

Title: Mount Love
Date: February 19, 2023
Subject: To comprehend and apply God's love to us.
Scripture: Ephesians 3:14 - 21

The highest point on the Appalachian Trail is Clingman's Dome in Tennessee. Nearby is Mount Love, the fifth tallest. Some consider it to be part of Clingman's Dome. Therefore, it's often overlooked. It isn't all that scenic.

Sometimes God's love is overlooked, treated in a ho-hum manner. We're to be caught up in wonder.

READ Ephesians 3:14 – 21

V. 14 links back to v. 1 where Paul introduced his prayer but got sidetracked. The phrase “for this reason” brings us back. “For this reason” includes every spiritual blessing, chosen, rescued, adopted, being special objects of God's grace, having been dead but made alive by God, reconciliation to God and to people, being built into God's holy temple, being part of his body the church, being his workmanship, having the ability to approach God through Christ, our faith in him. These possessions are the groundwork for expressing thankfulness, appreciation and prayer.

I. Prayer for empowerment and enlightenment. vv. 14, 15

A. Addressed to the Father. The prayer in chapter one was addressed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father.” This prayer zooms in on “the Father.” The person at the head of the family is the father.

People have various reactions to the word “father.” Some feel blessed because they've had good fathers while others feel like calling out curses on the person who miserably failed in the role of father.

The Lord knows there are all kinds of human fathers, yet he chose to cast himself as the Heavenly Father. Since he's God, he's perfect in all of his attributes including fatherhood. He never does anything wrong. He always has his children's best interest at heart. He always comes from a place of love. He's a good, good, good, good Father.

B. Involves the family. A person can't be a father without a family. The family is named for the father but not in the way former heavyweight boxing champ, Olympic gold medalist and spokesperson for George Foreman Lean Mean Fat-Reducing Grilling Machine (Foreman Grill), George Foreman did in naming his children. He has 10 biological children and two adopted ones. One of his girls is Georgetta. His five sons are all named George: George Jr., George III, George IV, George V, and George VI. He explained the reason, "I named all my sons George Edward Foreman so they would always have something in common. I say to them, 'If one of us goes up, then we all go up together, and if one goes down, we all go down together!'" (georgeforeman.com/did_you_know).

It's more like Scandinavian names which end with "son" - Peterson, Hanson, Johnson, Johansson, Anderson. A boy was given a name. To distinguish him from others with the same name, he was noted as the son of his father - Peter, John's son. Somewhere along the line it became Peter Johnson.

Those who place their trust in Jesus Christ as Savior are in the family of God and receive the family name. We're God's kids. "How great the love of the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God" (1 John 3:1).

God has a massive family -- in heaven and on earth. I think the family in heaven is comprised of the Old Testament saints and those who've placed their trust in Jesus Christ and died.

C. Response to the Father. Paul's response was to kneel. A member of the British Parliament, Neil Marten, was giving a group of his constituents a tour of the Houses of Parliament. During the visit, the group happened to meet Lord Hailsham, the speaker of the House of Lords and head of the justice department. He was wearing the ceremonial court dress including black silk velvet tailcoat, lacy white shirt, breeches, black silk stockings, black silk damask robe with a long train trimmed with gold lace and ornamental braiding and of course, a long powdered white wig. Hailsham recognized Marten and exclaimed, "Neil!" The people with Mr. Martin promptly knelt. They didn't dare to question or disobey the "command." They were good subjects of the kingdom and used to pomp, pageantry and giving honor to a person in higher position.

As subjects of the King of kings, as well as family members, we're to show deep respect, reverence and give honor to him. Paul's actions and attitude demonstrated a deliberate choice. He probably literally knelt, though it's not the only position in which to pray. It can help remember the position of God and us.

Backtrack to 3:12 for more on how we approach God in prayer. The NIV is the only translation that uses freedom. Most use boldness, the idea of being outspoken, blunt, saying what's on our minds. We're to come with freedom, boldness and confidence. We don't have to be afraid he'll reject us.

A presidential aide would likely be hesitant and unsure the first time he entered the Oval Office. Over the course of time he becomes less awkward and understands he's free to enter and can do so with confidence. He has access. Members at an exclusive club can walk in through the doors while security would stop those who don't have proper credentials. We have access to God.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes (*The Unsearchable Riches of Christ*, p. 96), "Of all the blessings of Christian salvation none is greater than this, that we have access to God in prayer."

