

DAY FIVE:

JESUS IS IN CONTROL

INTRODUCTION

Paul's letters were not adlib scribbles but very carefully constructed documents. It cost a lot of time and money to write a letter in Paul's day, so you had to be sure that you were not wasting words. In our Scripture reading today, when Paul outlines a prayer that he prays for those he is writing to, don't think that he is making it up as he goes. Every word counts. Every phrase matters. We are going to spend two days on this prayer because it is crucial for understanding two key steps in personal revival. I think this prayer relates to personal revival because it ends up with God doing "immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine by his power at work within us" Eph. 3:20. See if you can pick two steps to personal revival in this rather complex passage.

SCRIPTURE: EPHESIANS 3:14-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

DEVOTION

Paul is praying for something to happen in the inner being/heart of the Ephesians. For us, the word heart epitomises the centre of our emotions. It is the place where we feel. But for the Hebrews, it was much more. It was the centre of everything. Your heart controlled your thinking, your decisions, your opinions, your motivations, and your morality, as well as your feelings. So when you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes and positions himself in your "heart," at the centre of your life. In this prayer, Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit would do a powerful work in hearts of the Ephesians, so that Christ could live there.

But wait a minute, if we are Christians then surely Jesus is already living in us, along with the Holy Spirit. So why does the Spirit need to work powerfully to enable Jesus to dwell in our hearts? It all hinges around the word "dwell" which means live permanently, really settle down there. Deb and I are stayers when it comes to homes. We lived in our last large family home for over 20 years. We settled down there. We outlasted the kids who left,



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came back and moved out again. We eventually got all their gear out too. It became well and truly all our place. We owned it in every way. We “dwelt” there.

The trouble with our heart is that it is a crowded place with lots of tenants. Jesus lives at the centre of our lives, but so do our fears, our curses, our idols, our passions, our pain, our habits. So when it comes to making decisions that govern how we will live, there are many residents having their say in our heart. Sometimes we listen to Jesus, but our choices are also driven by the other voices at our very centre. They make it difficult to love and follow Jesus wholeheartedly.

Paul is praying that the Spirit would work powerfully so that the other tenants would be driven out completely. Then Jesus could have the whole place. Then he could speak without confusion. Then he could work powerfully through our lives. This is not a matter of willpower. I am sure you have tried. It is the freeing work of the Holy Spirit that we pray for. This is a key step in personal revival.

PRAYER RESPONSE

I do not know how this is going to happen, but I pray Holy Spirit that you will work in my heart to get rid of all that Jesus doesn't want there. Jesus, I really want you to dwell in me, all of me. I want to love you and follow you and be full of you. Holy Spirit, please root out all that opposes Jesus in me.

PRAYER FOR REVIVAL

There are so many places in our world that you do not rule Jesus. Please extend your kingdom. Take charge. Show your power. Drive out the evil forces and establish your authority. We need you Jesus.

