

## Ephesians Series: What is Your Life Mission? #18 “Getting Stronger”

Message Notes, April 2, 2023

### Ephesians 3:14-17a (NIV)

<sup>14</sup>For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

### How Can We become Stronger?

#### 1. What is our Focus?

- Do we lose heart as we face problems, or do we live for the hope that lies beyond them? According to Viktor Frankl in *Night and Fog*, a person’s response is 180 degrees different depending on whether s/he has hope or a sense of mission or not.
    - a. “For this reason” (14) refers to God’s plan of salvation for all mankind referred to in Ephesians 2:22, And in him you (Gentiles) too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.
    - b. Being aware of his mission to the Gentiles (building up the Kingdom of God) and being a part of the execution of that plan allowed him to continue to be engaged and active by writing and encouraging those who visited him, despite being imprisoned.
  - Praying to “the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name” (15), Paul explains the orientation of his heart.
    - a. Each of us has developed our own image of “Father” through our personal experience, but what Paul describes here comes not from our own analogies. He means “Father” as the great and trustworthy leader who created the whole world in its perfection, who continues to care for and support it regardless of the Fall, and who prepares the way for and steadily guides it towards recovery.
    - b. Even without personal experience, deep within our hearts we recognize that such a father should exist.
      - In his response to the question, “If there is a God, how could something so tragic happen?” Rev. Funakoshi pointed out that the presumption that God exists, because many people feel that such circumstances should not be allowed to continue, and that God would not allow them to persist. Hans Kelsen, Problem of Normativity: *sollen*: ought
- Paul practiced the art of direct communication with God, the Father of the whole world: that is prayer. It is given to us as well. Where are you directing your focus? Do you believe that there is a divine plan beyond your problems?

#### 2. Strengthening the Inner Being

- Using entirely new muscles, which are the “inner being”
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18** <sup>16</sup>Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup>For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup>So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.
- a. The “inner being” is the new, eternal life received by believing in God
  - b. The “outer being” is characterized as wasting away, light and momentary troubles, what we can see, and what is temporary
  - c. The “inner being” is characterized as renewed day by day, eternal glory that outweighs everything else, unseen, eternal
- Strengthened by the power of the resurrection
- “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being” (16)
- a. We must first be clear that becoming strong comes from the power of the Holy Spirit. Devoting more time and effort to what we have already been doing in our own strength is futile, because we are fighting against supernatural forces.

- b. Use of the two words *dynamis* (power of the Holy Spirit) and *krataioo* (strengthened) doubly emphasize that the power from above is absolutely essential for living out the life you have been given. We cannot live a single day without it.
- c. “Strengthens” uses the aorist (passive continuous form), indicating that this spiritual training of being strengthened by God must be consciously continued on a daily basis.

- Remember that growth is always a process

**Romans 7:22-23** <sup>22</sup> For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; <sup>23</sup> but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me.

- a. Failure is an inevitable part of the growth process. There is no way to get everything right the first time. We are strengthened through repeated struggles and failures, just as with physical training

- b. What should I do when I fail, and when I hear a voice telling me I am not saved?

**Romans 7:25-8:2** <sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin. <sup>1</sup>Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.

- Remind yourself that you in a process of growth. Remember that you were saved through God’s unilateral mercy, and that your future growth steps will be driven by that same mercy.
- This process is not something to be undertaken alone. As v. 16 says God may strengthen you, showing that this training is something to be walked through with a trusted co-worker.

### 3. The Key is Obedience

<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may  dwell in your hearts  through faith.

- It is important to know God not only by reason and by intuition, by also through obedience to him (action)

- a. The goal of our educational system is intellectual understanding, but in life, the issue not being able to actually do what we know should be done. In our life of faith, the issue is how we live or put our faith into practice.

- b. The word heart *kardia* means “seat of knowledge,” “affections,” and “will;” usage of this word in the Bible refers to the “will” or obedience to the will of God cf. Parsons: Action **John 14:23** Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.

\*However, there may be some who feel that they are not able to take a step toward His will because they are bound by their old ego.

- The indwelling presence of Christ (the source of power)

- a. The aorist tense of the word translated dwell *katoikeo* can mean that once God begins to dwell in our hearts, He never leaves or re-enters. In other words, once we have accepted His forgiving love, He will never leave or forsake us, not matter what.

- b. This intimate relationship with the Lord who indwells us is what we long for. Through communion with a close friend with whom we can be authentic (being), we can begin to live as we truly are, including the discovery of our mission (cf. Romans 12:1 LB And so, dear brothers, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living sacrifice, holy—the kind he can accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?)

- a. **Ephesians 3:16-17 NLT** <sup>16</sup> I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. <sup>17</sup> Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him.

### Conclusion

- What are you focused on now, the problem or God’s plan?
- What can you do now to strengthen your inner being?
- What are you feeling conflicted about now as you seek to obey God?