

Part 2 – Christ’s Indwelling and God’s Incomparable love

Ephesians 3:14-19 (READ)

For almost three chapters Paul lists some of the spiritual blessings
We already have in Christ
As he closes this portion of his letter he begins to pray those blessings in
You see it is one thing to be blessed with every spiritual blessing
And it quite another to experience it
It’s like the family who bought their kids day passes to an amusement park
It allowed them to ride every ride as often as they wanted
When they came back later
They discovered they had only ridden a couple of rides over and over
Even though their parents had paid the price
They did not experience the fullness of the amusement park
That is how it is with many Christians
Even though the price has been paid for us
We do not experience the fullness of God
The fullness of all that He has for us
And that’s not good enough for Paul
He wants every one of us to experience the fullness of the Christian life
He is urging us to live in the full power and effectiveness
Of all that we have in Christ
And he knows exactly what it takes for us to do just that
So first Paul prays for the Spirit’s power to strengthen our inner man
Paul wants us to experience the power we have from being in Christ
This is not some extraordinary event where we are given extra power
We are the habitation of God – His dwelling place
God’s unlimited energy and power are available to us
God’s power is already in us – we need to appropriate it
The truth is this - Omnipotent Almighty God dwells within your weakness

And absolutely everything God requires of you

He is fully prepared to supply to you – from within

His power is available to you

But you have to appropriate it

Paul wants you to experience in daily living the blessings

You have already received in the heavenly places

He wants you to live a life that corresponds to the wealth you have in Christ

How tragic that we go around in the rags of our own self effort

When we could be living in the abundance of God's unspeakable riches

We are children of the living God

Paul is saying – live like it – live like it

And the first step in living like God's children

Is to be strengthened by His power in the inner man

The inner man is the real you

It is the who you are

Out of the inner man flows our hopes and dreams – our aspirations and fears

Out of the inner man flows forth the evil that is in us

It is the inner man that has been corrupted by sin

And it is in the inner man where God is at work in you

Transforming you into the image of His Son

Any positive changes occurring in your character occur in the inner man

Any difference you have seen in your Christian life

Is caused by the Spirit of God displaying His power in you

Now here is the key part

If you try to make your inner man renewed by your own strength

It won't happen

You just cannot do it

For your inner man to change – for the who your are to really change

There must be an experiencing of the power of the Holy Spirit

Only God's Spirit can strengthen our inner man

The Holy Spirit is the one who energizes, revitalizes and empower us

He is the only one

For those of us who are praying for a believer to live like a believer

This prayer is an excellent model

It gives us an outline of how to pray for spiritual growth

You see Paul's prayer has a progression of enablement

John Stott compares it to a prayer staircase

That leads continually upward to God

And an upward progression to God

Begins with an experience of the power of the Holy Spirit

That is the foundation for the rest of the prayer

The first step of the staircase so to speak

He then prays for the indwelling of Christ

For the incomparable love of Jesus to permeate our lives

That we would experience God's own fullness

And for God's glory to be manifested in us the body

Today we are going to consider Christ's indwelling and His love

The second step in Paul's staircase to God

Is that believers may be indwelt by Christ

At first this part of Paul's request may seem a little odd

For what makes believers, believers is they have Christ within

If Christ is not in you by faith then you are not a Christian

But of course Paul means more than this

While it is true that all Christians are indwelt by Christ

It is also true that

As the presence of Jesus becomes stronger within us

And takes possession of more and more of our lives we grow in Christ

There are two Greek words both translated dwell

The first word means to dwell in a place as a stranger

Like Abraham - dwelling in place not his own

The second word and the one Paul uses means to dwell
In the sense of settling down and making it your home – owning it

