

THE SURPASSING-KNOWLEDGE LOVE OF CHRIST

An Exegesis of Ephesians 3:14–21

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Introduction

Ephesians 3:14-21 is an extraordinary passage, possibly expressing the conclusion of Paul's prayer begun in Ephesians 1:17-23, that each Christian might be given the power to deeply and wholeheartedly know the incredible love of God. In unpacking this, Paul deals with many important topics. This essay will address one important aspect of the passage, which is the centrality of this prayer for the whole letter, focusing on the love of God as the driven motif for the argument he presents on chapter 1, setting the foundation for the whole letter, being chapter 3:14-21 the apex, verse 19 more specifically. Paul is given the Ephesians doctrine and practice, *logos* and *ethos*, *doxa* and *praxis*. The whole of the Christian life can be found in this letter. The main themes one can find are "a strong emphasis on the divine action in bringing salvation... Their salvation did not take place because they earned it but because God planned it."¹ There is also the spiritual warfare against the powers that represents a threat to the believers. The whole plot to save the lost against the powers of evil are central to this letter, with a strong Christology in the midst of this whole process that takes place in the formation of the Church, which is the very body of Christ, she is also His bride and a household of God, where Jesus is the cornerstone. As we will go through this passage, it will be clear that the heart of this redemptive work is the unparalleled and even hard to comprehend love of God.

¹ D.A Carson, Douglas J. Moo, *As Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2009), kindle.

The Text

ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ 3:14-21

τούτου χάριν κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα, ἐξ οὗ πᾶσα πατριὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀνομάζεται, ἵνα δῶ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον, κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι, ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μήκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος, γνῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἵνα πληρωθῆτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ. τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν, αὐτῷ ἢ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

Translation I propose

For this reason I bow my knees towards the Father, out of whom each fatherly thing in heavens and earth is named, so that he may grant you all according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner man, so Christ may dwell in your inner selves through faith, in love being rooted and grounded; so that being able to seize tight with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the surpassing-knowledge love of Christ, so that you may be filled with all the fulness of God. But to him who is powerful to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power working in us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus into all generation, forever and ever, amen.

Parsing

τούτου: demonstrative pronoun, genitive, masculine, singular / οὗτος, αὕτη, τοῦτο / of this; for this

χάριν: accusative singular of χάρις, used as adverb.² / χάρις / on account of; by reason of

κάμπτω: verb, present active indicative, 1st person singular. / κάμπτω / I bend; I bow

τὰ: definite article, accusative, plural, neuter / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

γόνατά: noun, accusative, plural, neuter / γόνα / knees

μου: personal/possessive pronoun, genitive, singular / ἐγώ / my

πρὸς: preposition / πρὸς / (+acc) towards, to, with

τὸν: definite article, accusative, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

πατέρα: noun, accusative, singular, masculine / πατήρ / father

ἐξ: preposition / ἐξ / from, out of

οὗ: relative pronoun, genitive, singular, masculine / ὅς / of who; whom

πᾶσα: adjective, nominative, singular, feminine / πᾶς / every; all; each

πατριὰ: noun, singular, feminine / πατριά / family, tribe; fatherly thing

ἐν: preposition / ἐν / in

οὐρανοῖς: noun, dative, plural, masculine / οὐρανός / heavens

καὶ: conjunction / καὶ / and

ἐπὶ: preposition / ἐπὶ / on, over, upon

γῆς: noun, genitive, singular, feminine / γῆ / earth

ὀνομάζεται: verb, present passive indicative, 3rd person, singular / ὀνομάζω / derives its name,

get his name from; is named

² Alexander Souter, *Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 281

ἵνα: conjunction / ἵνα / that, so that, in order that

δοῦναι: verb, aorist active subjunctive, 3rd person, singular / δίδωμι / he would grant

ὑμῖν: personal pronoun, dative, plural / σύ / you; you all

κατὰ: preposition / κατὰ / according to

τὸ: definite article, accusative, singular, neuter / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

πλοῦτος: noun, accusative, singular, neuter / πλοῦτος / wealth; riches

τῆς: definite article, genitive, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

δόξης: noun, genitive, singular, feminine / δόξα / glory

αὐτοῦ: personal pronoun, genitive, singular, masculine / αὐτός / of his

δυνάμει: noun, dative, singular, feminine / δύναμις / with power

κραταιωθῆναι: aorist passive infinitive / κραταιόω / to be strengthened

διὰ: preposition / διὰ / (+gen) through

τοῦ: definite article, genitive, singular, neuter / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

