



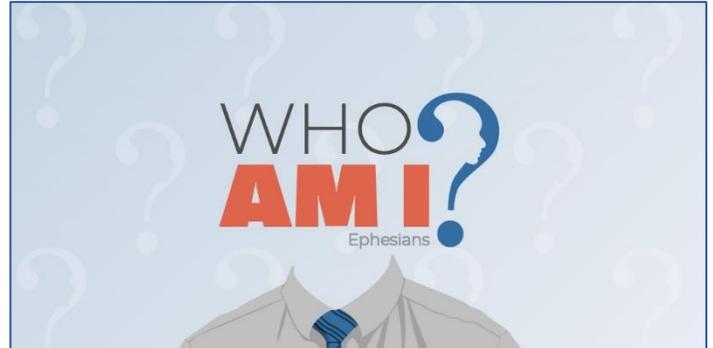
VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

God's Lifetime Guarantee

WHO AM I?

Ephesians 3:14–21

Tim Badal | February 26, 2023



Please open your Bible to the book of Ephesians. We're looking at Paul's letter to this church under the heading of "Who am I?" We're answering the question of where we find our identity and purpose in this world. So far in this letter, Paul has been telling us that we are in Christ. What he hasn't said is what being in Christ accomplishes for us? He's explained what we have by virtue of being in Christ, but what is the end result?

Today we come to a very famous passage of Scripture, including a very famous verse that we love to quote, but we don't always understand the context that brings us to that place. The verse is Ephesians 3:20, "*Now to him,*" that is God, "*who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us...*" What God is declaring here is that for any and all who are in Christ, "I have a guarantee for you. I have a promise for you. I have something for those who, by faith, bow the knee and trust Me as their personal Savior." Here is the guarantee. Here is the promise that God has for His people: "I will do far more abundantly than you could ever ask or imagine." God wants to knock your socks off. He wants to grace you with His goodness and love. He wants you to experience all of Who He is in this world.

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When we read that, we think, "God, I want You to do far more abundantly than I could ask for or imagine in my marriage and family. God, I want You to do amazing things in my workplace. I want You to do amazing things in my school, my neighborhood, in our country, in this world.

"God, I want You to do abundantly more than I could ask for or think about. I want you to bring heaven down to earth." God says—without any provisos or disclaimers—"You can have that. You can experience that. You can achieve that in Me."

Now, the question is: how do we get verse 20 into our lives? Verses 14-21 are going to help us get there. Paul is going to pray that we would experience this guarantee from God. Here's the guarantee: Jesus Christ has taken us out of darkness and death bringing us into life and light by His finished work on the cross. Because of this, God promises and guarantees that He will bless every believer—in this place and in the world, in unbelievable ways—as we rest and rely on the Holy Spirit.

What we need to hear today is that God is not the One keeping you from the great things He has in store for you. Because we rest and rely on our ourselves instead of the Holy Spirit, we often forfeit experiencing of God's blessing in our lives. So Paul prays that you and I would experience these unbelievable ways God wants to move and act in our lives in direct correspondence with how much we're resting and relying on the Holy Spirit.

How do we gain this lifetime guarantee?

If that's what you want in your life, if that's what you're longing for in your Christian life, God says, "I guarantee it can happen, because I'm able to do it." So how do we get there?

It begins with complete humility.

Humility is the understanding that you are not the end-all. Paul says, "I get on my knees." When they prayed in the first century, they prayed standing up. But Paul says, "I get on my knees. I want to show my dependence on You, God. I want to show my desire to serve You. I want You to know that I see You as being in charge and me being in submission. I want You to know that I believe You to be nobility and me to be something less than that. You are King; I am not."

Paul would agree with James, who says God opposes the proud, but gives grace and blessings to the humble (James 4:6). We need to be humble.

We need to have confident hope.

Paul says he bows his knees before the Father. Why? Because the Father is the One Who is able to do exceedingly abundantly more than I could ever ask for or imagine. I am going to the One Who is able to bring blessings into my life. I have confident hope that as I humble myself, God will begin to pour His blessings and goodness into my life.

