

# **“Connected In Love”**

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Today we'll be looking at the third chapter of the book of Ephesians, verses 14 through 21. I'll be reading from the New Revised Standard Version. “For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love.

I pray that you may have the power 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, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

This is God's word for God's people. Thanks be to God. Let's pray. Lord touch us here today in a powerful way to internalize your word. We want our relationships to be connected in love. Hear our prayer God and bless the reading, hearing, and understanding of your holy word. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

The passage just read is the second of two prayers in the book of Ephesians. In chapter 1, the author talks about the spiritual blessings we have in Christ. In the prayer of chapter 3, the author's emphasis is on the enablement of those spiritual blessings. In other words, we've been given spiritual blessings in Christ, so let's

use them. We have unlimited resources in Christ, but we must claim them and live them.

This prayer may sound as though the writer is petitioning God for individuals; however, every instance of the word *you* refers to a plural “you,” and suggests that all the addressees are connected. The phrase “. . . all the saints . . .” refers to the body of Christ—that means we, as a congregation, are meant to be connected in love. Now let’s flesh out this prayer. There are 4 parts, and one leads into the other.

The four parts are strength, depth, apprehension (or to get a hold of—to grasp), and lastly fullness. The author prays to have a spiritual strength that leads to a deeper relationship with Christ. When we pursue a deeper relationship with Christ the result is that we’re able to get a hold of God’s great love. The aim is to stay connected and remain connected with each other.

Think about this question. *How do we* resist and refuse to allow the works of the flesh to dominate our interaction with others? Let’s look at the progression the author states. The first thing petitioned for in the prayer is spiritual strength. It empowers us to live and behave more and more in a Christ-like manner. It’s embracing God’s love, and learning moment by moment to be controlled by God’s love. It’s when we yield to the Spirit’s control in our thinking and doing instead of yielding to impatience, distrust, anger or lack of self-control.

We’re talking about gaining spiritual strength that’s going to result in spiritual growth. It’s when we decide to love instead of harboring resentment. We take hold of patience and kindness when we feel like walking out the door. We listen instead of talk, and we determine to collaborate instead of insisting on our way. We work together, and the result is that we stay connected in love.

The second thing the author petitions God for us depth—spiritual depth. The author uses three verbs, “dwell,” “rooted,” and “grounded.” The word “dwell” literally means “to settle down and feel at home;” it refers to the *quality* of Christ’s presence in our hearts. A question we might ask ourselves is this. Does pride dominate our relationship with others when we feel offended? Does anger sometimes rule our heart rather than forgiveness? Does materialism or prestige govern our decision making too often? Christ wants us to be controlled by love.

The next verb used by the author is rooted. When I hear the word “rooted” I think of the plant world. Healthy plants have good soil to grow in. What’s the soil of your hearts like? Are we pulling up the weeds of bitterness, anger, resentment, or embedded mind sets that choke God’s love and keep us from staying connected in love? Are we nourishing the soil of our hearts with the necessary elements to make us grow deeper roots?

Now think about the verb “grounded;” this is an architectural term. Years ago my husband and I added an addition onto our home. It was a large addition, and the workers spent weeks digging, laying out, and pouring the footings. One day I asked the person in charge why it takes so long to accomplish the first step. They replied, “This is the most important part of the building—the foundation. If you don’t go deep, you can’t go high.” If we want to excel in the love of God, and achieve together what God wants, we must stay connected to God’s great power. We must grow deep roots into God’s love—and then we can go high.

The third thing petitioned for is the apprehension or the ability to grasp or take a hold of something. In other words, we all can understand something but not really make it our own. We can comprehend it, but it remains unconnected to us and aloof until we claim it and use it for ourselves. God wants us to allow the Spirit of God to control our thinking, our speaking, and our behavior. How can we

express God's love until we're immersed *in* God's love? To stay connected in love, we must take a hold of God's love and use it.

The fourth thing petitioned for is the fullness of God. To be filled up with the fullness of God means to be totally controlled and dominated by God. It means we're not tearing each other down. It means we're building each other up with God's love—to do that we must be emptied of self. We're not seeking our own way—we're seeking God's way. We're seeking to collaborate with others. We're seeking reconciliation. Who can accomplish this? Fact is we can't do or be any of this without staying connected to God's great love.

The writer sets our thinking straight with a benediction in verses 20 and 21; it encourages us to know that **with God we can and we're able to stay connected in love**. Here's the pyramid progression in the last two verses that promise God's enablement. God is able; God is able to do; God is able to do exceeding abundantly; God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask; God is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think.

Now take a hold of that promise, and believe God is able to change how you interact with others so we can stay connected in love. I challenge everyone here today, yield to God's great power, and allow God to do exceedingly, abundantly, above all, and more than we could ever ask or think. God *is working*, but we must take hold of that power to love more. So dig deeper, so you can go higher.

Let's pray. God of love who offers us all we have need of to stay connected in love, motivate us to accept and use all the resources you have provided. Let us take hold of and enjoy the grace that we've been offered. Amen.