



Strength, Love, and the Fullness of God

Matt Chandler – April 7, 2019

Good afternoon. If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. If you don't have a Bible, there's a hardback black one somewhere around you. Grab that. We're going to be in Ephesians, chapter 3. While you're turning there, in 2012 we were looking for some language to explain or at least help shape some things we were feeling as a church, and Jared Musgrove wrote a blog post for us called "Gospel People Say Goodbye."

What we were trying to highlight and make sense of was that God was answering our prayers and we were seeing him do these amazing things in regard to sending people out and churches being planted, but he was raising up and sending out people we deeply love. In that season, if you remember, Blake Chilton was here. Blake Chilton was our student minister, and it just became clear that God had placed on Blake's heart a desire to plant a church down where he was from in Bryan, Texas.

I was best man in Blake's wedding, and Blake was best man in my wedding, and we had met our freshman year of college. He was so woven in and integrated. Our wives were super close. Our kids were super close, Reid and Crew. They were our people. It became clear that God was calling them up and sending them out, so we needed some framework for, first, how excited we were, yet leaving some space for us to be really sad that we were losing a close friend.

The reason I'm talking about that is because today is the last day Plano is going to be on our stream. Over the last several years they have been with us. They *are* us. They have become Christians at The Village Church. They have matured in their faith at The Village Church. The Holy Spirit has done significant breakthrough in their lives at The Village Church. They're off stream as of this sermon, once this is over, and then they are going to be Citizens Church over there in Plano.

So I am feeling yet again a gospel goodbye. I've known Hunter Hall since he was 16 years old. He's going to be one of the pastors over there. Jamin Roller is *still* 16 years old. Then you have Taryn and

Adam and Andres. Those are our people. We are *their* people. They are our family, and God has raised them up and established them in Plano to do ministry in Plano for the people of Plano.

That couldn't be a bigger win, yet I can feel in me this tinge of sadness in that I'm old enough now to know that we are separated by 40 minutes, which means we love each other and we'd love to get together and it's rarely going to happen. Now if you're in your 20s you're like, "That's not true." Yes, it's going to become true. So I wanted to just say out loud to you, Plano, that I'm so grateful for what God has done there, how God is working there.

I'm excited about what Citizens Church is going to be and how God is going to use you guys. You are in great hands. I'm not talking about Hunter's and Jamin's and Taryn's and Adam's and Isaac's. I'm not talking about that; I'm talking about the hands of God. He has uniquely placed you in the middle of a suburb of Dallas that's just exploding right now, and the nations are all around you. I'm so eager to watch how God uses you.

This is a bittersweet day for me. I know many of your names. I know many of your faces. Many of you were with me in the red brick building 15 years ago before you, by faith, went with this crazy idea to go to a campus. So I'm happy today and I'm sad today, and God bless you. I'm so grateful for how God is going to use you. Can we thank Plano for hanging with us? We love you guys.

Okay. So you don't have to wonder at all, let me tell you what I'm going to try to do out of Ephesians, chapter 3. My hope today in the middle of this quick little six- or seven-week series moving toward May 12 is that I might now, in Ephesians, provoke or incite your imagination around what God has available for you and me right now that we should be earnestly seeking and desiring to be a reality in our lives.

I love the passage we're going to read because it's not primarily about you and me; it's primarily about God and what he can do, and I always feel safest in those spaces. We're just going to read a prayer the apostle Paul is praying for the church at Ephesus, yet what we're going to see in this passage is what's available to us, and it's available in a way that we can't do it, but if we earnestly seek it, God will bless us with it.

If you're like, "Get to the application," you're going to be wildly disappointed, because there *is* no application. There's no "four steps to glory." It's just going to be "Look at Jesus. Isn't that incredible?"

Won't he do it?" So that's where we're going. With that said, let's look at this together. Ephesians 3. We're going to pick it up in verse 14.

