

Sermon

Grace Street Fellowship, Dr. Jim Burgin, pastor

Sunday, July 29th, 2018

Sermon Series: "Staying Cool in a Hot Summer"

Sermon # 5 - **Strength for the Battle** - Ephesians 3:14-17

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

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Staying Cool in a Hot Summer – Review of the Summer Sermon Series

1. July 1st – We are to "set an example" – 1 Timothy 4:12. – in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity;
2. July 8th – We are to "live a life worthy of the calling" we have received (Ephesians 4; 1-6). We are to be humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love. These markers serve as spiritual checks, and also become markers for others who are finding their way;
3. July 15th - "How to resolve conflict – Romans 12:18 – If possible, as much as it is possible with you, live at peace with all people." You stay connected to the Lord of peace. Take the initiative. Confess your part. Work it out with truth and love;
4. July 22nd - You have the power to bless. James 3: Understand the power of the tongue, and use it to bless others. You will be blessed in return.

Transition – Not What, but How

1. July 29th – Today's message from Ephesians 3 will point you to the resources you need for any battles you face.
2. Do you know what's right to do, but feel too weak for the task? You know, for example, that you are to set an example and to live a worthy life, but you just don't feel strong enough. You know that you should take the initiative, turn the other cheek, and use your words to bless, not to complain or to criticize, but you just can't make it happen. Then this message is for you.
3. Sometimes, like Samson, we begin to believe that we are the source of our strength.
4. Let me put it this way.
 - a. You know that when it is sweltering hot, that an air conditioner will keep you cool, but you need resources to purchase one.
 - b. If you are dying of thirst in the desert, everyone knows you need water, but you want to understand the difference between a mirage and life-giving, thirst quenching water. And you need to know where to find it.
5. More personal

- a. How do we respond when the culture at large makes fun not just of what we believe, but who we are. Or, they make fun of the Lord we love.
- b. What do you do, when you are persecuted, because of your beliefs. You can't get the A in school, because you expressed Christian perspectives. You don't get the job promotion, or you can't get ahead at work in significant ways.
- c. What do you do when life's circumstances continually drain you to the point where you feel powerless?
- d. We know what we need to do, but we can't find the strength. Today's message is titled "Strength for the Battle."
- e. So, let's look at this passage again, and learn what it teaches us.

PART 2: FOR THIS REASON

Your Heart is God's Home –

1. Ephesians 3:14 says "For this reason," or your version of God's word may say "for this cause;"
2. Question: What is Paul's reason, cause, purpose for praying this prayer?
3. Notice that Paul is repeating himself:
 - a. Ephesians 3:1 says "For this reason," but then he gets distracted. When Paul says that he is a prisoner of the Lord for the sake of the Gentiles, he takes a few paragraphs to explain himself.
 - b. Thirteen verses later, he loops back around to where he started. Ephesians 3:14 says "For this reason I bow my knees."
4. In order to find the reason Paul is talking about, we have to go back to the end of Chapter 2, at the end of the conversation. Notice in 2: 22, he says "An in him, you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."
5. In other words, God's Home is in your heart. Not the physical heart, of course, but the very center of who we are.

What does this Mean?

1. You are the Father's child – 3:14 – all of God's family derives its name from the Father. We are his children.
 - a. John 1:12 says "to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."
 - b. In the model prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father."
 - c. When Jesus prayed, it was to his "abba," his daddy. It was a very personal relationship for the Lord, and it is for us too.
2. The attacks come against the Father's children, in order to hurt the Father. If you are not a Christian yet, then the enemy's goal is to keep you in the dark, blinded from the truth. After you are a Christian, the strategy changes. His goal is to make you weak and ineffective.
3. We have an intimate connection with God – He dwells (lives, resides) there by faith. The attacks come against the fellowship between the Lord & His children. Job's wife said to Job – "curse God,

and die.” The devil said to the Lord, “Job doesn’t really love you. He loves the wealth you’ve given him.

4. Because God’s home is in our hearts, the Devil
 - a. tempts us to live by sight, not by faith.
 - b. tempts us to live by the secular, not the spiritual
 - c. tempts us to grieve the Spirit of God
 - d. tempts us to lean into our own understanding.
 - e. tempts us to connect with an idol instead of our God.
5. His Love is the source of our Life
 - a. His love roots and establishes us – grounds, centers us. You know who you are, and to whom you belong.
 - b. His love is the source of our joy – he fills us up
 - c. His love gives us power that is at work in us.
 - d. The attacks come to distract us, dissipate our strength, delude us from what we know to be true, defeat us as if we had no power, and on it goes.
6. We have family – See verse 18 – power with all the saints. Verse 20 – Power in us, and glory in the church.

