

Paul, Teach Me to Pray

by Tim Conway

This sermon delves into the profound prayer of the Apostle Paul for the Ephesians, emphasizing the need for believers to be strengthened with power through the Spirit in their inner being so that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith. The sermon highlights the Trinitarian nature of the prayer, the deepening of spiritual experiences, and the transformative impact of Christ settling in the believer's heart, leading to a greater consciousness of His presence and a life aligned with His will.

Scripture: Ephesians 3:14, John 14:23, Luke 11:13, Psalms 84:7, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 2 Thessalonians 1:3, 2 Peter 1:5, Revelation 3:20

Topics: "Spiritual Strength", "Christ's Presence in Our Hearts"

Description

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Transcript

Verse 14, "...For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." Now I'm going to just stop right there. Every family in heaven and on earth is named. Every family.

That makes it sound like there's more than one family in heaven and on earth that's named. And if you just stick right there, that's a concept that I'm not sure you're going to find other passages that substantiate that kind of thinking like there's multiple families. The new KJV puts the whole family.

And in fact, if you go right back before this, chapter 2, verse 21, look at it. "...In whom the whole structure..." It's the same word. And why they translated it every, I'm just not certain.

And many of you probably hold the Bible that doesn't translate it that. It's the whole family. I mean, what was he talking about? Not only does the word mean whole, not only have the translators translated it that way back in the end of chapter 2, but the reality is that back there at the end of chapter 2, in verse 19, you're no longer strangers and aliens, but you're fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.

There's one family of God. So to translate this every as though there's multiple, that's a strange concept. I wrote the whole.

In fact, I should have struck out every. I'm not even sure what was going through the minds of the ESV translators to go in that direction. "...But from whom the whole family in heaven on earth is named." Part of the family is in heaven already and part of the family is here.

What do they call that? The church triumphant there. The church here? The church militant. That's one way to put it.

Yeah, there's other ways. So verse 16, "...that according to the riches..." Remember, this is a prayer. "...For this reason I bow my knees before the Father." This is the Apostle Paul.

He's praying for the Ephesians. "...For this reason I bow my knees..." What? Verse 16, "...that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Now, that encompasses the prayer. That's the prayer.

It's not exactly the prayer. It's what Paul says he prays for when he prays for them. So that's what it is.

It's actually Paul expressing to the Ephesians, hey, when I pray for you, this is what I pray. But we can count it as a prayer because it is Paul telling us how indeed he does pray. Now, I would have you notice something right off.

That. See at the verse 16? That. Right at the beginning.

Verse 16. "...that according to the riches..." That. That has to do with purpose.

Here's the purpose. Here's why Paul prays. "...that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner being." You see the that at the beginning of 17? That's not there in the original.

That is added. There isn't one there. But halfway through 17, that you... that one is in the original.

"...that you be rooted and grounded in love." And then when you get all the way halfway through 19, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. You've got these three purposes thrown at us. Like I said, the one at the beginning, it's kind of hard to translate that transition from verse 16 into verse 17.

If you try to say it even according to the original, I was trying to do it, and it's just... verse 17 starts with this infinitive verb to dwell, and just putting it all together and have it make sense. The translators did this this way so that it flows. But you actually have these three purposes.

Prayer. Prayer. Prayer.

I've entitled my sermon, Paul, Teach Me to Pray. Teach me. Paul.

I mean, we could be looking beyond Paul. Father, teach me to pray like Paul prays. I want Him to teach me.

Because there's things to be learned here. There's things I don't know about prayer that the Master, somebody like Paul, an evangelist like Him, a preacher like Him, an apostle like Him. Wednesday morning, I awoke to a WhatsApp message from our brother Kevin Williams.

He was letting me know that my old friend Leslie Smith had gone to be with the Lord. English time. He died about roughly 1 a.m. that morning.

Leslie was a British preacher. He came here back in the early 2000's. I heard about him through a pastor friend over in Houston.

And we had him come over here and we went out on the streets in front of the Alamo. And he had this technique. He brought out this whiteboard and he began doing all sorts of things.

And then it was kind of staged. Christians came with him. And we stood around like we're looking at what he's doing.

We really were looking at what he's doing. But the idea was you have a crowd that's looking interested in other people. And it worked.

The crowd started to grow. And then we turned around and we evangelized them. And because what he was drawing actually, it was kind of like Prem showed us on Wednesday.

It was kind of a pictorial view. Something like Sam Patron does. And it was this pictorial view of the Gospel.

And we turned around and began to evangelize this family. And next thing you know, that family was coming to the church. They came for a long time.

