

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. Remember this prayer is for believers – you and me

- A. Not just the exceptional people like Paul and Peter and...
 - 1). This is for people who were sinners but have been saved by grace – all of them
 - 2). So Paul prays that nobody would settle for a mediocre Christianity when this is possible

2. The flow of the prayer is important

- A. Verse 16 - We need to be strengthened in the inner man to understand these truths
 - 1). To win that fight against our own flesh that doesn't want to surrender
 - 2). To persevere in that surrender
- B. Verse 17 – that surrender leads to Christ being at home in our hearts – not treated as a guest
 - 1). This is a by-product of obedience

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.*”
 - 2). The fruit of that happening is found in v. 21

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.*”

 - a). This is that conscious fellowship with the Lord where he becomes so real in our lives
 - b). This is what you want in your Christianity

Transition: This leads to the next great possibility of the Christian life

- C. Verse 17-19 When Christ manifests himself to us we start to understand the great love of God
 - 1). We know it by experience – he is so real in our lives – we begin to grasp this incredible love
- D. Then at the end of V. 19 we experience being filled with all the fullness of God
 - 1). That sounds so incredible and it is
 - 2). Here is how Paul defines it

Eph 3:20 (ESV) 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,

Thought: I love the way the Bible works – there is a cost to enjoying all this - surrender

- A. But we are told the incredible pay off for surrender – therefore it becomes reasonable - logical
 - 1). God paints it in such glorious colors that our heart is willing

Transition: This week we're going to look at v. 16-17 together – see the practicalities of enjoying this

- A. I don't want to miss this – therefore I want to make sure I don't miss what it requires to have it
 - 1). I think as believers we settle for generalities that never lead us to enjoy the true riches available
- B. The first thing I want to make sure of – is to make sure we have the order of these things correct
 - 1). If we don't get this right – you can do what you think is necessary but you will fail

I. THE PROPER ORDER TO ENJOY THIS POTENTIAL

Eph 3:16–17 (ESV) ⁽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...

1. There is a reason the Apostle prays for our inner man to be strengthened first

- A. Unless that happens there is no possibility of the rest happening

- B. You cannot understand the majesty of this unless he strengthens your mind
 - 1). Our mind cannot naturally comprehend truths this deep
 - 2). Praise God the Holy Spirit can enable us – pray that he would
- C. We need to be strengthened to overcome that natural love we have for ourselves
 - 1). To realize the potential of this prayer we must surrender to God and his will
 - a). But we want to please ourselves – do what we want when we want to do it
 - 2). We need to be strengthened to win that fight against ourselves
- D. We need to be strengthened to persevere in this
 - 1). I hear this and think – that is what I want – I can be determined for awhile
 - a). But by Monday – I can be right back to where I was
 - 2). I need my will to be strengthened to persevere in this

Point: You don't have a chance to pull this off in your own strength – you need divine empowering

- A. You need to pray to be strengthened in the inner man – then pray it again and again and again
 - 1). Pray it until you know this strength
 - 2). Pray until you have the power to get rid of anything that is blocking Christ from being at home
 - a). Because that is stopping him from manifesting himself to you

It is short-circuiting this conscious awareness of Christ that you really want in your life

Transition: So we saw this must begin with the work of God in your heart – you need divine strengthening

- A. That is something you should be praying about regularly

2. We also saw the necessity of faith

Eph 3:16–17 (ESV) 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...*

- A. I think we need to see what this doesn't mean – much misunderstanding here
 - 1). This isn't a “take it by faith” only sort of thing – hear this all the time

“I prayed and opened the door of my heart by faith. So I believe he is there now. I take it by faith.”

