

Eph Ch 3 Vs 14-16

Strength for the inner man

Last week we read over vs 14-16, not really going into vs 15 and 16 but really just more or less taking the time to use this text to consider what it takes to have a healthy Christian experience in life and what it means exercise oneself toward godliness. Because as Paul told Timothy “*bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness is profitable for all things.*”

There are really 4 essential aspects of a healthy and vibrant Christian experience though we really only concentrated last week on two of them, and I’m not going to expound on the other two today, because our text doesn’t really lend itself to those things this morning, well, one of them we could get into but it won’t be our primary focus. But I will tell you what they are, last week we took the time to examine the essential need for us as believers to be spending time in the word of God, and in prayer. God’s word being the bread of life, that which nourishes our souls, and as physical food is to the physical body, so the word of God is to the soul. and So it’s absolutely critical for me, if I want to have a healthy spiritual life and be strengthened in the inner man and not be a weak and anemic Christian who’s always suffering defeat and never moving forward, that I be taking the time to nourish the inner man by means of consistent, systematic study of the word of God.

The other aspect of spiritual health that we looked at last week was that of prayer (these things are sort of like the food groups of the soul.) and You remember that Paul is writing this letter from prison and so there’s walls all around him, and when he’s not in 4-walls he’s chained to a Roman guard, but you can have a flourishingly effective ministry even if you’re unable to physically go somewhere or do something by spending time on your knees. J. Hudson Taylor said, “*Satan may build a wall around us, but he can’t put a roof over us to keep us from praying to God.*” and So no matter what may come our way, we can always pray, that’s one thing that can’t be taken from you, they had Paul’s freedom in a physical sense, but the Gospel was by no means chained and Paul had a fervent and effectual prayer life as we examined briefly last week.

Now, we’ve been sort of tracking these various godly characteristics that we’ve seen in Paul the apostle as a model more or less as to how we measure up and the things that should be taking place in our lives. Paul told the Corinthians “*Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.*” and So we’ve been sort of gleaning a few of these characteristics that we see in him, you remember we noted humility, his love for the word of God I think speaks for itself, we see in him a continual drive, discipline and desire to pray. These are the attributes that should be and need to be abounding in your life.

Now as far as the other two essentials for a healthy Christian walk, you've probably heard me state them before, one of them being fellowship with other like-minded believers. You might call it spiritual cross-pollination, Prov 27:17 says, "*As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*" and Again don't confuse friendship, with fellowship, just getting together and hanging out (though there's nothing wrong with that) that's not fellowship, that's friendship. It's fellowship when you find God in the center of it, when you're provoking one another to good works, and no corrupt words are proceeding out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. That's fellowship, *this* in one sense (our church gathering) could be considered fellowship, coming into this sanctuary and resting at the feet of Jesus with your brothers and sisters and receiving from the word of God, Him being at the center of our gathering, this is an essential aspect of that fellowship that's so critical to us.

We won't go there, but I'd refer you to Ps 73, emphasizing vs 17 and then of course Heb ch 10 vs 24-25 as well in regards to our need to come together as a body in corporate fellowship and worship the Lord and learn of His word. and Then finally in order to keep things fresh in our walk with Christ and be growing and flourishing in Him it's important that we be sharing our faith with others. That there be an outlet for all that you're taking in, because I don't know if you've ever seen a pool of water that has only an inlet but no outlet, but it has a tendency to get stagnate, and it's no good, even if it's fresh water that's being poured into it.

You and I take in fresh water every time we open this book, or sit in a bible study, or tune in to CSN and it's important that we be sharing with other's as the Lord grants us opportunity the things that we know concerning Jesus Christ and His love for them and desire to know them and to forgive them and reconcile them to Himself, 1 Peter 3:15 says that we're to "*sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you.*" So, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ your life should be earmarked by humility, prayer, the word of God, fellowship with other believers and sharing your faith when God raises those windows of opportunity before you.

Now I'm not seeking to say that you'll be some mass evangelist, but simply that when God places opportunity before you, you'll seize it, and when you let it slide, you know you've blown it. Now, in regards to this prayer that's before us, it basically breaks up into 4 subdivisions regarding, strength, depth, love and fullness, and again they really shouldn't be looked on as isolated request, but rather one that leads into the next into the next that culminates in the fullness of God. Let's read again vs 14-16 of ch 3.

