

# Ephesians 3:16-17 Commentary

PREVIOUS

EPHESIANS - CHRIST AND THE CHURCH  
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NEXT

Ephesians 3:16 that He would [grant](#) you, [according](#) to the [riches](#) of His [glory](#), to be [strengthened](#) with [power through](#) His [Spirit](#) in the [inner man](#), ([NASB: Lockman](#))

**Greek:** [hina do](#) (3SAAS) [humin kata to ploutos tes](#) doxes [autou dunamei krataiothenai](#) (APN) [dia tou pneumatou autou eis ton eso anthropon](#).

**BGT** να δ μ ν κατ τ πλο τοσ τς δ ξης α το δυν μει κραταιωθ ναι δι το πνε ματος α το ες τ ν σω νθρωπον,

**Amplified:** May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** that, according to the wealth of his glory, he may grant to you to be strengthened in the inner man, ([Westminster Press](#))

**ESV** that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

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

**NIV** Ephesians 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

**NET:** I pray that according to the wealth of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man,

**NLT:** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. (NLT - Tyndale House)

**NLT (revised)** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.

**Phillips:** and I pray that out of the glorious richness of his resources he will enable you to know the strength of the spirit's inner re-inforcement - (Phillips: Touchstone)

**Wuest:** that He would grant to you according to the wealth of His glory, with power to be strengthened through the Spirit in the inward man ([Erdmans Publishing](#))

**Young's Literal:** that He may give to you, according to the riches of His glory, with might to be strengthened through His Spirit, in regard to the inner man,

**THAT HE WOULD GRANT YOU, ACCORDING TO THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY:** [hina do](#) (3SAAS) [humin kata to ploutos tes doxes autou](#):

- **That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory** Ep 3:8; Eph 1:7,18; Eph 2:7; Ro 9:23; Php 4:19; Col 1:27
- Ephesians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 3:14-16 The Fullness of God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:16 The Fullness of God, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:16-17 The Fullness of God, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:14-17 Making Christ at Home in Your Heart](#) - Steven Cole

**Related Passages:**

Philippians 4:19+ And my God will supply all your needs according to **His riches in glory** in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:8+ To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentilesthe **unfathomable riches of Christ**,

Ephesians 1:7+ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, **according to the riches of His grace**

Ephesians 1:18+ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are **the riches of the glory** of His inheritance in the saints,

Ephesians 2:7 so that in the ages to come He might show **the surpassing riches of His grace** in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

## **REQUEST FOR A GIFT FROM GOD'S largess**

**Largess** is defined as generous bestowal of gifts and when used of men sometimes speaks of giving ostentatiously, which is clearly never the case with God, whose giving is based on His grace and love.

**Brian Bell** points out that "there are 2 prayers in Ephesians (here and in Eph 1:15-23) complement each other. The first, a prayer for enlightenment; the second is for enablement. Paul wants the Ephesians to **learn** all they have *in Christ* and then **live** what they have learned!

**That (hina) He would grant (didomi) you, according to (kata) the riches (ploutos) of His glory (doxa) - That (hina - see note below)** expresses purpose, in this case the purpose for which he is bowing his knees and interceding for the saints. **He would grant** is a request for the Father to give as an expression of His generosity, and He is the ultimate "Generous Giver!" As discussed more below **according to (kata)** is not out of but in proportion to His infinite riches, so clearly this giving is not miserly but lavish!

The One to Whom he directed his requests gives richly and generously!

-- Peter O'Brien

**S Lewis Johnson** observes that "there are three **"thats"** (ED: ACTUALLY MORE THAN THAT - [SEE BELOW](#)) that are important in Paul's prayer. The first one is in 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." Now I know you're going to say, "Well, must be the that that begins verse 17 must be the second one." No, in the English translation, **that** is used, but the little conjunction **"that"** ([hina](#)) which introduces a purpose clause or at least the substance of the petition, is not used there. So we'll drop that one, and include it with 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 [to the end] that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." **That** ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend..." – that's the second one... And the third one, in verse 19 in the middle of it, "**that** ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Each one of these conjunctions, ([hina](#)) are expressive of the purposes of Paul's prayer. Now you'll notice also that the whole Trinity is involved ([Prayer for Realization of God](#))

**Adam Clarke** on **according to the riches of His glory** - It would be a disgrace to a *king* or a *nobleman* to give no more than a *tradesman* or a *peasant*. God acts up to the dignity of his infinite perfections; he gives *according to the riches of his glory*."

**According to** - not "out of" ([see below](#)). The first is proportionate, the latter is a portion of! There is a "wealth" of difference! Paul used a similar expression to emphasize the limitless power of God in his first prayer that his readers might come to know (quoting from the literal translation)...

what the exceeding greatness of His power to us who are believing, **according to (kata)** the working of the power of His might (the same might that raised Christ from the dead). (Eph 1:19+)

**O'Brien** - At the heart of Paul's first petition (Ep 1:16,17+ for his readers is a request for power. He has already prayed that they might know Gods incomparably great might for them as believers (Ep 1:18, 19+). Now he asks for divine power more directly that God may strengthen them inwardly through his Spirit. If the apostle had urged his Christian readers not to be discouraged on account of his sufferings (Ep 3:13+), then his prayer for them to be strengthened by God's power was in order to meet this need. The resources available to fulfil this confident request are limitless (See [The Letter to the Ephesians](#))

The glory of God may be viewed as the sum-total of all his attributes.

-- F F Bruce

**F F Bruce** on **riches of His glory** - He prays that they may receive an inward endowment of spiritual strength, and that in no

niggardly measure, but “according to the wealth of God’s glory,” or perhaps “according to his glorious wealth.” In the intercessory prayer which accompanied the introductory thanksgiving of this letter, God was asked so to enlighten the readers’ spiritual eyesight that they might know “the glorious wealth of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18). That was one aspect of his “glorious wealth” (or “the wealth of his glory”). The **glory of God** may be viewed as the sum-total of all his attributes. Because God himself is infinite and eternal, His glory is inexhaustible, and provides the measure of his generosity when He bestows His gifts. Because His resources are inexhaustible, He cannot be impoverished by sharing them with His children. (See [The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians](#)).

**THOUGHT** - Dear brother or sister in Christ, are you living a life that corresponds to the unfathomable riches you possess in Christ? Are you living in spiritual rags or riches? If you’re in “rags,” it is not God’s fault, but your own! Begin by doing a heart check (Ps 139:23-24, Pr 28:13+, 1Jn 1:9+). After your cardiac evaluation, take time each morning to have the “breakfast of champions” and “feed” your heart (1Pe 2:2+, Col 3:16+, Mt 4:4+) Then you are ready for this (grace filled) “prayer dare!” I dare you to begin to pray Ephesians 3:14-21 daily (for yourself, your loved ones, your disciples, folks in your congregation, etc) for the next 30 days. If God’s Spirit does not begin to move some “mountains” in your life (and/or the lives of others), I will be shocked. Feel free to write me a testimony to the glory of God after the 30 days. But beloved, don’t stop at 30 days! Make this prayer a regular part of your prayer life and your life will never be the same!

In prayer, it is both useful for ourselves and glorifying to God to recognize His bountifulness—to remember that He gives to as a the riches of Kings! I love what **John Newton** ([Come, My Soul, Thy Suit Prepare](#) = beautiful vocal version by Matt Foreman) wrote that relates to this idea...

Thou art coming to a King,  
Large petitions with thee bring;  
For His grace and power are such,  
None can ever ask too much.

**O’Brien on glory** - That **glory** is God’s radiance or splendour, which conveys the ideas of the perfection of his character and activity. **His glory** is often conjoined with power (Rom. 6:4; Col. 1:11) and paralleled with his goodness (cf. Exod. 33:22 with v. 19). Here this preposition, which Paul often uses in petitions and thanksgivings (Eph. 1:19; Phil. 4:19), draws attention not simply to the idea of source, thereby signifying ‘out of the wealth of his glory’, but also indicates that his giving corresponds to the inexhaustible riches of that glory. It is on a scale commensurate with **His glory**: He gives as lavishly as only he can. (See [The Letter to the Ephesians](#))

**Wiersbe** summarizes Paul’s prayer noting that “There are four requests in Paul’s prayer, but they must not be looked on as isolated, individual petitions. These four requests are more like four parts to a telescope. One request leads into the next one, and so on. He prays that the inner man might have spiritual strength, which will, in turn, lead to a deeper experience with Christ. This deeper experience will enable them to “**apprehend**” (get hold of) God’s great love, which will result in their being “**filled unto all the fullness of God.**” So, then, Paul is praying for **strength, depth, apprehension, and fullness**. (See [Be Rich \(Ephesians\): Gaining the Things That Money Can’t Buy](#)) (Bolding added)

**Alexander Maclaren** - **He would grant you according to the riches of His glory:** The measure, then, of the gift that we may hope to receive is the measure of God’s own fullness. The ‘riches of His glory’ can be nothing less than the whole uncounted abundance of that majestic and far-shining Nature, as it pours itself forth in the dazzling perfectness of its own Self-manifestation. And nothing less than this great treasure is to be the limit and standard of His gift to us. We are the sons of the King, and the allowance which He makes us even before we come to our inheritance is proportionate to our Father’s wealth. The same stupendous thought is given us in that prayer, heavy with the blessed weight of unspeakable gifts, ‘that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.’ This, then, is the measure of the grace that we may possess. This limitless limit alone bounds the possibilities for every man, the certainties for every Christian. ([Sermon](#))

**O’Brien** reiterates this great truth writing that “That glory is God’s radiance or splendour, which conveys the ideas of the perfection of his character and activity. His glory is often conjoined with power (Ro 6:4+; Col 1:11+) and paralleled with his goodness (cf. Ex 33:18-23+ with Ep 3:19). Here this preposition, which Paul often uses in petitions and thanksgivings (Ep 1:19+; Php 4:19+), draws attention not simply to the idea of source, thereby signifying out of the wealth of His glory, but also indicates that His giving corresponds to the inexhaustible riches of that glory. It is on a scale commensurate with His glory: He gives as lavishly as only He can...The One to whom he directed his requests gives richly and generously: “And my God will fully meet every need of yours in accordance with his **riches in glory** in Christ Jesus” (Php 4:19+).By formulating his prayer along these lines, the apostle assured his readers that the Father was wholly able to meet their needs. ([The Letter to the Ephesian](#))

**John Eadie** comments that **according to** “illustrates the proportion or measurement of the gift, nay, of all the gifts that are comprehended in the apostle’s prayer. And it is no exaggeration, for He gives like Himself, not grudgingly or in tiny portions, as if He

were afraid to exhaust His riches, or even suspected them to be limited in their contents. There is no fastidious scrupulosity or anxious frugality on the part of the Divine Benefactor. His bounty proclaims His conscious possession of immeasurable resources. He bestows according to the riches of His glory—His own infinite fulness. “That He would give you”— ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

**Kent Hughes** comments on "according to" observing that "to come before the One from whom are all things and to whom are all things (Ro 11:36-note) makes for great optimism, especially when he is no mere John D. Rockefeller who sometimes gave from his riches, but is rather the One who gives according to his riches — “on the scale and in the style of the wealth of his glory.” Such are the resources from which he strengthens us. (See [Ephesians: The Mystery of the Body of Christ](#))

**Jamieson**, et al comments that "**according to**" means "in abundance consonant (in harmony) to the riches of His glory; not “according to” the narrowness of our hearts."

**Paxson** commenting on "**according to**" writes "God is not promising something which He is unable to perform. He estimated His own resources before He promised to bequeath such wealth to His children. God's budget has always been balanced, and there need be no fear of His prodigal program of spending for the salvation and sanctification of believers in His Son. Nothing is unstable in the plan of redemption, for God is not experimenting with men's souls, nor has He left anything to chance. He counted the whole cost of building this wondrous habitation of God long ages before He laid a single living stone upon the foundation, and knew that He was fully able to carry it to completion. In his book *In the Heavenlies*, Dr. H. A. Ironside unfolds the deep meaning of the words "according to" in a simple illustration: "It does not say 'out of' His riches, but 'according to' His riches. Here is a millionaire to whom you go on behalf of some worthy cause. He listens to you and says, 'Well, I think that I will do a little for you,' and he takes out his pocketbook and selects a ten-dollar bill. Perhaps you had hoped to receive a thousand from him. He has given you 'out of' his riches, but not 'according to' his riches. If he gave you a book of signed blank checks all numbered, and said, 'Take this, fill in what you need,' that would be 'according to' his riches." This is precisely what the King of glory has done for us, as we saw in Eph 1:3. He has given according to the sublime measurement of own immeasurable riches. Ephesians 3:20 "**According to the power that worketh in us.**" Perhaps we are quite convinced by now that through our position in Christ we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Objectively, we apprehend this fact, and doctrinally we believe it. But our great problem is how to live like heirs. We know what we are; our difficulty is to be what we know. How may we subjectively appropriate this wealth, so that experimentally it is manifested in a consistent walk and a conquering warfare? God assures us that He has made provision for this experimental realization through the in-working of a resident power. It is the power of a Person Who is none other than God's own Spirit. All that Christ was and did as the incarnate Son was through the power of the Holy Spirit. He promised to send the Holy Spirit to be to the disciples all that He had been to Him. From the day of Pentecost this same Spirit has been in every member of Christ's Body as a mighty power working to make these riches of glory his personal possession. This we shall see more fully as we now begin our study of the prayer petitions. We feel like saying in the words of Dr. Scroggie, "All that we can hope to do is to mark the order in this tumult of holy words." The trinity of the Godhead work together to make this wealth ours. The riches which the Father provides in the Son are possessed through the Spirit. ([The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian](#))

The **riches** describe God's endowment, His infinite wealth and resources. You can't possibly ask too much. **Paul** is saying in essence "I want you to get your hands on your wealth, realize how vast it is, and start to use it."

The old gospel hymn says it well...

My Father is rich in houses and lands  
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!  
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,  
His coffers are full, He has riches untold."

Our Father's resources are infinite, His repositories are overflowing, His vaults are bottomless.

The treasures of earth are not mine,  
I hold not its silver and gold;  
But a treasure far greater is mine;  
I have riches of value untold.  
—Hartzler

God's Word promises riches that money cannot buy.

**MacDonald** - Preachers often point out that there is a difference between the expressions “out of the riches” and according to the riches. A wealthy person might give a trifling amount; it would be out of his riches, but not in proportion to them! Paul asks that God will give strength according to the riches of His perfections. Since the Lord is infinitely rich in glory, let the saints get ready for a deluge! Why should we ask so little of so great a King? When someone asked a tremendous favor of Napoleon it was immediately granted because, said Napoleon, “He honored me by the magnitude of his request.” ([Believer's Bible Commentary: Thomas Nelson](#))

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**ILLUSTRATION** -A certain rich English eccentric named Julian Ellis Morris liked to dress like a tramp and sell razor blades, soap, and shampoo door-to-door. After a day's work he would return to his beautiful mansion, put on formal attire and have his chauffeur drive him to an exclusive restaurant in his limousine. Sometimes he would catch a flight to Paris and spend the evening there. Many Christians live something like Mr. Morris, spending their day-by-day lives in apparent spiritual poverty and only occasionally enjoying the vast riches of His glory that their heavenly Father has given them. How tragic to go around in the tattered rags of our own inadequacy when we could be living sumptuously in the superabundance of God's unspeakable riches. (From John MacArthur)

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**That** (in order that)([2443](#)) **hina** is a conjunction which is used as a marker of purpose, definition or result and is rendered in order that, that, so that. With the result or consequence that. With the particular aim or purpose of; in order that. "So that" means "in order to" which answers the question "Why?" We use it to begin adverb clauses of purpose. Let's hear an example: It helps to lower blood sugar so that you feel less hungry. The adverb clause is "so that you feel less hungry." It shows the purpose for the action in the main clause. Why does it help to lower blood sugar? To feel less hungry. ([LearnEnglish](#))

**Grant** ([1325](#)) (**didomi**) means to give as a favor. This **grant** is based on the decision of the will of the Giver (in this case God) and not on any supposed merit of the recipient (Is this not a working definition of grace? See **word study of charis**)

**According** ([2596](#)) (**kata**) means in proportion to one's largess! Not stingily. Not just a portion but a proportion! If I am a billionaire and I give you ten dollars, I have given you a portion (very small portion at that) out of my riches. But if I give you ten million dollars, I have given to you **according to** or more proportionate to my true wealth. The first giver would take it out of His riches and would be like Mr. Rockefeller who used to give his caddy a dime. God is not like Mr. Rockefeller, in either his wealth or generosity!

