

#52 “Don’t Put God In a Box”

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Ephesians 3:17-19 says, "So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God." Paul in this passage is praying for the Ephesian Christians to be anchored, strengthened, and established in their faith so that they will walk worthy of the calling with which they have been called, which is to walk in holiness and in likeness of their Savior. His concern, however, is that they will not get to the point of being totally empowered, influenced, filled, and led by the Spirit unless they come to understand the vastness of God’s love for them. Their strength to accomplish true spiritual things and to truly honor God will be found as their faith rests upon the truth and understanding of God’s immeasurable love. Sound doctrine is essential, and the Ephesians are well-taught. But Paul’s concern is that they would miss out on being filled with God’s strength by faith according to His grace and mercy if they come to rely only upon their own performance, ministry abilities, and service.

Interestingly, the church at Ephesus is rebuked in Revelation 2:4 for losing its first love. They had been faithful in standing for truth and removing erroneous doctrines from the fellowship (Revelation 2:2-3), and God was just to compliment them for their faithfulness in these ways. But He was also just to rebuke them for missing the mark when it came to the essence of walking with Christ. In fact, He threatened to remove their lampstand, taking away His blessing and power from their midst. *To lose our first love, even if we still go through the right "churchy" motions, is to seriously offend God and essentially render a church or individual believer ineffectual, powerless, and dead.* Thus, it is no coincidence that the Holy Spirit led Paul to instruct the Ephesians in the wonder of God’s love, knowing that embracing it would be a struggle for them.

We must come to understand just how unfathomably big God’s love is in order to keep from putting God in a box, so to speak. We can fall for the trap of putting limits upon God based upon what we believe or don’t believe and by trusting in form and function rather than the work, filling, and leading of the Spirit. God isn’t interested in our systems or programs but in our hearts. He wants us to be caught up in exhilaration about Who He is and what He has done, is doing, and is able to do. He wants us to be enraptured with His power, strength, ability, provision, and love. We must have a big view of God, and we cannot tie Him down, thereby exalting ourselves and our abilities, ideas, plans, and agendas. We must give Him full authority, and we must yield to it. We must depend upon Him, and we must let Him fill us. We must open our hearts to Him and let Him lead us. We must step out in faith, and let Him sustain us. God is bigger than our circumstances, our fears, and our small plans and ambitions. He desires to do exceedingly, abundantly

beyond all that we could ask, think, or imagine (Ephesians 3:20). In fact, this is exactly where Paul goes in the next verse as He can't help but praise God for His exceeding power and glory which transcends any bounds or limits we try to place upon Him.

God is so big, and He fills the world, up, down, left, and right. There is no direction we could go and escape God's presence or His love. He is love, and since He is everywhere, His love is everywhere. There is no place where God cannot work, and there is no soul which He does not desire to save. There is no place where we are too far away for God to hear or too far in the depths of sin to be saved. Even in the good times as we are on the highest of heights of experiences, God's love is there to keep us from pride and to continue to acknowledge Him. God's love can reach us at all times, in all ways, and in all places. We can't escape its reach, its grasp, or its power because it is everywhere. God's love is in our court to help us to love others, to love Him, to do ministry heartily, and to honor Him not just with our actions but with our motives and hearts. He is there to empower us so that our service is by His power to His glory. He is there to strengthen us to do what we cannot do of ourselves. The riches of His love, grace, strength, and power do not run out. *What overflows from God can overflow in us, if only we would let it and believe.*

Let's never lose sight of just how big, powerful, and loving our God is. Just when we think we have come to grasp with God's love, may He show us that it's bigger still. Just when we think we have done all that God desires to do through us or through a ministry, may He show us that He can do more still. Just when we think that we are beyond able to endure in faithfulness, may God show us that His resources are overflowing. Just when we think we have sinned one too many times, may we run to the forgiving arms of God. May we never minimize God and lose our first love. May His wonder enrapture our souls more this day than yesterday and more tomorrow than today.

Whatever we might ask and whatever we might think, God is able and willing to do more to His glory. He is just that big, and when we believe this, His universe-overflowing love can overflow in us, giving us life, joy, and sustenance to be fruitful stewards of His love. May we as poor beggars come to the riches of God to be blessed beyond degree for faithful and fruitful service to our King.