

Prayer for Enablement – Part 2

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AM Service

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Text:

Ephesians 3:14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, 15: Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, 16: That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; 17: **That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith**; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18: May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 20: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, 21: Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Introduction

We have been looking at Paul's prayers recorded here in the book of Ephesians. Paul is a man of prayer, and he faithfully prays for others. Also, **he doesn't just say a prayer, he really prays.** We see that in the prayer that he prays for other believers. I believe if we pray like Paul did, our churches will be transformed. That's one of the reasons why we are looking at these prayers. I pray that it would have a transforming effect on our lives individually and corporately as we follow Paul's example.

Last time we talked about Paul's prayer for others that the inner man might be strengthened with might by His Spirit. This morning, I want us to focus on the second one, which is "**that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.**" What this prayer means and how it is connected to the first one which is to be strengthened with might by His Spirit.

Again, remember that **Paul is not praying for the unsaved or lost people here.** He is not praying for salvation experience for the lost people. It is good to pray for people's salvation but that is not what this prayer is about. **This is a prayer by Paul for fellow believers.** He has described the recipient of this letters in the beginning as **saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.** He has described them in chapter one verse thirteen as **those who have trusted Christ** after they heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of their salvation and as **sealed with the Holy Spirit.** He has described them in **chapter 2 verse 22** as **the habitation, the dwelling place of God.** So, Paul is praying for believers at Ephesus which means that they already have Jesus Christ dwelling in their hearts.

Now, Paul is praying that Christ may dwell in their hearts. In whose hearts? In the hearts of those who have been born again. Now, the Bible is clear that the moment a person acknowledges and

trusts Jesus Christ as his Saviour, the Lord Jesus comes to live in the heart and life of the believer. He has come to permanently dwell in our hearts by means of His Spirit.

John 14:23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and **make our abode with him**.

Romans 8:9 But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Here the apostle Paul differentiates the believer and unbeliever. He describes a believer as one who is indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, while he describes an unbeliever as one who does not have the Spirit of Christ.

By the way, Christ already dwells in the hearts of every believer without exemption. Not just the best of believers, not just the spiritually mature believers. If believers already have Christ by His Spirit indwells them, if that is true and it is, **what is Paul praying here?** Why pray for believers that Christ may dwell in their hearts if that has already taken place at salvation? Good question and that's what I want to try to answer here today. In focusing on this prayer, I want us to think about three words, namely, **dwell, heart, and faith**.

I - Dwell

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may **dwell** in your hearts by faith ...

First, let's look at the word "**dwell**." The word dwell in Greek usage, is to **settle down**; to **abide**; to **inhabit**. It means to live or to dwell in a place in an established or settled manner as opposed to sojourning or making only an occasional visit. In other words, **to dwell is to make the house one's home!** What is a home? A home is a place of rest. You have heard the sayings, "*There's no place like home.*" "*Home is where the heart is.*" "*Home Sweet Home!*" Isn't that what we say and how we feel after being away from a long vacation, as great as they are? Home is a pleasant place. It's a place of comfort and rest.

Let's look at this phrase in this light, "**that Christ may be a place of rest in your hearts.**" Essentially, Paul is praying for the believers at Ephesus for Christ to dwell in their hearts, to be at home in their hearts. Paul is praying for **Christ to settle down and feel completely at home** in their hearts. So, the idea of the word "dwell" is **not just being inside the house of our hearts but of being at home there**, settled down as a family member.

MacDonald explains that "*Actually, the Lord Jesus takes up His personal residence in a believer at the time of conversion (John 14:23; Rev. 3:20). But that is not the subject of this prayer. Here it is not a question of His being in the believer, but rather of His feeling at home there! He is a permanent Resident in every saved person, but this is a request that He might have full access to every room and closet; that He might not be grieved by sinful words, thoughts, motives, and deeds; that He might enjoy unbroken fellowship with the believer. The Christian heart thus becomes the home of Christ, the place where He loves to be—like the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany. The heart, of course, means the center of the spiritual life; it controls every aspect of behavior. In effect, the apostle prays that the lordship of Christ might extend to the*

books we read, the work we do, the food we eat, the money we spend, the words we speak—in short, the minutest details of our lives.”

What is the point of this prayer?

Again, understand that Paul is not praying that Christ would come to live in their hearts, if they are believers Christ already lives in their hearts, what he is praying is that Christ would settle down in their hearts and that their hearts would be transformed to such an extent that He would feel one more and more at home in our hearts. So, the point of this prayer is **that believers would grow more and more in grace and holiness**. Understand, that salvation is just the beginning. It is the first stage of the great work of God in our lives. The next step is sanctification which simply means an ongoing process of growth in grace and holiness. This is God’s eternal purpose in salvation—to be conformed to the image of His dear Son, Jesus Christ.

II - Heart

Now when the Paul says, “**That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith,**” he is not talking about the physical heart in your body that pumps blood to all parts of your body. But rather it’s talking about that **invisible seat of intellect, emotions, will, and moral consciousness**. The Bible calls that—the heart. The heart is the **seat** and the **source** of our **thinking**, of our **willing**, of our **choosing**. It’s made up of your **mind**, your **will**, and your **emotions**. It is the **center of our being**. And so, what the Apostle desires for the Ephesians is that Christ may dwell not only in their minds or in their intellects, but also **in the very center of their being**.

