

INTRODUCE

Well, if you have your Bibles, and I hope you do,

- please grab them and turn to Ephesians chapter 3.
- You can open a phone or a tablet to Ephesians 3,
- or you can use one of the hard-backed black bibles
 - under every single chair.
 - You'll find Ephesians 3 on page **977**.

INTRODUCTION: CROSS FIT

As you turn there:

- just by a show of hands,
- how many of you have done...
- or currently do CrossFit?

Actually, I think it's now a verb,

- you don't DO CrossFit...
- you CrossFit!

So, CrossFit is defined as a form of high intensity interval training.

- CrossFit is a strength and conditioning workout
- that is made up of functional movement
- performed at a high intensity level.

Now, there are only two thoughts about CrossFit.

- It's awesome...
 - best thing I've ever done in my life...
 - everyone should CrossFit!
- Or...it's a cult. Right?

And even if you don't CrossFit, you know others who do. Why?

Because THEY let us know!

- They don't lead with,
 - *"Hey, I'm Ted and I work for Lockheed."*
- No, they're like,
 - *"Hey I'm Ted, and I work out at Decima,*
 - *or Ken Caryl,*
 - *or Kada."*

It's the first thing out of their mouth!

And they've got their own language. Right?

- *"You wanna come to the box with me?"*
 - *"What's a box?"*
- *"It's the CrossFit gym."*
 - *"Why don't you call it a gym?"*
- *"Cause it's a box!"*
 - *"Please don't hurt me!"*

But you need to know what a WOD and a FRAN and a MURPH are.

And CrossFitters are just bosting about their suffering all the time:

- *"I bled out of my eyelids today..."*
 - *it was awesome!"*
- And people, in droves, are like, *"sign me up for that!"*

TRANSITION

Now you, Fathom Church, you're like weird CrossFit people of the Bible.

- These first six weeks of Ephesians
- have been some hard-hitting theology and conviction...
- and I love how you almost lean into a Gospel beatdown.

I mean, it's almost like you like it!

- You're like the CrossFitters of preaching.
- Cause, I mean, I just rail on you,
 - and call you sinners,
 - and that you deserved the wrath of God...
- and you just lean in and say,
 - "Tell us that again, pastor."
- I love it!

STRENGTHENED

Well, today's sermon is called **SLIDE STRENGTHENED**

- And I think you'll see that this STRENGTHENING
- is more than just a theological beatdown.

This is the pivot point from the first half of this book to the second half.

- The first three chapters
 - are really deep theology
 - for the believers to know,
- and then in chapters 4-6
 - Paul starts to address
 - the behaviors that follow.

So, the pivot is a prayer.

- Paul prays for all this deep theology
- to STRENGTHEN these believers
- before he starts addressing their behaviors.
- **Belief always precedes behavior!**

So, let's jump into this prayer. Ephesians 3 starting in verse 14:

EPHESIANS 3:14-15

[14] For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

EXPLAIN

Now, Paul actually started this prayer back in chapter 3 verse 1,

- look back at verse 1:
- it literally started the exact same way...
 - **for this reason I...**
- but then Paul took a 13-verse interruption
- to talk about the revealed mystery of Christ,
- which Justin walked us through last week.

But today he gets back to his prayer.

- He's praying,
 - **on his knees,**
 - **before the Father,**
- and here's what he prays.

Verse 16:

EPHESIANS 3:16-17a

[16] that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be STRENGTHENED with power through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

RECAP

Now, just think with me for a moment about how wonderful this prayer is!

Paul has just spent three chapters saying:

- God chose you,
 - he predestined you,
 - he called you,
 - he saved you.
- Even though you were dead in your sins,
 - and in league with the enemy,
 - and deserving of his wrath.
- He rescued you,
 - and made you alive,
 - and saved you by grace through faith.
- He took you,
 - outsiders,
 - and made you insiders.
- He took those who were deadlocked enemies,
 - and he united the two
 - as one new tribe:
 - the church.

