

Strengthened in the inner being

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[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us now turn to the portion of scripture that we read together in the New Testament, the epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, chapter 3, and we'll read from 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, and so on.

What is your prayer life like? Do you struggle with prayer? When our lives are so busy with other things, what is it that gets pushed aside?

Is it prayer? Is prayer on the periphery or edge of our Christian life? Is prayer that which gets sidetracked?

Paul here reminds us of the importance of prayer. Paul was always diligent in prayer, whether he was a free man or, as he is here, a prisoner.

[1 : 27] Here we find him praying for the Ephesians while he is in the prison cell in Rome. He is not able to preach or visit them, but he could pray for them.

Remember, no matter what condition or situation exists, we can always pray and have communion with God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Earlier in his letter, in the first chapter, verse 15 to 23, he prays for them. Now, here again, we find him praying for the Ephesian believers.

And let us take note of the attitude as he prays for them. Here he tells us two things about our relationship to Jesus Christ and prayer.

First, in verse 12, he says, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

[2 : 31] And secondly, he says, for this cause or for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. Note that boldness, access and confidence are followed by the words, I bow my knees before the Father.

In Christ, we have access with boldness and confidence. Nevertheless, we must not come uphacertly or with little forethought, but must remember that when we pray, that we are going into the presence of the sovereign God.

We are going into the presence of God. Solomon says to us, be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.

For God is in heaven, and thou upon the earth. Therefore, let thy words be few. Boldness and confidence before God does not mean bracingness or presumption.

In prayer, we are not to show disrespect. We are to remember that it is a privilege and honour that has been bestowed upon us by God's grace.

[4 : 07] Therefore, we are to approach God with reverence and with godly fear. Now, Paul's prayer here is based not merely on a knowledge that he has received intellectually, important as that is in our prayer life.

But it is knowledge that he has also received by experience. We can have intellectual knowledge without an experimental knowledge. But we cannot have an experimental knowledge without an intellectual knowledge.

For the Bible tells us that faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God. And here Paul is coming to pray because he has experienced God's love.

He has experienced God's grace in his own life. Paul could never forget, as he reminds us in this letter again and again, what God's grace has done in his life.

And so he says, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.

[5 : 25] Now, to name in a biblical sense means to have authority. For instance, God gave the man he created his name.

And Adam was given the task of naming all the animals. Naming in biblical sense means having authority. Naming in biblical sense means to have authority.

And although we may look upon things today and think it is all chaos and confusion. It may be in our eyes.

But God is sovereign. And God, through all that chaos and confusion, is working out his eternal plan. And his purpose.

That will ultimately result in the new heavens and the new earth. Paul reminds us here that we are not under our own authority.

[6 : 56] That we are not to live as we want. But that we are to submit ourselves to God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

He has already prayed for the Ephesians. That the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened. That they would know what is the hope of their calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

What is the exceeding greatness of his power towards what we believe? According to the working of his mighty power. And now we find that he also prays that he would grant you, he says, according to the riches of his glory.

To be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner being. Or as the AV has it, in the inner man. According to the riches of his glory.

That is a phrase which we encounter in both prayers by the apostle for the Ephesians. And in this very chapter the apostle says that he has been given the grace to preach to the Gentiles.

[8 : 12] The unsuitable riches of Christ. Which means not merely the unsuitable riches that he has given to us. But Christ himself as the unsuitable riches.

These riches that we have in Christ himself are unsuitable. That is we can never fully comprehend the riches, the benefits that we have through Jesus Christ.

As we go in life, we can only become more and more amazed at the riches that we have through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And among the many riches that we have is this. To be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner being.

Christian man and woman won't be long on the Christian journey. Until they become aware that there is not a greater need in the Christian life than to be made strong. And that will have power outside of themselves.

[9 : 28] How often the Christian individual feels that they are going backward rather than forward. A Christian becomes conscious of weakness.

Of failures. Of defeats. Backslidings. That are almost overpowering. More than once he cries in anguish of spirit.

Can even come to almost the point of despondency. The point of despair. And almost come to the point where the man or woman says, Is it worthwhile to keep on?

I have just not got the strength for this inner conflict that I find within myself. Is it not within that very context that the apostle later on tells the believers to put on the whole armor of God?

Because he says, Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

[10 : 45] For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand in the evil day and having done all to stand. Is that not the reason why Peter the apostle admonishes us?

Be sober, he says. Be vigilant because your adversary the devil is like a roaring lion walking about seeking whom he may devour. Therefore, the inner being needs to be strengthened.

Because the power that confronts us in this world is a power that is great. It's a power that is devious. It is a power that is cunning.