**Riches** ([4149](#)) (**ploutos** from **pletho** = to fill) a plentiful supply of something and in human terms refers to the abundance of possessions exceeding the norm of a particular society (interestingly Paul never uses **ploutos** with this latter material connotation). Here **ploutos** refers to God's riches and is a favorite word with Paul in Ephesians to describe the quality of the divine attributes and gifts (See entries below)

**Ploutos** - riches(18), wealth(4). 22x in 21v - Mt 13:22; Mark 4:19; Luke 8:14; Ro 2:4-note; Ro 9:23-note; Ro 11:12-note, Ro 11:33-note; 2Co 8:2; Eph 1:7-note, Eph 1:18-note; Eph 2:7-note; Eph 3:8-note, Eph 3:16-note; Phil 4:19-note; Col 1:27-note; Col 2:2-note; 1Ti 6:17; Heb 11:26-note; Jas 5:2; Rev 5:12-note; Rev 18:17-note

**Glory** ([1391](#)) (**doxa**) speaks of a manifestation of God's true nature, presence, or likeness. He is glorified when He is allowed to be seen as He really is. To be where God is will be glory. To be what God intended will be glory. To do what God purposed will be glory. The basic idea in the word **doxa** is that of manifestation. The glory of God is the manifestation of His Being, His character and His acts. The glory of God is what He is essentially. Glory, therefore, is the true apprehension of God or things. The glory of God must mean His unchanging essence.

Would you like a sample of God's glory? Then simply walk out into the countryside on some clear night and observe the starry, starry skies for as **David** affirms in Psalm 19:1...

The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

Now combine this the vast riches and surpassing glory of these starry images with what **Job** said...

"Behold, these are the fringes of His ways; And how faint a word we hear of Him! But His mighty thunder, who can understand?" (Job 26:14)

**Comment:** Job's magnificent conclusion is this: How much knowledge of God there is beyond what we can see and hear.

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**TO BE STRENGTHENED WITH POWER THROUGH HIS SPIRIT: dunamei krataiothenai (APN) dia tou pneumatou autou:**

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- **To be strengthened with power** - Ep 6:10; Job 23:6; Ps 28:8; 138:3; Isa 40:29, 30, 31; 41:10; Zech 10:12; Mt 6:13; 2Cor 12:9; Phil 4:13; Col 1:11; 2 Ti 4:17; Heb 11:34
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#### Related Passages:

Acts 1:8 but you will receive **power** ([dunamis](#)) when the **Holy Spirit** has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Romans 1:4;who was declared the Son of God with **power** ([dunamis](#)) by the resurrection from the dead, according to the **Spirit** of holiness, Jesus Christ our Lord,

Romans 15:19 in the **power** ([dunamis](#)) of signs and wonders, in the **power** ([dunamis](#)) **of the Spirit**; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

1 Corinthians 2:4 and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of **the Spirit and of power** ([dunamis](#)),

1 Thessalonians 1:5 for our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in **power** ([dunamis](#)) and in **the Holy Spirit** and with full conviction; just as you know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

Ephesians 6:10 Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

### CHARGING YOUR SPIRITUAL "BATTERY"

**To be strengthened** ([krataioo](#)) with **power** ([dunamis](#)) through ([dia](#)) His **Spirit** ([pneuma](#)) in the **inner** ([eso](#)) **man** - The first petition is a petition for *empowerment*. Compare the prayer in Eph 1:18-20+ where the petition was to know the surpassing greatness of His power -- a petition for *enlightenment*. Here the petition is that we might realize or "activate" that supernatural power enabled by the Holy Spirit. Strengthened is in the aorist tense and passive voice indicating that the strengthening comes not from within ourselves, but from the Spirit. ("divine passive)

As an aside it is notable that Paul did not pray for physical problems (which constitutes the majority of prayer requests [the temporal] in most churches) but prayed almost always for the spiritual welfare of others (the eternal)-- a good pattern for imitators of Paul to follow (cf 1 Cor 11:1+). Don't misunderstand - there is absolutely nothing unscriptural or wrong to pray for physical requests (I do it all the time), but Paul wants us to also pray prayers with eternity in view and those prayers deal more with the spiritual needs/health of the saints.

**John MacArthur** - The first step in living like God's children is to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man. Yet most Christians never seem to get to this first step, not knowing what it is to see God's power fully at work in them. They suffer, the church suffers, and the world suffers because the inner man of most believers is never strengthened with power through His Spirit. (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**John Eadie** - The Spirit of God is the Agent in this process of (SUPERNATURAL, SPIRITUAL) invigoration. That Spirit is God's, as He bears God's commission and does His work. He has free access to man's spirit to move it as He may, and it is His peculiar function in the scheme of mercy to apply to the heart the spiritual blessings provided by Christ. ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

**Guzik** comments "There is an **inner man** just as real as our physical body. We all understand the importance of strength in our physical body, but many are exceedingly weak in the inner man." ([Commentary](#))

In the **physical world** one might lift weights and so strengthen themselves, but in the **spiritual world**, as believers we cannot strengthen ourselves! That task belongs solely to the Lord! However, don't forget that believers do have a role/responsibility in this spiritual strengthening -- we are not just to "Let go and let God". The believer's "job" is to submit [yield, surrender] himself or herself to God's Spirit [believers can resist, quench and grieve the Spirit] so that He can strengthen us. We can only "be [passive voice] strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might" (Eph 6:10+), and "be [passive voice] strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:1+).

**THOUGHT - Best** ([Ephesians](#)) gives all believers an important reminder that they "are not left to whistle up strength from within themselves in order to be able to do God's will." The corollary is the absolute truth that the only way a believer can do God's will and work is by being continually enabled by His Spirit. Jesus used a different metaphor but said the same thing in John 15:5 declaring "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who **abides** (present tense - continually) **in Me and I in him**, he bears (present tense - continually) much fruit, for apart from Me you can (present tense - continually) do **nothing** (ABSOLUTELY NOTHING OF ETERNAL

VALUE!)."

**John Stott** - Some are puzzled by this first petition when they remember that Paul is praying for Christians. 'Surely', they say, 'Christ dwells by his Spirit within every believer? So how can Paul ask here that Christ may dwell in their hearts? Was Christ not already within them?'. To these questions we begin by replying that indeed every Christian is indwelt by Christ and is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless as **Charles Hodge** rightly comments, 'The indwelling of Christ is a thing of degrees'. So also is the inward strengthening of the Holy Spirit. What Paul asks for his readers is that they may be 'fortified, braced, invigorated', that they may 'know the strength of the Spirit's inner reinforcement' (JBP), and may lay hold ever more firmly 'by faith' of this divine strength, this divine indwelling. (See [The Message of Ephesians](#))

**Albert Barnes** writes that "**to be strengthened** ([krataioo](#)) **with power** ([dunamis](#))" means "to give you abundant strength to bear trials; to perform your duties; to glorify his name...See [Ro 7:22+]. The body needs to be strengthened every day. In like manner the soul needs constant supplies of grace. Piety needs to be constantly invigorated, or it withers and decays. Every Christian needs grace given each day to enable him to bear trials, to resist temptation, to discharge his duty, to live a life of faith. ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

**James Montgomery Boice** explains Paul's first request for the believers to be **strengthened** internally through the Spirit writing that "Paul has been talking about suffering, and this is probably why he begins his prayer with a request that the believers at Ephesus might be strengthened by God's Spirit. None of us show much of the manifold wisdom of God in easy days. It is in suffering that the grace of God is manifested. But who has strength for suffering? We do not choose suffering. We shrink from it. Like Christ in the garden we inevitably draw back and ask that, if it is possible, this cup might pass from us. If we are to show God's wisdom in such times, it must be by God's strength. He must send his angels to minister to us. Still, it is not only in times of suffering that we need to be strengthened. **We need strength every day of our lives and in every circumstance** (ED: YOU MAY WANT TO READ THAT AGAIN!) Is it temptation? We need strength to resist it and be victorious to the glory of God. Is it a tough moral choice at work? We need strength to do the right thing so that Jesus, whom we serve, might be honored. Is it witnessing? We need strength to speak the truth regardless of what the world may think of us for speaking it. When Jesus prayed for God to send the Comforter or Holy Spirit to be with his disciples it was this he chiefly had in mind. The word parakletos ("comforter," "counselor," or "advocate") means "one called alongside to help." The Holy Spirit helps us do the right thing in difficult circumstances. ([Ephesians: An Expository Commentary](#))

A stick of dynamite has power but the fuse has to be lit for the inherent power to be manifest...so too with God's **dunamis**. Earlier Paul had prayed that the saint's be enlightened to the truth that they possess this surpassingly great power, the same (dunamis) power which effected the miraculous resurrection of our Redeemer (Eph 1:19; 1:20+)

Paul prays these believers be made mighty with power, or dunamis, the ability to do that which we could never have done before, the capacity, the divine ability to live a life on a higher plane.

Note that in his letter to the Ephesians Paul did not pray that believers might be **given** divine power but that they might **be aware of the divine power they already possessed**. (Ep 1:18, 19, 20-See **notes** Ep 1:18; 19; 20). Through Christ we have the resource of God's own supernatural power, the very power (dunamis) He used to raise Christ from the dead (cp Peter's word on our resources in Christ - 2Pe 1:3). It is of utmost importance to understand that God does not provide His power for us to misappropriate for our own purposes. He provides His power to accomplish His purposes through us. When our trust is only in Him, and our desire is only to serve Him, He is both willing and "able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us" (Ep 3:20-note).

**Dunamis** conveys the idea of effective, productive energy, rather than that which is raw and unbridled. Where is this inherent power derived from? Through the working of God's Holy Spirit. And where is the sphere of operation of this enabling power? in the inner man.

**THOUGHT** - Paul is praying for every saint (not some special class of elite so-called "spiritual" Christians) to possess genuine spiritual power, which ultimately is a mark of every believer who submits to God's Word and His Spirit (**Corollary question** - Do you lack spiritual power in your Christian life? Then do a simple inventory - Look at your "obedience quotient" - immediate or delayed [= disobedience] or non-existent, Look at your intake of sound doctrine vs "religious literature" [e.g. Christian novels, magazines, even devotionals, etc] vs only secular sources [R rated movies, foul language on TV, "premium channels" on Cable, etc] and finally look at your surrender to the Spirit - sweet surrender, partial and halting, willfully resistant to His voice.) (**As as aside** if you want to watch movies without the sex and foul language I highly recommend a service called [Vidangel](#) that removes objectionable material from the film. Unfortunately some companies like Disney refuse to give them the rights to do this with their movies. So much for Disney being "family friendly!")

Note that in this context this (dunamis) **power** is not necessarily the power to perform spectacular, sensational miracles (which is the predominant meaning of dunamis in its uses in the gospels - eg, see Mt 11:20, 23, 13:54, 58, etc), but the spiritual power necessary to live as mature, stable, wise Christians in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. It is by dunamis power that a believer is enabled to say "**Yes**" to his Lord and "**No**" to his flesh. Daily victory of sin (the world, the flesh and devil) is one of the greatest "miracles" a believer can experience.

**MacDonald** quotes **F B Meyer** on this supernatural power - "It is power. It is His power. It is great power; nothing less would suffice. It is exceeding great power, beyond the furthest cast of thought." (MacDonald then adds) This is the **power** which God used in our **redemption**, which He uses in our **preservation**, and which He will yet use in our **glorification** (Ed: Respectively - past, present and future salvation = Three Tenses of Salvation) Lewis Sperry Chafer writes: "Paul wants to impress the believer with the greatness of the power which is engaged to accomplish for him everything that God has purposed according to His work of election, predestination and sovereign adoption." ([Ibid](#)) (Bolding added)

When **Martin Luther** was summoned to Worms to recant his 95 Theses he wrote "May the Lord Jesus strengthen me."

**Peter O'Brien** on **through the Spirit** - This divine empowering will be effected through God's Spirit (This is rather different from the interpretation of G. D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, 695, who speaks of the Spirit as the 'source' of that empowering.), the same Spirit who, according to Paul's prayer of Eph 1:17, imparts wisdom and revelation so that the readers may know ([epignosis](#)) God better. The agency of the Spirit in dispensing divine **power** is in line with other New Testament teaching where the **Spirit** and **power** are intimately linked (Acts 1:8; Ro 1:4; 15:19; 1Cor. 2:4; 1Th. 1:5). (See [The Letter to the Ephesians](#).)

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**Wayne Barber** explains that **krataioo** "means "made mighty." It is the Greek word [krataioo](#). Some Greek verbs end in an "o" but this verb ends in two o's which conveys the thought of something beyond just being "strengthened." It means "to be shown to be strong, to be shown to be mighty." It is almost the same thing that Paul prays in Philippians. The idea then is that you are to get what is on the inside of you to the outside so that you might be shown to be strong...Is there a difference between might and power?" Oh, yes. The word "power" here is the word dunamis. That word means "to be able to do something, be capable." Basically Paul is saying,

"I want that which is inside of you to get on the outside of you. I want people to look at you as you live your Christian life and let them see that you have a divine ability that is operating inside of you. I want it to be more than just what you say. I am praying that it will be in how that you live."

The assignment to do the strengthening is not in God the Son, it is God the Spirit. The Spirit of God comes into a man the moment he becomes a Christian. Now, you are not living life alone. You may be acting like it, but you are not. If you are trying to fight your problems by yourself, if you are trying to figure them out on your own, if you are not coming to the Word, letting the Holy Spirit of God enable you and reveal to you the things of God, then no wonder you are confused. You have a divine partner living in you, and He is in you to strengthen you with power so that you have an ability that you didn't have before. If you will learn to tap into Him, then you will begin to learn to live in the reality of His presence....

Now understand something. He is not praying that they will get these riches. They already have them. He is praying that they be strengthened according to these riches. He is saying, "You've got them. Now be strengthened by that which you have. Live in it. Live out of it."

Folks, we have a reservoir of riches of wealth, spiritually, which God has given us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul intensely says, "Oh, God, don't let them walk out with heads filled with information. God, let them walk out understanding they have these riches. Let them be strengthened in the inner man with power. Let these riches be a part of the source of their strength in their walk."

You may find out this week that you have lost your job. You may find out this week that someone has done you wrong. Where are you going to be strengthened? Friend, Paul is saying you know something about your salvation. When you run back to the Lord Jesus Christ, in Him is the reservoir of what you are looking for. Let the Spirit of God with power strengthen you in the inner man. Let these truths so get down inside of your life that you become different. All of a sudden what you have inside of you begins to work inside of you. All of a sudden people see a difference in your life. You are doing things and you are living in a way that is on a higher plane than what you lived before. In other words, don't just sit and soak. Grab hold of the fact that you have got all the wealth that ever could be, spiritually, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Learn how to tap into it. Learn how to draw it out. It is in your account. It is in your name. The Lord Jesus lives in you. When you have your problems, run to Him.



