

# **When Glory Fills the House**

## **Part 2**

### **Blueprint: God's Design for the Church**

**Ephesians 3:14-21**

If you have your bibles, go ahead and open to Ephesians chapter 3 as we continue our teaching through the book of Ephesians. I am so thankful that each one of you is here. This is the second part of the message we started last Sunday of Ephesians 3:14-21. What we say this morning is somewhat based on what we said last week. We're studying a prayer this morning, Paul's prayer. I remember being a kid raised at Ledbetter Baptist Church and just by the example of my parents; I learned to respect people who prayed. If someone was praying, talking to God, we would be really quiet, we would be attentive, and we would never be disrespectful. As a matter of fact, before Sunday school would start, my parents would arrive at church (which we hardly ever got to church on time) and I can remember us coming up on the front porch and before we would go into church my dad or my mom would look through the little window at the top of the door, and if someone was praying we couldn't go in. every time my mom or dad would say so and so is praying, me and my sister would look at each other because sometimes it would be fifteen degrees outside. If it was brother so and so, he was going to pray for ten minutes and my sister and I would freeze out on the porch, but we learned to respect people who pray. Paul is praying, but Paul is not just praying, God's going to take his pray and make it part of His Word. You catch that, right. So this morning, we're not only listening to a prayer, this prayer is the very Word of God. Therefore, because it's the very Word of God, it's not a prayer just to the church at Ephesus; I believe it's a prayer for us at Hardin as well. I'm even more confident this morning than I was last Sunday morning that I believe

with all of my heart, this is a prayer that is going to be answered in the life of our church. My responsibility this morning is just to make you aware of what Paul is praying for us concerning, and it is the very Word of God. Give your attention to Ephesians 3:14-21 as we read this in the ESV.

## **Scripture**

***"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. 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, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."***

If you were here last Sunday morning, you know that we broke this prayer into three parts. We looked at the base of Paul's prayer. We looked at the point of Paul's prayer. Then we looked at the goal of Paul's prayer, the first part of that goal. We didn't get to finish the prayer last week, so we're picking it up this morning. I had extra time to restudy this prayer, and I overlooked something. There is another point in the prayer. So this morning, instead of having three points to the prayer, we've got four.

Last night I was watching football. I love Saturday night, on the couch doing my final sermon prep and watching football. Now, the football that I really love to watch on TV is SEC football. I just grew up loving SEC football. When I was a kid running the combine on a Saturday, I could listen to the pregame show of UK football, the call in show, the game, and the call in show after. I could literally spend six or seven hours immersed in UK football. I love UK, but I'm just as loyal to the Southeastern Conference as I am to the UK football team. Going into last night, we had the number

one and the number two team to rank teams in the nation, Georgia Bulldogs and Alabama Crimson Tide. When I got home from Bailey and Addison's wedding, it was obvious the number one team in the country, Georgia, was going to lose to Auburn, and that broke my heart. Not that I'm a Georgia fan, I'm an SEC Conference fan, and I thought wow, we might just get two teams in that Final Four National Championship, and Georgia got thumped by Auburn. So then, I did some studying and by the time I turned on the Alabama game, they were losing to Mississippi State. All of a sudden, I wasn't wanting Alabama to crush Mississippi State; I just wanted them to win. So the ultimate goal was just for Alabama to win, but in order for Alabama to reach the ultimate goal of winning, I now had a short-term goal. On this particular drive, I needed Alabama to score, and they did. But then their defense went on the field and I had another short goal. In order for the ultimate goal to be accomplished, I needed the defense to stop Mississippi State, so Mississippi State didn't score and ultimately, both goals were accomplished and Alabama won.