"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that 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—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

There are a couple of things I want to highlight. There are four things that are broken down in this text that Paul is specifically praying for. The first thing I want to highlight is his deep affection and deep desperation for the church at Ephesus. If we had time to go back to Acts, when Paul leaves Ephesus because God is calling him to Rome, he tells the Ephesian elders, "I'll never see you again this side of glory," and it is this tear-stained, snot-drenched farewell, where they know "In glory I'll see you, but not until then."

There's deep affection they have for one another, and you can see the deep desperation here, because the normal mode of praying in the New Testament is standing, not kneeling. If that's surprising to you, you can go back... We don't have time to do it, but in Mark 11:25, in Luke 18:11, and on and on you go, although there is a concept of kneeling, of throwing yourself before the living God, primarily, in the New Testament, people stand when they pray.

He says that given what he has just said about them, that they are the people of God, that God is going to make known his manifold wisdom to the principalities and powers of this present darkness, in light of the fact that they are the temple of the living God... "For this reason, I throw myself before the Father, through whom all families of the earth are named, and I plead these things for you." Rather, I could say, "These things are available to you." Here is the first one.

The first thing that's available to them and is available to us (it's going to require some work) is *strength in our inner being*. Let's pick it up in verse 16. "**...according to the riches of his glory...**" I wish I had time for that. That's expansive, huh? If you can make anything you want and as much of it as you want out of nothing, then your riches are infinite.

"...that 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—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend..."

This isn't language the church dives into very often. Right? *Inner being*? It sounds very Freudian. It sounds more like psychology than the Bible, yet this isn't Freud we're looking at; this is Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus.

He's saying there's this part of you, there's this core in you, there's this thing, this essence at the very deepest part of who we are, and that's what the Holy Spirit wants to get his hands on. It's this fascinating idea that you have a core, you have an essence, I have a core, I have an essence, and the Bible is going to teach... Paul has already laid clear to us in Ephesians 2:1-4 (we didn't get a chance to read that text, but you can go back and read it) that you and I are broken in sin and iniquity so that our core is frazzled. It's broken from birth.

The Bible calls this *iniquity* or *bent*, which means at the center of who I am, from the moment I come screaming on the earth, there's some frenetic energy there that's not leading me toward him but leading me away from him. If you've been around kids... We've talked about this for 16 years. Nobody has to teach a kid to bite another kid. I'm guessing you didn't teach him that if you have a biter. If you've ever seen your kid shove another kid down and snatch something out of his hands, I'm hoping he or she didn't see that modeled around the remote.

There's just an intuitive sense, "I want what I want. I need what I need. I'm going to get what I'm going to get." There's this weird, evil, "I'm going to get mine" in the hearts of little souls. Then what happens is the brokenness of the world adds to the chaos of that core, that essence, and we become either solid and stable or we are weak and fragile. The way you can read what's going on in your core is via behavior and compulsion.

When things get stressful, when things get hot, if you have a compulsion, like you get angry or you get violent or you move toward lust... Any compulsion is actually relaying to you what's going on at the deepest part of who you are. Some compulsions are just a rampant insecurity. You're just

waiting to be rejected, waiting for someone to do the smallest thing to show you, to validate for you that you don't matter and you're not worth anything and maybe Daddy was right. I'm not speaking psychologically; I'm speaking biblically.

The Spirit wants to work in this inner being, in this deeper place. You know this is true. You know there's something in us that regardless of what we know intellectually is right and wrong, we'll live contrary to what we know is right and wrong. You and I are great-great-grandchildren of the Enlightenment, which means we think we can solve everything with right information, but gosh, I'm looking around the room, and if you're 7 you know that's not true.

How much do you know is right that you can't seem to do? I'm not trying to stretch anything. I'm not trying sleight of hand here. You know a thousand things that are right and you can't seem to do them. You have right information; it just lacks power. The Spirit wants to do a deeper work than just head knowledge. There's a dance he's developing here that I'll get into in my second point.

