

Eph Ch 3 Vs 17-21

(God is able)

We find ourselves this morning right in the middle of this prayer that Paul is uttering for the Ephesian believers. and In realty it has application for all believers, this is a prayer that's well worth learning and committing the truth's of it into our own prayer life, so far we've noted the position of humility that Paul has taken in this prayer, in the fact that he says I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ We've made mention of the reason that he's praying this prayer (in light of all the unifying truth's that we read of in ch 2). and Last week we began to get into the actual petitions of the prayer and I told you that they basically divided up into 4 subdivisions. Those being strength, depth, love and fullness, each request leading into the next one resulting in an ever deepening experience with Christ so far we've looked at the 1st subdivision, that being strength, that being the 1st petition that is made in vs 16 notice with me (read).

That God would grant you to increase in might through His Spirit in the inner man, now that word might is the same word that's translated in other places as power, it's that which we often refer to as the *dunamis*. The dynamic, explosive power of the Holy Spirit with in and upon your life, only God's Spirit can strengthen your spirit, your inner man. You may or may not recall the fact that I mentioned to you last week that if the Lord willed or reminded me, that this week I'd spend just a couple of minutes talking to you about this.

The *presence* of the Holy Spirit in a person's life is the *evidence* of salvation, Rom 8:9 says that, "*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.*" So if the Holy Spirit is present in you, then that alone is sufficient evidence of your salvation, because it's the Holy Spirit that bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, again Rom 8:15, 16. So the *presence* of the Holy Spirit is *evidence* of salvation, but it's the *power* of the Holy Spirit that is *enablement* for Christian living. and That's what Paul is talking about here, that you would be increasing in the power of the Holy Spirit according to the riches of God's glory. Jesus said, "*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.*" We read in Luke Ch 4 that Jesus was filled with the Spirit, and that His ministry on this earth was performed in the power of the Spirit. and As you read the Scriptures you discover that this same power that Jesus operated in, is the same power that's available to you and me as believers, and in fact it's the only resource available for Christian living.

You cannot do in the efforts of the flesh, in and of your own strength, that which God desires to work out in your life. Only God can work out in your life, that which He wants to work out in your life and He does so by the power of the Holy Spirit. and As you read the book of Acts you begin to realize the essential need for the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer, not only in the respect of the evidence for salvation, but in regards to the enablement to live the life that God desires us to live. There are at least 59 references to the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts, which adds up to be at least $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total references found in the entire NT. So this need for you and I to receive this strength, this endowment from on high, is absolutely critical if we're to lead lives of victory, bringing glory and honor to God. and I would add that it's something that I believe is almost fatally lacking in the body of Christ as a whole today.

The empowering of the believer, or this baptism of the Holy Spirit that I'm speaking of isn't necessary for salvation, (Paul was writing to saved believers) so therefore many people never experience it. But because they don't receive this "upon experience" of the Holy Spirit they lead lives of failure, defeat, frustration and desperation. Oh, they're saved, they've accepted Jesus Christ into their hearts and the Holy Spirit has come in them, but they're so often miserable in their Christian experience, because they've never received the Holy Spirit upon them. Someone has said, "If God took the Holy Spirit out of this world, most of what we Christians are doing would go right on - and nobody would know the difference!" and Unfortunately, that's true.

How does one receive this baptism of the Holy Spirit, the same way you received Jesus Christ, by faith, don't make it more difficult than that, and don't get lost in the emotional spectrum. Because Satan will try to rip you off for that experience, you may just open up your heart and say Father I want to receive the fullness of what you have for me now, and I receive the baptism of Your Spirit, simply by faith. Not because I deserve it, but because of Your grace and the fact that you want me to lead a life of victory more than I want to myself. Jesus said, *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"* So you receive it, and sometimes you may be immediately granted the gift of tongues, or you may be given a prophetic utterance, not uncontrollably, but maybe the Spirit will urge you to make the utterance.

But then again, and often this is the case, you may not feel anything out of the ordinary at all, and so then Satan immediately comes along and whispers in your ear, oh give me a break. You don't think anything really happened do you, you didn't feel anything, and so people get ripped off and never operate their lives in the power that they've been given. But here's the news flash, you don't have to feel some supercharged spiritual renewing in order for you're experience to be real, in-fact, you may not feel anything at all.

That's why the bible says that we're to walk by faith and not by feelings, and without faith (the bible says) it's impossible to please God. and So I encourage you this morning receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, again by faith allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen you with might in the inner man.