Now, where is God getting this grace and goodness? Verse 16 says it's "*according to the riches of his glory.*" God has more than enough goodness and grace to share with us. So He's opening the coffers of heaven and extending this guarantee.

When we talk about guarantees for things we purchase, it means we've bought something of great value to us. A guarantee is a promise or assurance made by a company or seller to the buyer that the product or service they sell will meet certain expectations. If it doesn't, that company will take responsibility for it. This process reduces the perceived risk for the buyer, providing him with a safety net. It also builds trust between the buyer and the seller. When you know the product has a guarantee, there's a confidence that you can use it in freedom, without bondage.

I remember after breaking my cell phone, that I was given a cell phone screen protector and was guaranteed that it would work. In other words, if anything happened to my phone after that, the company would provide me with a new phone. They were so confident that the screen protector would protect my screen, that if somehow the screen cracked, they would take care of it. I was then able to live in freedom. I didn't worry about my phone, because I had this provider who said, "No matter what befalls the phone, you can be confident and trust that someone is standing behind that promise and we will address anything that happens to your phone."

As believers, we put all our faith and trust in Jesus Christ. We are saying, "I am weak, but You are strong. I am dumb, but You are wise. I am frail, but You are faithful. I'm putting all my eggs into the Jesus basket." What God says through the apostle Paul is, "I will make good on your faith. I will make good on your trust. I will not make you ashamed of this. I will not betray you in this. You can rely on Me. I want you to rely on this guarantee. I am able to do more than you could ever ask for or imagine. I can bless you in ways you have never thought possible."

The problem is when we read this, we think, "Wait a minute. I don't see this. Something must be wrong." We're quick to point to God, saying, "You're not living up to Your end of the bargain." It's not that He's not living up to His end of the bargain. He has said we need to humble ourselves. We need to have confident hope. He has the riches we need. But in order for us to experience this, we need to place ourselves in a posture of receiving His goodness and grace. To do this, we need to learn a few things about this guarantee.

What does this lifetime guarantee provide?

It gives us strength for the journey.

Paul prays that we would live in light of the guarantee of God. He wants us to live in liberty and in confidence that the God Who says all these things about us, because we are "in Christ," wants us to experience these things as realities in our lives. In verses 16-17, Paul writes, "*According to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*" As Christians, Paul says we need to be strengthened. We need power for the journey. We're finite and broken people, battered by temptation, tribulation and trials. Paul wants to assure us that we don't have to be defeated by these things. That's why he points us to the riches of God in Christ, things God has already given each Christian, which is His strength and power.

That phrase “strengthened with power” comes from the Greek word that is the source of our English word dynamite. It’s explosive power. Paul wants Christians to know that we have explosive power, earth-shattering power. Earlier in Ephesians 1, Paul describes this power as being the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the grave. That stone-moving, earth-quaking power that raised Christ from the dead is alive and well in you and me.

Again, you might be thinking, “I don’t feel it.” Well, we need to understand that we need to be strengthened with that power. That dynamite power is placed in us by His Spirit. The Spirit of the living God has to infuse us with this power. In a sense, it’s already in us—“Christ in us, the hope of glory”—but the problem is there’s a disconnect between that power and what we believe.

Notice that the strengthening comes where? Not into your biceps. Not into your hamstrings. Not into your quadriceps. Not into your calves. It comes into your “inner being.” That’s the place where we think, feel and believe. Paul is saying that our identity begins here. It doesn’t matter what strength you have at your disposal if you don’t think you have it.

