

## United in Power – Eph. 3

So, I did some research – I Googled it – about what causes fatigue. How many of you are fatigued right now? Raise your hand if you have the strength. I talk to people all the time and they tell me they are tired. Well, here is what the Google machine said about it:

*“Feeling tired can be caused by not getting enough sleep, nutrient deficiencies, stress, an underlying health condition, and drug side effects. Fatigue can be a normal response to physical activity, emotional stress, or boredom, but it can also signal a more serious mental or physical condition.”*

What I noticed about that list was that there was only one little phrase in there that was outright physical. It said toward the end that it could be caused by physical activity, which is obvious. But what isn't obvious is that most of the other reasons for fatigue were mental or emotional. “...anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, neurological and sleep disorders...” etc.

But there is also another reason for feeling tired besides mentally or physically and that is spiritually. We often put all the emphasis on the physical but overlook the mental and completely ignore the spiritual. Is it any wonder that so many of us go through life tired all the time? I've said before that sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is take a nap but sometimes physical rest isn't what we really need. We need God's power to help us thrive mentally, physically and spiritually. And when you have spiritual power, the mental and physical will fall in place.

So, how do we get this spiritual power? Wouldn't it be nice to have somebody pray for you that God would give you the spiritual power you need to do what God has called you to do? If that sounds good, turn in your Bibles to the third chapter of Ephesians because here we will see that the Apostle Paul is praying for you to have just that.

Ephesians is in the New Testament between Galatians and Philippians, all books written by Paul and all three are basically happy books, books with good news and great encouragement. The first three chapters of Ephesians are describing the resources we have as Christians and the rest of the book is about how Christians with those resources ought to act. But in the middle, here in the latter half of the third chapter, Paul once again prays for those that are reading this.

What's interesting to me is that Paul starts out verse 14 the same way he started verse 1. But in **verse 1** it looks like he kind of got excited and lost his place a little bit. Look at **verse 1**. *“For this reason I, Paul the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles –* “and then he stops that sentence and goes right into another thought in **verse 2**. Well, he picks it back up again in verse 14 with *“For this reason...”* and this reason is for all the resources he has described in the earlier verses. He is saying that because God has given us grace and peace and unity as believers, Paul goes to God in prayer. So, let's read his beautiful prayer in **Ephesians 3:14-21**.

*“For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom every family<sup>l</sup> in heaven and on earth derives its name. <sup>16</sup>I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup>so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup>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, <sup>19</sup>and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup>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, <sup>21</sup>to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

Amen, Paul! I'll take that prayer! Notice just real quickly that Paul says here he kneels in prayer. Some people might make a big deal out of that but when people ask what the best way is to pray, I always think it doesn't really matter what physical position you are in. Again, we can put too much emphasis on the physical. This is an attitude of submission to God in prayer. We usually bow our heads and close our eyes as an act of submission to the Lord but you can pray walking, standing, rolling around, whatever works for you. I will say that there is something special about kneeling or even laying face down when you pray that gets your attitude right but it's not so much physical as it is mental and emotional that brings out the spiritual. They are all connected.

But let's concentrate on what Paul is praying here. He is praying, again as Paul tends to do in these early chapters, with long flowery words and run-on sentences. But the basic prayer is that God will give us (Christ Fellowship) power to strengthen our inner beings and the power to know how much God loves us. That's what the prayer boils down to.

Now, don't raise your hand but have any of you ever done something that you know is wrong and thought, "*Man, I'm glad nobody saw that*"? I'm glad my mama didn't see me do that. I'm glad the cops didn't see it. We've all thought that. And so many times we just carry on like we are the best people on the planet. We look like we are moral and righteous and holy but deep down, we know differently. Have you ever said one thing and meant another? Have you ever said one thing and DONE another? Have you ever had some horrible thought that you are glad nobody knows about? Of course you have. That is our inner man that Paul is praying for here.

Look at **verse 16**. "*I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being...*" Anybody out there getting older these days? Oh, sure, everybody's getting older than they were but maybe you are starting to feel it. Just standing up or walking around can be painful. This outer man, this physical body is decaying and it's probably not going to get much better. Then we will die. How's that for good news?

No, that's not the good news. The good news is that the inner man, the spiritual man, the person that we really are, can get better. It should be getting better all the time. Our ability to reason and make good choices, our conscience and our will are all part of the inner man that Paul is praying for here.

I remember years and years ago asking my mom a question. I didn't tell her I had just done something I regretted. I just asked her if it ever got easier to make good choices. She looked at me like I was stupid and said, "*Yea, yea it gets easier.*" And at the time I was really surprised because I had lived what seemed like a long time and I kept making the same mistakes over and over again. But the problem was I didn't have any strength in my inner man, my inner being.

But how do we get what Paul was praying for us to get? How do we strengthen our inner being? Well, we are told in **Acts 1:8** that we receive power when the Holy spirit comes on us. Well, when does that happen? **Ephesians 1:13** says, "*Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*" It's at that moment of true belief, when we give all our lives to Jesus that we are given the Holy Spirit of God to live inside of us.

But, as we will see in the next chapter, we can grieve the Holy Spirit. That happens when we sin. Although the outer man gets weaker and weaker with age, the inner, spiritual man should be getting stronger and stronger. If that's not happening then that's a red flag that something is wrong with your relationship with the Lord or maybe it doesn't exist at all. Spiritual power is not the mark of some super Christian. It is available to all of us and should be a mark of all of us as believers. Are you getting spiritually stronger every day? If not, for a Christian it takes a toll on you mentally and physically as well as spiritually. Are you making better choices than you did last year? That's the first thing Paul is praying for you about.

