

**“MAY YOU BE FILLED WITH THE FULLNESS OF GOD.”**

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**First Christian Reformed Church**

**January 4, 2026, 10:30 AM**

**Scripture Texts: Ephesians 3:14-19**

### **Introduction.**

In the quiet, inner recesses of your heart do you deep down think God is generally pleased with you or generally displeased with you? Do you think you have disappointed God so many times, His is angry with you?

Most Christians go through life under a load of guilt and fear, a cloud of oppression, of God’s displeasure. We can never be good enough to get God to be pleased with us.

Many Christians struggle with an assurance God really loves them. In fact, it would be a safe bet to say half of you here struggle with knowing that God really, really loves you, and that He takes delight in you, and that when He thinks of you, He rejoices over you with singing.

There is no experience better than knowing the love of Christ in this life and there is no experience that will better prepare you to face and deal with everything this life dishes out, than to know the love of Christ that is better than life itself.

This morning we are standing on the threshold of a new year. Every year at this time I have preached sermons urging, admonishing, encouraging us to renew our desire and commitment to seek God, to pray and to read God’s Word.

For the past three years I have used the prayers of Paul to encourage us to pray, and I have used those prayers to pray for you and for my family. We can pray them with the confidence in knowing they are inspired by the Holy Spirit. This year we are making Ephesians 3:14-19 our prayer for the year, we have made a prayer card for you to keep in your Bible and pray throughout the year. It is also the memory verse for this month.

I am committing to praying this prayer for each of you and for our whole church family and I am asking you to join me. We all know John 3:16. It tells us how to become a Christian. We should make Ephesians 3:14-19 just as familiar, it tells us how to live as Christians. Make this prayer part of your family prayer, make sure your kids know it. Keep this prayer card around, use it a meals, family devotions, memorize it.

### **The main petition of the prayer.**

Paul starts his prayer not by asking us to do something but by asking God to do something based on the limitless, infinite riches of His glory. Paul's desires and expectations are fueled by the staggering immensity and generosity of God, not by our limitations.

The resources for answering this request are more vast than the ocean.

### **That we be strengthened.**

How? By the power of the Holy Spirit.

Where? In our inner being, at the core of our being; in our hearts through faith; meaning in our minds and spirits, in our thoughts and emotions, our reason and affections, in a word, soul.

Why? So that...being rooted and grounded, we may comprehend and know the unfathomable dimensions of Christ's love.

Notice, he is not saying that we need power so that we can love Christ better. What is this power for? To better grasp His great love for us. To know and really know. Not just know it, but experience it. Paul prays for us not to do something, but to know something. It takes the power of God to know the love of God.

To know the vastness of God's power.

To know the vastness of God's love.

### **To know the multi-dimensional Love of God.**

Now Paul attempts the impossible: to put into words what is inexpressible and incomprehensible. He uses cosmic dimensions to show the immensity and extravagance of Christ's love.

God's love is multi-dimensional. We need 3-D glasses in our hearts to see it. Paul has a vision of the staggering dimensions of God's love and he wants the same for all of us. He is saying would you like to see all the dimensions of God's love? Would you like to see it explode into life and thrill your heart and come closer than ever before?

### ***Breadth, Broad, wide***

The wideness of God's mercy encompasses a vast multitude beyond number. It is as broad as humanity, "for God so loved the world." God spreads out His arms like a father or a mother and scoops up and gathers to Himself all His children from every nation and tribe and people and tongue that have ever existed on the face of the earth (Rev. 5:9-10) in every age, in every place, in every circumstance. "It is a love that embraces the whole family of God from the least to the greatest" (Pink, The Ability of God, p. 256). It includes you and me.

It also takes in every care and concern of every child of God in every age. No care of ours is beyond the breadth of His love.

### ***Length, long***

How long is Christ's love? When did He start loving us? Scripture says His love is from everlasting to everlasting. It is as long as eternity and infinity (Eph. 1:4-5; Jeremiah 31:3).

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end" (Lam. 3:22).

We joke sometimes about the honeymoon being over. That is because we can't sustain a honeymoon level of intensity and affection. But God has no trouble sustaining a honeymoon level of intensity. As the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so our God rejoices over us (Isaiah 62:5).

God's love is an eternal love, from eternity past to eternity future. It is from before the foundations of the earth and will remain long after the foundations are destroyed.

Let every Christian know God will never love you and me more than He does today, and He will never love you and me less. (Scotty Smith).

## *Depth, deep*

**Philippians 2:5-8** Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

From an unfathomable height, Christ condescended to descend to an equally unfathomable depth for the sake of love, love for God and love for us.

Every step plunges deeper. Being in the form of God, He emptied Himself. He could have come down to be an angel, but no, He descended even farther, taking human form. And He could have stopped there, and not tasted the fruit of sin which is death. But He humbled Himself even farther and became obedient to the point of death. And not stopping there, but to a certain kind of death, the lowest kind, the curse and humiliation and shame of death on a cross.

Do we know the depths of the love of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us?

God's love is deeper than the deepest pit of sin and rebellion. His love is deeper than the most devastating effects of sin you have experienced or can imagine (Eph. 2:1-2; I Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:15). Deeper than all those things you think make God turn His love away.

When your mind remembers how deep is your sin, let it be a memento to you of just how much deeper still is the depth of God's love. Contemplate the depth of His love in light of your own personal history and ponder in your heart the staggering depth of suffering and shame to which the Lord of glory descended to save you from the pit.

## *Height, high*

The love of Christ is the highest height, this is the highest and greatest thing to be known. His love is higher than we could hope for, ask for or imagine (Eph 3:20). It is as high as the highest heavens.

God “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6-7).