- And he did all this...
 - so that all the manifold wisdom of God
 - might now be made known
 - to the rulers and authorities
 - in the heavenly places.

And now...in light of all of that...

- I am hitting my knees...
- I'm getting down,
 - before our Father,
- and I'm gonna beg him
 - that you would be STRENGTHENED with power,
- I told you all of those things...
- and now I'm praying that you would be STRENGTHENED!

TRANSITION

So, this is the pivot prayer.

- He wants to STRENGTHEN these believers
- BEFORE he instructs them in their behaviors.

You gotta remember this: **Belief always precedes behavior!**

And Paul is going to give us three purposes of this prayer in the next couple verses.

So, let's break these three purposes down.

Look at the rest of verse 17:

EPHESIANS 3:17b-18

that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

POINT 1

This is the first purpose of Paul's prayer.

That we would have the **SLIDE STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND**

- The outcome of the spiritual STRENGTHENING...
- will be the Christian's ability to grasp what God's doing.

This is why he says you will have the **STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND the breadth and length and height and depth.**

- Paul is making a statement
- of the grandeur of Christ's love for you...
- and you need **STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND** this!

It reminds me of the verse where we actually got our church name from.

Job 11 verses 7-9 say this:

SLIDE JOB 11:7-9

[7] "Can you fathom the deep things of God?

Can you probe the limits of the Almighty?

[8] It is higher than heaven—what can you do?

Deeper than Sheol—what can you know?

[9] Its measure is longer than the earth

and broader than the sea.

So, this is a STRENGTH that isn't physical, right?

- It's a STRENGTH in the mind
- It's a STRENGTH in the heart.
- It's a STRENGTH in the spirit.

And, this kind of STRENGTH is found ALL throughout the Bible.

But I'm reading through the book of Joshua right now in my quiet time,

- and so, I thought I'd use an example from Joshua.
- Joshua 1:6 says this:

SLIDE JOSHUA 1:6-7

[6] Be STRONG and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] Only be STRONG and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

So, that's the STRENGTH we're talking about.

- God's not saying to Joshua, be strong,
 - like physically,
 - like CrossFit,
 - like be unnaturally yoked out of your mind!

No! It's an inner strength to lead God's people into the promised land.

It's **SLIDE STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND** what God's doing.

ILLUSTRATION: JERICHO

Cause, in Joshua chapter 6, they come to the fortified city of Jericho.

- And maybe you know the story,
- but God says to Joshua,
 - *“Go and take the city.”*
- But Joshua goes,
 - *“Um...*
 - *we don’t have soldiers to match them!”*
- So, God says,
 - *“What’s that I hear?*
 - *Is that a clarinet?*
 - *Yeah...take the band...*
 - *and march around the city.”*
- And Joshua says,
 - *“Ok...*
 - *this is my first day.*
 - *It’s my first day on the job...*
 - *these guys have followed Moses,*
 - *and they’ve seen all your signs and wonders...*
 - *and on my first day...*
 - *you want me to tell them...*
 - *to bring the marching band to Jericho?”*
- *“Yes I do.”*

So, Joshua must remember, *“Be strong and courageous,”*

cause he calls together the captains...

- “Alright guys...”
- they’ve got a fortified city with well-equipped warriors...
 - we’ve got trombones...
- go get em...we’re going for a walk.”

AND THEY DO IT!

- NOT EVEN JUST ONCE...BUT FOR SEVEN DAYS!

I mean, God’s gotta be smiling at this one.

- HE’S JUST GOTTA BE!
 - Watch this one, angels...
 - “Yeah...do that same thing tomorrow!”
- I MEAN, IT’S JUST LUNACY!
- **It goes past any stage of human comprehension.**

But Joshua does it...seven days in a row he does it.

And then you get to the seventh day, and God ramps the crazy up a bit.

- *“Here’s the deal...*
- *you’ve gotta march around the city,*
- *not just one time,*
 - *but seven times...*
- *And then, you gotta yell!”*

And maybe my imagination goes a little wild at this point,

- but can you imagine when those guys came to the final lap...
- and they come to that fateful moment when they all stop...
- and they all kinda look up...
- and everyone on the wall is just looking at them...right?
- Moment of truth.

