

**Ephesians 3: 16-19; “Christ Dwelling in Your Heart”, Message # 23 in a series
entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, Delivered by
Pastor Paul Rendall on May 5th, 2024.**

I want to speak to you from these verses about your spiritual relationship with Christ. In verse 16 Paul is praying for his beloved brethren at Ephesus, and He is asking that the Father would grant them, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in their inner man. He is praying that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith. Wasn't Christ already dwelling there in their hearts by faith? Yes He was! But Paul is praying for a greater strengthening, and for a richer indwelling of Christ in hearts, by faith.

So, in relation to this truth, I want to raise 3 Questions with you, which I hope will help you in your walk with Christ. 1st of all – What does it mean to be strengthened with might through Christ's Spirit in your inner man. And 2nd – What does this mean, then, in the outworking of it in your life? And 3rd – What does it mean to be rooted and grounded in Christ's love? Let us pray, as I deliver to you this message, that the Lord will work in our hearts and open our eyes to understand the implications to us personally, of what is being said here.

1st of all – What does it mean to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in your inner man?

Verse 16 says – “...That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man...” I believe that these verses that we are looking at, give us the greatest understanding in all the Bible, in an overview, of the inner heart experience of the Christian in relation to Christ. They are speaking of our inner man; the person that we are in our heart before God. This is where our fellowship and communion with our living Lord takes place. This is where the constant interaction between ourselves and Christ is going on. It is out of this interaction that we begin to see how important it is for us to be rooted and grounded in Christ's love so that we might truly make progress in holiness.

What does that mean, to make progress in holiness? It means that as I live my life for God; that I make progress in the realization that I am separated unto His purposes for me and my life. Are you living your life to Him? I think that sometimes Christians may not understand how important this is, to their not being discouraged when either you, or those around you whom you love, are going through difficulties and trials. I want you to notice the first verses of chapters 3 and 4 have this same phrase in them. “I, Paul, the prisoner of the Lord.” Why did Paul mention this twice? He mentioned it twice so that those who he was writing to, would see that his being in prison did not come about simply because he got himself in trouble by preaching the gospel, and wicked men took action against him. It happened, it came about, because the Lord had him go to prison for Him, so that he would be a witness for Him. He was the Lord's prisoner.

What conclusion should we draw from this? Well, I think that the Lord would have you to know, that in regard to all of the major trials that you will go through, in your life as a Christian, the Lord has led you into to them. He has done this for reasons related to His own purpose for you. He leads you into them, and He will also lead you through them. And in His time He will deliver you from them, in the way that He knows will be best for you. He will teach you many good lessons related to trusting Him and obeying Him. You may not recognize this, and so you may be downcast. And you may and lose heart during your trial. You may feel that you are in prison, either in soul or in body, or both.

And so what are you to do? I believe that Paul is teaching us that we must follow his example learn to pray. And it will be good for you to ask others to pray for you, as well. Ask them to pray that according to the riches of God's glory, that He would grant you to be strengthened in your inner man to continue to walk with Him closely on the path of righteousness. You must pray and ask Him for strength in your inner man to continue to do His will, and keep His commandments. And in your efforts to do His will, that by His grace and power, He would be magnified in your life, no matter

what stage of life that you are in. Christ dwells in your heart by faith. Christ has riches of His glory which He will reveal to you in and through whatever trial you are going through.

When Paul mentions his tribulations for them, the believers in Ephesus, he is referring to his having had to go to prison because of the gospel that he had preached to them. He was preaching Christ and the gospel of the grace of God. But Paul also says in verse 13, “Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory”. Let me ask you now, what is it that you glory in? You make no boast in the flesh. You do not glory in your own wisdom, or your own strength, or your own riches. You glory in Christ Jesus. You glory in having Him as your Savior and Lord. You glory that He is there in your heart teaching you.

You glory in the fact that He is your continual Friend and Companion; that He is showing you His love, in and through all the various situations of difficulty and trial that you go through. It is not just that you know His love in the good times and in the good situations, but that you know His love in the difficult times, and you realize this in your heart in a tangible way. It is a very great and good thing when you realize that it His love for you that enables you to be wise, loving, and strong in being able to minister to others. This was the very thing that Paul was experiencing. He was ministering in this very way to those dear people there in the church at Ephesus.

