



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
May 12, 2013

THE POWER OF INNER STRENGTH

Ephesians: Recognizing Who You Are in Christ
Ephesians 3:14-21

This morning in Ephesians 3 we're going to look at a prayer. This is a prayer that Paul prays within a letter, so it's kind of an interesting prayer. I imagine that God hears all kinds of different prayers. Probably some very strange prayers that God listens to and responds to. I find it fascinating.

I am reminded of the story of the woman who had a parrot. She wanted this parrot to be a spiritual parrot so she taught this parrot to say, "Squawk! Let's pray! Let's pray!"

Along the line she met a guy that she started to like and enjoy and he also had a parrot. He was a little rough around the edges. He had a parrot and whenever that parrot said anything he said, "Squawk! Let's kiss! Let's kiss!"

It turns out that over time the man and the woman fell in love and ended up getting married. As they brought their households together they decided to introduce their parrots to each other. The spiritual parrot said, "Squawk! Let's pray! Let's pray!" to which the other parrot said, "Squawk! Let's kiss! Let's kiss!" And the first parrot said, "Praise the Lord! My prayers have been answered!"

Today we're going to look at a prayer in Ephesians 3 that Paul is writing in a letter. It's kind of an interesting prayer. In fact I think it's fascinating to see how Paul prays for the Ephesians and we can learn some valuable things with it. So turn with me in your Bibles to Ephesians 3:14-21.

Notice it starts: *For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

The reason Paul is drawn to prayer in this passage is because this passage doesn't stand alone. This passage actually appears in the context of several chapters. If we go back we can see why he's really drawn to prayer like this.

In Ephesians 1 if you were to go back there you would see how we're adopted into the family of God and God chose us before the foundations of the world. This whole idea of being a part of God's family is strategic and is amazing for Paul in and of itself.

But in Ephesians 2 it talks about how we get to be part of God's family. In Ephesians 2:8-9 it describes that the salvation that comes from God that we receive comes by God's grace. It's available to everyone, but not everyone receives it. It's by grace through faith. And so we position ourselves under the grace of God to receive the salvation that He gives us. We do that by faith. That in itself is also amazing, but Paul elaborates then in the rest of chapter 2 of Ephesians.

He elaborates on what that does for individuals and their relationships together. Not just changing as a person so they can accept Jesus and have Him change their life, but He does something in relationships. He talks about how the Jews and Gentiles who had this barrier wall of hostility; that wall was broken down and now relationships can be restored.

One of the things we find continually is that people who trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and then give over their relationship with someone else to the Lord, when those two people develop a spiritual relationship as a foundation, they grow closer together. Walls of hostility are broken down. The commonness of God's Spirit that brings that unity brings such a closeness that those are relationships that last forever.

It's powerful what God does and in the midst of that there's a specific example for the Jews and the Gentiles who had been at hostility, animosity for years. Now there's this sense that they're coming back together, that there's this way for them to be a new humanity, the Bible says in chapter 2. Chapter 3 uses the word 'church' to describe that as they become the church, the people of God, God does something. Unity takes place in their relationships.

As Paul is talking about all of that he's going, "We've got to pray." This is so powerful. So that's why he says that we're going to kneel here before the Father. *For this reason I kneel before the Father*, he says.

Now he's going to lead us into this prayer. People pray in all kinds of different positions. Sometimes people are praying kneeling, sometimes people lay prostrate on the ground, sometimes people lift their hands to heaven or look up to the heavens.

I remember when I was a child my dad opened the Bible and he said, "Let's talk about prayer." He opened the Bible to the passage that said Jesus opened His eyes to heaven and prayed. The reason he did that was because he wanted to dialogue with me and my three siblings about whether we should keep our eyes open or not in prayer. He started by talking about the example of Jesus and having His eyes open. Then he did this little activity with us.

He said, “Okay, we’re going to pray now. Scott and Lori, you keep your eyes open. Mark and Kent, you close your eyes and we’re going to pray.” It felt kind of uncomfortable in that situation to pray with my eyes open. And then he switched it around. We prayed again and the other two of us closed our eyes and the others opened their eyes. It was an opportunity for us to evaluate something because my dad asked this question: If Jesus opened His eyes toward heaven and prayed, why do we close our eyes and sometimes fold our hands when we pray? Why do we do that?

