸ but **God shows his love** for us in that while we were still sinners, **Christ died for us.**

Matthew 19:25-26

²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astounded and said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁶ But Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible.**”

I Corinthians 2:9

⁹ But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.”

Our Life Seen through Prayer

It's a cliché that many in our day want to be spiritual, but don't want 'organized religion,' church, institutions. I empathize. Church history has much that's wonderful, but all too much that's sad, corrupt, destructive. So also the present. Paul writes before most of that history, but the seeds are present wherever we humans construct institutions.

Paul writes from prison to help churches with all their problems see a different vision of what they can be, or of what is really happening when God interacts with us, his creatures.

God is not surprised by human sin, misuse of religion, etc. Paul knows his own story.

But our brokenness and failure does not stop God working on all levels with his creatures.

Paul's prayer centers on at the astonishing work the Father/Messiah/Spirit do in our lives.

We don't cease to be broken sinners, but we see opening around us a realm of love and

transforming, healing power from God, enacted in Jesus, present in the Spirit, at work in us.

God works deep to draw us beyond our present selves into our life filled with his fullness.

Keeping the Focus Clear

The prayer ends in 'doxology' – a word of glory: *doxa*: 'Now to him...be glory...Amen.' The words point to God's 'glory' – his substance, reality. Not flattery. This is the heart of reality. This is about how God shows his heart, what his creation is ultimately all about.

What is remarkable is that God chooses incarnation: Messiah Jesus, all that he was and did.

In his seeming weakness, self-giving love, his serving, dying – God says, that is my glory.

Even more shocking: God chooses faulty people, the church, weak but open to his Spirit.

God's work spreads through generations. Broken, forgiven us, experiencing God's love.

Feeling the Shock of God's Power

Paul's prayer led to the impossible: Us filled with God's fullness. But Paul has experienced how God does the impossible in his own life. Paul fills the doxology with words that express power (*dynamis, energein*). These refer not to our natural abilities or vitality but to the work of God's Spirit, God's own life, in us.

Our natural tendency is to want to flatter our own strength, but deep down to fear our weakness. Paul wants us to learn to recognize our weakness, false choices, brokenness, but deep down to realize that everything that matters is done by God's own power.

We look at others (and ourselves) and think that God is failing. We're scared for God, as though this were some competition that God might lose. It is not. God has already won.

That victory only awaits its overwhelming revelation. The question is do I get to share in that 'glory,' that reality already realized in Jesus' resurrection. Or will I fight off God's love and insist on remaining in my broken self, never learning the fullness I was created for.

Following God as He Opens Possibilities

Ephesians is a challenge to our minds, imagination, heart: "More than all we ask or imagine."

I can imagine quite a lot. What is the very best you can imagine yourself being? The most creative, fulfilling, delightful, effective, beautiful, free from fear, guilt, and shame? Beyond your bucket list. God has more than that in store for you. He would love to begin now.

It may not be easy, or what you think you want. It's beyond our imagination. It's in God's love.