

Knowing Unknowable Love

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[0 : 00] It's an understatement to say that self-help books have proliferated over the last several decades. In fact, there are now books that are written solely as references for all the self-help books that are available out there.

One such book is entitled Self-Help, 1,400 Best Books on Personal Growth. 1,400, and that's whittled down. That's the number that he arrived at after combing through all these books and deciding on the best ones.

If you search within Amazon's book category for theology, you get 205,778 results. If you search for Christian theology, you get even less, 146,691.

If you search for self-help, you get a staggering 746,824 hits. Now, the good news about that is a lot of people in our culture recognize that they need help.

The bad news about that is a lot of people don't know where to find help. This is often true for Christians also. When we are dealing with a sin in our life that we want to overcome, when we're trying to break a bad habit or to heal a pain that's been in our lives and been crippling us, when we want to correct an area of unbelief in our lives, we often turn to our own strength and take things into our own hands.

[1 : 27] But in order to fulfill God's true design and purpose for our lives, we need more of the Almighty God and less of our feeble selves. And in this passage, Paul teaches us that we need to pray to the Father so that through the power of the Holy Spirit, we may be filled with the presence of Christ.

I'm going to follow that as my outline. The first point will be prayer to the Father. The second point will be power through the Spirit. And the third point will be the presence of Christ. Paul had begun chapter 3 with verse 1.

He says, And then he digressed to explain his apostleship and his ministry on behalf of the Gentiles in verses 2 to 13.

And now here in verse 14 is where he resumes that original thought that he had in verse 1, and he begins that intercessory prayer on behalf of the Ephesians, and he begins with the same phrase. For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. So for this reason, points us back to what Paul taught us in chapter 2, right?

[2 : 34] So the basis for his prayer, the reason for his prayer, is that God has taken Jews and Gentiles and reconciled them, and has reconciled them together to God through Jesus Christ.

And because we are built up as a new temple of God, what is natural for a temple is to be filled with the presence of God. So that's what he prays for in this passage. Now you are building, Lord, this temple of God, the church.

Please fill them. That's what Paul is praying for in this passage. Now, as he prays, following the model of the prayer that taught his disciples in Matthew 6, 9 to 13, Paul addresses his prayer to God, the Father, right?

Our Father in heaven. And, of course, since God is one, and each of the three persons of the Trinity is fully God. So it's not inappropriate for us to pray to the Son or to the Holy Spirit.

We see an example of the apostles, for example, praying to the Lord, which is the Lord Jesus, in Acts 1, 24. Stephen, while being stoned to death, in Acts 7, 59, prays, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

[3 : 40] But there's no example in the Bible of directly praying to the Holy Spirit, but that's been prominent throughout the history of the church as well. So this is true.

But with all this said, however, the dominant pattern throughout Scripture is to pray to God the Father, because there is a logical order within the relations of the Trinity that determines how we relate to the persons of the triune God.

So in prayer, then, the pattern that is taught in Scripture, we pray to the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit. That's the pattern. And C.S. Lewis writes about this extraordinary phenomenon in his book, *Mere Christianity*.

And he says this, quote, An ordinary, simple Christian kneels down to say his prayers. He's trying to get in touch with God. But if he is a Christian, he knows that what is prompting him to pray is also God.

God, so to speak, inside him. But he also knows that all his real knowledge of God comes through Christ, the man who was God. That Christ is standing beside him, helping him to pray, praying for him.

[4 : 53] You see what is happening? God is the thing to which he is praying, the goal he is trying to reach. God is also the thing inside him which is pushing him on, the motive power.

God is also the road or bridge along which he is being pushed to that goal. So that the whole threefold life of the three personal beings is actually going on in that ordinary little bedroom where an ordinary man is saying his prayers.

The man is being caught up into the higher kinds of life. He is being pulled into God by God while still remaining himself.

Isn't that such a beautiful picture of prayer? In prayer, when we pray to God, we're communing with God. In a sense, really, our souls are partaking in his spirit.