I remember that. It made an imprint on my mind. It was always a rule, close your eyes, but now it was something more than that for me because now I realized I was closing my eyes for my own benefit. I was closing my eyes in order to put away the distractions of the things that are there when I pray so that I can focus on the Lord.

People pray in all kinds of different postures because I think that posture contributes to attitude. When Paul says, *I kneel before the Father*, it’s describing this attitude that he had of humility before God. When we come with humility before God it makes a statement of our willingness to listen to what He has to say. And posture contributes to attitude, right?

I remember disciplining my kids sometimes and they’d come back and they’d be ready to re-enter family life and they’d say, “I’m ready.” I’d say, “Well look. If you’re ready then I want you to turn around and face me, put your hands down at your sides, look at me in the eyes, smile, and show me you’re ready.” And when they start to do that we start seeing a countenance change. We start seeing an attitude change and responsiveness. That’s what we’re talking about here when we’re talking about posture affecting our attitude.

So this kneeling before God is very important. Is there correct posture for prayer? The answer is yes, there is. But it doesn’t have to do with body posture; it has to do with heart posture. So when we come before God and we kneel our hearts before the Lord then God is able to do something inside of us. We are talking to the God of the universe who has all these riches available to us and wants to pass them on to us. We come humbly asking God for those things.

Paul says, *For this reason I kneel before the Father*. I think the Ephesians could imagine Paul kneeling before the Father because the last time they saw Paul (this is a letter) he was kneeling.

The story happens on his third missionary journey. Paul had already met the Ephesians, but he’s on his way to Jerusalem and he comes to the coast and he doesn’t have time to go into Ephesus and talk to the people. He calls out the elders and says, “Come on out to the coast. I want to pray with you, I want to encourage you.” He brings them out, he talks to them about how to pastor well as you’re working with the Ephesian church. But then the Bible says he got down on his knees with the others there on the beach and they prayed together.

Paul was about to leave and go to Jerusalem and Paul knew his trip to Jerusalem wasn’t going to be pleasant. I don’t know if he knew exactly what was going to happen, but he knew it wasn’t going to be pleasant.

What happens is Paul goes to Jerusalem and there is a ruckus on the Temple Mount. People think it must've been Paul who created it. They unfairly drag him in to the Sanhedrin. They question him, they want to prosecute him, and so he appeals to Caesar which means now he's imprisoned and is on a boat (because when you appeal to Caesar as a Roman citizen you go to Caesar). So he's on his way to Rome and when he gets to Rome he's in a Roman prison. That's where now he writes the letter to the Ephesians to encourage them and to say to them, "Hey, I'm praying for you." *For this reason I kneel before the Father*, he says.

Notice verse 15: *from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name*.

We know that there's a sense in which God is the Father of all creation and so as created beings we all look to God as our head. But I think he's talking about more than that because of the context about how we all come together as a part of God's church and God is our Father that we enjoy. He's talking about that. That He becomes the one that we follow.

Whether you're black or white or Asian or Hispanic there's a sense of we're coming to God as our Father. Whether you speak English or Chinese or Indonesian or Swahili, you're coming to God as Father. Whether you're young or old, single or married, we come to God as Father. Those other differences are dropped away as we come to God as one family together. That's what he's talking about in verse 15.

Here's how he prays as you continue in that verse. *For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name*. We have a sentence now starting in verse 16 and I want to take that sentence apart. He says, *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*.

Do you ever feel like your prayers are bouncing off the ceiling? I don't think Paul ever experienced that. It seems like when he prayed something meaningful was taking place between him and God. And so he makes this statement here that prays for this inner strength.

Paul has very verbose language here. He adds a lot of adverbs and adjectives and prepositional phrases. I want to take all of those away. Let's just look at the subject, verb, and object of the sentence in verses 16 and 17 and see what he has to say.

If you look at that here's what the main sentence is and the other things are supportive material that help us further understand it. But here's the main sentence. *I pray that he may strengthen you in your inner being*. That's what he's saying. *I pray that he may strengthen you in your inner being* and then he adds all those other comments we're going to look at along the way.

What does that mean to be strengthened in your inner being? Well, God wants to do something in our hearts. But he doesn't use the word 'heart' here.