Vs17-19

So here we see the purpose and the 1st request as it leads into the 2nd. Why does Paul ask that you would be strengthened with might, through His Spirit, allowing the Holy Spirit to dominate your life granting you power in the inner man? So that Christ might dwell in your heart by faith, and as that happens we see that you'll be being rooted and grounded in love. So this is the 2nd subdivision "depth", and Paul uses 3 pictures here to describe this idea of spiritual depth, and they are "dwell", "rooted", and "grounded." The 1st thing that he mentions is that Christ might "dwell" (notice) in your heart, by faith.

Now again I remind you of the fact that Paul here is writing to Christians, and in this epistle he's made it abundantly clear all believers are in Christ, in ch 1 vs and vs 3, in ch 2 vs 6,10 and 13. and If Christ weren't in their hearts already then he wouldn't have referred to them as saints. So when we read here, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts" understand that he's not inferring for salvational purposes, or for the purpose of salvation, but rather for sanctification. Paul is praying for a deeper experience between Christ and His people. That word "dwell" right there, means to live in or abide in, it means to settle down and be at home in your heart.

Christ's home. Now think for just a minute concerning what all that entails for you and me, in order for Christ to be at home in our hearts, it's necessary that you and I be submitted to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. That's what Paul is writing here, he prays that the readers of this letter would be strengthened with might, that we might be dominated by the Holy Spirit so that Jesus might be at home in our hearts. Until the Holy Spirit controls our lives, Jesus isn't really "comfortable" for a lack of a better term in our hearts. He stays like a tolerated visitor; you ever come to someone's house and knock on the door and they immediately step outside and close the door behind them? Or maybe they let you in the entry but it's obvious that there are certain parts of the home that they don't want you entering. and How does it make you feel? You may understand that they're in no way seeking to be rude to you, but still yet it feels a bit awkward doesn't it? It's not really *mi casa* you *casa*, now again we're not debating here the fact of Jesus' *presence* in the hearts of believers, but to the *quality* of His presence.

Is Jesus at home in your heart, again what all does that infer, you could think of all kinds of things, does He have free roam to do whatever He wants in there at anytime He feels like doing it? You have that right in your home don't you? If you feel like adding something, or taking something away, or maybe rearranging a little here and there, it's your home do whatever you want. But now apply that to Christ in your heart, is He truly free to add things that need to be in your life, accountability, a hunger for His word, and a drive and discipline to spend time with Him in prayer, a deeper love for Him and desire to be around His people.

Is He free to take away things that don't need to be there, bad tempers, love for sin instead of love for Him, the temptation to engage in backbiting, or gossip. Or what if He wants to rearrange your priorities? Does He have free reign to do that? Maybe you spend too much time in front of the TV and not enough time on your knees; maybe you read sports illustrated, or some secular novel when you should be reading your bible. Maybe you want to stay at home and rest or watch the game when you should be crucifying the flesh and coming down to catch a bible study. Is he free to place kingdom priorities in your life? Or is He there more as a tolerated guest who really has no say in the matter of what transpires in your life.

Maybe you've given Him the right to every room in your heart except for the closets, there's just a few things that you just really can't come clean with right now and you're doing your best just to keep them hidden, out of sight, out of mind. Then Jesus isn't truly "dwelling" or settled down and at home in your heart, He wants to clean house, maybe you're thinking well, this one is just too embarrassing, I'll take care of this one on my own. Then that takes us back to prayer request #1 you're not truly submitted to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life, so no wonder Christ isn't fully dwelling in your heart, in the "sanctifying" sense. We've got to get past point A, before we move on to point B, and remember that before the temple was cleansed in Matt, Mark, Luke and Johns gospel, Jesus had to go in, now your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the same is true for you, you can't cleanse it in and of yourself. If you could Jesus would've never come, you have to let Him in there, so that He might drive out those things that are defiling you and hindering your relationship with God. What does He see when He looks at the pictures that are hanging on the walls of your heart, is it an embarrassment to Him?

You remember when the Lord dealt with Ezekiel, and took him by the Spirit to Jerusalem and there was this wall there and God said now dig a hole into that wall, and so he did and he came to this door and the Lord said now go into that room. and When he went into that room he saw all kinds of pornography, and idolatry, creeping things and abominable beasts carved on the walls. and God told him as he stood there flabbergasted at what he saw, this is what's going on in the hearts and minds of the leaders of Israel, this is what's happening in the secret chambers of their imagery.