There's an interchange. There's this conversation, communication, and we experience our union with God through prayer. And if we think about prayer this way, how can we not long to pray, to desperately want to pray, to enjoy this communion with God?

[5 : 57] What a mystery, right? What a privilege it is that God himself speaks to us and listens to us, that God himself mediates for us and helps us as we pray, and that God himself intercedes for us and energizes us to pray.

Isn't that amazing? And Paul gives us more details about this prayer to the Father and why it's appropriate to pray to him in verse 15. From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. There's a wordplay here between the word father and the word family. The two words in Greek look and sound almost identical. And what that wordplay is highlighting is that there's an obvious, the logical connection between the fact that God is sovereign creator of all things, and therefore he rules and reigns over all of creation.

Right? So he's the household of, so to speak, of all creation. Every family in heaven and on earth. So he's referring to not just earthly beings, but also heavenly beings, spiritual beings.

God is over them all. Now, I do need to add a couple qualifiers so that you don't get sidetracked because there's two things that this does not mean. One, it doesn't mean that God has physical, biological kinship ties with all people or with any angels, angels or angelic beings.

[7 : 18] It's a metaphor. Right? Second thing that it doesn't mean is that everyone in heaven and on earth will be saved in the end, constituting one large family of God.

Ephesians makes it abundantly clear that not all belong to the family of God, which is the church. The point that Paul is making here is not that everybody will be saved to be a part of the family, but that everybody is part of the family in the sense that God rules over them all.

He's sovereign over them all. That's the point that he's trying to make here. Now, that's why he mentions specifically that God, the Father, is the one from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Right? What's the significance of that? Why are they named by him? When God names something, right, throughout scripture, he's exercising his dominion over them. He's stamping them with his authority saying, I made this.

I created this. I saved this. I redeemed this. So I get to name it. Right? I mean, if you make something, you get to name it. Right? I mean, that's the idea behind this.

[8 : 17] In Isaiah 40, 26, he expresses it. It says, God is the sovereign creator and ruler who named every earthly and heavenly creature.

So he is the one to whom we owe all of our allegiance and to whom we owe our very existence. So it makes sense then that we pray to God, the Father.

Right? And we could pray with great faith because he is the sovereign ruler. He is powerful to be able to answer our prayers. And it also makes sense that we approach him with great humility.

Right? Since we are so weak and insignificant, but we're approaching this powerful almighty creator. That's why Paul says in verse 14, I bow my knees before the Father.

Right? This is a well-attested manner of praying throughout scripture. For example, according to Daniel 6.10, the prophet Daniel apparently prayed three times a day on his knees.

[9 : 26] Right? Paul bows his knees in prayer. And this is, I love that image because it's not just like a rote thing that he was taught, you know, like in Sunday school. Right? When you learn to pray for the first time, they're like, close your eyes.

Right? Bow your head. Clasp your hands. And kneel down. Right? I mean, that's not what he's thinking. He's doing this for a reason. And it's the fact that he's imagining himself that as he prays, he's praying as if he's very in front of, before the face of God.

He's in the throne room of God himself. And when you approach a king, you kneel or you fall prostrate. Right? That's what Paul's doing. So as he prays, he knows, he's so aware of the presence of God in which he has, whose audience he has, he bows his knees before him to express, one, his submission and two, his humiliation, his humility before God.

Right? It's the conquered enemies and subjects of kings who kneel. Right? And scripture elsewhere tells us at the end of time, every knee will bow down before Jesus.

But Paul does this willingly, not reluctantly, not begrudgingly, freely, lovingly. He submits to God, expresses his humility before God in prayer.

[10 : 43] And the fact that Paul substitutes this expression to bow my knees, to stand for the word to pray, suggests that this is probably his regular practice.

Like he's like, when he thinks of praying, he's thinking of bowing his knees. So this is something that he regularly does. And this doesn't mean, now, I'm not saying that every time we pray, we have to kneel.

