

# Monday Evening - English

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Date: 18 February 2019

Preacher: Rev Colin Macleod

[ 0 : 0 0 ]     Wonderful words, wonderful songs of praise and adoration, dependence. My joyful lips will sing your praise. My soul is fed with richest fear.

What a song for God's people to sing together as we perhaps reflect on a few days past and look ahead to the week to come. And I'd like to just look with you this evening as we conclude the weekend of our communion services at this prayer of Paul's in Ephesians chapter 3 from verse 14 where for the second time in this amazing letter, this letter that just keeps on giving, we hear the apostle break into prayer as he considers the eternal purposes that has been realised in Christ Jesus our Lord, as he considers his calling to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

He can't help himself. And 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.

What words! What comfort! And what encouragement for us all this evening as we remember what we've been reflecting on over these days when we particularly think of the Lord's table and when we think this evening of whose we are in Christ and that phrase alone occurs in Ephesians over 20 times in Christ to drive home to the young believers then and us this evening just whose we are and who we are what happens when we come in faith to Jesus we belong to him we are in him he is ours we are his and so I want us just to look at the major theme of this letter with you as we find it in expressing this prayer the abundant riches we have in Jesus because I believe at times the world and the flesh and the devil want nothing more than to rob us of our sense of richness to take from us our understanding of just who we are and whose we are and if he achieves that the devil is approaching a sense of satisfaction if that's even possible in his warped anti-Christ mindset because he's going to upset the church and he's going to have the church buffeted and battered and we find that all over Paul's letters in all of the churches he writes to he's writing to encourage him and to remind them that the Lord Jesus is the source of the church's power and as you read Ephesians you'll hear Paul saying don't go it alone draw on the resources he has for you and if you read from the beginning you'll have seen already at the very beginning of this letter his great statement blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and he spends the rest of the letter unpacking that for us to make it abundantly clear what that means and here in this prayer we see a little bit of it so let's just think first of all of two things this evening our great wealth and then ultimately of course the greatness of God because that's where this letter takes us so Paul in this his second prayer in this letter to young Christians we're not going to talk about Ephesus tonight that will be for Kenny and James will take you through that no doubt far better than I could let's just consider what he says in writing to the Christians who were there and that we can take to heart tonight we see that in this prayer as well as it being personal it's also specific

I bow my knees before the Father from when every family in heaven and earth is named and so he's being personal but he's also being very specific and that tells us right away it's an amazing thing to talk to people for God and about God but it's a greater thing still to talk to God for people and we shouldn't underestimate that and we should not forget that sometimes perhaps Christians we can be tough on ourselves too tough thinking what can I do how can I express this I wish I could speak like she could I wish I could have said what he said and it can be frustrating when it comes to sharing our faith and trying to express the gospel to people well take that frustration to God and pray for the people that you were hoping to speak to who knows how God would be pleased to use that and with this this marvellous flow of language that is both personal and specific

[ 4 : 59 ] Paul here expresses something more of this theme what's in his heart and what he's expressing is the great wealth of each believer he is praying 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 it just keeps on giving doesn't it phrase after phrase after phrase loaded with theology full of promise after promise full of teaching full of encouragement this is Christians this is the Christian in prayer for other Christians could he ask for more?

could he ask for better than what he asks for here? and it's wonderful that what he does as he begins to pray for this we begin to appreciate our great wealth the wealth of each believer a spiritual wealth here then we are directed to the source of our power for he says in verse 16 that he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit there's the source for our power which is why we don't go it alone we don't say we can do this let's do that and then not pray and not think and not engage in fellowship and not engage in reasoning and think well will that work?

is that a great idea? let's see can we staff the idea? do we have the right people? if we don't have the right people who does have the right people? and so ideas are thrown around and that idea that just begins can take shape and be moulded into a strategy that would then be achievable and in God's grace and dependent on the spirit something that will bring a great harvest in the work of any congregation so we are directed to the spirit as our source for power and the reason why the church is to face the world with this assurance and confidence is because of the amazing wealth we have what we read in this prayer is Paul saying remember this wealth it's yours Christ died to secure this for you so use it that's what he's been saying in the letter up until this point so we could say so what's in the bank?

what do we have? what is it that makes us use the language of spiritual wealth? what's really credited to our account? what he's already said up to this point Christian friend you are chosen you are adopted you are accepted in the beloved you are redeemed you are forgiven you are sealed you have this this is not a negotiation this is not a discussion it's an announcement you have this this is what's in the bank this is what's credited to your account in his spirit and so having all this being redeemed and forgiven and being sealed we have been given he's given his son for us what more could we possibly want?

