

## **Ephesians 3:17a, Part 3**

0219

Self-reliance and faith are in conflict with one another.

So Paul's making this request: It is my request, I pray a bow my knees, this is his earnest request, that according to the riches of his glory, you may be strengthened with power, outside of yourself, strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner man. And, so that, in order that, to the effect that, Christ may really find home in your heart, through faith.

So let's think for just a minute about the context of the request, the context in which Paul is saying that you may, that Christ may find this real abode, that he might find this deeper home in your heart, this more comfortable home in your heart.

The context is the strengthening of verse 16: that you may be strengthened with power through the Spirit. So last week, we talked about how it is that God strengthens us. And God strengthens us, not by making us stronger, as we said earlier, but God strengthens us by removing our reliance upon ourself. We are strengthened, because the Lord is our strength. And the more that we rely on the Lord, the more that we look to the spirit for his power, the more we are strengthened, because we're not the ones being made strong. We're the ones being made weak.

So Paul is praying that the Ephesians would be weakened in their self-reliance, so that they would be strengthened in their Spirit-reliance, to the effect that Christ would really, really find home in their hearts. You see the connection? See the flow of his of his thought?

If you don't see that yet, you'll see if you think about the necessary conflict that exists between the self-reliant heart and the heart of faith. Because all this happens, Paul says, through faith. The context of this deeper abode of Christ, of this really finding a home in your heart, the context of that is the context of faith.

Now, what is biblical faith? Biblical faith is not just belief. Biblical faith is belief, plus trust. You've heard the analogy—everybody's heard the analogy of the chair. Now you can believe that the chair will hold your weight but until you sit in it, you don't really know that, that kind of thing.

Or other stories that we may have heard. One of my favorite is the story of Charles Blondin. Charles Blondin was a French Acrobat in the 19th century. And he was just this fantastic tightrope walker. Well, in 1859, the summer of 1859, Charles Blondin had a tight rope connected across the Niagara Falls. So from the American side to the Canadian side, he connected this tightrope from one side of Niagara to the other. And he spent the summer putting on tightrope walking shows there at Niagara Falls. He would walk across from the American side to the Canadian side and back across this tightrope, he would then make a little bit harder by carrying a sack across, and then he would walk across on stilts, even would one time carried a stove, halfway across, and then halfway between the two sides, he cooked himself an omelet. I mean, he was an extraordinary sort of tightrope walker.

Well, the show's just gotten more and more phenomenal and more and more fantastic. Well, as the story goes, he was about to put on another show. And this time, he was challenging the audience. He says, who believes here that I can put a person inside a wheelbarrow, and push that wheelbarrow across the Niagara Falls? And of course, the crowd says, Yes, of course, do it, do it. You can do this, to which she said: Alright. I need somebody in the wheelbarrow. And of course, nobody got in the wheelbarrow.

That's the difference between belief and biblical faith. Biblical faith is not just belief, it's belief plus trust. So can you see how it is that biblical faith is the antithesis of self-reliance? The self-reliant heart is a heart that faith struggles to find life in. Whereas the heart that's described as a heart of faith is a faith that has, to some measure, rid itself of self-reliance, because the two are polar opposites. Self-reliance and faith are in conflict with one another.

To the extent that you are self-reliant, is the same extent to which faith cannot grow in your heart, to the extent in which your heart is dominated by faith, is the same extent to which you have turned from self-reliance.

So can you see now why Paul makes his request in the way that he does? I pray that you'd be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner man—in other words, that God would continue and in fact, even ramp up his work, behind the scenes of your life, to rid you of your self-reliance, so that Christ may really find dwelling in your heart through faith.

Because his deeper fellowship in your heart, his more connected community in your heart requires your self-reliance to be battled against, to be removed, to be, at least in a process of in your life, through the power of the Spirit, being shown the parts of your life in which you are relying upon self, so that they can be confessed and turned from, and through the power of the Spirit, be replaced with reliance upon God, or to use another word Biblical faith.

So you see the connection of Paul's prayer? It's really beautiful once you see it. And once you see, once you understand, this is what Paul's asking for, then it makes perfect sense why he asked for the first before the second.

