

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

Title: Spiritual Strength

Sermon Summary:

This sermon from Ephesians 3:14-19 emphasizes the critical importance of developing inner spiritual strength rather than focusing solely on external religious activity. It teaches that God's primary work occurs in the "inner man" - the true spiritual self that only God can see. Through the Holy Spirit's power, believers are called to be strengthened internally, rooted and grounded in Christ's love, and filled with the fullness of God. The message challenges believers to prioritize their private walk with God through prayer, Bible study, and obedience, recognizing that external pressures and trials reveal what's truly happening inside. When the inner man is strong, believers can withstand life's storms and overflow with Christ's love, demonstrating patience, long-suffering, and joyfulness regardless of circumstances. The sermon warns against the danger of maintaining an outward appearance of spirituality while neglecting the inner life, which leads to spiritual weakness when trials come.

Key Points:

- God focuses on strengthening the inner man while many believers focus only on external religious activity
- The Holy Spirit strengthens believers through God's Word, prayer, and obedience
- A weak inner life will collapse under external pressure, but a strong inner man reveals Christ when trials come
- Being "rooted and grounded in love" provides stability and depth in the Christian life
- Believers must comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of what they have in Christ
- Knowing Christ's love experientially (not just intellectually) motivates and constrains believers
- God desires to fill believers with His fullness so they live from spiritual overflow
- The outward man may be perishing, but the inward man can be renewed daily
- Storms and trials don't create weakness - they reveal the condition of the inner man
- Deep spiritual roots must be built before difficult seasons arrive

Scripture Reference:

- Primary passage: Ephesians 3:1-19 (focusing on verses 14-19)
- Supporting passages: 2 Corinthians 4:16, Colossians 1:9-11, John 14:23, Genesis 39:20-23, Daniel 6:10-23, Proverbs 4:23, Romans 8:38-39, Psalm 22, Hebrews 4, Exodus 34, Luke 1:15

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

Stories:

- Joseph in prison maintaining faithfulness and gaining favor despite horrible circumstances
- Daniel continuing to pray three times daily despite the king's decree, leading to the lion's den
- Stephen being stoned while praying for his persecutors' forgiveness
- Moses coming down from the mountain glowing after spending time with God
- John the Baptist being filled with the Spirit from birth and ready for ministry
- Personal illustration about house inspections revealing hidden problems beneath the surface
- Illustration of cherry trees looking beautiful but having weak roots that fail during storms
- Analogy of taking a cup to the ocean - you can know God's love without exhausting it

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

Discipleship Questions

How does the concept of strengthening the 'inner man' differ from outward religious activity, and what practical steps can you take this week to prioritize your inner spiritual life over external appearances?

When pressure and trials come into your life, what typically 'comes out' of you, and what does this reveal about the current state of your inner man?

The sermon mentions that Christ wants to 'dwell' in our hearts, meaning to fully occupy and rule our inner life. Are there specific 'rooms' in your life that you have not yet surrendered to His control?

How does the example of Daniel praying with his windows open despite the decree challenge your own willingness to prioritize time with God when external pressures mount?

What does it mean to be 'rooted and grounded in love,' and how does a deep understanding of Christ's love for you affect your ability to withstand life's storms?

The passage speaks of comprehending the breadth, length, depth, and height of what we have in Christ. In what ways have you experienced Christ's limitless provision that goes beyond intellectual knowledge?

How can focusing on a quick devotional or social media snippet versus spending substantial time in prayer and Scripture affect the strength of your inner man over time?

Stephen forgave those stoning him because his inner man was strong and rooted in Christ's love. What current relationship or conflict in your life requires this kind of inner strength to respond with grace?

The sermon suggests that God often works on our inner man during trials rather than immediately removing the difficulties. How does this perspective change the way you pray about your current challenges?

What would it look like practically for you to be 'filled with all the fullness of God' so that when life cuts you, what bleeds out is Christ rather than bitterness, anger, or fear?

Small Group Guide: Spiritual Strength

Based on Ephesians 3:14-19

Opening Prayer

Begin your group time by asking God to strengthen your inner man and help you comprehend what you have in Christ.

Ice Breaker Question

Share about a time when external pressure revealed what was really going on inside your heart. What did you learn about yourself?

Key Scripture

Ephesians 3:16-19 - "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 ye, 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 passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

Main Points Summary

1. Inner Man Strength (verses 14-17a)

God's first great work is strengthening the unseen life—the true spiritual you that nobody else can see.

