

Ephesians 3:16–19 | “What We Need, Part 2”

Preached on July 20, 2025 by Pastor Matt Brown

You can turn in your Bibles to Ephesians 3, verses 16–19 this morning, as we look at God’s precious Word. *[pauseee]*

Years ago, my church back in Lancaster would take these camping trips up in a large park in Canada. *[pause]*

We would go up there, canoe, hike, and camp at different places in the provincial park, but before we left for the trip, we were given a list of items to bring. *[pause]*

These items were essential to have in order for our trip to go smoothly, and for everything to be OK. *[pauseee]*

So we had to pack food, clothing, and a sleeping bag, among other things. *[pause]*

Some people would pack way too much stuff, and they would regret it because whatever you brought, you’d have to carry on your back the whole time.

But on the flip side, if you forgot to bring something essential, it would have been really bad...

You’d definitely be miserable, for you were hours away from a store. *[pauseee]*

Well likewise, in the Christian life, there are essential things that we need along the way. *[pause]*

Without them, we could really struggle, and it wouldn’t go well.

But with them, we are equipped for the journey of faith, so that we can persevere and even thrive amidst the hardship. *[pauseeeee]*

So last week, we covered verses 14–15, showing sort of the introduction to the fact that Paul prays for the Ephesians, and who he prays to...

Now, Paul will get into his requests, and those requests will likewise show us what we need. *[pause]*

I’ll begin **READING** back in verse 14 and we will go through verse 19. *[READ 14–19]*

There could be a whole list of things that could be named, but looking at Paul’s prayer requests, we find some essential items for the Christian. *[pause]*

First...

I. We need strength for Christ to dwell more fully in us. (16–17a)

I want you to take a moment right now, and ask yourself this question—what do you often pray for? *[pause]*

Now I don't know your heart or what exactly you pray for on a regular basis...

But when I think generally about Americans, there are some common things that come forth when it comes to prayer requests. *[pause]*

Many people pray for worldly success, like riches or possessions.

Others pray for health and a life of ease, and still others pray for some "sign" from God. *[pause]*

I've heard of people who pray against other people, saying to God, "Make them pay for what they did!"

And many others also pray for a change in their circumstances. *[pauseeee]*

Now, some of those things aren't inherently wrong to pray for, but what's significant is what's lacking in the content of our prayers. *[pause]*

Line up the content of your prayers with the content of Paul's prayers and compare them.

Quite often there's something significantly different in content, emphasis, and in the way we think. *[pause]*

Our prayers are often focused on the material, here-and-now of this fleeting life—things like money, possessions, comfort, and ease.

But Paul's prayers are often focused on the spiritual, eternal, and lasting things of life—things that will make a difference now, certainly, but also for eternity. *[pauseeee]*

So notice that Paul prays for the Ephesians, but he doesn't really pray that their situation would change around them, but that God would give them what they need in their situation. *[pauseeeee]*

The first request that we read is "that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being." *[pause]*

If we could sum up what he says first, it would be for Spirit-given strength within. *[pause]*

Now let's work backwards through verse 16, and at the end of verse 16, we see what kind of strength this is that Paul prays for...

It is "inner strength." *[pause]*

When we think of strength, I believe that our minds often go immediately to *physical* strength...

We might think of the strength of a bodybuilder to pick up things. *[pause]*

We might think of the strength of a marathon runner to endure a long race. *[pause]*

We might think of the body strength that a rock climber or gymnast needs, but that's not what Paul is talking about here, for he prays for strength "in your inner being." *[pauseeee]*

Outer strength would be physical strength in your physical body, but inner strength is that strength within. [pause]

It's the strength inside of you, which includes your heart, mind, and will, among other things.

So this is strength that affects your thoughts, emotions, will, desires, and choices. [pauseeee]

To be innerly strong doesn't mean that you can beat someone at wrestling, but it means that you are strong in the most important places that really impact and direct how you live. *[pauseeeee]*

Our culture is obsessed with physical strength, making it this super high ideal, so that the strongest-looking people are lifted up, yet Paul doesn't pray for that...