I left you a little short last week. Yes, I shared with you that base of Paul's prayer is that he's praying according to the riches of God's glory. He's not praying for God to answer this prayer out of His riches, but according to His riches so that the answer to this prayer in the life of the Ephesian church will actually be a reflection of how rich God is in the totality of His being. What was the point? He wanted them to be strengthened through His Holy Spirit in their soul/spirit. Now, why was he wanting them to be strengthened? That led us to the goal, and if you remember, we said there were three goals. First, so that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith. Secondly, that they would comprehend and know the love of Christ. Thirdly, they would be filled with the fullness of God. If you'll remember, we got through the first goal of those three goals, so that is where we are going to pick it up this morning. Please add another point to your outline. This morning we're not just talking about the base of Paul's prayer, we're not just talking about the point of Paul's prayer, and we're not just talking about the goal of Paul's prayer, but what's the ultimate goal of Paul's prayer? The ultimate goal is in verses 20-21; that to Him, God, be all glory. In order for God to receive all glory in the church and in Christ, three things must happen. You must give, as a believer, the key of your heart to

Christ. Notice I didn't say as a sinner. This is not a plea of a sinner to repent of sin and put their faith in Christ. This is a prayer for the church, for Christians who already believe in Christ to give Him the key to your heart, so that when He moves into your heart, He doesn't move in as an honored guest, but as a resident. He makes your residence His residence, and He's the primary person in your heart. You don't just give Him a key to where He can let Himself in and stand in the foyer. You give Him access to your living room, your dining room, your kitchen, your bedroom, your bathroom, your closet, and that corner of the closet where you know what you've got hid. You give Him access to that too. The next thing you know, your life is going to be radically different.

Have any of you ever seen a business that was declining, and then all of a sudden, someone buys that business, it comes under new management, and then you go to the place of business after the new manager takes over? Have any of you ever bought a home and remodeled the home, and afterward, you are so proud and you have some guests, family, or friends over, and someone says to you, "Wow, I really like what you've done to this place?" See, now the house, the business, reflects new management, new owner. I can't wait until the day comes in my life when somebody says to God, "Wow, I really like what You did with His heart!" I really like what You did with his life. Do you get it? See, that's the goal is for you to let Christ make Himself at home in your life.

But that goal leads to the second goal; that we, each one of us in the church, "being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." Paul is talking about as Christ takes up residence in our heart and we give Him the key to every room in the house, he wants is to know that we're being rooted, we're being grounded in love. Now, it's two metaphors. One comes out of the world of agriculture, which I understand fully. The other world comes out of the world of architecture, which some of us understand fully. It's the picture of a tree that puts down roots in the soil. Those roots don't stay in the upper level of the soil, what we call the topsoil; those roots penetrate down into the subsoil and they go deeper and deeper. As they

go deeper and deeper, it's giving strength to that tree that's growing up and it's growing out. As those roots grow deeper, it's getting nourishment from the soil, and as those roots get larger, everything on the surface is getting larger and bigger. And when those storms come, that tree can stand forty, fifty, sixty mile an hour winds. Why? Because of that massive root system. Paul is reminding us as a church that we're being rooted. We're putting down deep roots in God's love. From God's love and the relationship that we have with Him, we have a security system. We have safety, we draw strength, and we draw nourishment. As we're growing down in love, all of a sudden, there is a transformation on the surface that people begin to see. They see us growing up and they see us growing out. I love harvest. A lot of times when we start harvesting, we'll be harvesting certain fields and if it is doing pretty good, I can't wait until I get to another hollow. The reason is because sometimes I realize that the yields on our farm will never be the same because our soil type is not the same. So if the corn is doing really well in poor soil or moderate soil, I can't wait until I get to the rich soil. Did you catch that? God has rooted you in His love, and your life is to be an expression of the love of God.

He doesn't stop there. He says we're grounded. He switches to an architectural theme. He talks about building a house or a building, and you have to remember that in the ancient day they didn't do what we did, they would actually go out into a field and pull the dirt back until they got down into the solid rock, or gravel bank, and then they would start. That building was now grounded. It was connected. It was solid. It was secure so that it could withstand whatever Mother Nature threw at that building. That's the picture here. You're not just rooted; you're grounded on the solid rock of God's love. Why? Why is love your soil? Why is love your solid rock? It is because Paul wants us to have the strength to comprehend. This word, comprehend, literally means to grasp. Sometimes in Dexter, we talk about wrapping our mind around something. Have any of you ever had trouble wrapping your mind around something? You just can't get your brain to get it. That is what this word, comprehend, means. Paul wants us to wrap our mind around this. He wants us to grasp the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of God' love. It's not just to wrap our mind around it, but to know the love of Christ. so get this; the reason Christ wants to make

Himself at home in your life is so that you fully comprehend the full dimension of God's love, and then you know, in a practical way, the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge.

