

Prayer for Enablement – Part 1

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AM Service

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Text:

Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18: May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21: Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Introduction

After a long parenthesis, the apostle Paul now prays for the believers in Ephesus, and it is recorded here in the passage we just read. I love the recorded prayers in the Bible. One way you and I can improve the quality of our praying is to model our prayers after the prayers found in the Scripture. You can never go wrong praying the prayers found in the Scriptures, more specifically Paul's inspired prayers. Today, we will look at Paul's second recorded prayer in the book of Ephesians and it is found here in our text, [Ephesians 3:14-21](#). After praying for enlightenment, Paul now prays for enablement.

At the heart of his prayer for other believers in chapter one is a **prayer for enlightenment**, but here in chapter three, it's a **prayer for enablement**. The late Bible teacher and commentator Warren Wiersbe summarizes Paul's prayer this way, *"There are four requests in Paul's prayer, but they must not be looked on as isolated, individual petitions. These four requests are more like four parts to a telescope. One request leads into the next one, and so on. He prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to "apprehend" (get hold of) God's great love, which will result in their being "filled unto all the fullness of God." So, then, Paul is praying for strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness."*

Let's look now at the contents of Paul's prayer here in [Ephesians 3:16-19](#), namely strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness.

1. **Strength** - to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.
2. **Depth** - that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

3. **Apprehension** - that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, and comprehend the love of Christ.
4. **Fullness** - that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

This morning, we will focus on Paul's **prayer for strength**. As Paul bows his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, he prays for the believers in Ephesus that they might not faint at his tribulations, but rather **"be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."** If you remember in his prayer in chapter 1, Paul has already prayed that they might know the exceeding greatness of God's power available to them as believers. Now he asks that God's power might strengthen them inwardly through His Spirit. Let's look at this piece by piece.

I – Strengthened with Might

"... be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

The word **"might"** in Greek is *"dunamei."* *Dunamis* is the root from which we derive the English word **dynamic** or **dynamite**. Both words speak of strength, power, and energy. This is the very thing that our Lord Jesus promised His disciples before He ascended into heaven in **Acts 1:8**, **"And ye shall receive power, *"dunamei,"* after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."** Notice how Paul here relates this might with the Spirit. God has given to us His Holy Spirit that He might **strengthen us for life and for our service** to Jesus Christ.

I hope we all agree that **we have no strength of our own**. Jesus said in **John 15:5**, **"...without Me ye can do nothing."** But God wants us to be strong not on our own but to be **"strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might"** (**Ephesians 6:10**). **Satan seeks to deceive us and wants us to remain weak and frail**. How? By convincing us that we are not weak and frail and that we can do and accomplish things without God. When we think that we are strong that's when we really become weak, but when we acknowledge our own weakness and frailty, that's when we become strong.

This reminds us of the apostle Paul's testimony in **2 Corinthians 12**, where he describes a thorn in the flesh that was given him. Paul asked God three times to remove this infirmity, but that request was denied. Paul later understood that this is God's will for him—to keep him humble and continue to rely on God for strength in the midst of his infirmities and weakness. Listen to Paul's testimony in **2 Corinthians 12:9 and 10**, **"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."**

When Paul is weak, it more clearly demonstrates that Christ is powerful. **Christians who are trusting God are most powerful when they have the least self-reliance**. God's power is infinitely more capable than our own. Yes, we are weak and frail, but it is God's will that

Christians should be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. Paul confirms this by saying, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:13).

Don't let Satan deceive you. Seek to possess what Christ has purchased for you. As Paul prayed for fellow believers to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, so we too today, must do the same. We must pray this for ourselves and for others as well. We must pray this strength to enable us to live for God, to endure our cross, and to be able to bear whatever afflictions we might face in this life.

II – In the Inner Man

“... be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”

Paul is praying to be strengthened in the inner man. Paul uses the term “**inner man**” or “**inward man**” and “**outward man**” several times in his epistles, namely in ...

Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the **inner man**;

Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the **inward man**: 23: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our **outward man** perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

The “**inner man**” is the spirit of man. It is the spiritual aspect of a person and it is associated with things like our **mind, heart, soul, and spirit**. The “**outward man**” is our body. It is the **visible, external, physical aspect of a person**. Paul's focus was on the “inner man” or the “inward man” not on the “outward man.” I am sure he also prayed for the needs of the outward man, but that is not his main focus.

As someone has said, “*The Holy Spirit wants us to know that the most important thing that we pray for and your main need as a Christian, whatever circumstances you face is **not a change of those circumstances but inner strength in the midst of those circumstances**. Because if you get out of one circumstance you are just going to get into another one. But if you have inner strength to get through one, that will carry you through another one.*”

We tend to spend much time praying for the outward man and we have no time to pray for the inner man. We tend to neglect to pray for the inner man. Paul prays for the inner man because he realizes that the outward man is passing away, but the inner man is eternal.

2 Corinthians 4:16 For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, **yet the inward man is renewed day by day.**

Paul explains that the outer man can become weak and deteriorate. And there are many factors why this is so.

2 Corinthians 4:8 We are **troubled on every side**, yet not distressed; we are **perplexed**, but not in despair; 9: **Persecuted**, but not forsaken; **cast down**, but not destroyed; 10: Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

He was afflicted in every way, perplexed, persecuted, and struck down. Paul was beaten with rods three times, stoned once, received thirty-nine lashes five different times from the Jews, shipwrecked three times, and actually spent a night and day in the deep. His experiences took a toll on his life and as result outer man was failing. Additionally, the outer man can become weak and deteriorate as a result of age.

... though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.

Yes, the outward man will fail, it is perishing, but our inner man can be renewed spiritually. In spite of outward physical weakness, the inward man can become stronger day by day. It is this inner power that makes us endure and remain faithful in this trying times.

III – By His Spirit

“... be strengthened with might **by his Spirit** in the inner man.”

Paul asks that God’s power might strengthen the believers in Ephesus inwardly. **But how does God strengthen believers?** He does it “**by His Spirit**.” It is through His Spirit. Paul recognizes that one of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to strengthen believers. We need strength and power to live the Christian life, to grow in grace, and to develop into full maturity and only the Holy Spirit can supply that power and strength. Once again, a quote from the late Warren Wiersbe, “*The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life is **evidence** of salvation (Rom. 8:9); but the power of the Spirit is **enablement** for Christian living ...*”

The Holy Spirit indwells us believers to empower us, and He strengthens the inner man. This is the power that our Lord promised His disciples before He ascended into heaven, “**Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you.**”

Now, **how does the Holy Spirit strengthen us in the inner man?**

The Holy Spirit strengthens us not by some mystical way, but **by leading us to the truth**. This means **feeding** the inner man with the Word of God. This means **saturating** our mind with the Word of God. This means **yielding** to the Spirit and **loving obedience** to His Word. It is only when we yield to the Spirit and let Him control the inner man that we succeed in living to the glory of God. The Holy Spirit strengthens us as we take heed the command in **Colossians 3:16** where it says, “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.**” The Word of Christ refers to His teachings both directly as found in the Gospels as well as those explained by the apostles. Let the Word of Christ permeate and control every part of your being. This implies the importance of having a steady and constant diet of the Word of God.

Wayne Barber writes, *“The assignment to do the strengthening is not in God the Son, it is God the Spirit. The Spirit of God comes into a man the moment he becomes a Christian. Now, you are not living life alone. You may be acting like it, but you are not. If you are trying to fight your problems by yourself, if you are trying to figure them out on your own, if you are not coming to the Word, letting the Holy Spirit of God enable you and reveal to you the things of God, then no wonder you are confused. You have a divine partner living in you, and He is in you to strengthen you with power so that you have an ability that you didn’t have before. If you will learn to tap into Him, then you will begin to learn to live in the reality of His presence....”*

Closing Exhortations

Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

Paul begins his intercession with a prayer that the believers in Ephesus would **“be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”** This is a prayer for strength from the Holy Spirit; a prayer asking for the strength of God. **Why begin the prayer here?** It’s because we live in this fallen world—a world filled with troubles and temptations, therefore, there is a great need for the strength of God Himself. In a broken world, you and I will face great challenges, cares, and concerns. And the only thing that can preserve and sustain you and me in this broken world and in this perverse and crooked generation is the power and strength of God.

The apostle Paul’s prayer teaches us how we are to pray for one another. We will all face life’s challenges, and **our prayers should not be escape, but strength.** When life hits us, we tend to pray, *“Lord, get me out of this trouble!”* But instead of praying to escape from troubles, pray for strength that you and I may endure those troubles. This is what we need to pray for one another—that God **“would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”**

For those unsaved among us, my prayer for you is not that you **“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”** At least not yet. My prayer for you is that through Word of God and by the Spirit of God, you may be brought to the saving knowledge of God.

AMEN!