

Power To Strengthen Our Hearts

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Preacher: James Dancer

[0:00] The past few weeks, we've been seeing just how good, just how wonderful it is to be a Christian. Chapter 1, if you've got that open there, we're blessed beyond belief. Chapter 2, we're brought to life, a house of God's presence. Chapter 3, on display to the world. Great truth to know.

But there was a point last week where I just didn't really know it. And I didn't really feel it. And one evening, I felt just a little bit down. And Emmy, my wife, she did the perfect thing. And she listened, she comforted me. She actually read that first chapter of Ephesians that you see in your Bibles there. All those blessings.

But after she read it, do you know what I felt? I didn't feel anything. It kind of didn't work. It's so disappointing. I've been preaching this. I've been in this passage. And it just didn't get through. What's going on?

Maybe you've had a similar situation where someone's spoken a Bible verse into a really tough time in your life. And you sort of know that it should give you loads of joy and peace. And then you put on a smile and go, thank you.

[1:26] But actually, inside, what did you feel? Maybe not much in that specific circumstance. You know the truth up here, but maybe you still feel that life is really worth rumbling about.

You know it's good to be a Christian, but you don't know it. I think it's the same for living out the Christian life as well. I got a phone call about a month ago.

And the man on the other end of the line said, I'll say hi. He said, James, I'm really struggling with this sin. And I just can't change. I just can't change it.

What do I do? Knowing that it's wrong here, he said. He knew it was wrong. But didn't live it out. Couldn't live it out.

Now this series is called Living God's View of You. It's how the book of Ephesians is split up. The first half is God's view of you, who you are. Blessed, forgiven, made alive.

[2:31] All that. Second half, living out who you are. You can just skim over that when you see it in front of you there. But there's a gap between knowing who you are and living it out.

Knowing who you are and feeling it. And how do we normally bridge that gap? We pretend to rejoice in who we are.

We put on our nice Sunday smile. We talk the talk and we fake it until we make it. That doesn't work.

Knowing it doesn't really feel like it's enough to live it. And that's partly true.

And that is why this prayer is here. Look at verse 16. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power.

[3:38] With power through his spirit in your inner being. You see that? Inner being. Paul prays so that we know this stuff in there.

In our hearts. But also we need power. With power. Do we see that there? With power. To really know who we are and live God's view of us.

This is how we bridge the gap. We need power to strengthen our hearts. And firstly.

Well for Christ to make his home. In our hearts. Power. For Christ to make his home. Have a look at verse 16 again.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power. Through his spirit in your inner being.

[4:37] But here it is. Verse 17. So that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith. So that Christ may dwell in your heart through faith. So Christ can be in your heart in a kind of very head knowledge sort of way.

Even lord of your heart. In a very head knowledge sort of way. But it takes the resurrection power to make him at home in your heart.

Now Christ is there from the moment we believe. Okay. But that word dwell literally means down home. Settle down at home. Now we need power for Christ to make his home there.

To do a deep clean. Because before we come to Christ. It's a. Well the home of our hearts is a. Empty dishevelled.

Dead house. And come into Christ. And he comes in. And he turns a light on. And there's life. But we need Christ to dwell there. To do a makeover.

[5:50] To fix the foundations. To rewire. Every. Room. And I want you to imagine that. I want you to imagine that. The home of your heart. For where Christ comes to dwell.

It's like a house with rooms. And imagine the first is. It's like the living room. Now the people. The bit that people see. When they first come into your house. I'm kind of imagining my own house here.

Right. They see that bit. And I kind of like. In your heart. That the control centre. For how you. What people see. How you live. How you speak. And I can say myself.

There's a lot of cleaning up. To do that. When he dwells though. Christ does a deep clean. Cleaning up how we treat others. Responding to others.

Gradually. Over time. Cleaning up our mouths. What we say. So then you go through that. Your house. And you've gone into the living room. And you go to the study. Imagine my house still. And that's kind of like.

[6:48] Our own person. Well. It's like. Where we think. And it's where we. Where we work. Kind of like. Kind of like your thought life. Which again.

