

**Ephesians 3:19—and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.**

***and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, (3:19a)***

When Paul inserts the phrase, “*to know the love of Christ*” (Ephesians 3:19), he is referencing something other than a conceptual knowledge of Christ’s love. He is speaking of the knowledge of His love gained through the Holy Spirit as the saint passionately pursues His heart. In fact, “*know*” (Ephesians 3:19) is the same Greek word as is used in Philippians 3:10, where Paul states:

*that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death;*  
(Philippians 3:10)

To know Christ is to know His love, for “*God is love*” (1John 4:8, 16)—and Jesus is God (Hebrews 1:8). We can possess all the conceptual knowledge imaginable, but until the Holy Spirit opens our eyes to His Person and His love, it remains just that—conceptual knowledge. This opening of our eyes is called “*revelation*.”

I view Christ’s love quite differently than when I first believed on Him. I know Jesus loves me, but this understanding is not based on “*knowledge*” alone. It came through the Holy Spirit revealing God’s Person through His Word. Oh, by the way, “*the mystery*” was revealed to Paul in this same manner (Ephesians 3:3).

***that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. (3:19b)***

Paul speaks of “*the fullness of God*” in Ephesians 3:19b, “*the fullness of Christ*” in Ephesians 4:13, and the fullness of “*the Spirit*” in Ephesians 5:18. Jesus, the “*fullness of Deity*” (Colossians 1:19; 2:9), Who is God (Hebrews 1:8), takes up residence in a New Testament believer (along with the Father and the Spirit—John 14:17, 23) at the point of salvation/justification (Galatians 2:20). This means that God’s “*fullness*” came to live in us when we became believers (John 1:16). But only as we allow Christ to “*dwell*” (feel at home) in our “*hearts*” (Ephesians 3:17), and “*know*” His “*love*” (Ephesians 3:19a), are we “*filled up to all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:19b). In fact, we walk in God’s “*fullness*” only when we are emptied of our selfish motives and desires and allow Christ to direct and empower our daily routines. Therefore, we can lose perspective and cease walking in “*the fullness of God*” (without losing our salvation), “*fullness*” being a place of blessing and empowerment available to New Testament believers throughout their earthly pilgrimage.

**Ephesians 3:20—Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,**

We must be careful not to apply this passage to all believers, for its context pertains to believers who have an abiding passion to know God's heart. Stated differently, it applies to saints in pursuit of experiential holiness, righteousness, and godliness. Consequently, Ephesians 3:20 applies to believers who allow Jesus to “*dwell* [feel at home] *in their hearts*” (Ephesians 3:17), who are “*rooted and grounded in love*” (Ephesians 3:17), and who pursue being “*filled up to all the fullness of God*” (Ephesians 3:19). We can make this assumption because the Father “*is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all we think or ask,*” and does so “*according to the power that works within us*” (Ephesians 3:20). God's power fills vessels who find pleasure in knowing and obeying His Word. (“*Works*” can actually be viewed as God's energizing—refer to notes on Ephesians 1:11). Paul's life was characterized by this power only because of his unwavering commitment to knowing Jesus' heart (Philippians 3:10), which resulted in a lifestyle of obedience (1Corinthians 9:27) to the indwelling Christ (Galatians 2:20). And was he ever empowered by God's Spirit (1Corinthians 2:4)! Hence, he wrote the following to Timothy, his son in the faith:

*Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2Timothy 2:21-22)*

The verb “*ask*” (Ephesians 3:20) is in the middle voice, meaning “to ask for one's self or in one's own interest” (*Wuest*).<sup>1</sup> This truth validates God's capability of doing, on behalf of those walking in submission and obedience, anything they might “*ask*” (a truth in agreement with John 14:12-14). Individuals who walk as such are applying the principle of the cross—living for the benefit of God and others, which greatly affects the content of their prayers. Believers who walk in disobedience, yet refuse to confess and repent of their wrongdoing, shouldn't expect God to respond as Paul describes in Ephesians 3:20.

