

Indwelled

Eph. 3:14-21

The word indwelled is talking about the Christian's inner life...

... this is what Paul is referring to when he is praying for the Ephesians (and us) to be *"strengthened with power through God's Spirit in our inner being."*

Paul wants the "fullness of God" to indwell our inner being.

This prompts three questions:

- Why is this indwelling so important?
- What is this indwelling?
- How do I get it?

1. Why is this indwelling so important?

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

... but when you inquire further, they will say that they believe Christ existed, or the truths of Christianity...

...but when you press them and ask, "would you say that you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, or intimate fellowship" they will draw back ...

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

The truth is that many Christians, saved people, if they are honest will admit that they find in their lives a phoniness, a hollowness, a lack of authenticity ...

... and some will respond by saying, "that's how it is with all Christians."

... everybody has some spiritual hollowness ... every Christian is less than authentic to some degree

... nobody has a driving inward passion for God.

Listen to me ... If you feel that way, then it is critical for you to really look at today's passage because this thing that Paul is talking about ...

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

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life-- ² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us-- ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. (1Jo 1:1-4)

... 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 KNOW Him, we have a personal intimate relationship with Him.

But for many religious people ... if you to say, "*I know HIM, we talk, we have interaction*" ...

... when you speak this way, they think you are a fanatic.

... people respond and say, "*Well, who do you think you are?*"

That is one of the problems today's passage is addressing.

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

... they don't have an intimate fellowship and relationship with God.

... Some respond that such a thing is impossible ... and when anyone claims to have that kind of relationship with God...

Well that is exactly what Paul is talking about here in Eph. 3:14-21.

If you remember from last week Paul is concerned about the Ephesians being discouraged ... **and how to keep them** from being discouraged.

So, Paul prays for them and writes it down what it is he prays ... so. they can read it, learn, and be encouraged.

This passage is an amazing prayer because as Paul is praying (on behalf of their discouragement) he makes no reference to external circumstances.

... instead of praying about God changing their outward circumstances ...

... that there would be deliverance, peace, healing etc. ...

... Paul prays that they would be “**strengthened with power THROUGH God’s Spirit in their inner being.**”

... there is no reference at all to God changing any outward circumstance or force.

Paul here, is demonstrating the **absolute priority and power of the inner life** over the outward life.

If, in your inner life there is a strength, power, peace, then it doesn’t matter what is happening in the outward circumstances.

In **1 Sam. 15**—God tells Samuel that **man looks on the outward being, but God looks on the heart.**

Throughout the Bible the outer and inner man is constantly being contrasted.

Body vs. Soul (or heart).

We make the mistake of thinking that the “heart” is the emotions—that’s only part of it.

... the heart is the seat of the **mind, will, and emotions**.

... the heart has to be all three.

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

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

This may be more important than you think.

There are Christians who have never developed this inner life either because they think they are too busy to develop it ... or they don’t think such a thing is even possible.

But I must say ... 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 ... or the problems or how confused you are.

... The reason Paul absolutely ignores every external circumstance in his prayer ...

... Paul 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 ... no more than a stubbed toe ... a biting gnat ...

The struggle of so many people is that 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.

... they are totally dependent upon the circumstances of the outward life

... so, in times of stress, trouble, and trial the only option they have is to fall back on psychology, drugs, and other tricks they do to themselves, ... to try to survive until the circumstances 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?

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

Paul knows the Ephesian Christians are discouraged

Paul says, "I don't want you to **lose heart** so I'm going to pray that your inner being, and inner life is strengthened.

... Paul realizes the priority of the inner life over the outer life.

... until you realize that is where you need to start...

... then stop complaining about the problems in your relationships ... your finances ...

... stop complaining that your circumstances are too much ... or your life too confusing.

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, all outward the circumstances are nothing more than a mosquito bite.

The inner life has power and priority over the outer life.

... **This is why we need it.**

2. What is 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 that **need to happen**, otherwise Paul wouldn't be praying for them.

... but Paul wants us to know that we are not passive, comatose, uninvolved people ...

... God has given us the ability to have passion, desire, and thirst...

Paul wants us to desire an intimate relationship with God.

... Paul wants us to desire the fullness of Christ.

Now, what's odd is that the things that Paul is praying for us to have ...

... in chapter 1 and 2 Paul says we already have these things.

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, **“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.

... 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 in your inner being by the wonder and glory of Christ!

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 them praying 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 an intimate relationship with God.

Before long, however, Moody gave in and in and by September he was praying with these two ladies every Friday afternoon.

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

On November 24, 1871, Moody's church building was destroyed in the great Chicago fire.

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

... Day and night he would walk the streets desperate for the touch of God's presence in his life.

Then suddenly, one day, in the city of New York ...

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 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 subjectively

You say but I know the truths of God's Word, I understand doctrine and theology ...

Theology and Doctrine are essential ...

... they are wonderful ... but they are not our faith ... they are the road map of our faith.

Theology and Doctrine show us how we relate to God and His work for us ...

... For example:

If I set you down in the middle of Atlanta, and say “go find such and such” without a map or any directions ... what is the chance of you finding it?

... not very good.