Is not as it should be. Is it? We're honest. We'd be ashamed. To let Jesus in. Maybe you don't want to. Let him in. To paper shred.

Everything that's in that room. In your heart. But with his power. He can come in. And then there's like.

The bedroom upstairs. Okay. That's like our own. Personal space. Where you might shove things. So visitors can't see. That's a bit like our will. Our desires.

And what we really love. Maybe the most embarrassing room. Of them all. All of our idols. On the shelf. The hardest room.

[7:43] To clean. But with Jesus. Resurrection power. He can come in. He can chuck out those idols. He can give you new love. He can give you new desires. Gradually. Over time.

And we need his power. For him to come in. Because we stand at every door. Don't we? Don't come in here. Don't go in there. Don't look in that room.

Don't clean that up. I want to still hold on to that. Don't shred that thought pattern. Don't rewire this love for me. With all the human will in the world.

We still want to hold on. His power lets him come in. He moves us out of the way. So he can clean. So he can dwell.

What room? What room are you currently keeping Jesus out of right now? What part of your life feels impossible for Jesus to transform?

[8:52] We can come to the one with the power to do the greatest DIY SOS we've ever seen. Power for Christ to make his home.

But how does Christ achieve the outcome that he wants? To change us. From the inside out.

Well, here's what I imagine. Okay. And this is what it's going to say in the passage in a second.

Before I came to Jesus, I had scribbled all over the walls of my heart. S-I-N. Shove off God.

I'm in charge. No to your rules. But Christ comes in and he scribbles. What does he scribble on top of that? I love you.

I love you. He pulls up the foundations and he roots us in love. There are verse 17. He dwells so that we can know his love in our bones.

[9:55] To know his love in our bones. Let's go from verse 18. That we may have power together with all the Lord's people to grasp how wide and how long and how high and deep is the love of Christ.

And to know this love that surpasses knowledge. That you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. You're filled with God. Spilling over with who he is.

Chapter 4 describes that filling, being filled with the fullness of God as maturity. Living out who you are. And how do we get there? Knowing Christ's love.

Knowing his love in our bones. In our hearts. And grasping it in four dimensions. Verse 18. How wide and how long. How Jesus stretched his arms.

Open wide on the cross. To save all kinds of people. To the people you don't think would come. To the people you don't really want to come. To the people you think God doesn't want to come.

[11:01] To the highest in society. To the lowest. To the people on that side of the world. To the people on the other side of the world. His love is wide enough. And long enough to stretch for all.

If you don't think you qualify. For God's love. His love is for you. It really is. It's for you. Verse 18. How high and how deep is the love of Christ. How the Lord Jesus who deserves all the glory. Because he is so perfect. He is so good. And he came off that high throne.

And he came down deep to our depths. To live amongst us. To die on a cross. To go into the grave. To save you and me.

Who are at the deepest dead depth. In our sins. And went deeper than your darkest, deepest sin.

[12:02] That you could ever think he could go. And he came for you. To forgive that. To forgive you. The pinnacle of it all.

It's all that. So that he can be with you. Now his love ends in you being the temple. For his loving presence. There's so much kind of temple language here.

You might want to sort of look down the passage. Kneeling. Verse 14. Not standing. That's not the normal position. Kneeling. Kneeling. Kneeling. Kind of in the temple. Riches. Glory. Inner being. Fullness. Rooted and grounded. That's very sort of a house metaphor. The dimensions. How wide and how long. How deep. It's a prayer. It's a prayer to know his love.

Ending in him making us. What? His temple. A place for him to dwell. For him to come close. A relationship. With us.

[12:57] All this. Is so that. We know that Jesus. Really. Really loves us. He's done everything to come close.

There's a lot of great contenders out there. For what you need. To live the Christian life. But I think tying them all together. What this passage says. Is what you really need to know.

Is that Jesus loves you. That's what you need. If you want to live the Christian life. You need to know. That Jesus. Really. Really. Loves you. He does.

