



Sisyphus & Boulder<sup>1</sup>

## From Strength to Strength: Sustained by God's Indwelling

### NOTES

Keith Walker

Minister-at-Large: Canadian Mid-West District (Alliance Canada)

Keith.Walker@Usask.ca

www.KeithDWalker.ca

#### Pre-text

Zechariah 4:6: **So, he said to me, "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty.** Matthew 11:28-30: **Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.**

#### Our Needs Make Us Candidates for God's Grace (what we long for)

1. In Review: Needs for significance, community, transcendence, and the **presence of God** (Ps 84)
2. For this Message: Needs for peace, personhood (identity), **power**, and **protection** (Acts 18-20; Ephesians)
3. We want to go from strength to strength today, with understandings and commitments to live flourishing lives. Needs as gaps to be filled

#### Weave of Stories, Song, and Context, including: The Story of Sisyphus and Boulder (prop)

"Work isn't effort expended but products moved." Have you ever come to the end of the day and sensed that the progresses have been small; you feel exhausted and frustrated in your efforts.

#### Song of The Uphill Burdens and the Unforced Rhythms of Grace (Brian Doerksen's *Enter into the Rest of God*)

Are you tired, worn out and empty? Is your soul weary; have you tried releasing your burdens? Do you feel the weight of worry? I am the rest you need. I am the prince of Peace. Enter the rest of God. Come to me; burdens will fly away. Walk with me, learn the unforced rhythms of grace. Come to me; burdens will fly away. Walk with me, learn the unforced rhythms. Live the unforced rhythms of grace. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vFFa-C95RSU>

#### Context

Ephesians from **Idolaters to Gap** (Gospel of Sin Management) to **Embrace** of Grace to **Drift** (lost 1st love)  
**Historical Insights from Book Acts** (To learn of experiences - not best place to build theology)

---

<sup>1</sup> Sisyphus as a cunning King in Greek mythology whose final fate was long and tedious labour - rolling a huge boulder uphill for eternity as it always rolls back down once it reaches the top.

1. Story of Apollos (Acts 18, 19), narrative update by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26); baptism of repentance (John the Baptist, Acts 19); later learned the transforming work of Jesus and gift of the Holy Spirit;
  - Apollos was learned, thorough knowledge of Scripture, great fervor, taught about Jesus as John the Baptist knew him and taught John's baptism - baptism of repentance.
  - Priscilla and Aquila invited him home and "explained to him the way of God more adequately."
  - Baptism of Repentance is Old Testament provision of God to deal with sin and guilt
2. Paul's Message to Ephesians in Acts 19, 20
  - Told them about Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ's work on Cross (19:1-7)
  - Three years of preaching about Jesus, fear, disruption, riot, profound transformations, miracles, displacement of evil, disorder, order (19:8-41)
  - Commission to Ephesian elders (20:18-38): keep watch, be shepherds, be on guard and heed warnings,

**Text: Practical Christian Living Insights from Book of Ephesians**  
(Sitting: Ch 1-3, Walking: Ch 4, 5, Standing: Ch 6)

**1. Sitting in our Personhood and in Peace with God, Ourselves and Others**

- Focus of His love
- Lavish gifts to us Blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ (vs 3)
- Chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight (vs 4)
- Predestined us for adoption to sonship (vs 5)
- It is in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for
- Freely gave glorious grace (vs 6)
- In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins (vs 7)
- Riches of God's grace (vs 8)
- Chosen according to the plan in order that we might be for the praise of his glory (vs 11, 12)
- Marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (vs 13), guaranteeing our inheritance (vs 14)
- **Paul's prayer for them: (1:16-21)** - grasp the expanse of what He has done for us, boundless strength given to us
- He tore down the wall
- You were dead in your transgressions and sins . . . made us alive with Christ (vs 1-5)
- Raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (vs 6)
- By grace you have been saved . . . it is the gift of God (vs 8)
- You who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (vs 13)
- He himself is our peace; He has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility (vs 14)
- Created a new humanity . . . making peace [insider and outsider]. . . bringing reconciliation (vs 16, 17)
- Access to the Father by one Spirit (vs 18)
- Citizens build up into holy temple in the Lord (vs 20, 21) Christ as Cornerstone
- God's plan for including everybody
- Great mystery: Same offer to everyone. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence (vs 12)
- **Paul's second prayer (3:14-21)** Strengthen your inner spirit - plant feet in His love -

