

Sermon Preached by Emmett Floyd on 1/29/06
Text –Ephesians 3:14-21
“Inner Strength”

This passage contains one of the most beautiful prayers to be found in the Bible. Here Paul emphasizes the spiritual power of the Christian who gains his or her strength from inside out. In a day when many would emphasize the power that comes from developing a strong physique to those who would focus on military or economic might, Paul reminds us that true strength comes from a spiritual power within.

How is such a strength developed? This passage points out several features of such spiritual power. The first is the truth that faith provides the foundation for such a venture. “Christ dwells in our hearts by faith.” And this faith is a part of our heritage as Christians. We do not have to wonder where the true source of power to live a worthwhile life is to be found. We have all the years of Christian history and the memory of the strong people who have blessed our lives in years past, and continue to bless us today, to remind us of where they found strength.

Many of them endured hardship and suffering, yet they continued to persevere and serve. As another Scripture reminds us, they were able “having done all, to stand.” In Anne Frank’s diary (the young Jewish girl who with her family was hidden in a Christian Dutch home to escape the Nazis during the days of the German Occupation there), she says that one day she burst out saying about the Nazis, “I hate them all.” Her father admonished her, saying, “We cannot stoop to hating them, for if we do we will have destroyed ourselves.”

The second lesson we learn from the text is that strength is not an outward show of power; rather, it is an inner Spirit that sustains us. Paul prays for us to be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner person.” This gives us a strength beyond our own.

A story has been circulating on the internet about a surgeon who had a twelve-year-old boy as a patient who was facing a dangerous heart surgery. The doctor stopped by his hospital bed to warn the youngster of the serious nature of the surgery. To his surprise, the boy seemed unconcerned. He told the doctor, “When you open my heart you will find Jesus there.” To the doctor’s surprise, the surgery went better than expected and was very successful. When the patient had recovered enough, the doctor went by to see the boy and told him, “You were right; when I opened your heart, I found Jesus there.”

Finally, we learn that this inner strength gives us courage to face the future and all its challenges with a sustaining courage. We live in a world of such rapid change that we sometimes feel almost overwhelmed. I like the story of the little book shop run by two elderly ladies. One day the customers saw a sign over the check-out counter that read: “Be patient, brand new cash register – same two old

ladies.” Our text reminds us that faith enables us to experience the power of God to do “far more abundantly than all we ask or think.”

So, in a world that confronts us with problems and difficulties often beyond our understanding or capacity to overcome, we can rely on God’s providential care and wisdom to do what we cannot do. Our task as Christians is not always to succeed but always to be faithful – not always to triumph, but always to persevere – not always to have all the answers, but to trust the One whose wisdom will guide us through the darkest night to the light of His eternal love.

In England there is an inscription on a rural church which was erected during the terrible time of the religious wars that wracked England for a generation. The inscription reads: “Erected to the glory of God, and in memory of Sir Robert Shirley, who, in the worst of times did the best of things, and in a time of calamities gave new hope to the people of God.” Let us live by such faith that gives inner strength to do the best of things and give new hope to a world that needs to hear of God’s eternal love. Amen.