

**Eph 3:14–21 (ESV)** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>(15)</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>(16)</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>(17)</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>(18)</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>(19)</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. <sup>(20)</sup> Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, <sup>(21)</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

## 1. Continue with Paul’s great prayer in Ephesians 3

A. We are still looking at being strengthened in the inner man by the Holy Spirit

## 2. Remember Paul is praying for those who are believers

A. Those he spoke of as having trusted in Christ and who were sealed by the Holy Spirit

B. Tells us something important – forgiveness of sin – connection to Christ is just the beginning

1). A great step but just the first step into this grand adventure of knowing God

C. Unfortunately many believers stop at this point

1). They settle for a faith they believe will get them into heaven

But have no concern about growing in that faith

2). Therefore they never grow – like the Corinthians Paul writes too

a). They are like the Corinthians Paul writes too

He planted the church now some 5 years later he writes a letter to them

**1 Cor 3:1-2 (NIV)** Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly--mere infants in Christ. (2) I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.

1a). I gave you milk when you were first saved – of course - babies can’t handle meat

2a). But now five years later you still need milk – you haven’t grown an inch

You should be able to handle meatier truths but you still can’t

D. I want to create a desire for growth here – by showing what you miss out on

1). Listen to the experience of Christianity Paul is praying for in this verse

a). Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith – in an enlarged way

b). To really know and experience the love of God that is beyond understanding

c). To be filled with the fullness of God

**Point:** This is what is possible for every believer – all who are “in Christ”

A. To have this experience that is beyond what most experience in their Christianity

**Spurgeon spoke of this:** “There is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling”

1). There are some whose experience of Christianity is as different from the normal believer

As the believer’s spiritual experience is as different from the unbeliever

2). That may seem odd at first until you really think through what Paul is praying for

a). How many believers do you know that is experiencing the richness of all this

1a). Who really know and experience the love of God that passes understanding?

2a). Who are really filled with the fullness of God?

**Transition:** My prayer is that none of us would settle for less than this

A. I want to show you why you need this – why you want to be praying to be strengthened in the inner man

# I. WHY WE NEED OUR INNER MAN TO BE STRENGTHENED

## 1. Because the Christian starts out as a spiritual infant

**Again: 1 Co 3:1–2 (ESV)** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, *as infants in Christ.* <sup>(2)</sup> I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it.

- A. At that initial point of salvation they were spiritual infants – which is normal  
 1). Therefore, Paul fed them with the milk of spiritual truth not meat – they couldn't handle meat

**Transition:** So we all start out as spiritual infants – babies

- 1). But we must be concerned about growing – why? Next point  
 B. **Spiritual infancy is a dangerous time** – babies are vulnerable to the dangers around them

- 1). They are prone to believe false teaching

**Turn: Eph 4:11–13 (ESV)** And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>(12)</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>(13)</sup> *until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,*

- a). God uses teachers to aid his people to grow up – to mature  
 b). To bring about that fullness of God Paul is praying for in Ephesians 3  
 2). Look at the result when this is happening

**Eph 4:14 (ESV)** so that we may no longer be children, *tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.*

- a). So that we will grow beyond that immaturity that will believe lies  
 1a). That is attracted to every new teaching that excites them emotionally  
 b). Infancy is characterized by being governed by emotions – feel something they act on it  
 1a). Maturity is characterized by being governed by truth - the Word

**Point:** You must see this - When Paul prays we be strengthened in the inner man

He is not isolating this from the Word

- A. He is not talking about some mystical, magical thing that just sort of happens  
 1). Scripture is clear the Spirit uses the truth in the Word to bring this about  
**John Calvin:** God does not bestow his Spirit on his people in order to set aside the use of his Word, but rather to render it fruitful.  
 a). He renders it fruitful by using it to strengthen the inner man  
 B. You see this in 1 John – he writes about the stages of Christian growth

**1 John 2:13-14 (NIV)** I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. (14) I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

- 1). Did you notice how the children grow into being strong young men? Let's read it again

**1 John 2:13-14 (NIV)** I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, *young men, because you have overcome the evil one.* I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father. (14) I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, *young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

