



Sermon – April 07, 2019
Chris Osborne

Verses Covered

Ephesians 3:17 - 19

It's the only Baptist church I know that really doesn't seem to fear the rain. I'm impressed. So we're in the middle of Paul's second prayer for the Ephesians. He is, he talked last time about praying that you be, that you allow Christ not to visit you, but to live in you through the release of the Spirit in the inner man. And now he comes to the second part now. He's going to say a phenomenal statement at the end that I think we have to pay attention to. But we're going to walk through it phrase by phrase beginning in the last part of verse 17. He says, so that Christ might dwell through faith in your hearts. Then he says, here's where he starts.

¹⁷*in love rooted and foundationed.*

Now he uses, as a matter of fact, in English if you mix metaphors, your teacher will kill you. But this is exactly what he does here. He mixes metaphors. He uses a planting metaphor for the farmer. You put something down you want it to take root and lock down. And then he uses a construction metaphor that when you build a building, you better make sure the foundation's stable or you're going to have issues with the building. So he says to us that as Christians, that what we have to root down on and what we have to build our walk with Christ on, he says, is the understanding that God loves us. Now when you read that first, if you're my age, your first thought are the hippies in the 60's and 70's. Make love, not war. And a Volkswagen van with little flowers on it. I mean that's my first thought. But this is, for him, pivotal. So I want you to understand what he's just told you. That the root of your walk with Christ has to be settled down in the idea that God loves you. And the foundation on which you're going to build your faith in Christ is the idea that God loves you. This is why I struggle with some of the Neo-Calvinism. Because the Neo-Calvinism teaches that God really doesn't love you, but that, in fact, He only loves Himself. That is not where you go here. The concept here is explicitly that God's love is, it is directed at you and you want your root to be in that and your foundation to be in that. So you need to lock that down. That's his statement.

Now he explains that. Listen to what he says. And here's the Greek. Verse 18.

¹⁸*So that you might be strong enough inside to comprehend with all the saints*

And then he mentions different aspects of the love of God. So here's the second thing he says. Literally, the Greek word, we saw it earlier in Ephesians where he talked about the inherent strength of God. He says, you need to be strong enough, that's the word. You need to be strong enough inside you so that you can understand how great God's love is. Which he will explain in a second. Now that's an interesting Greek word. He doesn't say I want you to be intellectually capable of understanding God's love. I want you inside where you live to be strong enough to understand God's love. That's a powerful statement. Because that is our struggle.

We live in a world that is broken. This is not the world God intended for Adam and Eve and for us. Never intended for there to be death. He didn't intend for there to be struggle. We first encounter it when we grow up in a home. First thing that happens is, even if you grow up in a Christian home, you do something wrong, you get disciplined. And I would begin to realize there's a brokenness here. That there are times when my family and I are not on good terms and that there's a brokenness inside the home. And you begin to kind of wonder with that. And then it's not long until you face somebody's death. I remember in Junior High I had Talmadge Fog a grade ahead of me. Gary Fog and I were in the same grade. And then Cheryl Fogg, their sister, was a grade below us. And that year, the year book was dedicated to her because she had died of leukemia that year. Never experienced anything like that. So that was staggering to me. Then you move along and you experience what theologians would call theodicy moments. Combination of two words, justice and God. That there are things that can't explain and that appear to question His love for you. When I have a young couple in my office, and they married as virgins and they've done everything right and they've been 10 years into the marriage and they're in church all the time and they read their Bible and they study and they pray and they're faithful to each other and they do the right thing. And they tried for 10 years, spent money, in-vitro, done everything they can, and they can't get pregnant. And down the street a little 17-year-old girl who has twice terminated life. And for them, when they sit in my office and say, "Why doesn't He answer our prayers? He answered Hannah's and gave her Samuel. Gave Abraham and Sarah a child late in life. Gave John the Baptist to his parents. Why won't He answer that?" I don't have an answer for that. And when you hit those moments, you struggle.