Years ago, archeologists discovered a man who they believed spent almost his entire life in a Spanish cell. From the belongings that were left in that cell, they discovered he was a Christian. All that was left was his skeleton and it had a shackle around one of his legs and a heavy chain that went over to the rock wall, and he lived there for many years. Behind him on the wall was a drawing of the cross, and it had four words: breadth, length, height, and love. Can you imagine spending your life in a cell, and in that cell, you came to understand the totality of the love of God.

See, normally in the ancient world, they thought of three dimensions, length, height, and width, but Paul takes the love of God to a fourth dimension, not just width, not just length, not just height, but depth. Not to let our sanctified imagination run wild here, but for a moment, can we just pause to think about what God wants you and I to wrap our brains around? The reason He is making Himself at home in your life and your whole life is under new management is because He wants you to understand the totality of His love. Could you think about His breadth for just a moment? How wide is it? How wide was the love of God when Jesus Christ stretched His arms out on that cross? It was wide enough to encompass every nation, every tribe, every tongue, and every people group. There was no one outside the reach of God's love. We have that beautiful picture in the book of Revelation where one day in Heaven, there will be a representative of every nation, every tribe, every tongue, and every people group, because no one was left outside the width of God's love. When you think about the length of it, we know this; the Bible says it starts in eternity past because Ephesians 1 taught us that God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and in love, He predestined us to be brought into the family. The Bible tells us in the book of Revelation that before the founding of the world there were already names written in the Lamb's Book of Life, even before there were people. So when we think about trying to measure the length of God's love, you have to start in eternity past, and you can't stop until you get to eternity future. When you

get to eternity future, you can't stop there. We're trying to measure something that can't be measured because there's no stopping it in its length. When we think about the height of the love of God, can I just ask you how high it is from where we are to where God is? That's the height of God's love, taking you and I from where we are at this very moment into the very presence of Himself. Paul added a dimension that normally wasn't talked about, and that's the depth. Have you ever thought about how deep is God's love? I wish each one of us could tell our story because I know many of your stories, but most of us don't know each other's stories. When God's love came here to get some of us, it had to go right here to get others of us, and down here to get others of us, and all the way down here to get others of us, because there were some of us that believe and know we were at the bottom of the barrel. Yet when we found the bottom of the barrel, God's love was still there. Do you realize on that cross, He didn't just pay my penalty; He paid your penalty. On that cross those six hours, after three hours, God took the sin of you and me and put it on His Son. God's love was so deep that Jesus Christ was separated from His Father. In being separated from His Father, He paid your sin debt and mine.

I've got to be totally honest with you, I kind of think I get it, then I meet somebody else who's a brother or sister, and I realize I don't get it. I've wondered for years why Paul threw this phrase in, "...with all the saints." Here at Hardin, we teach the church is made up of the saints. We saints are the church. Paul is not writing to the church, and then there is this group called saints, so what's he talking about? How can he be writing to the church and wanting us to comprehend something 'with all the saints?' Is he saying I want the Ephesian church to get this, but then I want all the other churches to get it too? It could be, but I don't think that's what he's saying. I think he is saying you'll never get it; you'll never wrap your brain around it unless you do it with all the saints. Did that make sense? You'll never fully know the breadth, the length, the height, and the depth of God's love until you experience life with the entire family. This is why God does not want you as a believer to live your life in isolation from the family or the church. I want to be honest with you. The church is struggling in America today. Here's why we're struggling; we want to go back to the colonial days. We want to go back where we colonize and everybody in my

