

Ephesians 3:17a, Part 1

0217

He's not speaking salvifically, he's speaking communally. He's speaking of fellowship. He's speaking of the depth and the quality of fellowship in their heart.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family or the whole family in heaven and earth is named that—and here it is—in verse 16, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit, in your inner being. And here's our text, verse 17, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

So there's our text for today—so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. So we'll now be looking at the first half of verse 17. We're moving a little bit slowly through the prayer. But I was reminded and a little bit encouraged this week, that if we feel like we're moving through this prayer a little bit slowly, we are not moving through it as slowly as many others have. I was reading this past week of Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

Jones, who is widely known as one of the, or perhaps the greatest preacher of the 20th century, he's often called, used 17 Sundays, 17 weeks to work through this same prayer. So we're just on week three, so I was a little bit encouraging for me.

But at the same time, this very passage that's before us, the first half of verse 17, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, who was a very capable preacher of God's word, a very capable handler of God's word, also said of this passage, that of all the passages in Scripture, this is the passage that makes him feel the most inadequate to stand before God's people and expound this to them. So if Martyn Lloyd-Jones felt a little incapable, or inadequate to expound this passage to God's people, then I feel a little bit, okay, in the sense that we approached this passage a little bit with trembling knees, because this passage right away is going to present a difficulty for us, it's going to present an issue for us that we must think through and we must think through carefully.

So the issue that we face is going to be pretty much clear to us right out of the gate, and the issue is this: It is so abundantly clear to us, isn't it, that Paul is praying for and writing to those whom he believes, to be regenerate, born again, members of the family of God, whom he has said specifically, are indwelt by the Spirit of the Lord.

So here in the beginning of verse 17, he prays for those who are indwelt by Christ, who are in Christ, he prays that those may, through faith, that Christ may dwell in them. This parallels in a similar sort of way, what Paul prayed back in chapter one, verses 15, 16, 17, and 18, when he prays that the spirit of wisdom and revelation would do this work in their hearts.

So back then we looked at that, and we said, well, they already have the Spirit in them. Paul prays for the spirit. But we saw there that what Paul was praying for was, an increased activity, so to speak, an increased work of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to reveal to them increasing truths of their blessings and privileges in Christ.

Here we face a similar sort of question, although it's going to be different, but it does really jump off the page at us, doesn't it? Because here's, here's the thing: we labored the point earlier. And there was a reason for this. We labored the point earlier that Paul is building a sequential, progressive, case. One point follows the previous point. And that point rests on the previous point, Paul uses specific wording and specific grammatical structure—we won't go back into that, because we talked about that in detail, probably two Sundays ago—but Paul uses specific wording to show to us that he is making these requests, and one request rests on the previous, and is built upon the previous so that we can even look at them out of order. Because Paul says (a) so that (b), so that (c), so that (d), and (d) in order that...what comes after (d) whatever's next.

So this prayer rests on the previous statements, these previous requests that Paul makes. And so Paul prays, the first request is that you may be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner man. And then comes the next phrase: so that, in order that, or to the purpose of: Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

So there is our question for us to tackle, for us to for us to deal with, because we know a couple of things that are going to at least on the surface appear to be in conflict and the first of that, the first of those is this: Paul prays that they may be strengthened with power, so that Christ may dwell in them. Now we know that Christ Himself is the power. So for Paul to pray that strengthening and power would come, so that Christ who is their strength will come, is a bit problematic for us.

So the Scriptures tell us specifically that Jesus Christ—Paul looks upon Jesus Christ as the source of his power. The presence of Christ in Paul's heart is his source of power.

From his letter to Timothy, First Timothy, chapter one, verse 12: I thank Him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus, my Lord.

Or second Timothy two and verse one: you then my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Or second Timothy four, verse 17: but the Lord—meaning Christ, whenever Paul says, Lord, he means Jesus—whenever (I'm sorry), but the Lord Christ stood by me and strengthened me.

So he prays for strength, that Christ whom he says, abundantly clear elsewhere is his strength, he prays that strength will be given so that Christ may dwell in them.

But then the greater issue is the issue itself, the issue that: he's praying for regenerate people, whom he has said, are indwelt by the Spirit, and he's praying that Christ may indwell in their hearts.

So is there something about the word heart? Is, is Paul praying that Christ would dwell in a different place or a different part of them? Has he said earlier that Christ in dwells them and now he's praying that oh, that he made indwell their heart—does he mean some other different area of their being or of their of their soul? Perhaps?

