

Eph 3:14–21 (ESV) For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ⁽¹⁵⁾ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ⁽¹⁶⁾ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ⁽¹⁷⁾ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ⁽¹⁸⁾ may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ⁽¹⁹⁾ and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. ⁽²⁰⁾ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ⁽²¹⁾ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

1. This is a difficult portion of Scripture – why?

- A. Because Paul is lifting us to the peaks of the Christian experience – the heights of what is possible
 - 1). These are difficult to explain with the limitations of human language
And impossible to understand with the limitations of our human intelligence
- B. Look at how Paul sums up these possibilities in v. 20
Eph 3:20 (ESV) Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, *(NIV ask or imagine)* according to the power at work within us,
 - 1). This is beyond anything we could even imagine
- C. This is why it must be bathed in prayer – both the teaching and the understanding
What Paul did: Eph 1:17 (NIV) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, *may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation*, so that you may know him better.
- D. This is also why we must take passages like this and linger over them – dig deeply into them
The command: 2 Tim 2:15 (KJV) *Study* to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, *rightly dividing the word of truth.*
 - 1). As we study – depending upon the Spirit to assist us – we will begin to understand

Point: Because this is so important to really enjoying our Christian experience

We want to do whatever is necessary to understand it well enough to apply it

2. What is being offered in this prayer

- A. To know the experience of Christ in our hearts in a greater way
- B. To understand the greatness of God’s love that is beyond a mere human understanding
- C. To be filled up with the fullness of God
- D. To have a Christian experience that Spurgeon spoke of – saw last week
CHS: “There is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling”
 - 1). We don’t want to be those who miss out on this – to settle for the norm

Transition: In our passage before us – v. 17 – what is on offer?

I. CHRIST DWELLING IN OUR HEARTS

Eph 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

1. Before we get into this - first lesson is how to read our Bibles – Context

- A. If we don’t look for context we’ll probably miss the exciting potential of what is being said here
 - 1). We’ll apply it in an evangelistic way
“Paul is praying unbelievers will place their faith in Christ and be saved. When that happens he will reside in their hearts. So, ask Jesus into your heart.”
 - 2). Problem: That misses what is really being said here – result will be we misapply this verse
- B. Context: Chapter 1- Paul is praying for those who are already believers
 - 1). Those who have been chosen and adopted by the Father
 - 2). Those who were redeemed and forgiven through the work of Christ
 - 3). Those who had been sealed with the Holy Spirit – whose eternity is secure

- C. Chapter 2 he reminds them that at one time they were dead to God and alive to sin
 - 1). But God has given them spiritual life and has brought them into the family of God
- D. Then in chapter 3 he says “for his reason” – because all that is true of you – I am praying for you
 - 1). Because you are saved – I’m praying you progress into the fullness of Christianity – you mature

2. Here is the importance of reading the Bible correctly

- A. It changes this from an evangelistic message – where we pray that people are saved
To a personal application for those who are saved – to progress in their Christian experience
- B. Don’t get me wrong - there is nothing wrong with praying for souls – I do it all the time
 - 1). Just don’t use this passage for that prayer – it is not what it is saying

3. But if it’s for the saved that create a problem

- A. Isn’t Paul asking for Christ to dwell in the hearts of those he’s already dwelling in the hearts of?
 - 1). I mean if you’re a believer, Jesus is dwelling in your heart....right?
2 Co 13:5 (ESV) Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, *that Jesus Christ is in you?*
 - 2). So to be a Christian means Christ is in me – if he’s not then I’m NOT a Christian
Ro 8:9 (ESV) ...*Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*
- B. If this is for the believer and is not speaking about Christ moving into the heart through salvation...
 - 1). Then what is it saying?