 - a). I don't sense him at all – nothing has changed – but I take it by faith that he is at home there
- B. Listen – faith is essential and opens the door to all of this
 - 1). But when those doors are open there is something experiential that takes place
 - a). We experience true fellowship with Christ – we sense he is with us – conscious awareness
 - 2). You can be a Christian without this – but why would you want too?
 - a). Jesus came and offered full satisfaction in life – not thirsting any longer

Jn 6:35 (ESV) Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

Jn 6:37–38 (ESV) All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out. ⁽³⁸⁾ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

- 1a). This is what is on offer here – abundant – overflowing life
- 2a). The kind of life that will attract the unbeliever to the Christian faith

The kind of life we want them to see
- b). We can tell others how incredible Christianity is – the rest – the peace – the joy
 - 1a). Then they watch us to see if that's true – and they don't see any of it

“No thank you. I already feel like Eyore. I guess I already have what you have.”

“I was looking for something special. God's touch upon a life.”
 - c). The unbeliever has the right to question the validity of what we are saying – they watch
 - 1a). That is good news – as this world gets darker – what an opportunity to shine brighter

2a). What we are talking about here is turning up the lights until it is off the charts

Transition: I want to look at what real faith looks like – how it acts – sweep away some misunderstandings

A. There are many misunderstandings that happen in the name of faith that can keep this from happening

II. FAITH IN ACTION

Eph 3:16–17 (ESV) 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...

1. We have the Spirit and faith in these two verses

A. The danger is linking these two incorrectly – looking at it in a passive way

1). I believe (v. 17) the Spirit is going to do something (v. 16) so I'll just wait passively

2). It is the error of Keswick in England – “Let go and let God” – I used to believe that

a). If you try at all you just get in the way – so the biggest fight is staying out of the way

b). We need to cultivate this sort of spiritual inertia where we do nothing

1a). We simply live – staying out of the way – so God can do everything

B. The question as always is – Is that Biblical? Can you back that up with Scripture?

2. Should I just let go and let God? Get our answer in Philippians 3

Turn to: Php 3:12–14 (ESV) Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ⁽¹³⁾ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ⁽¹⁴⁾ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

A. I don't see a lot of passivity there do you?

Transition: Go to chapter 2:12-13 where Paul obliterates the thought of “Letting go and letting God”

Php 2:12–13 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ⁽¹³⁾ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

A. Here is the perfect balance of the healthy Christian life

B. The Apostle starts with a command

Php 2:12 (ESV) Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,

1). The command is: To work out your own salvation

The attitude is to be with great earnestness: With fear and trembling

2). That is not something God does for us – it is something you and I have to do

Transition: But immediately he adds something else that is vital

Php 2:13 (ESV) for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

A. That is saying exactly the same thing he said in Ephesians 3:16-17 but in reverse

1). Phil 2:12-13 – You must act because God is working in you

2). Eph 3:16-17 – God is working in you so now you need to act

B. If it weren't for God working in us we could never do anything

1). But because he is working in us now we must do something – work that out

Transition: But the Apostle says that is something that happens by faith. What does that mean?

A. We saw it doesn't mean “let go and let God” – a spiritual passivity – just get out of the way

B. I also want to warn you about an abuse of the thought of “taking it by faith”

1). There are a lot of times we do have to take things by faith even when we don't see them

2 Co 5:7 (ESV) for we walk by faith, not by sight.

2). But let me tell you when this gets ridiculous – example bible college - stuttered