πνεύματος: noun, genitive, singular, neuter / πνεῦμα / breath, wind; spirit

αὐτοῦ: personal pronoun, genitive, singular, masculine / αὐτός / his

εἰς: preposition / εἰς / in

τὸν: definite article, accusative, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

ἔσω: adverb / inner / ἔσω

ἄνθρωπον: noun, accusative, singular, masculine / ἄνθρωπος / man

κατοικῆσαι: verb, aorist active, infinitive / κατοικέω / may dwell

τὸν: definite article, accusative, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

Χριστὸν: noun, accusative, singular, masculine / Χριστός / Christ

διὰ: preposition / διὰ / (+gen) through

τῆς: definite article, genitive, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

πίστεως: noun, genitive, singular, feminine / πίστις / faith

ἐν: preposition / ἐν / in

ταῖς: definite article, dative, plural, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

καρδίαις: noun, dative, plural, feminine / καρδιά / heart; inner self

ὑμῶν: personal pronoun, genitive, plural / σύ / your

ἐν: preposition / ἐν / in

ἀγάπῃ: noun, dative, singular, feminine / ἀγάπη / love

ἐρριζωμένοι: verb, perfect passive participle, nominative, plural, masculine / ῥίζοω / rooted

καὶ: conjunction / καὶ / and

τεθεμελιωμένοι: verb, perfect passive participle, nominative, plural, masculine / θεμελιόω /
grounded

ἵνα: conjunction / ἵνα / that, so that, in order that

ἐξισχύσητε: verb, aorist active subjunctive, 2nd person, plural / ἐξισχύω / be able

καταλαβέσθαι: verb, aorist middle, infinitive / καταλαμβάνω / to seize tight; to overtake,
obtain; to hold

σὺν: preposition / σὺν / with

πᾶσιν: adjective, dative, plural, masculine / πᾶς / all, every, each

τοῖς: definite article, dative, plural, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

ἀγίοις: adjective, dative, plural, masculine / ἅγιος / holy ones; saints

τί: indefinite/interrogative pronoun, nominative, singular, neuter / τίς / what, who

τὸ: definite article, nominative, singular, neuter / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

πλάτος: noun, nominative, singular, neuter / πλάτος / breadth

καὶ: conjunction / καὶ / and

μῆκος: noun, nominative, singular, neuter / μῆκος / length

καὶ: conjunction / καὶ / and

ὕψος: noun, nominative, singular, neuter / ὕψος / height

καὶ: conjunction / καὶ / and

βάθος: noun, nominative, singular, neuter / βάθος / depth

γινῶναί: verb, aorist, active, infinitive / γινῶσκω / to know

τε: enclitic connective particle³ / τέ / and

τῆν: definite article, accusative, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

ὑπερβάλλουσαν: verb, present active participle, accusative, singular, feminine / ὑπερβάλλω / above throwing; surpassing

τῆς: definite article, genitive, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

γνώσεως: noun, genitive, singular, feminine / γνώσις / knowledge

ἀγάπην: noun, accusative, singular, feminine / ἀγάπη / love

τοῦ: definite article, genitive, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

Χριστοῦ: noun, genitive, singular, masculine / Χριστός / of Christ

ἵνα: conjunction / ἵνα / that, so that, in order that

πληρωθῆτε: verb, aorist, passive, subjunct., 2nd p., plural / πληρώω / you all may be filled up

εἰς: preposition / εἰς / in

πᾶν: adjective, accusative, singular, neuter / πᾶς / all, every, each

τὸ: definite article, accusative, singular, neuter / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

³ Alexander Souter, *A Pocket Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), 258.