Learn to be strengthened according to the riches that He has given you in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 3:14: A Prayer for Fullness - 1)

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**ILLUSTRATION** - A story is told of a woman who lived in a remote valley. She went to a great deal of trouble to have electrical power installed in her home. They noticed she didn't use very much electricity at all. In fact, her usage was minuscule. They sent a meter reader out to check on the matter. The man came to the door and said, "We've looked at the amount. Don't you use electricity?" "Oh yes" she said. "We turn it on every night to see how to light our lamps and then we switch it off again." This sounds like the way many Christians apply the power of God in their lives. [turn it on, switch it off again] [Brian Bell](#)

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**To be strengthened** ([2901](#))(**krataioo** from **krataios** = strong <> see study of root **kratos**) means to be empowered, to be increased in vigor, to strengthen with the implied meaning of to establish (active voice), to grow strong (active voice), to be made strong (passive voice), to be braced (as when the Gulf Coast states in the US "*brace*" for the onrushing Category 5 hurricane!), to be invigorated, to be fortified (I like that word for it pictures the saint in a "spiritual fort"). Note that all the NT uses are in the **passive voice**. ("divine passive") **Krataioo** refers to strength or might, but especially that which is manifested. As discussed below **krataioo** in this verse means to be shown to be strong, to be shown to be mighty.

**TDNT** writes that **krataioo**...means "to make strong," occurs 54 times in the Septuagint (LXX) (Jdg. 3:10; Ruth 1:18; 1Sa 4:9; 23:16; 30:6; 2Sa 1:23; 2:7; 3:1; 10:11, 12; 11:23, 25; 13:14; 22:18; 23:3; 1Ki. 20:22-23, 25; 2 Ki. 3:26; 12:6 -7, 12, 14; 22:6; 1 Chr. 21:4; 2 Chr. 21:4; 23:1; 34:8; 35:22; Ezra 6:22; 7:28; Neh. 2:18; 6:9; Job 36:19, 22; Ps. 9:19; 27:14; 31:24; 38:19; 64:5; 69:4; 74:13; 80:15, 17; 89:13; 103:11; 105:4, 24; 117:2; 139:6, 17; 142:6; Lam. 1:16; Dan. 4:36; 5:20). In the NT we find only the passive "to become strong." In Lk. 1:80; 2:40 it denotes childhood growth. In 1 Cor. 16:13, with *andrizesthe*, the exhortation is to "be strong" (cf. 2Sa 10:12 "**Be strong**, and let us show ourselves courageous for the sake of our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what is good in His sight."). Eph. 3:16 traces such strengthening to the inward operation of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2Sa 22:3). ([Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Eerdmans](#))

Here are two encouraging uses of **krataioo** in the **Septuagint** of the Psalms...

Psalms 27:14 Wait for the LORD; **Be strong** (Lxx = *andrizomai* = act like a man! In NT only in 1 Cor 16:13+) and **let your heart take courage** (Lxx = *krataioo* in divine passive, = be strengthened in your heart - cf perfect parallel with use in Eph 3:16+!); Yes, wait for the LORD. (Note both verbs are [present imperative](#))

Psalms 31:24 **Be strong** (Lxx = *andrizomai* = act like a man! In NT only in 1 Cor 16:13+) and **let your heart take courage** (Lxx = *krataioo* in divine passive, = be strengthened in your heart - cf perfect parallel with use in Eph 3:16+!), All you who hope in the LORD. (Note both verbs are [present imperative](#))

**NIDNTT** writes that **krataioo** means...to make strong, to take courage, to gain the upper hand over. *krataioo* is used in the Lucan birth narratives to describe the child Jesus growing and becoming strong in spirit (Lk. 1:80) and wisdom (Lk 2:40). Otherwise the word is not common in the NT. It clearly refers to manly strength in 1Co 16:13, which is a quotation (cf. Ps 31:24; 2Sa 10:12); and has a metaphorical sense in Eph 3:16; in Gnostic terminology, the inner man is expected to be strengthened with might. ([Brown, Colin, Editor. New International Dictionary of NT Theology. 1986. Zondervan](#))

Here are the other 3 NT uses of **krataioo**..

Lk 1:80+ - And the child continued to grow and to **become strong** (to become strong and healthy, with the implication of physical vigor) in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

Lk 2:40+ - The Child continued to grow and **become strong**, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

1Cor 16:13+ - **Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong**. (Note - all 4 verbs are commands in the [present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#))

**Comment:** **Krataioo** is used in the NT to denote inner, spiritual growth. As in Eph 3:16, **krataioo** is also in the **passive voice**, which literally means "be strengthened." In this context the implication is that the believer is to be sufficiently strong as to be able to wage war spiritually against any evil influence [the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#)].

**Power** ([1411](#)) (**dunamis** from **dunamai** = to be able, to have power) refers especially achieving power. It refers to intrinsic power or

inherent ability, the power or ability to carry out some function, the potential for functioning in some way, the power residing in a thing by virtue of its nature. **Dunamis** is the word generally used by Paul of divine energy. Note that words derived from the stem **duna**— all have the basic meaning of “being able,” of “capacity” in virtue of an ability. **Duna-** is the root for English words like dynamic, dynamo, dynamite, etc. **Dunamis** is the implied ability or capacity to perform. It conveys the idea of effective, productive energy, rather than that which is raw and unbridled. **Dunamis** is the potential for functioning in some way (power, might, strength, ability, capability). Sometimes **dunamis** is used to represent an entity or being that functions with remarkable power, especially being used to describe angel as powers (eg, see Ro 8:38+, Ep 6:12+) Although God promises us and provides us with His **dunamis** power, we must learn wait upon His timing (Acts 1:8) and also be willing to humble ourselves that His power may be perfected in us (2Cor 12:9-note). Note that Jesus Himself had at least in one sense the same power available to believers today (see Lk 4:1,14,18-...God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power)

**Barclay** writes that **dunamis** "can be used of any kind of extraordinary power. It can be used of the power of growth, of the powers of nature, of the power of a drug, of the power of a man's genius. It always has the meaning of an effective power which does things and which any man can recognize. ([Daily Study Bible](#))

There is an instructive use of **dunamis** later in 2Timothy where Paul describes men "holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its **power**; and avoid such men as these." (2Ti 3:5+) Paul's point is that the so-called godliness of these men is a sham and devoid of any real power (**dunamis**) to break the power of sin. Those who practice such deception enjoy the external expressions of evangelical worship to be amenable to their lifestyles but they are violently at odds with the gospel's internal effects of subduing sin and nurturing holiness. They lack the inherent ability or capability, the supernatural **dunamis**, because they lack the indwelling Spirit Who strengthens with power as Paul prays in Ephesians 3:16. The corollary is that those who possess the indwelling Spirit and divine **dunamis** have the inherent ability to wage victorious battle with the three mortal enemies, the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#), all seeking to turn us from God and unto self and its ungodly, unholy attitudes and actions. One can readily see the importance of praying for believers to be strengthened with **dunamis** power through the Spirit in their inner man.

**William MacDonald** comments on Paul's reminder to Timothy (2Ti 1:7+) of his access to God's "**dunamis**" writing that "Unlimited strength is at our disposal. Through the enabling of the Holy Spirit, the believer can serve valiantly, endure patiently, suffer triumphantly, and, if need be, die gloriously." ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Through** ([1223](#)) (**dia**) refers to the instrument by which the strengthening with power is effected, in this case the Holy Spirit). In other words this divine empowering will be effected through God's Spirit. The agency of the **Spirit** in dispensing divine **power** is in line with other New Testament teaching where the **Spirit** and **power** are intimately linked (Acts 1:8+; Ro 1:4+ ;Ro 15:19+; 1Cor 2:4+; 1Th 1:5+).

**Spirit** ([4151](#)) (**pneuma**) in context refers to the Holy Spirit not man's inner spirit. The **dunamis** (dynamic) power is communicated to us by the Spirit Who is our dynamo, residing in every believer and working through us. Although His name is not specifically mentioned we see His working in Philippians 2 where Paul records...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; **for it is God who is at work in you**, both to will (DESIRE) and to work (POWER) for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12+, Phil 2:13+)

It is always good to remember that Jesus performed His ministry on earth in the power of the Spirit (see verses below and Related Resource), and this is the source of power we have for living the Christian life.

Luke 4:1+ And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness...14 And Jesus returned to Galilee **in the power** (**dunamis** - the inherent ability) **of the Spirit**; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

Acts 10:38+ "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him **with the Holy Spirit and with power**, and how He went about doing good (implicit that He did good empowered by the Spirit), and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him.

See the related study - [The Holy Spirit-Walking Like Jesus Walked!](#)

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**Illustration** of **Strength in the Lord** - In 1934, when Adolf Hitler summoned German church leaders to his Berlin office to berate them for insufficiently supporting his programs, he was surprised when Pastor Martin Niemoller stood up to him. That evening his Gestapo raided Niemoller's rectory, and a few days later a bomb exploded in his church. He was later arrested and placed in solitary confinement. Dr. Niemoller's trial began on February 7, 1938. That morning, a green-uniformed guard escorted the minister from his prison cell and through a series of underground passages toward the courtroom. Niemoller was overcome with terror and loneliness. What would become of him? Of his family? His church? The guard's face was impassive, but as they exited a tunnel to ascend a

final flight of stairs, Niemoller heard a whisper. At first he didn't know where it came from, for the voice was soft as a sigh. Then he realized that the officer was breathing into his ear the words of Proverbs 18:10 (commentary): "The name of the Lord is a strong tower. The righteous run to it and are safe." Niemoller's fear fell away, and the power of that verse sustained him through his trial and his years in Nazi concentration camps.

## IN THE INNER MAN: eis ton eso anthropon:

- **Inner man** - Jer 31:33; Ro 2:29+; Ro 7:22+; 2Co 4:16+; 1Pe 3:4+
- Ephesians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 3:14-17 Making Christ at Home in Your Heart](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 3:14-16 The Fullness of God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur - **NB**: These 3 specific MacArthur sermons on **FULLNESS** are very edifying and equipping!
- [Ephesians 3:16 The Fullness of God, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:16-17 The Fullness of God, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

## EVEN BELIEVERS NEED AN "INSIDE JOB"

**In the inner (eso) man - In (eis)** depicts motion and in this case the "motion" of the supernatural dunamis from the Spirit to the "inner" destination. **The inner man** is the sphere (many [commentators](#) favor the preposition [eis](#) points to the sphere) in which the strengthening is to take place. The picture is of the [dunamis](#) entering into the inmost personality, into the person's "control room," the spiritual part of the believer's new nature where God dwells (cf Ep 2:22) and works.

**John MacArthur** - Only God can reach and cure the inner man, and that is where He most wants to work. His work begins with salvation, and after that His main field of work is still the inner man, because that is where spiritual life exists and where it must grow. The "divine nature," imparted to the believer at salvation (1 Pet. 1:3), is at the core of the inner man and is the base from which the Holy Spirit changes the thinking of the believer. Although the outer, physical man becomes weaker and weaker with age, the inner, spiritual man should continually grow stronger and stronger with power through His Spirit. Only God's Spirit can strengthen our spirits. He is the one who energizes, revitalizes, and empowers us (cf. Acts 1:8)...To the Galatians he wrote, "Walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16+). **The obedient, effective, and productive Christian must be Spirit conscious, Spirit filled, and Spirit controlled. When the inner man is fed regularly on the Word of God and seeks the Spirit's will in all the decisions of life**, the believer can be sure he will be strengthened with power through His Spirit. Spiritual power is not the mark of a special class of Christian but is the mark of every Christian who submits to God's Word and Spirit. Like physical growth and strength, spiritual growth and strength do not come overnight. As we discipline our minds and spirits to study God's Word, understand it, and live by it, we are nourished and strengthened. Every bit of spiritual food and every bit of spiritual exercise add to our strength and endurance. (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#) - I would strongly recommend listening to [MacArthur's 3 sermons on the Fullness of God](#) as they elaborate on the points in his commentary)

**O'Brien on inner man** - Some have understood this expression to denote the new creation inwardly begotten by the Spirit in those who are united by faith to Christ (cf. Col 3:10+; Ep 4:24+). However, it is better to understand the **inner person** as the interior of our being...the seat of personal consciousness...[and] of our moral being. It is the focal point at the centre of a person's life **where the Spirit does His strengthening and renewing work**. Indeed, the **inner self** stands in need of empowering given our struggle against sin (Ro 7:22+) and the need for daily renewal (2Co 4:16+). When the outer person of the believer is wasting away, the **inner person** is being renewed day by day (2Co 4:16+). In the context of both 2 Corinthians 4 (2Co 4:6; 5:12) and the following verse (2Co 4:17) **heart** is parallel to the inner person. (See [The Letter to the Ephesians](#))

**F F Bruce on inner man** - It is in tune with the mind of God and delights in his law (Ro. 7:22); it is renewed from day to day even when the "outer," mortal nature wastes away (2Co 4:16). It is the immortal personality which constitutes here and now the seed of that fuller immortality to be manifested in the resurrection age. Gnostic speculation about the "inner man" does not help us to understand Paul's use of the phrase; Paul is his own best interpreter. ([The Epistle to the Ephesians](#))

**Eadie on the inner man** - The "inner man" is that portion of our nature which is not cognizable by the senses, and does not consist of nerve, muscle, and organic form, as does the outer man. In the physiology of the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it (inner man) is not the soul—psuche—in its special aspect of vital consciousness, but it is more connected with mind—nous, and stands in contrast not exactly to sarx, as representing generally depraved humanity, but to that sensuous nature which has action and reaction in and from the members... it is the sphere in which (spiritual) renewal takes effect—our intellectual and spiritual nature personified...And this strength is imparted to the "inner man" by the Spirit's application of those truths which have a special tendency

to cheer and sustain. He impresses the mind with the idea of the changeless love of Christ, and the indissoluble union of the believing soul to Him; with the necessity of decision, consistency, and perseverance; with the assurance that all grace needed will be fully and cheerfully afforded; and with the hope that the victory shall be ultimately obtained. Ro 15:13-note; 2Ti 1:7-note. This operation of the Spirit imparts such courage and energy as appear like a species of spiritual omnipotence. ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

**Sam Storms** says the **inner man** is "the interior of our being ...the seat of personal consciousness...[and] of our moral being" (Fee, 695-96) (and is equivalent to the) heart. I.e., "that part of them which is not accessible to sight but which is open to his energizing influence" (Lincoln, 206). ([Ephesians 3:14-21 Sermon](#))

**THOUGHT-** The Christian mystics used to speak of the "interior life" or the life of the soul. Isn't it interesting (sad) how many Christians in America spend a fortune on their "outer life," on cosmetics, clothes, cars, and externals of life. So many people neglect the cultivation of the inner life. God wants to strengthen us in our interior, to pump His strength into our hearts and souls and does this in answer to prayer and by His Holy Spirit Who will especially utilize the Scriptures. Have you ever had the experience of a verse of Scripture, previously memorized but long forgotten, flashes into your minds in a moment of need?

**Paxson** - Is there any greater need in the Christian's life than to be made strong and with a power outside of himself? How often he feels that he is going backward rather than forward. He is conscious of weakness, failures, defeats, and backslidings that are well-nigh overpowering. More than once he cries out in anguish of spirit, "Is it worth while to try to keep on? I just have not the strength for this conflict." **Nor has he, and God rejoices whenever a child of His comes to the end of himself and acknowledges his own utter impotency, for then God can begin to work.** The Pentecost promise was for power. We are to be made strong with power through a Person. "**By His Spirit.**" **The Holy Spirit who worked for us to implant life (Jn 3:3-7) now works in us to impart power.** He lives within us to strengthen and energize with divine might and by a definite and continuous process. The life bestowed by the Spirit through rebirth is to be realized in fullness through renewal. **In the inner man** is the most secret springs of our spiritual life this Spirit-strengthening power is infused. God always begins at the innermost part of our being and works outward. ([The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian](#))

"Spiritual growth can be defined as the decreasing frequency of sin."

- John MacArthur

**John MacArthur** makes an interesting statement that "Spiritual growth can be defined as the decreasing frequency of sin. The more we exercise our spiritual muscles, yielding to the Spirit's control of our lives, the less sin is present. Where the strength of God increases, sin necessarily decreases. The nearer we come to God, the further we go from sin. (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Writing to the Corinthians Paul uses [eso](#)) noting that **the inner man** as that part of the believer that is being spiritually renewed by the Holy Spirit...

