

OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

GRACE THAT IS GREATER THAN OUR DISLIKE OF CHANGE

EPHESIANS 3:14-21

JANUARY 26, 2020



SERMON OUTLINE

January 26, 2020
Grace That is Greater Than...
Our Dislike of Change
2 Corinthians 12:7b-10

Romans 8:29
2 Corinthians 3:18

1. The Situation is Unbearable

Galatians 4:13-15
Galatians 6:11

2. God's Answer is Final

3. God's Remedy is found in Grace

Romans 8:18
2 Corinthians 4:17-18

4. God's Power is revealed in Weakness

John 19:28,30

God's Plan _____ **brings Pleasure** _____ **when we**

Empower our Weakness _____ **through Faith** _____

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

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MAIN POINT

Our lives are transformed as we grow in understanding of God's love and rely on His power.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. Share about a time when you received excellent customer service that went “above and beyond” what you expected.
2. How has your understanding of God's love grown or deepened from the days when you first placed your faith in Christ?

Leader: Every once in awhile, we receive personal care from people who go above and beyond the call of duty. In those moments, our hope in the kindness of strangers grows stronger, and we are motivated to do the same for others, too. In Ephesians 3:20, Paul wrote that God is able to answer our prayers by going above and beyond all that we ask or imagine. This is good news, and it should be a source of strength for our spirits. We may measure strength by how much weight a person can lift or how well a person can handle life's crises without emotionally breaking down. But more important than physical or emotional strength is spiritual strength, which God desires to give all believers. As we grow in comprehension of God's love, our lives are transformed by His power.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> [HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 3:14-16.](#)

3. What stands out to you about Paul's description of God in this prayer?
4. What does this description remind you of in regards to your relationship with Him?

Leader: In one sense, God the Creator is the Father of all, whether they acknowledge Him or not. He is the Father after whom all earthly fathers are patterned (at least in intention if not in execution). In a more restrictive sense, He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3), and of all who, through Christ, are brought into a relationship with God. As children derive their name from their father, so the members of the family of God derive their name from Him and are known and recognized as His children.

5. Paul specifically asked that God give the Ephesians His strength. How would you measure spiritual strength? What does a spiritually strong person look like?

6. What did Paul indicate we need most in order to be spiritually strong? What are some practical ways we can sustain our connection to Christ?

Leader: God's power is available for the asking, but we cannot benefit from it if we are still trying to live the Christian life in our own strength (2 Cor. 12:7-10). We find strength in reading the Word of God and hearing the voice of the Spirit. We see God's power displayed in our lives when we yield to the Spirit's leading and obey that Word as well.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ EPHESIANS 3:17-21.

7. Paul could have prayed that the Ephesians would witness boldly, receive the gift of prophecy, or perform miracles. Why do you think he chose to pray for their ability to comprehend God's love at the foremost instead? How does realizing you are loved this way strengthen you?

8. How does grasping the magnitude of Christ's love for us give us the power to live the full lives God intends?

9. We can understand being filled with the fullness of God as fully experiencing God's presence and power in our lives. When have you experienced that fullness in the past?

Leader: Paul prayed his readers would have a growing intimacy with the Lord, not just a surface relationship. God wants all of His children to experience the things Paul prayed for his readers. Comprehending God's vast love for us transforms our lives. The ultimate goal of the Christian life is for believers to be filled with all the fullness of Christ. We are to become like Him (Rom. 8:29) to the extent that others see Jesus in our lives.

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10. What does verse 20 tell us about what we can expect when we pray to God? How has God answered a prayer beyond what you asked or even imagined?

Leader: Paul prayed that the Ephesians might grasp the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that they might be filled with the fullness of God. God is both willing and able to grant us greater spiritual strength for daily living. We always need more of God's power in our lives. As we are strengthened spiritually and enjoy a growing awareness of Christ's indwelling presence, we can have deeper experiences of God's love and fullness.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

11. How has today's study encouraged you to pray continually for greater spiritual strength? What are some practical ways you can do that on a regular basis?

12. What is a prayer that our group might pray together that could truly bring more than all we could ask or imagine?

PRAYER

This passage is a call to pray big, bold prayers. Challenge your group members to ask for and dwell on great things God could do for His glory in hopes that He would exceed even those prayers and thoughts. Invite your group members to share what they would pray for if they really believed in God as He is described in these verses. Join them in prayer for those requests.