πλήρωμα: noun, accusative, singular, neuter / πλήρωμα / fullness

τοῦ: definite article, genitive, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

θεοῦ: noun, genitive, singular, masculine / θεός / of God

τῷ: definite article, dative, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / to the

δέ: adversative particle, conjunction / δέ / but, and, on the other hand

δυναμένω: verb, present middle participle, dative, singular, masculine / δύναμαι / who is powerful

ὑπὲρ: preposition / ὑπὲρ / above

πάντα: adjective, accusative, plural, neuter / πᾶς / all, every, each

ποιῆσαι: aorist active infinitive / ποιέω / to do

ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ: adverb / περισσῶς / most exceedingly

ᾧ: relative pronoun, genitive, plural, neuter / ὅς / of which

αἰτούμεθα: verb, present middle indicative, 1st person plural / αἰτέω / we ask

ἢ: conjunction / ἢ / or

νοοῦμεν: verb, present active indicative, 1st person plural / νοέω / we think

κατὰ: preposition / κατὰ / according to

τῆν: definite article, accusative, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

δύναμιν: noun, accusative, singular, feminine / δύναμις / power

τῆν: definite article, accusative, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the, that

ἐνεργουμένην: verb, present middle participle, accusative, singular, feminine / ἐνεργέω / works

ἐν: preposition / ἐν / in

ὑμῖν: personal pronoun, dative, plural / σύ / you; you all

αὐτῷ: personal pronoun, dative, singular, masculine / αὐτός / to him

ἡ: definite article, nominative, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

δόξα: noun, nominative, singular, feminine / δόξα / glory

ἐν: preposition / ἐν / in

τῆ: definite article, dative, singular, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

ἐκκλησία: noun, dative, singular, feminine / ἐκκλησία / church

καὶ: conjunction / καὶ / and

ἐν: preposition / ἐν / in

Χριστῷ: noun, dative, singular, masculine / Χριστός / Christ

Ἰησοῦ: noun, dative, singular, masculine / Ἰησοῦς / Jesus

εἰς: preposition / εἰς / into

πάσας: adjective, accusative, plural, feminine / πᾶς / all, every, each

τάς: definite article, accusative, plural, feminine / ὁ, ἡ, το / the

γενεάς: noun, accusative, plural, feminine / γενεά / generations

τοῦ: definite article, genitive, singular, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

αἰῶνος: noun, genitive, singular, masculine / αἰών / eternity; forever

τῶν: definite article, genitive, plural, masculine / ὁ, ἡ, το / of the

αἰώνων: noun, genitive, plural, masculine / αἰών / eternity; forever

ἀμήν: (Heb.) amen, truly

The pericope of Ephesians that this work aims to analyze (14–21) begins with *τούτου χάριν* (for this reason), which indicates that the section belongs to a larger section, being part of a bigger argument Paul is developing. Luke reports in Acts (19) that Paul founded the Church in Ephesus and had a ministry of approximately three years there. It is reasonable to believe that “Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians as a summary of his three-year gospel instruction in Ephesus.”⁴ There are six chapters in the letter, and there is a “conventional understanding of the letter’s body as consisting of two proportioned halves, 1:3–3:21 and 4:1–6:20. These two halves are often characterized as doctrinal and applicatory, respectively.”⁵ As the Reformed theologian, Guy Waters, puts it: “Since Ephesians is a summation of Paul’s gospel instruction in Ephesus, we may fairly characterize the first half as rehearsing the great indicatives of the gospel, and the second half as rehearsing the great gospel imperatives.”⁶

The main argument of this paper is that this pericope represents the apex of the letter, at least in importance, culminating in the description of the love of God. It is crucial to understand Paul's argument in the first chapter, specifically verses 3 to 14. That is the foundation of the letter and is where everything else will derive from. Right after this statement, verse 15 begins with *Διὰ τοῦτο*, indicating both dependence upon and conclusion of what comes before, in this case, verses 3 to 14. *Διὰ* with the genitive carries the meaning of consequence: on account of, because of.⁷ We can confirm that this is the case because of the demonstrative pronoun *οὗτο* is in the genitive case, being *Διὰ τοῦτο* a propositional phrase meaning “because of this”, or “for this reason.” This is going

⁴ Guy Prentiss Waters, “Ephesians” in *A Biblical Theological Introduction to the New Testament*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 271.

⁵ Waters, “Ephesians,” 271.

⁶ Waters, “Ephesians,” 272.

⁷ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek: Grammar* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 76.

to happen three times in the first half of the letter (chap. 1 to 3). First, chapter 1, verse 15: Διὰ τοῦτο; second, chapter 3, verse 1: Τοῦτου χάριν; and third, our passage: chapter 3, verse 1: Τοῦτου χάριν.