They were from California. Very interesting thing. But anyway, Leslie was one of those men who prayed.

Now, I didn't personally witness so much his prayer life, but I know this, that he told me one time, he told me he had a photo of our family on his mantle. And I believe he told me, I pray for you and your family every single day. What did he pray? Honestly, I don't know.

But I do know this, when he began praying for my family, none of my children were saved. When he went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, all my children are saved. I was thinking of something else.

I was remembering another Englishman. You've heard his name recently. Gordon Bayless.

We talk about him from the pulpit from time to time. Another evangelist that would come over from England. I remember one time my pastor, Pat Horner down at Community Baptist Church when I was down there, he invited me over to his house for dinner, specifically at a time when Gordon Bayless was in town for a conference.

And he invited me over so that I could meet Gordon personally. And I remember walking in. It was dark outside.

And I remember walking in. And I walked by the room where he was. And I believe the door was open a little bit.

And it was dark in there. And Pat ushered me into the living room and I sat in there. And after a few minutes, Gordon came walking out.

And I remember it looked like his hair was kind of messed up. It's like that look when you walk out of a dark room. His eyes are trying to adjust.

And it looked like he had just woke up. And I said, brother, have you been sleeping? And he and Pat just kind of smiled and they didn't answer. And I realized that he was praying.

He was in there wrestling with the Lord. What was he praying exactly? Again, I don't know. But I know this, when he preached, there was power.

And I was thinking again. I remember a time I was over in Romania. HeartCry had asked me to go over there.

I think it was the second or third time I was with Charles. We're driving around Romania. Sometimes those drives would be 8-10 hours as we crisscrossed the country.

And he got telling me about Leonard Ravenhill because he knew him personally and he had visited him at his home and he knew things about his life. And he told me that Ravenhill would spend hours in prayer. And he told me sometimes he would spend six to eight hours in prayers.

I asked Charles why he would do that. Now look, it wasn't because I'm against prayer. I'm all for prayer.

Yes, we should pray. But six to eight hours, I was asking just on the basis of it's good to pray, but if that's all you do, how do you accomplish anything else? And that was kind of coming from somebody who was a pastor and a father and had many other responsibilities. And Charles just told me he prayed like that because God burdened him to pray like that because there were needs sufficient to pray like that.

Ravenhill likewise has gone to be with the Lord. Bayless has gone to be with the Lord. Now Leslie Smith has gone to be with the Lord.

I can't help but think that these men knew how to pray. And the thing is that as I'm preparing for this sermon, I've been thinking about this man. I've been thinking about Paul.

Paul! There he is on bended knee before the Father. And what's he doing? He's praying for these churches. He's praying, praying, praying.

Bended knee. The question that surges up in my soul is this. Where are the prayer warriors? God, give us men like this.

You know, the thing that I want to emphasize to you is all these men have gone to be with the Lord. Who's taking their place? You see, that's the thing. In this country, in the church, men like this, women like this, when they depart, who is coming up behind them? Where are the men and women who are praying like this? God, give us prayer warriors.

It just seems to me that if we're truly going to see a new generation of prayer warriors raised up, revival in prayer, we need to be taught by God how to pray. We need to be taught to God how to argue. We need to get beyond, like I said last time, just praying, well, Lord, bless this, bless that, bless the other thing.

We need to know what is it? What is true? What is characteristic of the prayers? And as much as anything, the effectual, fervent prayers of a righteous man. What's true of the prayers? What's true of the man or the woman who is able to truly lay hold on God and when they pray, God answers? You know, there are people like that. There are churches like that.

When they pray, God comes. When they pray, God listens. And there's an urgency that we come to the very well of Scripture and we put our bucket down in there and pull up some of the pure waters on prayer.

Lord, teach us. Teach us from Paul how to argue, how to plead, how to pray, what to pray for. And I can tell you this, Paul's prayers resonate with me.

These prayers right here. Why? Because he prays for power. I mean, look at it.

Verse 16, According to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you being rooted and grounded in love, here it is again, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is breadth and length. And on he goes. You know what? If there's anything I feel constantly, and I imagine some of you, you feel the same way.

If there's anything I feel constantly, it's my weakness. I mean, I'm faced by it all the time. And it seems like the more God gives us, the more God puts on our plate as far as the ministry, as far as the church, as far as I'll be honest, as far as church planting, as far as just the needs of the brethren, the needs of family, the needs of leadership in the church like new elders.

Weakness. He prays for power. You can see it there.

He prays for the very things that I so desperately feel my own need for. God, give us prayer warriors like Paul who are going to call down the power of God upon the church of Jesus Christ. We need that.