Transition: That is what we are going to try to unravel in the next few minutes

- A. What does it mean for Christ who is already in the life of the believer to dwell there by faith?
 - 1). What is God offering here that is so great we need to be strengthened to experience it
So great it is beyond our natural understanding

Christ dwelling in our hearts defined

Eph 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

1. The key word in this passage is “dwell”

- A. Katoikeō (Kat-oy-keh’-o) in the Greek – compound word
 - 1). A compound word is comprised of two or more words that function as a single unit of meaning
- B. This word combines the verb “oikeō” = to dwell, to live, to inhabit
 - 1). And the propositional prefix – “kata” = Down, toward, in”
- C. When you put “Kata” in front of “oikeo” it strengthens it from a mere “Dwelling in, or inhabiting”
 - 1). To a “Settling down” or a “Being at home”

Point: This word emphasizes the idea of Christ settling down in your heart

- A. IOW rather than being treated as a guest – he is able to *make himself at home* in our life
 - 1). It’s the “Mi casa su casa” deal – my house is your house – treat it as your own
You have the run of the place – do whatever you want – look in any room you want

Transition: This is what God wants in the life of every believer – it’s not always the case

2. Example: Christ speaking to the church of Laodicea

Turn: Re 3:20 (ESV) Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

- A. Another misused passage – I’ve heard this in so many evangelistic messages
“Christ is knocking on the door of your heart. If you’ll just open the door he will come in.”
 - 1). This isn’t an evangelistic verse – he’s speaking to the church – to Christian people
- B. This is to believers **YET** Christ is knocking at a closed door to get in – what’s happening here?

- 1). Even though they were believers their spiritual condition was in a terrible state
 - a). Because they had money they thought they had everything they needed
 - b). But Christ called them lukewarm – materially wealthy – but spiritually impoverished

Point: This prayer of Paul is addressed to this kind of Christian

- A. That believer whose relationship with Christ is shallow and lacks intimacy
 - 1). He may be in their lives but he is not at the center of their life
 - 2). He is not at home in their heart – there are areas in the heart that are closed off to him
 - a). He is treated more as a guest – you can go here but not there – that is a NO-GO area
- B. That was the Laodiceans – may be you - I believe that is who Paul is thinking of in this prayer
 - 1). Praise God you've been saved – and Christ is in you
 - a). But you aren't enjoying intimacy with him – you aren't enjoying the fullness of God
 - b). Because you have not settled the issue of who is Lord in your life – and it is hindering you
- C. For individuals like that Paul prays they'd be strengthened in the inner man
 - 1). So they have the strength to overcome the temptation to keep control of their own life
So they would have the strength to surrender – to the Lordship of Christ
- D. Paul wants his readers who are saved – to really enjoy their salvation
 - 1). And that will happen when Christ is at home in our heart – when he is in control

Thought: He wants them to have what he has - When Paul writes this – he isn't like some teachers
Who teach on something they aren't experiencing themselves

- A. Like the one who tells you to take risks but never takes any risks themselves
Who tell you to evangelize but can't remember the last time they told anybody about Christ
- B. This wasn't the case with Paul – he is speaking about something he is living out
Ga 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
 - 1). I have died to those old ways and Christ is in control now – my surrender is so complete I can say
“It is no longer I who live – now it is Christ who is living his life through me”
- C. So Paul knows the joy and the rest that accompanies turning your life over to Christ
 - 1). He wants his readers to know that experience – To know Christianity in its fullness
 - 2). To know what it is to experience the reality of God in your life regularly
 - a). To have Almighty God live HIS LIFE through you

Transition: Go with me to John 14:23 – look a little deeper at living like this means

3. The promise of John 14

TURN: Jn 14:23 (ESV) Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, *and we will come to him and make our home with him.* (what Paul's praying for)

- A. If you will keep my word = that is a willingness to surrender
 - 1). I read his word and I keep it – I bow to his will that is recorded in his book
- B. The result is fantastic = *Christ will make himself at home in our hearts*
 - 1). The promise is – if you will bow to my Lordship by keeping my will found in my word
 - 2). That will allow me to make myself at home in your heart – to settle down – have access
 - a). To feel at home there rather than being treated as a guest
- C. Look at v. 21 the exciting result of Christ being at home in our hearts

Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, *and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*”

- 1). Christ makes himself at home in the obedient heart – v. 23

And then starts manifesting himself to that person – v. 21

- a). The promise is: You will truly know God by experience – he will make sure you do
- b). He will become as real to you as anybody else in your life!
 - 1a). This is the experience Paul is praying for you to have

Transition: This is obviously something beyond simply believing – beyond the initial stages of salvation

- A. This is what Spurgeon was referring to when he said
“There is a point in grace as much above the ordinary Christian as the ordinary Christian is above the worldling”
 - 1). It is possible to live Christianity out with very little of Christ in it – very little intimacy
Paul is praying that his readers wouldn’t be like that
- B. So we’ve answered one question
 - 1). Why is Paul praying for believers who have Christ in their heart to have Christ in their heart?
 - a). The answer is *in degree* – this means to have him control the heart – to settle down there
 - b). This is when Christianity really begins to soar
- C. Great! But what is the heart?