This week I was talking to a young man. The young man had some problems in his life and he just really wanted to overcome these problems. I was discussing it with him and I asked him, "Tell me about your relationship with the Lord." He said, "My relationship with the Lord is

cold.” That’s how he characterized his relationship with the Lord. “It’s cold.” I said, “Well that’s interesting.” He said, “Yeah, when I was a kid I was interested in God, but I haven’t really been interested in God.”

I took the opportunity at that moment to describe for him what it means to have grace in your heart, but not use spiritual terms. Here’s what I said to him (partly because I’m studying this passage) because grace, you know, is this spiritual strength that we have. So I said, “I think what you’d probably like in your life is you would like some supernatural spiritual strength or energy to come into your life to help you in your inner being. Wouldn’t you like that?” Sounds very New Age like, doesn’t it? And I think the New Age Movement actually offers something like that. Strength for your inner being or something along that line, but there’s no substance to it.

So he said, “Yeah, I think that’s what I need.” I said, “Well let me explain to you that’s what God offers. He calls it ‘grace,’ which is spiritual energy that He provides to us so we can live the life He’s called us to live. He does it in our inner being which is our heart. That’s what God does for us.” He was just really challenged by that idea, to go back and revisit his faith to revisit what that looks like.

I said, “Here’s what you might want to do this week. Just test God out. Pray and ask God.” He said, “I prayed in junior high and high school and nothing ever happened then. Why do you think that is?” I said, “I don’t know. I don’t know what God was doing back there in your life in junior high and high school. I don’t know. But I do know this. It looks to me like God is doing something in your life right now. What He wants you to do is come and talk to Him and ask Him and watch Him give you grace. It’s going to be amazing what He’s going to do inside your heart.”

I talked to another young lady this week who - I don’t know if she’s a missionary - must be serving in a church in some way. She was sharing her testimony with me. She said that after she got married her life was very empty. For two years it was really empty. She decided she was going to do something about it. So she went to start looking into New Age kinds of the things to see if that would satisfy her. She found some interesting things there, but it wasn’t really satisfying what she wanted. So she went to a small church nearby. She went to that church and while she was there she saw people who were committed to God. She was just so enamored by that that she wanted what they had. So she accepted Jesus Christ into her heart and God did an amazing thing in her life. It’s a transformation that took place.

It’s this strength in this inner being that God wants us to have. This is a very practical thing I think that Paul is talking about here. This strength in the inner being that He offers us. I think God wants to do that in our lives.

I often counsel with children with their parents present. Usually I’m just working with the child and the parents are watching in order to learn maybe something from what I’m doing with their children. Often I’m working with children dealing with anger or problem with lying or not being diligent with their homework or something like that.

As I'm working with children I'll often come to a place where I say to them, "Are you ready to change?" And they say, "Yeah, I think so." And then I ask this question, "Are you a Christian?" Now most of the time children will say to me, "Yes, I'm a Christian," and I'll say, "Oh good. Because if you're a Christian that means you have a lot more resources to help you to be able to work on this problem." It's really fun then to introduce children to God's word and help them see that the Bible has some practical revelation for them that they can put into their lives.

But the other day I was talking to a young man, he's thirteen years old, his parents are present there, and I say to the young man - I got to this point in my process - and I say to him, "Are you a Christian?" He says, "No." I said, "Well, okay. That's interesting. Is your mom a Christian?" He says, "I don't think so." They're sitting right here. I said, "Is your dad a Christian?" "No." These people both go to church. Their whole family goes to church. But that's what he says. He's not being obstinate. That's just how he's responding.

I said to him, "Let me tell you something. I'm going to help you with your anger problem. I'm going to show some great solutions to help you, but the biggest thing I want to do is I want to try to persuade you to become a Christian because if you become a Christian God will do amazing things in your life. You know that God has a mission that He wants you to do?" He looks at me strange. "Yeah. Does God speak to you?" I said to him.

I say these things to kids all the time because I'm convinced that God speaks to children. God wants to use children. God wants to do something. They are not in the preparation stage of life. They are in the mobilization stage of life and when we empower them to understand who God is they can serve the Lord. They can worship the Lord when we sing a song. They can serve the Lord. We want to empower them to do that. "Are you a Christian?" I say to kids because when they are then they have all of this strength that's available for their inner being that they need in their lives.

What Paul is going to talk about here is that you can have strength in your inner being. Don't you wish you had inner strength? Look at the verse there. The inner strength that you could have. Don't you wish you had inner strength to do something?