The results of prayer, evidences they're being answered, include being able to stand firm, love for God, love for others, obedience, looking and acting like God, evangelism.

II. What Paul wants God to do in the lives of the family. Vv. 16 - 19.

A. for Christ dwell in our hearts. Vv. 16, 17.

The bottom line of the request is that Christ would dwell in our hearts, that he'd be at home.

When we built our house, we could paint the walls in Nate's room his choice of red. We could plant a garden, evergreen trees, lilac bushes and flowers. It was our home. We didn't have to ask permission from the

person from whom we bought it. It would've been quite different if the builder Erv Zamzow maintained rights and would've been able to put stipulations on it - tell us what color for paint, no access to the back bedroom or could only use the kitchen between 8:00 AM and noon. Those things would be unacceptable.

When Jesus comes into our lives, he's the new owner. He gets to do the necessary demo and rehab. Jesus is to be at home in us, to be in total control. He wants to have free reign over every part on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, 4:00 AM when we can't sleep, 10:30 when at work, 12:02 when eating, when watching TV, when talking with the neighbor.

Yet there are times we try to place restrictions on him. "Don't try to redecorate my thought life. Leave that activity alone. Hands off the secrets in the pantry." Put Jesus into a closet. Come Sunday, go to the closet, "Hey, Jesus. It's time to go to church." Get back home and put him back in the closet, "Thanks for going with me. It was good. See you next week. I'll call if I need you."

Jesus is to be allowed to take up full and complete residence. He isn't to be treated like an occasional visitor whom we think stays too long after supper so we start dropping hints that he should go, like getting out the breakfast cereal.

The means of appropriating Christ dwelling in us is through faith. The prayer is we'd have the ability to believe he's present and growing in allowing him to be fully resident.

Again connected to "power." We're to be strengthened with power like a dynamo at a hydroelectric plant transforms rushing water into electricity to give power to homes and businesses. It provides the ability to carry on with the essentials of life.

The capacity for God to fulfill this request is "out of his glorious riches." If Elon Musk gave you \$100 or \$1000, you'd take it, but he wouldn't be giving out of his riches. You might feel he stiffed you or he was cheap. If he gave you a billion dollars, that would be out of his riches. God has a humongous bank account with unlimited reserves. Out of it he provides resources. God has the means and the willingness to share of those means.

B. To grasp God's love. Vv. 17 - 19.

The request is stated in another manner to reinforce it. The metaphor changes from a home to a combination of a tree and a building. Rooted refers to being planted. Established is a building grounded on a firm foundation. In the spiritual realm this occurs when a person is born again. They've come to place of trusting in Christ for salvation.

The love of Christ is the soil into which the church is rooted and upon which the church as the temple of God is established. We have nothing without it. Therefore, may we know the love of Christ, get up close and personal with it. We're to come to an understanding, appreciation and experience of God's love.

This isn't a solo endeavor. No matter if you watched the Super Bowl or not, you know football is a team event. MVP Patrick Mahomes has unique abilities, athleticism and guts, but wouldn't win a game by himself. One against eleven. Not very good odds. Grasping the love of God is a team event. There's the keyword

together, together with all the saints. It's going to take all Christians, of all generations of all ethnicities (Jew and Gentile), men and women, rich and poor to fully grasp what the Lord has for us.

More power, as in having the ability, capacity, capability, competency, is needed.

The love of God is portrayed as multi-dimensional: width, length, height and depth. We usually measure the first but don't think about what's underneath our feet. Width – whatever is to our sides. Length - in front and behind us. Height - reaching up to the ceiling but then we think about the skies. As far as depth, we go down to where our feet are. There's much more beneath our feet.

Dimensional terms help us understand the infinite nature of God's love. How far can you go in a straight line? We can travel forward, circumnavigate the earth, and come from behind back to the same spot.

It's not a straight line as it follows the earth's curvature and doesn't stay on the same geometric plane. Think a pane of glass on a globe. A Bolivian salt flat is the flattest place on earth. If we were able to stay on the same plane, defy gravity, in one mile we'd gain eight inches of elevation. A 1000 mile journey would result in being 660 feet up in the air. Continuing to walk on that plane would eventually get us out of Earth's atmosphere and into expanses of the universe with all of its billions and billions of light years of distance.

