

**Ephesians 3:14-21 (NIV)**

**A Prayer for the Ephesians**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family<sup>[a]</sup> in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> 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, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now 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, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [Ephesians 3:15](#) The Greek for *family* (*patria*) is derived from the Greek for *father* (*pater*).

**Ephesians 3:14-21 (HCSB)**

**Prayer for Spiritual Power**

<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. <sup>16</sup> I pray that He may grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power in the inner man through His Spirit, <sup>17</sup> and that the Messiah may dwell in your hearts through faith. I pray that you, being rooted and firmly established in love, <sup>18</sup> may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, <sup>19</sup> and to know the Messiah's love that surpasses knowledge, so you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do above and beyond all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us— <sup>21</sup> to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

**Footnotes:**

- a. [Ephesians 3:14](#) Other mss add *of our Lord Jesus Christ*

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible<sup>1</sup>

*Ephesians 3:14-21*

**3:14** Paul resumed the prayer that he began in [verse 1](#). In this prayer, he asked that believers might be blessed with inner strength, with insightful understanding, and with spiritual excellence.

**3:15** This verse involves some difficult translation decisions, but Paul's intent seems to be as follows: the concept and institute of fatherhood (shared with minor variation by all cultures) stems from God's role as Father and Creator of all peoples. It is not only Jews who can "kneel before the Father" ([v. 14](#)) and expect to gain audience, but people from every race and nation.

**3:16-19** Paul prayed for inner power, which is the result of God dwelling in the hearts of believers. He asked for believers to be **strengthened... rooted**, and **filled** via the work of the three Persons of the Trinity: Spirit, Christ, and God the Father.

**3:20-21** Paul burst into a grand doxology concerning God's majestic abilities. He prayed that God's glory would be abundantly manifested in the church and in Christ. Even in the eternal state, the church will bring glory to God **forever and ever**.

## English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

*Ephesians 3:14-21*

**3:14-21** *Paul's Prayer for Strength and Insight.* Paul resumes his thought broken off in [v. 1](#) and reports his prayer for the readers' strength and understanding of God's power ([vv. 14-19](#)). He concludes by blessing God ([vv. 20-21](#)).

**3:14-15** **For this reason.** Paul had broken off his thought in [v. 1](#), so he repeats this phrase to indicate that he is returning to that original thought. **bow.** When Paul considers the majesty of God's worldwide work of redemption in Christ, he responds in the only appropriate way: humble adoration of God **the Father**, the Great King. To be **named** in biblical usage refers to the definition of one's identity. God the Father, the creator of all things ([v. 9](#)), is also the one who "names" (i.e., defines the identity of) all creatures, even to the extent of "naming" **every family in heaven and on earth**. God's present action in the naming of "every family" is a further affirmation of his sovereignty over all creation.

**3:16** **Spirit.** The Holy Spirit applies to believers the personal presence and power of God. **inner being.** Or "inner man," referring to one's inner self as a human being.

**3:17-18** Christ already dwells in Christians, but Paul prays here for his indwelling with power. In [v. 16](#) Paul speaks of the indwelling "Spirit" and here of the indwelling **Christ**, suggesting the deity of the Spirit as well as the Son. **rooted and grounded in love.** Love is the natural and necessary outcome of a living faith that is the fruit of Christ's work in the Christian. **comprehend.** Godliness leads to greater understanding of God and his works (see [Ps. 119:100](#)). **Breadth... length... height... depth** expresses the immeasurable dimensions of God's riches in Christ. On **saints**, see note on [Eph. 1:1](#).

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 3".

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 3".

**3:19 surpasses knowledge.** To *know* what surpasses *knowledge* is the sublime privilege of the Christian. The purpose ultimately is to be filled with God's **fullness**.

**3:21 church.** Paul conceives of the church as a unified whole, not as isolated entities (see [4:4-6](#)).

**NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>**  
*Ephesians 3:14-21*

**3:14, 15** The family of God includes all who have believed in him in the past, all who believe in the present, and all who will believe in the future. We are all a family because we have the same Father. He is the source of all creation, the rightful owner of everything. God promises his love and power to his family, the church ([3:16-21](#)). If we want to receive God's blessings, it is important that we stay in contact with other believers in the body of Christ. Those who isolate themselves from God's family and try to go it alone cut themselves off from God's power.

**3:17-19** God's love is total, says Paul. It reaches every corner of our experience. It is *wide*—it covers the breadth of our own experience, and it reaches out to the whole world. God's love is *long*— it continues the length of our lives. It is *high*—it rises to the heights of our celebration and elation. His love is *deep*— it reaches to the depths of discouragement, despair, and even death. When you feel shut out or isolated, remember that you can never be lost to God's love. For another prayer about God's immeasurable and inexhaustible love, see Paul's words in [Romans 8:38, 39](#).

**3:19** This "fullness" is expressed only in Christ ([Colossians 2:9, 10](#)). In union with Christ and through his empowering Spirit, we are complete. We have all the fullness of God available to us. But we must appropriate that fullness through faith and through prayer as we daily live for him. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is also for you. You can ask the Holy Spirit to fill every aspect of your life to the fullest.

**3:20, 21** This doxology—prayer of praise to God—ends part 1 of Ephesians. In the first section, Paul described the timeless role of the church. In part 2 ([chapters 4-6](#)), he will explain how church members should live in order to bring about the unity God wants. As in most of his books, Paul first lays a doctrinal foundation and then makes practical applications of the truths he has presented.

## Life Essentials Study Bible<sup>4</sup>

### A Principle to Live By Ephesians #7: Experiencing God's Power

*from [Ephesians 3:14-21](#)*

**To live in God's will as individuals and as communities of faith, we must not only understand God's power but we must experience this power.**

Following Paul's digression regarding his special calling as apostle to the Gentiles, he continued the prayer he had begun earlier. Thus he once again wrote, "For this reason" ([3:1,14](#); see also "This is why" in [1:15](#)).

As Paul prayed, he may have gone to his knees, demonstrating his sense of awe regarding God's grace in his own life and in the lives of those he was remembering. In essence, Paul prayed that the power that saved them ([1:19](#)) would give them the inner strength ([3:16](#)) to do the good works that God intended for them ([2:10](#)). The source of this power is the Holy Spirit and the indwelling Christ, who are inseparable from one another. (See *Is #28: Supernatural Enablement*, [p. 951](#).)

Paul's intense desire was that these believers would be "filled with all the fullness of God" ([3:19](#)). Here he was not speaking about some ecstatic or emotional experience. Rather, he was referring to God's holiness—all that He is in terms of perfection. Peter underscored this same great truth when he wrote, "But as the One who called you is holy, you also are to be holy in all your conduct" ([1Pt 1:15](#)).

It is impossible, of course, to experience this kind of perfection—personally or corporately—until we are face-to-face with Jesus Christ. However, we are to draw on "the immeasurable greatness of His power" ([Eph 1:19](#)) in order to become more and more transformed into the Savior's image, a reflection of God's glory ([Jn 1:1,14](#); [1Co 13:11-12](#)). (See *1Pt #3: Living Transformed Lives*, [p. 1742](#).)

#### Reflection and Response

**What are some practical steps we can take personally and as local churches to experience the reality of Paul's grand doxology in [Ephesians 3:20-21](#)?**

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4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1629.