

Ephesians 3:17-18 — "Praying to Experientially Know the Exceeding Love of Jesus Christ!"

Christ's love is written in characters of blood, and his grace is stamped on every line and blessing of the gospel.
(Richard Rawlin)

God's love does not spring from delight in our beauty — but from pity to our deformity. (William Spurstowe)

"This is real love!" That God should punish the innocent for the guilty; that He should exact the blood of His Son to cancel the guilt of His rebels; that He should lay an infinite weight of wrath on Jesus' soul, in order to lay an infinite weight of love on ours; that He should sacrifice His life of priceless value, for our worthless, forfeited, and doomed life; that He should not only give His Son, but should bruise Him, put Him to grief, afflict Him, and make His soul an offering for sin; that the 'Lord of Glory' should become a 'man of sorrows'; that the Lord of Life should die. (Octavius Winslow)

Outline of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-19 —

1. you'd be strengthened with Power (v16)
2. you'd be **ravished with Love** (vv17-19a)
3. you'd be filled with GOD (v19b)

THESIS — From our text, we can draw out 10 BREATHTAKING REALITIES about this love.

We see 10 breathtaking realities to be awed BY his love & be affectionate in your love FOR Him.

1. UNCHANGING love of Christ

Cannot fluctuate - Lam 3.22 - the Lovingkindnesses of the Lord never cease!

2. SAVING love of Christ

rooted and grounded *IN LOVE*:

A believer is *located within the Sphere of Divine Love [in the realm of/united to this Love of Christ]*

3. STRONG love of Christ

Consider the verbs that Paul uses: *rooted* and *grounded/firmly cemented*.

4. PARTICULAR love of Christ

So that *you may be able to comprehend...* (the "you" comprises the elect, particularly chosen ones)

- God has general love for creation
- God has general love for humanity
- God has particular love for elect

For all its glory and the great heights from which it came, such love can only be experienced together "with all the saints"! Our experience of Christ's love is personal, but **never private**. It is meant to be felt and proclaimed and enjoyed in the context of the body of Christ. It is a personal, yet shared, experience. This is not contemplation of God's love while sitting alone on a sunlit hillside. It is an experience that comes from belonging to a community of believers where each child of God can encourage every other Christian with the truth of God's passionate affection for us.
—Sam Storms "With all the saints" (Eph 3:18a)

God's redeeming love is Particular and Distinguishing. Those who declare that God loves all people alike, the saved as well as the damned, greatly tarnish the love of God, reducing it to a fickle, helpless, frustrated passion. But that cannot be ... "Nothing is more absurd than to imagine that anyone beloved of God can eternally perish (Dan Fortner).

5. WIDE love of Christ**6. LONG love of Christ****7. HIGH love of Christ**

8. DEEP love of Christ

Oh, wonder of love! Love is submissive, it enables to suffer. So it was love that made our dear Lord Jesus lay down his life to save us from hell and to bring us to heaven. Oh, love unspeakable! (Thomas Brooks)

9. INFINITE love of Christ

O Lord, but that we may more admire the love of Christ, that surpasses knowledge. (Thomas Brooks)

10. EXPERIENTIAL love of Christ**Note the words from this German Hymn by Paul Gerhardt:**

*O grant that nothing in my soul may dwell, but Thy pure love alone!
O may Thy love possess my whole, my Joy, my Treasure, and my Crown.
All coldness from my heart remove; my ev'ry act, word, thought, be love.*

*O love, how cheering is thy ray! All pain before thy presence flies;
care, anguish, sorrow, melt away, where'er thy healing beams arise.
O Jesus, nothing may I see, nothing desire or seek, but Thee.*

God's love toward his elect is invincible and unquenchable. There is no possibility that it will expire. The black waters of our sin cannot extinguish it. And the floods of our unbelief cannot drown it. With men, nothing is stronger than love. His love for us overcomes every obstacle that might stand in the way of our everlasting glory. Every sinner loved of God from eternity was redeemed by Christ at Calvary, shall be called by the Spirit in time, and shall be saved forever. (Dan Fortner)

What is remarkable about this prayer is that Paul "assumes that his readers, Christians though they are, do not adequately appreciate the love of Christ." It's not a prayer that we might love Christ more, although we should. Rather, Paul is praying that we might better grasp Christ's immense love for us. While there is an intellectual side to this, it is not merely intellectual. Paul is praying that we who already know Christ's great love might come to experience it at ever-deepening levels. (D. A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation*).

O THE DEEP DEEP LOVE OF JESUS

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Vast, unmeasured, boundless, free,
rolling as a mighty ocean
in its fullness over me.
Underneath me, all around me,
is the current of thy love;
leading onward, leading homeward,
to thy glorious rest above.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Love of ev'ry love the best:
'tis an ocean vast of blessing,
'tis a haven sweet of rest.
O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
'Tis a heav'n of heav'ns to me;
and it lifts me up to glory,
for it lifts me up to thee.

O the deep, deep love of Jesus!
Spread his praise from shore to shore;
how he loveth, ever loveth,
changeth never, nevermore;
how he watches o'er his loved ones,
died to call them all his own;
how for them he intercedeth,
watcheth o'er them from the throne.

I STAND AMAZED IN THE PRESENCE (MY SAVIOR'S LOVE FOR ME)

I stand amazed in the presence
Of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how He could love me,
A sinner, condemned, unclean.

He took my sins and my sorrows,
He made them His very own;
He bore the burden to Calvary,
And suffered and died alone.

How marvelous! How wonderful!
And my song shall ever be:
How marvelous! How wonderful!
Is my Savior's love for me!

When with the ransomed in glory
His face I at last shall see,
'Twill be my joy through the ages
To sing of His love for me.