

## **The Power of Our King**

Trinity CRC, January 27, 2019 AM

Eph/Col series; Baptism of Evelina Carrozza & Lord's Supper

**Ephesians 1:15-23, 3:14-21 (3:14-16)**

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Dear People of God,

You've seen her in the grocery store. The lady who doesn't seem to have the knack for mothering. I mean, she gave birth to a child and she loves her kid but she doesn't really have the mothering touch. She seldom cuddles her child. She's easily annoyed when the child keeps her from her agenda. She shouts and yells at the kid and makes threats she's not able to carry through on: "I'm never going to take you out of the house again!" She's just not a natural at motherhood.

On the other hand, you've seen or know—or maybe you are—a mother who loves being pregnant, attending to every coo, whimper, smile and giggle of the baby. This kind of mother jumps the second the baby peeps. She changes the baby whenever there's a hint of wetness or, um, the other stuff! She enjoys every moment of motherhood. She is seldom annoyed by the interruptions a child brings into her schedule. She has patience and tenderness so children feel her love almost all the time.

Could it be that some of us are more like one of those mothers than the other when it comes to living by the Spirit? Are some of us just naturally better at it than others?

I would say the answer to that question is no. Every Christian has been given the Holy Spirit. But think about how we are in relationship with people. There is a question of influence. You might be right next to me all the time, but how much do I allow myself to be influenced by you? In a similar way, just because you believe in Jesus doesn't mean you are living out of His power as much as you could. You are not letting His nearness influence you as you could. That's the issue. We all desire, I suspect, to live in the power of Jesus, our King and Master. Our Lord. And this morning we need to understand and know that it is possible.

### **The Basis for the Empowered Life**

Paul offers a prayer for the Ephesian church in chapter 3 and reminds us of the basis for why we can have the power of King Jesus in us. The reason we can live by the Spirit is this: He says in v.14&15,

*Eph 3:14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

A little boy was confused when his grandpa talked about gasoline prices. In the cartoon, grandpa says, "Back in 1952 gasoline cost 20 cents a gallon. When you pulled up to the gas pumps three guys came out and checked your oil, checked the air in your tires, and washed your windshield." The little grandson in response thinks to himself, "This must be that thing they call senility."

In the same way, even though some might not believe it, we can say that living in the power of our King involves three people—the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—who are one God. We need a trinitarian understanding of living by the power of God.

Paul teaches us that it all starts with the Father. *“For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.”* Recognizing the Father’s role in our salvation is where to start in becoming a stronger, Spirit-empowered Christian. God the Father so loved the world that He sent His only Son to die for our sins. We celebrate that this morning again in the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, as we remember and believe that Jesus has died for the complete forgiveness of all our sins, we remember that whatever spiritual progress we have made and whatever we still are to become is only because of God’s grace. Recognize the Father as the giver of the Son and of every good and perfect gift we receive. As Paul reminds us in v.16,

*Eph 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he [that is the Father] may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*

The Father is the one who distributes the riches of His grace to people. Carmelo and Stephanie give their children all they can for the good of the family, I’m sure. Similarly, the Father in heaven gives His family all that is necessary for life and godliness. He is the one who answers the prayer that Paul is making. So the basis of living in the power of Jesus is the love and grace of the Father.

### **The Agent of the Empowered Life**

Next, Paul turns our attention to the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. He is the agent by whom we grow in our faith. In v. 16 he says,

*Eph 3:16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,*

A person can’t only be partly with you. If he’s there, he’s there. It’s kind of like you can’t be just a little bit pregnant, right Stephanie? You can’t have only a little bit of the Holy Spirit. Christians have Him in our inner being. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit. The problem we have with the Holy Spirit is not His absence; He’s there. The problem is His influence; how much we listen to Him.

I watched a documentary on a spectacular bridge built in France a few years back. Celebrated as a work of art and an object of French national pride, the Millau Bridge enables motorists to take a drive through the sky—almost 300 meters above the Tarn River valley for 2 ½ km through France’s mountains. The bridge cuts 100 km off the trip from Paris to the Riviera. The steel-and-concrete bridge with its streamlined diagonal suspension cables rests on seven pillars—the tallest measuring almost 350 meters, making it 15 meters or about 50 feet taller than the Eiffel Tower. Just look at the number of individual cables that make up one of those large reinforcing and supporting cables on this engineering marvel.

Well, in a much more spectacular way, I would say, the Holy Spirit fortifies us, braces and invigorates us to live a God-honouring life. He empowers us. He’s our bridge to a life powered by Christ our King. We really can’t live it without Him. That Millau Bridge

has several pylons that uphold the span. Each large cable is filled with smaller cables. And so the Holy Spirit works in various ways—big and small—to strengthen us, to keep us connected to God—continually reinforcing God’s work in our hearts.