The work and the place where the Holy Spirit wants to get in and change and fix and heal and empower and reveal and show is in the inner being. If you're like, "What am I supposed to do about that?" here's what's great: you *can't* do anything about it. You can recognize what it is and pray. That's why I love this passage. Paul is not going, "Here's how you fix your inner being." He's just being really clear. He's going, "You're a mess. Learn to spot that mess, and then learn to pray that the Spirit of God would heal it."

One of the reasons you and I don't pray is because we still believe right information will lead to right action. That's why you don't pray: because you keep thinking you can fix it. What *this* text is saying is, "I am pleading with you, Holy Spirit, that you would do a work at the church in Ephesus in their inner being that would help them comprehend your love and root them and ground them in love." How do you get rooted and grounded in love? It's not by knowing you should love people; it's by the Spirit of God doing work in the inner being.

It's hard to love people, and if you think it's easy you haven't tried or you're just loving people you like. "I love *that* dude. He agrees with me on everything." Let the proverbial stuff hit the fan and see how well you are at loving. Get betrayed and see how well you are at loving. Feel assaulted and see how well you are at loving. Remember what we said. Love is supernatural. We said it's the whole point last week. If you missed that, make sure you download that. These are tied together.

The Spirit of God wants to work in this inner place we can't get to. This isn't white-knuckle discipline; this is "Spirit of the living God, if you don't do this, I'm in a lot of trouble." It makes us perpetually ask and perpetually seek and perpetually ask the Spirit of God to do what we cannot do. It sets us free to be desperate and dependent, and trust me; that's where you want to be, even though everything in you is like, "It's not where I want to be. I want to be in control, and I want to master the universe."

You're not going to. That actually makes you a slave to anxiety, fear, and rage. It's better that you embrace the fact that you're helpless and that there's one who can help you in your helplessness. Here's where I want you to go in your imagination with me. This is available to you and to me and to us right here. This should be a vision for our lives. God can do this. He can touch me in the deepest possible way that shapes everything about how I see the world and how I interact.

It overcomes my compulsions. It helps me spot my compulsions. It lets me bring them into the presence of Jesus and be set free. This is available. We should be asking for this. We should want this for us. It's available. Otherwise, why is Paul praying for it if it's not available? But that's not all that's going on here. I love this. If you think about your own life right now... I don't know what's going on in everybody's life, of course, but what would it look like to be more rooted and grounded in love?

Just to be rooted, be grounded, be unmovable because of the love the Spirit has birthed forth inside of you, to be unmovable because of the love he has incited and excited in us. That's the work of the Spirit: rooting you in love, rooting you in mercy, rooting you in that place where you're confident that "He is at work, I am his, he is mine, he dwells inside of me, and I am safe in his hands." What would it look like to be grounded in that rather than blown all over the place by our emotions or our way of seeing things?

What would it be like to be rooted and grounded? I'm hungry for that, and it's available to me, so I'm going to plead and ask and cling and put the Word of God before God and say, "You said this. I want this." But that's not the only thing that's happening here. You have this strength in our inner being, but then you have... This is fascinating. It's creating a dance that I need to make sure we understand. Paul goes on to pray that they would *experience the love of God*. Let's look at this. This is the back half of verse 17 on through verse 19.

"...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge..." Let's chat about this. According to Paul here, the love of God is broad, it's long, it's high, and it's deep, and we can know that without experiencing it. We can have a definition of love that is greater than our experience of love.

Paul is saying that's not what God has for us. He has, yes, the right definition of love, but he wants us, as we comprehend that definition, to experience the love beyond our knowledge. Surely you know that a *definition* of grace is not as lovely as an *experience* of grace. Right? This is why the Bible oftentimes is going to attack this idea of right knowing without right being. Yet in order to understand the dance Paul is outlining here, we have to understand some of knowledge and how knowledge works.