group is like me, and I fear people who are not like me. God did not call us to colonize; He called us to evangelize. I want to share my heart with you this morning; I do not believe God ever meant for there to be an Hispanic church, a Korean church, an American church, a black church, a white church, a rich church, a poor church, a white-collared church, a blue-collared church, this side of the track church, that side of the track church, this suburban church, or this country rural church. In that environment, you'll never know the total dimension of God's love. Are you listening to me? I think I know what it's like to love with the love of God until I meet brothers and sisters in Nicaragua, Brazil, Thailand, and Trinidad. I'm blue-collar; I can't tell you what I've learned about the love of God from my white-collar brothers and sisters. I hope they've learned something from me. We're not American Christians; we're Christians who live in America and we're proud to be Americans, but our goal is to know the love of God in its totality. I need to hear what my African American brother has experienced and knows, and what my Hispanic brother knows because they come from a depth, a height, a length, and a width that I haven't experienced. Does that make sense?

Remember, the context of this prayer is in light of God building a church where there are not walls. So in the church, we're not trying to keep anybody out; we want all to experience what we have because what we have, we have it in Christ. It's not because of the right of a natural birth; it's because of a privilege of a spiritual birth. I've been to some places, and I want to tell you that in some of the places I've been, I would be doing everything I could do to get to the place where I get to raise my family. I would have never known what a certain kind of flag might have meant to somebody had I never been outside the south and had a brother who wasn't raised where I was raised. Are you listening to me? We will not pin our hopes on the back of a donkey or an elephant, and neither will God. He pinned His hope on the Lamb of God, and that's who we are. We've got to know the total dimensions of the love of God. Trust me, you and I can't know what it is; I can't know what it was like to have been raised in certain situations and experience the love of God, because I wasn't there, but we have been as a church.

Are you hearing my heart? God wants us to wrap our mind around His love, the totality of it, and then He wants us to know it. Please hear me; He wants us to know it. I can't tell you how many times in my past that my dad has told me to do something, and I get tired of hearing Dad tell me what to do, and I say, "I know; I know; I know!" Dad finally takes the hands off, let's me go do it, and...I didn't know what I thought I knew. Have you ever noticed when you're doing something with somebody else and you're following their lead, you think you know, and then when you're on your own...you don't know? Listen to me; some of us need to quit saying we know, because we don't know. I'm talking about yes, we know in intellect, we know in experience, we have experienced the love of Christ, but here's what I'm asking you; have you, in every situation of your life, displayed the love of Christ? Then you don't know, and that's where we want to be. We want to know in practice the love of Christ. My love will be holy, my love will be righteous, my love will be just, my love will be gracious, my love will be forgiving, and my love will be stern. Once I give Christ the key to my heart and He starts rearranging the furniture, cleaning out the junk, bringing the right foods in, the right entertainment in, the next thing you know I begin to experience His love. Then out here, at work, with my wife, with my family, with my associates, with my classmates, I begin to practice the love of Christ. I know when to confront you because of sin, and I know when to forgive you when you repent. Once there's been forgiveness because of the breadth of God's love, the height of God's love, the length of God's love, and the depth of God's love, once there's been repentance, I can reconcile with you.

Can we just pause a moment and be honest? How many of you used to have relationships with people but now they're outside the width of your love because you just couldn't love them that much? You pull back. How many of you went so far with somebody, and then said this is as far as I can go with you? How many of you could go with somebody as long as they were here, but when they went to there, you couldn't go anymore? You thought it was about them. It wasn't about them; it was about you. You say, hold it Bro Ricky; there are unlovable people. I know...but I don't know. I don't know that you're unlovable, and you don't know if I'm unlovable, until you love me the way Christ loved me. When you love me

the way Christ loved me, you might discover I'm lovable. I will never be lovable as long as you love me with strings attached. I will never be lovable as long as I know you're loving me for you, and you're just trying to get something out of me. But if you really love me with the love of Christ that's got a breadth, a length, a depth, and a height to it that expresses the totality of His being, and you do that, what you'll discover is that God didn't bring you into my life for me; God brought me into your life for you.