Whenever the Christian comes to the end of himself and acknowledges his own utter powerlessness, then God can begin to work.

[11 : 56] The Christian becomes aware that he needs to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner being. Again, we can go back to his previous prayer and his request for the Ephesians.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us were to believe according to the working of his mighty power? Paul is never afraid of repeating himself.

Here the apostle reminds the Ephesians that their salvation is in itself a demonstration of the power of God. He points out to them that their salvation demonstrates the power of God.

We cannot gain salvation by our own achievements or capabilities. We gain salvation simply by the grace and the power of God.

That is why Paul says to the church at Rome, For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[13 : 14] Right into another church he says, For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance.

Right into the Corinthian church he says, But unto them which are called, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

As it requires the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten the person, because the natural man's mind is dark, it is blinded by sin.

It needs the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds, to show us who we truly are, to show us our need before a holy God, to show us our need in the light of eternity.

We need the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds. We need the Holy Spirit to renew our wills, to make us our willy people.

[14 : 27] We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit. And now Paul prays that the believers may be strengthened by the same Holy Spirit in their inner being.

What does Paul mean by the inner being or the inner man? Well, the inner being is the central point of our whole being. The Bible also uses the phrases like the heart.

And when the Bible uses that phrase, the heart, it does not refer to the organ that pumps the blood round our body. What the Bible means is that the central core of our being.

Create in me a clean heart, says David. Well, that's not any reference to the organ that pumps the blood round. What he means is, create in me cleanliness, in the core of my being.

In other words, he is speaking of the mind and the understanding, our affections and our will. All these needs to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

[15 : 43] Our mind, our understanding, our affections, our will needs to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit. They need to be strengthened if we are going to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The inner being needs to be strengthened if we are going to be strong in the Lord. The enemy makes a special effort to attack on the inner being.

You see, we can lay great emphasis upon the lusts of the flesh and pray relatively little attention on the lusts of the mind, on the lusts of the heart.

Solomon warns and says, Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life. And again he says, For as he thinketh in his heart, so he is.

Keep the heart with all diligence. Discipline our mind. Keep our understanding, our affections and our will.

[16 : 54] What did the Lord Jesus say to his disciples in Mark chapter 7? He says, There is nothing without a man that entereth unto him can defile him, but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.

And when he entered into the house, his disciples asked him concerning that parable, and he said unto them, Are you so without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him, because it entereth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out in the draught, purging all means.

And he said that, which cometh out of a man, that defileth the man. For within out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornication, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness, all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

No wonder David had to cry out, create in me a clean heart, clean my mind, strengthen my understanding, and my affections, and my will.

You can see the great difference between the teaching here of Paul and what we hear today. Our society is an immoral chaos, and people blame the way that they are brought up or experiences they had in life.

[18 : 31] Now I'm not saying that that does not have an impact upon a person, but that is not the root cause. The root cause is sin.

Jesus stated that it is not the temptations that meet us on the street or in our homes that determine our actions and conduct. It is the heart of man who faces the temptations.

Two persons can face the same temptation, one falls and the other stands. The difference is not in the temptations, but in the response of the individual's heart.

This is why we need to be strengthened by the spirit in the inner being or in the heart. For we live in a world that is so full of temptations.

Our fall into sin always begins in the heart, begins with the mind, with the understanding. It begins always on the inside.

[19 : 38] And it finishes on the outside unless we discipline ourselves. David came to understand this.

We have already noted this morning Psalm 51. Well, in his form, and as he prays, he says, Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Behold, thou decided truth in the inner parts and in the hidden part. Thou shalt make me to know wisdom. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

What happens when we are strengthened by the spirit in the inner being? Well, what happens is that we learn that apart from Christ we can do nothing and that in Christ all things are possible.

Paul, writing to the Colossians and in his prayer to them, says, that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power and to all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness.

[20 : 56] When we are strengthened by his spirit in the inner being, we have a clearer knowledge of God and also we have a clearer knowledge of our responsibilities, including a greater resolve to discipline ourselves and to be obedient to Christ.

We will have a more generous heart to others and the desire for fellowship with Christ with a deeper joy in the love of Christ.

Paul goes on in his prayer and says that with his strengthening of the inner being by the spirit, we will come to know the reality of Christ dwelling in our hearts, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

As we are strengthened by the spirit in our inner being, Christ will be given the place of preeminence.

He will be enthroned as Lord over all. The word dwell means that the heart has become the home of Christ, the place where he has settled down.