- a). They moved from that state of immaturity – tossed to and fro by false teaching  
 To overcoming – because of the Word of God made them strong

- C. This is how Peter says we grow

**1 Pet 2:2 (NASB)** like newborn babes, long (crave) for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,

- 1). The Word is so important we are exhorted to crave it like a newborn craves milk  
 a). Why? Because that is the food the Holy Spirit uses to bring about growth

**Transition:** So we need to be strengthened in the inner man because we need to grow

- A. The more immature you are spiritually the more vulnerable you are to the false teaching around today
- B. Add to that the next point – we contend with a powerful adversary

## 2. We need to be strengthened in the “inner man” because the devil is real

- A. We have a powerful adversary who is very active in plotting out our destruction  
**TURN: Eph 6:12 (ESV)** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

**1 Pe 5:8 (ESV)** Be sober-minded; be watchful. *Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*

- 1). I see how apathetic some believers are when it comes to the spiritual disciplines  
 I think – don’t you understand the battle you’re in – you MUST think!
- B. Notice what Paul says in light of this - Ephesians  
**Eph 6:12–13 (ESV)** For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. <sup>(13)</sup> *Therefore (because this is who you’re contending with) take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.*

- 1). All of us are going to face those evil days
  - a). This is that day the temptation is so strong – the battle rages so hotly  
 That is a day that is extremely dangerous
  - b). The Christian landscape is littered with those who weren’t prepared and didn’t stand
  - c). They believed the lies – the false signs and wonders

**Point:** Because of the enemy we contend with *we need to be concerned about being strengthened*

- A. We dare not take this lightly – we must have spiritual ears to hear what the Bible is saying

**Transition:** That brings us to the next point – who we naturally are and how the devil uses that

## 3. We need to be strengthened in our heart to withstand the attacks

- A. We are subject to fear and discouragement. Some more than others
  - 1). They seem to live in the “What if’s” of life – always afraid – always down
  - 2). Add to that – the devil uses all this against us
    - a). He takes that “What if” and exaggerates magnifies it the worst-case scenario
    - b). It’s what Paul is talking about when he teaches on the spiritual armor  
**Eph 6:16 (ESV)** In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the *flaming darts of the evil one;*
      - 1a). The devil fires in these flaming arrows of doubts – what if’s - exaggerations
      - 2a). If we don’t deal with them quickly they lodge and start to engulf our mind  
 “Our kids are going to die. Our finances are going to dry up. We are going to end up on the street. Everything is ruined. My life is going to be destroyed. Woe is me.”
- B. You need the Spirit to strengthen you in the inner man to stand against this
  - 1). Again the way he usually does that is through the truth = what the shield of faith is constructed of
    - a). The fiery dart comes in – you block it with truth – the promises - Scripture

**Point:** You pray to be strengthened then you feed yourself the food that will strengthen you

- A. The Spiritual armor that enables us to stand against these attacks begins and ends with the Bible
  - 1). The Belt of truth and the sword of the Spirit
    - a). The belt of truth = general knowledge of the Word of God – well rounded
    - b). Sword of the Spirit = the Ability to use that knowledge quickly and correctly when you’re under attack
- B. The truth is what guards your emotions – your heart

- 1). Keeps it from being overwhelmed when there is adversity  
Keeps is from running wild with the what if's

C. *So pray – asking the Spirit to do this – and then pour in what the Spirit uses to do this with*

**Transition:** None of this will matter if we don't have the next step

#### 4. We need to be strengthened in our mind to understand the truth

A. You can't apply something you don't understand

- 1). We have said many times you can't understand the Scripture unless the Spirit enables you

B. See this with Jesus and the downhearted disciples on the Road to Emmaus

- 1). Jesus joins up with them – they don't recognize him

He inquires why they are so down – explain their dreams have been shattered

The one we trusted in has been crucified – all the hopes for his kingdom are gone

**Pick up the story: Luke 24:25-31 (NIV)** He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! (26) Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" (27) And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. (28) As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. (29) But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. (30) When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. (31) *Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.*

- a). They were unable to understand this truth UNTIL their eyes were opened by the Spirit

**Thomas Manton:** God's mind is revealed in Scripture, but we can see nothing without the spectacles of the Holy Ghost.

- b). When their eyes were opened they were strengthened in the inner man

**Luke 24:33-34 (NIV)** They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together (34) and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon."