Listen, I don't know how you feel, but I can tell you how I feel. I would talk with Leslie Smith on the phone. After years, he was in a bed in a nursing home.

And I would talk to him. And he'd tell me about his life there and how they were treating him. Have you ever heard old people in nursing homes? Most of them, they're bitter.

They complain. Not Leslie. He'd talk about how they took such good care of him.

And he told me how one of the nurses used the Lord's name in vain. Oh, you mustn't use the name of your Creator. Men and women like this, they could call down the power.

And to have Leslie tell me, I have your photo and I pray for you every day. I don't know how that makes you feel, but when I hear that, that is one of the best things. That is one of the best things imaginable that I can hear.

When it's somebody who I know, they have a relationship with God and they talk to Him and they spend time with Him and to have somebody tell me, that gives me great encouragement. It gives me great encouragement that God would take such an individual, gift him in that way, and then burden that man with the desire to actually pray for me. That is encouraging to me because it tells me that God is showing me mercy and acting in my behalf.

The urgent need of the hour. We need men and women who pray. And whatever in my immaturity, whatever I might have thought of Ravenhill and wondered why he would be spending eight hours in prayer.

Obviously, he wasn't pastoring a church and he didn't have a bunch of children at home. Obviously, there are some people that are in a position in life and that God has specifically burdened and raised up to be like that, but we need them. We need more of them.

What I want to do is, I want us to examine this. What can we learn? What does Paul teach us here? What can Paul teach us that we don't already know or that we're not already applying in our prayer life? So let's examine Paul's prayer. What jumps out at us? Well, it seems that there are two primary requests here.

Maybe we'd call them petitions. Paul is asking specifically, it would seem, for two distinct things. Now, they're joined together undoubtedly, but it seems like there's two petitions.

Notice, the first one is in 16. That according... There's the first that. The purpose clause here.

The reason he's bending his knee. Why, Paul? Why are you praying? What are you praying for? That according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. Now, many of the translators, they see the same thing here.

That's why they put a double dash right there. There's a pause before he goes and now asks for the second thing. Some of your Bibles don't have the double dash.

They have the semicolon. But there's that break in thought that looks to be the first petition. And then notice verse 17.

That, halfway through, that you be rooted and grounded in love may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. And then, you get this end which seems to kind of be a summation. When the other two happen, this is the result.

That you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Perhaps it's a third request. Perhaps it's a summary of the first petition.

Verse 2, I don't believe that this is all one petition for one thing. It seems to be two distinct things. And you can see it.

What's the first one? The first one is a request. They're both requests for power. They're both requests for strength.

But strength for two different things. The first one is the power necessary to be the dwelling place of Christ. The second one is a request for the strength necessary to have something going on in the brain that you comprehend something of Christ's love for His people.

Both requests. Requests for power. But power to do two different things.

So, today, I want to focus on the first of the two requests. I want to start out at verse 16 and go halfway through 17 with this first request. Just hear it again.

Look at it. I bow my knee to the Father. I'm praying to the Father for this, that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

Did you notice that? So that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. You say, what's that? Exactly. What is this? Christ dwelling in my heart by faith.

I mean, you know, if we want to be honest, when you start talking about Christ dwelling in your heart, you know what that sounds like? It sounds like a lot of the cheap evangelism today. I'll say the sinner's prayer, ask Jesus into your heart. Sounds like that kind of thing.

And you'll be saved. But think with me. Think with me.

Let me ask you one very important question right at this point. Is Paul speaking to lost people who need to be saved? What say you? No. Is Paul saying to unbelievers, accept Jesus into your hearts? Do you see the thing is, Paul isn't speaking to unbelievers at all.

This very letter, in no place in this letter does it seem that Paul is reaching out to the lost and giving them instruction in how to be saved or praying for them as to how they should be saved. We know this. The letter opens up with to the saints who are at Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

And in fact, at the end of the previous chapter, he said this, to you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. These are the people that are reconciled. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens.

This is who he's talking to. Those who used to be strangers and aliens, but they're no longer strangers and aliens, now they're fellow citizens with the saints and they're members of the household of God, and they're being built together into this dwelling place for God. That's who he's speaking to.

These are Christians. Now this is a very strange thing. Because if one of you came up to me, and I wasn't specifically thinking about Paul's prayer here, and he said, brother, I'm praying to you that you may have strength that Christ dwell in your heart by faith.

Okay, I guess I'm good with that. But what is this? I mean, what's going on here? What kind of prayer is this? What do we say to this? Ho-hum, whatever. Yes, I see it.

