

Growth in Spiritual Constancy

by Doc Greenway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of growing in spiritual constancy, which is rooted in the strength of God and manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Duration: 23:09

Scripture: Isaiah 40:31, Isaiah 41:10, Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 3:16, Ephesians 6:10-14, Colossians 1:12, 1 John 1:9

Topics: "Spiritual Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the need for strength and power in our daily lives, especially during times of crisis. He encourages listeners to trust in God's timing and to give Him time to work out His purposes and fulfill His promises. The preacher highlights the importance of being thankful and grateful for God's goodness and mercy. He also references the story of Moses and the lepers to underscore the sin of ingratitude and the importance of joyfulness in our spiritual strength. Overall, the sermon emphasizes the need for patience, gratitude, and trust in God's sovereignty.

Transcript

For these last few Sunday mornings, we have been considering the prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Colossian Church. I would like to read again this morning from the first chapter of Colossians and verse 9. This cause we also since the day we heard it do not cease to pray for you and to desire that he might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that he might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power and to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The prayer goes on through verses 13 and 14 as well.

We have been looking at this prayer and considering its subject, its objective, its goal. We have seen that as in the case of all Paul's prayers for the church, he is burdened with the need of spiritual growth and development, that the Christians of his day might get to comprehend the greatness of their God and the person of their Savior, that they would not be found wanting in this regard, so that when the time arose they might be able to give a reason for the hope which was within them. Last Sunday morning we mentioned how Paul was a great traveler for his day and age, but you don't find any description of scenery in his writings.

In fact, he isn't even concerned with the political situation of the day. But particularly in his prayers, he gets to the very core of the subject, the very heart of things, as he prays for the growth and development of the people of God in the knowledge of God. And in the end, this is the only thing that really matters.

The people that will know their God shall be strong and to exploit. There isn't any substitute for this, and there is no other way in which we can accomplish the will of God in our life and service, apart from knowing God personally through Jesus Christ. We mentioned the other Sunday morning that there were four things about which Paul prayed in this prayer.

Firstly, he prayed for growth in spiritual consciousness. That was verse 9. Then for their growth in spiritual conduct. We saw this in verse 10.

Thirdly, for their growth in spiritual constancy or steadfastness, verses 11 and 12. Fourthly, for their growth in spiritual confidence, verses 13 and 14. We are concerned this morning with that third one, growth in spiritual constancy, and we are going to look together at verses 11 and 12 of this chapter.

Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power. Strengthened, made strong. The word is the same as our word dynamite.

It comes from the same roots. And for this Paul prays that they might be empowered with all God's mighty power. And this is the source of constancy.

To remain constant and unmoved under pressure, the Christian must know a strength, a power greater than himself. If he is left to his own devices, if he is thrown back upon his own natural resources, he will falter and fail. But if he knows the mighty strengthening by the spirit of God, about which the apostle prayed again for the Ephesians, as we have read this morning, then they would be able to stand against the opposition of the enemy.

This, as I say, is the source of remaining constant, the source of constancy. This is the strength of God himself. For you know, it is according to his glorious power, his glorious power.

Here the word is *kratos*, and it means perfect, glorious strength. When Jesus told those who heard him speak that with God all things are possible, this is the sort of thing that is intended by the use of this particular word. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, perfect, glorious strength.

Now how is this appropriated? It is appropriated through the faith of the believer. There are many instances in the word of God where this is underscored for us. You take Isaiah the prophet in the 40th chapter and the 31st verse in what he said, that 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, they shall walk and shall not faint. This waiting upon God. It has another glorious promise attached to it, apart from what Isaiah tells us in the 40th chapter.

It's found in the very next chapter, in the 10th verse. Listen to this, it's a wonderful promise. Fear thou not, for I am with thee.

Be not a smade, 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. What a tremendous promise this is, how glorious to find this in the Old Testament, when the people existed under law.

And how much greater is it to find it in the New Testament, in the passage that we are considering at the moment. When God's people may be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power. When Saladin beheld the sword of Richard the lion-hearted, he marveled that a weapon so ordinary could do such mighty deeds.

But he was told, not the sword, but the arm of Richard. And it is not the instrument, but the arm of the Lord that does the work. Not the poor, human, weak, helpless creature who runs out of strength so quickly, but the strength of almighty God that flows in and makes good our every deficiency.

It's for this that the apostle is praying. And then this is manifested, this power manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You remember how Paul in the first Ephesian prayer underlines this.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us all who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. This strength of God is radiant with resurrection power. The power that caused the tomb to be opened and rolled away the stone and raised Christ in triumph from the place of death.

This is the measurement of the strength which God would pour into your life and mind. This is the concept which the apostle has as he prays for these people. Then if it is appropriated through the faith of the believer and manifested in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is imparted by the Holy Spirit himself.

You recall the promise of Jesus, but he shall receive power, dynamite, dynamite, after that the Holy Spirit is come upon you. And this sort of strength is not conscious exertion, it's unconscious energy by the Spirit of God. It is not human ability, but a divine efficiency which God imparts by the Spirit.

It is not self-possessed activity, but it is God-possessed personality. And it is in this way that God would manifest his presence in the midst of the church through God-possessed personalities who know the inflow of the strength of God's Spirit. You know this word strength has one root meaning which means twisted together.

When you read in the Psalms, the Lord is the strength of my soul. The Lord is twisted together like twisted strands, his power being one strand, my soul being the other, and twisted together until we become one. Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power.

And having spoken about the source of our constancy and our ability to stand under pleasure, he speaks of the standard of this constancy in this prayer. And to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness. For as Living Letters has it, filled up with this mighty glorious strength, so that you can keep going no matter what happens, always full of the joy of the Lord.

