

Sermon Series: **Prayer Reformation** (This series is inspired by a message preached by Dr. D.A. Carson at Moody Pastors' Conference, Chicago, IL)

# Father, Strengthen Us

Ephesians 3:16-17

## How did you learn to pray?

We are socialized in some ways into our prayer habits. For better or for worse, we tend to pick up the prayer patterns and habits of those who are around us. But as disciples of Jesus Christ, if we're going to be transformed by His \_\_\_\_\_, it would be helpful to go back to the ultimate models for prayer found in Scripture, and to study and pray them. For if the Bible is to inform and reform our spirituality, then one of the things it must do is ultimately shape our prayer lives.

It's easy for us to lose freshness and intensity in our praying. The way to change that is to study the prayers of the Bible and to learn to pray after their pattern. So this morning, we begin a four-part series on **Prayer Reformation** by studying the prayer of Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21. In the reformation of our own praying, what can the Spirit filled and inspired apostle teach us about prayer?

## The first request:

### 1. The \_\_\_\_\_ for power.

It is this: *That God the Father might strengthen us with \_\_\_\_\_ through His Spirit in our inner being.* All I've done is read the text in **verse 16**. Paul often prays for power from God, and we should follow his model. For example, in chapter 1:18, Paul wrote, "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, [first request] so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, [second, so that you will know] what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> **and [third, so that you will know] what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe,** [which is] in accordance with the working of the strength of His might,<sup>20</sup> which He brought about in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms." He's praying for power.

## 2. The \_\_\_\_\_ of power.

We are to ask for the same kind of power that made Jesus \_\_\_\_\_! Here's a summary of the prayer request from chapter 1: I pray **that you will know the surpassing greatness of God's power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, this exact same power that's toward us who believe!**" It's that kind of power that we are to ask God for... Resurrection Power!

## 3. The \_\_\_\_\_ of power.

When Paul uses this expression, "the riches of His glory," he connects it to Christ. For NT saints, it's always "the glorious riches **in Christ.**" For example, in Philippians 4:19, Paul wrote, "And my God will supply all your needs **according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.**" All the spiritual, eternal riches of God, which come to us to operate within us for transformation purposes, have been \_\_\_\_\_ for us by Christ.

Because Christ came and lived and served and taught and ministered and died and rose again and ascended on high and sent His Spirit, "we have the riches of God's glory **in Christ.**" All of God's determined resolve and power to transform and renew His people is generated in "the glorious riches that are found in Jesus!" So, "I pray *that according to the riches of his glory* he may grant you to be strengthened with power **through his Spirit** in your inner being."

## 4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of power.

The agent who mediates this power to us, we are told, is the \_\_\_\_\_. The Spirit of God is the Divine Conduit through which divine power flows in us. So we see all three Persons of the Trinity, and all three Persons are working this power in us and through us!

## 5. The \_\_\_\_\_ for power.

It is our "\_\_\_\_\_ being." In Greek, it's literally "the inner man"—the inner human being. This expression is used clearest in another place, in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer self [our body] is decaying, yet our **inner self** [that's exactly the

same expression—literally, “inner man”] is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.” The sphere for this power: that inner human place where eternity happens!

“The outer self is wasting away!” We’re all terminal cases, no exceptions. *But the inner being in Christ is daily renewable.* And Paul wants God’s resurrection power by His Spirit to operate in the domain of our inner being, to transform us on the inside. Pray for the outer man! But let’s hear it for praying for the temporal outer being \_\_\_\_\_, and praying much \_\_\_\_\_ for the eternal inner being!

## 6. The \_\_\_\_\_ for power.

It is one thing to ask for power, but what is the power to be used for? Sometimes we want power in our ministries so we can be thought of as powerful people. But Paul says in Philippians 3 that he intensely wants to “know the power of Christ’s resurrection,” but he also wants with the same intensity “to know the fellowship of His sufferings” (10). That puts another spin on it, doesn’t it? Here in Ephesians 3, Paul wants God’s resurrection power for us, for this purpose: **Verse 17a.**

What does that mean, “That Christ may  **dwell** in your inner being”? The verb “dwell” may be translated “inhabit.” “I pray that Christ may \_\_\_\_\_ your inner being through faith.” That gives us a clue at what is really at stake here.

When you got saved, Jesus moved in, and we are the people of the cruddy orange shag carpet. But we allow Him to move in, and He starts fixing up the place. The old begins to pass away; the new is dawning; by His Spirit, He begins to transform us. And gradually, little by little, sometimes with good forward progress, and sometimes backward slides, God starts to clean us up, because He’s determined to inhabit our whole inner being by His Spirit! *And that takes an enormous amount of power!*

The **New Living Translation** of verse 17: “And I pray that Christ will be more and more at \_\_\_\_\_ in your hearts as you trust in Him,” which is **the purpose** for resurrection power operating in your inner being. It

takes awesome power to be \_\_\_\_\_, to be transformed into the likeness of Christ, *so that* He is completely at home within you, *and the unquestioned Master of His home!*

**“This business under \_\_\_\_\_ management.”**

That’s what it means “to be strengthened with resurrection power through His Spirit in the inner being, *so that Christ will be more and more at home in your hearts as you trust in Him.*” It means that Jesus Christ didn’t come into your life to simply take up some spiritual space, but He came into your heart to take over, and to inhabit your entire being, and to transform you into His very likeness.

That takes enormous power; that takes much specific prayer-focus; and that takes serious determination on your part, striving after Christ-likeness in prayer. So may I strongly encourage you this morning to freshen up your prayers and pray with a new intensity, and pray this prayer for yourselves and for others. Reform your prayers according to this biblical pattern. For this is an awesome prayer request!