

**“Enough to Be Rich”**  
**Ephesians 3:13-21**

“I pray that you will be strengthened with power by his Spirit, that Christ will be at home in your hearts, and you will understand – be filled with – his great love.”

We’re nearing the end of the sermon series *Enough*, which I started nearly two months ago. This series has continued to circle around Paul’s great affirmation of faith in Philippians 4:12-13: “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether in plenty or in want: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Today, I want us to approach that same thought through Paul’s prayer for the church and for Christians in Ephesians 3:14-21. Have you ever listened to someone praying personally for you? Perhaps it was in a small group meeting, or a hospital room, or a counseling session, or a private encounter in a sanctuary? It’s an intimate and sacred moment when you hear your name lifted to heaven, and a prayer for you rises up. And within you wells up a desire that this prayer will be true, that what this person asks of God will come to life in and through you. Paul is praying for you and me in this letter, and I invite you to hear his words as a prayer.

Before he prays, he tells them why is praying for them. “I ask you not to become discouraged by what I’m suffering for you...” Paul is likely imprisoned, and he is concerned that his imprisonment will become a discouragement for their faith and cause them to lose heart. We are all often on the edge of losing heart. Paul is writing first to the church, and as a church, as the people of God, we are often on the edge of losing heart. We encounter the challenges of ministry and mission, we face the great need of the world and the seemingly small supply of resources we have. We know the difficulty of loving others as Christ has loved us, the painful reality of our own failings and shortcomings, the great challenge of being faithful over a long period of time, the endurance it requires. It is not hard to be strong and active and engaged for a little while; it is not hard to take on a new project or a new mission for a few weeks or months or even years. But it is a far different thing to be faithful over the long haul, to do as Eugene Peterson has written in a moving book about the Psalms: to live with a “long obedience in the same direction.” We are often on the verge of losing heart, and so Paul prays for the church.

He also prays for you and me as individuals, for as individuals we are often on the edge of losing heart. Life is full to the brim, and we go and go like the energizer bunnies. From one event to another, from one project to another, from one job to another, from one sporting event to another, one week to another, one season to another. Building a life, and careers, and businesses, and families and relationships, pouring out energy. But there is a time when the energy is nearly gone. I have come to know as a pastor there is a limit to even the most energetic person; all of us will come to the edge of losing heart. You and I cannot go on full steam forever; there is a limit. The crises that a great many of us face come when our steam runs out very unexpectedly. Transitions pile up and stresses pile up, and one day you realize you have no energy to move the pile. Sometimes the energy drains out in one great burst, and often in the face of loss – the loss of a job, or a home, a dream, or family, or marriage, or one we love. It drains the energy right out of us. We are on the edge of losing heart, and so Paul prays for you as individuals.

In therapy, counselors are taught to help people see and realize the resources they have to meet the challenges they face. When a person is losing heart, facing deep challenges, you have blinders on and all you can see is how big the challenge is. All you feel is a deficit: I don't have enough, I can't do this. Part of the work of a therapist is help you dig into your life and bring out the resources that you have but do not see; the resources that will help you meet the challenges you face. Paul is doing the work of a spiritual therapist: when he prays, he asks that the Father in heaven will strengthen you in your inner selves from the riches of his glory through the Spirit. When Paul looks at the church, when he looks at you, he sees the Spirit of the Living God dwelling within you, a Spirit that gives you access to all the riches of heaven: to the resources of God, who created the heavens and earth and holds them up with God's power; to the resources of God who created you, who knows has counted every hair of your head: to the power of the Living God, who died and rose from the dead conquering death forever.

Often we feel like a pitcher of water: for a time we are full, but then we are poured out and there is nothing left. Paul sees not a pitcher of water, but an artesian – and eternal spring. Within you, perhaps hidden in a place you cannot see it yet, God is alive and the riches of God's glory are available to you to give you power. To strengthen you in your inner selves. How many of us have need strength and prayed for *more*? God, I just need more... more courage to face to the impossible; more wisdom to discern in the inscrutable; more endurance to press through the difficult times; more kindness, to soften the hardness of the world and of my own heart; more forgiveness, to cover the regrets and guilt of others and myself; more patience to wait on your timing, God; more trust to believe in you when I cannot see or feel you. We pray for *more*.

Paul prays that we will know that we have more. That we will know that the Spirit of God is alive within us, and strengthens us with power, with a limitless supply, strengthens us in our *inner* selves when we are on the edge of losing heart.

How do we access this power? How does it become real and active in our lives and in our church? This is the second part of Paul's prayer, when he asks that Christ will live in your hearts by faith. The word heart meant something different for Paul than it means for us. For us, heart means the center of your emotions; it is where we feel and love and dream. But in Paul's world, the heart was center of the personality. The heart was the seat of the physical life – the source of your physical strength. The heart was the seat of the spiritual life – the place where you are connected with God. The heart was the seat of your mental life – it was the center of your thoughts and intentions and plans. It signifies your whole person. So Paul asks that Christ will live in your hearts, he is asking that Christ will live in the *whole* of your life: your emotional life, your spiritual life, and your physical lives – your thoughts and feelings, actions and intentions. Paul prays that Christ will *live* there. The Greek word is an interesting one because it means not simply to live, it means to settle down. It means to put down roots and make yourself a home.

We live in a community of deep roots; we live in a place where many people have lived their whole lives, and many of your parents and grandparents lived here. You have roots; you know the place and the people; the twists and turns of the road, the fields and the towns, the families and the relatives. You are rooted here. Paul prays that Christ will come to be *rooted* in your lives; Paul prays that Christ will dwell in your hearts – in your whole person – as one who is deeply at home there. The imagery that Paul is using in this prayer connects us Ezekiel's vision of the Temple in the Old Testament, when the Spirit filled the temple and the sound was a like a

mighty flood. Paul prays that you will be so filled with Christ and Christ's love, that Christ will be at home with you and you will become a temple of God.

Finally, Paul prays Christ will live in your hearts by faith. By faith is an important part of that prayer, because Christ will not put down roots in our lives unless we invite him to do so. Christ will not beat his way into our lives, but comes and makes himself at home only when we ask to stay and be at home with us. Sometimes we think of Christ like a friend who passes by every now and then; we know he's around and we see him sometimes, but only on occasion. And sometimes Christ is like an house guest who comes to visit when we have a need. When we have a need in our family, we invite my mother-in-law to come and stay and help out. There are times in life when we invite Christ to come and stay for a while because we need him then; but we do not invite him to make himself at home, only to visit.

Paul prays that we will invite Christ to come and live, to move in and put down roots; to learn the nooks and crannies of our lives, to clean out our closets and bless our conversation, to get to know our past and help us to live into God's glorious future. Because when Christ settles in with you, makes his home with you, there is a source of strength within you can that never be exhausted! There is a source of inner peace and joy that passes understanding; you can face life not with fear, but courage; not with hunger, but plenty; not with weakness but power.

This is Paul's prayer for you and for us; this is my prayer for you; that you will be strengthened with power by his Spirit, and Christ will make his home in your hearts by faith.