We need the power of the Spirit of God for many things, and not just for the demonstrative exploits that so many seem to be seeking for in these days. The supernatural if you like, the ecstatic, the extraordinary. We need the strength and power of Almighty God for other things.

All patience, the ability to bear the weight of adversity, long-suffering, the tranquility of spirit that does not retaliate. We need this sort of strength and power, and we need it very much in our daily life, and especially in the crises of life. We need to know that God can enable us to wait for his time, and remember that he is never too late.

Give God time, and though there is the flashing of steel above the prostrate form of the son of promise, as Isaac is bound to the altar, give God time, and he will show the ram caught in the thicket, and he will save the son of promise. Give God time, and though the thundering of the horse of Pharaoh may be heard pursuing the people of God, give God time, and he will open a way and take them across dry shore. Give God time, and just through the glistening of the tear of a baby, God moves to save a nation from slavery in Egypt.

God moves to bring the baby Moses into the care of Pharaoh's daughter. Give God time, and we must give God time to work out his purposes in our lives, and to fulfill his promise. In order to do this, we need the long-suffering patience that bears up under all pressures, and does not retaliate, a tranquility of spirit, and then always with joyfulness, for isn't it written the joy of the Lord is your strength, the sheer joy of God.

This is not something which is merely emotional, it is a spiritual thing, something which goes deeper to the inmost part of our being. The strength that comes through the joy of the Lord is a conscious personal experience. It is for this that the apostle prays, that these people at Colossae may know the standard of constancy which God has set, and to all patience and long suffering with joyfulness.

You see this is the song of constancy, which you have in verse 12. Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This steadfastness of faith, this constancy of purpose has a song, and it is often a song in the night.

Giving thanks, its music is our thanksgiving, giving thanks unto the Father. I was telling the children in Sunday school this morning, a story about an old lady, Christian woman, Betsy, was visited by her minister, and thought it was the landlord coming for the rent. And out on her windowsill was a little flower garden, just a flower box, but the words written on it were, think and thank.

And this I think is a good motto for the Christian, think, think of the done. You remember how Jesus underscored the sin of ingratitude in his judgment of the lepers who had been cleansed, when he said, were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine that are not found, but return to give glory to God, save the stranger? Now often when we have been up against things, we have cried to God from our hearts, and we have asked him to intervene, and God has marvelously moved in mercy, and we have forgotten to say thank you. The music of the song of constancy is our thanksgiving, and some of the strongest exhortations in scripture concern this very music of thanksgiving.

Enter into his gates with thanksgivings as the psalmist, and into his courts with praise, be thankful unto him, and bless his name. Again we are told, in his temple doth everything speak of his glory. But the original Hebrew was much stronger, in his tabernacle doth everything and everyone shout glory, as though the very furniture itself, as well as the people, would manifest thanksgiving and praise in a shout of gladness to God.

If it is true that the Lord inhabits the praises of Israel, then how much we need to remember the music of thanksgiving, especially in relation to God. When the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians and said, be careful for nothing, but let your requests be made known unto God with thanksgiving, I think he sets the pattern so wonderfully. Be careful for nothing, be careful for everything, be thankful for anything.

This is the music of constancy, and its theme is our standing, giving thanks unto the father who hath made us meet, to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life, made us meet, made us fit, made us worthy. For this is our standing in Christ, accepted in the beloved, cleansed through his precious blood,

clothed with his righteousness, controlled by his spirit, and all this through the sovereign grace of God. How conscious Paul was of this, writing of himself he could say, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, that I obtained mercy.

This consciousness of where he stood meant so much to him. I recall reading of a missionary who returned to his native town to conduct an evangelistic campaign, and on the very first night a letter was passed to him while he was sitting on the platform. An unsigned letter, full of accusations, made against him for the kind of life he lived before he professed faith in Jesus Christ.

And he bowed his head as he read that letter. When the time came for him to speak, he began by saying, I've just received a letter, it's unsigned, but it's perfectly true. And he read out these things, these accusations, one after the other.

He said, they're all true. And I bow my head in shame at the recollection of them. But this is true also.

If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This, he said, is my standing in Christ. And it applies to each one of us this morning.

Our standing is that we are made fit, made worthy to share with the saints in light, the inheritance which God has for us. And the climax to this song of constancy is, as I said, our sharing. We are to be partakers of the saints in light.

That does not mean that he has made us fit to share all the wonderful things that belong to those who live in heaven at the present moment. Not those who have departed this life, but the saints here and now, the separated ones, the Christians, the members of God's church. They are the saints in light.

For we walk in the light as he is in the light, and we have fellowship one with the other. Now what are some of these wonderful things that belong to this inheritance? They all flow from our relationship with God through Jesus Christ. That's why he tells the Romans in the 8th chapter and the 17th verse, they are joint heirs with Christ.

The riches of our inheritance are what we possess in Christ. And I was reading through Ephesians and looked at the first two chapters only, and saw the expression used over and over again, in whom, that is in Christ. And it's in him that we have these great possessions.

Our redemption, Ephesians 1 and verse 7, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. Ephesians 1 verse 11, our predestination, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him. Our confirmation, Ephesians 1 13 and 14, in whom, after that he believed, he was sealed with our Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance.

Our function as the people of God, Ephesians 2 and verse 22, in whom he also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. And all this because we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. It's all here, in this song of constancy, its music, its theme, its climax.

They are all here. May our prayer this morning be, that this prayer of Paul, an apostle, prayed in prison so long ago for the Christians of his day, may have its application in our life and experience, that we too may grow in constancy, as well as in our consciousness, and our conduct, and our confidence, as the members

of the body of Christ. May God bless his word to our hearts.

Let us pray.

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