- a). Students got together and prayed – then told him you have to take it by faith
IOW you have to believe God has already done it – claim it
 - 1a). He did – he told everybody he didn’t stutter – stuttering while he told them
 - 2a). That is Christianity that is not dealing with reality
 - 3a). That was claiming something that God never promised – everyone is not healed
 - 4a). It really stumbled some students because they saw how ridiculous it was
- C. What we are talking about here is so incredible – so powerful – you don’t have to play mental games
 - 1). When this happens you will know it – you will experience it
 - 2). This may rub some of my Calvinistic friends the wrong way
I know some who are so afraid of experience and emotions – the slippery slope
 - a). Start wanting these experiences and soon you’ll be swinging from the chandeliers
 - 3). I have no desire to go over the top – to be like the circus I see today
 - a). At the same time I don’t think a real relationship supposedly characterized by love
Should be entirely absent of all emotions and experience
 - b). God will withdraw at times – so we mature and don’t walk by feelings – trust the truth
 - 1a). We believe we are saved if we feel like it or not because his Word says it is so
- D. But Paul wasn’t taking this by faith alone – he was experiencing Christ – walked and talked with him
 - 1). He was able to say “To me, to live is Christ”
 - 2). He was stating a fact when he states numerous times that Christ stood by him to help
 - a). Because Christ was so real to him – he could say
“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”
 - b). Like a little kid who feels they can do all things when they are with dad – his strength
 - 1a). I’ll never forget that tree on Bucksford lane in England – little fort high up
I climbed up and lifted Taylor – He experienced my strength – but he was involved
He put his feet in the right places – pushed off – did what was necessary
 - 2a). When his friends came around – “I was up in that tree?” “Really!”
 - c). He trusted my strength to lift him – Paul trusted in Christ to lift him in all things
 - 1a). Christ was so real, powerful in Paul’s life – he rested – Nothings to hard for him
 - 2a). He got involved – he worked it out – but in absolute dependence upon God

Point: I’m not going to look at the potential here and let go and let God – it won’t happen

- A. I’m not going to “take it by faith that it has happened” when it hasn’t
 - 1). I’ll tell myself lies that will keep me from doing what I need to do – and it won’t happen
- B. I want real – I don’t want to play mental gymnastics
I don’t want to accept something that hasn’t happened and tell myself it has

Transition: That’s enough blathering on about what faith isn’t – what is the faith we need here

III. FAITH DEFINED

Intro: Hebrews 11 is the chapter where we see what real faith looks like – we’ll use one verse to define it

- A. You will not see passivity in Hebrews 11
- B. Here we will see how the faith links to Christ dwelling in our hearts – the activity of faith

Good definition of faith: Heb 11:13 (ESV) *These all died in faith*, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Transition: We will tear this verse apart and see four principles of faith

1. First principle of faith: I must see

Heb 11:13 (ESV) These all died in faith, not having received the things *promised*, but *having seen them* and greeted them from afar...

- A. I must see the promises in such a way they grip my heart – move me to action
- B. That's the example of the great men and women in Hebrews 11 – the hall of faith
 - 1). They were living their lives in the world just like us – normal people
But they saw a message that promised something greater than the world could offer
 - 2). Most around them missed it – but they saw it - it gripped them and moved them to action
 - a). ~~It moved Noah to build an ark while the rest mocked him~~
 - b). ~~It caused Moses to reject the riches of Egypt to suffer persecution with the Jews~~
 - 1a). ~~Because he saw the promise of a city not made by hands – gazed into eternity~~

Thought: The difference between the believer and unbeliever – we see something different

- A. Here is our first step – do you see the possibility of Christ dwelling in your heart like this?
 - 1). Is it gripping you? Stirring your faith to act?
 - 2). If not I plead with you to ask God to do that – so you don't miss the beauty of what is on offer

Transition: First point. Faith feeds off of truth – it sees God's message and is moved by it

- A. It creates a hunger and thirst to have what is being offered

2. Second principle of faith: You must be persuaded this message is for you

Heb 11:13 (ESV) These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Heb 11:13 (KJV) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, *and were persuaded of them...*

- A. They were persuaded the promises of God were for them
 - 1). So easy to see the promises – believe they are true – but never enjoy them yourself
- B. You may reason them away – “This is only for those more emotional, mystical types.”
“I'm more of a no-nonsense type of guy. A bit more stable than those other folk.”
 - 1). Then the devil may point out the people acting unbiblically on TV
“See, those are the kind of people this experiential stuff is for”
- C. You may see this and want it – but have excuses why it's not possible for you
“I have a family to care for. Work I need to go to. I don't have time to sit around for extended periods to seek Jesus. I have so many pressing problems that I can't imagine this happening to me.”
 - 1). Paul is writing to every believer in Ephesus – business owners – employees - slaves
 - a). A slave was forced to work extended hours of hard labor – this was a possibility for them

Point: True faith will be persuaded that this is a possibility for you – it grips that

- A. If you don't think this is possible for you – you will never pursue it – you will miss it
 - 1). Missing this in your Christianity is like having a Maserati with a 450hp V8
Going to mechanic – “Can you by-pass 6 of those cylinders – make it run like a Prius instead?”
 - a). People would think you're crazy – YEAH – same with Christianity
You're living with a fraction of the power – a fraction of the excitement

Transition: What do we have so far?