Right? There are other manners of praying that's also attested in scripture. However, what it does mean is that there is very good reason to kneel when we pray. Right? And we should consider that as an option when we pray.

Because whether we admit it or not, our attitudes are affected by our postures. Are they not? Right? That's why, right, teachers at schools tell their kids to sit up.

Right? Because it makes them alert. It makes them learn better. Right? That's why the military commanders tell those soldiers to stand at attention. Right? Because it affects their attitudes.

[11 : 40] Right? What they do. Right? That's why when a judge tells a witness to raise his right hand, to swear that he will tell nothing but the whole truth, why do you do that physical act?

That's not necessary. Because it affects their attitude, adds a solemnity to what they are doing and saying that they're going to do. So our postures affect our attitudes. That's why it matters how we listen to sermons.

That's why it matters how we sing and worship. That's why it matters how we pray. And it matters that we're, you know, half asleep in bed and scrolling through our Bible app.

Or sitting at a desk with an open Bible with a coffee in hand. It matters. Right? And by kneeling in prayer, we express and reinforce our submission to God and humility before God.

Right? And having told us about to whom he prays and how he prays, now Paul tells us about the basis for his prayer in verse 16, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being.

[12 : 52] According to, that's the clue here, that's the basis for Paul's prayer. Why it's worthwhile for him to pray. What fuels his faith for prayer is this, the riches of God's glory.

What is that? Right? What are the riches of God's glory? Because glory is the manifestation of God's deity. Right? It's all that is what the means to be God is summarized, summed up in the word glory.

So here, it could really refer to any number of his attributes and perfections. So, but thankfully, we're not left in the dark here because there has been a rich history in the context of Ephesians of the use of the word riches, right?

The word riches occurs five times in Ephesians. Of particular interest are parallels in 1, 7, 2, 7, and 3, 8. And in chapter 1, verses 6 to 7, he mentions God's glorious grace.

And then in the following verse, verse 7, Paul says, In Christ we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.

[13:58] Right? And then in chapter 2, verse 7, he says that God made us alive with Christ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

And then similarly, he also said in chapter 3, verse 8, he talked about the unsearchable riches of Christ. So to summarize then, the word riches throughout the book of Ephesians refers to God's bountifulness, right?

His generosity toward us. And when it's, and what, it's the glorious grace. And this commentator and pastor Brian Chappell puts it really helpfully.

He says, the riches of God are those that cancel spiritual debt. Right? That's the riches of God that he talks about, Paul talks about in Ephesians.

And the riches of God are so abundant that not only does it cancel spiritual debt, it enriches us. It makes us heirs of the king with the heavenly inheritance incumbent upon that status.

[15:08] We go from being impoverished, wretched sinners, paupers in debtors prisoned, to being heirs, children of God, children of the king of all creation, and heirs of his glorious riches.

That's the basis. That's why it's worthwhile for Paul to pray. And he prays on behalf of the Ephesian church that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened.

And if the basis of Paul's prayer is the riches of God's glory, the goal, the ultimate goal of Paul's prayer is also God's glory. Right? So he concludes his prayer in verse 21 by praising God.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. And the whole intercessory prayer actually in this passage from verses 14 to 21 has a chiasmic structure.

And a chiasm is a literary device where it's structured concentrically so that each element of the first half of the passage has a corresponding element that mirrors that element in the second half.

[16:20] So to kind of show you what I mean by that. So in verses 14 to 16a, okay, so when I use ABC, I'm just kind of numbering the clauses within each verses. So when it's in verses 14 to 16a, it says glory of God the Father from whom every family is named.

And then the corresponding element of that is verse 21 where it talks about glory to God the Father throughout all generations and families. And then the next element is power through his spirit in your inner being in 16b to c.

And then the corresponding element to that is verse 20, power at work within us, like inner being.

And then after that, it's Christ may dwell in your heart, 17a. And then it's 19b, that would be filled with the fullness of God, so dwelling, filling.

