

038 - "Apostolic Prayer Part 3 - That Christ May Dwell in Your Hearts Through Faith" -
Ephesians 3:17a - 2015-04-05

Call to Worship: Psalm 31:14

Scripture Reading: 2 Chronicles 7:1-10

Sermon: "Apostolic Prayer Part 3: That Christ May Dwell in Your Hearts Through Faith"
Ephesians 3:17

Benediction: Galatians 2:20

INTRODUCTION

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, you know that lately we have been praying for ourselves and one another, maybe more than usual.

- Some have had physical injuries, and we have prayed for them
 - Some of the men have been laid off from work, and we have been praying for them
 - Some of the women are pregnant or have given birth recently, and we have been praying for them
 - Some of us have had short-term or chronic illnesses, pains, weakness, and we have been praying for them
 - Some have troubles in their family lives, and we have been praying for them.
 - There is constant trouble from those who govern us, and we have been praying for them.
 - Just down the street another Baptist church is having members come to a more biblical understanding of God's sovereignty and grace, and we have been praying for them.
 - Recently we have had bible studies and sermons on God's commands for how we are to live:
 - Galatians: walk by the Spirit, not by the flesh
 - Ten Commandments
 - Sermon on the Mount
- And so, aware of Christ's commands regarding living righteously, lovingly, obediently, we have been praying for ourselves and each other about that.
- And of course there are all kinds of other things going on for which we are praying and in need of prayer.

So let us be thankful together for how, in God's perfect providence, we have come to the place in Ephesians where the Lord's apostle, Paul, tells us what is praying for the Christians.

Studying this together, we will see what to pray for, for ourselves and for each other, and what the ideal is to which we are striving.

We see in the book of Ephesians that before the Lord's apostle tells us Christ's commands for us to obey, He recounts to us the wonderful things God has done for us in Jesus Christ, by His death and resurrection. When He has done that, he still doesn't start issuing commands, but, instead, after teaching us of the amazing grace of God toward us, and before teaching us of the righteous commands of God for us, the apostle Paul pauses to tell us that he prays for God to help us.

So we are considering together this apostolic prayer found in Ephesians 3:14-21.

We studied its general characteristics:

1. Apostolic prayer asks God not for what we think we want, but for what we really need
2. Apostolic prayer bows to God, not trying to bend Him to our will, but bending us to His will
3. Apostolic prayer appeals to God the Father, our wise, loving, rich, powerful Father
4. Apostolic prayer asks that God gives to us, admitting that we are very needy

Last time we began to study its particulars. Here is the structure I see in this prayer, a structure in five parts.

that He may give you [two things] (16)

-to be strengthened [G2901] (16)

-Christ to dwell in your hearts (17)

that you be able [to do two things] (18)

-to comprehend (18)

-to know (19a)

that you be filled [with one thing] (19b)

The first part of the apostolic prayer is for us to be strengthened with might by God's Spirit in the inner man.

Today we see that:

The second part of the apostolic prayer is for us to have Christ dwell in our hearts through faith.

TEXT

Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

BODY

The second part of the apostolic prayer is for us to have Christ dwell in our hearts through faith.

- I. Clear away something that is NOT what Paul is praying for here:
 - A. You understand that something good can get in the way of something else good, and so it needs to be cleared away.
 1. illus. Laundry on the dining table or the bed
 2. Something true, but not meant by this verse, gets in the way of something true that is meant by this verse
 - B. Paul is not praying for Christ to come into the heart of the Christian and take up residence there
 - C. This is not something to be prayed for, but something already done, already accomplished
 1. We do not pray, "Lord, please create the world."
 2. We do not pray, "Lord Jesus, please die on the cross for my sins."
 3. Galatians 4:6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"
 4. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, (22) who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.
 - D. This is a source of great joy
 - E. This is a source of great comfort
 - F. But this is not something to be prayed for
 - G. And so this is not what Paul means in this place that he is praying for the Christians
- II. By comparing scripture with scripture we can get at what the bible does mean here
 - A. 1689 Confession; chapter 1; paragraph 9: The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched by other places that speak more clearly.
 - B. According to the scriptures themselves, what does the Lord's apostle mean when he speaks of the Christian having someone in his heart?
 1. Philippians 1:7-8 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the

defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. (8) For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