what more could we possibly want? sometimes perhaps we might lose this perspective sometimes we might face the indifference and intolerance and atheism and unbelief and sheer apathy that we come across when we engage in spiritual things and we think oh how do we what do we where do we we come back to passages like Ephesians in chapter 3 we remind ourselves of the spiritual wealth that is ours and we read this prayer that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith now it's one thing to talk of our great wealth let's focus now for the rest of our time on the greatness of our God because that's where this prayer takes us the reality to grasp and live by and come to God is one of faith and this prayer focuses on what the church is here to learn we're here to learn and grow up in Christ toward the end of this letter itself that's the phrase he uses

[ 9 : 26 ] Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 15 as we reflect on these things as we grow spiritually and as we receive this strength as we know this prayer to be answered in our experience in our fellowship in our spiritual walk what happens is that in chapter 4 verse 15 we grow up we grow up in every way into him and as we grow up into him who is the head into Christ so it is that we do not give the devil opportunity that's what he goes on to say so we can see as we grow and as we are strengthened we give the devil less opportunity to have his way with us we block off his approaches to our imagination we block off his attempts to have us fearful and timid and uncertain and afraid when we have the riches of Christ at our disposal indwelt by the Holy Spirit it's sometimes you could say without being blasé and without in any way being proud about any of this isn't it right to develop a perspective that says we've got all this we've got God we are resourced we have the riches of Christ within us and we have been sent to share the unsearchable riches of Christ with anyone who will give us the time of day what chance do they have to stand against us what chance indeed well what does he say about as we come to it as we go into the detail the mechanics of it what we find him here saying he prays for strength he prays for stability he prays for insight and he prays that we would know fullness that's where this prayer goes that you will be filled with all the fullness of God what a way to face the weak what a way to face the unbelievers around us what a way

Christian friends to approach any opportunity to share your faith and your testimony and your story with those who will give you the opportunity to do so what then does he ask strength let's just look at that for a moment we don't go our way we don't try and do things in our own we don't rely on our strength that's the recipe for disaster and a guarantee of failure we draw on the resources he has for us we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ every spiritual blessing in Christ and so we focus in on that and of course that gives us the foundation upon which to discuss with other believers of other denominations you may come and say well that's great but what about the additional pieces and not like the Pharisees did but nowadays you might come up against people more of the Pentecostal mindset those of a strict Baptist mindset who may talk about the insistence of believers baptism who may talk about the gift of tongues who may talk about the second blessing take them to

Ephesians 1:3 you are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ this is what we have this is who we are and with that in mind Paul then turned here and prays that he may grant you to be strengthened with power does anyone here not need to be strengthened tonight anyone want a show of hands in any Christian fellowship do you need to be strengthened tonight for your walk with the Lord no I'm strong enough I've never heard anyone say that and I would seriously doubt their understanding if they did think they didn't need strength he says be strengthened with power through his spirit in your in being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts he wants us to be fit and ready for service strengthening is a process now we know as Christians that the scripture talks about being sanctified sanctification itself is both instantaneous and progressive you are set apart

Christian friend but your sanctification your growth and maturing up into him is ongoing and part of this side of the coin involves strengthening that's why gyms are so popular today people go there not because they're as strong as they can be because they want to get stronger it takes time it takes energy it takes effort you've got to put in to get strong that's one thing that the army to share another little story with you is very good at it takes basic raw recruits who could probably be like that pillar and couldn't carry 20 pounds of weight and in a process of time they can run with 50 pounds and cover 8 miles in less than 2 hours that's the basic fitness test basic that's what happens with the army it's a process basic training 1986 in my experience was horrendous because they take you to the bottom of a hill in Cateret called the snake and it's called the snake because it just goes like that like that like that like that and you're looking like where's the top it's up there somewhere in the mist and they say go and you're just hanging out in trainers and gym shoes and shorts and a t-shirt then they say next time you're in boots with a pack and in a process of time you go from being half dead going up that hill to running up and you could run up it three or four times it's a strengthening process and Paul is here committing us to looking to God to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being so don't go into the weak friends don't go and say that's me communion's over

I'm good to go to the next communion that's not going to work that is not going to work keep on being strengthened how do we do that? the means of grace fellowship the word prayer meetings engaging in the work of the congregation doing your part not sitting back saying give me what I want but going to someone and saying what can I do?