And then the next one is rooted and grounded in love, 17b. And then it's know the love of Christ, 19a. And then what's amazing about this chiasmic structure is that there's one element in the middle that stands out, that alone doesn't have a matching corresponding element.

And that's the point, that's the main point that Paul emphasizes. And that here is in verse 18. To comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

[17:33] And I'm gonna explain that and cover that in a second. So keep that structure in mind because that's why I'm covering that last verse now to kind of meet you in the middle as we go.

Because that's the basis for Paul's prayer is the prayer to the Father is according to the grace. But how will we be strengthened? By what means will Paul's prayer be answered? And the means is spelled out in verse 16.

And that's my second point, power through the Spirit. That according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being.

That's the means, power through His Spirit. So the riches of God's glory is the basis for His prayer to the Father and now the means by which that will be accomplished, the power through the Spirit.

And verse 16 is mirrored by verse 20, which says, 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.

[18:36] So power, that's a key word in the book of Ephesians. It's used five times throughout the letter. And in chapter 1, verse 19, it was used to describe the power that of this work at work in the lives of believers and the power, the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

And it's not surprising as we think about this that the source of this power is the Spirit, that Spirit is particularly associated with power because it's the characteristic of our present age, this new covenant age, after the time of the death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, that God's people are indwelt by and empowered by the Spirit of God.

We were actually just talking about this in the membership class this morning, is that it's when Jesus ascends to the heavens, that's when he promised that the Spirit of God would descend. And he tells his disciples, he doesn't tell them to, okay, as soon as I'm gone, just go and start preaching the gospel.

He doesn't say that. He tells them to wait until they're closed in power from on high. And he says in Acts 1.8, you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth.

Throughout the news, the word power is almost synonymous with the presence of the Holy Spirit. The intervening age between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming is the age of the Spirit characterized by his power.

[20 : 00] Now, there's a theologian named John Murray. He was a Scottish-born Calvinist theologian. He taught at Princeton Seminary during its heyday when it was still the bastion of Christian orthodoxy.

And when Princeton started to stray from that orthodoxy, he left with a whole bunch of other sound teachers of the gospel to start Westminster Theological Seminary.

So he was a Presbyterian most of his life. He wrote the most often used theological textbook on the atoning work of Jesus Christ. All that to say, I'm just trying to show you that he's not an unhinged charismatic.

Now, but this is what he says in one of his writings. If Pentecost is not repeated, which is something that a lot of people like to say, right? Because if Pentecost, that was one sin for all.

So don't expect power now, right? Don't expect it. So if Pentecost is not repeated, neither is it retracted. This is the era of the Holy Spirit, right?

[21 : 02] And the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit is the distinctive marker of this particular age. 1 John 4 to 13 says, By this we know that we abide in God and he in us because he has given us of his spirit.

You're not a Christian if you're not filled with the presence of God, with the spirit of God. And you will make no progress in the Christian life apart from the power of the spirit.

If our life and ministry are not characterized by the spirit's power, then there's something profoundly amiss about our Christianity. And we are in dire need of this truth, aren't we?

This day and age. Because we're so accustomed to turning to other powers and relying on our own strength. When people see something wrong with the world today, what's often our first inclination, right?

It's to solve it with activism, right? When we see something wrong with the world, our first inclination is to solve it with activism. You know, people turn to social media to vent about it. Some people who are more involved even blog about it, right?

[22 : 11] Others will stage a protest or even put on a conference to address it. Sure, there's a place for all of those things, but all those things are for not without the spirit's power.

So why is our first inclination not to turn to concerted prayer? When people struggle with addictions, maybe to pornography or simply compulsive news feed browsing on your phones, often the first inclination is to solve it with technology.

Just install this great filter or this thing that blocks you out after you've spent a certain amount of time on your phone. But why?