2. To have strong, holy affection for someone, is what Paul means when he talks about having a person in your heart, and he uses it to speak of people he is absent from bodily, but still has a strong connection to in his affections.
 - C. So, Paul is praying that God will give the Christians a strong, holy affection for Christ
 - D. The apostle is praying that God will give the Christians not a passing or sporadic affection, but a constant, enduring affection for Christ
 1. Ephesians 3:17 that Christ may **dwell** in your hearts through faith;
 2. This is the idea not of visiting, or staying overnight, but of having residence
 - E. The apostle is praying that God will give Christians such a constant affection for Christ through faith
 1. recall how we learned recently together that the testing of your faith is more precious than gold to the Christian
 2. so Paul is praying that by the granting more faith, by the testing of our faith, by the growth of our faith, God will cause us to have more of this constant affection for the Lord Jesus Christ
- III. We can see in this prayer the proper understanding of a mis-used passage elsewhere
- A. Revelation 3:20 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.
 - B. Often preachers and others say that this is in reference to the unbeliever, and that Christ will not save him unless the sinner, by his own will, opens the door to Him; this is not a proper understanding; it is the Arminian understanding, but not correct; we believe the bible teaches an irresistible grace, by which the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ just opens the door Himself
 - C. But as I was reading, I found several of the soundest commentaries saying that it is here, in this concept, that we find the right understanding
 1. a Christian may have too much affection for the things of this world, thinking that he is rich because he has this world's goods
 2. but Christ says we should repent of such, as ones loved by Christ and so rebuked by Him
 3. in that context He likens himself to one standing at the door, knocking; the ones He loves, and rebukes for leaving Him outside their affections, are expect to open the door to him, that a greater communion between them may be established or restored
- IV. APPLICATION
- A. Understand that this blessed state of having Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith is something that must be given to us by God

1. be humbled, that it is not within your own power
 2. take comfort, that it is not up to your strength
- B. Pray earnestly for this very thing
1. We just studied in the previous hour that it is good to pray for the things we need for the body
 2. But understand that this kind of thing, not that kind, is to be primary in prayer
- C. Take every reasonable step to work toward what you are praying for here
1. If you are asking God to grant that Christ will be in your heart, that your affections will be for Him, work toward that same thing
 2. illus: We just planted the gardens; now I find myself longing for the little plants to appear
- D. See every circumstance as God's providential refining of your faith, by which affection for Christ is given!

CONCLUSION

The second part of the apostolic prayer is for us to have Christ dwell in our hearts through faith.

May God the Father grant that our affections constantly will be for the Lord Jesus Christ, so much that we can say we have Him in our hearts.

It has to do with obedience to the word of Christ.

It has to do with love of God

John 5:42 But I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you.

Bayne:

Christ's presence in us has 1) a beginning and 2) further perfecting and absolving (John 14:23); the latter is here spoken of; for before we can begin a commandment, God must dwell in the midst of us: Ezek 36:27 "I will put my Spirit in the midst of them," and make them walk in my commandments; and of this latter dwelling in them here is spoken, for these were such as had Christ in some sort dwelling in them, as chapter 2:14

"in your hearts"

that is, in your minds, wills, and affections, as chief commander, king, and ruler. He dwells in our souls, as our souls in our bodies, by his lively virtue, efficacy, and power, quickening, comforting, and strengthening us; possessing our souls as his house and dwelling, excluding and shutting out all other inmates, that his righteousness, merits, mediation, death, and sufferings, may feed, fill, and satisfy all our desires, wills, and affections, as our only treasure.

"by faith"

that is, by your faith further increased; for it is with faith and Christ, as it is with a strait vessel in which a thing is put greater than it can receive, so that the further the vessel is enlarged, the further the thing put in is apprehended. So of faith, the more and more it is augmented, Christ is the more and more entertained into the soul of the believer. So that it is as if the apostle should say, As I have wished you strengthening of the Spirit, so I wish you for this purpose, that you may have Christ himself, on whom this Spirit of strength resteth, that you may have him so near as to dwell with you, not so far only as to conceive the doctrine of him in your brains, or be able to discourse of him, but that he may dwell in your hearts and affections, and that by the means of a true faith, which is the only instrument of our union and communion with him.

It should stir us up to seek Christ himself, and to make sure of him, seeing without we have him in us we can have no benefit by him. Now he comes to us in the preaching of the gospel, and offers himself to us: Revelation 3:19, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man will open to me, I will come and sup with him." Now, if we open the door of our hearts to him, to desire, love, and embrace him above all, as he

offers himself to us, then will he make entrance into our souls and bodies as into his temple, where he will dwell for ever.

consider of this point, how near a communion the believing soul hath with Christ Jesus

this dwelling in us doth enfold these three things:

1. a presence, for Christ, not only as God is with us to the end of the world, but as man. Though he is locally contained in the heavens, yet he is spiritually present to our spirits believing.
2. the efficacy of Christ in us, viz, how that Christ doth put forth the efficacy of his Spirit in us, so that not we live, but Christ in us, Galatians 2:20
3. the constancy of this effectual presence, for dwelling is not to take a night's lodging here or there, but to make abode; so true it is that where Christ once loveth he loveth to the end, John 13:1, and where he cometh, he makes his abode for ever.

What a comfort it is to the sick person, to think that the physician dwelleth with him! to us weak, to think the Lord of hosts, mighty in battle, dwelleth with us!

all their affections bestirring themselves about Christ:

joy in Christ

love for Christ

grief that our sins have caused his bloodshed

admiration and wondering

high estimation of Christ and his grace

there are degrees of Christ's union and habitation, and of all the effects of his cohabitation

JRY:

So, Christ lives in the Christian!

The prayers is that the Christ's heart will be full of Christ. Is that what your heart is full of?

Carroll:

First, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." There is a great difference between taking permanent residence and paying an occasional visit. It seems that some Christians, at occasional intervals, receive visits from Christ, not very welcome visits on their part, and he has to stand outside and knock: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Paul does not pray for that, but that Christ may dwell in their hearts

through faith. That means to abide, not just a visitor staying over night, but owning the house and living in it, and he can dwell in your hearts only through faith.

Pink:

He may have the supreme place in our thoughts and affections
their hearts to be occupied with the excellence of His person and His works

We freely admit that the God-man Mediator does not indwell the saints, for His humanity is localized in heaven. But Christ is, essentially, a divine person, coequal with the Father and the Spirit, and in becoming flesh the Word lost none of His divine attributes. Omnipresence pertains as much to Him now as it did before He became incarnate, and as a divine person He indwells His people as really as do the other Persons of the Godhead. God the Father dwells in His children: if 1 John 4:12-15 is read attentively, it will be seen that in that passage "God" clearly has reference to the Father. The Holy Spirit dwells in the saint individually and in the Church corporeally (Rom. 8:8, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19); and God the Son dwells in believers. "God is in you of a truth" (1 Cor. 14:25) is to be understood as the triune God.

That Christ personally and immediately inhabits His people is a blessed fact, and therefore there is no need to make request for the same.

But over and above that, the apostle here prayed "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith," by which we understand him to mean that by spiritual meditations upon and loving contemplation of His complex person, His glorious titles, His mediatorial offices, His precious promises, His wise precepts, He may have a constant place, the supreme place, in our thoughts and in our affections. The apostle prayed that the saints might have a spiritual sight of Christ, a spiritual knowledge of Him, a spiritual enjoyment of Him, so that He would be present and precious to the soul; and that can only be by the exercise of faith in Him as He is revealed in the Scriptures. The apostle prayed for their hearts to be occupied with the excellency of His person, with His love and grace, with His blood and righteousness.

"dwell"

JRY:

This is the common word for where a person lives.
This is the word used of God residing in the temple.
This is the word Paul uses for the Godhead being in Christ.

Doner:

the answer is found in the word "dwell"

LoSardo:

more real and more regnant [this is from Vaughan]
same as John's idea of "abiding"

Dagg:

The fullness of the Godhead dwells in each of the divine persons, and renders the fulfilment of the covenant infallibly sure, in all its stipulations. The Holy Spirit, in the execution of his office, dwells in believers; but he brings with him the fulness of the Godhead, so that God is in them, and they are the temple of God, and filled with the fulness of God. The Son or Word, in the execution of his office, becomes the man Jesus Christ; but the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him; so that, in his deepest humiliation he is God manifest in the flesh, God over all, blessed for ever.

Charles Hodge:

The Scriptures, therefore, plainly teach that there is a vital union between Christ and his people; that they have a common life analogous to that which exists between the vine and its branches, and between the head and members of the body. The believer is truly partaker of the life of Christ. This great truth is presented under another aspect. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one God. Wherever, therefore, the Father is, there is the Son, and where the Son is, there is the Spirit. Hence if Christ dwells in the believer, the Father does and the Spirit also does. In answer to the question of the disciples, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" our Lord answered, "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."

(Joh_14:22-23.) In the Bible, therefore, it is said that God dwells in his people; that Christ dwells in them, and that the Spirit dwells in them. These forms of expression are interchanged, as they all mean the same thing. Thus in Rom_8:9-11, "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 same person is called the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. But in the next verse it is said, "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin;" and then in verse 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." It is thus plain that the indwelling of the Spirit is the indwelling of Christ. And therefore those numerous passages in which the Spirit of God is said to dwell in his people, are so many proofs of the mystical union between Christ and all true believers. They are One. One with Him and one with one another. For by one Spirit they are all baptized into one body. (1Co_12:13.

MacLaren:

in every soul where faith, howsoever feeble, has been exercised, there Jesus Christ does verily abide. . . it is the presence of His own self, exercising influences which are inseparable from His presence, and only to be realised when He dwells in us.

the special emphasis of the prayer here is that this 'indwelling' may be an unbroken and permanent one. Any of you who can consult the original for yourselves will see that the Apostle here uses a compound word which conveys the idea of intensity and continuity. What he desires, then, is not merely that these Ephesian Christians may have occasional visits of the indwelling Lord, or that at some lofty moments of spiritual enthusiasm they may be conscious that He is with them, but that always, in an unbroken line of deep, calm receptiveness, they may possess, and know that they possess, an indwelling Saviour.

the Spirit that strengtheneth with might is the Spirit of Christ; and He dwells in men's hearts by His own Spirit. So that the apparent confusion, arising from what in other places are regarded as identical being here conceived as cause and effect, is no confusion at all, but is explained and vindicated by the deep truth that nothing but the indwelling of the Christ can fit for the indwelling of the Christ. The lesser gift of His presence prepares for the greater measure of it; the transitory inhabitation for the more permanent. Where He comes in smaller measure He opens the door and makes the heart capable of His own more entire indwelling. 'Unto him that hath shall be given.' It is Christ in the heart that makes the heart fit for Christ to dwell in the heart. You cannot do it by your own power; turn to Him and let Him make you temples meet for Himself.

But do not forget that the faith which brings Christ into the spirit must be a faith which works by love, if it is to keep Christ in the spirit. You cannot bring that Lord into your hearts by anything that you do. The man who cleanses his own soul by his own strength, and so expects to draw God into it, has made the mistake which Christ pointed out when He told us that when the unclean spirit is gone out of a man he leaves his house empty, though it be swept and garnished. Moral reformation may turn out the devils, it will never bring in God, and in the emptiness of the swept and garnished heart there is an invitation to the seven to come back again and fill it.

"hearts" G2588 *kardia*