When I was young, I went with my grandparents to the Shriners Circus in Chicago. As we were walking through the parking lot, the circus animals were all around us. I remember seeing the elephants. There were probably a dozen of them—it was crazy. I remember thinking, “They’re not even in cages. They’re just standing there.” I was probably seven or eight, but I remember there was a rope hooked to the leg of each elephant. It was a pretty long rope, but it wasn’t that big. It was hooked to a chain link fence. In my eight-year-old mind, I realized there was no way that chain link fence could stop the elephant from moving if he wanted to. So I tugged on my grandfather’s sleeve and asked, “Grandpa, don’t those elephants know they can go wherever they want and do whatever they want?” My grandfather responded, “They have been conditioned into thinking that as long as that rope is around their leg, they can’t go anywhere.”

The devil has told Christians, “You ain’t got no power.” As Christians, you and I are as powerful as those elephants. But the devil has wrapped this little rope around a part of our being; maybe it’s part of our thinking. And he has said, “As long as this thing is around you, you can’t accomplish anything.”

We’ve bought into that and it keeps us silent. It’s what keeps us from moving. We truly believe we are harnessed when the Spirit of God says we are free and powerful. Little do we know that just by moving our leg or arm with a minimal amount of our strength, we could rip out the very thing that is holding us captive.

You see, the devil has told many of us that a sin, a temptation, a struggle, an issue or an idiosyncrasy you have—maybe a lack of education or a lack of experience—or all manner of excuses are holding you back from the unthinkable things God wants to do in and through your life. In other words, you’re being held captive by the thinking of your mind. You’re believing lies, instead of believing in the dynamite power God has strengthened you with. *

The people around you might say, “You talk about having the power of God, but you’re hooked up to a chain link fence and you’re not doing anything or going anywhere.” Then you reply, “Well, I can’t. I’m hooked. I’m kept in captivity.” But Paul is saying, “God wants to give you strength for the journey—dynamite power—to rip up whatever stakes are in the ground, whatever is holding you back from the full experience of what it is to be in Christ.”

How does Paul say we can fix this? He says we must have Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith. We have to believe that “greater is He that is in us” than that rope chaining us to the fence. We have to believe, by faith, that God has given us power to say no to sin, ungodliness and unrighteousness. We have to believe we have dynamite strength within that can shape this world for Christ. Then no longer are we held back by sin, struggles or the lies of people around us. Now we can live in victory because of the One Who is living in us. How do we get there? Christ has to dwell in our hearts. In other words, it’s not that God hasn’t given us this power, it’s that we haven’t tapped into the power. The power is there.

As I thought of ways to illustrate this, what came to mind is my internet connection at home. We live in an internet world. It seems like everything in our houses now has to be connected to the internet. The more we connect, the more bandwidth we need to accomplish all that is necessary. Our houses have to have a good wi-fi signal, because we no longer use wires. The problem for many of us is that our houses are too big for the signal carrier to get to all of it. It might reach some parts of your house, but not all of it.

Not trying to get too technical, but think of it as Paul wanting us to find a router that is strong enough to take the source from the modem and get it where it needs to go: your phone, tablet, television or whatever technology you’re using. That means we’ve got

to tap into the source. The source is there. We've got a modem. We've got internet coming into the house, but we have to be able to tap into that source. With regard to Paul's message, we have to allow Christ to dwell in us.

Years ago, Robert Munger wrote a booklet that sold hundreds of thousands of copies called "My Heart—Christ's Home." Maybe some of you have read it. It's a simple book with incredible depth. It takes the image of a house as a metaphor for your heart. It asks, "Is Christ dwelling in your heart?" Then he goes on and asks is Christ dwelling in your kitchen? If so, that's great. But is He in your family room? Is He in your bedroom? Is He in your closet? Is He in the bathroom? Is He in the garage? Munger uses every part of the house to correlate with a part of our lives. For example, regarding the kitchen, he asks, "Is Christ your nutrition or are you seeking to be nourished by something else?" You might ask, "What's Christ going to do in my family room?" Well, is Christ part of the media you're bringing in? Are you saturating yourself with things of God or of the world through your television or the internet? How about your bedroom where you find your rest? Are you resting in Christ or are you resting in yourself? What about the closets of your life? Does Christ rule there? Or are there places where you hide things from Him, where you keep your secrets?

