

## Imagining the Kingdom: Prayer for Power to Perform the Promise

Jerry Cisar — August 6, 2023

Text: Ephesians 3

### Introduction

James K. A. Smith, *You are What You Love*: “Worship is the ‘imagination station’ that incubates our loves and longings so that our cultural endeavors are indexed toward God and his kingdom.”

Smith: “Jesus doesn’t encounter Matthew and John—or you and me—and ask, ‘What do you know?’ He doesn’t even ask, ‘What do you believe?’ He asks, ‘What do you want?’ This is the most incisive, piercing question Jesus can ask of us precisely because we are what we want.... Discipleship, we might say, is a way to curate your heart, to be attentive to and intentional about what you love.”

i. Ezek. 36:26-27

ii. Philippians 2:13

### I. Partakers of the Promise (3:1-6)

A. Paul stops mid-sentence, interrupting himself.

i. What is it that is so significant that Paul stops mid-sentence and breaks off to expound on it?

ii. “Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you...”.



To receive an email preview of the sermon (with link to outline) or notification of new blog posts, scan here.

### LIVE THE STORY

*The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- What does the “for this reason” of Eph. 1, 14 refer to? And, what does “this reason” cause Paul to do? Why do you think that is?
- How might the idea that God had broken down the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile have felt to the 1<sup>st</sup> audience?
- What effect is the church’s performance of Gospel unity supposed to have according to v10? What are the rulers and authorities seeing?
- In the (in some circles) common breakdown of Ephesians as 3 chapters of indicative and 3 of imperative, what’s missing? Explain.
- What would it mean to “take hold of” the love of Christ, or to “make it our own,” vs. “comprehend”? (For extra study look at Paul’s other uses of this verb: Rom. 9:30; 1 Cor. 9:24; 3x in Phil. 3:12-13; 1 Ths. 5:4.)
- How can we know what surpasses knowledge according to Paul’s prayer? What might this tell us about how we gain true knowledge?
- Write your own question:

B. The mystery of Christ (3:6)

i. “You are no longer strangers (ξένοι)” (2:19)

ii. There is no fear in love (1 John 4:18).

C. Paul is exulting in the glory of the Gospel that has torn down those walls of hostility, but now we must live that way!

**II. Performance of the Promise (3:7-13)**

A. Having transformed people from hostility to unity and love, the church must now perform the promise, *like actors on a cosmic stage*, displaying the wisdom of God in unifying people like this.

B. The stage for this performance of the promise of a peaceable kingdom is in the realm of spiritual beings.

C. Paul knows that for us to perform the promise, we need something else.

**III. Prayer for Power to Perform the Promise (3:14-21)**

A. “For this reason”

i. The “reason” is all that chapter 2 elucidated.

ii. It is for *this* reason that Paul gets on his knees to pray for them! Why? Because of what they need to live it!

B. Paul calls on the abundant storehouses of heaven:

- i. To give us the strength we need so that Christ will dwell in our hearts... not my heart, or your heart, but *our hearts*.
- ii. That we being rooted and grounded in love, would have the power or ability to (lit.) *take hold* of the love of Christ.
  - a) Take hold of: to make something one’s own.
  - b) Paul doesn’t use this word anywhere else to mean “understand.”
- iii. To know what surpasses knowledge!

**Conclusion**