Paul is praying that Christ would settle in your inner man

And control you as your rightful owner

Let me put it this way

First there is Christ in us – that is salvation

Then there is Christ at home in us

That is when Christ accomplishes His work in us

And glorifies the Father through us

In his little book – My Heart, Christ's Home

Robert Munger pictures the Christian life as a house

Jesus goes through the house room by room

In the library which is the mind Jesus finds all kinds of trashy literature

He throws it out and replaces it with His Word

In the dining room which is the appetite

He finds sinful desires listed on a worldly menu

In place of prestige materialism and lust

Christ puts humility love joy peace patience and kindness

In the living room of fellowship He finds worldly companions and activities

In the workshop He finds only toys are being made

He opens a locked closet and finds where hidden sins are kept

Only when He had cleaned

Each and every room closet and corner of sin and worldliness

Could He settle down there and be at home

Now listen - Jesus at home in your life and in control is the Christian life

That is not Christ plus – not some ideal - it is the Christian life

Anything less is a sorry misrepresentation

Jesus enters the house of our hearts the minute He saves us

But He will not live there in comfort until He owns it

Where is Christ not welcome in your heart

What rooms are you keeping to yourself and not allowing Him access
What closets do you have locked
Those are the rooms where sin and self still reign
There is a song with the words
If He's not Lord of everything, then He's not Lord at all
Isn't it time to make Jesus Lord of everything
Open up your entire life to Him and give Him control

First Paul prays that you might experience the Power of the Holy Spirit
Then that Christ might make Himself at home in your heart

Then he prays for the incomparable love of Jesus to permeate your life

Being made strong spiritually leads to Christ's being at home in our hearts
Christ at home in our hearts leads to God's love being displayed through us
The result of yielding to the Spirit's power
And submitting to Christ's lordship is love

When Christ is at home in us His love begins to be displayed through us

When Christ freely dwells in our hearts

We become rooted and grounded in love

Jesus said – **A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another**

Peter wrote – **Fervently love one another from the heart**

It is God's supreme desire that His children fully love one another

We are to love each other as He loves us – not just in words but in deeds

The world will not come to Jesus because of our holiness

They will be attracted to the Savior by our love

Love is outward - Love is an attitude of selflessness

In O Henry's short story The Gift of the Magi

Two young people are married desperately in love and yet very poor

They each have one thing they treasure

She has long beautiful hair and he has a pocket watch he inherited

For Christmas he sells his watch to buy combs for her hair

Only to find she sold her hair to buy a chain for his watch

Each had sacrificed their one prized possession for the other

Brothers and sisters that is agape love

That is the kind of love we are to have for each other

Love is selfless giving - **always** selfless - **always** giving

It is the very nature of love to deny self and give to others

Now we can say that this love is not a matter of deep feelings - but it is

We can talk about love being an action not a feeling

And we will be right but we will miss the point

Agape love is not calculating – it doesn't make measurements

Agape love is love that sees a need - the need touches the heart

And the touched heart responds with sacrifice - that's love

While it considers other ahead of self agape love is not lack of self esteem

The Book of John tells us

Because He knew who He was Why He was here and where He was going Jesus washed His disciples feet

Believe me Jesus was not insecure

He wasn't trying to win approval

He knew who He was – He knew who the disciples were

He knew that there was a great gap between them

Yet out of love and need the Creator washed the creature's feet

That was a tender moment but the greatest act of love was yet to come

In obeying His Father's loving will to redeem the world

Out of love Jesus willingly went to the cross

Philippians tells us - Although He existed in form as God, He did not regard equality with God as something to be held onto, but rather emptied Himself taking the form of a bond-servant; becoming obedient even to the death of the cross

