



# Transformed by Love

December 31, 2023 - January 6, 2024

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## **MAIN POINT**

You are thoroughly loved by God, a fact that goes beyond mere knowledge and produces action.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Have you ever been loved so thoroughly by another person that you felt unable to repay it (i.e. a parent who sacrificed much, a teacher who went above and beyond the call of duty, a spouse who forgave you)?

What are some different ways we can respond (either good or bad) when someone shows us that kind of overwhelming love (i.e. with cynicism thinking they must have wrong motives, outright rejection, try to repay it, express gratitude, etc.)?

What about your relationship with God? How do you respond to His love for you? Do you think it's possible for you to understand the fullness of God's love? Is it possible for you to experience the fullness of God's love in your own life? Explain.

Human love is often difficult to understand and respond to rightly. On Valentine's Day, we try to express love to the people God has placed in our lives, but in the day-to-day we often fall short in both understanding and expression. How much more do we struggle to understand God's love and respond rightly to it? In Ephesians 3:17-19, Paul prayed for God's people to know God's love, grow in it, and experience it in practical ways.

## **UNDERSTANDING**

**READ [EPHESIANS 3:17B](#).**

What did Paul state as fact here about the Ephesian believers?

Is it true that all believers are rooted and established in love? How so?

What leads to a person feeling secure in God's love, as Paul described it here? What are some signs that a believer does not feel secure in God's love?

God's love toward us is a merciful act of His will. We are not rooted and established in our own good works, abilities, or even our own capacity to love. We are rooted and established in God's determined love for us, demonstrated most clearly through the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul's prayer is that we would be held strongly and grounded by that love as it grows us to maturity.

**READ [EPHESIANS 3:18](#).**

If God's people are rooted and established in God's love (v. 17), then why would Paul pray for them to have power to understand God's love?

Do you experience that same tension of being grounded in God's love but not fully understanding it? Explain.

How does a person learn to "comprehend" (CSB) or "grasp" (NIV) the length, width, height, and depth of God's love? Why did Paul include the phrase "with all the saints"? What does Christian community have to do with understanding God's love?

We are not able to grasp the vast extent of God's love for us on our own. To comprehend God's love, you must pursue it alongside other believers. Each one grounded in God's great love, grows to comprehend that love more deeply together by God-given spiritual strength. As Paul beautifully expressed it, God's love cannot be measured, but we can grow together in our understanding of it.

### **READ [EPHESIANS 3:19](#).**

Why isn't it enough to simply know God loves you? What else is needed?

Read [James 2:17-23](#).

What is the relationship between James 2:17-23 and Ephesians 3:19?

Read [Luke 11:42](#) and [John 5:39-42](#).

In your own words, what was Jesus' message to these Pharisees?

Just as faith without works is invalid, so is love without action. We don't grasp God's love simply by hearing or reading about it. We grasp God's love by experiencing it. Love must be expressed in action. Love expressed in action is evidence of the fullness of God—Jesus ([Colossians 1:19](#))—in a person's life. The truest understanding and expression of God's love is to be filled with Jesus, relating to God and people as He exemplifies.

## **APPLICATION**

Would you agree that you are rooted, firmly established, and secure in God's love? Why or why not?

What are some ways Christian community helps you better comprehend God's great love for you? What has to happen among believers for that process to take place? How are we doing at helping one another grasp God's love?

What is one action you can take to further see that God's love "surpasses knowledge" in your life this week? How can this group pray for you about that?

## **PRAYER**

Thank God for His love that holds you steady throughout all life's circumstances. Invite Him to help you grow in that love, together with other believers, so that you might move beyond knowledge to the daily experience of living and loving like Jesus.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **EPHESIANS 3:17-19**

**3:17b.** Paul prays 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, precious 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 in 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 which 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. That is to be 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.