I've often wondered when you come to the New Testament, we have that really cool story in the New Testament of Peter. Herod has got him in jail, he's going to kill him the next morning, right. An angel comes in and Peter's asleep. You've got to be godly to know you're dying in the morning and you're sound asleep. Angel, actually the Bible says, hits him, wakes him up, gets him out of bed, walks him through the jail, opens the doors for him, gets him to where the church is praying for him, knocks on the door, opens the door. Little girl has no idea who he is and she's praying for him to be released. That's a great story. Unless you're James' wife, who the day before, your husband who's one of the big three, right. Peter, James, and John. Your husband Herod killed. So when you hear this story about how great it is that God miraculously with an angel rescued Peter, your first question is, "Well that's great, but why didn't He rescue my husband?" When you live in this world, you're going to go through enough of those things that they will compile on you. Now here's the problem you have. The enemy will jump on top of you and scream in your soul, "If He loved you, it wouldn't be this way." And that's why Paul says, "Listen, I'm praying that inside you'll be strong enough to get how much God loves you." And he says, "Let me tell you how." Look at this.

That you might be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and height and depth

He says, let me tell you something. His love is wide. There is no one not open to the blood of Christ. Doesn't matter skin color. Doesn't matter how much money you make. Doesn't matter where you live. There is nobody on this planet that's born in the image of God that does not have a chance at the cross of Jesus. His love is that wide. It's that expansive. His love is that long. You can't run away from God so long that He quits on you. Luke 15, right, prodigal son, he takes all the money, hangs out, wastes it, comes back home. What does his dad do? "Well boy...." No. Hugs him. When I was pastoring in New Baden, I had this guy about 88 years' old who was 88. God saved. So we set up baptism on a Sunday night. It's in the winter. One of my deacons comes up to me right before the service and he goes, "Hey, heater's dead. The water is ice cold." So I go back there, put my hand in, and go, "Oh, man. I don't want to do this." Which is not a godly sign for a pastor. But at any rate. So I go up to him and I'm afraid, you know, I'm going to put him in that water and then have to do a baptism and right straight into a funeral when he has a heart attack and that thing. So I go up to him and say, "Hey man, it's really cold. Let's hold this off." And I'll never forget. He looked at me and he said, "You know, preacher, I've been waiting 88 years. I don't want to wait another day." You can't run so far that you outrun His love. Its height is huge. You're never not going to have it. When I die and I go to heaven, there's not going to be a day He does not love me. And there's a depth to it so that no matter how badly you sin, you can't sin your way out of His love. I had, in another church, lady came in, came in one day and she was just one of my favorite ladies. Her husband and I were great friends. She sat down and she began to weep. And after about 10 minutes, she finally got some composure and she said, "I'm embarrassed to tell you this, but my daughter, who was in high school, became pregnant." And she said, "I was so terrified of the loss of her future that the minute she told me, we made an appointment and went down the next day and terminated the life." To this day, she struggles with that decision. And that's always the hard thing. We have ladies in every church in the country. At some point the pastor speaks to this issue, and has to because the Bible's very clear about that, and the danger point of where we're going as a country. And if you've done that as a lady, you're just killing yourself inside. You've got to remember ladies; you can't fail God enough that He can't forgive you. That's the beauty of what Paul's saying. He's saying, "I am praying that inside, that you're strong enough to comprehend that you can't outrun Him. You're never going to lose it. It's open to everybody and no matter how much you sin; you cannot sin your way out of His love." He says, "I want you to comprehend that and I'm praying that you get that." And then look at this.

¹⁹So that you might know, literally, the casting beyond knowledge of the love of Christ.

He says, the love of Christ you can't know, but I want you to know it. That's what he prays. He says, it's beyond your knowledge. You're never going to totally get it. But I do want you to understand how deeply it is and that it's centered in Jesus Christ. You know it's true because in Romans 5 it says he demonstrated His love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He didn't die for us because we're nice people. He died for us because we're in rebellion against Him. That cross is the ultimate proof of whether or not He loves you. Not whether or not you have a child. Not whether or not you lose a child. Not whether or not you

struggle. Not whether or not people betray you. Not whether or not Christians are mean to you. Not whether or not your pastor fails. The proof of the love of God is inside the act of Jesus on that cross. And he says, I pray that you get this. And then look at what he says.

