**Strengthened With Power In the Inner Man**

**Ephesians 3:14-16**

**January 17, 2021**

1. Introduction
   1. The Christian life is a life no one can live in his own strength.
      1. This becomes clear when we think of the greatest Christians who have ever lived.
      2. For example, take the Apostle Paul, who wrote this letter to the Ephesians.
         1. We perhaps have a view of Paul as this mighty man of God, ferocious for the gospel, unstoppable, invincible, never discouraged but always spreading joy and hope everywhere he went.
         2. You could drag him out of town and stone him to death, and he would somehow survive, get up, and walk right back into town preaching Christ.
         3. You could beat him and throw him into a dungeon, and he would sit there all night singing hymns of praise to God.
         4. Paul, this incredible warrior for Christ, surely was a man unlike any other, without the weaknesses we all face in our walks with Christ.
      3. And yet listen to how Paul describes himself when he reflected on a visit to Macedonia in 2 Cor 7:5…
         1. Here was Paul, that great apostle, restless and disturbed.
         2. He says that he was afflicted on every side.
         3. He explains what he means by that by saying, **“Conflicts without, fears within.”**
         4. If he looked at his surroundings, there was nothing but warfare.
         5. Battles against the flesh, battles against the devil, battles against false teachers, battles against false brothers, battles against paganism and idolatry, battles against the Jews.
         6. Life on the outside felt like nothing but conflict.
         7. But he could not even retreat within his own soul, because when he looked within, he saw a man who was fearful.
         8. We don’t often think of the Apostle Paul as afraid, but here he says that when he came to Macedonia, within himself he was fearful.
         9. How could the apostle who had stared down so many great sufferings for the sake of Christ ever be afraid?
         10. Because the Christian life is a life no one can live by his own power and strength, not even great apostles like Paul.
      4. Can you relate to Paul’s statement this morning – conflicts without, fears within?
         1. I think given our culture and what is happening historically right now that we can all relate to this at some level this morning.
         2. I see many believers who are discouraged and fearful as they look to the future.
         3. Fears well up inside us as we think about potentially losing our religious freedom that we have so long enjoyed in this country.
         4. And there are conflicts without.
         5. People fighting over masks, fighting over politics, fighting over doctrine, fighting over all kinds of issues both inside and outside the church.
      5. We quickly realize that in ourselves we are beset with weakness and unable to live the Christian life in our own strength.
   2. Paul knew that, and he knew that not only did he struggle with his own weakness and inability to live for Christ in his own power, but that the Ephesians struggled with that as well.
      1. He just finished talking to them about his sufferings for the gospel on their behalf.
      2. And in v. 13 of Ephesians 3 he asked the Ephesians not to become discouraged because of his suffering and his weakness in the body, his weakness in his circumstances as he was now imprisoned for Christ’s sake.
      3. But it’s not enough just to ask the Ephesians not to become discouraged.
      4. Paul must now resume what he started in verse 1, and he realizes that he must also pray that the Ephesians would be strong in the Lord.
      5. He does well to tell them about their blessings in Christ, but he must go beyond just telling them about these things and pray for them to receive the reality of these things in their walk with Christ.
   3. Paul understood a very important truth: To receive divine strength to live the Christian life, we must avail ourselves of the great privilege of prayer.
      1. Knowing doctrine is a wonderful thing.
      2. Understanding the Word of God is vital to the Christian life.
      3. Encouraging others with words of hope and truth is a powerful way to serve one another.
      4. But all of these things fall short if we do not come to the Lord in prayer and seek His help and His power and His strength.
      5. We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength, with our knowledge and understanding only, and we can’t even live the Christian life with the help of other believers!
      6. We are utterly dependent on fellowship with God in prayer, asking Him to strengthen us and our brothers and sisters in Christ so that all the truths we know and share with one another become active and powerful in our lives by the Spirit of God.
   4. Paul, then, models this type of prayer for the Ephesians in Ephesians 3:14-19.
      1. This passage is so rich it will take us a few weeks to get through all six verses.
      2. This morning I want to just focus on vv. 14-16 and think about Paul’s prayer that the Ephesians might have divine strength to live the Christian life.
      3. Paul models this prayer so we might understand how to pray this way, and to grasp this we need to see four things about prayer in these verses.
2. The Confidence of Prayer (v. 14)
   1. When we come to God in prayer, God wants us to come with confidence.
      1. He says in James 1:5 that we need to come in faith without doubting if we would receive anything from the Lord.
      2. Paul himself, in v. 12, just told us that in Christ we have boldness and confident access to the Father.
      3. Our prayer life should be defined by this confidence that we belong in the presence of God in Jesus Christ.
      4. And we should have confidence that God will hear and answer our prayers.
   2. Paul exudes this confidence in v. 14 when he begins by writing, **“For this reason…”**
      1. That statement is verbatim what Paul said in v. 1 when he was originally going to tell them how he prayed for them, but suddenly broke off to give a digression concerning his sufferings.