I think if we all start looking at our lives we're going to see that we're at Point A in our lives. Point A is the place where we've got some problems, we're not happy with where we are, we know we've got some weaknesses, maybe something we need to work on. So we focus on that. Sometimes we say, "Okay I'm going to stop that," or "I'm going to do better than that," but what God wants us to do is not focus on point A, He wants to focus over here on Point B. Where are you going?

Now how are we going to get from Point A to Point B? It's going to be with the inner strength that God provides to us to get there.

If you're struggling today with a habit that you know God wants you to give up, what you don't need is a plan for stopping that habit. What you need is the inner strength, right? If you want to learn how to control your mouth or build a stronger relationship with someone, what you don't need is a plan from some book to do that. What you need is inner strength to make that happen.

That's why Paul focuses in on that. He's praying that they would have inner strength inside their lives. I'm going to use a spiritual term here. I think we need revival in our hearts sometimes. That's what this inner strength provides.

A. W. Tozer encouraged people who wanted to seek God with all their hearts to consider two points. One: "Get thoroughly dissatisfied with yourself. Complacency is the deadly enemy of spiritual process. The contented soul is the stagnant soul." What he's saying is be uncomfortable first. Be so uncomfortable with where you are and don't like it so much that you're ready to do something about it. And number two: "Set your face like a flint toward a sweeping transformation of your life. Timid experimenters are tagged for failure before they start. We must throw our whole soul into our desire for God." God wants to give us strength in our inner being.

We tend to focus in, the world tends to focus in on external strength, demonstrating your power. But God is talking about an internal strength here. Something that comes from the inside that gives a man the ability to cry, or provides you with patience under pressure, or to deal with an offense and let it go, to keep a positive attitude when things aren't going well. We all need that. Moms need it, dads need it, husbands and wives need it, children need that. God wants to give us an inner strength. Inside ourselves. That's what he's talking about in this passage.

Let's go back to verse 16 and read it again. *I pray that out of his glorious riches* (so that's where it's coming from. God has all of these riches that He provides for us) *he may strength you* (notice) *with power, through his Spirit in your inner being*. He wants to give you power and He wants to do it through His Spirit in your inner being. That's what God wants to do. He wants to bless you on the inside and He uses this power through His Spirit to do that.

Now go to verse 17. It says, *so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*. Christ wants to live in your hearts. You know sometimes when we talk about salvation we describe it this way: You want to ask Jesus to come into your heart. You want to accept Jesus into your heart. This is the verse that we get that from. When we're talking to children sometimes we say that. "Have you accepted Jesus into your life?" When we say that what we're saying is, "Have you asked Jesus to come into your heart?"

That's what he's saying here, *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*. Because Christ wants to come in and He wants to make your home His residence. He doesn't just want to rent, He wants to own. When you just rent you tolerate a lot of stuff. When you own you say, "I'm going to fix that problem." Christ comes in and He fixes the problems in our hearts because He wants to own that in our lives.

Let's go on now because I want to look at the second sentence in the prayer. We'll take that sentence apart too. It starts at the end of verse 17. *And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Let's look back at the basic sentence because Paul is very verbose in the way he talks. The basic sentence, if you're an English student, is this: *I pray that you have power to grasp the love of Christ*. That's what he's saying. *I pray that you have power to grasp the love of Christ*.

He uses the word 'love' several times. First of all in verse 17, *rooted and established in love*, and then he talks about *how wide* and *how long* and *how high* and *how deep is the love of Christ*. *To know this love that surpasses knowledge*. Those are all words that describe this love. This love is going to be what we need.

I want to talk to you about this love because you have to understand it. You math students will appreciate this because we're not just talking about a single dimension of love; we're talking about how long, how deep. It's a three-dimensional love.

If you were to take a line (one dimension is a line), a one-dimensional love tends to be that love that has to do with attraction. That's when you say, "I love spaghetti." It's this attraction. I like it, I desire it. The *eros* kind of love described in the Bible that has to do with physical attraction between a man and a woman. It's a good kind of love, but it's one-dimensional.

If you rely only on the one-dimensional kind of love it tends to be self-gratifying. "I feel good because I just ate my spaghetti." That's the idea of "I love spaghetti" or "I love that person." It's a single one-dimensional kind of love and the world knows a lot about that kind of love and that's what they talk about. When they say love many times they're talking about that kind of an attraction form of love. But God talks about more than that kind of love.