I mean, sometimes we can feel when we read stuff like this, it's like sometimes it feels like we're getting so much spiritual, I don't know if you want to put the words mumbo-jumbo in there. It's like it's spiritual, but it's not registering with me. What is this? I mean, Paul, come on.

Get practical. If you were praying for them, and they were having trials over there in Ephesus, and they were being attacked, and they were facing persecution, and some of them got thrown in prison, and you were praying that they'd get put out of prison, or if they were having financial difficulties, and you were praying that God would provide and supply all their need, or if they were struggling with cancer or something like that, well, yes, Paul, if you prayed that they'd be healed, we can all get that. That's relevant, Paul.

What's this? What are you praying for? What is this? Those things seem real. Those things seem relevant, but praying for the power to be strengthened in the inner man so that Christ can dwell in my heart? What's

that all about? Don't we automatically assume that if we are Christians, Christ already dwells in our heart? Listen, let me ask you that. If you're a Christian, does Christ dwell in your heart? Then why do you need anybody to pray to you that you might be strengthened so that Christ may dwell in your heart? Isn't that just a redundant? Isn't that almost a useless prayer? I mean, Paul, why are you praying for that which already is? Now look, if you're saved and you're around somebody who's praying for you to be saved all the time, isn't that a bit weird? Now, it either means that they just don't think your profession is real, but if you said to them, brother, why do you always pray for me that I be saved? You don't believe I'm saved? And he says, no, I altogether believe you're saved.

Then why are you praying that I be saved? Well, you know, there is a place for doing that in Scripture, because there is a place in Scripture that says that you're not saved unless you endure to the end. And if somebody was actually praying for you that you'd be saved and that's what they meant by it, you see, sometimes it's just a matter of knowing what the person means. It's our misunderstanding that makes us not perhaps count this thing to be so relevant.

Christ already dwells in your heart. But see, this is the point. It's hard to enter into the importance of praying this way if we really don't feel the need of what's being prayed for.

But the thing to do is not to despise this. The thing to do is learn from this. And I would say this, even if you looked at it and you said I don't get it, it doesn't sound really all that great to me.

But if you just backed up and you looked at the context around it, whatever this is and whatever Paul means by it, when you have Paul appealing to the riches of God's glory to bring this to pass, whatever this is requires the Almighty Spirit of God to unleash power by which I must be strengthened for this to take place. And you don't want to fail to notice if indeed what we find there at the end of verse 19 is the culmination of both of these petitions coming to pass that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. I mean, what is that? Filled with all the fullness of God.

Would to God we knew more of what that was. But when you look at this in context, Paul's not dealing with some meager little things here. He's dealing with glory.

I hope you can feel Paul is lifting way up into the glory when he's asking for this. So what is this? Well, I kind of hinted on this already, but for our own learning, let's really know. This is spiritual.

I'm not saying that praying for health, finances, I'm not saying that's necessarily unspiritual, but those things definitely have to do with what is earthly. And the thing is, what I would have you to notice is that when Paul prays, when he tells them, Ephesians, let me tell you how I'm praying for you. Not a single mention of any earthly circumstance.

Like he's not praying them out of circumstances in their life. So often we pray that way. So often reports come, oh brethren, this calamity happened to me.

Please pray for me. And you know what they want? They want you to pray them out of the calamity. Right? Oh, I lost my job.

What is it? I don't have a car. And you see what Paul would say to us is you know how I'm going to pray for you? I'm not going to pray necessarily that you get a car, and I'm not saying there's anything wrong with praying for a car, but if he's really going to hit on the things that are most important to pray for other people, what he's going to pray is the things that bypass circumstances all together. It's like the

circumstance isn't really the issue.

The issue is who you are on the inside. And he's going to pray that we're right on the inside, because if we're right on the inside, no matter what's happening on the outside, we're going to respond to it right. Even if they're putting us to death, putting us in prison, putting us in the fire.

You see, the issue is not praying away the circumstances, but that's oftentimes how we are very specific to pray, and yet that doesn't even enter in here. Nothing about trying to pray away their sufferings and trials. Rather, he's praying for their spiritual welfare in the inner man.

The inner man. Now that's helpful for us to learn. When we pray for one another, what are the most important things to pray for? Yes, there's a place to pray that God would supply all of our needs.

But you know, all of our needs, so often when we hear that kind of thing, we think money. And yet, our greatest needs are not financial. Our greatest needs are spiritual.

Two young men may find themselves faced with the same spiritual trial for purity. That happens all the time. Young men faced with trials that challenge their purity.