2. Rooted Deep (verses 17b-18)

Being rooted and grounded in Christ's love allows us to comprehend our vast and limitless reality in Jesus.

3. Filled Beyond Measure (verse 19)

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

God wants us to know Christ's love experientially and be filled with all His fullness for greater spiritual usefulness.

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Inner Man

1. **What is the difference between the "outer man" and the "inner man"?** How does focusing on one versus the other affect our spiritual lives?
2. **The sermon mentioned that "many believers focus on the outside while God focuses on inside strength."** What are some ways we focus on external appearances rather than inner spiritual health?
3. **Read 2 Corinthians 4:16.** How can our inward man be renewed day by day even while our outward man is perishing? What does this look like practically?

The Process of Strengthening

4. **According to the sermon, how does the Holy Spirit strengthen our inner man?** (Hint: Through God's Word, prayer, obedience, and trials)
5. **Compare the Hymn "Sweet hour of prayer" versus "30-second social media clip."** How has our modern culture affected our ability to spend quality time with God? What changes might you need to make?
6. **What does it mean for Christ to "dwell" in your heart versus just being present?** Are there "rooms" in your life you haven't given Jesus access to?

Rooted and Grounded

7. **Discuss the examples of Daniel and Joseph.** How did their inner strength show during external trials? What can we learn from their examples?
8. **The sermon used the illustration of trees with shallow versus deep roots.** What storms in your life have revealed the depth (or shallowness) of your spiritual roots?
9. **Read Proverbs 4:23.** Why is it so important to "keep thy heart with all diligence"? What are practical ways to guard your heart?

Comprehending Christ's Love

10. **What does it mean to comprehend "the breadth and length and depth and height" of what we have in Christ?** How does this comprehension change how we handle life's challenges?
11. **The sermon said, "And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."** How can we know something that passes knowledge? What's the difference between head knowledge and experiential knowledge?

12. How does being "filled with all the fullness of God" affect our daily lives? What would overflow from your life if you were truly filled with God?
-

Personal Reflection Questions

(Take 3-5 minutes of silent reflection)

- When pressure is applied to your life, what actually comes out? Is it Christ or something else?
 - On a scale of 1-10, how would you rate the strength of your inner man right now?
 - What specific area of your life have you not surrendered to Christ's rule?
 - Are you prioritizing time with God, or are you trying to maintain spiritual strength through "religious activity"?
-

Key Takeaways

1. **God does His best work on the inside.** The inner man must be strengthened before the outer life can properly reflect Christ.
 2. **Spiritual strength comes from time with God.** We cannot microwave spiritual maturity—it requires consistent time in His Word and prayer.
 3. **Storms reveal, they don't create weakness.** Life's pressures expose what's really happening in our inner man.
 4. **Deep roots must be built before difficult seasons arrive.** We can't wait until the crisis to start strengthening our inner man.
 5. **The Christian life is meant to be lived from overflow.** When we're filled with God, Christ naturally flows out when we're "cut" by life's trials.
 6. **God wants to use you until your last breath.** Spiritual growth and usefulness are not just for the young—the inner man can grow stronger even as the outer man ages.
-

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge

Choose at least TWO of the following to implement this week:

Daily Disciplines:

- Spend at least 15-30 minutes in God's Word each morning before checking your phone
- Set aside a "sweet hour of prayer" one day this week—60 minutes focused on God

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

- Memorize Ephesians 3:16-19
- Journal about what God is teaching you through trials you're currently facing

Heart Examination:

- Ask God to search your heart and reveal areas you haven't surrendered to Him
- Identify one "room" in your life you need to give Christ access to
- Confess any sin that's weakening your inner man and ask for cleansing
- Write down specific ways you've seen God's love in your life this past year

Outward Expression:

- Share with someone this week what you're learning about Christ's love
- Look for an opportunity to serve someone, allowing Christ to overflow from you
- When a trial comes this week, consciously choose to respond with Christ's strength rather than your flesh
- Encourage another believer by sharing a verse that has strengthened your inner man

For Parents:

- Have a conversation with your children about the difference between the inner man and outer man
- Prioritize your child's spiritual development over external achievements this week
- Model what it looks like to spend time with God in front of your children

Group Activity Option

The Root Inspection: Bring in two plants—one with shallow roots and one with deep roots (or show pictures). Discuss:

- What conditions create deep roots versus shallow roots?
- How does this apply to our spiritual lives?
- What "soil conditions" in our lives promote deep spiritual roots?