- A. We must see the promises – in a way that understands them
- B. We must be persuaded the promises are really for us
 - 1). You can understand how great they are – but if you don't think they're for you – it doesn't matter

3. Third principle of faith: They embraced the promises

Heb 11:13 (ESV) These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and *greeted them from afar*, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Heb 11:13 (KJV) These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, *and embraced them...*

- A. They saw the promises the potential – faith is fueled by truth
They were persuaded it was not only true but it was true for them
- 1). This creates a longing to experience what is promised
A hunger to know that promise personally in their lives

Go back through these first three points - SEE IF THIS IS REPEATING ITSELF

- B. This is the path to having this - You see the same thing in the Sermon on the Mount
Mt 5:6 (ESV) “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, *for they shall be satisfied.*
- 1). No passivity – no half-hearted whatever kind of attitude
 - 2). We are to embrace the promise of Christ dwelling in our hearts like this
With a hunger – and a thirst to have them be real in our lives
 - a). Faith sees the truth – the potential then acts to do what is necessary
- C. We do this all the time – when we see things we desire in life
- 1). We don’t just sit back and hope they come to us – we do what is necessary
 - 2). Those who say they are too busy to really seek Christ have the time to seek other things
 - a). It’s all about priority isn’t it?

Thought: What were seeing about real faith is – there is nothing casual about it – not passive

- A. Faith doesn’t sit around hoping God will do something – there are things it must do
- 1). If you want to grow – there are things you must do – God won’t do them for you
 - 2). If you want these promises there are things you must do – God won’t do them for you
- B. Read the biographies of the greats and see how they approached their faith
- 1). They had great rest – incredible peace and contentment
But they were running the race – agonizing towards the goal
- C. That is one of the amazing things about Christianity
- 1). It tells us to go to Christ to find rest from our weariness
Then once we are in Christ we are told to agonize – press on – relentlessly towards the goal
 - 2). Those two sound contradictory – they are not
We are pressing on in his power – in his abilities – in his strength
 - a). The Christian is extremely active – yet at complete rest
Energetically running the race while lying down in green pastures

Transition: They saw the promises the potential – faith is fueled by truth
They were persuaded it was not only true but it was true for them
This creates a longing to experience what is promised
A hunger to know that promise personally in their lives

4. Their faith caused action

Again check for repeats

Heb 11:13 (ESV) These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, *and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.*

- A. Here is where their faith turned into action – they saw the promise and acted upon it
- B. Read through the list of men and women in Heb. 11 – see how the promises changed their lives
- C. Abraham embraced the promise and was willing to leave family, friends, country
When Noah embraced the promise he separated himself from others and began to construct the ark

Moses was so moved by the promise that he gave up all Egypt had to offer

- 1). And was willing to accept being persecuted with God's people
 - a). Why? because he looked forward to a city not made with hands

Point: Hebrews 11 goes on and on and on – one saint after another

God is painting a beautiful panorama of what faith looks like through the lives of these saints

- A. When we see what is on offer in Ephesians 3 – Christ so real in our lives – conscious fellowship
 - 1). When we believe that is true – and is true for us – then embrace it – hungering and thirsting
 - a). It will become a controlling factor in our lives
 - b). It will become so precious we will be willing to give our sin up for it

Thought: You say I don't have that desire – what do I do – start where you're at

- A. Keep reading your Bible – memorize the passage in Ephesians

Ask God to make it so real to you that you will be moved by it
- B. Be a reader – I'm addicted to biographies of the great saints
 - 1). Why? One reason – I see this in it – lived out – it makes me long for it
 - 2). It makes me pray – whatever you want Lord I'll do it – don't let me miss this