II. SETTLING DOWN IN OUR HEART

Eph 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

1. Is the heart this beating organ in our chest? No!

- A. Heart in the Scriptures means the very center of our personality – all that makes up who we are
 - 1). This would include our mind, emotions and our will

Point: So Paul is praying that Christ would settle down in every part of the believers being

- A. That not only would they believe the correct things about him – which is essential
- B. Paul is praying for something more than that
 - 1). It is possible to know much doctrine – quote Bible verse after Bible verse
Yet know so little about this experience with Christ – so little of his touch - intimacy
- C. Paul is praying that Christ would be at the center of all things in your life
 - 1). That he would be the determining factor in all that you do
 - 2). To the extent that he not only controls your thinking – what you believe
But also your will and your emotions – YOUR HEART = all of you!
 - a). Everything is brought under his Lordship

2. This is rarified air – so few Christians get here – but you can!

- A. You can be strengthened in your inner man so you can get here
And listen – YOU WANT TO get here – so do I
 - 1). Where Christ is manifesting himself in every area of our life
 - 2). Where we are experiencing him in everything in our life – never alone
 - a). Where he is more than just somebody we talk about – He is somebody we really know
- B. This is what being filled with the Spirit is = being controlled by God
 - 1). The picture of filling is a beautiful one in the Greek
 - a). The winds filling the sails of the boat and the wind propelling it forward
 - b). That is THIS Christianity – divine power propelling you forward – you sense it
 - 1a). Here is where striving ceases as you experience Christ living his life through you

Again: Ga 2:20 (ESV) I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

2a). I've sensed this many times haven't you? I want it more! More consistently

3. Read the experiences of the great saints in the past – you'll find this

A. I think of Hudson Taylor discovering the exchanged life

- 1). He was saved and forgiven – Christ was in his heart – yet he struggled
 - a). He was burdened by life's problems – he was defeated too often by temptation
- 2). But there came a time when he became aware of something greater being possible
 - a). He saw that initial salvation was only the beginning
There was more of Christ he could experience
- 3). That awareness created a longing to experience it – a crying out for it
 - a). God did the same thing for him he had done with Paul

Gal 1:15-16 (NKJV) But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, (16) *to reveal His Son in me...*

1a). Notice – NOT to me – BUT *in me*

B. There is the possibility of this inward manifestation of Christ to the believer
Where he becomes as real to us as any other person in our life

Spurgeon said about this verse: “We come to know him by personal acquaintance, by having Christ dwelling in us so that we see him, hear him, feel his touch, and enjoy his blessed company.”

- 1). This is what Paul experienced in his times of trouble – the reality of Christ
 - a). In 2 Timothy Paul speaks about his trial in the Roman courts
2 Tim 4:16-17 (NIV) At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. (17) *But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength...*
 - 1a). No man stood with me but I wasn't alone – Christ was as real to me as any man
And that gave him the strength he needed
- 2). This is why Paul could write the joy-saturated epistle to the Philippians
While chained in a Roman prison – He wasn't alone! Christ was there with him
 - a). Freedom wasn't his source of joy – Christ was – and he was there!