No, because this word for heart is just the standard word for heart, it's the word we get our our word 'cardiac' from. And nowhere, anywhere in all the New Testament does this word mean anything like: the organ in your chest that pumps blood, it never means that.

It always has a spiritual, metaphorical meaning. And that meaning is always 'the core of a person', the very center of a person's being. In other words, you could draw a circle around that word heart, and then draw another little circle around the phrase inner man. And then a line between the two because the—I'm going to take those two to be the same thing, synonyms. Heart is synonymous with inner man, there is no difference that we can detect between what Paul means by inner man and what Paul means by heart. So when Paul is praying that Christ may dwell in their heart, he's praying that Christ may dwell in the same sense, in the same place as the inner man in the soul and the core of their being.

So how do we come at this, then, this idea that Paul is praying for Christ to indwell those whom he has specifically said, are already into out by the Spirit, chapter one and verse 13: And you also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and believed upon him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance.

Or chapter four, looking a little bit ahead, chapter four and verse 30, Paul is going to say: Do not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

So Paul has specifically said that these believers to whom he is writing, they are indwelt, by the Spirit, sealed by the Spirit. They are born again, regenerate believers. And in fact, we go further than that, and we could say, even to the extent that it would be overly tedious for us to go back through the letter, the first three chapters of the letter and point out all of the occasions in which Paul has said that they are in Christ, and Christ is in them. Twenty, thirty times we could see in these three chapters that Paul has, in one way or another said that they are in Christ, or Christ is in them. And so therefore, what can Paul mean as he prays that Christ may indwell, or may dwell in their hearts through faith?

So we see here that the Scriptures teach us that a fundamental truth of our faith is that to be in Christ, to be regenerate, is to have the Spirit of Christ—also called the Holy Spirit—to dwell within us. Paul writes to the Romans, in Romans chapter eight, verses nine and 10: You, however, are not in the flesh, but you're in the Spirit, if in fact, the Spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him. In other words, Paul says, here's the marker. Here's how you know, if the Spirit is, dwells in you than you are in Christ, the two are the same, the two are inseparable.

So, to come at this, we really need to take a look at this word—you guessed it—but everything's gonna hang on this word 'dwell.' What does the word dwell mean? And what does Paul mean when he's asking that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith?

So in looking at this word—the word is 'katoikeo.' It is a combination word, like many words in the Greek are two words that are basically just put together, that we find that this is often how the Greek language, Greek likes to put words together, it likes to compound words, it likes to take a base word, add a prefix, add another

prefix and a suffix to it. And then you end up with this big long word that has a very precise and complicated meaning, a meaning that often takes 6, 7, 8 words in English to translate. Okay, so you've heard people say, maybe a preacher that will say, these seven words in English, are translating one word and the Greek, ever heard that said?

The reason is because that's so very common. That's not anything particularly impressive, that's just how the language works. The Greek language likes to put words together: synonyms, (or I'm sorry), prefixes and suffixes, and add them all together to make a longer word that has a precise and clear meaning.

So that's just how the language is built. So this word is two words put together, it's the word that basically means, that the word for 'dwell' or 'inhabit' or 'live to live in a permanent way.' The word for 'dwell,' Paul takes that word, and he could have just used that word, he could have just prayed that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, and that would have communicated the same meaning of Christ dwelling in the heart. However, Paul doesn't use just that one word, he adds a prefix to it—the prefix kata, which is a preposition. That means 'down.'

So if we were to look at this word, and translate it, literally, it literally means 'down dwell,' or 'downward dwell.'

And so, it's taking the meaning of dwell, and it's adding to its or this preposition prefix that is communicating a downward sort of motion, or an inward, in a deeper sort of motion.

But then it even goes further. Because, I want to go through something that will take maybe a minute or two, for the reason of giving you confidence in what I'm going to say that Paul's meaning is here. In order to really see this and to grasp it with a great confidence, to know: this is Paul's meaning, because everything's gonna hang on the meaning of this word, dwell. Words mean things, right? God has communicated to us through words. And so it's our job to endeavor to understand those words.

And so just to be confident about what Paul is saying, here, he's taking this word dwell, he adds the preposition before it that means downward, but the preposition here is functioning as something that's called a primary particle. Anybody remember particles from high school grammar, you remember particles? Okay, the majority of us have never thought about a particle since you left high school grammar.

But what is a particle? A particle is a word that, in and of itself, has no meaning. It has no definition. But it has a grammatical function. That's a word that has no meaning, but has a grammatical function. What that means is that a particle is a word that it almost defies definition. But everybody knows what it means when you use it, it works in a sentence.