He died for you. He rose for you. He intimately came to be with you. In you. And through Jesus. You're now his. Precious child. Loved.

By a father. In heaven. You're that close. This is from Joe O. I think he's right. When he says that. Adoption. Being God's love child.

[13:58] Is the highest privilege. That the gospel offers. Higher than justification. To be right with God the judge. Is a great thing. Here it is. But to be loved.

And cared for. By God the father. Is greater. And we really are loved. And doesn't love make a difference.

We know this intuitively. I think. You might not be loved. Here very much. On earth. And nothing. In your life. Will feel worth it.

But knowing the love of Christ. What does that do? You're safe in his arms. The God of the universe. Loves you. And that's all that matters. You might find it hard.

To love someone out there. But when you know the love of Christ. When you know what he's done for you. Well you can live. Out of that love.

[14:50] Can't you? You might lack assurance in your relationship with God. But you know the height and breadth and depth. Of the love of Christ. And you realise. That he's never leaving.

He's going to be with you. The one thing that we desperately need. To live the Christian life. Is to know that we are loved. And Bethel.

If you are here trusting in the Lord Jesus. You're loved. And we need to know that. Do you know that? Let me rephrase that.

Do you know that? Because that is the whole problem. Lots of us do know.

What I've just said. We know it up here. But he wants us to know. On a whole different level. Look at verse 19.

[15:52] Verse 19. To know the love. That surpasses knowledge. You see that? To know the love. That surpasses knowledge. This knowledge we need.

Of the love of Christ. Is on a whole different level. Whole different sense. You know I heard it put like this. Someone who's blind. Okay. Can know all about. The colour spectrum.

There's different colours. Blue. Green. Black. Red. Whatever. But to really know what colour is. You can't just describe it. You've got to have the eyes to see.

Haven't you? Same with the love of Christ. You can literally know all about. The love of Christ. In your head. But know nothing of it. In your heart. You can be the greatest theologian.

In the world. And know everything about the Bible. And know everything about. Love of Jesus. And not trust in Jesus. Not. Not trust in him. Not have his power. And really know nothing.

[16:51] A child. Who just can say. Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. And they've trusted him. They know far more.

Than anyone else. Don't they? We need eyes to go deep. To know that. Love. That surpasses knowledge. A heartfelt.

Experience. You can't know love. Without experiencing. It becomes our whole identity. How do we get that?

The whole time we've been saying. Nothing less we need. We need nothing less. Than the resurrection power of Jesus. But how do we get that? How do we get the power?

Now you might be thinking. Have I missed something here? How do we get this power? I have been leaving it on a cliffhanger. Okay. On purpose. Right. Here it is. We trust.

[17:53] We trust Jesus. In the ultimate expression of trust. Do you know what that is? Trust put to words. Prayer. Prayer.

Look at verse 14. For this reason I kneel before the Father. Verse 16. I pray you may be strengthened with power.

This is what we're going to end on today. The power that we need comes through prayer. Prayer. Now when we think about prayer.

What do you think? Well. I think sometimes praying can feel like one of those token things. That Christians do. We pray just because you know that's what we do. We pray. Does this passage massively challenge that?

For anything to get from our heads to our hearts. We need that power. So we need to desperately pray. For it. It's unthinkable for the Apostle Paul to preach the gospel.

[19:00] But not pray it in. Verse 14. For this reason. I've just told you who you are. Therefore. For this reason. I'm going to pray. That you'd know. It should be unthinkable.

For someone to not pray. For me or Fiona. To not pray before. We heard this. Sermon. For the Bible reading. When we read our Bibles in the morning.

When we do a Bible study. When we're talking about truth. To think that we'll make any progress in the Christian life. Without coming to him. In prayer.

For power. To really know this stuff. What did I need. When I felt nothing.

After any read those amazing. Blessings from Ephesians 1. And she was. Absolutely right to do that. What do you need. To find comfort in Jesus. When life.