God is capable of doing “*beyond all that we ask*” as well as “*beyond all that we...think*” (Ephesians 3:20). How exciting to know that Jesus' resources are limitless in that He creates the visible from the realm of the invisible:

*By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible. (Hebrews 11:3)*

Thus, dream all you like, plan the most wonderful life imaginable, and God can exceed your wildest expectations. What an adventure—this life of faith! Anything else is a boring, extremely tiring existence.

**Ephesians 3:21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.**

“*Him*” refers to the Father, the recipient of all “*the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus*” (Ephesians 3:21). This passage confirms that we, the “*body*” of Christ (Romans 12:5), along with Jesus, “*the head*” (Ephesians 5:23), will bring glory to the Father “*forever and ever*” (Ephesians 3:21). The phrase, “*forever and ever,*” can also be interpreted “of the age of the ages.” Hence, we will bring glory to the Father “*to all generations of the age of the ages.*” What an awesome privilege!

## Ephesians 4

**Ephesians 4:1—I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called,**

Chapters 4-6 of this epistle explain how the doctrines taught in chapters 1-3 are to be applied to daily living. Thus, by employing “*therefore*,” Paul is encouraging his readers to link the truths of Ephesians 1-3 to the practical applications addressed in the remaining chapters.

Paul refers to himself as “*the prisoner of the Lord*” (Ephesians 4:1) although he was at that time imprisoned by the Romans. (He referred to himself as “*the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles*” in Ephesians 3:1, so you might want to review the commentary associated with that passage.) Paul was “*a bond-servant of Christ*” (Romans 1:1) in the truest sense of the word.

Now, Paul entreats his readers to “*walk in a manner worthy of the calling*” (Ephesians 4:1). “*Entreat*” means “to call to or for, to exhort, to encourage,” while “*walk*” refers to “behavior” (the same root word used for “*walk*” in Ephesians 4:1 is interpreted “*behavior*” in Romans 13:13 and 1Thessalonians 4:12). The meaning of “*worthy*” can be depicted by a weighing device that pivots in the middle like a seesaw. The goods being purchased are placed on one side with a corresponding weight placed on the other until the scales are balanced. Paul’s point here is that we must learn to walk in a manner (by yielding to Christ’s indwelling presence) that corresponds with “*the calling with which we have been called*” (Ephesians 4:1). In other words, the behavior that best exemplifies our “*calling*” should be the norm for our lives. What is our “*calling*”? Follow closely.

As we discovered earlier (under Ephesians 1:4c and 1:5a), Greek words such as *kletos*, *kaleo*, *kaleomai*, and *klesis* are normally translated “called” or “calling” and point to two different truths recorded in Scripture: (1) that we have been invited to receive Christ (2) that the New Testament believer receives a specific office (gifting or purpose) once he is in Christ (saved/justified). Paul states in 1Corinthians 1:9:

*God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. (1Corinthians 1:9)*

Yes, we were “called” (invited) into fellowship with Christ, as is every person. Yet, not everyone accepts the invitation.

The most common use of “called” or “calling” is in relation to the believer’s gifting, or purpose. Ephesians 4:1, in context with Ephesians 4:1-16, shows that Paul is addressing the different giftings, or offices, within the body of Christ. The believers at Ephesus were to “*walk in a manner worthy of*” their office, or gifting (Ephesians 4:1). We, like the believers at Ephesus, were “*called as saints*” (Romans 1:7) once we were placed in Christ (1Corinthians 1:2) subsequent to repenting and believing while depraved. What a wonderful purpose—to live, through Christ’s strength, as a saint should live. Consequently, the fact that the New Testament believer is “called” can point to something other than being “called” or “invited” to be saved. New Testament believers, in association with being saved, are “called” to a particular office or purpose within Christ’s body. These believers at Ephesus were to “*walk in a manner worthy of*” their “*calling*.”

**Ephesians 4:2—with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love,**

Certain character traits epitomize the lifestyle of a New Testament believer who walks worthily in his calling. “*Humility...gentleness...patience,*” along with “*showing forbearance to*” fellow believers “*in love,*” should be obvious.

“*Humility*” can also be rendered “lowliness of mind.” Don’t misunderstand. The humble are not to perceive themselves as worthless and without hope. Neither are they weak with no backbone to stand in battle. Rather, they are individuals who regard others “*as more important than*” themselves (Philippians 2:3). Anyone who lives by the principle of the cross demonstrates humility as a way of life.