But I am saying that the way that he was able to do that, was because he knew the love of Christ towards himself. He knew Christ’s love in a very real way, even there in prison. And you and I need to understand the same thing, lest we grow faint, lose heart, and become discouraged, downcast, or frustrated. And therefore you don’t really want to glorify God. Why is it that Christians fall into discouragement and some into depression? Why is it that they stay in that frame of mind, sometimes for a long time? It is because they do not realize that Christ has this great love for them, and wants to have deeper fellowship with them. It is the fellowship of His sufferings.

Philippians 3: 7 – “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.” “Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

What Paul is talking about here is experiential. It’s not just simply that he knew intellectually that Christ loved him. That’s not what he is talking about here. He wanted a greater experiential understanding of Christ’s resurrection power in His life so that he could fellowship with Christ in His sufferings. Christ suffered and died for our sins, so that we could die to sin and live to righteousness. Are you, dear Christian, dying to sin, and seeking to live to righteousness? Not your own righteousness which is from the law, but that which through faith in Jesus Christ? Christ is always with you. You know that as a fact. But what Paul would have you to know, according to what is being said here, is that Christ would have you to know His love for you, in relation to His perfect righteousness, and His resurrection, experientially in your heart. He wants you to know this in relation to His good word and promises in the Bible.

2nd – What does this mean, then, in the outworking of it in your life?

What does this mean in your life, for instance, if you are going through a trial? It means that when you exercise faith and hope in Christ, in the midst of your trials and difficulties, that He will be faithful to strengthen you in your inner man, as you look to Him. He will strengthen you to do His will, as you hold fellowship and communion with Him in your heart. It means that when you pray to Him, and take counsel with Him, and seek Him for His help, He will, in accordance with His Spirit’s working, strengthen you. And He will dwell in your heart in a very rich spiritual sense.

As a person who knows the Lord, your heart is the house of habitation in which Christ lives and dwells by His Spirit. Having that base of operations there in your heart, He supplies you with grace and strength and peace and blessings too innumerable to count. These blessings are all related to

the Spirit's communication of the fruit of the Spirit to you in relation to your being able to do God's will by faith in Christ. Now, I wonder if you understand, dear Christian, that each and every day the Holy Spirit is making His motions in your heart? He, the Spirit of the Lord Jesus, is dwelling in your heart. He is there enlightening your mind. He is shining light on the truth of God's word. In His light you see light. He is leading you, and giving you actual grace, and working in your heart, so that you might manifest the fruit of your interaction with Him.

By faith, and in relation to your prayers, this is really taking place in your life as a Christian. The way that you understand more of what He is doing, is when you believe that He is powerfully working there in your heart. Perhaps as you look around you, you are sad and discouraged about Christ's kingdom and cause. You see all the enemies of Christ there are; all the enemies to the truth of the Bible. You see how many people are against the walls of Zion being rebuilt in our day. Perhaps you don't see how the good work, which you personally want to do to promote Christ's kingdom and the gospel, can be done.

Well, turn with me over to Nehemiah chapter 2, and I want us to read verses 1-10. "And it came to pass in the month of Nisan, in the twentieth year of King Artaxerxes, when wine was before him, that I took the wine and gave it to the king." "Now I had never been sad in his presence before." "Therefore the king said to me, 'Why is your face sad, since you are not sick?'" "This is nothing but sorrow of heart." "So I became dreadfully afraid, and said to the king, 'May the king live forever!'" "Why should my face not be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' tombs, lies waste, and its gates are burned with fire?"

"Then the king said to me, 'What do you request?'" "So I prayed to the God of heaven." "And I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' tombs, that I may rebuild it.'" "Then the king said to me (the queen also sitting beside him), 'How long will your journey be? And when will you return?'" "So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time." "Furthermore I said to the king, 'If it pleases the king, let letters be given to me for the governors of the region beyond the River, that they must permit me to pass through till I come to Judah, and a letter to Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he must give me timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel which pertains to the temple, for the city wall, and for the house that I will occupy.'"

