

Bible Study – February 16, 2010

Ephesians 3:16-18

Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.....

The inner man being reinforced with inherent capacity and power as a result of the Spirit imparting it to you is what Paul is talking about. By 'strengthened' he means to extend the degree to which you can function. Strength is the degree to which you can endure under duress or outward pressure. Paul is saying I am praying that God would raise the limits with which you can perform or execute. The Holy Spirit does a work inside you where you receive a boost of spiritual power which makes you stronger and more capable. Your level of strength must match the weight of your situation. When what you encounter is greater than your strength, there is some kind of breakdown or collapse. When you have been strengthened in your inner man, you become less likely to encounter situations where you will come up short. Any time you engage in any kind of spiritual conditioning your inner man gets stronger. The key to mental strength is a well-nourished spirit man. Your spiritual execution is determined by your spiritual health. For example, your capacity to pray, receive a word from the Lord, minister to others is dependent on how much conditioning you have applied to your spirit man. Never assume you get strength at the time something comes up. Strength must be a pre-existing condition when things happen in order to avoid a breakdown.

That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith...

Paul is talking about a consciousness or awareness of Jesus Christ which is so strong and pervasive that you have a vivid grasp of the spiritual reality of every situation. Faith is the conviction of things not seen. Therefore the key to having faith is Christ living in your heart, influencing your heart to the degree which you see beyond the natural and can operate without physical evidence. The heart is

the center of your being where decisions are made. Motivation for action comes from your heart. Whatever influences the heart determines what direction you will go. Will you go in a destructive, non-productive way or will you go in a life-giving effective direction? Conditioning of the heart equips you to operate in faith. Whatever your heart processes as most important is what dictates how much faith you will have. Faith can only exist in your heart. When you are cognizant of Christ and keenly aware of Him and when He factors into how you perceive reality and interpret situations, you automatically have faith to respond to challenges. The awareness of Jesus Christ is to be so evident and prominent in your thinking, desiring and even feeling that you are equipped to function with faith.

That ye, being rooted and grounded in love...

‘Rooted’ involves receiving nourishment, nutrition and sustenance. Through love as your source you are supplied and sustained. The depth and intensity of your love is the determining factor for how much is flowing into you in the way of spiritual provision and subsistence. Just as our physical bodies need calories (heat energy) to fuel us and give energy, our spiritual man needs a constant flow of spiritual life to fuel our inner man so it has energy and power to do things. Spiritual disciplines require varying degrees of energy in order to do them. For example, you have to be operating at a certain level of energy to execute some spiritual functions. You cannot absorb a loss without a certain degree of energy it takes to sustain it and keep going beyond it. A lot of people shut down because they encounter a situation greater than their energy level at the time. The other word is ‘grounded’ meaning stable or foundational. This relates to your ability to remain in place despite external pressures and hostile environments. ‘Grounded in love’ relates to security and permanence of conviction despite conflicting and negative forces. You receive life when you love people and people love you. You become stable and strong when you are a giver of love and a recipient of God’s love.

May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height...

This is the skill of perceiving the vast immensity of spiritual insight. He uses these four parameters to indicate the extent of the infinite resources we have at our disposal. Just as someone can have good eyesight in the natural, Paul is suggesting we develop good spiritual insight into the spiritual realm. The ability to discern, perceive and recognize spiritual things is a skill that can be sharp and keen. It is an ability that can be beneficial and meaningful in responding to various situations. It can make all the difference in whether you become overwhelmed by your circumstances or not. When you are aware of all you have going for you as a believer, you will never feel outnumbered or ill equipped for anything you need to do. It is not enough to perceive spiritual reality but we are to operate from a position of superiority in terms of what we have going for us.

When you see the full breadth, full length, full depth and full height, it changes how you assess your situation. You cannot be intimidated by what you are up against. You are always to operate from a position of strong confidence based on a stream of knowledge which comes from the spiritual realm, which gives you a true representation of the way things are.

Paul is talking about a faculty and specific skill which transcends your natural ability. He is talking about the supernatural capacity of God which works inside you, allowing you to process things in a way where everything is seen from the right perspective. Many times the key to responding to something is to see it in its proper context. Something can be very different when viewed in the wrong context. A thousand dollars can appear to be a lot but when you take it in the context of a millionaire, it is a small amount of money. Three hundred pounds may appear to be a lot of weight, but when you take it in the context of Olympic weightlifters that is a light amount. Paul is saying we must view our situations within the context of the full extent to which our spiritual resources have breadth, length, depth and height.