

Strengthened

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:14-21)

Paul, after writing to the Ephesian Christians regarding the responsibilities in God's plan that the grace of God had given him, describes the prayer he offers on their behalf. The apostle prays that the Ephesian Christians (and the Colossian Christians; see **Colossians 1:11**) would be strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man. This had already been accomplished with the disciples in the Galatian region and Phrygia (**Acts 18:23**). This is also something that Peter was concerned with in regard to Christians. *"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, **strengthen** and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen."* (**1 Peter 5:8-11**). This is something the disciples in Sardis needed (**Revelation 3:2**). Undoubtedly, if these Christians needed strength, Christians now still need strength, too.

What is it to be strengthened? "Strengthened" is the process of being made strong or powerful—the opposite of being weak. Of course, the apostle is talking about being strengthened spiritually. Remember! One can be spiritually weak (**1 Corinthians 11:30; Romans 15:1**).

What is the source of strength? It is of God. That ought not to be any surprise, for all good and perfect things come from God. *"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"* (**Philippians 4:19**; see also **James 1:17**). Paul, through personal example, also reminds us that we can do all things [the things of God's will] through the strength he provides. *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"* (**Philippians 4:13**).

What is the measure of strengthening? It is to be mightily or powerfully accomplished. Furthermore, it is to be *"according to the riches of His glory."* Can you think of anything more beyond measure than the glory of God? Even when His people are tired, His riches of strength are abundant—it never runs out. *"He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary"* (**Isaiah 40:29-31**). *"Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand"* (**Isaiah 41:10**).

How does the strengthening come? It is by the Spirit. The Spirit giving strength may have been, for some, in a miraculous way for a time, as the angels did Jesus (**Matthew 4:11**). However, the word of revelation, which came of the Spirit, is, the source of spiritual strength for all. “*I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one*” (**1John 2:14**). A knowledge of the word is the difference between being weak or strong (**Romans 14:19-23; 15:1**). Faith, which comes by hearing the word, makes one strong (**Romans 4:20**). Putting on the whole armor of God, which is becoming equipped with the word, makes for strength (**Ephesians 6:10-17**). To show further that it is by the word that we are strengthened, notice that Christians become weak when they do not study the word (**Hebrews 5:11,12**).

Where is this strengthening to be? It is to be in the inner man. The inner man is the spiritual man—it relates to our attitude, our heart (**2Corinthians 4:16**). Even a Christian, when he is bedridden, may be strong. Being strengthened in the inner man is the only strength which profits very much (**1Timothy 4:8**). See the role of the word in this? This strength comes by exercising with the word (**1Timothy 4:6-8**).

How is strength seen? It is manifested in several ways. We sometimes can see strength in diligence in attendance (**Acts 2:42**). We see strength in real Christian service (**Galatians 6:1**). We see strength when Christians fight the good fight (**Ephesians 6:10-11**). We see strength in people who stand fast (**1Corinthians 16:13**). We see strength when people do right (**Revelation 3:2**). The weak falter in all of these.

Is there strength in you? Some mentioned in Scripture were strong (**1John 2:14**). Are you? If you suspect that you are not strong, why not give heed to the instructions which we have just considered? Why not exercise so as to grow? — S. Scott Richardson Sr.