

We Are Indwelled

Eph. 3:14-21

Today's text is 2 paragraphs, each paragraph is comprised of only one sentence.

We are coming to the end of the 3rd chapter and if you'll remember the first 3 chapters is Paul telling us who God says we are, the last 3 chapters Paul is telling us what it looks like to be who God says we are.

Last week in the sermon entitle "We Are Confident" Paul did not want the Ephesians to be discouraged by his suffering ... and the likelihood of their own future suffering.

Paul ended that section (in verse 13) by telling them to not lose heart ...

... but Paul isn't just encouraging them to not lose heart, Paul is also praying for them and that where we pick it ups today ...

¹⁴ 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. (Eph. 3:14-19)

Paul says that he is praying that God would strengthen and empower these believers "in the inner being" ... "through the power of the Holy Spirit."

... that the inner being would be strengthened through the Holy Spirit

... here is the truth that Paul is teaching us.

1. The Inner Life Has Power Over the Outer Life

What is happening in the inside will go a long way in dictating what happens on the outside.

... and Paul says that this indwelling Holy Spirit is necessary for spiritual maturity (to be rooted and grounded in love) as well as spiritual comprehension (to know what breadth, length, height, and depth of God's love is.)

This is what I believe is missing in so much of Christianity today.

When you talk to people about Christ a lot of them will say "I am a Christian,"

... they will say that they believe Christ existed, or they accept the truths of Christianity...

...but when you ask, "do you have a personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ" ... well, that's when it gets awkward.

... well, I don't know about that, who am I to say that I have ...

The truth is that many Christians, if they are honest, will admit that they when they think about their Christian lives they detect a sense of phoniness, coldness, hollowness ... a lack of deep authenticity.

... and here is the saddest part ... many will follow up by saying, *"but that's how it is with all Christians."*

... everybody has a sense of spiritual hollowness, coldness, phoniness ...

... nobody has a driving passion for God.

... If you feel that way, then it is critical for you to really look at what Paul is saying in today's passage

... this indwelling of Christ in our inner being is an important indicator of whether or not you are a growing maturing Christian.

... one of the things that irks people about evangelical Christianity is that we make the claim (*not just that we believe and worship God*) ... but that we personally KNOW Him, we have a personal relationship with Him.

In some sectors of Christianity ... if you to say, "*I know God, we talk, we have interaction*" ...

... if *you speak this way*, they will think you are a fanatic.

... "*Well, who do you think you are? You must think you are special*"

That is the problem that today's passage is addressing.

... plenty of people who say they are Christians, don't have this dimension in their Christian life.

... they don't have an intimate, personal, ongoing, fellowship with God.

AND not only that, but many of them also think that such a thing is even impossible.

... last week we saw that Paul is concerned about the Ephesians being discouraged ... **and he wants to keep them** from being discouraged.

So, Paul not only prays for them, but he also writes it down what it is he prays so. they can read it, learn from it, and be encouraged.

This passage is an amazing prayer because as Paul is praying for them he makes no reference to their external circumstances.

... **Paul doesn't ask God** to change their situation or circumstances ...

... Paul doesn't ask God to give them deliverance, peace, or healing.

... Instead, Paul prays that they would be "**strengthened with power THROUGH God's Spirit in their inner being.**"

... WHY is there is no request at all for God to changing any outward circumstance?

Because here Paul is demonstrating one of the great truths of what it means to be a child of God ...

the **inner life has absolute priority and power** over the outer life.

... I am not being simplistic; I'm just trying to be biblical

... if the inner being is strong and grounded in the Lord, then it doesn't matter what is happening in the outward circumstances.

WHAT IS THE INNER BEING?

... the inner being is the heart and it is a combination of the **mind, will, and emotions**.

... it's all three.

If you are **emotionally moved** but it **doesn't affect your will or the way you live**, then it hasn't touched your heart

If you get **excited mentally or intellectually** about something but **doesn't affect the way you live or feel** ... then it hasn't touched your heart.

This may be more important than you realize.

There are Christians who have never developed this inner life either because they think they are too busy ... they don't have time.

I must say this ... If you are **too busy to develop an inner life** ...

... then you have no reason to complain to God about the lack of peace in your life

... you have no reason to complain about your inward confusion

AGAIN, the reason Paul absolutely ignores every external circumstance in his prayer for these Ephesian Christians...

... is because he believes that if they

- Are strengthened in their inner man
- They are rooted and grounded in love
- They if can comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of God's love

Then all those other external things are **inconsequential** ... nothing more than a **minor distraction**.

One of the reasons some Christians do not mature is because they are totally unaware of the inner spiritual life ...

... their whole life is bound up in the situations of their circumstances.

... they know nothing beyond the five senses

... they live only in one realm ... the physical.

... their peace and security is totally dependent upon the circumstances of their outward lives.

... so, in times of stress, trouble, and trial the only option they have is to fall back on external things like psychology, drugs, alcohol, sex, and other tricks they use for distraction

... they are just to try to survive hoping that in time their circumstances will change.

I must ask you ...

Do you know what it is to retreat into the realm of your inner being and lean upon the Lord and draw strength from the indwelling Holy Spirit?

This is one of the most blessed things you can ever know.

... Paul realizes the priority of the inner life over the outer life and he wants us to know about it also.

... until you are ready to start here ...

... stop complaining that your circumstances are too much ...

... then stop complaining about the problems in your relationships ... it's pointless.

What are you doing about your inner being?

What are you doing about your intimacy with God?

Paul is saying that this is the thing, **if we get this right**, then all these other outward circumstances are nothing more than minor distractions.

The inner life has power and priority over the outer life therefore we need the indwelling.

2. We need this INDWELLING?

Paul is talking about the things he wants God to bring into their lives.