C. Brothers and sisters this prayer is in God's book because he wants to do this in you

- 1). AND THAT should create a desire in us to cry out – God I want this!
Strengthen me in the inner man so I can know your son like this
- 2). Listen to the prayer Hudson Taylor prayed every day

Lord Jesus, make Thyself to me
A living, bright Reality;
More present to faith's vision keen
Than any outward object seen;
More dear, more intimately nigh
Than even the sweetest earthly tie.

a). Lord I want to know you intimately than any person on earth

C. Did God answer that prayer in Hudson Taylor's life? Yes!

Listen to these words of a fellow minister, speaking about Hudson Taylor: Here is a man almost sixty years of age, bearing tremendous burdens, *yet absolutely calm and unruffled*. Oh, the pile of letters! Any one of which might contain news of death, of shortness of funds, or riots or serious trouble. Yet all were opened, read

and answered with the same tranquility - *Christ was his reason for peace, his power for calm. Dwelling in Christ he partook of His very being and resources.*

- 1). How could he be so calm when he faced so many trials all the time?
 - a). He was so surrendered to Christ that it was his peace being lived out through him
If something didn't make Christ anxious it didn't make him anxious

- 2). Isn't that what Jesus said would happen

Jn 14:27 (ESV) Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

- a). When Jesus has made himself at home in your heart – you will know that peace
He will live his peace through you

Again: Ga 2:20 (ESV) ... It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.

- D. This is living out what Lloyd-Jones called *a conscious fellowship with Christ*

- 1). You can be saved but know so little of Christ in your experience
 - a). You can rely on him – pray to him – trust in his work on your behalf
 - b). But lack this intimacy – this nearness – this divine presence
- 2). Paul is praying for the Ephesians that this wouldn't be the case
 - a). That they wouldn't settle for such a stunted Christianity
 - b). That God would strengthen them so they could give control to Christ and experience this

Transition: But there is one more thing we need to see here

- A. We've seen the heart is everything we are – Mind, will, emotions
- B. We seen that Paul is praying Christ would settle down in everything we are
 - 1). Controlling not only the mind – but the will and the emotions – “Lord of all”
- C. We've seen the wonderful results of this occurring
 - 1). He will manifest himself to us – When he does that he will become real to us
And he will live his life through us – great power – great rest
- D. Now Paul brings up one more thing

III. THE NECESSITY OF FAITH

Eph 3:17 (ESV) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts *through faith...*

1. It takes faith to believe this is a possibility

- A. Paul says this is so deep – so amazing it is beyond our imagination
 - 1). You must believe that God is willing to give you this experience of himself
 - 2). He wouldn't put it in his book if he wasn't

2. It takes faith to believe that this truly does lead to real life

- A. Christ settling down in your heart takes surrender
 - 1). That means you are going to have to believe that is truly worth it
- B. Listen - Satan is going to come at you right away – telling you this won't bring satisfaction
 - 1). It's what he did to Eve in the garden – the lie that still works
 - a). Eve did God say “You can't eat of that tree? Did he say you'll die if you do? He was lying. Let me tell you the truth Eve. If you eat of that fruit your life will be enhanced not reduced. You'll be like God knowing good from evil.”
 - b). That is the lie – surrendering to God will never lead to satisfaction
 - 1a). To be satisfied you must maintain control of your life
 - 2). Listen to that and you lose out on all Paul is saying here – what did Jesus say

Mt 16:24–25 (ESV) Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ⁽²⁵⁾ For **(here is the reason why they should be willing)** whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

- a). When you try to save your life – keep control of it – you lose life
 - 1a). You will lose all this potential we are talking about here
- b). But if you lose your life to him – surrender – you will find life
 - 1a). True life – abundant life – life with his touch upon it – the reality of him in it

Point: It will take faith to believe this is worth it – faith to overcome the lies of Satan and your flesh

3. It takes faith to believe God will strengthen you to do this

- A. Why did Paul pray “To be strengthened in the inner man” first?
 - 1). It will take strength to do this – to cast down your flesh and surrender to Christ
- B. Pray then step out to do this - believing he will give you the strength to surrender

CONCLUSION

1. Paul is praying we will enjoy Christ in the fullest sense

- A. That are Christianity won’t be hindered by our refusal to give in to him
 - 1). If you’re in control you can only rise as high as what you can achieve
When you surrender to him the only limitations are his
 - a). You start living life beyond what you can normally do – amazed at what he is doing
- B. This is the life you want – pray for strength to surrender – trust God that he will provide that strength
 - 1). Then step out in obedience – and you’ll see his power enable you