I think the best way to do this... If you're in the Training Program, this is language you know. There's *objective knowledge* and there's *subjective knowledge*. Let's talk about this. Here's objective knowledge. *Objective knowledge* refers to what anyone in the world can observe or know. Here would be an example. The Bible teaches that God loves me. You don't have to be a Christian. You could be a pagan at the History channel. "I have to do a special on the Bible. Let me read through it. Okay. The Bible teaches that God loves people." That's just an objective knowledge.

A *subjective knowledge* refers to feelings and experiences that depend on the individual, i.e., "I have experienced God's love for me." Do you see the difference between objective knowledge and subjective knowledge? Now here's why it's important that you not pick one of those but embrace God gave us both. Throughout the Word of God, there are those with a great deal of objective knowledge who reject Jesus Christ, and then there are actually far more who have these subjective experiences and reject Jesus Christ.

What Paul has in view here is that both objective and subjective knowledge has been given to his people for their good, for them to walk in power, and for them to know the God who is true and right. Let me give you some biblical examples, and then I'll try to tie it together with maybe an earthly one. Nobody had a better seat to the teachings of Jesus than Judas Iscariot. That brother is just watching it all happen. He's hearing every word that proceeds from Jesus' mouth, but no subjective experience, and he rejects Jesus' reign and rule.

I love you. I'm a bit of a charismatic myself, but if you're thinking, "If I could just see a miracle, then I would never doubt again," I would just like to say the whole Bible finds that mindset to be absurd. There are so many examples I could pick. I'll just use one everybody knows: Exodus, God's people backed against Pharaoh's army and the Red Sea. So what does God do? He parts the Red Sea. The sea is parted, and they walk on dry ground through the sea to the other side, and then it closes on the Egyptians, destroying them all.

You would think if anything is like "I am convinced," it would be that the ocean opened up. If you're like, "Oh man. If God would just heal my friend's shoulder..." Oh, give me a break. They could grow a third limb and you'd still be like, "I don't know." If Jesus can resurrect from the grave, ascend into heaven, and the Bible could say they worshiped him there, but some doubted, then no miracle you could ever see is going to convince you long-term. That's the work of the Spirit in the soul, in the inner being.

Three or four weeks later, they're like, "God brought us out to the desert to kill us. I knew it. All right. Let's worship one of the Egyptian gods that God has already murdered publicly in front of everybody. Let's make a golden calf, and let's praise that golden calf for leading us through the Red Sea. Praise you, golden calf, for delivering us out of the bondage of slavery." That's madness. They had all this subjective experience without the objective knowledge. They misread it, rejected the King of glory, and went their own way.

Maybe *this* would help. I have subjectively experienced Lauren Chandler's love for me. I have felt it. I have sensed it. I have experienced it in all sorts of beautiful ways, but if in that experience I reject objective truth, what has been revealed about Lauren, then I am unloving and our relationship has a lot of strife in it. Example. Let's say even while I'm talking about it I'm like, "You really have blessed me. This is crazy. Wow!"

So I'm done here, and I go hop on my phone. She's at Norah's little play day. She has a little rodeo today. I call Lauren and I'm like, "Baby, how's Norah doing? She doing good? Okay. Listen. I know I have Encounter tonight. After everything, I just want to run my hands through your jet-black hair while I look deeply into your green eyes." Let me tell you something. If you're like, "Aw..." No, no, no. That's going to end very badly for me. My wife doesn't have black hair, nor does she have green eyes.

I have this subjective experience of who Lauren is, but if I deny the objective reality of who she has been revealed to be, then I'm out of step with reality, and now I'm out of step with power and God's mercy and might. See, the way this is meant to work is that I have a subjective experience based on objective reality, even if that objective reality is thin.