He prays for them to have strength in their inner being. *[pauseeee]*

What good is outer, physical strength if you have no inner strength to do the right thing when a difficult decision is to be made? [pause]

We all know of people with amazing, physical strength, who have used their strength in horrific ways. *[pause]*

So Paul doesn't pray for us all to be body builders, yet he does pray for us all to be strong within.

It's from our heart that flows our actions, so no wonder Paul prays for strength there. *[pauseeee]*

It's so encouraging that Paul isn't talking about physical strength here because it means that no matter how physically weak you are, you can be strong! [pause]

No matter what age you are, what physical disability you have, or anything like that—you can be strong in the Lord! *[pause]*

What comfort, dear ones!

If something tragic happened to you, so now you are physically weak beyond measure, you can be strong! *[pause]*

If you are 8 years old, and can't really lift much of anything that's heavy, you can be strong! [pause]

If you are 98, and your frail body can't even lift your own weight off of a chair to get up, you can be strong! *[pause]*

And that means that the most physically weak-looking person in this room could very well be the strongest among us. [pauseeeee]

Oh, praise the Lord, that walking with Him isn't about survival of the *physically* fittest! [pause]

Compared to the world, most, if not all of us, look weak...

We look frail, puny, and fragile, but with the strength of the Lord, we can be strong. [pauseeee]

Our world is impressed with those who can lift the heaviest, or push down others in the business world, but do you know what I'm impressed with?

The inner strength of a Christian, who has lost everything in their life, like family members to death, a job, money, physical health, or things like that—and still trusts the Lord amidst it all.

Now that's strength! [pauseeeee]

Strength is holding firm, resisting the temptations of life that are so strong, yet you come out victorious.

And so I'll take the church's strong ones over the world's strong ones any day! [pauseeeee]

Now how or where do we receive this strength? [pause]

Do we have to go to some physical location to charge up our power supply for the week? [pause]

Do we have to eat spinach like Popeye, or have some radioactive incident happen to us like a superhero? [pause]

Do we have to lift some weights and we will get there, or get enough rest and it will be replenished?

No, for Paul says that we are granted this strength "through his Spirit." [pause]

The way or means of receiving strength from the Lord is through his Spirit within us. [pauseeee]

At salvation, God gives His Spirit to every believer, and so now we have eternal life, spiritual gifts, and so much more, but it's through the Spirit that we can receive strength, too. [pause]

Because God resides within us through His Spirit, so He can give us inner strength as we go through this life.

Therefore, strength comes *from* God *to* us *through* the Spirit. [pauseeeee]

Our world is obsessed with proclaiming that *you* are strong enough, acting as though you must find your strength from deep down within you. [pause]

They act like you have this reservoir somewhere in you that you just need to tap into, but I am not strong in myself, by myself.

You are not strong in yourself, and when some life tragedy hits you out of nowhere, you realize that you are not strong. [pauseeee]

When the worst thing happens to a person, who keeps hearing that they are strong enough in themselves, they come face-to-face with their weakness, and proclaim, “I’m not strong! I can’t do this!”

And in that moment, all of the self-affirming words appear as vain and fade away into oblivion, for all that you are left with is your weakness ever before your eyes. [pause]

But that’s the perfect place to be in, for in your weakness you can only look outside of yourself, and so you call out, cry out, and reach out to the Lord, who has infinite stores of strength.
[pauseeee]

So how can we be strong?

Not by simply looking within, but via the Spirit within us, who gives us inner strength, so that we become “strengthened with power” from the Lord. [pause]

We receive what we need to live the Christian life...

Strength to endure, strength to serve, strength to trust, strength to love, strength to speak words of truth and grace with others, and so much more. [pauseeee]

To think that the great and all-powerful Lord of all gives us strength and power to live this life for Him is amazing. [pause]

We receive what we need because He is gracious, and what we receive is not lacking—His great riches means that we will be greatly supplied.

