

mission was finished. He was convinced of the love of God. Thus, start praying this prayer in Ephesians that you (and those you love) will have an ongoing revelation of the depth, height, and breadth of God's great love. The assurance of God's love must become the foundation for your inner strength.

Fellowship with God

Paul's prayer reveals something else about his amazing strength. It tells us that Paul was committed to **ONGOING FELLOWSHIP** with His Lord and Savior. Obviously, this is why Paul was praying in the first place. You see, through prayer, worship, and recalling the promises of God you enter a level of fellowship and exchange with Christ that is just not possible otherwise. 1 John 1:3 is a powerful verse that summarizes the primary objective of our faith. It says, ***“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you THAT you may have fellowship with us; AND TRULY OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.”*** Once you become a Christian, the Apostle John says that your priority should be on FELLOWSHIPING with Christ. **Through fellowship, Jesus can infuse you with His power, His plans, and His ideas. Your life can become the great adventure that God intended it to be.**

The Holy Spirit is the one who brings us into fellowship with Christ. Any illustration to explain how this process works will fall woefully short – but let me present one idea that may help. Let's consider how the INTERNET works. Your personal computer can access a wealth of information via the internet. **Without the internet, your computer sits all alone. Alone, it only has a limited amount of information stored on the hard drive. But with the internet, your computer immediately becomes connected to something much greater.** You are able to download all sorts of information, music, news, videos, and on and on. Now let's compare this to your walk with the Lord. You are like your personal computer – and the Holy Spirit is comparable to the internet. The Holy Spirit connects you to the wealth of God's resources. **When you learn to pray, worship, read the Word, etc. your “connection” allows you to “download” God's directions, wisdom, and information from heaven.** Let me quickly add that the Holy Spirit is not an “it” or a “force” – the Holy Spirit is God. As I said, no illustration is perfect. But I

think it helps to understand that without the connection of “fellowship” in the Spirit, you are cut off from heaven's resources just as your computer can be cut off from the internet.



The Divine Exchange

As you fellowship with Christ, you will experience what I've come to call the **DIVINE EXCHANGE. Your weakness will be exchanged for His strength; your inability for His ability; your lack for His provision; and on and on.** This wonderful principle is throughout the Old and New Testaments. For example, Isaiah 40:29-31 says, *“He gives power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew (Hebrew - “exchange”) their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.”* What a beautiful picture of the Divine Exchange! The Apostle Paul had learned to live this way. In 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 he said: *“And he (Jesus) said unto me, ‘My grace (ability) is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.’ Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”* **Jesus was standing right there with Paul when all men forsook him – and He is standing right there with you now.**

Dear friend, I pray that you will learn to draw on the strength of Christ in all that you do. Abide in Him and learn to live in a state of Divine Exchange.

■ -- Jason Peebles

Key Memory Verse:

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” *Philippians 4:13*

Prayer for His Strength

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. Teach me to depend on your strength instead of my own. I choose to commit the situations that I am facing into your hands. Thank you for your inner strength that goes far beyond my own ability. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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Christ Who Strengthens Me

by Jason Peebles

In 2 Timothy 4:16-17 Paul describes one of his most difficult emotional times. **He said, “At my first defense NO MAN STOOD WITH ME, BUT ALL MEN FORSOOK ME.”** Can you imagine that? The great apostle had no one! He felt abandoned and all alone. Have you ever felt like that? Have you ever felt that no one else in the whole world understood you or was willing to stand by you? It's during those times that we must learn (like Paul) to draw on the strength of Jesus Christ alone. **Paul went on to say, “However, 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. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.”** You, too, can learn to draw on the strength of Christ during difficult times.

Through Christ

Paul set a standard for all of us. In Philippians 4:13 Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Paul had learned the secret of drawing on the strength of Christ. He had learned to exchange his inability for God's ability. Just think of it. Paul endured unbelievable problems. 2 Corinthians 11:23-33 lists just a few of them: stonings, beatings, assassination plots, shipwrecks, hunger, lack, and all sorts of other dangers. Wow! The next time you are tempted

to feel sorry for yourself, just read Paul's list! So how did he do it? Paul knew how to yield to the power of Christ. Remember, he said – **"I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME."**

It is important to recognize that the strength that Paul spoke of comes from Christ Himself, by the Holy Spirit. For a moment let's consider a few things that Paul did NOT say in his verse. He did not say, "I can do all things through positive thinking." Certainly "positive thinking" is important. In fact, I believe that Christians who understand how to walk by faith will be the most positive people in the world. But the point is that our positive disposition comes from Christ Himself and the strength that He imparts. It is not the result of some kind of mental gymnastics on our part.

Additionally, Paul did NOT say, "I can do all things because I am a strong person." It is true that when we walk with Christ we will be strong. **But here's the precise point of the matter – it is not a self-generated strength. No, it is a Christ-generated strength that comes from within as we learn to fellowship with Him and depend on Him.** As we learn this secret, we can actually exchange our weakness for His strength; our discouragement for His encouragement; and our impending defeats for His victories. In truth, we can learn to live an EXCHANGED LIFE where all our weaknesses can be exchanged for His strength.