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying (present tense), yet our **inner man** (the heart, the soul that lives forever, that part of man reborn, newly created in salvation) is being renewed (present tense) day by day. (2Cor 4:16+)

**Blaikie** has an interesting thought on **the inner man** explaining that "The inner man is the **seat of influence**, but **with us it is the seat of spiritual feebleness**. Most men may contrive to order their outward conduct suitably; but who has control of the inner man? Faith, trust, humility, love, patience, and the like graces which belong to the inner man, are what we are weakest in, and what we have least power to make strong. In this very region it is sought that the Ephesians might be strengthened with might by the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is available for this very purpose for all that ask Him. ([Pulpit Commentary](#))

**F F Bruce** on **inner man** - The "inner being" is the new creation inwardly begotten by the Spirit in those who are united by faith to Christ. It is in tune with the mind of God and delights in his law (Rom. 7:22); it is renewed from day to day even when the "outer," mortal nature wastes away (2 Cor. 4:16). It is the immortal personality which constitutes here and now the seed of that fuller immortality to be manifested in the resurrection age. Gnostic speculation about the "inner man" does not help us to understand Paul's use of the phrase;87 Paul is his own best interpreter.

**Vincent** on **inner man** - In the inward man...is the rational and moral I; the essence of the man which is conscious of itself as a moral personality. In the unregenerate it is liable to fall under the power of sin (Ro 7:23+); and in the regenerate it needs constant renewing and strengthening by the Spirit of God, as here. Compare the hidden man of the heart, 1Pe 3:4+. ([Ephesians 3 Greek Word Studies](#))

**Morris** - The prayer offered by Paul in Ep 3:16-19 is addressed to the **Father** (Ep 3:14+) and concerns the indwelling of **Christ** by

faith (Ep 3:17+) and inner strengthening by the **Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 3:16). Thus all three Persons of the Godhead dwell in the heart of the believer (John 14:16,17,23), so that we can "be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ep 3:19+).([he strengthened](#) Defenders Study Bible) (See also Trinity - A Brief Excursus)

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**Inner** (2080) (**eso**) means within (In, into, inside, within, inner.). **Esō** is an adverb of place implying movement in or describing the state of being within. Used literally of inside a room (Jn 20:26) or inside a prison cell (Acts 5:23). Figuratively **eso** refers to the inner man, mind, soul and specifically the moral or spiritual side of man. Figuratively **eso** refers to **inner man** as the place of some spiritual action as of the law of God (Ro 7:22), of the inner man which is the place the Spirit works to renew the believer (2Co 4:6) and the part of a man where the Spirit exerts His strengthening effect (Eph 3:16). Lastly **eso** refers to being within the body of Christ, the church (1Co 5:12).

**Gilbrant** - In Romans 7:22 it is used to refer to the inward or spiritual side of man's nature. This does not refer to the introspective, inward-looking man, but to his essential being, often expressed in terms of the heart (kardia [2559]) versus his outward appearance (Ephesians 3:16; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16). First Corinthians 5:12 uses the word to describe those believers who are within the Christian community, as opposed to the pagans who are without or outside. ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

**Eso** is used 6 times in the NT (see below) - inner(2), inner man(1), inside(2), within(1) and more often in the Septuagint (all literal uses) Ge. 39:11; Lev. 10:18; Lev. 16:12; Lev. 16:15; Nu. 3:10; 1Ki. 6:15; 1Ki. 7:36; 2Ki. 7:11; 2Chr. 4:4; 2Chr. 29:16; 2Chr. 29:18; Job 1:10; Ezek. 9:6;

John 20:26 After eight days His disciples were again **inside**, and Thomas with them. Jesus \*came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you."

Acts 5:23 saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one **inside**."

Romans 7:22+ For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the **inner** man,

1 Corinthians 5:12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are **within** the church?

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our **inner** man is being renewed day by day.

Ephesians 3:16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the **inner** man,

**Man** (444) (**anthropos**) refers not to the male of the species but to all human beings.

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**Spurgeon** writes that "the firstfruits were not the harvest, and the works of the Spirit in us at this moment are not the consummation—the perfection is yet to come. We must not boast that we have attained and so reckon the wheat for the wave offering to be all the produce of the year; we must hunger and thirst after righteousness and pant for the day of full redemption. Dear reader, this day open your heart wide, and God will fill it. Groan within yourself for higher degrees of consecration, and your Lord will grant them to you, for He is able "to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

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### **Our Daily Bread** devotional **Inner Strength**

A large company extracts contaminating substances from steel drums by suction. Powerful pumps draw the materials out of the barrels, but the workers must carefully regulate the force of these pumps. If they take out too much air, the drums will collapse like paper cups because the outer pressure will exceed the inner pressure.

Likewise, when adversity and hardship come into our lives, unless God empowers us from within we will be unable to withstand the pressures from without. True, we get solid support from loved ones and Christian friends, but it is our spiritual inner man, "strengthened with might through His Spirit," that sustains us and keeps us from crumbling.

The Spirit works to strengthen us and renew our minds as we read God's Word and pray. If we neglect the Scriptures, seldom talk with the Lord, and stop fellowshiping with Him, we will grow weak and vulnerable. Then we will be unable to withstand the pressure of temptation or trouble.

Let's ask the Lord to develop our inner strength so that when life's blows and burdens press upon us we will not cave in. -D C Egner ([Our Daily Bread](#). Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved)

Help us, O Lord, when troubles come  
To trust Your Word and not succumb,  
And help us not to turn aside  
But in Your strength and love abide. --DJD

The power of Christ in you is greater than the pressure of troubles around you.

Ephesians 3:17 so that **Christ** may **dwelt** in your **hearts through faith**; and that you, being **rooted** and **grounded** in **love**,  
(NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** [katoikesai](#) (AAN) [ton Christon dia tes pisteos en tais kardiais humon en agape](#) errizomenoi (RPPMPN)  
[kai tethemeliomenoi](#) (RPPMPN) ,

**Amplified:** May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love, ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

**Barclay:** so that Christ through faith may take up his permanent residence in your hearts. I pray that you may have your root and your foundation in love, ([Westminster Press](#))

**NET:** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, so that, by being rooted and grounded in love, ([NET Bible](#))

**NLT:** Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. (NLT - Tyndale House)

**Phillips:** that Christ may actually live in your hearts by your faith. And I pray that you, firmly fixed in love yourselves, (Phillips: Touchstone)

**Wuest:** that the Christ might finally settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts through your faith; in love having been firmly rooted and grounded ([Eerdmans Publishing](#))

**Young's Literal:** that the Christ may dwell through the faith in your hearts, in love having been rooted and founded,

**SO THAT CHRIST MAY DWELL IN YOUR HEARTS THROUGH FAITH:** [katoikesai](#) (AAN) [ton Christon dia tes pisteos en tais kardiais humon](#):

- Ep 2:21; Isa 57:15; Jn 6:56; Jn 14:17,23; Jn 17:23; Ro 8:9-11; 2Co 6:16; Gal 2:20; Col 1:27; 1Jn 4:4,16; Rev 3:20

#### Related Passages:

Ephesians 2:21-22 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into **a dwelling of God** in the Spirit.

Isaiah 57:15 For thus says the high and exalted One Who lives forever, whose name is Holy, **I dwell on a high and holy place, And also with the contrite and lowly of spirit** In order to revive the spirit of the lowly And to revive the heart of the contrite.

2 Corinthians 6:16 Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "**I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.**"

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We (**SO THE TRINITY LIVES IN BELIEVERS!**) will come to him and make **Our abode** (Greek = mone = state of remaining in an area, staying, tarrying) with him.

## IN OUR HEARTS

**So that** - Regarding "so that" (or similar words like "that" in other English translations) indicates a purpose or result. Result of what? The implication of Paul's prayer is that the more the Spirit empowers their lives the greater will be their transformation into the likeness of Christ, the greater will be their sense of His being "at home" comfortable in their heart.

**TECHNICAL NOTE** - Note the 5 uses of **that** or **so that** in Ephesians 3:14-19 - **That** (Ep 3:16), **so that** (Eph 3:17), **that** (Eph 3:17b), **that** (Eph 3:18YLT), **that** (Eph 3:19b). This term of purpose/result links Paul's requests together, so that one request follows and is based on the previous request.

**Christ (Christos) may dwell (katoikeo) in your hearts (kardia) through faith;** - Paul is praying that Christ may be a permanent resident in their hearts, with **katoikeo** conveying the added thought of **domination** and **control**. **May dwell** is in aorist tense shows finality, which is paraphrased by Wuest as "that Christ might finally settle down and feel completely at home in your hearts." ([Erdmans](#)) Surprisingly, this verse is the only place in Scripture that specifically mentions Christ dwelling in our hearts. Paul's point here is that Christ should be in permanent residence, not at the periphery, but at the very center of the believer's life. (See [My Heart Christ's Home](#))

**MacArthur on Christ may dwell** - Paul has already made clear that all believers are in Christ (Eph 1:1, 3, 10, 12; 2:6, 10, 13). He is therefore not here referring to Christ's indwelling believers in salvation but in sanctification....Paul's teaching here does not relate to the fact of Jesus' presence in the hearts of believers but to the quality of His presence. (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**Through faith** - This speaks of the Christian's continuing trust in Christ and His authoritative Word and does not refer so much to our initial belief or trust in Christ for salvation. But as we began by faith, so we are to continue to live day by day in faith. The spiritual world is not traversed by sight but by faith, which is the only way we can see the unseeable! Christ dwells in us by faith, because it is only by faith that we perceive His presence. It is only by faith that we know Him for Who He is. It is only by faith that we understand what He does for us. It's by faith we appropriate all of the blessings of the spiritual life and reciprocate the manifestations of His love. How does faith come? By the word of God. It's through the study of the holy Scriptures. "So **faith** comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. (Ro 10:17+)

**MacArthur on through faith** - He cannot be fully at home until He is allowed to dwell in our hearts through the continuing faith that trusts Him to exercise His lordship over every aspect of our lives. We practice as well as receive His presence by faith. (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

**O'Brien** makes the observation that "The prayer that the readers may be strengthened inwardly through God's Spirit is explained and amplified by the following clause: that Christ might dwell in your hearts through faith. Several English Versions render these words as the purpose (or result) of the preceding (cf. the NIV's **so that**), and give the impression that Paul wants the readers first to be empowered by the Spirit so that subsequently Christ may dwell in their hearts. Although this interpretation is syntactically possible, it is unlikely. The language of the two clauses is parallel, and the experience of the Spirit's strengthening activity is the same as that of Christ's indwelling (cf. 1Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17; Ro 8:9, 10; Gal 4:6). **In your hearts** is equivalent to in the **inner person** of Eph 3:16, while Christ's indwelling defines more precisely the strengthening role of the Spirit in Eph 3:16 His indwelling is not something additional to the strengthening. To be empowered by the Spirit in the inner person means that Christ Himself dwells in their hearts. ([O'Brien, P. T. The Letter to the Ephesians](#))

**Spurgeon - That He may dwell** "does not mean that He may call upon you sometimes, as a casual visitor enters into a house and tarries for a night, but that He may "dwell," that Jesus may become the Lord and Tenant, of your heart." (C H Spurgeon, Daily Help)

**Sam Storms on dwell** - There are two words typically used for the concept of indwelling. The first, **paroikeo** = to abide or to inhabit, but not necessarily permanently. The second, the one used here, is **katoikeo** = "a settling in or colonizing tenancy" (Best, 341); i.e., to live permanently (cf. Col 2:9). Christ doesn't sojourn in our hearts. He is no divine nomad! He is, reverently speaking, a squatter. He is a permanent, abiding resident. Two questions: First, isn't "indwelling" a ministry of the Spirit? See Ro 8:9-10. According to the NT, Christ dwells in his people by means of or through his Spirit (see 1Cor 15:45; 2Cor 3:17; Gal. 4:6). Second, if Christ, through the Spirit, indwells the believer from the point of the new birth, how can Paul pray as he does in this text? It would seem that he is praying for the emotional increase or experiential expansion of what is already a theological fact. His desire is that the Lord Jesus, through the Spirit, might exert an ever-increasing and progressively more powerful influence on our lives and in our hearts. It is what I like to call, the *incessant spiritual reinforcement* in the human heart of the strength of Jesus and His love....One more interesting observation: although the concept of Jesus being 'in our hearts' is a popular way of expressing what it is to be a Christian, this is the only place in the NT where that precise terminology is found! ([Ephesians 3:14-21 Sermon](#))

**MacDonald** explains that "Actually, the Lord Jesus takes up His personal residence in a believer at the time of conversion (John 14:23; Rev. 3:20). But that is not the subject of this prayer. Here it is not a question of His being *in* the believer, but rather of His

feeling **at home** there! He is a permanent Resident in **every** saved person, but this is a request that He might have full access to every room and closet; that He might not be grieved by sinful words, thoughts, motives, and deeds; that He might enjoy unbroken fellowship with the believer. The Christian heart thus becomes the home of Christ, the place where He loves to be—like the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. The heart, of course, means the center of the spiritual life; it controls every aspect of behavior. In effect, the apostle prays that the lordship of Christ might extend to the books we read, the work we do, the food we eat, the money we spend, the words we speak—in short, the minutest details of our lives....We enter into the enjoyment of His indwelling **through faith**. This involves constant dependence on Him, constant surrender to Him, and constant recognition of His “at home-ness.” It is **through faith** that we “practice His presence,” as Brother Lawrence quaintly put it. ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Boice** writes that the dwelling “is used for the fullness of the Godhead abiding in Christ and, as here, for Christ’s abiding in a believer’s heart and life. The prayer is that Christ might settle down in our hearts and control them as the rightful owner. ([Boice, J. M.: Ephesians: An Expository Commentary](#))

**Eadie** comments that “Christ dwells there not as a sojourner, or “as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night,” but as a permanent resident. ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

**Blaikie** “The first of these is for the indwelling of Christ in their hearts, as opposed to mere occasional visits or influences from Christ; the instrument by which this blessing is attained being their faith. Christ exercising a constant power within them, both in the active and passive movements of the heart, giving the sense of pardon and acceptance, molding the will, sweetening the emotions, enlightening and confirming the conscience, purifying the whole springs and principles of action. This to be secured by their faith, opening the door, receiving Christ in all his fullness, resting and living on him, believing his promises, and longing for his appearing the second time.” ([Pulpit Commentary](#))

**O'Brien** adds this note on **heart** - The ‘**heart**’ here, as elsewhere in Ephesians, is employed in its customary Old Testament sense of the centre of one’s personality, the thoughts, will, emotions, and whatever else lies at the centre of our being. If Christ has taken up residence in our hearts, he is at the centre of our lives and exercises his rule over all that we are and do. This indwelling is **through faith**—that is, as they trust him he makes their hearts his home. The implication of the apostle’s prayer, then, is that the more the Spirit empowers their lives the greater will be their transformation into the likeness of Christ, a point that will be developed throughout the second half of the letter. (See [The Letter to the Ephesians](#) )

**KJV Bible Commentary - Faith** is the medium of appropriating Christ. Faith opens the door and receives Him. In some Christ is just present, in others He is prominent, and in still others He is preeminent. ([KJV Bible Commentary](#))

**Wuest** writes that “Dr. Max Reich once said in the hearing of the writer, “If we make room for the Holy Spirit, He will make room for the Lord Jesus.” That is, if the saint lives in conscious dependence upon and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit will make room for the Lord Jesus in the heart and life of the saint by eliminating from his life things that are sinful and of the world, and thus enable the saint to make the Lord Jesus feel completely at home in his heart. Wonderful condescension of heaven’s King, to be content to live in a believer’s heart and have fellowship with him. ([Wuest Word Studies - Eerdmans Publishing Company Volume 1, Volume 2, Volume 3](#) - used [by permission](#))

**Wayne Barber** writes that...

If you are not being strengthened in the inner man with power by the Spirit of God, it is very obvious that you are not making Christ at home in your hearts. Why? Because Christ is His Spirit that lives there. If you are living a lifestyle that is not pleasing to Him, if you are grieving Him, then no wonder you're discouraged, defeated and generally a "mess" spiritually speaking. No wonder your life is falling apart. There is a very basic truth in Scripture and when you come to grips with it, it becomes very understandable what victory is all about.