When I became a Christian, here's all I knew: Christ was going to save me from my sins and he loved me despite me. That's all I had. The Spirit did something in me, and I was like, "Yes!" And I bought a shirt that said, "I [heart] Jesus." I just freaked out. It was a thin objective knowledge. I had some kind of knowledge, but the subjective experience was profound and shaping for me.

That subjective experience led me to dive into the Word of God where I learned more about the Word of God, which led me to greater subjective experiences of his goodness and grace, which led me back to study the Word of God, which then fed my subjective experiences of his goodness and grace, because the more I can gaze on his beauty as he has revealed himself to me, the greater my joy and passion and zeal is for him.

I'm not ignorant of his beauty and grace, even though I crave subjective experience. It's important to note how you're wired and how you've experienced the Lord so you can lean into what you need to lean into so that you might be more fully formed. Keller says it like this: "Some kinds of Christianity put the emphasis on the will and life actions, other kinds on the emotions, worship, and praise. The Bible never, ever emphasizes one over the other or pits them against each other."

This is Keller saying what Paul is saying, what, if you've been in the Training Program, Bavinck says. This is subjective and objective reality. Here's what I know. There are those of you in this... You're built a certain way, wired by God a certain way. Praise his name. The life of the mind is huge for you. You're skeptical of emotions. You're skeptical of anything that looks emotional, but you can read for days. It just gets a little weird if I ask you to pray or lift your hands in worship.

Praise God for how you're built. That's not wrong. That's beautiful. You have objective knowledge growing, but don't reject subjective knowledge. In fact, the Bible is going to say you need both. Maybe what you do is you're like, "Man, I just want to crank worship music and dance around my kitchen and get a prophetic utterance for the nations." By the way, have you ever noticed everybody always gets the nations or the ends of the earth? Nobody ever gets a small word from the Holy Spirit, especially in more Pentecostal settings.

It's not like, "Hey, this is going to be a good week." It's like, "Next year is the year of Jubilee for you, and the nations will be gathered around you." It's always this over-the-top... Like, "Wow! Really? Because it's just Tuesday." Maybe that's you. Praise God. I want you slapping that tambourine and dancing around your kitchen, but you need to know how you're wired. You need to seek understanding from the Word of God of how your subjective knowledge needs to be defined and how it needs to be understood.

What God is doing among us is one thing; it's not two. You cannot pick one of these. You cannot reject one. You will be wired in a direction, which is great. That just means you need your brothers and sisters. Not everybody has all gifts. We need each other. We need the intellect of the intellectuals, and we need the passion of the passionate. We need passionate intellectuals. We just need all of us. We don't need to be weirded out by each other.

I'm telling you, one of the ways the Devil loves to disrupt and destroy the power God has for his people is to force you to think you have to pick one of those. If you're all life of the mind and the charismatic folk wig you out... You're like, "They're weird. I don't even know what they're talking... It's so weird. Why do they lift their hands like that all the time? Say what? It just freaks me out." If you're intellectually honest, the *Bible* is weird. We're weird people.

You're like, "Weird bothers me." Christ returns on a white horse with a sword coming out of his mouth and a tattoo on his thigh by which he'll judge the nations? *That's* not weird? "I can deal with *that* weird. I just don't want anybody having a dream of any kind." Really? Christ coming back on a cloud with a sword coming out of his mouth, totally fine. Virgin birth, totally fine. Just nobody gets to have a dream? You need to get around people who walk in that if you don't.

Again, if you're a happy clapper with that tambourine, praise God for you. If you just want to pray, pray, pray, but then you're like, "I don't have time to read the Bible; I just want to soak in the presence of Yahweh," I want to encourage you. Let that be defined and refined by the Word of God, because that's what he has for all of us. It's what I mean by *biblically serious* and *spiritually alive*. God has both for us. Don't feel like you have to pick.