Χάριν is an accusative singular of χάρις, used as adverb, for the sake of, by reason of, on account of.⁸ So Τοῦτου χάριν and Διὰ τοῦτο belong to the same semantic range. This sequence of “for this reason” indicates the dependence of Paul first statement on chapter one as a foundation for the whole argument he is making, which in this case is the mighty work of God in the election and redemption of his church, through the work of Jesus Christ, as he states in the center of the argument in verses 7 to 10:

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

This is a device Paul has used elsewhere. In Titus one can find the same structure. The opening of the letter to Titus, Paul sets the foundation of his argument:

1. Paul, a servant[a] of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness,
2 in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began
3 and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior;
4 To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

One can notice the same themes, even though more briefly, being stated here in the introduction.

Right after that, verse 5 says: “This is why I left you in Crete” (ESV). The original text says:

Τοῦτου χάριν ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτη. We could translate this: “For this reason I left you in Crete.” Depending on what Paul stated before, he now presents the development of his argument.

That is the same structure we find in Ephesians.

⁸ Souter, *Greek New Testament*, 281.

That is how I propose the structure of the letter.:

1:3-14 foundation <----→ 1:15 Διὰ τοῦτο development <----→ 3:1 Τούτου χάριν development
<----→ Τούτου χάριν conclusion <----→ 4-6 application <----→ 6:10-18 application/conclusion

Each "development" session is dependent on the previous session, and each subsequent session is linked to the initial foundation. This way, we are able to situate our pericope in the letter and understand the role it has.

Verse 1 says: Τούτου χάριν κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. We already know that this section belongs to a larger section. Paul here is returning to the prayer he begins in verse 1:15-19 (the first development from 1:3-14):

because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might.

Paul, after stating the right doctrine of God, Christ and Salvation (1:3-14), he prays for the Ephesians (I do not cease to give thanks for you... that God... the Father... may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him). He will return to this prayer in chapter 3, even being unusual for an epistle to turn to prayer midway. As the Reformed theologian, Michal Allen, explains: “Paul returns to prayer, having begun in 1:15-19 and initiated a rerun in 3:1. It is unusual for an epistle to turn to prayer midway, and we see that this prayer draws the first half of the letter to a close.”⁹

⁹ Michael Allen, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2020), kindle.

Verse 14 shows that now, at the conclusion of this prayer, Paul is even more emphatic, because even though he is repeating the formula *Τούτου χάριν*, he is now adding *κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*, which is a sign of reverence and worship. The fact that the noun *πατήρ* is in the accusative – *πατέρα* – means that the object of his action, *κάμπτω*, is the father. But since, as my argument is this pericope is dependent on the previous one, which is also dependent in the foundation of the letter, we can say that Paul here is concluding this way because God, the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the cause of our salvation – as we saw in verse 1 – as well the object of our salvation.

In a systematic reasoning, it is correct to say that we are the object of God's salvation, because we are the ones who are being saved. But in this letter, without denying this reality, Paul is showing that this whole process of redemption belongs to the triune God. He says in chapter 1, verse 4, that “[God] chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that *we should be holy and blameless before him.*” Chapter 2, verse 10, he says: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ *Jesus for good works.*” We can conclude that, in the opening of Paul's argument, in verse one, where he says *Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ*, he is referring to God as father, in the objective case, because he is the object of the whole process Paul is going to describe. In the close of the section, when Paul returns to this prayer saying *κάμπτω τὰ γόνατά μου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*, now the father is in the accusative, receiving the action. Paul is displaying a circle that begins and ends with God, just as our salvation. He predestined us before the foundation of the world, way before we were born, even before the world was born, God decreed everything that comes to pass. He is *πατήρ*. But he is also the goal of all creation. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that *we should be holy and blameless before him.* That is precisely what

Paul is doing here in verse 14, he is bowing his knees before him. God is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega.

That is why in my translation I have offered an alternative way of translating πατριὰ in verse 15, because I judge that this is directly connect with πατέρα in verse 14. The way we see the verse flows we can conclude that Paul didn't chose this word randomly. The word πατριὰ is commonly translated as "nation" or "family," which communicates well the meaning of the word. The end "ια" in Greek indicates quality¹⁰ of this something. That's why I translated πατριὰ as "fatherly", so one can see the connection in the argument more accurately. "I bow my knees towards the Father, out of whom each fatherly thing in heavens and earth is named." This sentence mirrors Paul's statement in the Areopagus: "In him we live and move and have our being" (Act 19:28).