That you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

If I don't get that concept of love, listen, I can't be filled with the fullness of God. And we do struggle. I've told you before. In, when I have kids in my office every Wednesday, I ask the same set of questions to every child that comes in. One of my questions is, have you sinned? Yes. Does like your sin? No. Does He love you? Yes. I have never had a child, ever, debate that. But I've had a ton of adults in my office who struggle with the idea that God still loves them. I remember we were street witnessing one year in Jackson, Mississippi. Sat down with a guy. Tried to talk to him about Jesus. Started out with the Billy Graham thing and I said, "Listen, God loves you. He's got a plan for your life." He said, "God doesn't love me. I mean nobody loves me." Sat with him for 20 minutes. Couldn't convince him of anything. And finally left him there with the belief that absolutely nobody loved him and God didn't love him. At some point we all struggle with that. I struggled when my son had his surgeries. And we're sitting in the room and Peg's got the days and I've got the nights. And I'm listening to him have these bladder spasms and crying, screaming, for an hour to an hour and a half in intense pain. And I'm praying and I'm telling God, "Look, this isn't building him in Christ. Why can't you give Him some relief?" And I'm struggling because I've got to go home and preach to a church in Midland on the weekends that I'm struggling with exactly what Paul's praying for here. Until one night I look out the window. And across the street is this illuminated cross. And the Holy Spirit said to me, "Nothing you're going through with your son is worse than what I went through with mine." If you do not get in your soul how much He loves you, you cannot experience His fullness. That's what he says. That's a staggering statement. You can go to all the BSF Bible studies you want to. You can go all you want to. You can study that Bible as richly as you want to. But if you're not rooted and foundationed in the idea that God loves you no matter how far you go, no matter how many people you bring in, no matter how much you sin, God's absolutely in love with you! If you can't get that in your soul, he says, you can never experience the fullness of God in this world.

So, listen, he doesn't think he can teach that to them and make it stick. He thinks he's got to pray that in them. Now I want you to listen to me today. All of us have a circle of people. That circle that is intimate in our lives is comprised of two groups: our families and our friends. I'm telling you, you need to pray for your family and your friends that they understand in their soul, not in their head, but in their soul how deeply God is in love with who they are. If you're a dad or a mom, you need to pray that into your children's lives. That when they come to Christ, that they root their faith in God's love for them. That they build their house in the fact that God is in love with them. You need to pray that for your children because your children are going to sin. They're going to fail. A lot of times when they've grown up in a Christian home and they've been taught we do this, we do this, we live right, and all of a sudden they've failed. They are crushed. They feel the failure. They've disappointed their parents. And they struggle at that point with whether or not the parents love them, and particularly I'm sure God doesn't love anymore, because I've stepped away from His code. You need to drive into your children through your prayer life that God has based their soul in His love. So that when they do fail, they realize I cannot sin myself out of how much He cares for me. You want them to understand, it doesn't matter how far they

go away. And I'm telling you, when we deal with college students, we see kids that come in as a freshman. We don't see them again until their junior year because they have a couple years where they just nuts out. I want them to understand. It doesn't matter how far you went, how much you've gone, how long you've gone, you can't go past His love. And you need to pray that in your kids' lives if you want your kids to have the fullness of God in their life in this world. That's his prayer.

It's obvious, then, you can teach this and get it here. But for that circle of people in your life, you can talk to them about it, share with them about it, read verses about it, point to the cross about it, but as with me in Houston in the hospital room with my son, it took the Holy Spirit speaking inside me for me to understand no matter what I see happen in my life, He loves me.

Father, I would ask You again, today, for all of us in this room, that You would not take my words, but You would take what You wrote right there, that your Holy Spirit wrote for us right there. And Father in every heart in this room, burn that in there through Your Spirit that You love us. We're never going to be out of that. We can't outrun it. Anybody we know can come in. And, Father, remind us today no matter what we think we've done bad, Your love and grace and mercy covers all of it. Drive that deep into who we are. I ask You that in the same way Paul did for this church, I ask You for this church. In Jesus Christ name.