Jesus death on the cross for us was love in its most perfect form

This is the divine sacrificial love every believer now has in himself

Why – because Jesus still loves that way – and His love is in you

Jesus' love will be shown in you when Christ is at home in your heart

And His character is being displayed through your life

We cannot fulfill any of Jesus' commands without Christ doing it through us
Least of all His command to love
Try it on your own and you will only glorify self
You can only love as Christ loves when He has free rein in your heart
And His love is being poured out to others through you
Listen to what John says is the great sign that you are a Christian
If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.
And then just in case you missed the point John adds
We love, because He first loved us
We love because His love in us gives us the ability to love others
Loving is the supernatural attitude of the Christian because love is the nature of Christ
That means when we are Spirit empowered love is natural to us
We don't have to work it up by saying things like
Remember Christ died for this person too
When Christ is in control of your life
Your first response to any situation will be a loving one
And when He is not – it won't
When Christ is expressing Himself through you, you will love others
That is just the way it is – that is the normal Christian life
Not us working up love out of the little of it that we possess
But love flowing out of us from Christ's abundance
Jesus said that out of your innermost being will flow springs of living water
That living water coming out of you is Jesus expression of His nature
And His nature is to love
Let me tell you
If you aren't loving then living water isn't flowing out of you
That doesn't mean you are unsaved
It does mean that you are missing it
You are missing the blessings of the Christian life
The Christian life isn't salvation now – heaven later

And we will get there in the sweet bye and bye
In the meantime as the group Talking Heads sang
Life goes on – same as it ever was – same as it ever was
No God saved you now so that you might experience Him now
And in the experience display His glory to a dark needy world
And the display of God's glory has mainly to do with love – love
When the Spirit's power is in you – the love of Jesus shines through you
Now here is the bad news
The absence of love coming through you is caused by the presence of sin
The absence of love has nothing to do with what is happening to us
And everything to do with what is happening in us
Now I am not saying that you have to have warm feelings for everyone
That's not even possible
Some people are harder to be around than others
You know what I mean – and a name may have just come to you – that's ok
What I am saying is that when Christ is comfortable at home in you
You will love them anyway
Remember loving them means that you will always seek their highest good
You treat them with respect and love
And - Now here is the tough one
And you will place their interests ahead of your own
Believe me it wasn't in God's best interest to have His Son crucified
For a creation that had rejected Him
It wasn't in Jesus best interest to become sin
For those who would crucify Him
But God loved you enough to send His Son
Jesus loved you enough to come
And His love is now in you
The loveless life is the ungodly life
And the Godly life is the serving caring tender-hearted giving self-sacrificing life

That is the love of Jesus working through the believer
Finally when we are rooted and grounded in love
We are able to understand what love really is
We are able to comprehend with all the other saints experiencing Christ's love
What is the depth and height and breadth and width of love
We cannot understand the fullness of love unless we are immersed in love
Unless it is the very root and ground of our being
When someone asked Louis Armstrong to explain jazz – he replied
Man, if I got to explain it, you ain't got it
If you don't get jazz by experience – defining it won't help
Well I didn't get jazz – still don't

Love cannot be truly comprehended until it is experienced

I didn't get love either – but now in Christ I am experiencing it

And I began experiencing it the moment I was saved

The incredible thing is this

Others are now experiencing it through me

To be rooted and grounded in love

Requires being rooted and grounded in God

When we are saved **God's love is poured out within our hearts**

Though the Holy Spirit who is given to us

Love is in every Christian because Christ is in every Christian

Yet I heard of a church that fired the leaders of its youth programs

Why - because they were too old

They wanted younger people running it

How can that be

It certainly wasn't Christ's love being expressed through the leadership

When it comes to loving each other

So often the church of Jesus Christ comes up short

What is missing is the Spirit's power working in our inner man

Cleansing our hearts and minds of sin

So Christ might dwell in every part of our lives

So that we might experience the breadth and length and height and depth

The abundance of God's love in us

Now when Paul says this love surpasses knowledge

He means it in two ways

First Paul means that you don't get it by detailed study

It is not like geometry or calculus

Agape love is not something learned

If I got to explain it you ain't got it

It is the love of Jesus in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit – period

Secondly though and primarily Paul means that

Agape love is much better than knowledge

It isn't knowledge that covers a multitude of sins

Let's take a look at his Letter to Corinth written some 8 years earlier

1Cor 13 – If I speak with the tongues of angels and men, and do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love I am

What am I – do you know how this ends

But do not have love, I am - nothing

How could he have all these gifts and all that knowledge and all that faith

And still be nothing

We like to think that our knowledge shows how holy we are

Or we like to think that our use of God's gifts show how spiritual we are

God says that isn't true

The greatest evidence that Christ is living in and through you is love

Everything else - everything else - is in second place