“Like, we’re all supposed to yell now?!?”

- And I just have to imagine
- they’re all nervously looking at each other like,
 - “You do it, man.
 - Cause I ain’t starting this thing.”

Who’s gonna start the screaming?

- It’s gotta be some teenage boy in the youthgroup...
 - who’s like “Arrrggggh!!”...
- and then everyone else joins in...

And the walls come crashing down.

You think they had the **STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND** for the next town?

TRANSITION

This is the first purpose of Paul’s prayer.

- That we would learn all that rich theology...
- and it would give us the **STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND**
- how unfathomable God is!

The second purpose can be found in verse 19:

EPHESIANS 3:19a

[19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge,

POINT 2

So, Paul is praying that you'd have the STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND.

And here's the second one. He wants you to have a

SLIDE KNOWLEDGE THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE

I love this one!

You cannot KNOW something that SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE!

- To speak of knowing something
- that surpasses knowledge
- is deliberately paradoxical.

But what Paul is saying is that

- to KNOW the love of Christ...
- is to KNOW Christ HIMSELF,
 - which, back to our last verse,
- is an ever-deepening experience.

So, he prays that you would KNOW,

- remember that Greek word, *ginosko*?
 - It's here again!

It literally reads *ginosko agape christos*.

- That you would experientially and intimately KNOW...
- the highest, deepest, and most profound form of love...
 - a sacrificial love that transcends and persists
 - regardless of circumstance.

ILLUSTRATION: SICK

How to illustrate this?

- Well, all illustrations will fall short.
- But let me try.

My whole family got sick this week...and it got me remembering...

See, when Harper was little...

Like, little little...she got sick for one of the first times.

- So, we were down in our living room,
 - and we didn't know that Harper was sick,
 - but we had finished feeding her dinner,
 - and Harper was in her pajamas,
- and she was just pitching a fit...
 - just crying and whining,
 - which wasn't unusual,
 - we just thought it was bedtime.
- So, I'm trying to distract her,
 - and play with her,
 - and read to her,
 - but she's not having any of it...
- And I'm holding her in my arms,
 - when she leans back,
 - looks at me with big, tear-filled eyes...

 - and just vomits all over the front of me.

And now she's screaming...

- because she doesn't understand what just happened,
- and she's scared...
 - and she's covered in it,
 - and I'm covered in it,
 - and our couch is covered in it,
 - and our carpet is covered in it...
- and it does not smell pleasant!

And so, I did what any man would do.

- I put her down,
- and called,
 - "Honey, can you come deal with this?"
- No! That's not what I did!

Here's, honestly, what happened.

- I never thought about the smell,
 - though it was very bad.
- I never thought about how disgusting it was,
 - though it was so disgusting!

I just saw my little girl...

- covered in it,
- screaming and crying,
- scared because she didn't understand.

- And so, I held her to my chest,
 - and I carried her up to the bathroom
 - and turned on the shower.
- And I held her in my arms
 - until the water temperature was just right.
- I then stripped her of her Disney's Frozen jammies
 - now covered in filth,
- and I took off my soiled clothes...
- and I held her in my arms in the shower
 - as I washed all that filth off of her body.
 - Off her face,
 - and her chest,
 - and even those little neck rolls she used to have...
- And then I grabbed a warm towel and wrapped her in it,
 - and I dried her off,
 - and put clean pajamas on her.
- And while Maryse rocked her to sleep
 - and laid her down in her crib,
- I took my clothes and Harper's
 - and threw them in the washer,
- and then went back downstairs
 - and started cleaning the couch,
 - and the carpet
 - of all the mess that I hadn't caught with my chest.

- I used a rag,
 - and then some carpet spray,
 - and then a little green machine carpet cleaner
 - to rid the area of any stain at all.
- And then I Febreezed the mess out of that room.