A two-dimensional (so one dimension is a line) is a plane. A plane has a length and a width to it and that plane describes really a *philia* kind of love that the Bible talks about. That's the friendship kind of love. It's not the love where you're just attracted to someone, but now we're interacting with that person in a way that brings some enjoyment. So you have a brotherly kind of love it talks about in the Bible. That's a great kind of love and often husbands and wives have that kind of love, a friendship kind of love, with someone else. That's a plane, on a plane.

So we have a line, we have a plane, but then we have the object. That's the three-dimensional kind of love. A cube or a pyramid or a sculpture is three-dimensional. What we're doing is looking at love in a different way and the word that describes it, the word that's used in our passage here, is the word *agape*, which describes a commitment kind of love. A love that requires sacrifice and a deeper sense of what this is.

Paul is saying, "I want to pray that you will know this love." How deep and how wide and how long this love - it is so big that it's hard to even get a picture of what it looks like. We want to understand the depth of it. That's what he's praying for. Because the inner strength that he wants, that Paul is praying for, is something that God wants us to have inside of our lives and that's going to come when God's love comes into our hearts in fullness.

Notice what it says in 19: *to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God*. Your heart may have some stuff in it. It may be full of a lot of things; full of anger, full of desire, full of all kinds of stuff. But God says, "I want to pack

that heart so full of my love that it pushes those other things out.” And when that happens God does something deep inside your life.

What does that look like for you in very practical terms? What does it mean to understand God’s love, the fatherly love of God?

I met a man this week named Bernie. I happened to be walking along, he started talking to me. He’s been a pastor (he’s 79) for over thirty years and then he was a missionary. He knew that I teach parenting seminars and so he said, “I never had a dad. My dad left before I was born.” I said to him, “Well that’s really interesting. You went into ministry, all these things are happening. I want to ask you a question, Bernie. You didn’t have a father. Do you pray to God as Father?” He said, “I do. Definitely.” I said, “Well how can you pray to God as Father when you didn’t even have a father?”

I really liked his answer because what he said was, “I think I have an advantage over people who have an earthly father because the very first father I ever met was God as my heavenly Father and I got to know Him because He does these things in my life and produces godliness in my heart and He’s used people in my life to demonstrate His love for me. God has done something so amazing that when I think of a father I think of my daddy, God.” That’s what he says. “I think about God. That is my father.” Wow. That is powerful.

If we start looking at earthly models of fatherhood we know that all of us fail. We all have had imperfect fathers (and mothers, for that matter). But God wants to do a work in our heart so we see God as the perfect parent, as the Father in our lives. So when we understand the love of God, He does this work, He does a healing work in us, even if we’ve experienced terrible things in the past, even if we’ve experienced bad things in our lives.

Verse 19 says, *And to know this love that surpasses knowledge.* It’s such a deep commitment that it surpasses knowledge *that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.* The fullness of God. Our capacity for God is bigger than we presently have. Let me just say I don’t know how big it is, but I know God’s love is bigger than our capacity. We may not allow our hearts to have all that capacity that it could have. If we just say, “God I want you to fill me up with your love,” it’s amazing what the love of God does because when the love of God comes in it provides that inner strength inside of our hearts.

You need the inner strength to do something, to overcome some area of your life that God wants to work on in your heart; it’s going to start with experiencing the love of God, the fullness of the love of God in your heart. Wow.

You might say, “My problem’s too big for that. I need more than love.” I don’t know what it is that you need, but you’ve got to look at the next verses because in 20-21 it describes how God can do anything.

Look at this in verse 20. *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!*

Now go back and look at the words in the verse because he ties it all together in here. If we think that there's not enough inner strength out there that God could give us to overcome the problems we have then we're mistaken because God wants to communicate to us that He can do it all. He can do a tremendous amount.

It says God is able to do what we ask. But that's not only what it says. It says God is able to do *all* that we ask. But that's not where it stops. It says God is able to do *more than all* we ask. But it continues on. It says God is able to do *immeasurably more than all we ask*. But it doesn't stop there either. It says God is *able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine*. That's big.

You're wondering if God could fix you. What He does is He comes in, He gives you a new heart, He changes things inside of you, and God does some great things. He provides you with inner strength.