What it usually does is it usually adds either motion, or intensity, or emotion. Now, all that sounds really technical and bizarre. The easiest way to get at this is with an example. Let me give you an example of a particle in English, and you'll see exactly what I'm saying.

So I'm gonna choose the particle: 'alright.' Can you give me a definition of 'alright'? Pretty hard to define the word: 'alright.' But we all know what 'alright' means.

So if we were to think about the word, let me say, for example, I'll give you a sentence and I'll use the sentence, the exact same words, and then I'll add in the word, alright, and you'll see just a little bit of a different nuance, just a little bit of a different flavor. And that's how we use particles.

So let's take this example right here. "It's time for us to leave." "Alright, it's time for us to leave."

Can you sense a difference there? Just a little bit of a difference. What the 'alright' does is it adds a little bit of, well, maybe frustration, maybe it's some movement there, maybe just a little hint of, of 'I'm really tired of this.' Okay, "it's time for us to leave," and, "Alright, it's time for us to leave"—they mean the same thing, but the second, to add that word in there just adds a little bit of a of an emotional, forceful 'umph' to it. Like: it's really time for us to go. Alright?

See, I just used it right there. So that helps this, everything just kind of move along like that. That's how particles work. Particles for the most part, add emotion or they show emotion.

Now, the English language uses particles rarely, very, very rarely. We only have a handful of particles in the English language because in English, the way that we like to express emotion is with the intonation of the speaker. With the influx of the speaker's voice with the accent of the speaker's voice. That's typically how we show emotion in English, which is why texting can be so confusing, because the written English language is very poor at expressing emotion. But the spoken English language is good at expressing emotion.

Just the reverse for the Greek language. Biblical Greek has lots of particles. And Biblical Greek uses particles all the time. And that's how we can know something about, sometimes the emotional flair or the emotional color of a passage. Anybody ever heard of the Amplified Bible translation? That's what the Amplified Bible is doing, is it's seeking to bring out the meaning of those words, mostly the particles, that help us to get a little bit of an insight into the intensity of emotion that is there, that is, quite frankly, virtually impossible to bring over into English when you just translate words for words and meanings across the translation there.

So this word that means down 'Kata,' is functioning as a primary particle. So what it's doing is it's adding intensity. It's adding forcefulness. It's adding emotion, to the base word, which is 'to dwell.'

So dwell down with force, dwell down with intensity. So here's literally what Paul is saying: I pray, I bow my knees, that according to the riches of his glory, you may be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner in your inner man, so that Christ may really dwell in your hearts through faith. That's what Paul's getting it here.

Now I hate to use that word: 'really,' I mean, it sounds so, sophomoric, you know, 'really,' it's not, that's not a very technical, or academic kind of word. And that's probably why our translators don't use it.

But I don't know how better to express what Paul's saying. He's saying: that Christ may really find a home in your heart, that Christ may really find a permanent, comfortable, residence in your heart. Paul is not speaking here of something that has to do with salvation. Paul is not speaking evangelistically here. He's not asking that power would, the strengthening power would come so that they may be converted and the Spirit would come in and dwell them. He's not speaking salvifically. He's speaking communally, he's speaking of fellowship, he's speaking of the depth and the quality of fellowship in their heart.

He's not saying: I hope Christ comes to take up residence in your heart. He's saying, I hope that Christ, I pray that you that you're strengthened in your inner man, so that Christ may really find home in your heart.

So that's the sense that Paul's getting that's the basic mean, that's where we have to start. We have to start by understanding what the words are communicating to us, and then we look at that, and then we want to take that idea. Now we want to flesh that idea out biblically.

We want to really get at this idea that does the Bible speak to us about some type of greater indwelling of Christ? Does the Bible really speak to us about some sense in which the presence of Christ in our heart becomes stronger and more forceful and more dominant in our life?

Is this something that the Bible teaches us that the Christ who has found a home in our heart still has ways of finding a greater home in our heart or a more comfortable home in our heart? And so that's what we want to look to the Scriptures right now to see, is this something that the Bible presents to us? This, let's use the word 'homemaking'—the homemaking work of God.

Now, in using that word, there's sort of an image that I'm not trying to communicate, and that's the image of Jesus wearing a little apron or frilly apron and doing the ironing at your house. Instead, what I want to get at is this idea that Paul is praying that Christ would make a deeper, more comfortable, more lasting, more dominant home in your heart.