Paul's not praying that you'd be strengthening your inner man so that you can be converted. Paul's praying that you'd be strengthened in your inner man, so that through God's gracious and loving taking from you those strongholds of self-reliance, you then increasingly turn to the Spirit, and increasingly make your home a comfortable abode for God. Because self-reliance and faith are always at odds.

Remember from last week, what we read from Second Corinthians chapter one. Paul's talking about these afflictions and the sufferings that God brought upon him: So that Paul says, to make us not rely upon ourselves, but upon God who raises the dead, you see, there's two options. Paul says, rely upon self or rely upon God. So Paul says these afflictions came to remove that self-reliance, so that I would rely upon God instead. Or to put it another way that my home would be made a more fitting and more comfortable abode for God.

Now, this faith connection, this is how we not only come to have the indwelling of Christ in our hearts, but it's also the same method in which Christ increasingly takes dominance over our hearts, and increasingly finds more comfortable abode in our hearts, it's through the same measure to the measure of faith.

So this is why Paul will say to, for example, the Colossians and Colossians chapter two, verse six and seven: as you came to know the Lord, so also walk with Him in faith, rooted and grounded in faith. You came to know the Lord in a saving way through faith, that same way is how you come to increasingly fellowship with Him, and increasingly make your life and your heart, a comfortable home for God, an abode for God. Second Corinthians five or seven, Paul says: We walk not by sight but by faith.

So ultimately, what Paul is praying for is this. At the end of the day, Paul's praying, through these first two requests, you be strengthened, and that strengthening, Paul knows, is going to come through God's efforts of removing self-reliance, so that your heart will increasingly turn in trust to the spirit, making an increasingly comfortable abode for God. So that Christ would feel more and more at home in your heart and more and more comfortable in your heart.

And again, just to be really careful—Jesus doesn't need to be made to feel comfortable. God's not a man like we. But we talk about this in anthropomorphic ways, in order to understand, how it is that we, through the power of the Spirit, are granted increasingly close communion and fellowship. Okay, so we just use this term of making Christ more comfortable in our heart, knowing that that's a weak term in itself. But this is what we're using to express that.

So this making Christ more comfortable in our hearts is something—occurs by faith—but ultimately, the request is this. The request is not so much that Christ be made comfortable in your heart. But instead that you would increasingly know that your heart is not your heart, that your heart is in fact, his heart. That your heart is in fact, his kingdom.

How is it that you truly make someone at home, let's say as a guest? You know, we all have guests come over. And we always say: Make yourself at home. *Mi casa es tu casa*, right? Make yourself at home.

And when you're a guest in someone's home, you know your guest, right? And you try to make people comfortable. And if we came over to see you at your home, you'd do the same, you'd say the same. Just—you want us to be comfortable. You want us to feel at home, right? But ultimately, you don't. Because you're a guest, right?

There's an ancient Welsh proverb that goes like this: The good host endeavors to make the guest feel at home. The good guest never forgets that he's not. Isn't that a beautiful picture of just a good visit? A really good visit, in which the host does everything to make the guests feel like they're at home. But the guest never forgets that this isn't my home. I mean, that's just a nice sort of symbiotic visit, right?

But that's just the thing: It's a visit. To make someone truly at home, how would you do that? How would you make somebody feel at home? You'd serve them, right? Can I bring you some coffee? Can I make you something can I bring you something to eat?

Or you know, if it's an overnight guests, you know, make sure that they know here's the towels, here's the linens, you know you, this is your house, you just do what you want, right?

But ultimately, the there's only one way that a guest is going to truly feel at home. There's only one way that you could have me over to your house, and make me truly feel at home. And that's if I took out my checkbook, and I wrote you a check. And home was mine.

So that's ultimately how Christ is made to really, really dwell in our hearts, through our turning from self-reliance, and turning to the spirit, we're increasingly made aware that we are his. He's not our guest. We're not inviting him in so to speak, to say, let me share with you my home, Jesus.

But instead, we're increasingly made aware—our heart is his kingdom. He has bought us with a price. We are not our own. We are his. He has bought us once when He created us, and he's bought us a second time when he redeemed us. And so as the scriptures will teach us—in many places, and in many ways—do everything as unto the Lord for it is it is truly all his. All of our life is truly His. All of our heart is truly His