For Paul prays “that according to the riches of his glory he may grant” us strength. [pauseeee]

Christian, God is not lacking in what He can give to you—His supply does not run out!

Go to Him, go to Him, go to Him! [pauseeee]

He gives us out of the riches of His glory, so really, He gives to us out of Himself and what He has. [pause]

It’s not like this strength that He gives us is something outside of Himself, where he says, “Oh yeah, I have a hammer. Let me go find it in my shed for you, and you can use it.”

No, out of His glorious strength, He gives us strength, all the while never diminishing of His inherent power. [pauseeeee]

People are always looking for strength and power in this life...

Strength to make it through another day, power to accomplish something daunting, strength to be victorious over something, power over some other power that they face...

And they look for strength within themselves, or they look for strength in some occult, or look for strength in some other person or object.

But *we* are those who find our strength in the Lord. *[pauseeee]*

The Lord, who created the universe with His mere word, is our strength. *[pause]*

The Lord, who separated the waters of the Red Sea, led His people through, and then closed the waters down upon the Egyptian army, is our power. *[pause]*

The Lord, who has given us every single good thing in this life, is our strength.

And the Lord, who defeated Satan and death on the cross and in the grave, is our power.

So we look to Him, we go to Him in prayer, and pray for strength in our inner being for us and others. *[pauseeee]*

After praying for inner, Spirit-given strength, Paul then says in verse 17, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” *[pause]*

So a result of this inner strength is that Christ will dwell in your heart more deeply. *[pauseeee]*

Every believer has Christ residing in them through the Spirit, but Paul is talking about Christ dwelling in a more settled way in our hearts. *[pause]*

He wants Christ to reside in *every* part of our heart, so that no place in our life is untouched by Him. *[pauseeeee]*

So often people think, “Christ can have this aspect of my life, but those ones over there are mine.”

Yet Christ wants to dwell in *our hearts*, and that means really in the center of who we are, and where everything flows out of. *[pause]*

He wants to dust, sweep, mop, and then furnish every part of us, so that He controls and shapes every aspect of us.

And the result is that as we rely upon the Lord’s strength, and as our faith deepens, so Christ’s lordship is displayed in our lives more fully. *[pause]*

Christ becomes more and more settled in our hearts, so that Christ’s presence and power are more clearly felt and seen. *[pauseeee]*

As we become strengthened within, people will see Christ in us even more clearly. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever heard the phrase, “I see Christ in you.”? *[pause]*

It’s *that* idea—as we grow in faith, so Christ is seen more and more in and through our lives.

What a wonderful goal! *[pause]*

Wouldn’t it be wonderful, if Christ was settled more in our hearts, and settled in more of our hearts—where we let Him control and shape everything we think, do, and say. *[pauseeee]*

In order for this to happen, we need the Lord to work in us and give us a strengthened faith in Christ.

For if we disbelieve Him, distrust Him, or doubt Him, that’s not going to lead Christ to dwell even more deeply in our hearts.

But if we trust Him, and say, “Lord, dwell more in me, work in me, give me what I need, help me, lead me, and shape me,” now that’s going to make a difference!

And may the wonderful result be that we will all be able to confidently say like Paul, “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”!¹ *[pauseeeee]*

So many people are driven by self—“What do I want? What will please me? What will feel good to me? What will make me look better?”

But a Christian is to be a person who dethrones self, and enthrones Christ in their heart, and the beautiful result is Christ at home there. *[pauseeee]*

When someone moves into a new home, we often ask them, “Do you feel like you are settled yet?” *[pause]*

We don’t mean that they don’t live there, for they do, but we all know that when you first move into a new home, you don’t feel settled. *[pause]*

It doesn’t feel very much like home at first—the walls are bare, and all of your stuff isn’t out yet.

