

Praying For Inner Strength

August 30, 2023

Scripture: Ephesians 3:16

14. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16. That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18. May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19. And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21. Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Summary: We must pray more for inner strength and physical strength.

Verse 16 "THAT HE WOULD GRANT YOU, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY, TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN."

I. EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS AN "INNER MAN."

A. Our inner person is our spiritual part.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy HEART, and with all thy SOUL, and with all thy MIND" (Matt. 22:37). The "heart," "soul," and "mind" refer to the "inner man."

Obviously, if we have an inner person, we must also possess an outward person. "Though our OUTWARD MAN perish, yet the INWARD MAN is renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16). Our outward man is our body. Our inward man is our spirit.

B. Our inner person is much more important than our outward person.

Notice that Paul makes no mention in this prayer of anything physical or material. Paul was much more concerned about the spiritual needs of the Ephesians than their physical and material needs.

Later in this letter Paul asks the Ephesians to pray for him. He urges them to pray "that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel" (6:20).

Remember where Paul is; he is in prison.

If you were in Paul's position, what would you ask others to pray about? Probably, you would be freed. But Paul requests that the Ephesians pray that he would continue to boldly preach the gospel.

Matthew 6:25-33

"BUT SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS; and all these things shall be added unto you" (v. 6:33).

Jesus was dealing with people who were always worrying about food and drink and clothing— material things.

The trouble with you, He says, is that you're starting at the wrong end. You're starting with the material and with the seen; instead start with the spiritual and the unseen. "Seek ye FIRST the kingdom of God, and his righteousness."

We often are anxious about things that affect the outward person—things like food, drink, and clothing; it would be good if we became more anxious about things that affect our inner person—spiritual things. These things are far more important.

Mark 7:20-23

Jesus said that it is not that which goes into a man which pollutes the man, but rather that which comes out of him. It is "OUT OF THE HEART" that comes "evil thoughts, adultery, fornications, murders" and so on (v. 21).

It is not the intensity of the temptation that determines whether you will stand or fall. The strength of your heart, your inner person, is what determines whether you will stand or fall.

Two people may face the same temptation; one falls and the other stands. The difference is not in the temptation but in the person's heart.

II. OUR INNER MAN NEEDS TO BE "STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT."

"THOUGH OUR OUTWARD MAN PERISH, YET THE INWARD MAN IS RENEWED DAY BY DAY" (2 Cor. 4:16). In other words, "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day."

Isaiah 40:28-31

"I DESIRE THAT YE FAINT NOT" (Eph. 3:13). To "FAINT" means to be DISCOURAGED. To be "STRENGTHENED" is the opposite of fainting, the opposite of being discouraged.

Notice that Paul does not pray that circumstances be changed for the Ephesians.

Instead, he prays that they would be given inner strength: "strengthened with might by [God's] Spirit in the inner man."

When you pray for others who are facing some kind of difficulty, what do you ask God to do for them? Do you only pray that their circumstances might be changed? If they are sick, do you only pray that they will be healed? If they need a job, do you only pray that they will find employment? If they are in a troubled marriage, do you only pray that their marriage will improve?

Our prayers need to go beyond asking God to change circumstances. We need to pray for spiritual strength for ourselves and others.

A change in spiritual strength is more needful than a change in circumstances.

What often happens when things go wrong in our lives? We tend to become anxious. Our hearts and minds become plagued with worry.

Philippians 6-7 "Be careful for nothing." In other words, "Do not be anxious about anything" (NIV).

How do we obey that command? There is only one way to get rid of anxiety: prayer—take your anxiety to the Lord. "[Cast] all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Peter 5:7).

"In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

If you do this, "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, SHALL KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS THROUGH CHRIST JESUS." The circumstances have not changed, they remain exactly the same. But instead of anxiety in your heart and mind you have peace.

"THE JOY OF THE LORD IS YOUR STRENGTH" (Neh. 8:10).

Let's pretend that somehow, I made the Canadian Olympic weightlifting team. For some strange reason only two men entered the competition: me and, unfortunately, the world champion. It looks like I'll have to settle for the silver medal. But wait! My opponent receives a phone call just minutes before the start of the competition. It is his wife. She tells him that she is leaving him. Naturally, his heart and mind are no longer set on lifting weights. He is upset. He is troubled. He stands in front of the barbell. His huge arms reach to pick up the heavy load. With a mighty effort, he pulls the barbell to his chest. . . . Suddenly the barbell falls back to the floor. He can't do it. He quits. Why? There is nothing wrong with his muscles. He's stronger than ever. The problem is with his heart and mind. They have been weakened.

This illustrates why the strength of your inner person is so important. If your heart and mind is filled with discouragement or anxiety, you will never be victorious when temptation and troubles come.

Fill your mind with good things, not with negative thoughts.

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, THINK OF THESE THINGS" (Phil. 4:8).

"The joy of the Lord is your strength!"

III. GOD WILL "GRANT" US INNER STRENGTH IF WE ASK HIM FOR IT.

The word "GRANT" indicates the inner strength is a gift from God. It is a gift we can receive if we desire it and ask for it.

"MEN OUGHT ALWAYS TO PRAY, AND NOT TO FAINT" (Luke 18:1). If you want to avoid fainting, if you want to avoid being discouraged, pray. Ask God for inner strength. He wants to give it to you.

IV. GOD WILL GIVE US INNER STRENGTH "ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY."

There is a huge difference between giving OUT OF one's riches and giving ACCORDING TO one's riches.

For a millionaire to give fifty or a hundred dollars would be simply giving out of his wealth. But for him to give twenty-five thousand dollars would be to give according to his wealth. The greater a person's wealth, the greater his gift must be to qualify for giving according to his wealth. For God to give "ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY" is absolutely staggering, because His riches are limitless!

Later in this same prayer Paul describes God as "HIM THAT IS ABLE TO DO EXCEEDING ABUNDANTLY ABOVE ALL THAT WE ASK OR THINK" (v. 20).

V. GOD WILL GIVE US INNER STRENGTH "BY HIS SPIRIT."

Only God's Spirit can strengthen our spirits.

"But ye shall receive power, AFTER THAT THE HOLY GHOST IS COME UPON YOU" (Acts 1:8). This promise was given before the day of Pentecost. On that day the Holy Spirit took up permanent residence within believers.

Today every Christian has the Holy Spirit inside of him or her. A great source of power is present.

**"Not by might, nor by power, but BY MY SPIRIT, saith the Lord of hosts"
(Zech. 4:6).**

CONCLUSION

I. EVERY CHRISTIAN HAS AN "INNER MAN."

II. OUR INNER MAN NEEDS TO BE "STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT."

IV. GOD WILL GIVE US INNER STRENGTH "ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY."