

“That Christ May Dwell in Your Hearts by Faith” Ephesians 3:17

INTRO:

The last time we were here in **Ephesians 3:16**, we talked about how we are to be strengthened with might in the inner person. The inner person is the real us, the place in us which understands and responds to God the Father. We need this strengthening because we are not as strong as we need to be to live out the application that Paul wants us to carry out in our lives.

Having taught us we need to be strengthened in our inner man, the Apostle Paul shows us how we are strengthened. We are strengthened when Christ Jesus makes His home in our hearts by faith. (**Ephesians 3:16–17**)

“That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

I. How Does Christ Dwell In Our Hearts?

II. How Do We Experience This?

I. How Does Christ Dwell In Our Hearts?

A. This text is somewhat confusing to us because the Bible tells us plainly that when we put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that the Spirit of God takes up residence in our lives.

Romans 8:9-10 says,

“But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”

Paul is praying are believers. They are those who are saved (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) and thus already have the Holy Spirit dwelling in them.

B. What then is Paul praying for? What aspect of this indwelling of the Lord Jesus is Paul speaking about? A. T. Robertson gives us a clue when he wrote: *“Christ is asked to make his home in our hearts. This is the ideal, but a deal of fixing would have to be done in our hearts for Christ.”* There are two aspects to this.

1. First, Paul is praying that we are growing in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts, He is there and He is not silent. He begins working on us to change us from the inside out. Transformation, spiritual remodeling takes supernatural power. So, Paul that we would work together with God to change our hearts and lives into a suitable home for the Spirit of Christ to make His home.

2. Second, Paul is praying that the Lord Jesus Christ would be real to them. They would make Him a vital part of their own lives and consider what He wants for them.

C. A passage in John's Gospel sheds light on this principle.

1. In **John 14:22-23** we read, ***"Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to 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. We are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God as part of our salvation experience. Still, there seems to be an additional dimension in this text. In these verses the Lord Jesus is explaining how the Father and the Son are made manifest in the believer and how the world can see God in us. The one who loves Christ exhibits evidence of his love through obeying the word of God. In this way we, and those around us should be awareness of the fact that God the Father and God the Son both make their dwelling place in him.

D. In **Revelation 3:20** there is a second verse that intimates a fellowship with Christ in our hearts. This is part of the letter that the Lord Jesus dictated to the Church of Laodicea, the lukewarm church. After the Lord confronted their sin, He said,

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Where does this fellowship take place? It has to take place in the heart.

II. How Do We Experience This?

A. The key is found in the phrase, ***"through faith."*** We find a similar statement in **Colossians 2:6-10** ***"As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power."***

1. There are several observations that we need to make in these verses. First, notice how we are to walk in our relationship with Him. We are to do this in the same way that we received Him. That is by faith. We must focus on what we know to be true and ask that God would make that reality real to us.

2. Second, we must be rooted, built up and established in the faith. That is we must learn and make a part of us the body of truth that God has given us in His Word. We

cannot grow in our relationship with the Lord Jesus apart from the Word of God. This book must be a part of our being, if all the reality of Christ dwelling in us is to be real to us!

B. What does all this mean? It speaks of the fact that it is by faith that we are able to experience this kind of intimacy with the Lord Jesus. Faith reveals the possibility to us. As we believe the promise of God's word we recognize the reality of this kind of relationship.

1. Faith also makes us recognize that we like Paul need to pray that God would make it a reality in our lives. Hudson Taylor used to pray for himself this little verse:

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 e'en the sweetest earthly tie.

2. We are dealing with a reality here--not one that can be seen, measured or touched, but a reality none the less. Unless we appropriate the promise by faith, we will know little of the strengthening of the inner person that Paul prays for us. It is the enjoying of the presence of the inward dwelling Christ that makes the strengthening possible.

B. There is one more thing that needs to be pointed out about this request. The place that Christ dwells and makes His home is our hearts.

1. The heart is the center of the real you and me. It is the seat of our emotions, intellect and will. Whatever has our hearts has us.

2. If we want to know this reality that Paul is holding out to us here. If we want an intimate relationship with the Lord of Glory in our lives, we must allow Him to have our hearts. Nothing else will suffice.

3. He must dictate what it is that we love. He must influence the things about which we think. He must be the motivating force behind all that we do. When He is the center, then the life will be one that is filled with all the fullness of God.