You don’t know where you are or where “such and such” is or the path to it.

You need a map to show you where you are, where you are going, and how to get there ...

... The map shows you how everything relates to everything else.

But the map isn’t the city.

... You can’t visit the city by looking at a map.

A lot of people know a lot of biblical doctrine and theology and have been in the church a long time ...

Doctrine is essential ... but it is still a map.

It shows us how everything relates to everything else.

It is one thing to say, “I know that I’m a sinner” but it is another thing to have experienced that.

- The knowing the doctrine of sin ... and realizing you are a sinner are different things.

The experience of your sin means that you become a humble and compassionate person.

... it means you become approachable, and patient with people.

... because you have experienced the reality of your sinfulness.

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

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

What about you? How is your inner life?

You say, “I am a believer, but I have almost no inner life? ... How can I have this kind of life?

... I pray but I don’t know that I have come to experience these truths.

... I haven’t ever really sensed God’s holiness.”

Good ...

... That’s the first step ...

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

What is this indwelling? Experiencing subjectively the glorious truths of the Gospel.

3. How Do we Get this Indwelling?

In the text Paul illustrates three prerequisites that are needed ... here there are:

a. Consistent seeking prayer

Two of the Apostle Paul’s prayers are recorded in this letter ...

... Paul has a thirst, a desire for God to respond

Hudson Taylor started his prayers every day with this line: *“Lord Jesus make thyself to me a living bright reality.”*

... do you desire, are you constantly asking God to reveal himself to you every day.

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

... and we should do.

b. Obedience

Look at the word “**kneel**” ... this is not just a way to pray this is a way of submitting.

Paul is bowed and submitted before God ... “Lord this is how much I need to have an intimate relationship with you.”

Lord I shouldn’t have, but I did again, I’m trying to quit ... but again.

... You will not be able to come before God open, earnest, and free if you know you have a guilty conscience.

... Paul is kneeling to say, “Lord I am submitting in obedience.”

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 are a part of our own intimacy with God.

Along with illustrating these three prerequisite **Paul tells us two things we should do.**

Look at the word in verse 18 “Comprehend.”

This word means to wrestle, defeat, subdue ...

Well it certainly doesn't mean that we subdue God ... that's not possible.

What does this mean?

I think this is like Psalm 42 *"Why are you cast down Oh, my soul..."*

... or in Psalm 103 *"Bless the Lord Oh my soul and all that is within me..."*

Paul is talking about wrestling with ourselves ... wrestling this truth into our hearts through prayer and meditation.

Meditating on this truth until it becomes a part of us ...

Then in verse 19 he says "know" which means to see clearly.

... and what is it that Paul says we should know or see?

... the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge...

... In fact, Paul uses 4 superlatives to describe this love and what he wants us to KNOW about it.

The breadth, length, depth and height.

What does the **breadth of Christ's love** look like?

... I imagine that Paul is thinking about something like the glorious truth in Rev. 5:9-11 where John writes

... by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation ...numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, (Rev 5:9-11)

The **breadth of God's love** is so broad that it doesn't matter what kindred, tribe, tongue, nation ... you don't see anyone as hopeless.

... also, as there is a God in heaven, no one is helpless.

What does the **length of Christ's love** look like?

Again, I imagine that Paul is referring to the truth the writer of Hebrews mentions ...

"I will never leave you nor forsake you." ... So, we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" (Heb 13:5-6)

The doctrine of eternal security is the doctrine of the length of God's love.

... when did God's love for you begin ... before the foundation of the world ...

... when does it end?? NEVER

... It doesn't matter what you do or how far you go ... you cannot outrun God.

... the tenacious love of God.

How **deep is Christ's love** ...? I believe Paul is talking about how far Jesus Christ was willing to go to get us.

Paul spoke of it this way writing to the Philippian church.

...though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men ... he humbled himself by becoming obedient to even death on the cross. (Phi 2:6-8)

Not only that Jesus came from heaven to earth ... he went all the way to death on the cross.

What kind of pressure did Jesus feel in the Garden of Gethsemane, that would make him sweat great drops of blood?

... would cause Him to pray what he prayed ...

“Father, I know we’ve been planning this for trillions of years, but I’m scared ...

“Father, I’m giving my life for them and they can’t even stay awake.”

“Father, let this cup pass from me”

... but then Jesus paused and said, “No, I’ll do it ... not my will but thine be done.”

That is the depth of God’s love.

Finally, what is **the height of God’s** love?

... This is where God wants to take every one of us.

When you are in love you can’t enjoy anything fully without the one you love there.

Movie ... event ... experience ...

That is a dim reflection of the love Christ has for us.

What kind of glory does God enjoy, what kind of wonder thrills the heart of God?

In John 17 Jesus prays, ***the glory I had with you before the foundation of the world, I want them to have it to, I want them to be where I am.***

Jesus wants to give us that which has thrilled His heart with joy throughout eternity.

This is the answer to disillusionment, discouragement, disappointment with yourself and your place on earth...

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

What is this indwelling? Experiencing subjectively the glorious truths of the Gospel.

How do we get this indwelling? By meditating upon the **breadth, length, depth and height** of Christ's infinite love for you and me.