Munger's little book illustrates what I'm saying regarding the internet. Christ has to rule and reign in all parts of our lives. There can't be one part of our lives that we say is our own. It's those parts where we will never experience the fullness of Christ and His love for us.

For some of us this morning, the reason you're not seeing God do immeasurably more than you can ask or imagine is because you've locked the door to certain parts of your life and are not letting Christ dwell there. Munger says you have to open those doors, so every part of your life can tap into the source of heaven, allowing all of God's goodness and grace to abound in you. This is something you do by faith. You pray, "Jesus, I need You in my life every moment. I'm going to pick up Your Word and I'm not going to start a day without knowing what it has to say to me. I'm not going to go a day without praying, asking You to intervene in my life. I'm not going to go a day without being involved in the lives of other believers. I want to see Your goodness and grace, so I'm going to rest and rely on the leading of Your Spirit. I want every part of my life to be tapped into the One Who is able to do more than I could ever ask or imagine."

Is Christ dwelling in your life? A better way to put it might be this: When you connect your phone to a wi-fi signal, you can see bars showing the signal strength. Ask yourself, "As I go about life, what part of my life is getting a strong signal? Right now it's really strong. I'm at 5G." You're in the Word. You've sung praises to God. You're with God's people. But then you go out to the parking lot and the signal gets fainter. Then you start looking at things or participating in things that you shouldn't and the signal gets even smaller. You go to work, but you're a covert Christian; nobody knows who you are. That signal is getting fainter. You begin to realize that the reason why God isn't doing abundantly more than you could ask or think is not because He's not able; our text says that He is able. It's because you're not allowing Christ to dwell in you.

It grounds us in the Savior's love.

So how do we do this? Paul prays that we would be "*rooted and grounded in love*," so we "*may have strength*." We just talked about that strength, His dynamite power, that will strengthen us to make it through the journey. Where does it come from? It comes from thinking or being able to "*comprehend*." This isn't physical strength; it's the internal strength that comes from knowing that God is Who He says He is. If what He says about Himself is true, and what He says about us is true, then we will live differently because of what we know about God and about ourselves.

So what are we supposed to comprehend? Paul says in verse 18 that it's "*the breadth and length and height and depth*." He goes on to say that we will "*know*" the love of Christ. That word "*know*" implies an intimate experience. We are to deeply experience "*the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*."

So back to the wi-fi illustration. To experience the fullness of all He wants to give me, it begins with me knowing with my head and experiencing in my life the love of Christ. I need to know I am loved by the God of the universe. I am so loved, that even though I was a rebel against Him, by His amazing grace He saved me. And He is saving me day by day. And He will save me when I see Him face to face. I'm supposed to comprehend the breadth, the length, the height and the depth of this. What Paul is saying is simple. "I want you to know the totality of what it means to be loved by Christ." Right away we might say, "I know I'm loved by God. I've known this since I was a little kid. 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.' I know this, because He died on the cross for me." When we say that, we do what I did some months ago when Amanda and I had the opportunity to go to the Grand

Canyon. I started calling people I know, messaging them on Facebook, video chatting with them. One of the people I did that with was my dad. He was sitting in his house in Hinckley and I was showing him what I was seeing in the Grand Canyon. I said to my father, "Well, I can take this off my bucket list; I have seen the Grand Canyon." To which my father responded, "No, you haven't." I said, "I'm looking at it right now. I've seen the Grand Canyon, Dad." He said, "No, you haven't." I asked, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "Did you go to the other side?" "Well, no." "Did you go into it?" "No." "Did you take some pictures from inside it?" "No." "Did you take the mules down into it like the Brady Bunch did?" "No." "Did you camp down there?" "No." "Did you get into all the ravines and crevices?" "No. I get it, Dad, okay. I've not seen the Grand Canyon. Thank you very much, I've got to go. The signal's really bad here...."

