

For this reason I kneel before the Father,¹⁵ from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen. (NIV84)

Theme: According to the unimaginable power of Christ...

1. May you grow in knowledge and faith in him.
2. May you be to his glory forever.

I don't have that good of an imagination. I am not that creative of a person. When I watch certain movies I can't help but marvel at the creativity of some people in Hollywood. It is amazing to me all the different things they can come up with in their minds. Some of the story lines and visual effects simply boggle my mind.

Maybe you are creative. But no matter how vivid of an illustration you have, neither you nor any writer in Hollywood could come up with a plot that accurately portrays the power of Christ. For Paul says about God, **he is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine**. We can legitimately say that God's power is unimaginable.

Paul knew of God's power full-well. With his unimaginable power in mind Paul prayed to God. When you think about the infinite power of Christ, what do you pray for? What would Hollywood writers ask of God? Perhaps you would ask God for something spectacular. Maybe it is just for good paying job, good health for you and your family, or happiness. But that's not what Paul prayed for. He prayed for the spiritual lives of the Ephesians. He wanted Christ to use his power to welcome gentiles into his family. And he God to strengthen their faith.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being. He first asks God to strengthen their new man—the part of them that hates sin and desires to obey God. Paul prays that God may lead them to live holier lives. In order to live a holy life, one must first have faith. That is why Paul prays **that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**. In order for Christ to dwell in our hearts through faith, in order for us to follow him in our lives, we must first hear the word—the gospel. So Paul prays that for God to make us **rooted and established in love**. That is the love of Christ. This is a prayer that God will always say 'yes' to. And he answers this prayer only through the gospel.

So Paul's prayer is for the Ephesians to have a stronger faith. This is a congregation Paul knew well. During his third missionary journey Paul spent about three years there. He knew their faith—there were probably many solid believers in the congregation. Many of them may have wondered why Paul would pray for such a thing. They knew Christ, they believed in him, why would Paul pray for their faith? Out of all the things Paul would want God to use his infinite power, he prays for faith? Perhaps some of the Ephesians are like some of us. We are believers. We know God's Word. Why do we need to know more of God's Word? We often think that we know enough, that our faith is strong enough, and that we live good enough lives. At least, that must be the case. For we may at times stay away from the gospel in word and sacraments. Those are the means by which God gives us faith, strengthens that faith and leads us to live a life that is pleasing to him. Perhaps we do ask God for a stronger faith, but we then stay away from the very thing God gives us to strengthen our faith. Rarely will we open up our Bibles at home or sit down with the Meditations or another devotional book. Many of us must think that they know much of what the Bible teaches and there is no more room for growth. Perhaps that's why our many spots are open for our Sunday Morning Bible Class, and even more during the week. Many of us must figure that we grow in our knowledge of Christ when we are young—that is why we attend BASIC or Confirmation Class, or drop our kids off at Sunday School. But once we get confirmed, well we know all there is to know—for that is often the last time we study God's Word at all.

Sure we can learn more of God's Word during worship services. We do hear the gospel in many different forms. We receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper which also strengthens our faith. Yet, many of us often miss Church. A few times a month we may find the time to attend a worship service, but at other times, we have other things going on. So our faith is not strengthened, we are not motivated to live a God pleasing life. We often find out that our knowledge of Christ and his Word becomes less and less. What you could recite as an eighth grader, you can no longer remember. Definitions and terms you once could give you can't think of any longer. The basics of the Christian faith which you learned in Catechism have long been forgotten. And yet we act as if we know all there is to know and avoid the means by which our prayers for a stronger faith and a more complete knowledge.

That is why Paul prays that the spiritual lives of the Ephesians is made stronger through the power of Christ. He prays that they **may grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ**. The more we make use of the gospel, the more we can grasp his love. The more we know of God's Word the more the Holy Spirit works through the gospel and works faith into our hearts. So often, the more we know, the stronger our faith becomes. As we see our sins washed away through the waters of baptism, we understand how much God's love us. As we kneel before the Lord and partake of his very body and blood that he shed on the cross we know that he loves us. The more we learn about God's love, the more we see how great his love is. His love is all around us. It is vast and complete. It is not a sham or empty. It is above and below, to the sides, behind, and in front of us. So Paul prays that we grasp how deep it really is. Yet in the same breath Paul says that this love **surpasses knowledge**. God is so powerful that this side of heaven we will never be able to understand him.