[22 : 09] When we are strengthened, we give Christ that place of preeminence. He becomes enthroned upon the throne of our hearts. You know, it is one thing to know that Christ has, what Christ has done for us, his coming into the world, the miracles that he performed, ministering into the needs of many, going to the cross, shedding his blood, dying for us, atoning for us, being resurrected, and has ascended for us.

All things are much more he has done and is doing for us. But we are not to stop there. We are to know Christ in us.

Christ is not outside of us. Through his spirit, he is dwelling in us. He is in us.

And we are to know him in us. We are to know what he can do in us and what wonders he can perform in us and through us.

There is a great difference between what Christ does for you and what Christ does in you.

[23 : 36] And this is where we may have difficulty. We like everything that he has done and is doing for us. But the difficulty comes in allowing him to work in us and through us.

To believe in the Lord Jesus Christ is not the end of our faith. It is only the beginning of our faith. It is absolutely essential to believe the truth about his person and about his work.

But we must allow the Christ that has come to indwell in us to us take a seat upon our heart. Who is enthroned upon our heart.

We must allow him to work in us through us. Christ dwelling in us is not just an influence that desire.

It is much more than that. It is Christ himself dwelling in us in some mystical form.

[24 : 44] Paul writes to the Colossians and hear what he says to them. and it may shed light upon what I am trying to bring before you. He says to them to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Not Christ outside of you but Christ in you the hope of glory. He writes to the Galatians and he says I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live yet not die but Christ liveth in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Note what Paul says Christ in you and Christ liveth in me. We cannot fully understand that nobody can but we believe it.

Though we cannot fully understand that wonderful truth we have to pray to be strengthened in the inner being to believe it.

Christ dwelling in our hearts is a very personal experience. Paul writing to the Galatians says regarding his experience on the road to Damascus but when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace to reveal his son in me that I might preach him among the heathen immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.

[26 : 28] notice what Paul says to reveal his son in me not to reveal his son to me but to reveal his son in me it was an inward manifestation of the Lord Jesus in which he is made real to the apostle and it is so to all who believe everyone who believes as this personal experience Christ coming to indwell in them through his spirit that's what happens when a person is born again in regeneration when we say that person is born again what happens the spirit of God or the spirit of Christ comes to indwell in that person takes up his place on the throne of his heart and that person's life is completely transformed is completely changed from that day onwards how do we achieve an intimate relationship with him well

Paul here he prays that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner being he prays that the holy spirit would work in our minds and our hearts and our affections and our wills we need to be strengthened so that we can comprehend the great truths of Christ that we can grasp and hold on to them and that will allow them to change us the more we are strengthened the more we will want to be strengthened and the more we will prepare our hearts and minds for Christ Paul prays that we may know the reality of being in Christ he wants us to experience the intimate and powerful relationship with Christ and he wants us to experience that in our minds and in our understanding and in our affections and in our will how do we achieve an intimate relationship with him well the apostle says he had by faith the Christian life is a life of faith it is by faith that we believe God's word to fully accept it and receive and trust in Christ it is by faith that we believe that Christ suffered died and rose for us that he lives that he operates in us that he is coming back for us we have to keep this reality constantly we have to establish priorities in our lives because this requires effort it means reading your Bibles it means meditating on scripture it means being in the fellowship of like minded people in the fellowship of Christians it means praying we are constantly to remind ourselves that our relationship with Jesus Christ is personal yes we may believe on him recognize what he has done for us and accept certain principles of the

Christian faith but the question is do we have a personal relationship with him do we allow him to work in us and through us yes we must realize our dependence on him therefore we must spend time in prayer we are to talk with Christ who has come to settle and dwell in our hearts we are to ask him to cleanse us to purify us we are to ask him to strengthen us we are to ask him that he will work in us and through us therefore it is not enough for me and you to know what Christ has done for us important us that is but as Christians we are to allow

Christ to work in us and through us he is the greater light he is the greater light I am the light of the world but he has also called his people lights because it is through them it is through them that he is going to work they are to be witnesses you know that that sentence in the prophecy of Isaiah it is a most profound sentence where God says ye are my witnesses that I am God where is the world going to see God sees it through his people where is the world going to see the love the compassion and the mercy of

[32 : 03] Christ through his people you have often heard the phrase that the Christian is the Bible of the world well that's so true do we allow Christ to work in us and through us therefore we need this prayer that we have here when Paul is praying for the Ephesian believers we all need this prayer that we will be strengthened with power through his spirit in our inner being and being

strengthened that we allow Christ to work in us and through us that we shall be true lights in this world that we shall be faithful and true witnesses in this world that through us the world will see the love the mercy the compassion of Christ that through us the world will come to know who God is ye are my witnesses that I am God may the Lord bless our thoughts let us pray