One young man falls. One young man does not. One was prayed for.

Somebody was praying for him. Somebody like Leslie Smith had his picture up on the mantle and prayed for him every day that he not fall. That God strengthen him.

One was prayed for. One was not. Look, if you don't think things work that way, then you're missing exactly what Paul's doing here and how the kingdom does in fact work.

Paul doesn't pray for these Ephesians and say, well, you know, prayer for people like that is just useless. Do you think Paul counted it useless? Do you think Paul actually felt like if he prayed that these Ephesians be strengthened, that the result would be that they wouldn't be strengthened? Or do you think he actually thought that praying for them would yield the very result he was praying for and that them being strengthened would help them to stand, to run, to do better, to win, to conquer, to fight, to resist? You see, that's the reality. And if we lose that, oh, hyper-Calvinism, it is a plague in the church.

I love the sovereignty of God. What James was talking about in the first hour. Of course, if the Lord wills, but I'll tell you this, what the Lord does will is He wills for His people to pray and He tells us, and it's His will too to answer prayer.

God says it. God says if you ask, You will receive. That's His will.

His will is that you have not because you ask not in the same letter to James or from James. That's a reality. Throw your hyper-Calvinism out the window.

What do you mean by hyper-Calvinism? What am I talking about there? I'm talking about where you say God is sovereign. God's going to do what He's going to do. And so praying for somebody to be strengthened in their inner man is relatively useless.

I'll say that's crazy. That's backward. That's not biblical.

That is error. You know what the reality is? That the guy that's being prayed for all the time by somebody is going to run better than the guy that's not. You say, how can you prove that? I can prove that everywhere by the fact that prayer is guaranteed of results in the Scriptures.

That's just the reality. And when God does answer these things, these requests that somebody be strengthened, then what happens? Well, they're strengthened. And what happens when you're strengthened? You perform better.

You can handle greater weight. You can handle greater... You think about it. Two young men.

They're going to try to lift the same huge weight in weight lifting. One drinks an energy drink and it actually gives him energy. Which one's going to perform better? It's the same way in the spiritual realm.

That's what Paul's praying for. Paul is praying for power. He's praying for strength.

That things may happen. Strength of comprehension. Strength that you may have Christ dwell in your hearts by faith.

Two Christians encounter the same difficulty. Which will advance more? Which is going to do better? Which is going to face the temptation? Which is going to face the devil better? God, give us prayer warriors who will pray the power of God down upon the church. Not for money.

Not for better health. But for the power of God in the inward man. That's what we need.

Oh, if we're praying for one another. I'll tell you, it will make a difference. Don't be hyper-Calvinistic.

Don't be unbiblical. If we are praying for one another, you know what? Paul's going off to do something. He's going off to face enemies.

He's going off to take the Gospel into dark places. And what does he say to the churches? Pray for me. Pray for me.

That I might be sped on my way. That I might be able to handle the enemies of the cross I'm going to encounter. And that I may speak with boldness.

Do you think he felt like, oh, that's just senseless. That's useless. I won't be any more bold if you pray for me or not.

That's absolutely contrary to what he's saying. He every bit believed that if they were praying for him, there would be results that would not happen if they weren't praying for him. That is the reality.

God, give us men and women who are convinced of this. Yes, God is sovereign. But He has determined that people who lay hold on His sovereignty have what they would not otherwise have if they didn't pray.

Do you remember the king? Do you remember the king when the prophet was going to go be with the Lord? His days are done. He goes to the king of Israel. He says, take that arrow.

He said, bang it against the floor. He banged it three times. What did he say? He was angry with him.

He said, if you would have banged that more, he said, you know what's going to happen? You're going to have victory over your enemies three times. If you would have banged it five or six times, you would have

totally subdued your enemy. What's that? That is a picture of prayer.

Bang the arrow, brethren. You say, what? It's like our brother Andy. He talks about there when the Amalekites were fighting against Israel and as long as Moses' arms were up, which is a picture of upraised hands in prayer, Israel prevailed.

And when his arms fell, Amalek prevailed. And you remember what happened. Two of his friends came and upheld his arms.

And so Israel had victory. Those are the kinds of things you find in Scripture. We need to think that way.

We need men and women who are convinced. We need men and women who are convinced that we've got people in this church who will stand if they pray for them. They will fall if they don't.

They're convinced that prayer matters that much. That the spiritual welfare of our church matters that much. Listen, we live in a culture, many are desperate.

They're desperate for health. Ruby and I, we go to the gym at times, the place is full, and there's a lot of old people in there. They're trying to just keep the engines going.