So as Christ dwells in your heart, is He truly dwelling in your heart, is He comfortable with what's hanging up in there on the walls, those things that are etched into your heart? In 1 Cor 6:19-20 Paul in writing regarding the fact that we're to flee sexual immorality said, *"do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."* John 14:23, Jesus speaking, *"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."* I will dwell in their hearts, how? Again we see it here in vs 17, through faith, the infusion of the Spirit into your inner man awakens your faith, through which Christ comes and dwells, or settles down in your heart. (Finish Vs)

This word "rooted" takes us into the agricultural world and the word "grounded" takes us into the architectural world, but both are in essence implying the same basic thing. In order for a tree to get adequate nourishment and stability, it has to send its roots deep into the soil. and Likewise in order for the believer to be getting nourishment and stability, if there is to be power in the Christian life, then there has to be depth, our roots must go deeper and deeper into the love of God.

This word "love" is the word agape' the all-giving non-self seeking love of God. and This type of love isn't a matter of feeling or emotion; it's a matter of the will. Now it's true that ordinarily Love is accompanied by deep feelings and emotions, but God loved us even when we were unlovable, it wasn't just about warm fuzzies and deep emotional feelings, but rather it resulted in Him giving His only Son to redeem the world. Paul prays that we would be rooted in this "agape" love of God.

Ps 1:1-3 says, *"Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper."* Jer 17:5-8 says, *"Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, In a salt land which is not inhabited. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit."*

But not only does Paul pray that we would be rooted, but grounded as well, in reference to the foundations upon which we build. Warren Wiersbe talks about one time when he and his congregation were building a church over an old lakebed. and He says, “For weeks, the men were laying out and pouring footings. One day I complained to the architect, and he replied, “Pastor, the most important part of this building is the foundation. If you don’t go deep, you can’t go high.” The trials that we go through in life test out, or prove out the depth of our experience, whether or not you’ve been established on a solid foundation or you need to reestablish some footings in your life. People don’t have nervous breakdowns, nerves don’t breakdown, foundations crumble;

Jesus told the story (you recall) of 2 men that built on different foundations. One was established on the rock of Christ Jesus and so when the storms of life blew, he was able to stand, the other didn’t, and so when those same type storm blew, Jesus said his house fell, and great was it’s fall. The storms of life will test the depth of your roots and the strength of your foundation, and so Paul here is praying for the readers of this letter to have a deeper experience with Christ, why, because only a deep intimate relationship with Christ will sustain you during the storms and trials of life. (Repeat vs 17-19)

Vs18

Now I could jump on this issue again but I won’t, but I want you to take not again of the words, “with all the saints”, this epistle is just packed with the reality that we’re to be relating to one another and not isolating ourselves. The world longs to isolate themselves, they want private reserves and areas that no one can enter, but as a believer you need to resist that temptation, because the bible emphasizes body life. We’re a family and families don’t isolate themselves from one another unless something’s gone wrong, and in Christ that’s not to be the case, we’ve been given the ministry of reconciliation.

Paul says, “that we may be able to comprehend *with all the saints.*” and that word “comprehend” would be better understood (I believe) and it could’ve been translated “apprehend”. and The reason that I make note of the difference is because in the English language, the word “comprehend” carries with it more the idea of understanding, as to where the word, “apprehend” suggest laying hold of something for yourself. and It’s possible to understand something, and intellectually consent to something, with out really making it your own, or applying it personally. Paul is saying here, I want you to lay hold of the vast expanse of God’s love, the width, the length, the depth and the height. The fact that it’s wide enough to embrace the entire world, John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”*

It's long enough to last forever, it began with the Lamb of God slain from before the foundations of the earth, and proceeds forth throughout the endless ages of eternity, the bible tells us that Love never fails. It's deep enough to reach down into the deepest pit of the depravity of man, and pull the most wretched of sinners out of the miry clay and set their feet on the rock solid foundation of Jesus Christ and It's high enough to raise us up together and cause us to be seated together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Vs19

What does that mean, how can you know the love of Christ that passes knowledge? Paul's prayer is that you might know by experience, (that's the word that's used there, *ginosko*, to know by experience) the love of Christ which passes intellectual comprehension. In other words I can't explain it, I can't even understand it, but I want you to experience it 1st hand. and That you might be filled with all the fullness of God, man, this prayer just keeps reaching higher and higher (I love it), the heaven of heavens can't even contain the fullness of God, how can we? and What does that entail, such righteousness, and wisdom, Love, grace, and truth, mercy, power, longsuffering and patient, yet exercising perfect justice. The fullness of God, and if I'm going to be filled with God what else has to happen? I have to be emptied of myself, or as John the Baptist put it, I must decrease and He must increase, in my life.