The Inner Man

Let's examine one of the most important prayers of the Apostle Paul that deals with this inner strength. **In fact, you really should mark this passage in your Bible. I've memorized it and make it a habit to pray this prayer every day for myself and those on my prayer list.** This prayer gives us a direct glimpse into how Paul operated and how he prayed for the believers of his day. If it was good enough for Paul then it's good enough for us! Study this passage carefully and start praying it:

Prayer for Your Inner Man Ephesians 3:14-21

"For his cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, TO BE

STRENGTHENED WITH MIGHT BY HIS SPIRIT IN THE INNER MAN; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now unto Him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKS IN US."

Wow -- what a powerful prayer! OK, let's briefly examine some of the key points that give us insight into Paul's secret of ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"*** --

1. Inside / Outside - First of all, Paul was praying for the believers of His day to be strengthened on the "inside." That's extremely important. We all want to see results on the "outside" (in our goals, business, families, etc) – but Paul lets us know that victories always start on the "inside" – in our hearts and minds. When you feel discouraged on the inside it's hard to be motivated on the outside. **Thus, it is very important for you to start praying every day for yourself (and those you love) to have the inner strength of the Holy Spirit.** This is the real key to victory. Pray that you will have the influence and power of the Spirit in your mind, emotions, plans, willpower, feelings, etc. If you are strong on the inside, then it will only be a matter of time until you see the breakthroughs you need on the outside.

2. "By His Spirit in the inner man" - Paul gives us a simple model of how we are made. We have an "outer man" and an "inner man." The outer man is our physical body and our inner man is our mind, will, emotions, and spirit – in other words, everything on the inside (2 Cor 4:16-18). **It was in this inner dimension of our being that Paul prayed for the Holy Spirit's strength. As we stated earlier, Paul knew that if we were strong on the "inside" then we would be strong on the "outside."** This kind of strength comes through prayer, worship, and fellowship with our Lord.

3. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith" – At first, this may seem like an odd thing to pray for Christians. When Paul prayed for Christ to live in their



hearts, he was not praying for the Ephesians to be "saved" in the sense of becoming new Christians. They were already Christians. In Ephesians 1:1 Paul addressed them as *"the faithful in Christ Jesus."* No, he was praying that Christ would FULLY live in every part of their hearts. Here again, Paul is praying for the power of Christ to infuse every part of their being. It's one thing to be a Christian and another thing for Jesus to influence every area. **Paul was praying that the anointing would infuse every part of their minds, emotions, and hearts ("Christ" means the Anointed One).** This is why Paul goes on to pray, *"That you might be filled with all the fullness of God."* Jesus Christ "in you" wants to "fill you" and influence you with His inner strength and motivation. **Thus, it is important for you to begin praying every day for Christ to FULLY LIVE in your heart – that His power will infuse you, impregnate you, and influence every part of your being.** Each day, I pray something like this over my life and the lives of those on my prayer list: *"Jesus, I ask that your strength will be imparted to my heart and mind today by your Holy Spirit. Fill me with your motivation, your plans, and your desires. I claim Philippians 2:13 that says, 'It is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.' I thank you that you are working in my mind, my emotions, my will, and my spirit. Thank you that your strength even lifts me above hurtful memories from my past. Thank you for strength beyond my own ability. Thank you that I can do all things through you."*

4. "Exceedingly abundantly ABOVE all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." What a fantastic promise that we are given when the strength of Christ infuses us! Paul makes it clear that when we are strong on the "inside" we can expect amazing results on the "outside." We all want verse 20 (quoted above – *"exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think"*) – but notice that it only comes after the sections of the prayer on being strengthened on the "inside" by the power of the Holy Spirit. Let this fantastic promise motivate you when you feel discouraged. **You should get in the habit of praying something like: "Lord, I thank you that you are doing exceedingly abundantly ABOVE all that I can ask or think, by your power that is at work in me."** Finally, here is one more area that I want to touch on . . .

5. "And to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge." This section really deserves an entire study on its own, but let me briefly address it here. **Our main inner strength will come from an ongoing revelation of the depth of God's love for us.** For example, if I am convinced that God loves me and cares for me, then I won't worry. Why worry about finding a job if I'm truly convinced (not just mentally, but deep within my heart and subconscious) that God truly loves me? My energies can be better spent **THANKING HIM** (in faith) that He is opening the right door for me. If I am truly convinced that God loves me, then I won't worry about others who may let me down or betray me. God will watch over me and show me what to do and how to respond. After all, He is more powerful than any plot against me! **The most important key for your inner strength is an ongoing revelation of just how much God truly loves you and how you can trust Him in every situation.** So, when you sense that tormenting "feeling" that something may not work out, learn to pause and **THANK GOD FOR HIS GREAT LOVE.** Romans 8:32-33 says, *"What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things."*

Paul knew that God would watch over him when all men forsook him. He knew that Christ was there beside him. Paul was confident that no one (including Roman soldiers) could take his life until his