Look at this next one. It's almost too hard to believe. It could be a whole sermon series by itself. That last line: "**...that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**" Let me tell you how I'm taking this. I take that little sentence as permission to always walk in a bit of holy discontentment. Here's why. Earlier in the book of Ephesians, he says it's going to take the coming ages for you to

grasp...not to fully get but just for you to *grasp* the inheritance you have in Jesus Christ. It's going to take these millennia, these eons for you to comprehend the depths and riches of God's grace toward you in Christ.

Here, he's like, "Yeah, I'm praying that you'd be filled with the fullness of God." My guess is this little physical frame of mine could not hold all the fullness of God without disintegrating. So what's happening here? I think Paul is praying that they never fully be satisfied in what God is up to. There's a way to be content... "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" in Philippians. That's not about football; it's actually about being content regardless of circumstance.

That little passage is about, "Whatever comes, I'm going to be all right, because I'm in you and you're in me and I'm confident that you're the Sovereign over all." In our contentment, what I think passages like this one give us permission to do is long for more. I'm trying to imagine if the Holy Ghost just breaks through tonight at Encounter, and all our sick get healed, and everybody who's not a Christian becomes a Christian, all in this room tonight. It goes through Monday morning and we just skip work because the presence of God is so thick here we're not leaving the room.

I'm going to love that, and I'm not going to be satisfied once we close it down. Once the Lord finally lifts and we head back to work, I'm not going to be like, "Well, that was awesome. I'll just wait to die now." I'm going to be like, "Okay. Can we make that every Sunday? Can we do that every weekend? Can we do that every time we gather?" which he'll say no to, because it *is* in the ordinary that he works. You should never despise that.

But I'm always going to want more. I'm always frustrated when I pray for sick people and they're not healed. I'm so grateful that they're sustained, but I want to see healing. I'm always frustrated when people don't get saved when we share the gospel with them. I'm like, "Okay, open up their eyes. I can just share. You do this. You promised. Your arms aren't too short to save. Save! Be mighty." There's a holy discontentment that God honors.

There are two things God will never despise. The first one is the broken and contrite in spirit (Psalm 51). You feel weak? You feel frail? You feel empty? God is into that. He loves you in the midst of that. He also loves crazy, bold faith. You couldn't think of some kind of crazy, just "Save everybody on earth right now, Lord" and have God go, "Really? Kind of tone it down, bro. I'm not all *that*." God never responds to audacious prayers in that way. They please him. Faith pleases God.

So you have in this passage that Paul has given us this permission to want more and to long for more. Even if everything in our imagination happens, there's more. Where did I get that? Well, I'm glad you asked. Look at starting in verse 20. This is a coffee cup verse, and what I mean by that is if you grew up in church and I ask you your favorite verse, it's one of the psalms, it's Jeremiah 29:11, it's 2 Chronicles 2:14, or it's *this* one.

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen." So what is he asking for? Great expectations. He's asking for hope. See, if these things are true and what we believe is true, ought we not be optimists? And what would stand out as a shining light of insanity in 2019 like optimism?

That's low-hanging fruit these days, just to be optimistic. With everybody freaking out and always outraged, with everybody just gloom and doom, "The sky is falling," regardless of party lines, what would it look like to just go, "No, no, no. The King is on his throne. He can do far more than we could ever expect, ask, or even imagine"?

I want this passage to be our thing. The Village Church. I know it was given to all Christians everywhere. Whatever. *This* prayer... This is what we are. This is what we do. This is what we're always asking for. We're always discontented. We're always wanting more in a holy way. We're always asking for the inner being of men and women to be healed and to know subjective knowledge and objective knowledge and to walk in the fullness of being biblically serious but spiritually alive. I want this to be our thing.

I have these nicknames for my wife and my two daughters and my son that will not be shared, and if I mess up one of those nicknames, the other ones are like, "Hey, that's *my* deal." I want this to be our deal. I want you to memorize this passage. Tonight at Encounter we're going to pray through this passage while we ask the Holy Spirit to heal our sick and for supernatural breakthrough in spiritual bondage. We're going to start praying these prayers. This is going to be our thing, asking God to do this.