They're trying to keep the health. Anything that promises youth in your old age, it sells well. And I've probably spent my dollars on some of it.

But desperate for health. Good diet. Going to the gym.

And financial things. Desperate. I see it all the time.

Right south of 35 on this side of the highway when you're driving south, there's a big billboard there. It's all about just having peace, being at rest, concerning your financial future. And I drive by it and I think, Lord, I don't have anything in there I'm trusting You.

You're my trust for retirement. You're my trust for the future. And look, I'm not saying you can't save some money, but our Lord said, store up your treasure in heaven.

This same culture that is so hungry for financial security and for health security, they're not very hungry for transformation of the inner man. That seems to get passed over. But that's where Paul goes.

And you know what? I just heard it from my sister-in-law. She was saying concerning children. And I was taking this to heart.

Mida. Sirta. She was saying concerning our children.

It's like she was having a conversation with the Lord. The Lord was saying to her concerning her children, when do you grow the most? When there's trials or when there's not trials? And she was saying, Lord, when there's trials. It's like she was hearing His voice say, well, when are your children going to grow the most? You see, we don't like our children in trials.

We want to protect them from it. I don't like it. I don't like to see my children cry.

I don't like to see my children in distress. But you know what? That's what's best for the inner man. You see, Paul doesn't come along and say, you know what? We need to try to rescue our children, whether

they be spiritual children or the physical children.

We need to rescue them for hard times, from difficulties and from trials. Paul doesn't even pray for these Ephesians any way whatsoever like that. He just says, it doesn't matter what you're facing.

You've got marital problems. You've got persecution in the family. You've got children that are going off the way of the world.

You're in financial distress. You've got the Romans over there that are threatening you and taking your stuff and all these things. He doesn't say, you know what? I'm going to pray you out of that situation.

I'm going to pray you into harmony in this world. No, none of that. He says, you know what I'm going to pray for you? I'm going to pray that God would so strengthen your inner man that such things happen that no matter what you're faced with, you'll excel, you'll please the Lord, you'll be triumphant.

That's the issue. One thing I would have us to see by this is, I love it and I like to show it to you when I see it. Because it happens more in Scripture, I think, sometimes than we're aware of.

But just the Trinitarian nature of this first petition. For this reason, I bow my knees to the who? The Father, from whom every family or the whole family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through who? His Spirit in your inner being so that who? Christ the Son. Don't you love that? I love it.

Trinitarian. Paul prays to the Father for power from the Spirit that will yield the indwelling of the Son. Oh, how important each of the persons of the Holy Trinity is.

Not just to the life of the Christian, but to the prayer life of the Christian. I just say that in passing. I wish I could say much more on that.

I wish I could say much more on that. Not that I have much more to say on it. I wish that the Lord would have really allowed the blinders to come off so that I might have said with great effect more on that note.

But just take that and mull on that. What this is, a prayer that's meant to take the Christian further up and farther in. You see, when He says, now think about this, you're already saved.

I'm praying for you that you may be strengthened with the power of the Spirit of God in your inner man that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith. What He's doing, this is Him saying, Christian, I'm praying you will go higher and deeper and further in that you'll experience more, more. I mean, you know what this is like? Sometimes I think we get confused.

We were just talking on Tuesday about this reality concerning the Holy Spirit. Why? I'm not going to turn to it, but it does say in Luke 11, 13, that we as Christians should be praying to our Father in Heaven for the Holy Spirit. It's interesting.

It doesn't say for more of the Holy Spirit. It says, the children, if you then being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, your Father, He's talking to Christians. Your Father, give the Holy Spirit to them who ask.

Why would we need the Holy Spirit? Did we not receive the Holy Spirit when we were first saved? Scripture says if you don't have the Spirit, you don't belong to Christ. So obviously we do. You are not in

the kingdom.

You will not receive the kingdom unless you're born of the Spirit. That's just the reality. So why in the world would we be told to pray for the Holy Spirit? It's these kinds of truths.

It doesn't mean that you don't already have the Spirit, just as it doesn't mean that Christ doesn't already dwell in your heart. The reality is it's a prayer for more. More of the manifestation.

More of the influence. More of the experience. Is that not the way Scripture paints? Do you know that the Christian life is not meant to be static? It's not meant to be.

You need to have motion. I just recently at my wife's birthday, I put this on her card and I think about this. I think about this text often.

The path of the righteous is like the dawn of day. And what does it do? Anybody know? It shines brighter and brighter until full day. I like that.

Brighter and brighter. Or you get this. Psalm 84.7 They go from strength to strength.

