

Rooted and Established in Love for what?

~ Ephesians 3:14-19

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Good morning, everyone. It's a tremendous honor to be here with you today. Thank you to the anniversary committee for their invitation to share a message with you. Lori and I have been praying for you as a church ever since we departed here. We've prayed that the Lord will sustain you. We've prayed that the Lord would bring the person He chose for you when the time was right. We're thankful for the way God has faithfully led you and provided for you.

The theme for this weekend comes from Ephesians 3:17 - Rooted and Established in Love. For 50 years God has rooted and established this community in His love. This weekend has been all about celebrating that reality. But SVBC is not finishing its ministry this weekend. And Ephesians 3:17 is not the last verse in the Bible let alone the book of Ephesians. The author of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul, uses rooted and established in love as a launching point for this community of believers.

Today, we're going to look at something we all need more of. We're going to discover a great gift available to us because we're rooted and established in love. But we can't get this gift on our own. We need help. Yet this gift has the potential to launch us individually and corporately to the great works of God that He has planned for us to do.

So, we're going to examine this by asking 5 questions of this text. 1 - What do we have? 2 - What do we need? 3 - Why do we need it? 4 - How do we get it? 5 - What do we do with it? This is all found in Ephesians 3:14-19

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

So Paul is praying for the Christians at Ephesus in the middle of his letter to them. When I first started taking this prayer seriously, I realized how shallow some of my prayers were. I would sometimes pray, "Lord, will you give us a good day today? Help us to enjoy the health you've given us. Give us wisdom for that meeting at work and please help our vacation plans to work out." Notice most of those requests are me-focused. I ask for a good day. I enjoy good health. I want wisdom for my meeting. I hope my vacation plans work out. There's nothing wrong with praying about these things but do they advance the kingdom? Are they part of God's mission to spread the gospel amidst opposition and the desperate struggle for souls? Do such requests reveal a hunger for closeness to God and power to live the Christian life? Not really. So, compare that to what Paul prays starting at the end of verse 17.

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love," There's our phrase and the answer to our first question. **1 - What do we have?** If you're a Christian here today **you have been rooted and established in love.** Paul uses two images to portray what we have. Rooted is the image of a plant, say a tree. Think of a tall tree maybe in your yard or near where you live. That tree has to have deep roots to stand tall, upright and remain standing through storms and wind. Then we have the word "established" or "founded." So, this is actually building terminology. It's the image of strong foundation. Think of tall buildings. Well before they build anything above the ground, the builder digs down deep to the rock on which to put the foundation. On that foundation, the building stands.

Paul tells us that we have been rooted like a tall tree and founded like a skyscraper in love. Love somehow provides this deep root and solid foundation. But whose love? Though some think this refers to the love of the community, I agree with those who interpret this as the love of God's. His love is the basis for the deep roots and solid foundation upon which we stand.

Now why might Paul be so focused on love? Well during that time some fairly strong religions boasted about their secret knowledge. If you had this knowledge, you were the most advanced. You had the greatest advantage. As Christians, we can be tempted to focus so much on knowing the faith and learning the theology that we neglect or even ignore love. The New Testament goes to great pains to emphasize that true Christianity involves head and heart. The book of 1st John is all about that. It says

the true Christian is the one who believes that Jesus is the Christ born of God. That's the head part. But that's not only the part. The true Christian also loves his/her brother and sister in the community and they demonstrate their love for God by obeying His commands.

This love was demonstrated with Jesus' journey to the cross. There, he sacrificed His life as a substitute for us. He poured out His blood to atone for our sin. He endured God's wrath so that we could be forgiven. He finished that work on the cross where he defeated death and sin and the devil. That was the ultimate act of love on our behalf.

So Paul reminds us in this first phrase of the tremendous gift we possess. We have been rooted and founded on God's love. This love pours into us and must pour out of us to those around us. That sounds pretty good. If we're rooted and founded on God's love, do we really need anything else?

Paul says yes. This brings us to our second question. This is the heart of this prayer request. Verses 18-19. "And I pray, that you being rooted and established in love, (here's verse 18) may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge. **What do we need? God's power to grasp Christ's multi-dimensional love and know Christ's knowledge-surpassing love.**

We need God's power to grasp and know Christ's love. That seems a little weird at first. Can't we just read the New Testament a little and list different ways that Christ loved us? Don't most of us grasp that Jesus loves us? So why would we need God's power to do this?

Let's look at the specific "ask." "I pray that you may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." To grasp certainly involves thinking or comprehending. But the grasping is an earnest and straining activity. It's like trying to understand something that we haven't really thought about before. Or we're exposed to a whole world or knowledge or some field of study that we didn't even know existed. We aim to grasp all the different pieces of that area.

We've just seen some astronauts go to the moon and travel the farthest distance that humans have ever travelled. That event didn't just happen with three guys in a bar saying, "let's go to the moon

on Thursday.” There were years of preparation, design, construction, selection, testing, practice and analysis for a successful space flight.