Here's how I want to conclude. I don't know what you're wanting for yourself, but it's smaller than *this*. When you're lying in bed at night and you're like, "Oh man. If *this* could happen..." Whatever that is, if it's not *this*, it's smaller than this. I'm not saying it doesn't matter. I'm not saying it's insignificant. I'm saying it's smaller than *this*.

I think what Paul is praying for the church at Ephesus is they think bigger, dream bigger, pray bigger than they're praying and thinking and believing. If you're like, "Oh, if I could just get that promotion..." Look. I *want* you to get that promotion. I want you at the highest level of leadership in the organizations you serve. Praise God for that. Just don't sacrifice your faith or your family to get there. I want that. I want success for you, but success is smaller than this.

I want all your relational strife to evaporate, but that's smaller than this. It's not insignificant; it's just smaller than this. To make it to retirement and enjoy the fruit of your labor is just smaller than this. To be seen a certain way is just smaller than this. One of the things that not wanting reveals about us is maybe a drift toward worldliness and maybe a drift toward a kind of contentment that's not a godly contentment but a worldly contentment.

If there's no want in you personally, as a son or daughter of God, to be all the more filled with the fullness of God, that's revealing something about you. If you don't want that for our family of faith, that's revealing something about you. I'm not trying to shame you; I'm trying to lay before you a type of spiritual MRI that lets us see ourselves more clearly.

That's what conviction is. It's a sweet invitation to come more deeply and more wholly in. No imagination for what a life fully surrendered to Jesus might look like, no mission or hope, no destiny, no "This is what God has called me into," other than being a church person and a morally upright citizen... Those are shallow dreams, shallow hopes, shallow prayers.

That's why I love that there's no application in this passage, because the surefire way to put this back in your court rather than to have you throw yourself at the feet of Jesus and ask for the Spirit of God to help is to give you a list of things to do so you feel like this is in your control so that you don't need him, so you don't have to dream big for your life, for our church, for your own relationship with Christ.

Paul nestles this prayer right before he begins to get into what family looks like, what raising children looks like, what money should look like. All of that stuff is after this prayer, after he has rooted them in the gospel and after he tells them, "Dream bigger than just good families and money and retirement and safety. Dream bigger for your life, for the days of your life, for the days you breathe in air. Dream bigger for you, because my Spirit is in you."

On May 12, we'll talk about this idea of the priesthood of believers, but did you see in the text the power by which all of this happens? Is it not the Spirit dwelling in *you*? All of this happens via the Spirit dwelling in you. Not the Spirit dwelling in *me*...the Spirit dwelling in *you*, in *your* neighborhoods, at *your* workplaces, in the places in which *you're* living and breathing and playing out the days of your life.

I'll end with this. I've already said it. I really want this to be our thing. When I'm right here, because this is where I come and just lie on this floor and ask God to work and move and do things among us, *this* is what I'm praying for us. This is what I want for us. I want *you* to want this for us. It's completely inadequate for me all by myself to want this for us. *We* must want this for us, the great adventure promised to us. Not marinating in our own mediocrity but surrendering to God's call on us, our gifting, the Spirit inside of us, to spend the days of our lives in ways that matter. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these brothers and sisters. I thank you for an opportunity to let the Word of God bear its weight on us. I know there are people in here who are in a very difficult season of life, so I just pray grace on them, blessing on them, peace on them. I know that for all the veneer we project in here, a lot of it is really hollow. So would you meet my brothers and sisters where they are?

For those who don't know you or who are far from you, would you woo them to yourself today, reveal yourself most clearly to them? I do pray that this prayer Paul prayed so many thousands of years ago would become our prayer, that we'd long for it, desire it, fight for it, fast in it, plead with you concerning it until in your grace and mercy you answer it in spades. We bless your name. We want to, as this passage says, lift high the name of Jesus forever and ever. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.