- Strengthened with power
- Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith
- Being able to comprehend with all the saints the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love
- Filled with the fullness of God

All of these are things **need to happen**, otherwise Paul wouldn't be praying for them.

... God has created us with the capacity to have passion, desire, and thirst...

But here is what's odd ... the things that Paul is praying for us to have, he has already said, in chapters 1 and 2 that we have them.

- In **Colossians 2** Paul tells us that when we come to Christ, we have the fullness of God because the fullness of God dwells in Christ.

⁹ *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, (Col 2:9-10)*

- Paul writes to the Corinthian church and asks them, *“Don’t you know that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”*

So, if Christ already dwells in the believer’s heart why is Paul praying for Christ to dwell in their heart?

The answer is quite simple.

It is possible to have something and **not experience it.**

... “being strengthened with power through God’s Spirit in our inner being” **is potential**

... and it **does not become actual until we do something about it.**

... please stay with me.

This story comes from R. C. Sproul ...

When the famous seventeenth century French scientist Blaise Pascal died in 1662, they found a small piece of parchment sewn into his coat. At the top of the paper Pascal had drawn a cross.

... Underneath the cross were these words.

*In the year of the Lord 1654
Monday, November 23
From about half-past ten in the evening
until half-past twelve.*

FIRE

*God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob
Not of philosophers nor of the scholars.
Certitude. Certitude. Feeling. Joy, Peace.
God of Jesus Christ,
My God and thy God.
“Thy God shall be my God.”*

*Forgetfulness of the world and of everything, except God.
He is to be found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.
Greatness of the soul of man.
"Righteous Father, the world hath not know thee, but I have known thee."
Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.*

*Jesus Christ.
I have fallen away: I have fled from Him, denied Him, crucified him.
May I not fall away forever.
We keep hold of him only by the ways taught in the Gospel.
Renunciation, total and sweet.
Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director.
Eternally in joy for a day's exercise on earth.
I will not forget Thy word. Amen.*

That was Blaise Pascal's record of an intense two-hour religious experience that he kept secret until his death.

It was an experience of God that **gripped his soul and changed the course** of his life.

Pascal stored his record of this moment in the lining of his coat, close to his heart.

... For eight whole years he took care to sew and un-sew it in every time he changed his coat. It was a treasured experience, something he could return to again and again.

This is more than **academic knowledge** and **mental affirmation** ...

This is being gripped by the wonder and glory of Christ in your inner being!

In the summer of 1871, two women in Dwight L. Moody's congregation felt an unusual burden to pray for him "that the Lord would give him the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire."

Moody said that he would see these 2 ladies in the front row of his church praying for this and it irritated him ...

... at first, he didn't really believe in being able to have this kind of intimate personal relationship with God.

Before long, however, Moody decided to give in by September he was praying with these two ladies every Friday afternoon.

He had come to the place where He that his ministry was becoming a sounding brass with little power.

On November 24, of that same year Moody's church building was destroyed in the great Chicago fire.

... He went to New York to seek for financial help.

... Day and night he would walk the streets desperate for direction from God.

*Then suddenly, one day ... well **Listen to Moody's description of that day,***

"New York—oh, what a day! —I cannot describe it, I seldom refer to it; it is almost too sacred an experience to name.... I can only say that God revealed himself to me, and I had such an experience of his love that I had to ask him to stay his hand.

I went to preaching again. The sermons were not different; I did not present any new truths, and yet hundreds were converted.

*I would not now be placed back where I was before that blessed experience if you should give me all the world—it would be small dust in the balance." (W. R. Moody, *The Life of D. L. Moody*, New York: 1900, p. 149)*

This is the indwelling ...

... this being strengthened with power through God's Holy Spirit in the inner man

This is when the potential become actual in your life.

It is one thing to come to Christ and to know the truth objectively ... it is another thing to experience it in power!

Paul is not just talking about truths we need to know ...

... Paul is talking about truths that we must appropriate ...

What about you? How is your inner life?

You say, "I am a believer, but I have almost no inner life?"

... I pray, but I don't have this kind of spiritual power in my life.

... How can I have this in my life?

... That's the first step ...

Why do we need this indwelling? to take away our phoniness, coldness, and our spiritual hollowness

What is this indwelling? When the potential becomes actual through spiritual experience.

3. How Do we Get this Indwelling?

In the text Paul illustrates three prerequisites that are needed to have this indwelling ...

a. Consistently praying for it.

The Ephesian letter records 2 of Paul's prayers and in both of them we see Paul's desire, thirst, desperation for God to respond.

... you must desire, you must constantly be asking God to reveal Himself to you.

... God may not answer this prayer every day, month, or even year ... but living each day with that hope and desire for it is what Paul is doing ...

... and we should do.

b. Obedience

Paul says, “**for this reason I bow before the Father**” ... this is not just a physical posture this is a way of submitting.

Paul is bowed and submitted before God ...

... “Lord this is how much I need; this is how desperate I am to have an intimate relationship with you.”

The third prerequisite is community.

c. **Community**

... in verse 18 Paul prays that we “*may have strength to comprehend with all the saints.*”

There is a sense in which togetherness with others *of like faith* is a part of our own intimacy with God.

Now before you say, “there is no way that such a life can ever be had ... this is just a fairy tale ... spiritual mumbo jumbo

... look at what Paul says next.

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. (Eph. 3:20-21)

What God can do, and what God wants to do in and for us is far beyond anything we could even imagine ...

... God is not obligated to answer our small prayers ... God wants better for you than you could even think to want for yourself.

I leave you with this:

The purpose of the indwelled life is to demonstrate the glory of God through passionate believers so that the unsaved multitudes will abandon their dead gods, the dispassionate Christians will abandon their dead religion, so that Christ will be worshiped and exalted without limitation in His church.