Vs 14-16

Now since we spent our entire time together last week basically revolving around vs 14 I'm not going to go any farther into that vs except to say as it's been said before, the individual who advances on their knees, never need retreat. and Again not so much from a physical standpoint though there's certainly nothing wrong with getting literally on your knees or face before God, but the main emphasis is on the disposition of your heart and your will before the Lord. and It needs to be in humble subjection to Him, Paul says, for this reason (and we spoke of those reasons last week) (finish vs 14 and 15).

Now, I don't want you to be confused here, this is not speaking of a universal brotherhood of man whereby God is the Father of us all. Now in one sense you could say that God as Creator is the Father of us all, because Adam is called the son of God in Luke 3:38 in regards to the fact that God created him, and we all came from Adam. So in the creative sense you could say that God is the Father of mankind, but in the saving sense He is only the Father of those who believe. We are not by nature children of God, (as in a universal Fatherhood of God that saves all men, you know all roads lead to God) you will not find that biblically supported. To the contrary we are by nature (as you recall in ch 2 vs 3 of this book) children of wrath and sons of disobedience. and In reality the bible speaks of 2 distinctly different spiritual fatherhoods that exist in the world, God's and Satan's. God being the heavenly Father of all who trust in Him, Satan being the spiritual Father of all who don't. and We see this clearly laid out for us in the 8th ch of John beginning there in about vs 37-47.

When Jesus said, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. and The Pharisees answered and said, we're Ab's descendants and we've never been in bondage to anyone, how can you say we'll be made free? and Jesus basically said to them, you may be Ab's descendants, but you're not Ab's children, because if you were Ab's children you would do the works of Ab, but instead you want to kill Me. and That's because you do the works of your father, and they said to Him, *"We were not born of fornication; we have one Father--God." Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him."*

In 1 John 3:10 John wrote and said, *“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.”* So the whole family that vs 15 is in regards to is the whole family including the old covenant and the new who has trusted God by faith, being as it were born again and becoming the sons of God. and Even as when you’re born you are given the name of your father, meaning that you are identified with him, you are part of his family (at least ideally though in society today that doesn’t always happen). But even so when you’re born again, you are in Christ given the name of or identified with God, you are in His family, and Paul’s petition to the Father is...

VS 16

That He (He being the Father) would grant you, and take note of that word “grant” I believe that nearly all of your bibles with the exception of those of you with NIV’s uses that word, that He would *grant* you, it’s the language of grace. and I believe, (though forgive me if I seem to nitpick here) but I think it’s relevant that he uses the word “grant” and not “give”. Because he’s not praying that God would give believers these riches, he’s already said that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. So it’s not that Paul is praying for us to be given these things, but rather that God would grant us believers to be strengthened by God according to the riches that we already possess.

In other words, he’s praying that they might live lives that correspond to the spiritual wealth that they have been given Christ. “That He would grant you, (notice) according to the riches of His glory”, here’s that little prepositional phrase again “according to”, and that’s significant, he didn’t say “out of” but rather “according to”. The petition is that you would be strengthened according to the riches of His glory, and the reason that I stop to remind you of the difference between the words “out of” and “according to” is because they’re two radically opposing things and we need to understand what’s being said here.

If I had 4 or 5 billion dollars and you asked me to contribute to your cause and you had some sad story and there was all kinds of equipment you needed to buy and so I said, wow you’ve really touched my heart, here’s .50cents don’t spend it all in one place. Then I would’ve given to you “out of” the riches that I had, but if I said, hey, I’ll fund the whole thing, here’s \$15 million dollars then I’d be giving “according to” my riches, you see there’s a vast difference there.