The same kind of thing can be said for width, height and depth. People have tried to describe the enormity of God's love. Songs have been written about it. We sang about it earlier. Words to songs may be coming to your mind. Chris Tomlin's Jesus Loves Me or Love Ran Red. Crowder's How He Loves. Reckless Love by Cory Asbury. And on and on and on.

Move from musicians to theologians. John Stott, "The love of Christ is wide enough to encompass all mankind...long enough to last for eternity, deep enough to reach the most degraded sinner and high enough to exalt him to heaven."

"the entire provision God has made in Christ for the good of his people, so that the dimensions would be those of the gospel storehouse, the vast reservoir out of which the Church is filled. "Breadth" might denote the manifoldness of that provision; "length," its eternal duration; its "depth" might be represented by the profundity (immensity) of Christ's humiliation; and its "height" by the loftiness of the condition to which his people are to be raised. To comprehend this, to understand its existence and its richness, is to get our faith enlarged, our expectations expanded" (Pulpit Commentary, Ephesians 3:18)

How about hearing from a missionary? Patrick went to Ireland over 1500 years ago. He wrote what is known as Morning Prayer. The full poem is on the back of the sermon notes. Here's some of what he said about the expansiveness of Christ's love: "Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ on my right, Christ on my left, Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ in the heart of everyone who thinks of me, Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me, Christ in the eye that sees me, Christ in the ear that hears me."

We can add the love of Christ is personal enough to reach out to you and me. He could see past our sins and love us in spite of them. It's massive enough to wrap his arms around the entire world.

The love of Christ is expressed as surpassing knowledge. This doesn't mean it's unknowable but that it's not able to be known completely. It's like being in a booth with money in and they turn the fan on and you have to grab as much money as you can in a minute. Can't grab it all. It's like trying to catch the wind. Love can't be ascertained merely on an intellectual level. It needs to go beyond that. People can say, "Oh that's wonderful" about what God's done but it hasn't made a change in their lives.

The desire is that we "be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." This isn't saying we become God but that we'd be filled to the brim with God. This brings us back to Christ dwelling in our hearts with his love being the dominant feature - to be filled with love as much as God has and gives.

III. Outburst of praise. Vv. 20, 21

We come to the third time power is brought up and it's in triplet form in v. 20 - able, power, work. The first two have the root word from which we get dynamo, dynamite, dynamic. The third is where we get the word energy.

The emphasis is on what God can do. It's his power that's at work in us. It's not our own. It's not something we manufacture but it's his strength ability and energy. These are unlimited so we shouldn't put a limit on God. We shouldn't say "You've done enough. This might be beyond your ability..."

The scope of God's ability is reinforced by saying he can do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine. Asking refers to things we talk to him about, our requests. Imagine indicates exercising our mind to comprehend and understand. It's not anything that we can dream up. God doesn't do things in violation of who he is. So even though I could try to imagine a square circle, it doesn't mean God is going to make one.

The outburst of praise directs our attention to the one who is to get the credit - to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus (v. 21). In which of those is it easier for God to get the glory? Obvious answer - in Christ Jesus.

However, we need to remember that Christ is intimately connected with his followers as we are his body. Therefore, the church reflects Jesus Christ and are to be reflecting his glory. The desire is that glory of God would be shown beginning now and throughout all generations forever and ever.

Sounds like this would make a great ending for a book. But it's not. We've only scaled half the mountains of the teaching in Ephesians. The first part lays the theological framework for the second half. We come to the transition from the lofty teaching to the lofty practice of our faith we've encountered. The strategy is to keep climbing baby. Keep climbing as we get to the nitty gritty of life. We don't always experience walking on mountaintops. Sometimes we walk through dark valleys in life. God wants us to remember that we always look up and see the mountains.

Look to him and see his love. Christ's love is far-reaching, never ending, unlimited. One of the best descriptions of love is "while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

Video. This I Know (Jesus Loves Me) by Lydia Laird. [youtube.com/watch?v=e_jOXm81xXE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e_jOXm81xXE)