- a). From depression to excitement – why? The Spirit enabled them to see truth

AND they were strengthened in the inner man by that truth they saw

**Point:** When you pray for the Spirit to strengthen you in the inner man

A. One thing you are asking is for him to take the Word you are reading and do this with it

**Transition:** The next one is vital to keep pouring the word in - perseverance

#### 5. The will needs to be strengthened

A. It is so easy to desire good things – great things but never follow through

- 1). For some reason the desire and the action never seem to meet up

B. A lot of this is because of what we've become in the fall

- 1). We are prone to make excuses rather than work

**Pr 22:13 (ESV)** The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!"

**Pr 26:13 (ESV)** The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!"

- a). There is no lion – that shows how far we will go to excuse away work - activity

- 2). Add to that what we saw last week – the fight with the flesh that rises up to oppose anything good

- a). Which means Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, fellowship etc.

C. We can hear a study like this – I'm going to pray like this and I'm going to read

- 1). But will you still be thinking that by mid-week? Will the desire turn into discipline?

- a). You should know yourself well enough by now that you need God's help

- b). You need to be strengthened in the inner man to persevere – to endure

**Point:** We need to be strengthened to stand against the devil – and here to stand against ourselves

- A. To break the habits of things like procrastination
- B. So we need the Word to be strengthened we need to be strengthened to read the Word
  - 1). Pray for this strength and get your Bible out – keep praying for this strength

**Transition:** Balance: We talk about letting truth control our emotions and our experiences

- A. There is a balance with that – don't want to go so far we are afraid of emotions and spiritual experience

## 6. We want to be strengthened in the inner man because of what it leads too

- A. All of these things Paul is praying for
  - 1). That Christ may dwell in our hearts in a greater way  
That we may KNOW the love of God that is beyond all understanding  
That we may be filled with all the fullness of God
- B. Paul puts being strengthened in the inner man before all that – because it is the path to that  
**DMLJ:** “The very greatness of what is offered to us demands that we be strengthened in order to receive it, lest we might be shattered by it.”
  - 1). We see this principle in the Bible – this kind of truth takes maturity to handle  
**1 Co 3:2 (ESV)** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it...  
**Heb 5:14 (ESV)** But solid food is for the mature...
    - a). Feed a baby a steak – you'll only make him sick
    - b). Strong meat can only be taken in by those who are strong enough to take it in

**Point:** God will only give you what you can handle – the stronger you are the more you can handle

- A. You must be strong enough to handle these greater experiences – *Why Paul puts it first*

## SUMMARY:

### 1. Take an honest look at the inner you and you'll see why you need strength

- A. Thank God he is willing to give us that strength we need
  - 1). If he wasn't – every one of us would be ruined by our own spiritual weakness
- B. But he is willing to get involved
  - 1). Willing to do what our experience proves we cannot do  
He is willing to give us the strength we need to walk with him and live the Christian life

**Transition:** To further encourage us – Paul writes on how we receive this and the resources available

## II. HOW WE RECEIVE THIS STRENGTH

### The Reception: We receive this as a gift

**Eph 3:16 (ESV)** that according to the riches of his glory *he may grant you* to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

### 1. The word “grant” means it is given as a free gift

- A. It is a gift of grace I can't earn or merit – I simply ask for it and receive it
- B. You may feel so weak spiritually – but you can whisper  
“God have mercy on me. Grant me the strength I need to carry on.”
  - 1). He will hear you and he will move – he will help you  
He will empower you to do those things that lead this strength
- C. We've seen you need to read your Bible – but you need his strength to do that - so ASK for it
  - 1). If you are apathetic about this – ask him to make you care

**Transition:** But does he really have the resources necessary to help me? Whatever that need is

### The Resources: The riches of his glory

**Eph 3:16 (ESV)** *that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power* through his Spirit in your inner being,