In verse 16 Paul repeats the formula of praying he said previously in verse 1:17, when he says: "the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom" (ὁ πατήρ τῆς δόξης, δώη ὑμῖν πνεῦμα σοφίας). The root δίδ of the verb δίδωμι, which means "give", indicates Paul supplicating to God on behalf of the Ephesians. The conjunction ἵνα indicates that the following verb will be in the subjunctive, which is the case of δίδωμι in both 1:17 and 3:16. In the case of our pericope, he is asking to give, or grant (δίδωμι) κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ (according to the riches of his glory). This is important to notice, because it will be fundamental to understand verse 17 as well.

John Eadie commentary on Ephesians is helpful here. He says:

The phrase is connected not with κραταιωθῆναι, but with δῶ, and it illustrates the proportion of measurement of the gift, nay, of all the gifts that are comprehended in the apostle's prayer. And it is no exaggeration, for He gives like Himself, not grudgingly or in tiny portions, as if He were afraid to exhaust His riches, or even suspected them to be limited in their contents. There is no fastidious scrupulosity or

¹⁰ Thomas A. Robinson, *Mastering New Testament Greek* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers Inc , 2007), 116.

anxious frugality on the part of the Divine Benefactor. His bounty proclaims His conscious possession of immeasurable resources. He bestows according to the riches of His glory – his own infinite fulness.¹¹

Paul then adds an infinitive of cause, κραταιωθῆναι, which is followed by the basic formula of a causal infinitive, which is διὰ τοῦ. “The causal infinitive indicates the reason for the action of the controlling verb. In this respect, it answers the question ‘Why?’.”¹² So, in this case, why is Paul asking God the Father may grant the Ephesians according to the riches of his glory? The infinitive gives us the answer: to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in [their] inner man.

We have reach now a important point for the understanding of the whole passage, which is verse 17. The way we interpret the relationship between the words in this verse affect the meaning of the whole passage. We begin with another infinitive, κατοικῆσαι. It is the combination of the roots οικέω and κατά. οικέω means to live, to dwell. Κατά means, when used in regard to places, “down.” Hoehner points out that “Paul normally uses οικέω to express the idea of dwelling.” So he concludes: “Thus, κατοικῆσαι connotes a settled dwelling, as opposed to παροικεω, a temporary sojourn (Luke 24:18, Heb 11:19). This permanence of dwelling is seen in the two other occasions that Paul uses the term where he states that all of the fullness of God’s deity dwells in Christ (Col 1:19, 2:9). Here in Ephesians Christ is the one who dwells in the believer.”¹³

¹¹ John Eadie, *Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1979), 243.

¹² Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 1996), 596.

¹³ Harold W. Hoehmer, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 480.

Now we need to assess the implications of Jesus dwelling in the believer. Hoehmer will present three different views concerning this matter:

First, some consider κατοικῆσαι to be parallel with κραταιωθῆναι with both dependent on ἵνα δῶ in verse 16– that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person and that Christ may dwell in your hearts. This view has three problems: (1) there is no coordinating conjunction to indicate the parallelism of κατοικῆσαι with κραταιωθῆναι. (2) it must reach a long way back to ἵνα δῶ, and (3) there is no progress of thought. Furthermore, would Paul pray for Christ to dwell in the heart of believers? The second view is that κατοικῆσαι serves as an exegetical infinitive to κραταιωθῆναι– “that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person, namely, that Christ may dwell in your hearts.” This is possible, although as with the first alternative it has to reach way back to ἵνα δῶ. Again, would Paul pray for Christ to dwell in believers’ hearts? The third alternative is that it is a contemplative result of the previous infinitive with κραταιωθῆναι– “that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person so that, being strengthened, Christ may dwell in your hearts.”¹⁴

Hoehmer decides that the third alternative is the better from the three.

This is the better view because it does not have to reach all the way back to ἵνα δῶ, for it is not a contemplative result of ἵνα but of the complementary infinitive κραταιωθῆναι. Also, this allows for progress in the prayer for the believer to be strengthened with the result that Christ may dwell in his heart. This differs from the second view in that it does not explain the previous infinitive but shows the result of receiving strength. Thus, it can be translated, “that he may grant you to be strengthened in the inner person so Christ may dwell in your hearts.”¹⁵

That is a good argument, but he raises another problem. Even though I agree with his reasoning, therefore with his translation he says that the problem with the other two views, specially the first one, is because “it must reach a long way back to ἵνα δῶ.” This is not a convincing argument, at least not in face of the other ones, especially because the verse does not end at ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν. The *versus* continues, and if we follow Hoehmer’s argument, we have another problem: what do we do with the rest of the verse (ἐν ἀγάπῃ ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι)? If we can not go the way back to ἵνα δῶ, it is hard to know how we can deal with two more participles in the sentence. The exit Hoehmer finds is to make this participle part of the next sentence, which begins in verse 18. He says: “having stated the petition, Paul now gives the reason for the prayer: he wants the Ephesians to understand Christ’s love and

¹⁴ Hoehmer, *Ephesians*, 481.

