

## What's in this Name?

✦ **Hearts strong in love (v.14-19)**

✦ **Generous answers to prayer (vv.20-21)**

In the Name of Jesus our shining Epiphany Lord, dearly beloved:

Have you ever seen such prejudice? Saul of Tarsus, an up and coming Pharisee, heard about Jesus of Nazareth, and was obsessed with smashing that reputation in chains, imprisonment, even death. But then he heard the risen Lord Jesus saying, *“Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”* (Acts 9:4f EHV<sup>1</sup>) *“Who are you, Lord?” “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”* **What's in this Name?** for Saul? You'd expect wrath and destruction. Instead Jesus called Saul into His service as Paul the Apostle to us Gentiles. Jesus chose to use one of the most violent persecutors of Christians as His chosen instrument to bring the Good News to the ends of the earth – right here, right now! Now chained himself, Paul writes, *“In [Christ] we can freely approach God with confidence through faith in him. So I ask you not to lose heart because of what I am suffering for you, because it is your glory.”* (3:12f) **Glory** in suffering! Paul is so eager to build up their faith that he lets them in on his prayer that **this Name** of Jesus give them...

✦ **Hearts strong in love (v.14-19)**

Climbing the mountain of this letter to the Ephesians to this summit prayer, Paul has said some amazing things. Read Ephesians and let your heart swell with joy. He lifts us out of distress and anxiety, above the muck of quarrels, right to the heart of God's great **love** in Christ. God knew us before time began and planned to bless us with faith to receive the grace of God that saves undeserving sinners like us. He captures our hearts like a bridegroom winning the heart of the woman he loves. We're united with Christ even as non-Jews of that chosen race, because God planned all along to shine the Epiphany light of Christ on Gentiles too. That was the mystery of the Gospel worth suffering chains for Paul.

*“For this reason I kneel before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the entire family in heaven and on earth receives its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he would strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner self, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”*

If you already believe in Jesus, why does Paul pray for you to be strengthened? That's like asking, “I already have a Game Boy, why do I need an Xbox?” “I have a bike; why do I need a car?” If cars and computers need more power, why question God's desire to make our **Hearts strong in love?**

Our generations have so long been part of Christ's church that the miracle of immigrant Gentiles being fully accepted by faith just seems natural. It's like the sun coming up every morning. Even snowy Minnesota can be bright in the bleak midwinter. But if you lived in a tiny valley of the Alps where light only shines from straight above, to see the sun in the springtime would be quite spectacular, wouldn't it?

Who would have guessed *the riches of his glory* in Christ's saving **Name** would include rebellious Israelites soon to be captives in exile Babylon? But the LORD through Isaiah a century before says, *“Then you will be a beautiful crown in the LORD's hand... You will be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land will be called Married, because the LORD delights in you....”* (Isaiah 62:3f EHV) Yes, trusting **in this Name** of Jesus makes you *“the garden of his delight.”* (Isaiah 5:7 NIV84)

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<sup>1</sup> EHV ~ Evangelical Heritage Version (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

**What's in this Name?** There's more. *"Being rooted and grounded in love, I pray that you would be able to comprehend, along with all the saints, how wide and long and high and deep his love is, and that you would be able to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled to all the fullness of God."* God wants you filled to overflowing with **this Name**.

Jesus' mother Mary knew God's love deep in her heart. At a wedding she went to her son, God's Son her Savior, and stated, *"They have no wine."* If Jesus sounds harsh in His reply, Mary still says to the servants, *"Do whatever he tells you,"* then walks away in perfect trust. God is so good, **this Name** of Jesus so dear, that a poor couple was rescued from embarrassment and given fine wine to sell.

*"Rooted and grounded in love"* has great lessons for us and our children. God wants us to be tenacious Christians. It's easy to pull up a plant in sand. But if the roots have worked their way down into a rock crevice, they're nearly impossible to tear out. Christians deeply rooted in Christ-like love are like high altitude trees on a windswept mountain. They've been through these storms before. And when the weather clears, they're still standing strong. They may be bent and gnarled from leaning into the wind. But their glory is standing strong in the worst conditions. If they suffer persecution, **this Name** makes them **Strong in love** even for their enemies. When they suffer disappointment from loved ones, **this Name** of Jesus that forgives all their sins, makes them forgive those who disappoint them. Social media remains the cyber world of imagination; their reality is found in Christ whose **Name** means...

### ✦ **Generous answers to prayer (vv.20-21)**

*"Now to him, who is able, according to the power that is at work within us, to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine..."* How different would your state of mind be, how much better your health and wellbeing, if you turned off the news and started praying about the story of your life? Even teenagers can look back at major turning points in their lives when some hard problem became God's opportunity to bless you. Humans often complain that God lets trouble happen. But tragic losses mean God has great gains of spiritual and material blessings waiting to pour out on your prayers. Do you really want a go cart if God wants to give you a car? Do you really want a car if God wants to carry you on the wings of prayer to the heights of grace, soaring on eagle's wings? A marriage without challenges or a church without differing opinions would leave God without opportunities. Paul told the Corinthians, *"No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval."* (1 Corinthians 11:19)

God is willing and able *"to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine."* "You have needs beyond your ability to ask. God has gifts beyond your ability to imagine."<sup>2</sup> So **What's in this Name** for a husband whose wife is unkind and quarrelsome? The invincible Christ-like love that conquers all. (Read Hosea.) **What's in this Name** for a wife whose husband is harsh and unloving? The invincible love of Christ for her that can conquer with unconditional respect like Monica for her husband and her son Augustine. (Google that!) **What's in this Name** for a child whose parents are distant and uninvolved or maybe feel like "helicopter parents" sometimes? Christ's invincible love always respected His earthly parents even when unfair. His **Name** is your righteousness, God's promise to bless you honoring too.

**This Name** of Jesus has you on God's heart forever, still are right there today. Your bridegroom Christ holds you close and loves to hear you pray in confidence of His generosity no matter what.

Centuries after Paul, another man in prison celebrated all this. They found his skeleton after the Inquisition passed. There on the wall above his chain was a cross with the words, "wide / long, high / deep" scratched into the stone. Someday you can ask him, **What's in this Name?** And he will spend eternity with you praising God who finally makes everything clear. *"Now to him, who is able, according to the power that is at work within us, to do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever! Amen."*

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<sup>2</sup> DeVries, Rev. Eugene. "Ask, Pastor, Ask," devotion for the Minnesota District Spring Pastors' Conference, 4/14/2010. *The Preacher's Apprentice (TPA)* sermon study or copies: m.cordes@comast.net . New Life Evangelical Lutheran Church You can also call: 651-484-1169. Hear the sermon at [www.newlifeshoreview.com](http://www.newlifeshoreview.com) . 180 County Rd F - Shoreview, MN 55126