Again in the physical, to be filled with all the fullness of God is impossible, but remember what Jesus said in Matt 19:26 when He was speaking about how hard it was for a rich man to get into heaven and He said, "*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*" and In Luke 1:37 we read, "*with God nothing will be impossible.*" So yeah, this may be something that we could never do or even see on this side of eternity, but that's all the more reason to be on our knees praying in like manner, that we might decrease so that the fullness of God might increase in our lives.

Vs20-21

To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we ask or think, Paul says I know I've asked some pretty (seemingly impossible things) but mans impossibilities are God's opportunities, these may be big requests but I serve an even bigger God. How big is your God? God can not only do more than you could ever ask of Him, but more than you could ever think, how big is your God, I'd like to think that I can dream up some pretty magnanimous things, but compared to God's ability to do, all that I can imagine is but less then a pin drop in the limitless ocean of His ability. and How does He do it, by the same power that works in you, the power of the Holy Spirit, that blows my mind. That same power by which God created the heavens and the earth and all that's contained therein, is the same power that's at work in me, changing me, molding me, and conforming me into the image of His own dear Son.

In the context of this prayer, God's ability is to be the focus (because He is the One Who is able, meaning that we're not) but His ability is to be the cause for expectation as we pray in this manner. Because as I said this is some pretty radical praying, but Paul says that it's not near as radical as the ability of my God to deliver the request. But I find this phrase "ask or think" quite interesting, because unless you're nothing like me, you may find that you think of things way bigger than you ever petition God for. You maybe thinking of some radically huge outpouring or some massive event or something that it would be incredible to be utilized in, not for your own glory, but just to see God magnified and souls added to His kingdom. and Then you kind of snap out of it and you're like, oh, back to reality, but yet James said you have not because you ask not, but when you ask, make sure it's not for your own selfish agenda or glorification, because then you may as well expect that you'll receive nothing of that nature from the Lord.

God is able to take a nobody like you and me and do great and awesome things, as a matter of fact that's the type of people He prefers to use, that no flesh should glory in His sight, but rather He gets all the honor and all the glory. But too often we limit God because we apply to Him our own limitations, if it seems simple then hey no problem, but I don't know about this one, it seems pretty tough. and This one, well forget it, it's impossible, but with God it's just as simple for Him to heal someone in the final stages of leukemia as it is the person with the common cold or a simple headache. But how often the attitudes of our prayer life reflect our own ability rather than His ability, you know if it's a headache, it's oh Lord, Just touch him and help him to feel better, and if it doesn't pan out hey no problem, that's what Advil is for, but if it's leukemia it's, oh God, Great and awesome, we beseech you by Your mercy, and you know the common cold isn't so bad, but leukemia, hey you really have to pray for that. I mean hey that's tough, but you see there we go strapping our weaknesses, or categories of difficulty onto God. But those categories don't exist with God, He is able to do exceedingly and abundantly above all that we ask or think, it's nothing with God to do anything that we could possibly fathom.

You remember when Jonathan woke up one morning and kind of nudged his armor bearer and said, you know, I can't seem to shake this thought, I just wonder if the Lord wants to deliver the Philistines into our hands today. Because it's just as simple for the Lord to deliver the entire army into the hands of me and you as it is for Him to deliver them into the hands of the whole army. and So the armor bearer said hey, let's go for it, with everything that's in your heart, I'm behind you. I love that, and that's the type of people you want around you, those people that say hey, if you believe that God's putting this on your heart, lets go for it. Lets just step out, and take a venture in faith, who knows what the Lord may do and they went up and sure enough the Lord began to deliver the army of the Philistines into the hands of just two men and later when Israel learned what was happening they jumped on board and drove back the Philistines and had a tremendous victory.

The bible is full of instances of God taking impossible odds and doing miraculous things, and we would do well to learn to rely on God's ability and quit limiting Him to our own, what does God want to do through this body of believers, what does He want to do with your life, step out and see what happens.

(Read vs 20-21)

We will bring honor and glory to God the Father through Christ Jesus throughout all eternity for His love and mercy and grace, and so be it.