¹⁵ Hoehmer, *Ephesians*, 481.

consequently have a deep love for one another.” So go goes on and translate it as: 17b “in order that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18. Might be able to comprehend...”.

Notice how the translation doesn't match the original text. Verse 17 in Greek is: κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν ἐν ἀγάπῃ· ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι. The two participles are here. Verse 18 is: ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος.

Notice that in the original text, verse 18 begins with ἵνα, which is commonly translated as “in order that.” Hoehmer moves this ἵνα to verse 17, prior to the two participles. I have written elsewhere¹⁶ on this text and agreed with this solution, but I have changed my mind and I believe there is a better way to solve this.

Looking at the structure of Ephesians, especially in chapter 3, we find an interesting pattern on how Paul is phrasing his argument. Paul uses a main verb in the aorist, followed by two infinitives. That happens three times only in chapter 3. The first case is verse 8 and 9:

ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις αὕτη τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ φωτίσαι πάντας...

The second time is in verses 16 and 17:

ἵνα δῶ ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον, κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν...

The third time is in verses 18 and 19:

¹⁶ Leandro Passos, *ἐν ἀγάπῃ as Foundation: An analysis of Pauline Ecclesiology as a Contribution to the Ecumenical Dialogue*, presented to Bruce Lowe for Pauline Epistle at Reformed Theological Seminary on May 8th, 2023.

ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε καταλαβέσθαι σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος, γνῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν...

We can notice a perfect flow of Paul using this structure throughout chapter 3, using a main verb in the aorist tense (in yellow) followed by two infinitives (in blue) which makes the bridge between the two verses the section is embracing.

Alongside with that, we have the ἵνα clause, that makes even hard for Hoehmer's interpretation be accepted. Both verses 16 and verses 18 starts with ἵνα. This conjunction, usually translated as "that," or "in order that", has as its function to start a new clause. So there is a microstructure within the macrostructure here. In the same way that I propose a macrostructure for the whole letter above, here I propose a structure for chapter three following the same logic.

Chapter three begins with Τοῦτου χάριν, which is the key term for the dependence of a prior or larger section as I stated above. This is what I am calling here the "macrostructure" of the letter. Here, in chapter three, ἵνα has the same role for what I am calling the "microstructure," which is the argument Paul is making only in chapter three. It is as it follows:

Τοῦτου χάριν (opening of chap. 3:1, beginning new argument) ←--→ Τοῦτου χάριν 3:14
(developing and opening conclusion of the argument) ←--→ verse 16: ἵνα (first section of the microstructure) ←--→ verse 18: ἵνα (second section of the microstructure).

Hoehmer attempt to move the two participles to verse 18 does not work because it would not respect verse 18 as a new, separate clause. He merges both ἵνα.

My proposal is that, both infinitive and both participles in verse 17 and 18 belongs to the main verb in the aorist at the beginning of verse 16: **δῶ**. So my translation is a flow that follows the first verb: so that **he may grant** you all according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner man, so Christ may dwell in your inner selves through faith, in love being rooted and grounded. And the next ἵνα properly placed at the beginning at verse 18: so that being able to seize tight with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth.

In this way, the pattern remains, of κραταιωθῆναι and κατοικῆσαι, along with ἐρριζωμένοι and θεμελιωμένοι, belonging to ἵνα δῶ; and καταλαβέσθαι and γινῶναι belonging to ἵνα ἐξισχύσητε.

Still, concerning the two participles, one can raise the question of the main verb in verb 16, δῶ, is singular, and both participles in verse 17 are plural. The answer to that is Paul uses the pronoun “you” in the plural both in verses 16 (ἵνα δῶ ὑμῖν) and verse 17 (ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν).

With my proposal of macrostructure and microstructure, we can see our pericope divided in pairs of two verses– 14&15, 16&17, 18&19, 20&21.

The first clause is Paul resuming his prayer to the Ephesians, appealing to the authority of God, the subject and also the object of our salvation and redemption, as we saw in the first session.