Paul’s prayer is that Christ may dwell in their minds, that Christ may dwell in their will, that Christ may dwell in their affections. His desire for the believers is that Christ may be all in all in their life, controlling it and directing it. Christ is to be the very heart of their hearts; He is to be at the very center of their lives. This is extremely important. The Puritan, John Flavel wrote a book, entitled “**Keeping Your Heart,**” in 1826. He wrote, “*The greatest difficulty in conversion, or the greatest challenge is to win our heart to God. The greatest challenge after conversion is to keep the heart right with God.*” He also said, “*The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition is one of great business or importance in the Christian’s life.*” To which, I agree, because the battle against temptation and sin is a battle that is won or lost in the heart. It is vitally important that we should apply this to ourselves—that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.

Now, before we leave this point, I want to talk about the relationship between the prayer “**to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**” and “**that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.**”

If we want Christ to be “at home” in our hearts **our inner person must submit to the strengthening of His Spirit**. Until the Spirit controls our lives, Jesus Christ cannot be comfortable there, but only stays like a tolerated visitor. Paul’s teaching here does not relate to the fact of Jesus’ presence in the hearts of believers but to the quality of His presence.

Wayne Barber writes, *“If you are not being strengthened in the inner man with power by the Spirit of God, it is very obvious that you are not making Christ at home in your hearts. Why? Because Christ is His Spirit that lives there. If you are living a lifestyle that is not pleasing to Him, if you are grieving Him, then no wonder you're discouraged, defeated and generally a ‘mess’ spiritually speaking. No wonder your life is falling apart. There is a very basic truth in Scripture and when you come to grips with it, it becomes very understandable what victory is all about.”*

But how is this achieved? How can this dwelling of Christ in our hearts becomes possible? That brings us to the next word I want us to consider...

III - Faith

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by **faith** ...

Paul's prayer, that Christ may dwell in their hearts is by faith. It is through faith that you and I will know and enjoy the reality of Christ's presence in our lives. It is amazing how much this idea of Him dwelling with us is at the heart of Scripture.

In Leviticus 26:11, we read, *“And I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. 12: And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”*

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:16, *“And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, **I will dwell in them**, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”*

Jesus says in Revelation 3:20, *“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, **I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.**”*

He said in John 14:21, *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”*

We see how the Scripture repeatedly reassures us God is always near, and that He desires His Son Jesus Christ to dwell in our hearts, but sometimes we struggle to believe this. The indwelling of Christ in the heart of the believer is **not just a phrase, it's a reality**. But if you want Christ to be at home in your heart, you must exercise faith. **Faith reveals this precious truth as a reality.**

As we saw earlier, our Lord Jesus Christ did not come as a temporary guest or visitor; He came as a permanent Resident. It is God's purpose that He dwell in our hearts **personally, permanently, and powerfully**. Christ is not a guest or an occasional visitor; He is the rightful owner and lives here.

Galatians 2:20 I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Jesus Christ is not a 3-5-day visitor. He is moving in, and He is taking over, which can be painful. Why? As someone has said, “*He comes to live in the house but the moment He comes in, He begins to rearrange and redecorate.*”

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

This can be painful, because once He moves in, He will start cleaning up our lives. This is where we need to exercise faith and believe that He knows what He is doing and He knows and desires the best for us. You and I must learn to trust Him. We must depend on Him. We will know and enjoy the reality of Christ’s presence in our life if we are leaning on him.

*Christ liveth in me,
Christ liveth in me,
Oh! what a salvation this,
That Christ liveth in me.*

Closing Exhortations

As we close, allow me to highlight another word, which is the word “**may**.”

Ephesians 3:17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.

The word “**may**,” implies that even though Christ through His Spirit indwells you as a believer, **there is a possibility that Christ is not at home in your heart.** The word “may” is a word based on condition. The condition is us! For Christ to dwell in our hearts, or to be at rest and at home in our hearts, **you and I must do our part.** So, the question I want to leave you with is, “*Are you making your heart a comfortable place for the Lord Jesus Christ to dwell? Are you keeping your heart with all diligence? Are you allowing the Word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom? Are you using the means that God has ordained to keep your heart pure?*”

And remember that this is in a form of prayer and so, we are supposed to pray this, for ourselves and for fellow believers—that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that Christ may move in and take over; that Christ may be at rest and at home in our hearts. Do you want stability? Do you want an intimate and soul-satisfying walk with Christ? This is only possible if He dwells in your heart. He has to settle down in your life. This is not a prayer that is designed to put guilt-trip. It is a petition that is designed to lead us to aspire. So, I challenge you church to pray this prayer for yourself and for fellow believers that God has placed in your life.

If you’re an unbeliever—if you have never trusted Christ for salvation—**what you need is a new heart.** Only God can give you a new heart. And to whom does He give a new heart? God gives a new heart to those who **humbly confess their sin and their defilement and call upon the name of the Lord for their salvation.**

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11: For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. 12: For there is no difference

between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. 13:
For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

God says this in Ezekiel 36:25-26, “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”

AMEN!