But as time goes on, you become more settled as you make it your own—so also, as true Christians, Christ is in our hearts, but is He settled? *[pause]*

Have you let Him make your heart His home, or is it more like a hotel room or an Airbnb? *[pauseeee]*

We need strength for Christ to dwell more fully in us, but secondly...

II. We need strength to know the fullness of Christ’s love. (17b–19)

People are obsessed with quick fixes, or three easy steps to success. *[pause]*

¹ Galatians 2:20.

Just walk into a bookstore, browse the shelves, and then report back—it's all over the place.
[pause]

Sadly, this kind of thinking has infiltrated the church, as sometimes Christians think that way when it comes to their walk with the Lord. [pause]

They think that if only they do a few steps, find a quick fix, or add something *extra*, then things will get so much better. [pause]

They think, “If only I could just add this extra thing and this other extra thing to my Christian walk, I'll be more spiritual.”

But what's interesting is that Paul doesn't really think or talk that way. [pause]

Rather, his emphasis is more so on the fact that we must know and grasp the things that we already have, and *that* will make the difference. [pause]

So the emphasis isn't on gaining something new and extra, but grasping something you have and that is already true. [pause]

Look at what Paul prays for in the second half of verse 17 through verse 19...

“That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.” [pauseeee]

What is the main request? Strength to comprehend and know the love of Christ. [pause]

So Christ is loving, has loved us, loves us now, and will continue to love us—but Paul wants us to truly and deeply comprehend that.

And so what is Paul showing us here about knowing the love of Christ? [pause]

Prayer is needed for this, for we need God's help to truly know His love for us. [pause]

You can't just try hard enough on your own to know the extent of God's love.

You can't comprehend it by merely being smart. [pauseeee]

There are myriads of unbelievers, who would say that Jesus appears to be a very loving guy, but they do not *truly* comprehend and know the love of Christ. [pause]

So many people will say, “Yes, I know that God is love,” but do they truly comprehend the *vastness* of His love?!

Have they truly experienced the glorious *depths* of His love? [pause]

It's one thing to know an answer on a test of God's love, but it's still another to know it from the depths of your own heart.

And so we need to *pray* to comprehend and know the extent of His love, and so we pray for God-given strength to do so. *[pauseeee]*

'Strength' here means to be fully able to do something, that is, to be capable.

So really, Paul is praying that God would give them the full capability to comprehend and know the love of Christ. *[pause]*

God must give us the power to comprehend the comprehensiveness of Christ's love—it is deep, high, wide, and long! *[pause]*

His love reaches *down* to the lowliest of sinners, and raises us *up* to the highest of heights in Heaven. *[pause]*

His love reaches *out* across the world to all kinds of people, and reaches *back* from eternity past and *forward* into eternity future.

What love of Christ! *[pause]*

May God give us the power to truly comprehend it in all of its fullness! *[pause]*

May we not just comprehend it with our minds, but know His love experientially in our hearts. *[pauseeee]*

Paul says that it's a love that surpasses knowledge, so you can't fully know His love from *only* book knowledge...

But you know His love even more deeply as you abide in Him, experience His presence, and trust Him more. *[pauseeee]*

Have you ever tried to explain something amazing to someone else, and explaining it didn't feel like it did it justice? *[pause]*

It felt like something was lacking, until the person experienced it themselves.

So also, Christ's love is like that—it's so amazing that explaining it doesn't do it justice, it surpasses mere knowledge. *[pauseeee]*

It's one thing to know that Christ is loving and died for sinners.

Many people in this world could simply recite our beliefs in that truth and not be impacted with it, but it's another thing to know that and experience it yourself! *[pauseeee]*

To know and experience that I was a condemned sinner, who couldn't save myself, as I wallowed in my sin and guilt and shame.

And yet out of great love, Christ left the perfection of Heaven to come to this sin-cursed world, live a perfect life for me, die on the cross for my sins and in my place, and then rise again...

Now *that's* something else! *[pauseeee]*

And to know that He has never stopped loving me, in fact, He loved me before the foundation of the world! *[pause]*

And He will never stop loving me, for He loves me right here, right now in all my messed-up-ness, weaknesses, sins, and flaws.