[ 15 : 32 ] come forward with your ideas we say this in Leith all the time there's no such thing as a bad idea here in Leith we're hanging on we're hanging on for dear life as many churches are nowadays language we're familiar with and we feel we've really we're in a precarious situation here as a congregation and so we say there are people there's no bad ideas here none if you've got an idea you think it might work come and tell us that's part of the strengthening process we remember that Christ purchased this church with his own blood it's a precious thing we belong to he bought us with his own blood and so let us not sit back that as we seek to be strengthened with power through his spirit and our inner being with Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith this is the language of overflowing my cup was overflowing this prayer just keeps on giving rooted and grounded in love then may have strength to comprehend with all the saints see the corporate language here he's looking at fellowship he's not looking at a believer stuck in a corner somewhere he's looking at believers being together brother and sister in Christ together left and right helping one another aware of one another conscious of one another particularly taking care of one another if you know someone struggling don't wait for someone else to help them ask if you can help and if you don't know how to tell someone who you think might be able to we must look out for one another and help one another that comprehend with all the saints the breadth and length and height and depth to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge there are people today who know nothing of the love of Christ

I was with friends this afternoon and two certain individuals and representatives of the JW's came to the door while we were chatting they are people who know nothing of the love of Christ and have nothing to offer and nothing of value to say to people yet they are out there chapping doors had them at our own door of Musselboro two weeks ago same empty headed stuff nothing to say to people about Jesus nothing after five or six or seven minutes of this emptiness my wife Aileen eventually said to them what about Jesus oh yes him too him too now we are way beyond that friends we know about the love of Christ we know about the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge we know something of the unsearchable riches of Christ this is the good deposit that's been committed to us do we bury it in the field and keep it we protect it we nourish it we assert maintain and defend it we teach it and we share it and above all we live it as we live it strengthened with his power in the spirit through our inner being who knows the effect that could have on the community in which we're part who knows how God would be pleased to bless that witness so there is a prayer here for strength it's very reminiscent to Paul's language in his very last letter to young Timothy reminding him

God has not given us a spirit of fear but of power of love and a sound mind it's also reminiscent of the language my grace is sufficient for you so that Christ may dwell in your hearts so friends we face difficult times challenging times we face times when we may not be sure of what's going on but we don't face them alone but it's not just all about strength and any physical training instructor not my favourite people in the planet I'll tell you that for nothing but when they get alongside of course they don't just talk about strength they talk about stability core strength and that's also in this prayer in verse 17 with the language that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you will be rooted and grounded in love it's not just about overpowering people and bursting through walls and smashing down barriers and taking people by force there's a stability prayed for here and so we focus right in on the quality of our personal relationship with Jesus that's where this verse takes us so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that word there dwell it's a wonderful word it's rich it's full it means literally in its root meaning to settle down to feel at home see what he's saying so that Christ may settle down and be at home where in your heart through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love now we're beginning to get someone we not just have strength for the course for the battle for what's ahead we have the stability of a personal relationship with Jesus that's the type of relationship

Paul longs to see in their young lives and that's the type of relationship that affects change in homes businesses and communities and countries because it's a change of heart and Christ is at the centre so the strength prayed for here there's stability and this stability is about having a deep and deepening faith it's wonderful language that you would be rooted and grounded in love there is how we grow in a stable fashion up into Christ remembering his love for us and giving thanks that we know and love him rooted and grounded in love I was remembering recently before we left Afghanistan in 2016 there was a tree planting ceremony at one of the chapels in an American base that we shared it was a joint deployment with Scottish and Americans working together and the Afghans said we will plant a tree now there are two things

Afghan people are very good at fighting and gardening they could probably make something grow out of that carpet it's incredible you look at a desert and you think there's rocks nothing could live here and you go past there and a week later there will be a beautiful patch of grass how do they do it but this day we're standing outside the chapel it's very stony and then it just looked bleak you thought and they're digging away and thinking I in my ignorance stand oh well nice looking there was a fig tree it was about that high and I said poor thing is going to be dead in probably a month but I got an email six months later saying McLeod you ought to see this fig tree by the way it's absolutely flourishing it's full of leaves and fruit it's incredible because they knew what they were doing what had they done they had dug down and they'd established its root where the root needed to be established for growth friends what are we told here that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith that you being rooted and grounded in love now having that love in mind may have strength again to comprehend with all the saints your brothers and sisters the breadth and length and height and depth to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge as Paul is thinking on this and praying it's as if he cannot contain himself the language just seems to be caught up and running into each other one sentence it's almost not he's moving on before he finishes a thought and moving on and moving on because he's so caught up with the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of

[ 23 : 18 ] God so he wants strength he wants stability he prays for insight let's leave insight let's just go straight to the fullness and just think finally this verse 19 look at this prayer that you would know this process of the sanctification of strength and insight stability and now fullness fullness as we grow up in Christ so we experience the fullness of God isn't that what he's telling us tonight is that not what the scripture is saying to us Paul's prayer for these new Christians was that just a special prayer was that an apostolic prayer was that an Ephesian Christian prayer no it was not this is the word of God to the people of God and so we take this to ourselves we seek this process of being strengthened and knowing stability insight and where does it leave us to be filled with all the fullness of