Our knowledge of Christ's power and love will not be complete in this life. That is why Paul prays for our spiritual lives. But the goal of Paul's prayer is not simply that God uses his power to increase our knowledge and faith, but that we ultimately join him in heaven.

But we are not powerful enough to do this ourselves. That's because we are nothing but sinners. Passed down from Adam and Eve.

Conceived and born of sinful parents. And from that time we were enemies of God. We hated him and wanted nothing to do with him. We sinned against him every day. In fact, everything we did was a sin. And in our sin and unbelief we were on our way to hell. Earlier in Ephesians Paul describes what we all are by nature. **As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins**. We are spiritually dead by nature. A dead person is not able to do anything. As spiritually dead, we are unable to do anything spiritually. We were unable to believe in God. We couldn't turn to him. And we are unable to save ourselves. Nothing we do could earn our way to eternal life. There is nothing we can do to impress God. And we don't have to power to take away our own sins.

We may not have the power, but God does. Christ does. So Christ gave up the riches of heaven to live as a frail human being. God became man and took on flesh. Throughout his life not once did he sin. He always obeyed his Lord. Where we sinned, he obeyed. He always wanted to learn more of God's Word. When he was twelve he failed to return with his parents to Nazareth after a trip to Jerusalem. But instead of playing with some of his friends, he was found studying God's Word in the temple.

Jesus never did any wrong. Yet, he was put to death on a cross. But he did this willingly so that he could pay the price for our own sins. On the cross he took the guilt of all our sins upon himself. He suffered through the pain and agony of hell in our place. And he gave us his perfect life. Christ served as our substitute in every way. Three days after his death he rose from the dead. Because he lives we know that we too will live. And all who believe in him will not die or face condemnation for their sins, but they will live with him in heaven forever.

The unimaginable power of Christ. Have you ever seen a movie that was so outrageous that you swallow the story? Not even the most creative writers in Hollywood could have came up with the plot of God's son. That God would save his enemies in this way, we never would have imagined. As the Old Testament believers waited for the coming the Messiah the had some ideas of what he would do. But their wildest dreams were well short of the reality. The Savior is God's only Son. That, in love for his enemies, God would send his

Son to die. That he would willingly suffer through hell for those who rebelled against him. This is something we never could have imagined or asked for. That is something we never could have believed on our own. That is why Paul prays for God to give and strengthen our faith.

And he does that with one main goal in mind—that God takes us to heaven. That is what Paul prays for in verse 19. He asks that the Ephesians may have a fuller knowledge of God’s love. And the result of that is **that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** We won’t reach the fullness of Christ until we reach heaven. For there in heaven we will be like him. Perfect and holy. Returned to the image of God in which we were made.

And there in heaven we will be to the glory of God. Christ is to the glory of God because of who he is and what he has done. We are to God’s glory when we give glory to him. When we praise him, study his Word, and live a life that is conformity to his will we are to his glory. Just the fact that we, his former enemies are now his children, makes us to God’s glory. And because of the work of Christ we will be to God’s glory forever. For an eternity we will live with him. We will sing his praises as we stand next to him in his holy city. That is Paul’s prayer for the Ephesians. That through God’s power we may be to his glory forever.

We may marvel at the creativity of writers and producers—but they can’t match up to God. He is more powerful than we can ever ask or image. Who has done something we can’t come up with on our own. Paul knew of God’s power and love and so he prayed. But he didn’t pray that God use his power for physical blessings but spiritual ones. And so Paul’s prayer is the prayer every Christian pastor. According to the unimaginable power of Christ, may you grow in the knowledge and faith of Christ and may you be to his glory forever. Amen.