My dad was trying to make the point that even though I had seen the Grand Canyon, I had not really experienced it. The Grand Canyon is so immense, so expansive, to simply take a look from the observation deck and say, "Seen it, been there, done that," is to miss the entire point. There's a lot more to the Grand Canyon than what I saw or experienced. There are nooks and crannies to experience. I had not even scratched the surface.

So I can say I know the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, but Paul is praying that we would experience the fullness of God. Now, how can we do this when the knowledge of God and His love for us surpasses our ability to know it? Paul says God loves you so much that you can't even explain it on paper. God loves you so much, you can't put it into words.

Let's go back to the Grand Canyon for a moment. If I were to go to the observation deck, look out at the Grand Canyon, then say I've experienced it, your response should be like my father's. "No, you haven't. Maybe a part of it, but not in its fullness." Paul says for you and I to experience the fullness of the love of Christ, we will need the "strength to comprehend." How can we comprehend that which surpasses knowledge? Paul prays in verse 18 that we would have the strength to comprehend it. But how? *"With all the saints."* If you and I were at the Grand Canyon and I took a picture of the vista and said I've experienced the Grand Canyon, you would probably say, "No, you haven't." But what if I gave each of you a camera and said, "I want you to go explore it. Go deep inside, then let's meet back here tomorrow. Let's share our notes and pictures."

Who then will have experienced more? Me by myself or me collectively with a group of people? The answer is collectively. We're going to share all the photos we have of this immeasurable place. Will we have experienced it to its fullness? No. But I will have a comprehension that exceeds my knowledge, because you will have gone places I couldn't go or didn't go. Then through you, I will gain a greater understanding of the Grand Canyon.

Listen to me, church. God's love is so expansive that one single person cannot take it all in. That's why God has created the church. This is what Cisco talked about last week. God uses the church as a way to display His glory. He wants us to take it in—from all our places, all our backgrounds and with all our baggage—so that we can tell one another about the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

As you tell me about God is loving you, and as I tell you about how God is loving me, we are displaying to one another the height, the breadth, the length and the depth of the love of Christ to each other. As we declare this truth, as we see the love of Christ being lived out in others' lives, we start to recognize, "I am truly loved. The same God Who loves them loves me the same way. The way God loves the people in my small group or Bible study or student ministry is how He loves me." This allows me to see the totality of God's love and I begin to experience what it means to be filled with all the fullness of God.

It graces our socks off.

So this guarantee gives us strength for the journey, it grounds us in the Savior's love and what else does it do? It tells us that God wants to grace our socks off. He wants to give you His goodness and His grace in ways you could never imagine. He is doing amazing things in the world. His power is at work. The question is: are you tapped into it?

God wants to do amazing things in your marriage. Are you resting and relying on the Spirit of God for that? How about in your family? How about at your work, in your school, in your neighborhood, in your relationships, in your finances, in your fight against sin or in this church?

God wants to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask for or imagine. The question is am I tapped into God's love for me? Is Christ dwelling in me?

I love what Eugene Peterson says when he paraphrases this passage. This comes straight from [The Message](#):

My response is to get down on my knees before the Father, this magnificent Father who parcels out all heaven and earth. I ask him to strengthen you by his Spirit—not a brute strength but a glorious inner strength—that Christ will live in you as you open the door and invite him in.

There's the guarantee. God wants to knock your socks off. God wants to grace your socks off. If you will allow Christ to live in you, open the door and invite Him in. Will you do that this morning? [The Message](#) paraphrase goes on to say this:

And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

God can do anything, you know—far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams! He does it not by pushing us around but by working within us, his Spirit deeply and gently within us.

Glory to God in the church!

Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus!

Glory down all the generations!

Glory through all millennia! Oh, yes!

Is God at work? Are you experiencing this great guarantee that will enable you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling? We will never live out the calling God has for us until we truly tap into the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Amen? And when we fall in love with Him, when we allow the fullness of this to embrace us, it is then and only then that the goodness and grace of God will come running after us.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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