**2. Walking in Peace and Plugged into Power (Chapter 4 & 5)**

- Live a life worthy of the calling you have received (vs 1)
- Be humble, gentle, patient, bear with one another in love and keep the unity of the Spirit (vs 2 & 3)
- Walk and run with purpose - with discipline
- Permeated with oneness yet all in unique ways
- Not tossed about with winds or schemes (vs 14)
- He wants us to be grown ups; robust in love
- Speaking the truth in love, grow to become like Christ (vs 15)

- Enlightened, open understandings, sensitivities and avoidance of distracting allurements, foot-holds and sin (vs 21, 22) - Must not grieve the Holy Spirit (vs 30) Avoid going with crowd, no more lies, no pretense, no foothold to devil
- Follow God's example: walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us (vs 1-2)
- Be not deceived, avoid fruitlessness, awake, and let Christ shine.
- Watch what God does - then do it! Love extravagantly
- The good, the right, the true. Daylight walking Avoid the barren pursuits of darkness, wake up
- Be careful how you live; be wise; make most of every opportunity
- Be filled with Spirit (vs 18)
- Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything (vs 19)
- Be courteous with one another and cherish relationships and each other.
- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (vs 21)

### 3. Standing in Protection of God (Chapter 6)

**Ephesians 6:10-17** <sup>10</sup>Finally, **be strong** in the Lord and in **His** mighty power. <sup>11</sup>Put on the full armor of God, so that you can **take your stand** against the *devil's schemes*. <sup>12</sup>For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the *powers of this dark world* and against the *spiritual forces of evil* in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup>Therefore **put on** the full armor of God, so that when the *day of evil* comes, you may be able to **stand your ground**, and after you have done everything, to **stand**. <sup>14</sup>**Stand firm** then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, <sup>15</sup>and with your **feet fitted with the readiness** that comes from the **gospel of peace**. <sup>16</sup>In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming *arrows of the evil one*. <sup>17</sup>Take the **helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is **the word of God**.

- Be prepared for conflict
- If deficient in sitting and walking then standing won't work -
- We stand in victory
- Be unshakable
- Forget self -
- Disunited church is church fighting the wrong enemy -
- Bible, prayer, encouragement of one another are indispensable

**Stand up, stand up for Jesus ye soldiers of the cross; Stand up, stand up for Jesus, the trumpet call obey; let courage rise with danger and strength to strength oppose. Stand up, stand up for Jesus, stand in his strength alone; the arm of flesh will fail you, ye dare not trust your own. Put on the gospel armor, each piece put on with prayer; where duty calls or danger, be never wanting there.**

- Now in a conflict zone - citizen of Christ's kingdom - part of cosmic conflict - eternal matters
- Up against schemes of devil - can't prevent us from loving Jesus but tries to disrupt
- Satan is real and vicious (World, Flesh and Evil one). Supernatural but limited 1 Jn 3:8
- Devil is defeated (outcome for sure) but . . .
- Death is defeated (outcome for sure) but . . .

#### **Christ provides for our longings for peace, personhood (identity), power, and protection**

1. **Do we have idols that distract and destroy (idols of destruction)**
2. **Do we have gaps in our understandings and appreciation for the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit?**
3. Do we find substitute means to settle the disquiet and lack of **peace** in our relationship (God, self and others)

4. How do we answer the question of our identity (**personhood**) when there are myriads of offerings?
5. Where do we get the **power** to live?
6. How do we deal with threats to **protect** us from self, world, and satan?
7. **How have we safeguarded our lives from the dangers of drift?**