      2. That means that v. 14 does not primarily connect with vv. 1-13, but it goes all the way back to what Paul had described in Ephesians 2.
         1. This is the pattern of Ephesians 1-3.
         2. In Ephesians 1, Paul began in vv. 1-14 with an explanation of our great salvation in Christ.
         3. And then he ended the chapter in vv. 15-23 with a description of how he prayed for the Ephesians in light of those wonderful truths.
         4. Then Paul again talks about the marvelous salvation we have by grace through faith in Ephesians 2.
         5. And in Ephesians 3 he describes how he prays for them in light of those truths, but he interrupts himself to talk briefly about his sufferings.
         6. And so we have these two halves of this opening part of Ephesians that both end with prayer in response to the truth of the gospel.
      3. When Paul says, **“For this reason…”** then, he means something like this: “In view of the surpassing greatness of the blessings that are ours in Christ, I pray…”
         1. Paul’s prayers are not guided by wishful thinking or personal desires, but they are guided by the truth of what God has done for His people in Christ.
         2. It is because we were formerly dead in our trespasses and sins, but God made us alive in Christ that Paul prays.
         3. It is because we have been saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves but it is the gift of God that Paul prays.
         4. It is because we who were formerly aliens and strangers have been brought near and made partakers of the promise in Christ that Paul prays.
         5. It is because we are God’s new humanity in Christ, His kingdom, His family, and His temple, that Paul prays.
         6. All of these truths motivate Paul to pray confidently because Paul knows that God has already promised us these blessings, given us these blessings in Christ, and will continue to pour out His kindness on us through all eternity.
         7. There is no doubt in Paul’s mind that he can pray with confidence for God to give strength to the Ephesians because God has promised that He will.
   3. When we come to God in prayer and pray for ourselves and others in accordance with what God has done for us in Christ, we need to have that same kind of confidence.
      1. That’s why we need the framework of Ephesians 1-2 to pray like Paul prays in Ephesians 3.
      2. We need to realize the immense privileges and blessings that belong to us in Christ so that when we pray we are not wondering if God cares for us or if God will take care of us or meet our needs, but we have utter confidence in God because of the gospel of Christ.
      3. The gospel is what gives us that boldness and confident access because it is through believing the gospel that we are in Christ.
      4. And we see in Ephesians that the gospel is so much more than that Jesus died for us to forgive our sins.
      5. The gospel includes that, but it goes on and tells us how God has set us free from sin and Satan and death, how He has given us new life, how He will pour out His kindness on us forever, how He has made us His very own, special people who are part of His new creation.
      6. And all of this is accomplished for us by Jesus Christ, and it all becomes ours by grace through faith.
      7. And so we come to God with this great confidence in prayer.
   4. Second, I want you to notice…
3. The Posture of Prayer (v. 14)
   1. Notice how in v. 14 Paul’s great confidence because of the gospel is coupled with great reverence and humility.
      1. Paul notes that he bowed his knees before the Father in prayer.
      2. To pray on your knees was a sign of great reverence and humility.
      3. It also expressed loyalty to the master when one of his servants would come and present his request with a bended knee.
      4. Paul wants us to understand this posture of prayer that was one of great reverence and respect and humility before God.
   2. When we read through the Bible, we find that there were many different physical postures in which people prayed.
      1. For example, in 1 Kings 8:22, Solomon stood while he prayed to the Lord; standing was also common in Jesus’ day as He referenced people standing to pray in multiple passages.
      2. In Genesis 17:3, Abram fell on his face before the Lord, not merely bowing the knee but prostrating himself before God, as people sometimes did in prayer, especially to show extreme reverence or urgency in prayer.
      3. In Psalm 63:6, the psalmist prays while lying on his bed.
      4. There is in one sense no right or wrong physical posture for prayer.
      5. We are told in 1 Thess 5:17 to pray without ceasing, so that would require that we are always in a mindset of communion with God in any physical position we are in, whether seated at home, lying in bed, walking around, standing, etc.
      6. So the issue here is not so much that Paul physically bowed his knees, although we have no reason to think he did not do so.
      7. But the main point that Paul wants to make is not the physical posture of his body but the spiritual condition of his heart.
      8. When he came to God, he had great confidence, but he was not brash or presumptuous.
      9. He was humble in his heart.
      10. He recognized the majesty and greatness of the one to whom he prayed.
   3. There are times when it might be good and helpful for us to physically take this posture in prayer of bowing down and praying on our knees.
      1. There is nothing special about it, and God certainly is not more inclined to listen if we are physically bowing before Him.