2 Corinthians 3.18 Our ESVs say from one degree of glory to another. But do you know what that is in the original? From glory to glory. There's this increase.

There's this upward movement. Or 2 Thessalonians Your faith is growing abundantly. The love of every one of you for one another is increasing.

2 Peter Peter is getting ready to go be with the Lord. He's putting off this body, this frame. And he says, I want to appeal to you.

I want to exhort you. I want to encourage you. That if these qualities are yours, and he goes through a whole list of them, and are increasing.

See, increase, increase. Philippians Paul is praying that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment. Think with me here.

Just look for a second at Paul's second petition in this prayer. What is he praying for? He's praying that you might have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ. That sort of passes understanding.

Now let me ask you something. When somebody prays that for a Christian, is that implying that they don't know anything about the love of Christ? You see, it's further in, further, deep. The breadth, the length, it's go deeper, go higher.

That's the call. That's the prayer. Ephesians I'm praying for you that in your inner man, you would be strengthened to experience the realities of Christianity deeper, deeper, further, further in.

Broader, higher. And when it comes to Christ dwelling in our hearts, it's the same reality. And what the verb, the verb dwell, Christ dwelling in your hearts, it's an interesting word.

It actually has a prefix attached to it. Kata If you know your Greek, it means down. It's the idea of settling down.

It's Christ coming and not just passing by. Not just abiding, but he's settling in. It's the idea of abiding down.

The idea, what's being prayed for? That you might be reinforced by God, strengthened. That's what reinforced. You say strengthen that wall.

Strengthen that beam. What are you saying? Reinforce that thing. Why? It's that Christ may dwell in there.

That takes the power of God. I remember one time Paul Washer saying that Christ came to him. And Paul said that Christ came to him in a way, God came to him in a way, that he was never the same again.

And he told me, I believe this was in a conversation I had, or I heard him say it. But he said, I believe that God supernaturally strengthened me to receive that manifestation of Christ that was thrust upon my soul. And he said, I don't think I would have been able to bear that otherwise.

Spurgeon, you know what Spurgeon, he says in light of this reality, he said that he believes that there are Christians, like if you receive what Paul is praying for, he says he believes that there are some Christians who receive an answer to this kind of prayer, whose experience is so much higher than the ordinary Christian's experience, as the ordinary Christian's experience is above the unbeliever. I want that. And if there's anybody in here that'll pray that for me, God love you, God bless you, God help you.

And you say, well, likewise, brother. I hear you. One of the things that we as overseers are to be doing is we're to give ourselves to prayer and to the Word.

And I don't know exactly about James' prayer life, but I have a feeling that he prays a lot for you. And I know that I do too. And God give us more elders who are going to pray for you like this.

We need that. You know what Lloyd-Jones said? The very greatness of what is offered to us here demands that we be strengthened in order to receive it, lest we might be shattered by it. Lloyd-Jones speaks of the transcendent glory of such an experience.

When Christ enters the heart, the glory is such, the power is such, the very physical frame seems to collapse beneath it. Now he's talking physical frame. And what Paul isn't talking about having your spiritual frame strengthened, he is talking about your spiritual frame.

When we're filled with the whole fullness of God, we need to be strong. I want that. I want that.

Lloyd-Jones says it's a shattering, overwhelming experience. Now look, the closest, as I'm thinking about the concept, the closest in my own mind that I can come to this in other passages is basically this. Jesus Christ said to His disciples as He was getting ready to go to the cross, right there in John 14, He said to them this.

He said, whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father. And He says, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. Now you think about it.

You're sitting there. You're Peter. You're Thomas.

You're Matthew. And Jesus is saying, if you have My commandments and you keep them, you're the one that loves Me. And you know what? If you love Me, oh, My Father's going to love you.

I'm going to love you. And I will manifest Myself to you. I think that's, I think, and it gets even closer to that two verses later.

In 1423, it says this. Jesus answered him, if anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word. Again, it's got to do with love and keeping His Word.

He says, My Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home. See, that is the closest you find in Scripture. We're going to come to you and we're going to make our home with Him.

We're going to make our abode. We're going to abide. We're going to settle in.

And you know, Jesus says something similar in other words, to a church, to the church in Laodicea, where by the way, His candlestick was still shining. He says to people who are professing to be Christians, I mean, we can sort out whether they're lost, whether they're saved. He says those whom He loves, He chastens.

And He says to them this, I stand at the door and knock. He said, If you open to Me, I'll come in. You're just going to come in? No, I'm going to come in.

I'll sit down and I'll eat with you. There's a closeness and there's an intimacy there. You see, you get this in Scripture.