Victory is not me doing for Him. It is me being strengthened.

That enables the Spirit of Christ to be welcomed in my heart...

You have already received Jesus into your life. You say, "I want to walk in the fullness of what He has to offer. Where do I start?" It starts when you realize how weak you are and how desperate we all are to tap into His strength. You see, weakness is an absolute necessity if you are going to be strengthened in the inner man by the Spirit of God. God will bring people and circumstances into your life that will cause you to get down on your face and say, "Oh, God, I can't." He says, "That's right. I never said you could. I can. I always said I would. Now tap into Me. Appropriate what is already yours."

By nature, our “heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9). Without the life of the Lord Jesus within us we have no alternative but to backslide or lapse in disciplining ourselves for godliness (1Ti 4:7-11-see **notes** 1Ti 4:7; 4:8; 4:9; 10; 11). And so we see Paul’s longing for the saints at Ephesus that Christ might dwell as Lord and Master in



their hearts by faith. Only by such conscious, continuous and conspicuous presence of His indwelling life can believers know experientially a sanctified, holy heart. Our prayer (in addition to Paul's prayer of course) should be...

Moment by moment I'm kept in His love;  
Moment by moment I've life from above;  
Looking to Jesus till glory doth shine;  
Moment by moment, O Lord, I am Thine.  
Daniel W. Whittle ([Play Hymn](#))

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**Paxson** writes **Purpose of Realization** - It is threefold:

- (1) to establish Christ's presence in possession of us;
- (2) to enhance Christ's preciousness to us through the deepening knowledge of His love for us;
- (3) and to ensure the plenitude of Christ's life in us.

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." **"That"** -- a very definite advance upon the first "that." The Spirit working in power in the inner man discovers and discloses that which hinders Christ's fullest indwelling; demands the emptying of the life of self and the enthronement of Christ as Lord; and establishes Him more effectually in the possession of every part of the Christian's life.

**"Christ may dwell."** This has no reference to Christ's initial entrance into the Christian's life. He is already there as Saviour. He has crossed the threshold and been given a place in the life. Yet in some lives He seems to be far more like a house-guest than the sole and rightful owner. This does not satisfy Christ's heart, nor fulfil God's purpose. When God exalted His Son to be Head over the Church, He gave Him the right to become the Lord over every Christian.

The word **"dwell"** connotes the fixed, permanent abode of the One who owns; it is illuminated and interpreted by Paul's other word, "To me to live is Christ." This word "dwell" makes the human personality of the Christian the home of Christ into which He may settle down and be absolutely at home, possessing, controlling and using it as He wills. His is to be the presiding Presence, permeating and possessing all.

**"In your hearts."** In the innermost sanctuary Christ is to be given the place of pre-eminence, enshrined and enthroned as Lord over all.

**"By faith."** On the Godward side Christ's indwelling is due to the supernatural power of the divine Spirit, while on the manward side it rests upon the willing yielding of the Christian to Christ's possession and upon the appropriation of Christ Himself by faith. Thus the presence of Christ is made a living, luminous reality, and the first purpose in the realization of our wealth is fulfilled. (*The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian*)

Although it is not strictly Scripture, you might consider taking a few moments and reading **Robert Boyd Munger's** short work entitled [My Heart Christ's Home](#) ([My Heart Christ's Home - YouTube](#)) for some thoughts on what it looks like to have Christ dwelling in your heart.

**[May the Mind of Christ, My Savior](#)**  
([Play hymn](#))

May the mind of Christ, my Savior,  
Live in me from day to day,  
By His love and power controlling  
All I do and say.

May the Word of God dwell richly  
In my heart from hour to hour,  
So that all may see I triumph  
Only through His power.

May the peace of God my Father  
Rule my life in everything,  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me  
As the waters fill the sea;  
Him exalting, self abasing,  
This is victory.

May I run the race before me,  
Strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus  
As I onward go.

May His beauty rest upon me,  
As I seek the lost to win,  
And may they forget the channel,  
Seeing only Him.

**O Jesus Christ, Grow Thou in Me**

[\(Play hymn\)](#)

O Jesus Christ, grow Thou in me,  
And all things else recede!  
My heart be daily nearer Thee,  
From sin be daily freed.

More of Thy glory let me see,  
Thou Holy, Wise and True!  
I would Thy living image be,  
In joy and sorrow, too.

Fill me with gladness from above,  
Hold me by strength divine;  
Lord, make the glow of Thy great love  
Through my whole being shine.

Make this poor self grow less and less,  
Be Thou my life and aim;  
O make me daily through Thy grace,  
More meet to bear Thy Name!

So just as the powerful words of the preceding hymn convey, Paul is praying that Christ may grow more and more intimately at home in our hearts so that we might come under His full control and blessed domination.

**Christ Liveth in Me**

by Daniel W. Whittle

Once far from God and dead in sin,  
No light my heart could see;  
But in God's Word the light I found,  
Now Christ liveth in me.

As rays of light from yonder sun,  
The flowers of earth set free,  
So life and light and love came forth  
From Christ living in me.

As lives the flower within the seed,  
As in the cone the tree,  
So, praise the God of truth and grace,

His Spirit dwelleth in me.

With longing all my heart is filled,  
That like Him I may be,  
As on the wondrous thought I dwell  
That Christ liveth in me.

**Refrain**

Christ liveth in me,  
Christ liveth in me,  
Oh! what a salvation this,  
That Christ liveth in me.

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**Christ** (5547) (**Christos** from **chrío** = to anoint, consecrate to office) is the NT counterpart of the Hebrew word transliterated Messiah. Notice that once again Paul has masterfully involved each member of the Holy Trinity - the Father (see Eph 3:14-note), the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 3:16) and Christ (Ephesians 3:17). Indeed, one of the great privileges of prayer is that we can interact with the eternal Godhead on the behalf of others and ourselves. Why are we so loathe to take advantage of this incredible privilege? Consider prayerfully and reflectively singing the following hymn (prayer) by Kate Wilkinson...

**May dwell** (2730) (**katoikeo** from **kata** = intensifying preposition and emphasizing permanence + **oikeo** = occupy a house) literally means to settle down and abide or to take up permanent abode. It means to live or dwell in a place in an established or settled manner as opposed to sojourning or making only an occasional visit. **Vincent** on **katoikeo** - Settle down and abide. Take up His permanent abode, so that ye may be a habitation of God (Ephesians 2:22-note where the derivative word katoiketerion = dwelling place = a permanent dwelling). The connection is with the preceding clause: "to be strengthened, etc., so that Christ may dwell, the latter words having at once a climactic and an explanatory force, and adding the idea of permanency to that of strengthening. (Ephesians 3) Figuratively, as in this verse, **katoikeo** refers to the possession of a human beings by God (or other supernatural beings), these divine powers said to have "settled down" in one's soul, pervading, prompting, governing it. A good thing if the supernatural being is Christ. A bad thing if the reference is to demonic beings (e.g., see Mt 12:45).

**Hearts** (2588) (**kardia**) does not refer to the physical organ but is always used figuratively in Scripture to refer to the seat and center of human life. The **heart** is the center of the personality, and it controls the intellect (mind), emotions (feelings), and will. The **heart** is the wellspring of man's spiritual life. **Heart** is a key word in Ephesians (see notes Ephesians 1:18; 4:18; 5:19; 6:5, 6:22) and is used by Paul with in the OT sense as descriptive of the center of one's personality, the thoughts, will, emotions, and whatever else lies at the center of our being. If Christ has taken up residence in our **heart**, it follows that He is at the center of our lives and exercises His rule over all that we are and do. While **kardia** does represent the inner person, the seat of motives and attitudes, the center of personality, in Scripture it represents much more than emotion, feelings. It also includes the thinking process and particularly the will and emotions because they are influenced by the intellect. If you are committed to something, it will affect your will, which in turn will affect your emotions. Men in ancient times considered the **heart** to be the center of knowledge, understanding, thinking, and wisdom, the meaning also conveyed by the New Testament uses. We often relate **heart** to the emotions (e.g. "a broken heart"), the Bible relates it **primarily to the intellect** (e.g., "Out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders," Matt 15:19). That's why you must "watch over your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23-commentary).

**THOUGHT:** Is He at the center of your heart? Your attitudes and actions will speak a louder answer than "yes" or "no"!

**Through** (1223) (**dia**) signifies the channel through which God's grace flows, here speaking of faith and remembering that this free flow of grace is based on the object of that faith, Christ Jesus our Lord. **Faith** is never the basis or the reason for justification, but only the channel through which God works His redeeming grace. **Faith** is simply a convicted heart reaching out to receive God's free and unmerited gift of salvation. **Through** the perfect, once for all sacrifice of Christ and through receiving His gift of righteousness, we have access to God in both daily prayer and eternal salvation (Ep 2:18-note; Ro 5:2-note; Heb 4:16-note, 2Pe 1:11-note). Every person who comes to Christ in faith can come before God at any time, not in self-confidence but in Christ-confidence.

**Faith** (4102) (**pistis**) means a firm persuasion, conviction, or belief in the truth. **Pistis** is not just mental assent but firm conviction, surrender to that truth and conduct emanating from that surrender. In sum, faith shows itself genuine by a changed life. Faith is never the basis or the reason for justification, but only the channel through which God works His redeeming grace. Faith is simply a convicted heart reaching out to receive God's free and unmerited gift of salvation. Furthermore, faith, like grace, is not static. In short, saving faith is more than just understanding the facts and mentally acquiescing. It is inseparable from repentance, surrender,

and a supernatural longing to obey. None of those responses can be classified exclusively as a human work, any more than believing itself is solely a human effort. As they trust Him, He makes their hearts His home. And remember not to disconnect faith from obedience -- faith that believes is faith that obeys. We can say we believe but if we refuse to obey, the validity of our belief has to be questioned.

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**Wayne Barber** explains Christ dwelling in us means we "have to learn to accommodate Him by my faith. Do you understand what that means? The word "faith" is pistos, which comes from pistoo, which comes from peitho. It means to obey it. I can tell you all day about my faith, but until you see me obey it, I don't have any faith. Faith is not something you tell people about, James says; faith is something you show people that you have by your willingness to obey Him. Some days my flesh does not want to obey Him. I have other thoughts in my mind, but God says, "You had better obey Me." I choose to obey and immediately step into what was already there—the presence of God. Folks, I am telling you, obedience, surrender, is the key to the whole Christian life. I have to let Him in. Purity, holiness, and cleansed hearts have to be the norm if a person is ever going to experience the strengthening of God in the inner man. I surrender my thoughts, my attitudes, my emotions, and my secrets, and through my faith I begin to appropriate and to accommodate the Lord Jesus Christ in my heart.

(He adds) Faith is what accommodates Him. What do I mean by faith? Well, it was by faith that He entered your life to begin with, when faith was exercised in who He is and what He has come to do and when you bowed before Him. You see, the word "faith" doesn't mean just to mentally understand. It has the idea also of bowing before Him. The deity of Christ is built into the word "faith." The Greek word pistis, comes from the word peitho, which means to be so overwhelmed, so persuaded that you are brought to your knees. That is when worship begins. Salvation is when you bow and surrender your will to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the essence of what faith is all about. When that faith was exercised, Christ entered your life. When faith continues and you continue to bow before Him and surrender to Him, then He dwells in your life by the means of faith. You see, it is what accommodates Him.

Christ is at home in the life of a person who loves Him, loves His Word and is surrendered to His will. Christ is at home in that person, and that person is going to experience the dwelling of Jesus within him. He is going to experience the manifestation of a divine power that he doesn't have on his own.

When I surrender and say "yes" to Jesus, Christ begins to live in me. I tap in to that ability that I would not have had if I had not exercised faith in Him. So we accommodate Him. We make Him feel at home by the means of faith. If I am not trusting Him, if I am not surrendering to Him, then obviously He is uncomfortable in my life.

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**F B Meyer** - The kernel of this prayer is in the clause that Christ may make His home in the believer's heart through faith. The previous petitions lead up to this. Note the Apostle's attitude-with bended knee; his plea with God-that He is the Father from whom all family love emanates; his measure-the wealth of God's glorious perfection; the necessary preliminary to Christ's indwelling-the penetration of our inmost being with the strength of the Holy Spirit. And then note the outcome: The indwelling Christ means that we shall be rooted and grounded in love. When this is the case we shall understand His love; and when we experience and know Christ's love, we shall be as completely filled in our little measure as God is in His great measure.

A dying veteran in Napoleon's army, when the surgeon was probing for the fatal bullet, said, "A little deeper and you will find the Emperor." Faith opens the door to the Spirit; the Spirit reveals Christ; Christ fills the heart; the heart begins to understand love; and love is the medium through which we become infilled with God, for God is love. It is staggering to ask all this; but the God who works in us with such power is able to do more than we ask, more than we think-abundantly more, exceeding abundantly more.

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**AND THAT YOU, BEING ROOTED AND GROUNDED IN LOVE: en agape errizomenoi (RPPMPN) kai tethemeliomenoi (RPPMPN):**

- **Being rooted** - Matthew 13:6; Ro 5:5; 1Co 8:1; 2Co 5:14,15; Gal 5:6; Col 1:23; 2:7
- **Grounded** - Mt 7:24,25; Lk 6:48
- Ephesians 3 Resources - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 3:14-16 The Fullness of God, Part 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:16 The Fullness of God, Part 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:16-17 The Fullness of God, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur
- [Ephesians 3:14-17 Making Christ at Home in Your Heart](#) - Steven Cole

**FIRM ROOTS AND  
FIRM FOUNDATION**

**And that you, being rooted and grounded in love** - Now Paul mixes his metaphors (as in 1Cor 3:9+), drawing one from agriculture (**rooted** - picture of a tree) and the other from architecture or building industry (**grounded**). The exact meaning of this description is not clear and commentaries differ in interpretations. One question is to whose love does this refer - Christ's, God's or believers, and Hoehner favors the latter. Of course this **love** does not have its source in men but in God. Some see **rooted and grounded** as a request of the prayer, but that does not seem to make good sense.

**O'Brien** says "Our preference is to interpret the words **you, being rooted and established in love** as expressing the contemplated result of the two previous infinitives, which in turn provides the condition for the next request. Through the strengthening of the inner person by God's Spirit and Christ's indwelling in their hearts, the readers are to be established in love so that they will comprehend the greatness of the love of Christ. (See [The Letter to the Ephesians](#))

**Steven Cole** on **rooted and grounded in love** (see [quote in context below](#)) - The result of being strengthened with power through God's Spirit in the inner man is that Christ will come to be at home in our hearts through faith, resulting in our being rooted and grounded in love. Paul does not specify whether this is God's love for us or our love for Him or our love for one another. So at this point, he is talking about love as the main principle of the Christian life. God's great love for us as demonstrated in sending His own Son to be the sacrifice for our sins undergirds everything. Stemming from that, all of His commandments are summed up by saying that we are to love God and love one another. Thus the Christian life is rooted and grounded in love.