Notice how he talks about it at the end of 20. *According to his power* (that's what he's already talked about) *is at work within us*. It's that power providing that work in us, that inner strength. It doesn't come like the New Age person says or the world says. You want to be strong? Just be strong on the inside and then you can conquer whatever you need to conquer in your life.

That's not what God says. You're weak on the inside. Have God come into your life with all of His love and His strength and power and He's the one who's going to help you accomplish what needs to happen in your life. Notice from where the strength comes. I'm not saying here just be strong on the inside, I'm saying let's let God help you to be strong on the inside. We all need this grace in our lives.

And then, of course, verse 21 says, *to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!*

There's a little book written about this particular passage of scripture, about Jesus coming to dwell in our hearts, called *My Heart - Christ's Home*. It's a nice little allegory about Christ coming in and living in your house, actual physical house inside your heart, saying, "Hmm. I think I'd like to go into the living room." Allowing God access into various parts of the house of your life. I want to read you the part about the hall closet.

One day I found Christ waiting for me at the door. An arresting look was in His eye. As I entered, He said to me, "There is a peculiar odor in the house. Something must be dead around here. It's upstairs. I think it is in the hall closet." As soon as He said this, I knew what He was talking about. There was a small closet up there on the hall landing, just a few feet square. In that closet, behind lock and key, I had one or two little personal things that I did not want anyone to know about. Certainly, I did not want Christ to see them. I knew they were dead and rotting things left over from the old life. I wanted them so for myself that I was afraid to admit they were there.

Reluctantly, I went up with Him, and as we mounted the stairs the odor became stronger and stronger. He pointed to the door. I was angry. That's the only way I can put it. I had given Him

access to the library, the dining room, the living room, the rec room, the workroom, and now He was asking me about a little two-by-four closet. I said to myself, "This is too much. I am not going to give Him the key." "Well," He said, reading my thoughts, "if you think I'm going to stay up here on the second floor with this smell, you are mistaken. I'm going out on the porch."

Then I saw Him start down the stairs. When one comes to know and love Christ, the worst thing that can happen is to sense Him withdrawing His fellowship. I had to give in. "I'll give you the key," I said sadly, "but You will have to open the closet and clean it out. I haven't the strength to do it." "Just give me the key," He said. "Authorize me to take care of that closet and I will."

With trembling fingers I passed the key to Him. He took it, walked over to the door, opened it, entered, took out all the putrefying stuff that was rotting there, and threw it away. Then He cleaned the closet and painted it. It was done in a moment's time. Oh, what victory and release to have that dead thing out of my life!

God wants to do that in each one of our hearts. He wants to provide us with inner strength. If you're here today and you're just learning about this idea for the first time, I want to tell you where it starts. It starts by making your heart Christ's home. By saying, "Christ, I want you to come in to my life. I want you to run and control my life. I need you. I want you to provide me with the strength that I need to live my life effectively for you." And God does an amazing thing. He comes in and He starts taking care of the closets of our lives. He starts doing some deeper things in our hearts than we ever could imagine.

If you just look at your house from the outside you might say, "No way. This is never going to happen. Maybe in about ten years I'll be able to have enough strength to deal with this. My life's too complicated right now. I can't really work on this in my life." God says, "I want to help you right now. It's not up to you." We don't say, "God, I'm going to clean up my life first then I'm going to come to you." No, no, no, no, no. We say, "God, I want you to come into my life right now and I want you to clean me up. I want you to do that deeper work." And then God does. He comes in, He does that deeper work of cleaning us up, and doing that work to give us that internal strength that He wants us to have in our lives.

I invite you today to go to the next level in your spiritual life. To allow God to take you from wherever you are at Point A to Point B. It's going to happen through the inner strength that God has for you inside your heart. It's free. It's a gift. All we must do is position ourselves under the grace of God and God does some amazing things and wants to do those things in our hearts.

I want to invite you. We have prayer counselors that are going to be on both sides this morning. As those prayer counselors are there waiting to pray for you, they are willing to be a place where you can just share with them and say, "Lord, I want you to work in my life some more. I want you to do something deeper in my heart. Lord, would you do that? Lord, I want the inner strength that you provide. Would you come into my life? Would you help me move to that next level? Lord, take me to where you want me to be."

Prayer counselors are available as we worship the Lord. If God's speaking to your heart, I encourage you to go to those prayer counselors and allow them to pray with you as God continues to work in your heart. Let's worship the Lord together.