That will not offer a lasting solution to the problem. Why is our first inclination not to turn to prayer so that God transforms our hearts? When our brothers and sisters are struggling to eradicate deeply entrenched patterns of sin in their lives, instead of turning to pragmatic solutions, sure, use wisdom, sure, use pragmatic things that we have at our disposal, but they cannot replace or precede dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit's power strengthens us in our inner being so that the love of Christ takes root in our hearts and grows so that the weeds in our lives, the weeds of sin, they lose hold and they wither away.

[23 : 42] That's why Paul prays that the Ephesian church would be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being. And the inner being is simply a contrast to outer being. We don't have to go into, you know, details about trying to explain that.

And it refers to the moral, spiritual side of people as opposed to the physical side. Paul used the same expression in 2 Corinthians 4, 16, when he writes, though our outer self is wasting away, our

inner self is being renewed day by day.

Now, I mentioned earlier that within this chiasmic structure, what corresponds, what mirrors, verse 16 is verse 20. 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, right?

The power at work within us through the Holy Spirit is such that God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. Sometimes we are too timid and faithless in what we ask of God, aren't we?

We don't ask him for much because we don't think that he can do much. But God is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask, according to the power at work within us.

[24 : 59] And God is not merely adequate for the task. He's able to do far more abundantly than all that we think. And not only can God do all that we ask, more than we ask, it says he can do more than we can think, right?

We think that it's God's power that's limited when we come to him in prayer. But it's our imagination that's limited. It's our faith that's limited. How this would transform our prayer life if we really believed it.

God can do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think. If we really believed it, wouldn't we pray far more frequently and far more boldly? Maybe you feel defeated by persistent temptation in your life and you're starting to doubt and despair whether you'll ever be able to overcome that sin in your life.

Maybe you feel dejected. Maybe you feel depressed from disappointment after disappointment, downtrodden by the suffering in your life, the circumstances. Maybe you're facing difficulties. You have circumstances in your life that seems insurmountable. You don't know how you're going to face them and overcome them. In all of those things, no matter what you are going through, no matter what situation you're in, hear this.

[26 : 13] God is able. He's able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think according to the power at work with this. Apply it today.

We need to pray to the Father for power through the Spirit. And then Paul moves on to the core, the crux of his intercity prayer in verses 17 to 19.

And this brings me to my final point, the presence of Christ. Paul says in verses 17 to 19, 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.

In verse 17, Christ dwelling in our hearts corresponds to mirrors, verse 19, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Both are temple language, right?

Because we're temples of God. We were actually one temple of God as the church. Now we should be indwelt by God and filled by God. So even though this idea has been much abused, I'm sure you guys have heard this or seen this.

[27 : 33] You know, people say, hey, invite Jesus into your heart. Accept him into your heart, right? So this is a little bit overused and abused sometimes, but there is biblical basis for that teaching, right?

It says Christ dwells our hearts. Now, however, there is a key difference in which Christians usually use that expression and the way it's used here in Ephesians is that Christians, we normally tell that to unbelievers, right?

We tell unbelievers, hey, accept Jesus into your heart. We assume, we take for granted that believers already have Christ in their hearts. But what's interesting is Paul here is addressing believers.

He tells believers, I pray for you that Christ would dwell in your hearts. What? What's going on? Right? I got Christ, Paul. Right?

Because, I mean, that's very clear from the preceding context, right? In chapter 2, 11, 13, he talked about, remember at one time you were separated from Christ, alienated from Him, but now you have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

[28 : 33] So he's talking to those people who have been brought near who are now in Christ and he tells these people they need to be filled with the fullness of God, that they need to be indwelt by Christ.

What is going on? This is similar to Luke's use of the phrase in the book of Acts, full of the Holy Spirit. You guys have heard that used before. New Testament scholar Max Turner puts it this way in his book, *Power From on High*.

Luke does not believe all Christians to be full of the Spirit. That's why in Acts 6, 3, they select people who are full of the Spirit for the task that they have at hand.