Paul here is pray that God would strengthen you not “out of” His riches in glory, but “according to” the riches of His glory, and God’s wealth in any capacity is limitless, so this is a powerful request that Paul is making. That we would be given the capacity equal to our opportunity, that’s what the little boy was heard to say when he fell into the barrel of molasses. “Lord, make my capacity equal to this opportunity.” To be strengthened with might, through His Spirit in the inner man, here’s that 1st subdivision regarding strength. Strengthened with might, in other words increasing in might, not physically speaking but rather spiritually speaking, later on in Eph Paul will echo this same concept when he says in ch 6:10, *“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.”*

Why, because it’s not easy to live the Christian life, it takes strength, not so much physical strength, though at times it may, but by and large the strength that is required is spiritual, and anyone who’s been a Christian more than about 2 weeks will attest to that fact. Because believers we are constantly being bombarded by Satan with temptations of one kind after another, and as an adversary he is not weak, he is a powerful enemy. and He may tempt you to blow your temper, or grow apathetic, or to lust after some individual, he may seek to lull you to sleep, he may get you entangled in some hostile web of back biting and gossiping, or any number of things. Throw on top of all of that the weakness of your own flesh and you’re in a desperate situation, we need to be strengthened with might. Ps 138:3 says, *“In the day when I cried out, You answered me, And made me bold with strength in my soul.”* Isa 40:29-31 *“He gives power to the weak, And to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, And the young men shall utterly fall, But those who wait on the LORD Shall renew their strength; They shall mount up with wings like eagles, They shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint.”* Isa 41:10 *“Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”* Phil 4:13 *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*

2 Tim 4:17 Paul said in regards to a certain trial where he stood alone and all who were with him forsook him, *“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear.”* One more Col 1:10-11 Paul again praying, *“that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy.”* Notice there what the request of strength was for, for all patience and longsuffering with joy. So many times we seek to maintain patience in and of our own strength,

I don't know about you, but in that regard my patience doesn't last too long. I unfortunately have a relatively short span of patience, ask my son about that, he knows all about it. I don't have the might, nor the sufficiency to maintain much patience, and as small as an issue as patience might seem, Paul recognized it as a real struggle in we as people and a lack of it can spiral us out into the flesh in about 0 seconds flat. and Suddenly it doesn't seem like such a minor issue anymore, it takes the power of God in our lives to be patient individuals, it's so easy to get impatient with one another and at times even with the Lord. This need to be strengthened is so real for the life of the believer, and how is this strength that Paul is speaking of here, funneled into our lives? Through His Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit, Zech 4:6 "*Not by might (that is human might) nor by power, but by My Spirit, Says the LORD of hosts.*"

So the strength that we need to lead victorious Christian's lives is funneled through the Holy Spirit into, yours and my inner man. That's what God is primarily interested in, the spiritual condition of your inner man, the real you, not just what you look like or appear to be, but who you really are way down deep in the inner recesses of your heart, that's the person that the Holy Spirit wants to strengthen.

It starts initially with the work of salvation, because according to Eph ch 2 vs 1 prior to the Holy Spirit making you alive, your inner man was dead in trespasses and sins. But then after you were resurrected into the newness of life, the position of the inner man is still God's main field of work in your life, why, because that's where spiritual life exists and where it needs to grow and be nourished. So the focus with the Lord is on the inner man, as opposed to the outer man, the world looks primarily to the outer man, there are billion dollar industries that might as well (as Bob Hoekstra put it) be called "outer man industries". That hair style is out dated, you need a new one, you need to have this scent about you, but this cologne, you weigh too much buy this product, you're too skinny and need to buff up, I've got just the right thing. and There are literally billions if not trillions of dollars being made whereby the focus is the outer man, now I'm not inferring that it's wrong to want to smell nice or look nice or to have a nice hair cut. Because I don't believe that, that's how you begin to get into legalism and religion, the Lord knows that we're body, soul and spirit, that's the way He made us. So in such things I believe (of course exercising wisdom and discernment) we have liberty to enjoy some of those things.

But I would say that you should use caution in placing too much emphasis on the things that the world lives by and lives for and lives on. If it's something that man does or is doing, just exercise caution, if it's something that only God can do go for it with all your heart, one way to consider it might be, be a radical full on fanatic for those things that God is doing, and exercise caution in those things that man is doing. Because man focuses on the physical, and is external in his thinking and motives, but that's not to be the case with you

You remember when Samuel went to the house of Jesse to anoint the next king of Israel. and His 1st son walked in and he was Mr. Politically perfect, he was tall and handsome, I mean the gut looked like a king, and he said, “*Surely the Lord’s anointed is before Him.*” In other words, wow, this has to be the guy, he hadn’t prayed about it, sought the Lord concerning it or anything, he just blurted this out due to the way the guy looked. But the Lord interrupted him and said, “*Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*”