**John Stott** on **rooted and grounded** - "To express how fundamental Paul longs for their love to be, he joins two metaphors (one botanical, the other architectural), both of which emphasize depth as opposed to superficiality. These Christians are to be **rooted and grounded**, or to have 'deep roots and firm foundations' (NEB). Thus Paul likens them first to a well-rooted tree, and then to a well-built house. In both cases the unseen cause of their stability will be the same: love. Love is to be the foundation on which their life is built. One might say that their love is to be of both a 'radical' and a 'fundamental' nature in their experience, for these English words refer to our roots and our foundations. (See [The Message of Ephesians](#))

**MacDonald** - To be **rooted and grounded in love** is to be established in love as a way of life. The life of love is a life of kindness, selflessness, brokenness, and meekness. It is the life of Christ finding expression in the believer (see 1Cor. 13:4-7). ([Believer's Bible Commentary](#))

**Warren Wiersbe** has a true story which emphasizes the importance of Paul's prayer for them to be grounded "In my second building program, we had to spend several thousand dollars taking soil tests because we were building over an old lake bed. For weeks, the men were laying out and pouring the footings. One day I complained to the architect, and he replied, "Pastor, the most important part of this building is the foundation. If you don't go deep, you can't go high." That sentence has been a sermon to me ever since." (See [Be Rich Ephesians: Gaining the Things That Money Can't Buy](#))

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#### **QUESTION - [How can we be rooted and grounded in love \(Ephesians 3:17\)?](#)**

**ANSWER** - After explaining to the believers at Ephesus the incredible new life that God has given them by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:1—3:13), Paul adds that he prays for them (Ephesians 3:14). Part of Paul's prayer includes the statement that they are rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17).

Part of Paul's prayer is this: "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" (Ephesians 3:17–19ESV).

Paul recounts how he is praying for the Ephesians to the God who is the Creator of all of humanity—the One from whom every family on earth derives its name (Ephesians 3:15). This One has the power to fulfill a prayer request, so Paul is emphasizing that this is not an empty prayer, nor is it offered to someone who cannot grant the request. This One has riches and glory—another evidence that God has the power to answer prayer (Ephesians 3:16a). Paul asks this Great One that He would grant the Ephesian believers "to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16). Paul understood that God has given His Holy Spirit to every person who has believed in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:13–14), and he understood that the power of God in a person's life would come through that Holy Spirit within (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). Paul asks that the believers would be strengthened in their inner persons by the Spirit within them.

Paul also recognized that the strengthening he was asking for comes through [knowing Christ](#) and His love better (Ephesians 3:19). He is not asking that God do something mystical or miraculous, but that He would allow them to really understand the things of God and of Christ that had already been revealed to them. Paul asks God that they be strengthened in this knowledge but acknowledges that they have already been rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17).

This rooting and grounding in love was something God had already accomplished for the Ephesians (and for all believers), as Paul

has explained, especially in Ephesians 1:4–14. As indicated by the verbs *errizomenoi* (“being rooted”) and *tethemeliomenoi* (“being grounded”) in Ephesians 3:17 and the perfect passive participle usage of both, God Himself has accomplished our rooting and grounding in love. Because we are rooted and grounded in love, and we have this incredible new life by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), Christ can be at home in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17a).

There is some responsibility on our part, though, as Paul exhorts that we should *let* the word of Christ dwell richly in us—we should actively be pursuing fellowship with Him through His word. Christ already dwells in us (through His Holy Spirit), and we should allow Him to be at home in us. One of the results of this kind of growth and maturing is that we may be able to comprehend how great is His love—so great, in fact that it surpasses being known, yet Paul prays that we will truly know it (Ephesians 3:18–19).

Because God has rooted and grounded us in His own love, we can live in relationship and fellowship with Him, getting to know His amazing love better each day. That is what Paul is praying for the Ephesians, and that is the richness of our [inheritance in God](#), as He has blessed *us* also with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3). One of those great blessings is the fact that God has rooted and grounded us in His love. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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**Steven Cole** - Paul mixes his metaphors, using one from botany and another from architecture to strengthen his point. We must keep the connection with the earlier part of the prayer in mind. The result of being strengthened with power through God’s Spirit in the inner man is that Christ will come to be at home in our hearts through faith, resulting in our being rooted and grounded in love. Paul does not specify whether this is God’s love for us or our love for Him or our love for one another. So at this point, he is talking about love as the main principle of the Christian life. God’s great love for us as demonstrated in sending His own Son to be the sacrifice for our sins undergirds everything. Stemming from that, all of His commandments are summed up by saying that we are to love God and love one another. Thus the Christian life is **rooted and grounded in love**.

To be **rooted** in love pictures a sturdy, growing tree that sinks down roots that enable it to withstand drought and fierce storms. A tree is a living, growing organism. Even so, the Christian life is a living, growing relationship with God and with others. God’s love is the soil in which it is rooted and it necessarily results in our growth in love for Him and for others. Love is the first-listed fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). If you are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, love will be manifesting itself obviously in your life. Conversely, if you are not growing in demonstrable love for God and others, it indicates that you are not walking in the Spirit. At best, you are a babe in Christ and He does not yet make His home in your heart. At worst, you may not be a genuine Christian at all.

To be **grounded** in love pictures a solid building, with a foundation that goes down to the bedrock. It can withstand a flood or an earthquake, because it is built on the rock. This pictures a love for God and for others that is not based on fluctuating feelings or circumstances. Rather, it is solid and steady, undergirding everything else in life.

We need to be very realistic and practical in applying Paul’s point here. Some come into the Christian life from an upbringing where love was nonexistent. They have known only anger and abuse. But, they hear about the love of Christ on the cross, they trust in Him as Savior and Lord, and they step into a brand new world. But since they have never experienced genuine love, they don’t know how to love others. Where do they begin in the Christian life? Paul’s words here suggest that they must begin to sink down roots into God’s love and they must build a foundation centered on loving God and loving others. Love must become the motive for all that they think and do.

Often, these new believers are directed into acquiring Bible knowledge. Knowing the truth of Scripture and its great doctrines is essential. There is no growth in the Christian life apart from knowledge. But, if you acquire knowledge without love, you only feed pride (1 Cor. 8:1). Paul says that if we have all knowledge, but do not have love, we are nothing (1 Cor. 13:2). So while we should strive to grow in the knowledge of God’s Word, it must always be practically oriented towards helping us love God and others.

Sometimes new believers also are directed towards serving the Lord. Again, it is vital that every believer use the gifts that God has entrusted to him or her in some sort of ministry. The parable of the talents shows that God expects us to use and multiply what He has given us for His kingdom. But, if such service is not rooted and grounded in love, it profits us nothing (1 Cor. 13:3).

Even if you were raised in a Christian home where you were loved and you were taught from childhood to think of others ahead of yourself, you still must work to sink down roots and lay a foundation in love. At the heart of loving God and others is dying to self, and none of us dies to self without a lifelong struggle. You may think that you are a loving person, but then you don’t get your way. Maybe God doesn’t answer your prayers as you think He should. Or, you’ve been obedient to Him, but then you get hit with an unexpected, difficult trial. Maybe your family members don’t go along with the way you want things done. Or, you show love towards someone who responds by betraying you or slandering you. Or, you give yourself in what you thought was selfless service, but nobody notices or says thank you. So your feelings get hurt.

Just as the test of a tree’s roots is a strong storm and the test of a building’s foundation is an earthquake or flood, so the test of your love is when these sorts of trials hit. Do you shake your fist at God because He disappointed you? Do you get angry with those who

have wronged you or who were insensitive to your hard work? If so, you've got more work to do on the foundation of your Christian life. You've got to sink your roots deeper into love. ([Knowing the Unknowable Love of Christ](#))

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**Being rooted** ([4492](#)) (**rhizoo** from **rhíza** = root) literally means to cause to take root or to strengthen with roots. In classical Greek rhizoo is often used with ethical implications. Figuratively **rhizoo** means to become stable, to render firm, to fix, to be firmly established, to be strengthened with (spiritual) "roots", to be firmly fixed with the focus upon the source of such strength. Rhizoo is used in Eph 3:17 and Col 2:6. There are only 2 uses in the Septuagint - Isa 40:24 and Jer 12:2 ("Thou hast planted them, and **they have taken root**; they have begotten children, and become fruitful; thou art near to their mouth, and far from their reins.")

**Rooted** is **perfect tense** and **passive voice**, the passive voice pointing to the "source" being from an outside Source, in context God or Christ (divine passive). Believers are established and settled securely in the love of Christ. We are rooted deeply in the soil of love and thus rooted are able to grow into strong, sturdy "trees." In Christ we find life-giving soil. In Isaiah we see a parallel picture reading that when Messiah returns He will "grant those (the primary meaning is for believing Israel but this truth is applicable to believers) who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called **oaks of righteousness**, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. (Isaiah 61:3)

Paul wrote in Colossians "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so **walk** ([present imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) in Him, **having been firmly rooted** (perfect tense) and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. (Colossians 2:6-7+)

**Grounded** ([2311](#)) (**themelíoo** from the adjective **themélios** = foundational, fundamental, describing that which lies beneath -- the foundation -- with reference always to something secure and permanent in itself) means to ground securely. Deeply and firmly founded, like a building rising higher and larger. The picture conveyed by themelíoo is that of a house which is so firmly fixed on a foundation that it is not moved by winds or floods or figuratively by the stormy waves of suffering or the loud howling roar of our adversary, the devil.

**Jesus** used **themelíoo** in His soul stirring conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount:

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been **founded** (themelíoo - perfect tense - actually pluperfect which also conveys permanence) upon the rock. (see **notes** Matthew 7:24; 7:25)

**Comment** - The metaphor is architectural and refers to the foundations on which one builds. When the storm blows, the strength of the roots is disclosed! Paul prayed that the believers might have a deeper experience with Christ, because only a deep experience could sustain them during the severe trials of life.

The refrain of the great hymn, [My Hope is Built](#), beautifully describes the meaning of themelíoo, the refrain declaring

*"On Christ the solid Rock I stand,  
all other ground is sinking sand,  
all other ground is sinking sand."*

In his epistle to the Colossians **Paul** wrote that God would present the saints before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach...

if indeed you continue (genuine believers will continue - they are not saved by continuing in their natural power but continue because they are saved and have supernatural power) in the faith firmly **established** (themelíoo in the passive voice and perfect tense) and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister. (Colossians 1:23+)

**Comment** - Believers at the moment of salvation become established on the firm foundation that was laid at the Cross which has results that continue into their present every day life (and through all ages to come).

**Peter** uses this same metaphor (establish) to encourage the afflicted saints writing...

And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and **establish** (themelíoo) you. (1Pe 5:10+)

**Love** ([26](#)) (**agape**) (Click word study on agape) is that love which is unconditional, sacrificial, and giving, even to one's enemy. The prototype of this quality of supernatural love is the Father's love for sinful men as manifest by the Son's sacrifice on the Cross. That

is the love in which we are to be rooted and grounded!

In context of Ephesians 3, the **agape** in view is the love of God revealed in Christ and poured into His peoples hearts by His Spirit (cf Ro 5:5+, Ro 5:8+; Ro 8:35-39+). God's love in Christ provides the motivating power that enables believers to love others, and thus this prayer anticipates the call to the higher, heavenly life of love in subsequent chapters (Eph 4:2+; Eph 5:2+). Those believers who are strengthened with **dunamis** by the Spirit (Eph 3:16) and in whom Christ is settled in their hearts (Eph 3:17) will be enabled to obey Paul's call in Ephesians 4:1+ to **'walk in a manner worthy of the calling'**.

**John Eadie** on **love - Love** is the fundamental grace. As love keeps its object enshrined in the imagination, and allows it never to be absent from the thoughts; so love to Jesus gives Him such a cheerful and continued presence in the mind, that as it gazes ever upon the image, it is changed into its likeness, for it strives to realize the life of Christ. It deepens also that consecration to the Lord which is essential to spiritual progress, for it sways all the motives, and moves and guides the inner man by its hallowed and powerful instincts. And it gives life and symmetry to all the other graces, for confidence and hope in a being to whom you are indifferent, cannot have such vigor and permanence as they have in one to whom the spirit is intelligently and engrossingly attached. When the lawgiver is loved, his statutes are obeyed with promptitude and uniformity. Thus resemblance to Jesus, devotion to Him, and growth in grace, as the elements and means of spiritual advancement, are intimately connected with love as their living basis. The entire structure of the holy fane is fitly framed and firmly held together, for it is "rooted and grounded in love." ([Ephesians 3 Commentary](#))

As **W. Graham Scroggie** says, "Love is the soil in which our life must have its roots; and it is the rock upon which our faith must ever rest." ("Paul's Prison Prayers".)

## My Heart Christ's Home Robert Boyd Munger

In Paul's epistle to the Ephesians, we find these words:

"That (God) would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" (Ephesians 3:16). Or, as another has translated, "That Christ may settle down and be at home in your hearts by faith."

Without question one of the most remarkable Christian doctrines is that Jesus Christ Himself through the presence of the Holy Spirit will actually enter a heart, settle down and be at home there. Christ will make the human heart His abode.

Our Lord said to His disciples, "If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). It was difficult for them to understand what He was saying. How was it possible for Him to make his abode with them in this sense?

It is interesting that our Lord used the same word here that He gave them in the first of the fourteenth chapter of John: "I go to prepare a place for you .. that where I am, ye may be also." Our Lord was promising his disciples that, just as He was going to heaven to prepare a place for them and would welcome them one day, now it would be possible for them to prepare a place for Him in their hearts and He would come and make His abode with them.

They could not understand this. How could it be?

Then came Pentecost. The Spirit of the living Christ was given to the church and they understood. God did not dwell in Herod's temple in Jerusalem! God did not dwell in a temple made with hands; but now, through the miracle of the outpoured Spirit, God would dwell in human hearts. The body of the believer would be the temple of the living God and the human heart would be the home of Jesus Christ. It is difficult for me to think of a higher privilege than to make Christ a home in my heart, to welcome, to serve, to please, to fellowship with him there.

One evening I invited Jesus Christ into my heart. What an entrance He made! It was not a spectacular, emotional thing, but very real. It was at the very center of my life. He came into the darkness of my heart and turned on the light. He built a fire in the cold hearth and banished the chill. He started music where there had been stillness, and He filled the emptiness with His own loving, wonderful fellowship. I have never regretted opening the door to Christ and I never will - not into eternity!

him, and he with me." (Revelation 3:20). If you are interested in making your life an abode of the living God, let me encourage you to invite Christ into your heart and He will surely come



After Christ entered my heart and in the joy of this new relationship I said to Him, "Lord, I want this heart of mine to be Yours. I want to have You settle down here and be perfectly at home. Everything I have belongs to You. Let me show You around and introduce you to the various features of the home that you may be more comfortable and that we may have fuller fellowship together."

He was very glad to come, of course, and happier still to be given a place in the heart

### **The Library**

The first room was the study - the library. Let us call it the study of the mind. Now in my home this room of the mind is a very small room with very thick walls. But it is an important room. In a sense, it is the control room of the house. He entered with me and looked around at the books in the bookcase, the magazines upon the table, the pictures on the walls. As I followed His gaze I became uncomfortable. Strangely enough, I had not felt badly about this before, but now that He was there looking at these things I was embarrassed. There were some books were there that His eyes were too pure to behold. There was a lot of trash and literature on the table that a Christian had no business reading, and as for the pictures on the walls - the imaginations and thoughts of the mind - these were shameful.

I turned to Him and said, "Master, I know that this room needs a radical alteration. Will You help me make it what it ought to be? - to bring every thought into captivity to you?"

"Surely!" He said. "Gladly will I help you. First of all, take all the things that you are reading and looking at which are not helpful, pure, good and true, and throw them out! Now put on the empty shelves the books of the Bible. Fill the library with Scriptures and meditate on them day and night. As for the pictures on the walls, you will have difficulty controlling these images, but here is an aid" He gave me a full-size portrait of Himself. "Hang this centrally," He said, "on the wall of the mind."

I did, and I have discovered through the years that when my thoughts are centered upon Christ Himself, His purity and power cause impure thoughts to back away. So He has helped me to bring my thoughts into captivity.

May I suggest to you if you have difficulty with this little room of the mind, that you bring Christ in there. Pack it full with the Word of God, meditate upon it and keep before it the immediate presence of the Lord Jesus.

### **The Dining Room**

From the study we went into the dining room, the room of appetites and desires. Now this was a very large room. I spent a good deal of time in the dining room and much effort in satisfying my wants.

I said to Him, "This is a favorite room. I am quite sure You will be pleased with what we serve."

He seated Himself at the table with me and asked, "What is on the menu for dinner?"