And he says, this metaphor, I'm continuing to quote, this metaphor is used precisely to distinguish those whose lives are particularly marked by the work of the Spirit from ordinary Christians.

And in Luke, second terms, the criterion for judging whether it is appropriate to speak of someone as full of the Spirit is whether the community of Christians felt the impact of the Spirit through that person's life and saw the Spirit's graces and gifts regularly expressed through him or her.

[29 : 49] Right? Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. All believers are possessed by the Holy Spirit. But not all of them are full of the Holy Spirit.

Similarly, while it is true that when we repent and believe in Jesus Christ, we are indwelt by Christ through the infilling of the Holy Spirit once and for all, that's true, it is nevertheless also true that we must continue to grow in our nearness to God, awareness of His presence, and increasingly submit every area of our lives to His Lordship.

That's what He's talking about. We need to be indwelt by Christ more and more with a greater measure of Christ, filled with more and more of God. We've talked about this before in the Gospel of John.

There's a difference between union with Christ, which is the objective reality that happens when we believe in Him, we're united with Him in faith, and then there's a difference between that union with Christ and communion with Christ.

Communion is our subjective experience of that union, our experience of that fullness, that indwelling. We need to grow in that, and we need to pray for everyone that we would grow in that.

[31 : 10] And what does it look like? As Galatians 2.20 says, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me, and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

What does that mean? When the Bible speaks of being filled with something, it's speaking of being controlled by it, dominated by it. When you're filled with joy, you're controlled by that joy.

Your life is defined by it. When you're filled with fear, you're controlled by that fear. When he says, be filled with all the fullness of God, he's praying that the Ephesian church would be controlled, dominated by God.

Likewise, Christ dwelling in our hearts. What does that suggest? It's ownership. He indwells us. He lives in us. We belong to Him.

So then, of course, everything we do, all our resting, all our working, all our playing, all our listening, all our talking, all our watching, all of it has to be brought under the lordship of Christ.

[32 : 24] That's what it means for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith. And it's by faith. We need to believe that and live by that. That's what it means to have more and more of the fullness of God, of the presence of Christ.

Are you aware of that? Are you walking with Christ? Are you keeping in step with the Spirit? Or are we, or are you acting as if you're taking leave of Him when you leave the Sunday service until we get back together again?

That kind of life falls so short of the fullness of the love of Christ, the joy and power that God desires for us. I pray that we would even today experience a greater measure of Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith.

We may be filled with all the fullness of God. But in our life filled with Christ and to live for Him, we have to be assured of Christ's love for us. And so Paul continues to pray in verse 17b that we would be rooted and grounded in love.

The word rooted is an agricultural word, right? And it's related to earlier word that he used, strengthen. The word strengthen can also mean to hold fast onto something, to grasp onto something.

[33 : 51] So he's saying that we need to be rooted and strengthened in the love of Christ, in love. And he also said that we need to be grounded. That's an architectural term which means to lay a foundation.

And this also is conceptually related to the other word that he used which is for Christ to dwell in us because the foundation has to be laid with the love of Christ in order for Christ to dwell in that temple, in that house.

So we need to be rooted and grounded. And he's using terms that Jesus himself used. If you remember the parable of the sower in Matthew 13, 6 and verse 21, Jesus compared so-called Christians who lose their faith when tribulation or persecution come to plants that wither away because it had no root.

It was not rooted. Similarly, in the parable of the builder in Matthew 7, 24 to 27, Jesus contrasts so-called Christians who hear God's word and then don't do anything about it, don't obey, don't respond to it, to people who build their house on the foundation of sand.

And he contrasts that with Christians, true Christians, who hear the word of God and obey it and respond to it as people who build, builders who build their foundation on rock.

[35 : 07] That's what he's praying for here for the church, that we'd be rooted and grounded in God's love. And this is mirrored by verse 19, which said, that we might know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Up to this point, Paul had mostly talked about the Father's love, but it's true that the Son, Christ, also loves us because he dies for us willingly. He takes on the cross for our sake out of love and out of love for the Father and out of love for us.