Transition: Do what it takes to thirst after this – to add this hunger the Lord promised to fulfill

- A. But there is also something you must remove
 - 1). We must realize certain things are incompatible with this experience
 - 2). To have Christ in our hearts settling down – there are things that cannot be in our heart

III. REMOVING WHAT HINDERS

2 Co 6:14–16 (NLT) How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can light live with darkness? ⁽¹⁵⁾ What harmony can there be between Christ and the devil? How can a believer be a partner with an unbeliever? ⁽¹⁶⁾ And what union can there be between God's temple and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: "I will live in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

1. This verse is pretty clear – Christ is not comfortable dwelling with certain things

- A. He could never be at home in a heart that is given over to sin
- B. Listen to the very next verse

2 Co 6:17–18 (NLT) Therefore, come out from among unbelievers, and separate yourselves from them, says the LORD. Don't touch their filthy things, and I will welcome you. ⁽¹⁸⁾ And I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

- 1). Our Christianity begins with a call to separate ourselves from the world to follow God
- C. John puts it this way

1 Jn 2:15 (NLT) Do not love this world nor the things it offers you, for when you love the world, you do not have the love of the Father in you.

- 1). If you want to have Christ dwelling at home in your heart you must get rid of the worldliness

Transition: I need to warn you who take this on board – and start getting serious about your walk

- A. Your next tactic of the devil that will stop all this will be to make you proud

2. The uprising of self-righteous pride

- A. You start doing this and the devil will try to stir you up to see everybody that isn't
 - 1). He wants you to be mastered by self-righteousness – hyper critical pride
 - a). I'm doing this but they're not! Look down your nose at them – become a Pharisee
- B. We must always guard our hearts from this – the devil doesn't care what extreme you're on
 - 1). Compromised in sin – critical in self-righteousness = Both block God's movements in your life
 - 2). Love the story of H.A. Ironside – looking for ways to become more humble – Sandwich board

- a). Gets home “I bet there isn’t anybody else in the Christian body who would do this”
- 3). Christ cannot be at home with a heart filled with sin or with self
- C. But sin can be so deceitful – I believe that is why David prayed
 - Ps 139:23–24 (ESV)** Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! ⁽²⁴⁾ And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!
 - 1). He didn’t trust himself with being able to spot the beginnings of sin
 - He said “Lord will you look and point out anything in me that grieves you. Then will you help me to walk in your ways of holiness.”
 - a). Lord point out where sin and self reign and help me to surrender to you

Summary: There are actions here for sure

- A. Genuine faith is willing to believe the truth – it sees the promise and believes it is true
 Genuine faith is persuaded that the truth it sees is true for them – this promise is for me
 Genuine faith then embraces that promise – it is moved – if it is for me I want it
 Genuine faith then acts – it does whatever is necessary to have that promise
 - 1). It prays for it over and over and over until it is a reality – story of the persistent widow
 - 2). It is willing to remove whatever is blocking the reception of the promise
 - a). Whatever would be keeping Christ from feeling at home

3. But before I sign off I must circle back to the beginning

- A. This all starts with a work of God – a strengthening in your inner man
 - 1). If you don’t have this desire – I believe that should concern you – there is a deadness there
 - 2). Where do you start – you pray – you ask for it until you have it
 - a). Then you can begin to work out what he has worked in

Thought: You say I don’t have that desire – what do I do – start where you’re at

- A. Keep reading your Bible – memorize the passage in Ephesians
 Ask God to make it so real to you that you will be moved by it
- B. Be a reader – I’m addicted to biographies of the great saints
 - 1). Why? One reason – I see this in it – lived out – it makes me long for it
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Transition: Do what it takes to thirst after this – to add this hunger the Lord promised to fulfill

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 - 1). We must realize certain things are incompatible with this experience
 - 2). To have Christ in our hearts settling down – there are things that cannot be in our heart