"And the king granted them to me according to the good hand of my God upon me." So, what I want you to see from these verses is that this king, Artaxerxes, was a man who in spite of his being in a very great earthly position, took notice of the sadness of his cupbearer. Nehemiah had just given him his wine, and he noticed that Nehemiah was sad. Now, we who believe in the sovereignty of God must ask ourselves a question: Who was it that placed such a disposition into this king that he would take notice of his cupbearer's sadness, and even explain it back to Nehemiah? "Why is your face sad, since you are not sick?" "This is nothing but sorrow of heart."

I would suggest to you that this was God's good working of His good will in relation to Nehemiah. It was His directly and providentially working to help Nehemiah because He knew that he was sad. And he was sad for the right reasons. He was sad, not in relation to himself, but in relation to the kingdom of God; more specifically, in relation to Jerusalem lying waste, having been destroyed by the Babylonians. When he related this to the king, the king immediately wanted to know what he would request of him. So Nehemiah threw up a prayer to the God heaven. And then he said to the king – If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, I ask that you send me to Judah, to the city of my father's tombs, that I may rebuild it.

Now, I want you to see this man as a type of Christ our King. If an earthly king can take notice of a man who is employed in his service in this good way, does not our heavenly King Jesus take just as much notice of our face, our sadness, and our sorrow of heart? I would assert to you that He does, and much more so. If this is so, should we not be just as eager to explain to our King the reasons that we are sad, and what it is that we would like to accomplish with our life? The Lord knows when you want to help His cause, and rebuild Zion's walls, and seek the well-being of the children of spiritual

Israel. And He can strengthen you with might in your inner man, through His Spirit, so that you will be able to do and accomplish all that is related to His good purpose. Everything.

But you have to live by faith. You cannot live by doubt and skepticism, which is what so many of us fall into, when things aren't going well, when we receive opposition, when we have enemies who oppose the advance of Christ's kingdom. But these verses are saying that Christ can strengthen you with might in your inner man, through His Spirit so that you will be able to do and to accomplish all that is related to His good will and purpose, for you in particular. You just need to pray for His good working in your heart; that He would more and more show you the riches of His glory.

His glory is His excellence, His strength, His power, His wisdom, and His ability, to do all things well; to show you mercy, and to do you good, in the situation that you are in. This is not to say that you will not have to go through terrible trials; I am not saying that. What I am saying, is when you do go through these things, that Christ will be with you. And you will know it, that He is with you, because you are living and walking by faith in Him. That's what I am saying.

3rd – The Lord would have you to comprehend how much you need to be rooted and grounded in His love.

What does this phrase mean, that you being rooted and grounded in love may comprehend with all the saints, the love of Christ? Being rooted and grounded in love is the word picture of a plant, or a tree of righteousness. In this sentence it refers to the Christian as the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified. You, as a Christian person are, as it says in Isaiah 61: 3, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified in your life. If you are rooted in Christ's love then you can grow up in Him to be like Him in relation to His love. And you will bear fruit to God in righteousness and holiness. But we are told here that we must also be grounded in Christ's love. To be grounded is not only to be planted in Christ, but it is also to be an established plant.

Psalms 1, verses 1-3, shows us this. "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night." "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper." So a Christian is established by being planted in the love of Jesus Christ. They are placed by the rivers of waters, of the Holy Spirit's working as living water in their life. They mediate day and night upon the law of the Lord, which teaches them about Christ.

The word speaks to us of His love, and His grace which leads to our obedience. You are grounded in His love when you can glory in tribulations. Romans 5, verses 1-5 – "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." "And only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope." "Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."

So, once again, you will notice that it is the love of God which establishes us in our being grounded in our faith. It is because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit that we can glory in tribulations. This is because you know that they will produce perseverance in your faith. That should excite your hope, and love toward God, and love toward your fellow men. This proven character is what is being developed in you by the Holy Spirit. And it will lead you to understand that you have a hope that will not disappoint you, because God's love has been poured out in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

It did not originate from your own feelings about your having to go through tribulations, and somehow seeing the strength to do so as coming from yourself. You rather see all of your spiritual strength as coming to your inner man from the Indwelling Christ; His Holy Spirit communicating that grace to you, leading to your being able to manifest the fruit of the Spirit in all of your speech and conduct. May it be so for each of us.