And this week, as I thought of that experience it hit me...
and tears welled up in my eyes.

- For this is the state that my sweet God found me in...
- and this is what he's doing in me.
 - Never angry about the mess.
 - Never harsh in word or action.
- Just washing,
- and cleaning,
- and gentle,
- and loving.

TRANSITION

I pray

- that you would be STRENGTHENED...
- by KNOWING the love of Christ...
- that SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE...

There's one more aspect of this prayer. Look at the rest of verse 19:

EPHESIANS 3:19b

that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

POINT 3

The third point of Paul's prayer for strengthening is that you would be

SLIDE FILLED WITH FULLNESS

Now, this is again, a rhetorical device.

- Not paradox like the last point,
- but this is the language of hyperbole.
 - How can we,
 - finite beings,
 - be FILLED with the all the FULLNESS of God,
 - the infinite?

How can we be filled with fullness that could never be contained in us?

Well, another beautiful parallel verse to consider is Colossians 2:9-10

SLIDE COLOSSIANS 2:9–10

[9] For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, [10] and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

- In Christ, the whole fullness of deity dwells...
- AND you have been FILLED in him!

This is a great divine mystery!

- But Paul wants us to be STRENGTHENED
- by being **SLIDE FILLED WITH** all the **FULLNESS** of God.

APPLICATION: WELLS

Now, we seek for fullness in so many places APART from God.
We drink from wells, thinking they'll fill us all the time.

Let me give us four wells we tend to drink from.

SELF

First, we drink from the well of SELF. That's where we always run to first.

Here's how it plays out:

- we have thoroughly convinced ourselves
- that a better version of us
- is what's going to finally solve
- all that bothers us.

We have this future version of us in our minds

- that once we get there,
 - that angst,
 - that frustration,
 - that, "*There has to be something more,*"
- is simply going to vanish.

But here's what I'd like to lay before you.

- Ten years ago,
 - you thought you would be there today.
- But how's that going?
- Still a little bit disappointed?
- This is the game.
- We perpetually push it forward.

That version of you in the future you have in your head,

- the one with six-pack abs
- and cash falling out of your pockets
- will be just as disappointing to you as you find you right now.

You will not be able to FILL yourself with a better version of you.

Which leads me to the second well.

- If WE can't fill OURSELVES...
- We'll try to get OTHERS to help us.

OTHERS

That's the second well: OTHERS.

- It's unbelievable how many of us think...
- other people will complete us.

The fracture in the foundation of every relationship,

- whether it be friendship
 - or marriage
 - or parent to child,
- is the fracture of...
 - *"You will satisfy and complete me."*

I tell engaged couples this all the time.

- If you're going into this marriage thinking,
 - *"this person is going to satisfy*
 - *all the cracks and crevices of my heart,"*
- you are moving toward conflict
- that ultimately will create a lot of pain.

We find the fullness of life in Christ, not in others.

So, you have the well of SELF.

- That's not going to work.

You have the well of OTHERS.

- That's not going to work.

THE WORLD

The third well we drink from, hoping to find fullness is THE WORLD.

What I mean by THE WORLD is really the stuff the world can provide.

- You can numb your angst
 - with trinkets and toys
 - and food and drink
 - and hobbies and experiences.

And when we drink from the well of THE WORLD

- we take the good gifts God gives us,
- and we use them to do more
- than God created those things to do.

For example:

- Food is good. It is to be enjoyed.
 - But we shouldn't run there for comfort,
 - we shouldn't run there for support,
 - and we shouldn't think it ultimately fills us.

- Wine is a good gift from God.
 - Some of you are not in a place
 - where you can enjoy that at all.
 - But there's a way to drink wine that glorifies the Lord,
 - and there's a way that leads to debauchery,
 - sin,
 - and destruction.
 - Be careful!
 - It will not fill you!

- Sex is good and right and beautiful,
 - but to experience the depth
 - of what God created sex to be,
 - it must be done the way God commanded us to operate
 - so that our joy might be ever increasing
 - and so we don't experience
 - the collateral damage that occurs.