And he talks about this later in chapter 5 too. Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. Christ took our place on the cross and he died so that sinners like us can be saved and take his place next to the Father's side.

That's what this is referring to. And he thinks, the way he thinks about the love of Christ is so grand and immense that he refers to an oxymoron to explain this concept.

That we might know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Isn't that great? In effect, he's praying that we would know the unknowable love of Christ.

[36 : 31] I want to know that unknowable love. Right? And Paul prays and continues this in verse 18 that brings us to the crux, the centerfold of this chiasmic structure.

It says that we may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

Now, I do need to digress a little bit here because I need to explain this to you because some of you guys have the NIV. How many of you guys are using the NIV?

So if you're using the, oh, are you the only one? Maybe I won't do it. I'm just kidding. So if you're looking at some of the other translations, so the NIV, for example, probably the most prominent example of this, it says, breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ.

That's what it says on there. That's not what it says in the ESV. And that's actually, that's the wrong translation just because it's a great example of the interpretation affecting translation because they're assuming that breadth and depth and height and length is referring to the love of Christ which is mentioned in the following verse.

[37 : 44] So because they're already making that assumption, they're just now interpolating that to this verse to make sense of it so that it's clear for people because in the Greek New Testament, it doesn't tell us what that exactly is.

It's just nouns, the breadth and length and height and depth. It just says, what is the breadth and length and height and depth? Now, having ruled that out then, what does that leave us with?

What does it mean? And how can we find out what this means? And I think this will be a helpful exercise in practicing our commitment to scripture, sola scriptura, right?

Scripture alone is our foundational authority, normative authority. And as we're going through this Ephesian series, we're celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. And one of the core tenets of that was scripture alone.

Not pastors, not priests, not church councils, not church traditions, but scripture alone is the foundational authority for our life and practice.

[38 : 43] And that's why labor to prove things to you instead of just telling you what I think. Because if it's not scriptural, then you shouldn't believe it. And so, how can we tell?

So let's look at the immediate context of the verse. Do you notice anything in the verses preceding that? 18 and verses following that, that might be referred to by the breadth and depth, breadth and length and height and depth.

You don't have to respond. You can if you want to. But, so, look at, look at what it says at the end. That you should be filled with all the fullness of God, right?

Fullness is something, it's volume, something you describe with depth, breadth, length and height, right? And so, so that's, that's a great possibility. So what else can the dimensional language be referring to here?

And if you look at other contexts, like, let's look at the rest of the book of Ephesians. In chapter 1, verses 19 to 20, it uses measuring language, dimensional language. It says, let the immeasurable greatness of God's power toward us who believe that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

[39 : 59] So, immeasurable power, so that seems to relate to this concept of these dimensions. He uses that word again later in chapter 2, verse 7, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

And that's similar to another thing that he says, the unsearchable riches of Christ, right? So, all of these things, he's been using these terms throughout the book, so that's already helpful for us. What can be the breadth and length and depth and height?

Another possibility is in 310, he says that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Now, that was not exactly a term of measurement, but it's getting at a similar idea.

Now, I'm going to show you something that's so helpful for studying Bible and reading, learning how to read the Bible on your own, because that's one of my tasks as well as a pastor is not just to teach you what the Bible says, but also teach you how to read the Bible for yourself, and that's what I do in preaching as well.

So, if you look at your Bibles, there's tiny little letters that's next to some words and verses, and in that you, and those are cross-references. Now, if you look at the tiny little letter next to verse 18 in the ESV, it's a small letter E before the word height.

[41 : 15] You guys follow that? And you follow it to where the reference is. It tells you other parts of Scripture that speak about the same issue or that relate to the language that's used in that. And it's pointing you to Job 11, 5 to 9.

It says, but oh, look for Job 11, 5 to 9 if you haven't seen that in your reference. If you don't have that reference in your cross-references, then we'll get you a new Bible because that's, you should really have that.