The second thing he is praying for is that we will be able to understand better the love that God has for us. Look at **verse 18**. He says, I pray that you *“may have power... to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ...”* Now, we all know that Jesus loves us, right? We have been singing the song “Jesus Loves Me” since we could first speak. And now, as adults, you can’t help but smile when you hear some precious little mouths singing that song. Aw, it’s so sweet...and so DEEP!

Honestly, if we could grasp (as Paul prays) just how much God loves us it would absolutely change us to the very core, the very deepest part of our inner man. I don’t know who said it but I read these words the other day. *“We want, in fact, not so much a father in heaven as a grandfather in heaven: a senile benevolence who, as they say, “liked to see young people enjoying themselves” and whose plan for the universe was simply that it might be truly said at the end of each day, “a good time was had by all.”*

If that is what you think a loving God looks like then you are probably not a very good parent. If that is what you think true love looks like then your view of love is shallow and small. And Paul is praying that you would be able to grasp just how big and deep God’s love is for you. Because when you start to understand God’s love for you, you will start to love others with that same kind of big love and you will start to love God with a big love.

It’s the kind of love that puts others first. **1 Corinthians 13** is the love chapter and it says your love will be patient and kind and not proud or boastful. It’s the kind of love that people see in you and go, *“Now, wait a minute. What’s going on here? This guy is different. He is not “normal.”*” And they see that kind of love and say, *“I want that kind of love in my life.”*

That kind of deep love is shown when you get an a+ on the test and the other guy gets a c and you congratulate him on the c without mentioning your a+. It’s the kind of love that raises other people up even if it makes you look not so good. It’s the kind of love that makes it okay when somebody else gets credit for your work. It makes you love people more even when they don’t love you back.

It also means your love for God goes deeper and when your love for Him deepens, you don’t want to displease Him and you start to sin less, which is actually what Paul was praying for in the beginning. But if your love is shallow and small, you’ll be grumpy, in a bad mood, and tired all the time because it takes a toll on you when you aren’t living the way God made you to live.

So, Paul is praying for you to be stronger in your inner man and to know the love that God has for you. But I hear ya. Todd, that’s too much to ask from me. This is the way I’ve always been and this is just how God made me and this is how my daddy was or my mama was and blah, blah stinking blah. Okay, you’re right. Let’s just finish this passage and we can go home and take a nap.

Let’s see how Paul says “amen” in this prayer and we can all just waddle home like we waddled in, knowing this was all a waste of time. Let’s look at **verse 20** again. But before we do, I have to tell you that this verse is about half the reason I wanted to preach through this book. This verse is powerful truth and if you will embrace it and meditate on it, it will change your grumpy, tired, old life.

This is how Paul says amen right here. *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, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”*

God is able to do immeasurably more than we could ever ask or imagine in our lives. It’s funny. That Greek word that Paul uses there for “immeasurably” is *huperekperissou*. And do you know what it means? Of course you don’t because none of us speak Greek AND it’s not a real word. Paul made it up! It’s not found anywhere else. He got so excited he just started combining some words to try to express the amazing, awesome, incredible power that God

has to change lives and it just came out *huperekperissou*. Isn't that great? It's like combining amazing and incredible and coming up with amaze-dible or something.

Can't you just picture Paul – in prison and in chains – dictating this letter to Tychicus or whoever it was and he's standing up getting excited, pacing as far as the chains will let him and he's saying, "God is able to do amaze-dibly more than we could ask or imagine..." and the guy taking it down says, "Uh, wait a minute. What was that...? And Paul hollers, "Just write it down. I'm on a roll!" *huperekperissou*

So, we have a God who is able to do amaze-dibly more than we could ask or imagine. Is He able to heal us? Is He able to forgive us? Is He able to bless us and protect us and be there for us?

Think about a cruise ship, but not just any cruise ship. Think about the cruise ship ***Icon of the Seas***. The *Icon of the Seas* is the world's largest cruise ship. It has 20 decks. The company claims the ship has the tallest waterfall, the tallest water slide, and the largest waterpark of any cruise ship and it has an ice-skating rink. It will hold 10,000 people including crew and passengers and it weighs 307 thousand nautical tons. That's a lot. I'm pretty sure.

Now...the question is, will the ocean be able to handle it? Will the *Icon of the Seas* overload the ocean and cause the ocean to fail? Will all the water be splashed out and dried up? That's silly, isn't it? In the scheme of things, the *Icon of the Seas* will barely make a ripple in the ocean. The ocean will barely know that little boat is even there. The *Icon of the Seas* is nothing compared to the ocean that floats it. And God is greater and bigger than the ocean He created.

Are you discouraged today? Are you depressed? Are you anxious about the future? Are you grumpy and tired? God is in control and He loves you with a love that is wider and longer and higher and deeper than you can grasp. He loves you with a life-changing love no matter what you've done in your past. And no matter what your future holds, He will be there to forgive you and to encourage you and to protect you. And if anything happens to you, you can know that you know that you know that God has allowed it or caused it for your good and for His glory. So, what are you worried about?

There is power in the name of Jesus and we have access to that power and we as a church can be unified in that power if we are obedient to Him. Are you right with God today? Are all your sins forgiven? Have you asked Him to search you and show you where you are not right with Him? Let's do that right now, every one of us. Bow your heads, close your eyes and ask Him to make it obvious where your life is not measuring up to His standards.

Are you sure you have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus today? I'm not asking if you are a church member or if you have been baptized. I'm asking if you can remember that one day when you asked God to forgive you of all your sins and repented of those sins and asked Him to be your Lord and Savior. If not, today is the day of salvation. Do it right now as the music plays.