      2. But it can serve as a visible reminder to us, a physical reminder that we feel in our bodies, of our need to humble ourselves before God in prayer.
      3. It can test our hearts to see if our hearts match our physical posture.
      4. It also can indicate that we are setting aside this time to pray and not do anything else, so we want to focus our minds on prayer and the God to whom we are praying.
      5. I would encourage you that if your heart is feeling proud, or you are struggling to humble yourself before God in prayer, that perhaps you set aside some time to literally and physically bow your knees before the Father to ensure that when you pray, your heart is in the right posture before His majestic greatness.
      6. We must come before God with a confident humility, with a bold reverence for Him.
   4. Third, if we are to receive God’s power to live the Christian life, we need to understand…
4. The Intimacy of Prayer (vv. 14-15)
   1. Notice the title and description of God that Paul uses in vv. 14-15…
      1. Paul goes directly to the Father.
      2. This is in accordance with how Jesus taught us to pray, when He said that we are to pray, “Our Father.”
      3. And it fits in with what Paul said in Eph 2:18, when he said that we have our access through Christ by the Spirit to the Father.
      4. Because of Christ and the Spirit of God dwelling with us, we have this great intimacy with God in prayer, so great that we pray to God as our very own Father.
   2. Paul then expands on this title in v. 15…
      1. This statement has been very confusing to people throughout the centuries, primarily because of the statement about families in heaven.
         1. That seems to contradict what Jesus said, that no one is married in heaven but all are like the angels.
         2. And so in what sense are there families in heaven?
      2. One possible interpretation is that Paul is referring to angelic beings when he talks about families in heaven.
         1. The word translated **family** does not necessarily need to mean an immediate family of father, mother, brother, sister, but it can mean a group all derived from one.
         2. And so the families in heaven would refer to the groups of angels, the principalities and powers and other titles by which the different groups of heavenly beings are named.
         3. And the families on earth would, not surprisingly, refer to human beings.
         4. The point of Paul saying this is derived from the significant of naming creatures.
         5. Naming in the Bible, and even in the magical religions of the ancient world, gave someone power of the thing or person that was named.
         6. That is why, for example, Adam gave names to all the animals, to indicate that Adam was the authority and ruler over all the earth.
         7. And so the point that Paul would be making is that the Father is the sovereign ruler over all beings, whether angels of humans.
         8. This would be a statement, then, of confidence in God, that not only do we have this intimate relationship with God as our Father, but our Father is in charge of everything and everyone.
         9. Of course, this is true theologically.
         10. We know that God is the sovereign over all things and all people and all events and all history.
         11. Nothing happens outside of His sovereign will.
         12. He is in the heavens, the psalmist says in Psalm 115:3, and He does whatever He pleases.
         13. Or as Paul told us in Ephesians 1:11, God works all things after the counsel of His own will.
         14. While this makes sense theologically, it is a little bit challenging to see how it fits the context of thought in Ephesians 2-3, which must be taken together.
         15. It would seem to fit better in Ephesians 1, where Paul mentions these heavenly beings, than in Ephesians 2, where that is not really in view.
      3. And so a better interpretation is to understand it to refer to all the redeemed of humanity, both those who have died and now live in heaven, and those who are still alive on the earth.
         1. The verse would read like this: “From whom the whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.”
         2. If you have the old 1984 NIV translation, you’ll see that’s how the translators interpret this verse, and I think rightly so.
         3. The point that Paul is making in saying this is to refer back to what he had just said in Ephesians 2:19-22.
            1. Paul was emphasizing that we had formerly been far off and excluded from the promises to Israel, but now we were fellow citizens with the saints.
            2. Now we are of God’s household, or family.
            3. Now we are God’s building, God’s house, God’s temple.
            4. And all of these images are used to show the unity of the family of God.
            5. Jews and Gentiles in Christ are all part of the same family.
            6. And it doesn’t matter if those in Christ are now in heaven or if we are still on earth, we are all part of God’s divine family, His household.
         4. We see a similar thought to this in Hebrews 12:23…
            1. We are now part of the church enrolled in heaven, and that great company includes the spirits of the righteous made perfect, now in heaven in glory, awaiting the consummation of the ages when Christ returns.
            2. This is an absolutely marvelous reality that we are not only in relationship with our Father, but that we are part of this great household, this great family that extends not only to every other Christian in the world but to every other Christian even in heaven.
         5. We might think of how Paul puts it in Galatians 6.
            1. He tells us in Galatians 6:2 to bear one another’s burdens.
            2. And then we read in Galatians 6:10 why this is so important: Because we are of the household of the faith.
            3. We bear one another’s burdens because we are a family, the family of God, who is the great Father of all believers in Christ.