[19:58] Is just overwhelming. Doesn't give you joy. What does that man need. Who phoned me up. I said. I just don't feel like I can change. Power. Through prayer.

Do you know what's so annoying. We've got. This passage right. Where. You know. I'm sitting. With the enemy. Right. And this passage that. We're reading now. Is actually on our wall. Right next to. Where we're sitting. I should have looked there. Shouldn't I. And it's really.

What we. Mostly. Need. Isn't it. It's what we mostly. Need. Because Christ. Gives us the ability. To know his love. And that. Love is what we most need.

Isn't it. To live the Christian life. If you look at my prayers. On the. On average week. I don't think you'll see. That I actually. Fully believe that yet.

[20:59] What do I pray. What do you pray. Mostly. Have you ever. Have you ever prayed. For power. To know the love of Christ. Before.

What would it look like. To pray this. As one of our main prayers. As a church. That's a bit of a silly example. Imagine the next. Kind of prayer. Time with other Christians.

That you're in. Okay. Imagine if it went like this. Oh. Can you just. Can you just pray for my. My migraine. In my head here. I really want to get better. Oh.

Sure. Yeah. Definitely. Next person. Can you pray. That I'll know up here. Really know up here. That the Lord Jesus. Loves me in a deep way.

Yeah. Yeah. Sure. We'll pray for that. Next person. Oh. Yeah. I've got some. Some heart surgery this week. And. I'm just a bit quite anxious about it. Can you. Can you pray for that. Yeah.

[21:55] Sure. Next person. Can you just pray that Christ would dwell in my heart. And that he'd really take ownership of every room in my heart please.

I just. Really. Don't feel like I'm letting him into this room this week. Yeah. Definitely. We want to be balanced. So. The Lord Jesus. He loves to hear. Anything that's on our minds. We can bring anything to him. Big or small. Okay. Don't mishear me there. But. Wouldn't it be great. To regularly. And unashamedly.

Come to God with. What we truly believe is our greatest need. Power to strengthen our hearts. So that Christ can make his home. So that we know. His love in our bones.

Wouldn't that be great. It's good to say. Isn't it. That. I think prayer. Is not. A magic spell. You pray once.

[22:50] You know. Your Christian life. Is perfect. Prayer. Is God's means. For us to continually seek him. Isn't it. But I think. Like the Ephesians. We've probably got. The opposite problem of that.

Maybe lacking confidence. That God. Can work powerfully. In us at all. But we can come to. The impossible God. Like Rich was saying today.

Who can do more than we ask or think. Have a look at verse 20. Now to him. Who is able to do. Immeasurably more. Than all we ask or imagine. According to his power.

That is at work. Within us. To him be glory. In the church. And in Christ Jesus. Throughout all generations. Forever and ever. Amen. Amen. You might think.

I'll never be able to. Rejoice. With my health condition. That I've got. You might think. I'll never be able to. Rejoice. Or know who I am. With my busy life. With what I've got going on. I'll never be able to.

[23:46] Kill that sin in that area. To let him into that room. I love that phrase. That Rich used. We put a lid. On God sometimes.

We don't need to put a lid. We can't put a lid on God. God cannot. Just do what we ask. Or even more than we ask. But immeasurably. More. Than we could ask.

Or imagine. And it's also that he gets the glory. Isn't it? We have to trust him. Our great. Awesome. Impossible God. So where do you need.

To pray for power. This week. To know who you are. And live out. Who you are. This week. I'm going to give us a chance to.

Reflect. And pray in our heads. What we've seen today. And then I'll lead us. In prayer. For a few moments. Thank you.

[24:49] Thank you.

Lord Jesus, we are so good at knowing things, knowing things in our heads, and getting more information. Lord, we know that we need the power for Christ to come in.

So we do pray that you would empower our hearts, to strengthen our hearts, that Christ would be able to make his home. Lord, we do pray, Lord Jesus, that you would come in to fill our hearts with love, so that we would know your love, Lord Jesus.

Help us to be convicted of that is what we need. We need your power, we need to pray. And we pray that in Jesus' name. Amen.