Prayer Focus

Pray together as a group for:

1. **Strengthening of the inner man** - That God would work deeply in each person's heart this week
2. **Surrender** - That each person would give Christ full access to every area of life

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

3. **Comprehension** - That we would truly grasp the breadth, length, depth, and height of what we have in Christ
 4. **Overflow** - That we would be filled with all the fullness of God and overflow with His love to others
 5. **Specific needs** - Share and pray for specific trials group members are facing, asking God to use them to strengthen the inner man
-

Closing Thought

"Before God enlarges what He does through you, He deepens what He does within you."

Next Steps:

- Share with the group next week how God strengthened your inner man
 - Be prepared to discuss what happened when you prioritized the inner man over external busyness
-

Additional Resources for Study

- **Related Scriptures:** Romans 8:31-39; Colossians 1:9-11; Psalm 1:1-3; Jeremiah 17:7-8
- **Hymn to Meditate On:** "Sweet Hour of Prayer" or "The Anchor Holds"
- **Question to Ponder:** If someone observed your life this week, would they see evidence of a strong inner man or just religious activity?

5-Day Devotional: Strengthening the Inner Man

Day 1: The Hidden Work of God

Reading: 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Devotional: God's greatest work happens where no one else can see—in your inner man. While the world focuses on external appearances and achievements, God looks at the heart. The outward man may be perishing, facing trials, aging, and weakness, but the inward man can be renewed daily through time with God. This renewal doesn't happen through religious activity or busyness, but through intimate fellowship with Christ. When pressure comes and life squeezes you, what flows out reveals the true condition of your inner life. Today, ask yourself: Am I investing more in how I appear to others or in who I'm becoming before God? The storms of life don't create weakness; they reveal what's already inside.

Day 2: Christ Dwelling in Your Heart

Reading: Ephesians 3:14-17

Devotional: For Christ to dwell in your heart means more than His presence—it means His rule. Many believers have invited Christ in but haven't given Him access to every room of their lives. Perhaps there's a "memory room" you keep locked, or a "fantasy room" you reserve for yourself. True dwelling means Christ has full occupancy, ruling from within. This happens as your inner man is strengthened through His Spirit. When you spend time in God's Word, when you pray authentically, when you surrender more territory to Him, Jesus gains more of you. He doesn't just want to visit your life; He wants to make His permanent residence there, transforming you from the inside out.

Day 3: Rooted and Grounded in Love

Reading: Colossians 2:6-7; Jeremiah 17:7-8

Devotional: A tree's ability to withstand storms depends on roots no one can see. Similarly, your spiritual stability depends on how deeply rooted you are in Christ's love. Deep roots aren't developed during the storm—they must be cultivated long before difficulties arrive. The tree planted by rivers of water endures drought because its supply runs below the surface. Are you drawing daily from the deep love of Christ? When you comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of what you have in Him, external circumstances lose their power to shake you.

Ephesians – Week 9 – Spiritual Strength – Bible Study Helps

Spend time today meditating on Christ's love for you—how He died for you when you were His enemy, how He's adopted you, made you a joint heir. Let these truths sink deep roots.

Day 4: Knowing the Unknowable

Reading: Philippians 3:7-10; Romans 8:35-39

Devotional: Paul prays that we would "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." How can we know what surpasses knowledge? This isn't merely intellectual understanding—it's experiential intimacy. Like taking a cup to the ocean, you can experience Christ's love without ever exhausting it. Every trial, every challenge, every season of life offers fresh opportunities to know His love more deeply. The love of Christ constrains us—it motivates and compels us beyond mere duty. When you've truly encountered His love through Scripture, through answered prayer, through His faithfulness in hardship, you cannot remain unchanged. Today, reflect on how you've personally experienced Christ's love. Let gratitude fill your heart and overflow into action.

Day 5: Filled With All the Fullness of God

Reading: John 15:1-11; Colossians 2:9-10

Devotional: God's ultimate desire is to fill you completely with Himself. You don't get more of the Spirit; the Spirit gets more of you. As you empty yourself—surrendering your eyes, ears, hands, feet, thoughts, and plans—God fills those spaces with His presence and power. A Spirit-filled life isn't about emotional experiences; it's about progressive surrender and daily obedience. When trials come and you're "cut" by circumstances, what bleeds out? If you're filled with God, His character flows from you—patience, peace, love, joy. Moses didn't know he was glowing after meeting with God, but others saw the evidence. Time with God leaves visible marks on your life. Today, ask: What areas have I not surrendered? Lord, fill every part of me with all Your fullness.