Paul prays that God’s family would be strengthened with the power of the Holy Spirit in our inner being. In other words, as our inner being—which is our heart—learns to listen more and more to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the outer being or the way we live will more and more reflect the change that is taking place inside. So our job as followers of Jesus is to take advantage of all the cables of the Spirit’s power or connection that are available to us.

Some of those include something important like **prayer**. We need to do as Paul did: he prayed for the Ephesian Church. He mentions that especially in chapter 1. The Church needs the power of God. Therefore, we must always go back to the Holy Spirit and come under His influence more and more. That starts with prayer. And prayer is more than just asking God for something. It includes quietness—listening to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. To connect more fully with the Holy Spirit’s power, we must pray. To receive wisdom and revelation from the Spirit, says Paul, we must pray (1:17). To grow in believing that the power that rose Jesus from the dead is in us (1:20), we must pray. Without prayer we are weak because we aren’t tapping into the power of God.

Similarly, we strengthen the Spirit’s influence in our lives by **Bible reading**. We tune our hearts to God’s heart by reading the word. Like the psalmist said:

*Ps 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet  
and a light for my path.*

God’s Spirit-inspired word won’t steer us wrong. The more we read it and ask the Holy Spirit to give us understanding, the better we are going to hear God’s voice through it and receive his direction and strength for living in every situation.

I came across this list entitled, “Things Your Mother Wouldn’t Say”. It included:  
"Be good and for your birthday I'll buy you a motorcycle!"  
"Let me smell that shirt. Yeah, it's good for another week."  
"I don't have a tissue with me--just use your sleeve."

I think most of us would know that our mothers wouldn’t say those sorts of things. And in our spiritual life we have the Word of God to make sure that what we are hearing in our hearts is from God. We need to be open to the Spirit’s prompting in our heart, but we can always know that He won’t say one thing in the Bible and something contradictory in our heart. The Spirit of God through the word of God redirects our thought and directs our actions for Christ-centred living.

And closely connected to that is **Worship**. In corporate worship we bow together under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He speaks to us through word and sacrament, means of grace. We are being spiritually fed and nourished—strengthened in our inner being by the Holy Spirit. Singing, likewise, tunes our hearts to God, making worship one more of those cables to keep our connection to the Spirit strong.

The Spirit works through so many other means too. Through the Church, through our friends, through our circumstances, through the giftings that He gives us. And more.

The point is that we must be taking advantage of all the ways the Spirit gives us to connect to the power of God in our daily lives. Neglecting these things will keep us from experiencing the fullness of the power of the Spirit which will keep us spiritually poor and weak. God's desire is strength and connection to the power of Christ for His children.

## **The Purpose of the Empowered Life**

That brings us, finally, to consider the purpose for which God gives us His power. Listen again. Paul writes,

*Eph 3:16 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.*

The Holy Spirit is given to us is so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.

Friends, Christ makes His dwelling in the hearts of each believer the moment we are reborn. But when Christ moves in, our hearts are not yet fully the kind of home He desires them to be.

You know what that's like. When you buy a house, most times there are changes to be made. You might have to replace some worn out carpet. You might change the colour of the walls. You might even have to do some major renovations. On the spiritual level, you might say that Christ moves in. Then bit by bit the Holy Spirit—the heavenly homemaker—remodels us, making us more and more into a Christ-indwelt home.

This is borne out in the choice of the word Paul uses in v.17 for “dwell.” In the Greek, Paul could have used either *paroikeo* or *katoikeo*. *Paroikeo* means to inhabit a place as a stranger, perhaps someone just living somewhere for a while but not intending to put down roots. The other word, *katoikeo*, means to settle down permanently. This is a word that refers more to a home than to a hotel. It's the home of the master where he lives, loves, and rules. This is the word Paul uses here.

This means that the Holy Spirit's work includes turning our hearts into homes, turning our hearts into the place where Christ not only lives but is at home. In other words, the Holy Spirit's work in you and me is not about us getting from God some great power for what we want. It is about being tuned to Christ so that we know the love of Christ in all circumstances and situations. We know that Jesus is at home in us. You see, the Holy Spirit is always working to getting us into greater communion with the One—Jesus—whose heart is our home. And in that way, we enjoy the gifts He brings into our lives—the joy, peace and love, the patience, strength and submissive spirit—that enriches our lives. We have his strength and courage to live and love in our world in new ways. As Paul goes on to say, it's about us being rooted and grounded in love so that more and more we come to know how great the love of Christ is. And when we know Him well, we know He's with us and—in His power—we can do all He desires for us.

It's so important for us to realize that getting the Spirit's power is not something we naturally come by. It's a gift to all of us. It comes to every believer in Jesus. But let's make sure we're all connecting to Jesus as much as we can and staying tuned to God's plans for us and the world. All for the glory of Jesus our Saviour and King.