MEMORIZE

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. - Ephesians 3:20-21

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

3:14. Repeating the opening phrase, Paul resumes his original prayer which he started in verse 1. The kneeling posture (compare Luke 22:41; Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5; Rom. 11:4; 14:11; Phil. 2:10) represents humility and reverent worship in contrast to the common practice of standing to

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pray (Mark 11:25; Luke 18:11,13).

3:15. Prayer is directed to the Father. This Father is the Father of all fathers, for every family in heaven and on earth derives its existence and its family name from the Father. Certainly such a powerful, creative Father can hear and answer the prayers about to be uttered.

3:16. The prayer has four requests that build on each other, or that flow out of each other. The first request is for inner spiritual strength. This is not the “when the going gets tough the tough get going” kind of power. This is not self-discipline or the power of positive thinking. This is not mental renewing, or self-talk, or getting a grip on yourself, or turning over a new leaf. This is a fundamental work of God from His Spirit to our spirit.

3:17. This leads to the second request, deep faith. This is not salvation. Paul was writing to Christians, and Christ takes up residence in our heart when we accept Him (John 14:23). This is more than resident faith that comes with salvation. This is Christ’s being at home in our heart. The third element is a prayer for abundant love that finds concrete expression in 19a. First Paul gives the qualities needed to be able to receive this prayer. Love must become the dominant quality of life, the roots of your existence, the foundation on which all else rests. Such love in your life comes from the divine love.

3:18. The strengthening of our inner man by the Spirit allows us to let Christ be at home in all the rooms of our heart. Letting Christ be at home in all the rooms of our heart enables us to know the vast dimensions of the love of Christ.

We need foundations for our experiences and relationships. We can’t handle life unless we are assured that God loves us and has accepted us—that we are dear to Him. When we know this, then we know who we are. Then we have a sense of well-being. Love gives us that. This sense of identity and being loved gives us the ability to relate to others, so we can comprehend with all the saints the magnitude of the love of God. Knowing God’s love is not an individual accomplishment. It occurs only in the loving context of the church and involves the whole church, not isolated individuals.

3:19. Paul’s request then is that the church and each of its members know in a personal, emotional way, as well as an intellectual one, this love of Christ. We measure this love only with cosmic dimensions and understand it only by seeing it expressed at its deepest, most intimate level on the cross. Praying that we can know it, we ultimately confess that it is beyond our full comprehension.

The final request is a prayer for God’s fullness. The inner strength of the Holy Spirit, which is a gift God gives to those who pray for it, leads to the indwelling of Christ, which leads to abundant love, which leads to God’s fullness in us—being satisfied with God. We all want to be filled up to the fullness of God. The only way it will happen is if we pursue Him. If we pray for Him to strengthen us with power by His Spirit by the inner man, Christ will be at home in each room of our heart. If Christ occupies our heart, we will have a confidence and security in His love for us. If we have such confidence and security, we are able to love others. This ability to know God’s love and thus love others, leads to the fullness of God in us. His presence, His power, His love, His life inhabit us. We participate fully in His kingdom on earth. That is Paul’s prayer for you.

3:20. Paul ends his discussion of the mystery of the church and his prayer for power with a spontaneous burst of praise to God. His prayer forms a great doxology to the Lord for His power and glory. We see three things emerging from this doxology. First, we see the sovereignty of God. God in His sovereignty may choose to do whatever He wills. What He can do far exceeds anything we can dream or imagine, must less ask for. God’s sovereignty means our prayers can be answered far beyond even what we ask.

Second, we see the omnipotence of God. God manifests His great power in many ways. Most

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obviously, He manifested it when He created the world. He used that kind of power to bring Jews and Gentiles together and form them into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. The power we see in creation and in the church is the power of God that works in us in the love relationship of prayer.

3:21. Finally, we see His glory. The power God has manifested and continues to display has a purpose—bringing glory to Him. All that God has done is to resound to His glory forever. God has done things in the church among His people and in Christ Jesus—where His people now abide and where God completed His plan of salvation. As we see and recognize God's work in the church and in Christ, we respond in praise and worship, giving God glory.