"Well," I said, "my favorite dishes: money, academic degrees and stocks, with newspaper articles of fame and fortune as side dishes." These were the things I liked - worldly fare. I suppose there was nothing radically wrong in any particular item, but it was not the food that should satisfy the life of a real Christian. When the food was placed before Him, He said nothing about it. However, I observed that He did not eat it, and I said to Him, somewhat disturbed, "Master, don't You care for this food? What is the trouble?"

He answered, "I have meat to eat that you do not know of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." He looked at me again and said, "If you want food that really satisfies you, seek the will of the Father, not your own pleasures, not your own desires, and not your own satisfaction. Seek to please Me and that food will satisfy you." And there at the table He gave me a taste of doing God's will. What a flavor! There is no food like it in all the world. It alone satisfies. Everything else is dissatisfying in the end.

Now if Christ is in your heart, and I trust He is, what kind of food are you serving Him and what kind of food are you eating yourself? Are you living for the lust of the flesh and the pride of life - selfishly? Or are you choosing God's will for your meat and drink?

### **The Living Room**

We walked next into the living room. This room was rather intimate and comfortable. I liked it. It had a fireplace, overstuffed chairs, a sofa, and a quiet atmosphere.

He also seemed pleased with it. He said, "This is indeed a delightful room. Let us come here often. It is secluded and quiet, and we can fellowship together."

Well, naturally as a young Christian I was thrilled. I couldn't think of anything I would rather do than have a few minutes with Christ in intimate companionship.

He promised, "I will be here early every morning. Meet me here, and we will start the day together." So morning after morning, I

would come downstairs to the living room and He would take a book of the Bible from the bookcase. He would open it and then we would read together. He would tell me of its riches and unfold to me its truths. He would make my heart warm as He revealed His love and His grace He had toward me. These were wonderful hours together. In fact, we called the living room the "withdrawing room." It was a period when we had our quiet time together.

But, little by little, under the pressure of many responsibilities, this time began to be shortened. Why, I'm don't know, but I thought I was just too busy to spend time with Christ. This was not intentional, you understand; it just happened that way. Finally, not only was the time shortened, but I began to miss a day now and then. It was examination time at the university. Then it was some other urgent emergency. I would miss it two days in a row and often more.

I remember one morning when I was in a hurry, rushing downstairs, eager to be on my way.

As I passed the living room, the door was open. Looking in, I saw a fire in the fireplace and Jesus was sitting there. Suddenly in dismay I thought to myself, "He was my guest. I invited Him into my heart! He has come as Lord of my home. And yet here I am neglecting Him."

I turned and went in. With downcast glance, I said, "Blessed Master, forgive me. Have You been here all these mornings?"

"Yes," He said, "I told you I would be here every morning to meet with you." Then I was even more ashamed. He had been faithful in spite of my faithfulness. I asked His forgiveness and He readily forgave me as He does when we are truly repentant.

"The trouble with you is this: you have been thinking of the quiet time, of the Bible study and prayer time, as a factor in your own spiritual progress, but you have forgotten that this hour means something to me also. Remember, I love you. I have redeemed you at great cost. I value your fellowship. Now," He said, "do not neglect this hour if only for my sake. Whatever else may be your desire, remember I want your fellowship!"

You know, the truth that Christ desires my companionship, that He loves me, wants me to be with Him, wants to be with me and waits for me, has done more to transform my quiet time with God than any other single fact. Don't let Christ wait alone in the living room of your heart, but every day find some time when, with your Bible and in prayer, you may be together with Him.

### **The Workroom**

Before long, He asked, "Do you have a workroom in your home?" Down in the basement of the home of my heart I had a workbench and some equipment, but I was not doing much with it. Once in a while I would play around with a few little gadgets, but I wasn't producing anything substantial or worthwhile.

I led Him down there.

He looked over the workbench and what little talents and skills I had. He said, "This is quite well furnished. What are you producing with your life for the Kingdom of God?" He looked at one or two little toys that I had thrown together on the bench and held one up to me. "Are these little toys all that you are doing for others in your Christian life?"

"Well," I said, "Lord, that is the best I can do. I know it isn't much, and I really want to do more, but after all, I have no skill or strength to do more."

"Would you like to do better?" He asked. "Certainly," I replied.

"All right. Let me have your hands. Now relax in me and let my Spirit work through you. I know that you are unskilled, clumsy and awkward, but the Holy Spirit is the Master-Worker, and if He controls your hands and your heart, He will work through you." And so, stepping around behind me and putting

His great, strong hands over mine, controlling the tools with His skilled fingers He began to work through me.

There's much more that I must still learn and I am very far from satisfied with the product that is being turned out, but I do know that whatever has been produced for God has been through His strong hand and through the power of His Spirit in me.

Do not become discouraged because you cannot do much for God. Your ability is not the fundamental condition. It is He who is controlling your fingers and upon whom you are relying. Give your talents and gifts to God and He will do things with them that will surprise you..

### **The Rec Room**

I remember the time He asked me about the playroom. I was hoping He would not ask about that. There were certain associations and friendships, activities and amusements that I wanted to keep for myself. I did not think Christ would enjoy them or approve of them, so I evaded the question.

But there came an evening when I was on my way out with some of my friends, and as I was about to cross the threshold, He stopped me with a glance and asked, "Are you going out?"

I replied, "Yes."

"Good," He said, "I would like to go with you."

"Oh," I answered rather awkwardly. "I don't think, Lord Jesus, that You would really want to go with us. Let's go out tomorrow night. Tomorrow night we will go to prayer meeting, but tonight I have another appointment."

He said. "That's alright. Only I thought that when I came into your home, we were going to do everything together, to be close companions. I just want you to know that I am willing to go with you."

"Well," I said, "we will go someplace together tomorrow night."

That evening I spent some miserable hours. I felt wretched. What kind of a friend was I to Jesus when I was deliberately leaving Him out of my associations, doing things and going places that I knew very well He would not enjoy? When I returned that evening, there was a light in His room, and I went up to talk it over with Him. I said, "Lord, I have learned my lesson. I can't have a good time without You. From now on we will do everything together."

Then we went down into the playroom of the house and He transformed it. He brought into life real joy, real happiness, real satisfacion, new friends, new excitement, new joys. Laughter and music have been ringing through the house ever since.

There is just one more matter that I might share with you. One day I found Him waiting for me at the door. An arresting look was in His eye. As I entered, He said to me, "There is a peculiar odor in the house. There is something dead around here. It's upstairs. I think it is in the hall closet." As soon as He said this, I knew what He was talking about. Yes, there was a small closet up there on the landing, just a few feet square, and in that closet, behind lock and key, I had one or two little personal things that I did not want anyone to know about and certainly I did not want Christ to see them. I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from the old life. And yet I loved them, and I wanted them so for myself that I was afraid to admit they were there.

Reluctantly, I went up with Him, and as we mounted the stairs the odor became stronger and stronger. He pointed at the door. "It's in there! Some dead thing!"

I was angry. That's the only way I can put it. I had given Him access to the library, the dining room, the living room, the workroom, the playroom, and now He was asking me about a little two-by-four closet. I said to myself, "This is too much. I am not going to give Him the key."

"Well," He said, reading my thoughts, "if you think I'm going to stay up here on the second floor with this odor, you are mistaken. I will take my bed out on the back porch. I'm certainly not going to put up with that." Then I saw Him start down the stairs.

When you have come to know and love Christ, the worst thing that can happen is to sense His fellowship retreating from you. I had to surrender. "I'll give You the key," I said sadly, "but You'll have to open the closet and clean it out. I haven't the strength to do it."

"I know," He said. "I know you haven't. Just give me the key. Just authorize me to take care of that closet and I will." So with trembling fingers I passed the key to Him. He took it from my hand, walked over to the door, opened it, entered it, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet and painted it, fixed it up, doing it all in a moment's time. Oh, what victory and release to have that dead thing out of my life!

### **Transferring the Title**

Then a thought came to me. I said to myself, "I have been trying to keep this heart of mine clear for Christ. I start on one room and no sooner have I cleaned that than another room is dirty. I begin on the second room and the first room becomes dusty again. I am so tired and weary trying to maintain a clean heart and an obedient life. I am just not up to it!"

So I ventured a question: "Lord, is there any chance that You would take over the responsibility of the whole house and operate it for me and with me just as You did that closet? Would You take the responsibility to keep my heart what it ought to be and my life where it ought to be?"

I could see His face light up as He replied, "Certainly, that is what I came to do. You cannot be a victorious Christian in your own strength. That is impossible. Let me do it through you and for you. That is the way. But," He added slowly, "I am not owner of this house. I am just a guest. I have no authority to proceed, since the property is not mine."

I saw it in a minute and dropping to my knees, I said, "Lord, You have been a guest and I have been the host. From now on I am

going to be the servant. You are going to be the owner and Master and Lord."

Running as fast as I could to the strongbox, I took out the title deed to the house describing its assets and liabilities, location and situation and condition. I eagerly signed it over to belong to Him alone for time and eternity. "Here," I said. "Here it is, all that I am and have forever. Now You run the house. I'll just remain with You as a servant and friend."

He took my life that day and I can give you my word, there is no better way to live the Christian life. He knows how to keep it in shape and deep peace settles down on the soul. May Christ settle down and be at home in your heart as Lord of all!

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## God's Great Love

[I pray] that you . . . may be able to comprehend . . . the love of Christ which passes knowledge. —Ephesians 3:17-19

Today's Scripture: John 3:1-18

God's love for us is so deep that we have a hard time comprehending it. It reaches down to us through the darkness of this sinful world, even though we are hopelessly undeserving. The Bible says that before God created our planet, He had decided to display the depth of His love for us through His Son's death on the cross (1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8).

In my imagination I look back over time and see the Lord raising mountains to majestic heights, cutting valleys for flowing rivers, and stretching out vast plains. I envision Him creating the mighty oceans and beautiful lakes. Then I see Him pause and reflect on the goodness of His creation. He gazes at that part of the world where His Son will be born. He knows that Jesus will be rejected and crucified. With a sweep of His hand He could obliterate the world and spare His Son from the agony of the cross. But He doesn't.

Because of God's love, the Son came to earth and was slain. On Calvary He died to pay the penalty for our sins. In John 3:16 we read, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Oh, how great is God's love for us! By: David C. Egner [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

Thinking It Over

What is your response to God's love? Have you confessed your sin and accepted His forgiveness? Are you living in grateful obedience to Him?

Eternal life is made possible by God's eternal love.

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## Loved Well

That you . . . may be able to comprehend . . . what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ. —Ephesians 3:17-19

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21

We were gathered with family for Thanksgiving dinner when someone asked if each person would share what he or she was thankful for. One by one we talked. Three-year-old Joshua was thankful for "music," and Nathan, aged 4, for "horses." We were all silenced, though, when Stephen (who was soon to turn 5) answered, "I'm thankful that Jesus loves me so well." In his simple faith, he understood and was grateful for the love of Jesus for him personally. He told us that Jesus showed His love by dying on a cross.

The apostle Paul wanted the believers in the church at Ephesus to understand how well God loved them, and that was his prayer: "That [they would] be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ" (Eph. 3:17-19). He prayed that they would be rooted and grounded in that love.

To ground ourselves in God's love, it would be helpful to review these verses frequently or even memorize them. We can also take a few minutes each day to thank the Lord for the specific ways He shows His love to us. This will help us to grow in our belief and be thankful—as Stephen is—that Jesus loves us "so well." By: Anne Cetas ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

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**F B Meyer** writes the following devotional entitled "The Receptivity of Faith" in **"Our Daily Walk"**

FAITH IS our power of appropriation. The pity is that we are so slow to make use of our Lord's resources! He does not force Himself upon us. Though He brings with Him gold tried in the fire that we may be enriched, and white raiment for our clothing, and eye-salve for our blindness; and though He knows how urgently we need these things, He will not force them on our acceptance. Rather, He stands and knocks, as a travelling merchant knocks at the door, who has wares to dispose of, and we need to open the door and receive the gifts which are offered, without money and without price (Rev3:18-20; Isa55:1-2).

Faith is our reception of the spiritual to make good the lack of the physical. It is a drawing on the Eternal for the deficiencies of our earthly pilgrimage. Probably when we look back on our present life, we shall find that our deficiencies were permitted, and even assigned, that we might be driven to avail ourselves of the fullness of the Lord Jesus (John1:16; Eph3:19). We were allowed to wander in the sultry heat, that we might know Him as the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land; we were exposed to wild tempests and storms, that we might make for alcoves and harbours in Him that we should otherwise have missed.

It has been truly observed that Job's rebellious moods arose when he thought that God was afar off, but there was a difference when he realised that God was suffering with him. Remember that you are not divided from God by a deep chasm. He knows your sorrows. In all your afflictions He is afflicted. We have not a High Priest, who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. When Jesus saw the sisters weeping, He not only succoured them, but entered into their distress, and wept with them.

Are you weary with burdens that are crushing you? Is your lot cast with them that hate peace? Is your heart oppressed with loneliness? Take Jesus into account. Don't face your difficulties alone, but meet them in the fellowship of your Saviour. Have faith, i.e., reckon on God. Let the Lord Christ dwell in your heart, and He will be responsible for all, as you reckon on Him for all.

PRAYER - O Lord, I open my nature, and since my capacity is small, I pray that by love and faith, by patience and suffering, Thou wilt enlarge my heart, that it may be filled with all the fullness of God. AMEN.

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#### **D Martyn Lloyd-Jones - 'Strengthened with Might'**

The Apostle now tells us that he is praying that the inner man may be strengthened with might by the Holy Spirit. I must emphasize that this prayer is offered for those who are already Christians. He is praying for the people whom he has been describing in the first and second chapters, where he said some very remarkable things about them, such as, 'In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession'. Not only so! The Apostle has already offered a great prayer for them in chapter 1, namely, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him'. But still he is not satisfied. He goes on praying for them, and he lets them know that although he is in prison and far away from them, he is bowing his knees, he is praying in the presence of God, he is looking into God's face on their behalf, and he is praying that in the inner man they may be strengthened with might by the Spirit of God.

I emphasize the fact that he offers this prayer on behalf of Christians because the experience of forgiveness and of salvation is merely the beginning of the Christian life. It is only the first step, an indication of entry into the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately there are many Christians who stop at that point; they are concerned only about their personal security and safety; their sole concern is to belong to the Kingdom of God. They are anxious to know that their sins are forgiven, that they will not go to hell, and that they have a prospect of going to heaven. But the moment they have had this initial experience they seem to rest upon it. They never grow, and you cannot detect any difference in them if you see them fifty years later. They are still where they were. They think they have everything, and there is no indication whatsoever of any development.

Now that is very far removed indeed from what we find here about the Christian. There are great and glorious possibilities for Christians. One of them is 'that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith' and that they may come to know something about God's love in its 'breadth and length and depth and height'; indeed that they 'might be filled with all the fulness of God'. These words indicate something of what is possible for the Christian; and we must underline the fact that it is possible for all Christians. The Apostle is not writing a circular letter to apostles, he is not concerned here only with some very exceptional persons; he is writing to the ordinary church members of the Church of Ephesus. We do not know their names, we know nothing about them; they are people whom we describe (if there is such a thing) as ordinary Christians. Yet Paul is praying for them, and he prays that they may experience all these blessings, leading to the almost incredible climax, 'that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God'.

This is not only a possibility for all Christians, it is the duty of all Christians to be in this position. The great Charles Haddon Spurgeon, dealing with this matter, once said, 'There is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary

Christian is above the worldling'. In other words, there is a stage in the Christian life, in the development of the Christian, 'which is as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling'. That states the matter in a very striking and strong manner, but it is right and true. We all know the difference in level between the non-Christian and the Christian. The Christian is on a higher level, a higher plane than the non-Christian. But Spurgeon reminds us that there are higher reaches in the Christian life which are as much above this ordinary Christian level as the Christian is above the non-Christian. We must accept that, if we really believe that Christ can dwell in our hearts, that we can know this love of God and of Christ in all its dimensions, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God. Clearly, that is as much above the ordinary Christian level as that level is above the non-Christian.

