

Series: Ephesians
Title: Four Great Needs
Text: Ephesians 3: 14-21
Date: March 9, 2014
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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,...

As we come to the specific things Paul asked God to give to the believers at Ephesus. Notice, Paul does not ask for himself to be delivered from prison. Nor does he ask for their physical, material or financial well-being. He does not ask that they themselves would be spared from persecution. His petition was entirely for what is truly needful.

Title: Four Great Needs

Divisions: 1) **V16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;** 2) **17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;** 3) **17: 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,** 4) **19: that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.**

**I. FIRST, BELIEVERS NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED BY GOD’S SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN—
v16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;**

He Would Grant You

If we have any blessing from God it will be because God gave it to us—**v16: That he would grant you.** Believer, “what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” (1 Cor 4: 7) Every spiritual blessing believers have is granted to us from God. It is a gift of his free grace. We are only sinners! God’s very glory is, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.” God gave all to his people before the world was made. God blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ according as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world

This “inner man” is given to us of God. It is not mental, fleshly man, it is the new man created of God. We are not born the first time with this inner man.

Ephesian 4:24: And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

1 Peter 3: 4:...[the inner man is] the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, [in which is that] ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

This “inner man” is the “new creature”, the “new creation”, the “new heart”, created in us by God the Holy Spirit in regeneration. In the inner man, we are given a willing heart, given faith to believe on Christ, in the day of his power. God gives us an understanding of divine things in this inner man. He gave us discernment of the things that are freely given to us of God. In the inner man we are given affections for Christ, for his Gospel, his ordinances, his ways, his people, for things above. So we have nothing to boast of—all things are granted to us of God. So, too, we must ask God to continue to grant us strength in the inner man.

According to the Riches

And Paul asks that this strength be given us **v16: according to the riches of his glory**. According to God's spiritual wealth. God is all fullness and that which he gives is according to his riches. For those God chose in Christ, redemption from the curse of the law, full forgiveness of all our sins, is given us according to his riches? (Eph 1: 7)

Ephesians 1:7: In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

The riches of his glory is the inheritance of every believer: Paul's prayed,

Ephesians 1:18: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

He tells us in Colossians 1:27, the riches of the glory...is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

The very reason God calls each of his elect is to show us the riches of his grace toward us:

Ephesians 2:7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Paul calls them...

Ephesians 3:8...the unsearchable riches of Christ;

So, brethren, never imagine that our God is in short supply of whatever we need:

Philippians 4:19: But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Strengthened With Might

Paul asks that according to the riches of his glory, we be **v16:...strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**; The word translated "might" is "dynamite." It is the same word Paul used when he said,

Romans 1:16: For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth;

This "might"—this dynamite—which strengthens the inner man is God's Spirit in the inner man—**v16:...strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**. We have no strength except by God's Spirit in our inner man.

Psalms 28:8: The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed.

Psalms 138:3: In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.

Isaiah 40:29: He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. 30: Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 31: But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.

Do we have reason to fear that God will fail to strengthen his chosen, blood bought, Spirit-wrought child? He says,

Isaiah 41:10: Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

2 Corinthians 12:9: And he said unto [Paul], 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.

But why does the Holy Spirit move Paul to ask first, for this strengthening power? The “inner man” begins as a babe. It has all the parts of a new man. Our spiritual senses are in the inner man: It’s where we feel the weight of our sin—Paul described it as the real me carrying around a body of death. But in this new man, we also see the Son of God by faith: in the glories of his person and his grace, our redemption accomplished by him. We hear the voice of Christ in his word calling us to rest in him and we distinguish his voice from the voice of a stranger. We smell a sweet savor in the person, blood, righteousness of Christ and his sacrifice for us. We taste that the Lord is gracious, his word becomes sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. We handle the word of life, we lay hold on Christ. Our new will, and affections are inner man.

Then in this inner man God grows us in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. Our faith in Christ is strengthened more. We are made to know more and more that the love of Christ for us is everlasting, unchangeable, sovereign love. So that our love for him is made more fervent and our love for our brethren grows in him. Our hope in Christ is strengthened. Our joy in Christ is made more full. This strengthening of the Spirit is performed through the hearing of the gospel, which causes us to grow in all these spiritual senses in the inward man.

1 Peter 2: 2: As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

Ephesians 4:15: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

2 Thessalonians 1:3: We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

2 Peter 3:18: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is only by his Spirit strengthening our inner man that we are able to put off the old man with his deeds and

Colossians 3: 12: Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; 13: Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. 14: And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. 15: And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

This strengthening of our inner man by his Spirit is vital. We need his strength continually all the time, every hour.

Application: Vain religion and a mere form of godliness—works on the outside; its superficial, shallow, a vain show.

Matthew 23:27: Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.