And He will love me into eternity, for I will forever be with Him, and His love will be there—now *that's* something else. *[pauseeee]*

What love of Christ—I haven't even touched the tip of the extent of His love! *[pauseeee]*

This is what we need—we need to truly know the depth of the love of Christ, and what a difference it would make in our lives. *[pauseeeee]*

Go and talk to a mature Christian sometime, and ask them: “What is one of the things that is different in your life from your previous, more immature days?”

And let me tell you, one of those things will be their grasp of the love of Christ. *[pause]*

I find that as my comprehension, knowledge, experience, and appreciation of the love of Christ grows, so my spiritual maturity grows. *[pauseeee]*

When you are first married, you think that you couldn't know your spouse any more than you did, but years down the road, you realize...

“Wow, I know them so much deeper, and I love them more than I ever thought possible.” *[pause]*

So with Christ, when you are first saved, you marvel at the love of Christ for you...

But as time goes on, you recognize, “I never thought that the love of Christ was so deep, so wide, so long, so high!” *[pause]*

It's like a vast treasure trove that never seems to have an end, and it never seems to cease yielding its glorious riches for us to wonder and behold! *[pauseeeee]*

We are strengthened in this love of Christ by “being rooted and grounded in love.” *[pause]*

We have a strong, rooted foundation of God's love for us in the gospel, and then we go on to further wonders beyond. *[pause]*

Like a rooted tree, we are sustained and grow because of the love of Christ—it is our foundation that we stand upon and build upon. *[pause]*

Our life is grounded on the love of Christ, and it grows more in the knowledge of His love, and the glorious result is “that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” *[pauseeee]*

That statement is so wonderful that it feels like a disservice to even try to talk about it, but I can’t help but proclaim this momentous truth, so that all can understand it...

As we grow in knowing Christ’s love more, so we are filled more with the fullness of God. *[pauseeee]*

This doesn’t mean that we *become* God, but that God fills us with Himself so much that God’s presence, power, and love are seen in and through us. *[pause]*

His character emanates out of us, and we reflect Him in our lives. *[pause]*

Like the Old Testament temple was filled with the glory of God, so our lives become filled with the Lord...

We become godly and Christlike, spiritually mature, and we start to become more and more of what God desires for us to be. *[pauseeeee]*

You see, the goal of Christian maturity isn’t for the glory of the believer, but for the glory of God. *[pause]*

It’s not so that people see us more fully, but see more of God more fully in us and through us. *[pauseeee]*

So look and pray to the Lord for the strength to know the fullness of Christ’s love, and let Him and His love fill you. *[pauseeeee]*

This passage shows us that...

We need strength from God, so that Christ and His love will more fully transform our lives.

Often people will want to grow in their Christian walk, but they think that they just need to try harder. *[pause]*

They think, “As long as I just put in the effort, then I’ll grow in leaps and bounds.”

But Paul reorients our minds back to reality—we need God to give us what we need to grow. *[pause]*

We don’t *just* need God at salvation, but we need God every single day.

So what do we do? We pray. *[pause]*

We pray for ourselves, but like Paul, we pray for others, too. *[pauseeeee]*

Do we pray for what Paul prays for here?

Like how often is it that we actually pray for *these* requests?! *[pause]*

Could it be that maybe we are not where we want to be because we aren't praying for the right things?

Are we praying amiss?² *[pause]*

Let's pray to the Lord for spiritual strength, so that Christ will dwell in a fuller way in our hearts...

May He feel welcome and at home in our hearts, as we trust Him, and let Him lead us and shape us. *[pause]*

And let's pray for the full ability of knowing Christ's love more—it's so deep and wide that we need help. *[pause]*

And the glorious result of all of this is the fullness of God within us, emanating out of us as we live as shining lights in this dark world.³

² A reference to James 4:3.

³ A reference to Philippians 2:15.