Well, when it comes to Christ’s love, we will never come to the end of grasping it. To help us realize this, notice the multiple dimensions Paul uses in verse 18. “I pray you may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.” Now the dimensions of width and length can measure buildings. The dimensions of high and deep can also measure buildings. But they also describe trees. So maybe, Paul is saying “You’ve been rooted like a tree and founded like a building on God’s love. But there’s so much more to discover. Christ’s love for you is not like a garden shed but a massive warehouse. His love for you is not just a little seedling but a 200-foot redwood.

We cannot comprehend the vastness of Christ’s love for us in our own strength. We apparently need the power of God to do that.

But we not only need God’s power to grasp Christ’s multidimensional love. We also need God’s power to know this love that surpasses knowledge. Now that also seems a little weird at first. How can we know something that surpasses knowledge? That certainly requires something outside of us. But it seems he’s not really talking about head knowledge but experiential knowledge. It’s kind of like the difference between book smart and field smart; or theoretical and practical.

We need God’s power to experientially know this love that surpasses knowledge. We need to experience Christ’s love in our life experience - the good times, the ordinary times, the hard times and the tragic times.

I was recently visiting a lady who has experienced a lot of health problems since Christmas. She had been an every week church goer and she has not been since Christmas because of these problems. Recently they discovered cancer. And I asked her “how are you doing with this diagnosis?” She said three things. “I am not scared. I am at peace. I trust God.” That’s a pretty unusual response for someone just diagnosed with cancer. So, I asked her to explain it a little more. She shared that she had had cancer 20 years previously. When she got that diagnosis, she was undone; upset; disoriented and didn’t know where to turn. She got very serious about her walk with God. She came through that but with a

much deeper faith. She experienced Christ's love through that journey. Now, she knows this love that surpasses knowledge. No matter what happens, she has received God's power to grasp and know this love of Christ.

So what do we have? We have been rooted and established in Christ.

What do we need? We need God's power to grasp Christ's multidimensional love and to know His love that surpasses knowledge.

Why do we need God's power to grasp and know Christ's love? Why would believers who are already rooted and founded in love need power to grasp and experience Christ's multi-dimensional love? **Life's troubles can blind us to Christ's love.** throws at us storms, trials, persecution, discouragement. The enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Anyone who wants to live a Godly life will be persecuted. Following Jesus is not easy. If you as an individual and this church body decides collectively to step out in faith to join the advance of God's kingdom, you will face opposition.

If our roots in Christ are not very deep or our trust in Christ's foundation is not very strong, we might fall away. We might give up. We might shrink back from what God has called us to do. We might stop taking risks for God and His kingdom. We might become more concerned with our safety than others' salvation. But if we, by God's power, grasp Christ's vast love for us and experience His love as He walks with us, we can stay firm in our faith and trust, whatever comes.

I remember sitting beside Marlis Lemke, who many of you knew, last summer in her bed at their home where she passed away. We read Psalm 23. You know verse 4. "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." I think we read a little more and prayed together. She said something like, "I can't believe I'm actually living these Scriptures." She was walking through the valley of the shadow of death. There was no hope barring a miraculous intervention from God. There was also no bitterness on her part; no charges brought against God for His unfairness; no real anxiety. Marlis had spent her life depending on

God's power to grasp and experience Jesus' love. He walked with her through that valley to the other side.

How can we grasp and know Christ's love? We get it the same way the Ephesians would. We ask for it from God. **We pray for ourselves and others that God will empower us to grasp and know Christ's love.** Think about how much of a difference it would make in your life this week, if you knew a little more of Christ's great love for you. It's amazing this knowledge and experience can put so much of life into perspective. I commute now 40 minutes to an hour to get to work. During that time, there is tremendous opportunity to get frustrated with other drivers. They tail gate, they cut in, cut off, they make dangerous moves. I could get highly irritated and angry. Or I can remember the vastness of Christ's love for me and for that driver. On some days I even pray for them to discover Christ's love after they've been caught in a radar up ahead.

Lastly, what do we do with it? **What do we do with it?** What do we do with an increasing grasp of Christ's multidimensional love and an increasing experience of His love that surpasses knowledge? **Enjoy it. Experience it. Share it.** This anniversary weekend is not all about SVBC just resting into the fact that it's rooted and founded on Christ's love. It's about asking for power to grasp and know Christ's love so that you can share it and spread it.

God wants to lavish love on all who will receive Him. He is redeeming the world with the good news of Jesus' coming and the hope for wholeness to be found in Him.

And He's done it all with and from His love. People long for hope, healing and to experience true love. They need to hear about the immeasurable love Jesus has for them. When we grasp and experience Jesus' love, we will be filled to share and bring this love to a world in need.

Christian and Sturgeon Valley Baptist Church ask God for power to grasp and know the multi-dimensional love of Christ. If you don't know Christ, you can receive Him today by turning from your life without Him and turning to a life with Him.