Moses was the most humble man on the earth (Numbers 12:3) but could never be accused of wimping out (going passive) in a bind. David (2Samuel 7:18), Josiah (2Kings 22:19), Isaiah (Isaiah 6:5), John the Baptist (John 3:30), Paul (2Corinthians 12:7-10), and, of course, Jesus (Matthew 11:29), all exemplified humility as they carried out the Father’s will. But to a man, they possessed the boldness of a lion. So “*humility*” (Ephesians 4:2) is not synonymous with “weakness.”

God makes the following promises to the humble: He will teach them His way (Psalm 25:9); they will prosper (Psalm 37:11) and be rewarded with riches, honor, and life (Proverbs 22:4); they will possess wisdom (Proverbs 11:2) and honor (Proverbs 29:23) and receive abundant grace (1Peter 5:5). Humility most definitely is the way to travel, especially when you consider the alternative.

The opposite of humility is pride. Pride caused Lucifer’s fall (Isaiah 14:12-14), was the basis of Adam and Eve’s sin (Genesis 3:5-6), and is the root of sin in mankind in general (1John 2:16). A life of pride results in forgetting God (Deuteronomy 8:14; Hosea 13:6), engaging in corrupt action (2 Chronicles 26:16), being unthankful to the Lord (2 Chronicles 32:25), opposing God and man (Psalm 10:2-4), being rebuked by the Lord (Psalm 119:21), receiving dishonor (Proverbs 11:2), bringing destruction upon one’s self (Proverbs 25:15; 16:18), stirring up strife (Proverbs 28:25), stumbling and falling (Proverbs 16:18; Jeremiah 50:32), never being satisfied (Habakkuk 2:5), seeking evil gain (Habakkuk 2:9), experiencing self-deception (Galatians 6:3), opposing the Father (1John 2:16), being unfaithful to the Lord (2 Chronicles 26:16), and being humbled (Proverbs 29:23; Isaiah 2:11, 17; Daniel 4:37; 5:20; Matthew 23:12). Why Paul encouraged the believers at Ephesus to walk in “*humility*” (Ephesians 4:2) is apparent.

“*Gentleness*” (Ephesians 4:2) is a natural byproduct of humility. “*Gentleness,*” a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:23), can also be interpreted “meekness”; but in no way means “weakness.” Jesus was gentle and meek (2Corinthians 10:1), but cleansed the temple after observing its abuse (Matthew 21:12-13; John 2:13-17). Consequently, the gentle (meek) can display righteous anger without committing sin (Ephesians 4:26). In fact, controlled anger (directed toward what opposes God and is harmful to others) is permissible when coupled with wisdom and discretion. However, unrighteous anger (uncontrolled anger based on selfish motives) toward those in opposition is sin. We are to love and pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:10-12, 44; Luke 6:28)—never attempt to “whip them into line” by using weapons of the flesh.

Once humility and gentleness take root, patience follows. How so? Humility and gentleness are gained through a proper view of God’s awesome character, power, and sovereignty. Once a believer perceives God as sovereignly working all things for his good (Romans 8:28), he is more apt to wait patiently on God’s timing rather than attempt to resolve difficulties in the power of the flesh. Those who marginally know God possess little patience. Those who know Him intimately (know His heart) learn that everything must be done in His timing, for the right thing done at the wrong time is sin. God teaches us patience by allowing our faith to be tried (James 1:3). Once tried, we learn that God always knows best and answers prayers with: “Yes!” “No!” or “Wait!” Abraham learned this truth while waiting on God’s promise regarding Isaac (Romans 4:18-21; Hebrews 6:13-15).

When a believer possesses humility, gentleness, and patience, he is equipped to “*show forbearance*” to

others “*in love*” (Ephesians 4:2). “*Forbearance*” means “to hold up or to bear with.” “*Love*” is *agape* love, unconditional love. Unsurprisingly, our *agape* love validates to the world that we are Jesus’ disciples (John 13:35). Paul desired that the Ephesians display all of these qualities.

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<sup>1</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. (1989). *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI. [www.eerdmans.com](http://www.eerdmans.com). Used by permission.