It's not a question of Christ being in the believer. It's His being at home. I mean, you invite somebody over for dinner.

What Jesus is saying, You let Me in. I come in. I sit down.

We're going to commune together. We're going to have fellowship. The thing about all this is, that verb there in Ephesians 3, it means you have somebody over and they settle in.

It's like they start moving the furniture in. That's what's being talked about here. And you know, when you have somebody in your house, it affects the atmosphere of the house.

You have somebody that comes in and they move in and they really settle in. There's an impact there. And this is the kind of thing that Paul is praying for.

Christ is a permanent resident in every saved person. But Paul is praying to people who already have that. That's the thing.

He's praying for more that Christ might really settle in and have full access. I mean, when somebody really settles in and they're really at home in my house, they'll go in my bathroom. They might use my shower.

I remember Brother Andy came to my house. Andy just charged, right? He charged into the master bedroom, straight into the master bathroom. He's like looking at everything.

That's what Jesus is doing. He's coming in. Now, Andy didn't bring his furniture and his clothing, but this is full access.

Every closet, every basement, every crawl space, all the attic. Paul is praying that the Christian might have this experiential expansion of what is already a theological fact. That we know.

But more, more. He's praying the Christian might have more. The Lord Jesus, through the Spirit, might exert this ever-increasing and progressively more powerful influence on our lives, in our hearts.

The heart. The heart. In our hearts.

Well, that of course is the inner person. It's the spiritual center. It controls every aspect of our behavior.

Then God give us... Remember what this is all about. God give us the prayer warriors who are praying that the power of God will come down, that we all might be brought to this place where Christ is dwelling. We have a greater conscious sense of His fellowship, His presence.

Greater and greater enjoyment of Him. Paul wants Christ settling into our consciousness. I mean, you think about it.

He comes and He settles in. Where you wake up, Christ is there. You're dreaming.

Christ is there. You're going to do and go about your day. Christ is there.

He's there. He's in your consciousness. He's guiding the conscience.

He's there in the affections. He's there. His presence is felt.

It's real. It's deep. It's greater.

May God take us higher and deeper and further and not be grieved by sin, by sinful words, sinful thoughts, that kind of thing. You remember how it was? He found Himself very at home at Mary, Martha, and Lazarus'. In a spiritual sense, we want our heart to be like their home.

He loved it there. He went there. They loved Him.

The Christian heart. That's the home of Christ. The place where He loves to be.

I want this. Pray this for me. And I'll pray it for you.

And if we do, we're going to be more like Paul. We're going to be praying the way Paul prays. You don't have to pray that I get more money.

You don't have to pray that I get a new truck because the paint's all peeling off. My old one still runs perfect. You don't need to pray that.

But you pray this for me. Pray this for me. Please, pray this for me.

And for my wife. And for my children. And for each other.

And for your wife. And for your husband. And for your children.

I'll tell you, if we bombard heaven for this and we're serious about this, there's more to be had. There is more to be had. May the prayer life of our church be revived and go deeper.

I said in the early days, oh, brethren, I remember. We were down in Floresville. I remember this guy came in.

Craig probably remembers who he is. We were taking prayer requests one night and he said, I remember his aunt or his mom had a sore toe. And then he wanted to pray for his mom's dog.

And that has always stuck with me. And any time our prayer meetings get to where requests come out like that, then I feel like it's time to stand up and say, brethren, we need to rethink what these prayer meetings are all about. Paul helps us here.

We need to pray for the things. I'm not saying you can't pray for your dog. I'm not saying you can't pray for everything, but I'm saying there are some prayers that really matter.

And there are some prayers that in the light of eternity and the light of the bigger picture, they're just not that important. There's some big things. And having Christ.

You think about it. When that reality of Christ dwelling deeply in you and there's that experience, I'll tell you, you don't lightly go look at pornography on the Internet. You don't lightly run out and lie.

You don't lightly go exude jealousy. And why? Because you're so thankful for the revelations of Christ on your soul, for His nearness, for the experience, for the love, for the overwhelming presence, the aroma. It's very difficult to get jealous when you realize you've got the greatest riches and the greatest treasure in all the world.

Very difficult to become covetous and idolatrous and to be longing and pining after all the things that the world pines after. Boy, it sets things right when you have such a close experiential sense of the indwelling Christ. It sets everything right.

Paul knows that. May that fullness of the glory of God according to the riches of His glory, brethren, may He grant you to be strengthened. Father, give this to us that everyone here, every one of Your children here, Lord, may they experience exactly in full measure what Paul was praying for these Ephesians.

Amen.

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