PART 3: PAUL KNEELS BEFORE THE FATHER

Prayer is as Important as Instruction –

1. The posture of prayer is less important than the attitude of the heart. Posture of praying people varies in the Bible. Solomon stood at the dedication of the Temple (I Kings 8:22); David sat before the Lord when he prayed (I Chronicles 17:16); Jesus “fell on his face” in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39)
2. “Before the Father” – (vs 14). This means he was “face to face” with the Lord.
3. Why? Because Instruction isn’t enough.
4. Think of people you love. Your heart is burdened. Perhaps you have a rebellious child whose behavior is beyond typical kid behavior, and it shakes you to your foundations, scares you to death. Question. Do you understand that instruction is important, but prayer is critical. You can provide godly instruction, but it isn’t enough. The Bible says, “Whatever you sow, that will you also reap.” Only the Lord can speak to the heart. When is the last time you were on your knees for your loved ones? Depend upon the Lord for the outcome. Don’t neglect the prayer closet.

Paul Prays for Inner Strength to Overcome

1. Nowhere in here does Paul pray, nor does he promise, that their problems will shortly be removed;
 - a. John 16:33 says “In the world you will have tribulation.
 - b. Phil. 1:29 says “unto you, it is given for you to suffer for His sake.
2. Neither does Paul make light of the problems they were facing. In Ephesians 6:12, Paul reminds us that our “struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against

the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm. Believers are to put on the full armor of God.

3. He prays that they will be strengthened in the “inner man.”
 - a. What is this inner man, Paul is talking about?
 - b. When you asked Jesus into your life, you became a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). The old was gone, the new arrived.”
 - c. The inner man is another way of describing the spiritual aspect of a person. The outer man, by contrast would be the visible, external aspect of a person.
4. When praying for loved ones, we should follow Paul’s example.
5. Instead of praying for God to relieve the struggle, or to solve the problem, we should ask God to strengthen our Christian loved ones in their inner man.

PART 4: STRENGTH IN THE INNER BEING

What happens when the inner being is strengthened?

1. Dependence on God increases. Instead of praying for God to relieve the struggle, or to solve the problem, we should ask God to strengthen our Christian loved ones in their inner man. God’s children should learn to lean on Him, and lean into Him, instead of depending upon you, or upon others to solve their problems for them. When I was in junior high, my dad would help me with my math homework, because it was above my head, but my dad is an excellent teacher, and he would not do the problems for me, but he helped me learn how to solve the problems for myself. Now, I can do the math on my own.
2. We learn to depend upon God more. The natural man leans into the flesh and the world for satisfaction. For example, let’s say after many years of marriage, a husband passes away. Their children are naturally concerned about the mom, so they pray constantly for her happiness, and that God would provide another husband for her. That’s the wrong prayer.
3. Temptation loses its power. When the inner man is strong, the sweet love of Christ will makes sin’s temptation less effective.
4. His children are protected. – God’s love becomes a shield from the attacks of men, and the darts of the enemy. It doesn’t mean the darts aren’t there, but they can’t cripple us any longer.
5. Peace, Passion, and Purpose fill the child of God. God fills you up with Him. You know who you are. You don’t have to look to others to ratify your life. You know what you are to do, and no matter what comes your way, you have his peace. We have peace, because of the Prince of Peace. We have purpose. We have passion – doing God’s work, God’s way.
6. Effective Witness – We live to share his love with others.

How does this Happen in us?

1. We pray for God’s glory in all the earth, and for his kingdom to come.
2. We pray for His will, not ours.
3. What will the result look like? A song in your heart.

INVITATION

Conclusion/Invitation Peace is just as possible as Pain

1. When the inner person is strengthened, peace is possible.
2. When a man or woman faces problems without Christ, they face it in their own strength, and often they are alone.
3. The natural person has no “inner person” being strengthened by the Spirit, so he/she will be controlled by the flesh.
4. The person living in the flesh has to change his circumstances to find peace. They become a man/woman on a mission to change their circumstances, or to control the people around them. They have to be on a boat in a lake to have peace. The natural person either makes everyone around him miserable, or checks out of life in one way or another.
5. The natural/fleshly person is ultimately controlled by his situation.