### 1. The glory of God is the summation of all the attributes of God

- A. His might and majesty. Holiness and purity. Wisdom and knowledge etc.
  - 1). This is speaking of God in his totality coming to your aid
  - 2). God making everything he is available to you to answer that prayer
- B. You need power to strengthen you – there is enough power available  
You need wisdom – there is plenty  
You need love – he is willing to pour his love through you
  - 1). You need patience, endurance, kindness, name it and there are resources available  
They come to us through him – He answers us by giving us his abilities
    - a). The exchanged life – he replaces our weakness with his strength
- C. We live in tune with God – in a situation we need power, love, kindness – ASK FOR IT
  - 1). If you’ve been walking with him – abiding – in tune – in the Word  
He will pour his life into you and strengthen you to respond correctly

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### The representative: Through his Spirit

**Eph 3:16 (ESV)** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power *through his Spirit* in your inner being,

### 1. God uses his Spirit to accomplish this

- A. The same Spirit who has always been involved in our salvation
  - 1). He convicted us of sin and drew us to Christ  
The same Spirit who opened up the truth of the Gospel showing us we needed to be saved  
And what we needed to do to be saved  
The same Spirit who drew you to Christ and gave you the faith you needed to believe
- B. Do you think he is going to stop there – in the kingdom – that’s enough!
  - 1). He continues to work on us – strengthening us in the inner man – developing us
    - a). So we can walk in a way we enjoy our Christianity
    - b). So we can experience all that Paul says is available to the believer in this prayer

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## CONCLUSION

### 1. Paul shows us the possibility of Christianity in this prayer

- A. This is meant to do a couple of things
  - 1). To open our eyes to what we could have in the Christian life
  - 2). To drive us to prayer – asking that we would experience this
- B. But what if you don’t even have the desire for any of this – start there – you can only start where you are
  - 1). Ask God to create that desire in you so that you will press on into this  
**Php 2:12–13 (ESV)** Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>(13)</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.  
“Lord help me not to settle for mediocrity when all this is available to me. Draw me closer and closer to you. Give me the strength to press in. Help me do those things that are necessary to being strengthened. Through your Spirit help me to be disciplined in the Word, prayer and fellowship, those things the Spirit uses to bring about maturity.”
- C. Ask him for the strength to do it – then get your Bible out – reading it trusting him to meet you there

- 1). Don't read your Bible being content not to see God in it
- 2). Read in a prayerful attitude – speaking with him – listening – looking – on tip toes
  - a). Talk it over: Lord what can I see about you here? If there are any changes I must make, any promises I must claim?
  - b). Read with a pencil ready to write – you'll be amazed at what you see?

## 2. This strength is given by the Spirit

- A. It comes when we ask in prayer and seek God in His word – our spiritual sustenance
  - 1). Pray then read – then expect God to do great things in you – changing you from the inside out  
**Alexander Maclaren:** He who has the Holy Spirit in his heart and the Scriptures in his hands has all he needs.

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## COMMUNION

### 1. Communion is a regular reminder about what made all this possible

- A. It transports us back 2000 years to a cross planted on a hill in Jerusalem  
Where our Savior hung as a substitute for our sins
- B. We've talked about the Spirit strengthening us today – there is where it began
  - 1). He convinced us we were guilty of sin
  - 2). Then opened up the Scriptures that told us about our Lord's saving work
  - 3). And took us to the cross – to receive that work into our life by faith

### 2. We hold in our hands two simple elements – a piece of bread and a cup

- A. The bread speaks of the body of Christ – broken and bruised for you
  - 1). Beaten, spit upon and finally hung on that cruel cross to receive God's wrath in your place
    - a). He was the only one who didn't deserve God's wrath – no sin
- B. The cup speaks of his shed blood – as his blood was poured out your sin was cleansed
  - 1). Finally when every sin for every one who would ever believe was paid for
    - a). Jesus cried out – it is finished and he died

**Point:** So two simple objects that remind us of that one event that changed the course of history

- A. And changed your eternity if you have believed
  - 1). If you haven't believed – why? What is holding you back from him?

### 3. Let's partake