The question we must face therefore is: Have we reached this level to which Spurgeon refers? Do we conform to the description which the Apostle gives here of what is possible to the Christian? Is Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith? Have we looked into this great 'cube' of God's eternal love? Have we been staggered as we have looked at its dimensions? Do we know what is meant by being 'filled with all the fulness of God'? Do we know the God who is able to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we either ask or think? Have we reached that level, that height? Are we dwelling there? Or are we still down on the ordinary Christian level? There is always the danger of imagining that because we have been converted we can rest upon our oars, or simple become active, busy workers always rushing into activities.

Having dealt with this matter we must obviously go on to the next question. If we feel that we are still on this ordinary level, how can we reach the higher level? There is but one answer to that question, it is the answer given by the Apostle's prayer. We must be 'strengthened with might by (God's) Spirit in the inner man'.

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Why does our inner man need to be strengthened?

The first answer is that initially the Christian is only a babe. That is the New Testament term. Paul, writing to the Corinthians says, 'I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ' (1 Cor 3:1). A babe has only started to live; he has not developed fully, and he needs to be strengthened. He is weak, he is ignorant, he is innocent of many things in the world that is round and about him, and he does not have an immunity against the things that are liable to attack him. That is always the characteristic of infancy. That is why the child has to be protected by the parents; obviously he does not know, he does not understand. He takes everybody at their face value, he takes that world as it is, and sees everything superficially. He does not know of its ugliness and the foul things that are in it. It is only as we grow that we begin to understand these things. I am not saying that the babe is without sin, or that he is innocent. I do not agree with Wordsworth's idea that we come into this world 'trailing clouds of glory', and that later 'shades of the prison-house begin to close upon the growing boy'. I am saying that a child, because of his ignorance, is not aware of the dangers, and therefore needs to be protected.

The same is true of the new man in Christ Jesus. However old a man may be when he is converted, he is at first a babe in Christ. And as a babe he feels at first that everything is solved, that he will never have another difficulty. Quite frequently evangelists are responsible for such thinking; they give him that impression. In his utter innocence the babe imagines that there will never be another cloud in the whole of his life. But alas, the clouds come, difficulties arise, problems come across his path; and he is bewildered, and often he falls. He may even become a backslider. This is largely because he was a babe and was not aware of the facts. So the babe needs to be strengthened. The Apostle John in his First Epistle writes to 'little children', 'young men', and 'fathers', because there are these gradations in the Christian life, which is a process of growth and of development.

A second reason for the need of this strengthening of the 'inner man' is the existence of the devil, the adversary, the accuser of the brethren. Anyone who has not realized that he is confronted with this power is the merest tyro in the Christian life. The Apostle emphasizes the matter in the last chapter of this very Epistle, saying, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood'. The problem is not only that we have to struggle against our own flesh and blood, that is, our bodies. Neither is it merely a struggle against other men. The real problem, says Paul, is the struggle against 'the principalities and powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, the spiritual wickedness in high places'. The inner man needs to be strengthened because this power is not only great in might, but also in subtlety and in cunning. This same apostle tells the Corinthians that the arch-enemy is so powerful that he is able to 'transform himself into an angel of light' (2 Cor 11:14). He can quote Scripture, he can reason with you, he can put up arguments and present cases, and he can confront you with an appearance of truth which sounds right and truly Christian, but which is false; and he can lead you astray and into snares which will trap you. There is no more powerful reason for the need of strengthening with might by the Spirit in the inner man than the fact of the devil.

The devil always makes a special target of this inner man. I have often had to deal with people who were in trouble and difficulties in their spiritual life simply because they had not realized his existence and his cunning. They seemed to think that the only sins were the sins of the flesh. They were watching and on guard against these, and they had reached a point at which they were comparatively free. So they thought that that was the only line on which the devil attacks, and they were not aware that with great subtlety and as an angel of light he can make direct attacks upon the inner man, and insinuate there his evil thoughts and ideas, his

innuendos and suggestions. Being unaware of this they suddenly found themselves unhappy and wretched and wondering whether they had ever been Christians at all. This was entirely due to the fact that the devil in his subtlety had ignored the outward altogether and had concentrated all his attention upon the inner man. Hence the exhortation in the Old Testament: 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life' (Prov 4:23).

A third reason why we need the strengthening of the inner man is the very greatness of that which is offered to us, and which is possible for us. This possibility is 'that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith', and that we may know the love of God and may 'be filled with all the fulness of God'. The very greatness of what is offered to us demands that we be strengthened in order to receive it, lest we might be shattered by it. This is a most important point, and one which is often misunderstood; many Christians do not appreciate its significance.

An illustration of what I regard as a complete failure to understand this point occurs in some words written by the saintly Bishop Handley Moule. He writes, 'And why do we need a supreme empowering just in order to receive our Life, our Light?' He thinks that it is odd to say that we need to be strengthened to receive Jesus Christ who is our life and our light. He asks, 'Does the hungry wanderer need power in order to eat the food without which he will soon sink? Does the bewildered mariner need power to welcome on to his deck the pilot who alone can steer him to the haven of his desire? No!' The very suggestion, he suggests, seems quite ridiculous. But, in my view, this sounds quite wrong. Paul prays that we may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man in order that we may receive Christ. But, says the good bishop, Christ is our strength. In what way do I need strength in order to receive strength? After giving his two illustrations he goes on to say that Paul must be referring to a tendency within us to dread the thought of Christ's 'absolute indwelling' of our hearts, and to be afraid of it, and to wonder what it might do to us. While there is an element of truth in that statement I reject it as an exposition of this particular verse. The bishop says that we need to be strengthened by the Spirit because, left to ourselves, we are afraid to receive Christ in His fulness.

There is a very definite fallacy in Bishop Moule's argument, and a fallacy even in terms of his own illustrations. He asks the question whether a man who has been without food for a long time needs strength in order to take the food which is going to give him strength. He says, No! I venture to suggest, with great respect, that the answer may be Yes! Let me explain. Some of us have probably read about men who, during the last war, were torpedoed and who had spent many days on rafts or in boats upon the ocean; or of men who had been in concentration camps where they had been brought to the verge of starvation. Eventually these men were rescued or set at liberty. One's natural tendency would be to set them down at a table and put a great square meal before them. But to do so might very well kill them. The explanation is that the man is not strong enough to take such food. Before he is in a fit condition to take a heavy meal he must regain his strength. In order to do so you have to inject glucose into his veins, into his blood; you may have to give him various meat extracts, or a very lightly boiled egg which has but little nutriment in it. He has at first to be put on a very light diet. A man who is weak and exhausted simply cannot take strong food; it is dangerous for him to do so. I argue therefore that in terms of his own argument the bishop's case is quite wrong. It certainly misses the spiritual intent of the Apostle's prayer at this point, which, I suggest, is that what we are going to receive is so potent, so mighty, so strong, that we need to be strengthened in order that we may receive it.

Let me support my argument by referring to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians: 'I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able' (1 Cor 3:2). Correspondingly, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes: 'Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age' (5:14), that is to say, to those who have grown and developed. If you gave a baby red meat, strong meat, it will give him acute indigestion and cause him great sickness and illness. You do not give strong meat to babes; you give them milk. Strong meat is only appropriate to those whose senses have been exercised by use, who have developed, who are strong enough to take it. Indeed the Apostle Paul has said the same thing to the Corinthians in the First Epistle, chapter 2, verse 6: 'Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect'. He had not taught 'wisdom' to them because they were yet carnal, in fact, mere babes in grace. He had given them the food that was appropriate for them. Before they could receive 'wisdom' they needed to be strengthened.

All this is fully substantiated by what we find in the experiences of many saints of God. There is a well-known story of an experience that came to D. L. Moody as he was walking down Wall Street in New York City one afternoon. Suddenly the Holy Ghost came upon him; he was baptised with the Holy Ghost. He tells us that the experience was so tremendous, so glorious, that he really began to wonder whether he could stand it in a physical sense; so much so that he cried out to God to hold his hand lest he should collapse on the street. This was because of the transcendent glory of the experience. When Christ enters the heart the glory is such, the power is such, that the very physical frame seems to collapse beneath it, and we are made to tremble and shake. The same can be found in the experiences of men like Jonathan Edwards and David Brainerd. When Christ comes and dwells in the heart by faith, and when we are filled with the whole fulness of God, we need to be strong. It is a shattering, overwhelming experience. So the Apostle prays that these Ephesians may be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man. The greater the power, the greater is the strength that is needed to contain it.

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How then does this weakness of the inner man show itself? First of all, in a spiritual sense the mind needs to be strengthened. This is so because we are assailed by doubts. Some of the greatest saints have reported that they were assailed by doubts even at the end of their lives. They have not believed the doubts, but the doubts have presented themselves and have troubled them for a while. Then there is the problem of depression. Depression is very difficult to define. You may wake up in the morning and find your mind in a depressed condition. The mind that may have been working perfectly yesterday does not seem to be functioning happily today. We are conscious of a kind of dullness and slowness and inability to think clearly. The mind seems to need to be strengthened. Or we may be troubled by evil thoughts that come and attack the mind. They seem to be thrown at us. Paul talks later in chapter 6 about 'the fiery darts of the wicked one'. The devil hurls them into the mind. They start when you wake up in the morning before you have had time to think. So the mind needs to be strengthened. Another problem is that of wandering thoughts. We all experience this. You find that you can read light literature or a newspaper with no difficulty in respect of concentration. But when you try to read the Bible your mind seems to wander in all directions and you cannot concentrate. You are looking at words, you are reading the verses, but your mind seems to be elsewhere.

We need to be strengthened in the mind also because of the nature of Christian truth. While the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is in one sense gloriously simple, it is also true to say that it is the profoundest truth in the world. This Epistle to the Ephesians is not simple. You cannot understand it in a casual manner and without effort. You cannot gallop through it. There is profound truth here and subtle argumentation. There are 'immensities and infinities', to quote Thomas Carlyle. You cannot take these things 'at a run'. Born again people, Christian people, when they read this Epistle to the Ephesians may well say, 'I do not understand it'. So the mind needs to be strengthened. We are meant to apprehend truth; and we cannot do so and realize what it means, and what it is telling us, unless our minds are strengthened.

Alas, there are many Christians who do not know this, and completely fail to realize it. Not only do they not know it, they do not want to know it. Such is the Christian who says: 'I am a simple Christian, a plain man, I can give my witness and my testimony. I can do practical work. But these things are too hard for me, I cannot grapple with them. I am not concerned about doctrine and theology; I believe the simple gospel'. But no Christian has the right to speak in that manner. If you are making no real effort to understand this Epistle to the Ephesians, or all the other profound teaching in the New Testament, you are guilty of sin. This Epistle was written to ordinary Christians. We are all meant to understand these things; and we have no right to contract out of our responsibilities and say that we want a simple message, a plain gospel. For a Christian to say that he cannot be bothered, that it means too much of an effort, that his mind is tired, and that he is busy with affairs and has many problems in daily living, that he is not a natural reader or thinker, and that he is not prepared to make an effort to understand, is to deny the Scripture. The Apostle Paul prays that the minds of these Ephesians might be strengthened in order that they might realize these higher possibilities of the Christian life and experience them, and rejoice in them, and so be able to bear a powerful witness and testimony to the glory of God. Intellectual lethargy is undoubtedly the greatest sin of many Christians today. They never grow in knowledge, they end where they began. They are always talking about their first experiences, but they have never entered into these riches to which Paul refers; they have never climbed the mountain tops and breathed the pure air of God's holy truth. They are content with the ordinary level; they are ignorant of the more advanced teaching because it demands an intellectual effort.

In exactly the same way the heart needs to be strengthened because we are attacked by fears and by imaginations. We are subject to discouragement. We tend to indulge in evil forebodings. Even when all is going well with us our hearts begin to say, Ah! all is right at the moment, but you never know what is coming! And immediately we are depressed. Have we not all experienced this? How treacherous the heart can be! It can conjure up possibilities; and we go to meet them in imagination: What if this happens? what if that happens? what if this child dies? what if I lose my loved one? and so on. Thus we can make ourselves feel wretched. Nothing is actually happening, we are only imagining what we would be like if it did happen. Thus these fears and forebodings and discouragements and evil imaginations often play havoc with the Christian. There are some Christians whose whole course is 'bound in shallows and in miseries' because they have never realized the need of having their heart strengthened by the Holy Spirit.

In the same way the will needs to be strengthened. Our wills are feeble and irresolute as the result of sin and the Fall. We honestly resolve and propose to do certain things: and we really desire to do them. Then at the last moment, we are afraid, or we give up. Because of questions such as: What if I do, or what will happen if I do? the will seems to be paralysed or made irresolute, and we fail to do the thing we know we should do. How often we fail at the very last moment!

The moment you begin to look into this inner man, and to analyse him, you see that he is very weak, very feeble, and needs to be strengthened. Were it not that we can offer for ourselves the prayer that Paul was offering for the Ephesians we should every one of us fail and falter. How often have we done so in mind or in heart or in will! If we were left to ourselves there would be no hope for us, and there would be no one to recommend the gospel. But thank God there is this way whereby we can be strengthened. The Apostle states it perfectly for us here. So that however weak you may feel yourself at this moment, however much you may have failed, this is the way. The Apostle's prayer is that 'the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named', would strengthen them in the inner man. May we not then say, All is well: I can be reinforced by God? I cannot make



myself strong: I cannot put this iron into the walls of my soul; do what I will, I fail. But here is strength from God. He is all-sufficient!

The next term reads, 'may grant you'. What a blessed word is this word 'grant'! God makes me a grant; He gives me this. It is a free gift; you do not have to earn it, you do not have to purchase it. You simply ask for it and receive it. 'That He may grant you ...' The feeblest saint can lift up his face even when he cannot stand on his feet. He just looks and says—'Lord have mercy upon me', 'God strengthen me'. And he will 'grant' you the strength you need.

But, and yet more wonderful, Paul says, 'that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory'. The glory of God is the sum, the summation, of all the attributes of God, His might, His majesty, His holiness, His purity, His righteousness, His justice, God in the totality of His being. The glory of God! And it is according to the riches, the fulness of the glory, that God is able to strengthen us with might.

God does this by His Spirit. It is the special function of the Holy Spirit to do this. It was the same Holy Spirit who convicted us of sin, and who gave us the gift of faith that enabled us to believe. We could never have believed without Him, because 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned' (1 Cor 2:14). But God has given unto us of His Spirit, and it is by the Spirit we believe, and by Him that we are made spiritual men. The same Spirit can also strengthen us in the inner man. The Apostle in chapter 4 of the Epistle to the Philippians says: 'In nothing be anxious'. When things go wrong we tend to become anxious, and especially in our hearts and minds. There is only one way of getting rid of anxiety. It is, 'In all things by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God' (vv. 6–7). If you do so, says Paul, 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus'. The circumstances are not changed, they remain exactly what they were. Whence then comes the peace into heart and mind? It is from the Holy Spirit who has strengthened your heart and your mind so that you can resist everything that is against you; and you are safe.

Such then is the prayer the Apostle offers. We are living in days when we are constantly hearing about the reinforcing of materials. They reinforce concrete and there is ferro-concrete. Concrete is very strong, but, if you put some iron into it, it will be stronger still. And as new massive buildings are erected something is needed to support and to hold the weight that they will have to bear. That is the principle behind what the Apostle says here. If you and I are to contain the Lord Jesus Christ within us, and be 'filled with all the fulness of God', we must be reinforced in the inner man by the Holy Spirit. And if we realize that these are possibilities for us, and desire them, and ask God 'according to the riches of his glory' to reinforce us by His Spirit, He has promised to do so, and Christ will dwell in our hearts by faith.

Are we as much above the level of the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the level of the man who is not a Christian at all? To be such is a wondrous, glorious possibility for every one of us at this moment, in Jesus Christ, by the grace of God. ([The Unsearchable Riches of Christ- An Exposition of Ephesians 3 - pages 130-141](#))