

Ephesians 3:15—from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,

“Every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” from the Father (Ephesians 3:14-15), “from whom are all things” (1Corinthians 8:6). Scripture confirms that two orders of intelligent beings exist—angelic and human. The angelic order contains three classes: (1) cherubim (2) seraphim (3) angels. The human order consists of classes such as Jew and Gentile. But be it the angelic or human realm, every family derived its name from the Father. The Jews were named the Jews (Israel), the Gentiles the Gentiles, the cherubim the cherubim, etc., each name originating with the Father. However, the fact that everything in the human realm is the “*offspring*” of God (Acts 17:28-29) does not communicate that all mankind is saved/justified (John 3:16). To become a child of God requires repentance and faith while depraved (Romans 5:1; 2Timothy 2:25; Acts 11:18), so Paul is not (by any stretch of the imagination) teaching universal salvation. The lost have Satan as their “*father*” (John 8:44).

The heavenly Father, Who created all things through the Son, lived inside the believers at Ephesus (John 14:23; Ephesians 2:22). Thus, limitless power was accessible even in their disheartened state (Ephesians 3:13). Paul asks the omnipotent (all powerful) Father, Who lived inside them, to provide strength—as verified by verse 16.

Ephesians 3:16—that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;

The Father is rich in “*glory*” due to the perfection of His Being. His character, love, power, and wisdom are without flaw. Hence, when He appears, “*glory*” is manifested (Exodus 3:1-5; 19:16-18; 24:15-18; 33:17-23; 40:34-38; 2 Chronicles 5:11-14; John 1:14). Due to His impeccable nature, He possesses the resources to strengthen the disheartened. Evidently, the Ephesians were failing to appropriate faith, not due to blatant sin but because of losing heart (Ephesians 3:13). Had blatant sin been to blame, Paul would have, at some point in these passages, asked them to repent. Yet, no such plea is present. He is basically encouraging “*the fainthearted*,” as he did with the church at Thessalonica in 1Thessalonians 5:14.

Paul prays: “*that He would grant you.... to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man*” (Ephesians 3:16). The “*inner man*,” since Paul is addressing New Testament believers, is the “*new*” creation (2Corinthians 5:17), or the “*new self*” (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10), who replaces the “*old self*” (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9) at the point of salvation/justification. The child of God is “*strengthened with power...in the inner man*” (Ephesians 3:16) through the avenue of the “*Holy Spirit*” (Acts 1:8; Romans 15:13; Ephesians 3:16). Paul, realizing this truth, prays that the Ephesians might be strengthened as such. (“*The inner man*,” or new self, is the New Testament believer, “*the divine nature*” of 2Peter 1:4, who consists of soul and spirit. The physical body is not redeemed at salvation/justification, for church saints will not receive resurrected bodies until the Rapture of the church.)

Paul’s prayer verifies that although we become “*saints*” when we accept Jesus as Savior (Ephesians 1:1), and are “*blessed...with every spiritual blessing...in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:3), we must be empowered by “*His Spirit*” to live a lifestyle pleasing to God (Ephesians 3:16). To glorify the Father is impossible unless we are in tune with, and enabled by, His Spirit (Romans 8:5-6, 12-13; 2Corinthians 3:18; 4:16; Galatians 5:16). Should God grant that the Spirit strengthen these believers “*according to the riches of His glory*” (Ephesians 3:16), the Ephesians would consistently reflect His glory through a holy and powerful lifestyle enabled through the Spirit’s energizing. We can understand why Paul prayed so fervently on their behalf.

Ephesians 3:17—so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; (3:17a)

Paul previously referred to his readers as “saints” (Ephesians 1:1) who had been “sealed in” Christ (Ephesians 1:13). Therefore, when he writes, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith,” he is not questioning their salvation. *Wuest’s* commentary records the following regarding “dwell”:

“dwell” is *katoikesai*, made up of *oikeo*, “to live in as a home,” and *kata*, “down,” thus “to settle down and be at home.” The tense is aorist, showing finality. The expanded translation is “that Christ might finally settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts. (Wuest, 1989, p. 132)ⁱ

Many New Testament believers fail to allow Jesus to “settle down and be at home” within them. He moves in (Galatians 2:20), and is their “life” (Colossians 3:4), but is seldom allowed opportunity to affect their daily living. Evidently, the Ephesians had begun to lose heart (Ephesians 3:13) and struggled to appropriate faith. Only an awakened faith, energized by the Holy Spirit, would result in Paul’s readers making godly choices—freeing Christ to reside comfortably in His earthly dwelling (1Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

At times, we too “feel” incapable of appropriating faith. We know that God is alive and in charge, but victorious living eludes us. The Holy Spirit can grant strength during these seasons, transforming our doldrums into triumphant praise. If you have yet to experience such seasons, just wait. They will surely come, although they seem to appear out of nowhere. These passages take on new meaning when saints trudge through one of those lonely valleys. Even Paul experienced times, earlier in his ministry, when faith seemed to flee (2Corinthians 7:6)—possibly explaining his passionate intercession for his readers.