Did you catch that? I'm not there yet, guys. Maybe you are, but I want us to be there fully knowing the love of God. Why? Because here is what it leads to; that we'll be filled with the fullness of God. The ultimate goal is that you and I will be filled with the fullness of God. Did everybody catch that? When I let Christ make Himself at home in my life, give Him the remote, let Him have my recliner, let Him choose what's in my pantry, then I begin to practice the love of Christ. When I practice the love of Christ, I'm filled with the fullness of God. I'm still Ricky, but I'm now full of God. Have any of you ever had someone look at you and say you're full of bologna? Have any of you ever had somebody look at you and say you're so full of yourself? Do any of you know what it's like to be full of anger, be full of jealousy, or be full of envy? I mean you're still you, but you're now full of something that's controlling you; it's influencing you. What Paul is teaching is he wants us to be full of God with our wives, our husbands, our children, our parents, our employer, and our employees. Did you hear me? Full of God, so at that moment you're under the control of God. How are you doing?

If some of you are like me, you thought you were full until you met so and so, and dad blame it, it exposed something, not in them, in you. You realized you aren't full. Let me explain it this way. Have you ever went to a restaurant or sit down at a meal, I can do this at Gran's, she is a great cook. I can get full at Gran's house and Gran can offer me something else, and I say, "Gran, I'm full!" Gran will say, "Well, I hate that; I made my famous pecan pie." All of a sudden, I'm not full. I can eat one more bite. I mean, what I meant to say was I'm full of salad, I'm full of bread, I'm full of meat, I'm full of potatoes, but I am not full of pecan pie. Amen! Some of us think we're full. You're not full, and that's why you're in a big, big family

that's diverse, evangelistic, and doesn't just think of America and Hardin; we think of Nicaragua, Brazil, Thailand, and the nations of the world! Why? Because we want to be so full of God that in every situation this week we find ourselves in, somebody looks at us and says you are so full of God. When is the last time someone said that about you? You are going to know at that moment that yes, you may have been full at that moment, but you still believe there's more of Him you want to know, which leads us to the ultimate goal.

Now to Him who is able to do what we ask or think, to Him be glory. It's more than that; now to Him who is able to do more than we ask or think, to Him be glory. That's not what the verse says. Now to Him who is able to do far more than we ask or think. That's not what it says. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly. That's not what it says. "Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to Him be glory." I'm telling you that we can so live in relationship with God that we get to a point that what's happening in our life is not a reflection of what we're asking God for or what we're thinking about doing, but God so takes possession of us that we do far more abundantly than all that we could ever ask Him, or think about doing for His honor and glory. What is the means though which He does it? "According to the power that is at work in us." Back to Kory's sermon in Ephesians 1:19, Paul prayed for our eyes to be open to this truth that the same power that reached down and raised Jesus Christ from the dead, put life in His body, raised Him up, seated Him at the right hand throne of God, far above all power, principality, and dominion, put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over the church, His body, who He fills with the fullness of Himself. That same power is the power that reached down and raised you from being dead in sin to alive in God, and raised you up, seated you in Christ, and is giving you a heavenly perspective where you do not see the world the way the regular world sees it, but you see it from God's perspective, and you ultimately know that in Christ all things have been put under our feet, and we are a part of His body, a part of His church. As Colossians teaches that in Christ the fullness of the godhead dwelt bodily, Jesus was still a human, but at the same time, all of the godhead dwelt in Him bodily in my body and your body, and us as the body of Christ, Christ

dwells in us. Please tell me you get this. As God was full of Christ, Hardin Baptist Church should be full of Christ, full to the point that every action we have is under the influence and control of Him. Please tell me you're wise enough to know you're not there yet. You blew it with your wife this week. You blew it with your with your husband. You blew it with your children. You blew it with your parents. You blew it with your as an employer. You blew it with your as an employee. You blew it with your as a professor. You blew it with your as a banker. You blew it with your as a student. But don't give up; know this prayer will be answered in your life. God is going to fill us with His fullness for His honor and His glory, amen. Can we leave here, get out of the way, and let God get in the way so that the world sees Him and not us? Would you do that for the rest of this day and the rest of this week, and then the rest of this year and the rest of your life? We want Him to be known in our church.