Again, this well cannot FILL,

- and we know that from experience!
- Because we know we have to keep going back
 - again and again and again
- to find something to quench our thirst,
 - but it always leaves us wanting more,
 - or worse...sick to our stomach.

RELIGION

And the last well we try to drink from is the well of RELIGION.

What I mean by mean by religion

- is that all major monotheistic religions...
- teach a type of appeasement of a deity...
- that is external to internal.

It's...

- *"I'm going to tilt the scales in my favor*
 - *by being a good person.*
 - *That's what's going to FILL me.*
- *I'm going to give myself over*
 - *to this list of things I must do*
 - *in order to appease this god...*
- *Let me obey these commandments,*
 - *and if I'm good enough*
 - *at obeying these commandments*
 - *then I'm good."*

But religion doesn't work.

In fact, religion is just as enslaving as any of the other wells are.

- Isn't RELIGION...just the well of SELF...
 - with a choir robe on?
- Aren't you still trying to better yourself
 - with external,
 - religious practices?

It will not FILL you!

TRANSITION

But Paul just said there's a fullness of God...

- an eternal fullness...
 - that will fully,
 - finally,
 - and forever
 - fill your soul!
- It's not found in SELF,
 - OTHERS,
 - the WORLD,
 - or even in RELIGION.
- It's only in Christ...

And he's praying that you'd be STRENGTHENED with that knowledge!

Let's finish our text. Verse 20:

BLANK SLIDE WITH PADS

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

[20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

CONCLUSION

So, Paul ends with this doxology, and says God is able...listen...

To do far more abundantly than all we ask for or think about.

- Abundantly more in our marriages
 - Abundantly more in our children
- Abundantly more in our workplaces
 - Abundantly more in our schools
- Abundantly more in our families
 - Abundantly more in our churches
- Abundantly more in our neighborhoods
 - Abundantly more in our hearts

Listen, you can have all of this stuff...and ABUNDANTLY MORE!

Don't you want that?

Some of you, today, need to be STRENGTHENED like Joshua:

- You need the STRENGTH TO COMPREHEND
- how unfathomable God is!

Others of you, today need to be STRENGTHENED...

- With KNOWLEDGE THAT SURPASSES KNOWLEDGE...
- That you would intimately know
 - the great love the God has for you
 - like a loving father caring for a sick child.

While still others today need to be STRENGTHENED...

- by being FILLED WITH FULLNESS...
- Are you lapping up water from other wells...
 - just hoping to be filled...
 - when the promise of the fullness of God...
 - is here for you to have?

Listen, are you settling for something much less...
than the ABUNDANTLY MORE that God has for you?

ENDING

God wants to totally transform your life from the inside out.

- I think our problem is that we are settling for too little.
- God has this abundant life in store for you.
- He has so much more in store for you.
- He wants you to go deeper and deeper and deeper with him,
- and it begins right here in this prayer.

So, before we come next week to the behavior Paul wants to address...

- he starts with your heart.
- **Belief always precedes behavior!**
- Are you being STRENGTHENED?

So, let me end by praying this prayer over you once more.

- Maybe as we bow our heads and close our eyes,
- you just want to open up your hands
- and place them, palm up on your lap.
- As a physical symbol that you are receiving this prayer for you.

Let's pray.

[14] For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, [15] from
whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, [16] that according to
the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power

through his Spirit in your inner being, [17] so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, [18] may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, [19] and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

[20] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, [21] to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

RESPONSES:

Well, every week at Fathom we respond in 4 ways:

- COMMUNION – THE LORD’S SUPPER
- GIVING TITHES & OFFERINGS – fathomchurch.org/give
- PRAYER - fathomchurch.org/prayer
- SINGING

So, I’m going to read the Words of Institution from the Apostle Paul, we’ll take communion, and then we’ll sing:

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23–26 – WORDS OF INSTITUTION

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **TAKE**

[26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Love you church, let’s stand and sing together.

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