Yeah. And so, but oh, that God would speak and open his lips to you and that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom for he is manifold in understanding.

Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves. Can you find out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limit of the Almighty? It is higher than heaven.

What can you do? Deeper than Sheol, what can you know? Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea, right? That's helpful, isn't it? Illuminating.

[42 : 15] Because that's the only place in all of Scripture and in all ancient literature where all four of those dimensions occur together, except for one other instance that I will mention.

And so here, it's referring in particular to the wisdom of God, the limitless wisdom and knowledge of God, but it's talking more in general about the immensity of God. Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?

That Job asks, right? Or the character in Job's book, Acts. So it's talking about the eternity, the infiniteness, the immensity of God. Now, it's interesting that in the context of the Greco-Roman culture in which Paul's writing this, it was very well observed that everything that you see in creation is marked by three dimensions, right?

Right? So it has length, and it has breadth, and it has depth, right? And one of the Greek Platonic philosophers argued that it's when you add the fourth dimension, right, that you reach the realm of gods or spirits, as he was arguing, right?

And some of the magical papyrus that have been found from this era where people use incantations in magic rituals, there are two examples where people refer to their God as the height, the depth, right?

[43 : 39] The breadth, the depth, and length, and height, right? So what does that tell us? All of those clues. First, most importantly, the biblical context, and then the historical and cultural context.

I think what it's referring to is this. It's the breadth and depth, the length and height and depth. By adding that fourth element, the height, to what we would normally use to describe all creation, Paul is saying, pointing us to the immensity of God, his infinite, his eternity.

God is great. He surpasses your understanding. He surpasses your limits. He's all, he's talking in short and about the fullness of God and the fullness of Christ that he's been talking about throughout this passage.

Colossians 1, 19, it says, In Christ, all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. Ephesians 1, 23, he said, The church is Christ's body, the fullness of him who fills all in all, right?

Isn't that similar to the language here? That's what Paul is referring to here, and that's why he prays that along with all the saints, because the church is the body of Christ, that along with all the saints that we would comprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

[44 : 51] That's a staggering truth, and Paul wants us to take hold of it. That's what the word comprehend means.

If only you knew what the breadth, length, and height, and depth of God's love toward you is, you would love him so and long for him and serve him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

If you only knew what is the breadth and length and height and depth of God's power toward you, then you would seek him, look to him, depend on him rather than on yourself.

If you only knew what is the breadth and length and height and depth of God's wisdom toward you, then you would trust him in all your circumstances, no matter how difficult or puzzling they may be. And you would have no room for bitterness or discontent. If only you knew what is the breadth and length and height and depth of God's grace toward you, then you would not wallow in your guilt.

[46 : 10] And you would be overcome with gratitude and freedom. And you would be overcome that's what Paul is praying for, that Christ would dwell in us, that God would fill us, that we would know, comprehend, take hold of, capture what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

It's like a king with his glorious crown and splendid robe entering in to dwell in a mud hut. earth. It's like pouring a million dollar perfume and there is such a thing as a million dollar perfume into broken jars of clay.

It's like God taking on human flesh with all its infirmities. It's like the king of glory taking up the cross, the instrument of execution as his throne.

That's the reality Paul wants us to take hold of. That's what Christ did for us and that's what Christ wants to do for us to dwell in our hearts more and more.

So let's pray as the church to the Father so that through the power of the Spirit we may be filled with the presence of God.

[47 : 39] Let's pray together. God, words can't quite describe this privilege.

So fittingly, Paul can't say any more than just simply to say, oh, what is the breadth, the length, the height, and depth? God, we want to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

We want to know the immeasurable riches of his grace and kindness toward us. We want to know the unsearchable riches of Christ toward us. We want to know the immeasurable power of Christ toward us.

Please, Lord, work in us so that our lives will be radically transformed so that we can be Christ's to all those whom we encounter, living by the priorities and the power of the triune God.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.