Conclusion: We receive Jesus’ presence at the point of salvation/justification, but we must practice His presence to live victoriously.

and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (3:17b)

When faith is waning, we sometimes struggle to appropriate our true identity—that we are holy and blameless saints before the Father. But a renewed “faith” (Ephesians 3:17a), energized by the “Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 3:16), restores perspective. This foundation of “faith” (Ephesians 3:17a) is attained through a proper understanding of God’s “love” (“being rooted and grounded in love” 3:17b). Paul, in Galatians 5:6, goes so far as to say that “faith” works “through love.” A person who lacks a proper understanding of God’s love will, therefore, struggle appropriating faith.

Paul understood the key to godly living:

For the love of Christ controls us,... (2Corinthians 5:14)

May God grant us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the ability to progressively comprehend His “love”!

As a farmer, I learned the importance of being firmly “rooted” (Ephesians 3:17b). I noticed time and time again that an abundance of moisture early in the crop year didn’t ensure a bountiful yield. So long as plentiful moisture existed, the root systems of the young plants remained shallow. If the abundant moisture persisted and the roots failed to gain depth, the plants writhed during the hot and dry months of July and August. Also, the slightest wind late in the season could uproot the shallow root systems and, some years, destroy the entire crop. However, if dry conditions existed shortly after the planting season, the root systems would spear deeply into the soil, seeking the moisture well below the surface. The dry, hot days of July and August affected these plants to a lesser degree, as did the late season winds. Paul employs this principle

in Ephesians 3:17. Our roots must be “grounded” deeply in God’s “love” if faith is to withstand the storms and droughts certain to come our way. Paul confirms in Galatians 5:6 that “faith” naturally follows a deeply rooted and grounded “love” for God and His Word. Therefore, faith goes unappropriated in minds yet to understand God’s affection for His people.

Fresh insight into God’s “love” also yields an enhanced love for others. Paul addresses this truth in Ephesians 3:18.

Ephesians 3:18—may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

After the discouraged New Testament saint is “strengthened” by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:16), and faith is bolstered through an enhanced understanding of God’s “love” (Ephesians 3:17), he passionately pursues intimacy with God and fellowship with His people. Paul, consequently, wrote to Philemon:

and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ’s sake. (Philemon 6)

As the disheartened saint regains perspective through focusing on “every good thing which is in” him “for Christ’s sake” (Philemon 1:6), the “fellowship” of his “faith” becomes “effective” (Philemon 1:6). He, all of a sudden, pursues (with passion) fellowship with God and His children. This change pays huge dividends, freeing him to “comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth” (Ephesians 3:18). Let’s examine this phrase more extensively.

“Comprehend” means “to understand” or “to apprehend in the sense of laying hold of with the mind, to mentally grasp some idea or truth.” What is to be comprehended (apprehended) is available to “all the saints” (Ephesians 3:18), not just the spiritual “elite” (should such individuals even exist). Paul also seems to be saying that this comprehension is enhanced through fellowship with the saints (“may be able to comprehend with all the saints”—Ephesians 3:18). Thus, certain truths remain dormant without corporate fellowship with other believers.

Fellowship among believers has played an important role since the church’s inception (Acts 2:42), and rightly so. When the body of Christ comprehends the Scriptural view of God’s love and operates in it (John 13:34; 1Peter 1:22), the supernatural is always manifested. The world suddenly realizes that we are Jesus’ disciples (John 13:35), we experience optimum spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:11-13), we learn to live by Christ’s life (Romans 5:10; Colossians 3:4), and we jettison the death associated with the letter of the Law (2Corinthians 3:6). Lone Rangers would become extinct within the Kingdom should Scriptural fellowship become the norm.

Opinions vary as to what Paul is referencing in the phrase, “what is the breadth and length and height and depth” (Ephesians 3:18). Because the general subject matter of verses 17-19 is Jesus’ “love,” Paul is probably addressing this topic. To know “the breadth and length and height and depth” of anything is to know it fully. God’s love, above all else, needs to be known in this manner since His very nature “is love” (1John 4:8, 16).

The “breadth” of Christ’s love is displayed not only by means of the cross (He died for all persons, not just some), but in His acceptance of both Jews and Gentiles into His body (Ephesians 3:13-15). His love also lasts throughout eternity (Hebrews 7:25), meaning its “length” is limitless. The “height” of Christ’s love is boundless due to our having been placed into Christ (2Corinthians 5:17) “in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 2:6; 4:10), “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion” (Ephesians 1:21). And

finally, His love possesses the “*depth*” to reach down to man and grant him the freedom to exercise personal repentance and faith while depraved. What love!

ⁱ Ibid., Page 132.