

## Ephesians, Chapter Three, Lesson Three

SPIRITUAL STRENGTH Ephesians 3:14-21

### STIMULATE

\*\* How's your balance? In our last study we learned that our gracious God had brought the life of every believer into balance by taking the heavy weight of our sin and balancing it on His scales of Justice through the death of Christ on the cross for us!

What were some of the things that might try to throw us out of balance and thus have a negative impact upon our "Spiritual Service"?

1) personal failure 2) impatience 3) worldly affection  
4) lack of prayer 5) lack of time in the Word of God.

\*\* Did anyone encounter one of these victoriously?

Especially during times of physical fatigue, I find myself being challenged to maintain the right attitude or eternal perspective that I know brings the greatest honor to the Lord. It was great this week to be reminded of how much I can control my attitude.

### MOTIVATE

\*\* What is it going to take to keep our "Spiritual Service" to the Lord in balance?

The power of God - and nothing less!

\*\* We need to understand the infinite resource we have at our disposal and how we can avail ourselves His power. The apostle Paul is going to close out the third chapter of this marvelous epistle by teaching us about our "Spiritual Strength". Let's join him now in verse 14 of chapter three as we anticipate all that the Lord has for us today.

Read passage (V.14-16) (V.17-19) (V.20-21)

Opening Prayer

### *Spiritual Strength*

### INVESTIGATE

**V.14** \*\* What was the reason that Paul was now going to pray for the Ephesian believers? We saw this two weeks ago back in our study of verse one.

The many unifying truths that have been bestowed upon both Jew and Gentile as blessings from God, which Paul just spoke of in chapter two and the mystery of their oneness in Christ.

For example:

2:15 - They both become one new man in Christ

2:16 - All believers are in one body

2:17 - Both groups share peace with God

2:19 - Equally citizens of God's kingdom

2:19 - Equally members of God's family

2:22 - Together they form the dwelling place of God in the Spirit

\*\* As Paul begins his prayer on behalf of the Ephesians, what is his first act?

To "bow" his knees before the Father. Paul is consumed with a reverence for God and out of that genuine reverence he humbles himself by bowing his knee.

\*\* Do all prayers of humility and adoration for God then have to be on bended knee?

No - it is the heart that the Lord is concerned with, not our knees! cf. 1Peter 5:6, James 4:10

**V.15** \*\* As we move into this next verse, who are the people to whom Paul is referring?

Christians only! "Every family" is literally translated as "the whole family".

\*\* What have we just seen in chapter two that helps us to understand which family this is?

2:18 - we have our access...to the Father

2:19 - we are of God's household

2:20 - we (Christians) are the dwelling of God

\*\* According to Paul, where does this family reside?

"in heaven and on earth" - He is referring to all of the saints, whether here in the body or at home with Christ. cf. 2Corinthians 5:6-8

\*\* What is at the end of verse 15 which serves as a another reason for us to know that Paul is talking about believers only?

This family "derives its name" from the Father.

cf. John 8:44 - Pharisees and the devil

1John 3:10 - children of the devil are obvious

**V.16** \*\* For what does Paul pray?

That the Father would grant us strength in the inner man! There may not be a more loving prayer for us to offer on behalf of our beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. Strength for the battle can only come from the eternal source of our heavenly Father as His marvelous grace grants it to us.

\*\* As our heavenly Father grants us strength, is there any limit to the resource which is supplying it?

No, it is "according to the riches of His glory". Or to put it another way, it is limitless. God's glory will never diminish or fade. The richness of our God will forever shine forth as our eternal resource for all we need.

\*\* What if Paul's prayer was slightly different? What if he had prayed for the Father to grant us this strength "out of" the riches of His glory?

"out of" would indicate a small portion taken from the whole, while "according to" indicates the measurement of impact that strength will have upon the recipient.

**\*\*** What agent does the Father use to strengthen us?

His Holy Spirit - cf. Ephesians 5:18, Galatians 5:16

**V.17** **\*\*** In this next section, we are going to see three results of this supernatural strengthening of the Christian by God. What is the first one?

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts"

**\*\*** Since Paul is writing to Christians, why is he praying for them to be strengthened "so that Christ may dwell" in their hearts? Isn't He already there?