   3. Now, I want you to notice the significance of the last part of v. 15, that our entire family derives its name from the Father.
      1. We understand this in the human realm.
         1. The name of someone is typically derived from their father.
         2. I have the last name of my father.
         3. My children have my last name.
         4. My grandchildren will have the last names of their fathers.
         5. This identifies us; it tells us what family we belong to.
      2. We all have different last names here this morning if we have different earthly fathers, but I want you to notice that the reality of our true identity goes beyond our names in this world and that our true identity is derived from God, our heavenly Father.
         1. There is a sense in which we all have one name, even if we have many earthly names.
         2. And that’s because we all belong to God, we are part of His family, so intimately connected with and tied to God that He has given us His very name as our own.
      3. It’s really fascinating how important this concept of the name becomes when we read through the first three chapters of Revelation, especially the letters to the churches in Revelation 2-3.
         1. Three times in this section of Revelation the reward promised to those who are faithful relates to their name.
         2. God will give them a name in Revelation 2:17.
         3. Jesus will confess their names before the Father in Revelation 3:5.
         4. And then listen to what Jesus says in Revelation 3:12…
            1. Isn’t that incredible!
            2. We will derive a new name from God!
            3. We will have the name of the Father, the name of the city in heaven, and the name of the Son inscribed upon us.
            4. The name of God, God’s Son, and God’s inheritance become ours in Christ.
      4. Now here’s where this intersects with prayer: We come to God not in our own name but in the name He has given to us in Christ.
         1. We come to Him, don’t we, in the name of Jesus?
         2. And because we are one with Christ by faith, there is a sense in which we have a right to that name, just like a bride has the right to her husband’s name.
         3. It was not her name before, but now that she is joined to her husband and has become his wife, all the rights and privileges (or in some unfortunate cases scorn and humiliation) of his name are afforded to her because that name has been given to her.
         4. And this name creates an intimacy with the Father that we come to Him as His children, welcome into His presence.
         5. We also come as part of this massive family, all connected to one another through faith in Christ.
   4. When you go to God in prayer, do you have this intimacy with God, that you think of Him as your Father?
      1. And what’s more, is your entire identity now derived from the fact that your name is derived from your Father in heaven?
      2. When you think about yourself as a Christian, do you see yourself in isolation, such that your relationship with God is just you and God, or do you see that you are now part of a family that extends not only throughout the world but into heaven itself?
      3. We might be encouraged to pray because of this truth.
      4. We maybe see someone like this great apostle in prayer, and think that of course God would hear him because he was the apostle Paul.
      5. But do you recognize, brothers and sisters, that you are brothers and sisters with this great apostle?
      6. Do you recognize that you are just as much in the family as he is?
      7. Do you recognize that God is your father, and that you can go to God in this closeness and intimacy that the apostle Paul enjoyed?
      8. In a sense, and I say so with the deepest reverence, there is a sense in which we can enjoy fellowship with the Father as even our Lord did because we are one with Christ, beloved by the Father even as He is.
      9. When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray as He did, the Lord did not say to them, “Well, I’m the Son of God, so you can never pray like I do, but let me teach you how you might pray at your own lower level.”
      10. Not at all!
      11. He modeled for them how to pray, and He taught them to follow His example in prayer, encouraging them to call God Father even as He did.
   5. If you would receive divine power to live the Christian life, brothers and sisters, you must understand the intimacy you have with God in prayer, who you are as a member of God’s family.
   6. Now, fourth, we need to see…
5. The Request of Prayer (v. 16)
   1. And this is so rich and so powerful that we will need to spend an entire message looking at it next time…
6. Conclusion
   1. As we close this morning, though, I want to encourage you to pray.
      1. Jason did a wonderful job a couple weeks ago encouraging us to pray for our prayer vigil and into the new year.
      2. And I want to remind you this morning that the reason we learn about prayer is not that we might store up information about prayer but so that we might actually become more prayerful and more effective in our prayers!
   2. You see, you can understand the confidence you should have in prayer, and the posture you should have in prayer, and the intimacy you have with God in prayer, but if you never bend your knees and go to God in prayer, what does it benefit you?
      1. How does it benefit your brothers and sisters in Christ if you do not actually pray?
      2. We must take these truths and do something with them, become more prayerful.
      3. I would like to see us as a church come to enjoy prayer and the intimacy with God in prayer to such a degree that we fill this place up the first Sunday of each month for our monthly prayer gathering.
      4. I think the more we understand the privilege and power of prayer, and the more we learn to apply these truths to our lives and pray in our homes alone, the more we will long to pray with other believers as well.
      5. We are, after all, one family with one name and one Father in heaven.
   3. May the Lord use His Word this morning to ignite a fire in your heart for fellowship with your Father in prayer.