But this strengthening of the inner man is more than: reading a few theological books, learning doctrine and key words, making a public profession, joining a church, having a little fit of conviction now and then. God works in the inner man so there is real communion between the believer and Christ. So that what is done outwardly is true and not phony:

Colossians 1: 10: That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11: Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness;

And we need this strengthening in the inner man for this second thing Paul asks:

II. SECONDLY, PAUL ASKS—V17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;

Christ May Dwell

Paul is not praying that they would be saved; they already were saved. When a sinner is regenerated, when God gives faith in Christ, repentance from dead works, the Lord takes up residence in the inner man through faith. But Paul is praying “**that Christ may dwell.**” Not that Christ may visit on Sunday mornings or during the mid-week service. But that Christ may take up his abode in the inner man as one that is at home as the king of his castle.

That Christ may dwell **in our hearts**, not our heads, but our hearts. We start out being taught the doctrine of Christ and his grace. Doctrine is teaching, it is good, necessary. We must be sound in true doctrine—in truth—T.U.L.I.P.

But to have Christ dwelling in the heart is the needful thing. Paul’s prayer is that Christ might dwell fully in our very hearts—continually—that Christ ravish our hearts with his love, that all our affections might be on him alone all the time.

Illustration: Sarah and Seth

Brethren, do you remember when Christ’s first ravished your heart? When you first looked upon him whom you had pierced? When you beheld Christ bearing your sin, your wounds, in your room and stead? When he called you to his side and whispered all your sins are washed away. He robed you in his perfect righteousness; He stole our heart in love so completely. Your heart burned within you as he communed with you in the way?

Paul’s prayer is that we might have that intimate communion with Christ continually—abiding, dwelling in our hearts. Not just while we hear a sermon but Christ might dwell in our hearts long after we leave here. That when we go home our desire be to pick up his word today, tomorrow and the next, to keep out intruders—to keep his presence in our hearts, to teach Christ to our children.

John 14: 23: Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

By Faith

Notice he says, “**by faith.**” That Christ may dwell in our hearts so much that we truly see by faith things that cannot be seen with the human eye. That while this world competes for our affection our heart would be turned upon Christ to behold Christ seated at God’s right hand and there his people seated in him—to see ourselves seated in him. To behold that one day soon we shall be perfectly conformed to him that all the things that seem so important in this life may fade into the vanity they are, that we might enter into the truth that “ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col 3: 3-4) Paul desired it for himself as well as his brethren. He said,

Philippians 3:10: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

III. THEN PAUL PRAYS—V17:...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,

Rooted and Grounded

It is not only that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith but also that we might be rooted and grounded in Christ, rooted in love to Christ by his love for us.

Colossians 2: 6: As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: 7: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

Christ, in his great love for all the elect of God, for each believer in particular, is the Root that stablishes our hearts in faith and love to him.

Illustration: A tree rooted can withstand mighty winds.

So it is with a believer rooted in the love of Christ. We may have many inward storms of unbelief, doubt, and fear, and many outward storms, of persecution, loss, reproach, and shame for Christ's sake. But in the same way that storms make a tree take deeper and stronger root in the soil, so the storms that blow upon us make us take deeper root in the love of Christ.

Likewise, Christ is our Foundation. "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." (Isai. 28:16.)

A house "settles" on its foundation after its build. That is the word here "grounded". A building grounded, settled, on a solid foundation shall stand come what may.

Luke 6: 47: Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: 48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. 49: But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

On Christ the Solid Rock I Stand
All Other Ground is Shifting Sand

Apprehend the Dimensions and Love of Christ

That which roots and grounds us in Christ, is a heart—apprehension of God's love for us in Christ—**v18: May be able to comprehend** [the right word is "apprehend"] **with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,**

Note: the same word translated "comprehend" is translated "apprehend" in Philippians. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:12.)

Apprehend means "lay hold of." We can apprehend what we can't fully comprehend. We can apprehend—lay hold of—the infinite love of God in Christ for all his elect though it "passeth knowledge"—though it is incomprehensible by our finite minds.

The breadth of Christ's love: his righteousness covers every sin of every elect child of God for whom he gave himself. **The length** stretches from eternity to eternity over all time. **The depth** is to the uttermost pit of our depravity to the least of the least. **The height** is to heaven taking in the whole family in heaven and in earth.

These are the measurements of the whole temple of God made up of his people and in whom he dwells. This is the love of Christ, in which the apostle prays that we may be "rooted and grounded," so as to embrace it with every part of our inner man.

IV. LASTLY, HERE IS WHY—V19: that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Illustration: Think of how massive the sun is. It is so large that it illuminates the whole globe; there is not a space that its light does not penetrate. Its rays travel thousands of miles in an instant at the speed of light. The radius of that sun is vast. Then there is a tiny dewdrop hanging suspended from a blade of grass. While we are looking at the tiny dewdrop, the rays of the morning sun shines on it. It contains no light in itself, nor can it contain the fullness of the rays streaming from the sun. But that little dewdrop is filled with all the fullness of sun to the full extent of its limited capacity—full! So that that little dewdrop shines as if it were itself producing light. That is what Paul is praying for!

This prayer of Paul's is my prayer for each believer here, brethren. The more we know of the love of Christ by the Holy Spirit, the more precious his love will be. The more his love will make us love him and love one another, and walk with each other in unity and affection. To paraphrase the apostle John it is impossible to be born of this Love and not to love those born of this Love.

Ephesians 3: 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.

Amen!