Now, we can’t see the heart, only God can, only God can look into that core, unseen, secret person of the heart and accurately evaluate what is there, no man can do that. But what is in the heart will in due time, eventually come out for all to see. So even though we can’t see into the heart of man, what’s in there eventually does get seen, but so many people concentrate on the exterior countenance and stature, the way things appear to be, and image. But God looks to the heart, because I can do certain things outwardly, I can act a certain way, or say certain things, and even though they may appear to you to be right, my heart might be at completely opposite ends of the spectrum with the way things appear. That was the Pharisees problem (Turn to Matt 23:25-28)

You see you can make the outside of a cup all clean and shiny, but if the inside is all full of mold and filth, it’s not fit for use, it’s not truly clean, and what Jesus is saying here is that if you are doing things just so outwardly but inwardly you’re still full of self-indulgence, then in reality you’re not clean. But if a person is cleansed and strengthened in their innermost being, it’s going to be reflected outwardly as well, in other words I can change outwardly with no ramifications inwardly, but it’s impossible that I should change inwardly with out the ramifications showing themselves outwardly.

That’s why God focuses on the inner man, because when He has your heart, He has all of you, 2 Chron 16:9 says, “*For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him.*” The eyes of the Lord are running to and fro throughout the whole earth, why, what is He looking for? Handsome men and beautiful women, so that He can make His kingdom popular, so that He can make His kingdom shine with the glory of man? No, His eyes are searching this whole earth in order to find the person that He might show Himself strong on the behalf of.

What’s the qualification to be that person? Your heart has to be loyal or perfect, turned toward and tuned in, to Him, you remember when we said that God’s *ear* is turned toward and tuned into your cry, to your prayer, well, here we find that God desires your *heart* be turned toward and tuned in to Him. God is looking for hearts that are looking for Him, that’s what He’s looking for. and He wants to show Himself strong on the behalf of those who’s hearts, or that inner man, is loyal to Him.

Now I'm not saying that God's not concerned for your outward being, but the primary emphasis is on the inner man, and what's going on in there will be made manifest by the way that you live your life, the things that you say and do. Jesus said that out of the abundance, or the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. Do you want to know what's truly in the heart of a person, just hang around them long enough, and when they get comfortable around you, what are the things they talk about? Are they all consumed with the Lord and things pertaining to the Kingdom, or do they get a little more lax concerning those things and get a little more open about worldly things and fleshly things.

Jesus said, *“those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.”* You know someone stubs their toe, or slams a finger in the door, or gets upset because of their lack of patience and you hear, “oh, beep! filth, foul, and flare!” What's in the heart eventually comes out, Prov 4:23 says; *“Keep your heart (or guard your heart) with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.”*

That's why God is interested in your heart, because that's from where the issues of life spring, and so He develops our hearts so that what comes out in our walk and talk, and our relationships and attitudes is rightly reflecting Him to the world, because odds are, you're the only bible that the majority of the people you come across will ever read. Are they getting the gospel, are they seeing Jesus, or are they now more confused then ever? God wants to strengthen you with might, through His Spirit, in the inner man, now what's the evidence of that, you might define your spiritual growth as a decreasing frequency of sin. The more one is exercised towards godliness, and is yielding to the Spirits control of our lives, the less sin is present. Where the strength of God increases, sin necessarily decreases (MacArthur) the nearer you get to God, the further you get from sin. So Paul prays that we might be strengthened with might through the power of the Holy Spirit in the inner man, and yours and my inner man should be growing stronger everyday (as opposed to our outer man.)

In 2 Cor 4:16 Paul said, *“We do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.”* Our outer man is perishing, try as you may, yet due to sin, it's all down hill from here, outwardly speaking, but inwardly you can be renewed day after day after day. and Though we may grow weaker outwardly, we can grow stronger and stronger in the inner man until one day we go to be with the Lord. These outward things are temporal, but what God is doing inwardly will last forever; it will be for an eternal relationship with Him. So I encourage you, let the Lord build up and strengthen your inner man, that you might be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might bringing honor and glory to Him.