Concerning this love Paul says something similar in Romans 8

**Romans 8:38-39** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **The fullness of God.**

How can you know what surpasses knowledge? It takes the power of God to know the love of God, and by that power we can be filled with the fullness of God. How is that possible? How can that make sense?

You can fill a container with the fullness of the Pacific Ocean and still never put the fullness of the Pacific in a bucket. We can be filled with the fullness of God but never exhaust the fullness of God. This is the climax, the summation of Paul’s prayer.

This is the prayer in one sentence. “Fill us with your fullness.” There is only one way for that to happen. God must do it. And He asks us to ask Him.

The love of Christ, dear friends, defies measuring. Not only is it beyond measuring since its dimensions are so vast, but it is quite honestly beyond comprehension. It surpasses knowledge. We are powerless to comprehend and know God’s love unless God, out of the riches of His glory and by the power of His Holy Spirit in our inner being, enables us, which He is willing to do if we ask.

The capacity of our soul is key. It can be enlarged, stretched, expanded, by asking for God’s power to do it. Of all the things worth knowing in the universe and of all the mysteries worth pondering and exploring, the one thing that matters most is to know the love of Christ. If you have this, you have enough, you are rich beyond measure.

### **Illustration.**

Let me take an example from Oceanography to illustrate the difference between knowing about God and knowing God. What is a wave? Well in Oceanography 101 you will learn ocean waves are “oscillations of the sea caused by the frictional drag of the wind over its surface” so the equation is,  $c = \frac{g}{2\pi l} \tanh(2\pi d)$  where  $c$  is velocity,  $l$  is the wave length,  $\tanh$  is the hyperbolic tangent,  $d$  is the depth, and  $g$  is the gravitational constant (David Powlison, Seeing With New Eyes, p. 37-38).

Now let's compare that definition with this description of waves that a Royal Navy frigate faced while rounding Cape Horn in the early 1800's. This is from Patrick O'Brian's, *The Far Side of the World*, which is the inspiration for the wonderful movie, *Master and Commander*.

“At the beginning of the graveyard watch, the southwest wind came in with a shriek. The shriek rarely lessened in the days and weeks that followed...The enormous rollers sweeping eastwards grew more monstrous still, their white, wind-torn crests a quarter a mile apart with a deep grey-green valley between...The scale of the rollers was so vast that the frigate, opposing them, behaved more like a small skiff...The maintopsail was shaking so furiously that the masthead almost gave out...Warley was up on the lee yardarm when the footrope gave way under him and he fell, plunging far clear of the side and instantly vanished in the terrible sea” (Patrick O'Brian, *The Far Side of the World*, p. 201-3, quoted in Powlison, *Seeing With New Eyes*, p. 38)

So what is a wave? Is it just hyperbolic tangents and the frictional drag of wind? Tell that to those sailors who know waves up close and personal.

So what is the love of Christ? Is it just an equation of  $(b \times l \times h \times d)$ , or is it something far more powerful and personal and gripping and life changing? Can you fathom the depths of that love that rescued you from your storm-tossed sea, that resurrected you from a watery grave, that went down to death for you and redeemed you with His blood. That love that forgave your sins and the sins of those who sin against you and adopted you and made you a child of His covenant when you were without God and without hope? That love that reconciled you to God and to your brothers and sisters in Christ, that spoke a word and calmed the waters of your life? Can you fathom the love that has been lavished on us out of the riches of His great glory and grace? This is Paul's prayer for us and my prayer for us.

**Implications and application.**

When was the last time you prayed a prayer like this?  
Asking out of the riches of Father's glory  
That you may be strengthened by His Spirit  
That you may know the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love  
That you may be filled with the fulness of God.

Can you think of a prayer that is bolder in its request or more staggering in its implications? Yet the Holy Spirit give us permission to pray for this.

I urge us to pray this prayer for ourselves, our children, our families and for our church family, our leaders and staff.

Knowing this will sustain us in the severest of trials. This alone will assure us of our salvation when we face the guilt and shame of our constant sin. No matter how dark our sins are, they cannot cloud the light of Christ's great love for His own.

Let the greatness of God's love for you chase away every demon, every fear, every anxiety, every adversary. All those are big, but God's love is greater still. These words are for your comfort and hope.

May we start this year calling on Him more than we ever have, daily experiencing this gracious and glorious means of miraculous grace. Don't wait until its too late. Pray as if your life depends on it. Every day in 2026.

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32, ESV). God is a giver and He is more glorified when we ask for and receive from Him every spiritual blessing and more than we could ask or imagine. He is the rewarder of those who seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).

In Christ God is pleased with you, God is pleased to fill up sinners with His fullness when they come weak, poor, needy, dependent, tender of conscience about sin and repentant. When our conscience is tender to our own sin, that is when Christ becomes precious to us and the fullness of God's love becomes more real to us.

Come to this table hungry, come expecting to be filled, come to this table humbly asking the Father according to the riches of His glory so incredibly

revealed in Christ and His sacrifice, that He would fill you with all the fullness of God.

**Prayer:** Holy Father, forgive us for being so easily satisfied with this life and the stuff of this world. You have so much more for us and we still fill up on spiritual Twinkies, on food that doesn't satisfy. You have created us to taste and savor your love. Open our eyes, open our hearts, give us your Spirit. Fill us with this fullness lest we grow small and stale and our hearts shrivel up and become cold and hard.

Lord, I entreat you for the sake of this flock, according to the vast riches of your exceedingly great glory, by the power of your Holy Spirit, strengthen us and enable us to grasp and know and see and enjoy the inexpressible, incomparable, unsurpassable, inexhaustible, extravagant love of Christ.

And Lord, having prayed this prayer, it is my further prayer and confidence that you will do immeasurable more than we could think to ask or imagine for the sake of your glory in the church and in Jesus Christ in this generation and forever. In His name we pray. Amen.