God wow this just keeps on giving Warfield in writing said this Christianity is not a program of conduct it is the power of a new life it is the power of a new life and where does that new life come from it comes from the spirit as we've seen already in verse 16 that he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being and that strength and stability and insight leads us ultimately here to being filled with all the fullness of God how long do we have not long enough do we I don't mean tonight I mean life how in our lifetime do we begin to understand what's said here to comprehend being filled with the fullness of God and that's what Paul is praying for he's aiming high isn't he aim high don't aim low and hope for something aim high and expect something as we grow up then friends in Christ so we experience the fullness of God

God is the limit to this fullness dare anyone put a limit on it we receive from him as we walk with him God's goodness is both generous and genuine he not only gives with an open hand one writer said but he gives with a full heart how often have you sung Psalm 23 and that wonderful verse that speaks of something about this my table thou hast furnished in presence of my foes my head thou dost with oil anoint and my cup overflows the fullness of God the richness that is ours and the greatness of our God a Christian friend a very experienced Christian friend I was speaking to a few weeks ago she said if you ever feel intimidated in life read Ephesians 1 and if you're still intimidated read Ephesians 1 and if you're still intimidated read Ephesians 1 so I got the message and I said wow and then you read

Ephesians 1 and you have the foundation for everything that's coming in this letter and of course the foundation is verse 7 in him in him again that phrase in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our sins wow that's as good as it gets that's the theology of the New Testament in a nutshell in a sentence and here Paul is unpacking it more and more and more and it just keeps on coming so then this prayer closes with this note of abundance without measure we don't even have time to go into verses 20 and 21 but Paul is again setting the context and saying don't think small in your prayer don't think small in your planning as a people don't think small in your fellowship don't be isolated don't be weak don't be hesitant don't be selfish don't be afraid but together together grow rooted in the love of Christ and seek this fullness of God as you tackle life as you live life remember that old

Pepsi advert live life to the max here's the key to that not drinking Pepsi but this the fullness of God so where do we go with it we've looked to God for his blessing and guidance in his word and sacrament these past days and now we face life Tuesday's coming and Wednesday's coming Thursday's coming the week is approaching we don't know what that week holds but he does how do we face it we face the week with Christ dwelling in our hearts and we face the week with a saviour who according to the riches of his glory will grant us to be strengthened with power through his spirit in our being we don't face the week alone one lovely story just to finish and share with you I read some time ago of a French resistance fighter who in the war put it all on the line as a radio operator for the resistance every time they switched that wireless on their life was in danger because the

[ 29 : 02 ] Germans were getting better and better at direction finding and tracking them down and of course if they were caught with a wireless they were shot inside every time he put that wireless on every time he turned the button he knew his life was on the line and as a radio operator he had a log book and he knew the code word he was waiting for because he'd been dropped in behind enemy lines the Brits and the French together were feeding and resourcing the resistance to keep them going and he said the one phrase we're waiting for was the dice are on the carpet because that was the prearranged signal in code to tell the resistance D-Day's coming and he spoke in such emotion about turning the switch putting on the headset and hearing the words the dice are on the carpet and he said in his interview for the first time in my life I knew the future it's wonderful now we don't know the future but God does may that be enough for us let us pray

Lord our God we thank you that though we do not know what may be coming on this week or month ahead you do and Lord we ask that you would bless us richly as we seek your face and seek this strengthening this stability this insight this fullness may we seek always the fullness of God and may we have in our hearts a restlessness as we seek to know your fullness in our experience Lord may this prayer be our prayer and may we Lord as we grow and as we know strength and as we develop our stability as we continue to grow up into Christ may we all the more be people at peace and at rest not wrangling and wrestling and fearful and wondering about the future but resting in you knowing that whatever is coming you know and may that be enough for us make us

Lord ever mindful of you and keep us from wandering away from these wonderful stabilising strengthening encouraging words as we go into the week ahead to face all may we do so with joy thanksgiving and anticipation for Jesus sake Amen we'll close our service this evening and we'll sing from Psalm 28 in the Psalter Psalm 28 from verse 6 the last four verses verse 6 to verse 9 forever blessed be the Lord for graciously he heard the voice of my petitions and prayers did regard or promise that God hears us these wonderful words from verse 6 to 9 to the praise of God forever blessed be the Lord for gracious he heard the voice of my petitions and the earth did regard the

Lord my strength and shield my heart upon him did rely and I am held against my heart the joy exceeding glee and with my song I will embrace their strength is God alone he also is the saving strength of his anointed one for thine people off him he enfin h and au love pour him

God bless you.