The word for "dwell" is *katoikeo* and comes from two words. *Kata* meaning "down" and *oikeo* meaning "to inhabit a house". What Paul is praying for is not that Christ would enter the heart of a believer, but that He would be at home, settled down as a comfortable family member in the believer's heart.

**\*\*** How did Paul express the same idea at the end of chapter two?

We Christians "are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit". (Ephesians 2:22)

**\*\*** Before Paul gives us the second result of being strengthened by God, he interjects a wonderful description of the Ephesians (and us as well). What is it?

You were "rooted and grounded in love". This is such a refreshing manner with which we ought to be able to describe all Christian assemblies. cf. 1Corinthians 13:1, 13:13, 1John 4:7 and 16

**V.18** **\*\*** Alright then, what is the second result of our God-given strength?

We (along with all the saints) may be able to comprehend what is "the breadth and length and height and depth"

**\*\*** We need to break that four part description down and we can do it from this one letter to the Ephesians.

"breadth" - wide enough for Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:11-18)

"length" - Before the foundation of the world, unto eternity (Ephesians 1:4-6)

"height" - Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3) Seated with Christ (Ephesians 2:6)

"depth" - To reach down to the lowest of sinners, the lowest level of depravity (Ephesians 2:1-3)

**V.19** **\*\*** And finally, what is the third result of being strengthened by our heavenly Father?

We can know that which surpasses knowledge, "the love of Christ". Paul is not speaking of our love for the Savior, but amazingly His love for us. He wants us to "know" or "experience" that which surpasses knowledge. cf. Romans 5:5, Jude 1:20-21

**\*\*** OK, as we are strengthened by the Father, through the Holy Spirit in our inner man we make Christ comfortable at home in our hearts, understand the scope of the gospel and experience the love of God. But to what end? What is the purpose?

That we "may be filled up to all the fulness of God". What an amazing outcome! We know that Jesus should be described that way, but us as well? cf. Colossians 1:19, 2:9 and Psalm 17:15

**V.20** \*\* How does the apostle conclude this incredible first half of his letter to the Ephesians, which has described all that we are in Christ?

With a "doxology" or praise saying!

\*\* How would you go about the task of describing God?

As impossible as it is, Paul chooses to do it by listing His unlimited abilities. He is "able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think".

\*\* That's an amazing list, can you think of something we need that God cannot do?

NO! - "Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow". (James 1:17)

\*\* For the Christian, where does all of this limitless power reside?

"according to the power that works within us"! It is actively strengthening our inner man!

**V.21** \*\* Obviously God is to be glorified, just because of Who He is, but in our passage what two vehicles are to be used to display that glory?

- 1) "in the church"
- 2) "in Christ Jesus"

That puts us in some amazing company - we know that God was and is glorified in Jesus, but we too are to be vessels by which our heavenly Father is glorified!

\*\* Was God to be glorified only by the lives of the Ephesians to whom Paul is writing?

No - His glory is to be put on display by Christians "to all generations forever and ever".  
All see - John 17:17-20

## **EXTRICATE**

\*\* As we return to our passage and look it over one more time, what can be said about someone who is being strengthened in their inner man by God?

- 1) They are humble and reverent before God (V.14)
- 2) They are in God's family (V.15)
- 3) The Holy Spirit works on their inner man (V.16)
- 4) Christ is at home in their heart (V.17)
- 5) They understand the scope of the gospel (V.18)
- 6) They experience the love of God (V.19)

## **DELINEATE**

\*\* Knowing that your "Spiritual Strength" is being constantly supplied by the Holy Spirit in your inner man, which of those six things would you like to become even more aware of as you walk with the Lord over this next week?

## **EVALUATE**

\*\* What can I do to grow in this area of my life? cf. 2Peter 3:18

## **ACTIVATE**

\*\* Each week, as we draw our studies to an end, it is our desire to not merely gain a head knowledge of the Bible - but rather a heart knowledge of God's precious Word. Please take a moment now to share with the Lord in the silence of your own heart, how you are going to apply what you have learned today.

We want to be able to say with Paul, may God be glorified in our church family, "to all generations forever and ever, Amen."

Closing Prayer