We then devoted a long session to the second clause to deal with the most appropriate translation, containing two infinitives and two participles, which I proposed to be all one unified clause with the main verb in the aorist. In it, Paul exposes the content of his petition to God, which is in accordance with the riches of His glory, that the Ephesians may be strengthened in

the inner being with power, so Christ may dwell in their inner selves, being rooted and grounded in love. All the movement that Paul is making is to get exactly here, in love ἐν ἀγάπῃ.

For Paul, God the Father need to grant them strength with power through His Spirit, so that they can know this love. First, we possess, then we comprehend. First Christ dwells in us, the Father grant us, through His Spirit that, in love, we may know this love, because the only way of grasping this love is by being loved first. Paul says: “so that being able to seize tight with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the surpassing-knowledge love of Christ, so that you may be filled with all the fulness of God.” The verb Paul uses for “seize tight” (καταλαβέσθαι) “is a more colorful way expressing the idea of knowing of comprehending something. In its literal sense, the verb was used for the Israelites capturing a city or an enemy army during a conquest.”¹⁷ So, the sense here is not that we are capable of having an exhaustive knowledge of God, or that we can know him completely. The idea Paul is communicating is that of relational knowledge, possession. We will be able to know God, not as an object of scientific study, but because Christ is dwelling in us.

To emphasize this divine love, Paul will use units of measurement to refer to it as one would use refer to a three-dimensional object – such as the ark of the covenant (Exod. 37:1-2) or the Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 6:2-3). We have then in verse 19 the presence of one more participle, that I believe is the arrival point of the Paul’s argument, the apex of his prayer. The participle is ὑπερβάλλουσιν. This word is formed by two words: the preposition ὑπερ, which means “above”, and the verb βάλλω, which means “I cast, throw.” The participle is in the accusative, so it is as

¹⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 214.

object, and it is feminine singular, agreeing with ἀγάπην. Even though the infinitive takes an accusative as its subject, which is the case here with γινῶναί τε τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν, the fact of the participle agreeing with the noun makes all of that the subject of the verb, and the participle functioning as an adjective of its subject. It means that, in the same way that ὑπερβάλλουσαν is the subject of the verb in the infinitive γινῶναί, the words the participle is attributing quality (adjective) is part of this subject, which are also in the accusative case, as the participle gathers the words around him. So, Paul is praying the the Ephesians get to know this love, but he is qualifying both the knowledge and the love. The kind of knowledge we just saw in verse 18, is the knowledge capable of seizing tight with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth of such love. The love is what the participle is qualifying, is the τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην, the surpassing-knowledge love of Christ. He then concludes the verse by stating that, only when we reach this point, we can actually say that we know God. Ernest Best says when comments this passage that: “The ultimate purpose of the prayer is the filling of believers.”¹⁸ Paul is going to call this filling by the Spirit, the πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ (fullness of God), and he is going to use the adjective πᾶς to indicates that that is not a parcial filling, like when we put only 10 dollars of gas in our cars. The impact of the adjective πᾶς and the noun πλήρωμα in those who read these words is that of abundancy. That is the conclusion he is going to draw in the last section, verses 20 and 21. Paul is recognizing that the only one able, not just able, but powerful to do this things is God, so he says in verse 20: “But to him who is powerful (δυναμένῳ) to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.” Paul then finishes his prayer with a doxology: αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ εἰς πάσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων· ἀμήν.

¹⁸ Ernest Best, *Ephesians: A Shorter Commentary* (Ney York: T&T Clark 2003), 170.

Conclusion

In conclusion I wish to provide practical applications for using what has been said in this essay to help myself and others correct misconceptions of God and his relationship with us to better appreciate the power of being continuously filled with his Spirit to be able to abidingly focus with the eyes of our heart at an identity level on the astoundingly immeasurable love of God for each of us.

The letter of Ephesians offers us a powerful trinitarian picture of salvation, especially in chapter three, where Paul is praying to God the Father, literally bowing his knees towards him, so by the Holy Spirit the Lord Jesus Christ can dwell in the hearts of the believers. In dwelling, the believers have a deeper (and wider, and higher) knowledge of the love of Christ, which is the reason, the very foundation of this redemptive work. God is love, and “in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.” “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.” And the only way of knowing this love is by having it dwelling within us, the surpassing-knowledge love of Christ.

“To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

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