

DEVOTION 2

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

Ephesians 3:14-21

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may 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, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now 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, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Today we will focus on verses 16-17a, but please read the whole passage again.

Paul is praying for something to happen in the “inner being” or the “heart” of the Ephesians. For Westerners, the word “heart” epitomises the centre of our emotions. It's where we feel. But for the Hebrews, the concept of “heart” was much broader. 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. Your heart drove your life. It represented the very core of your being.

When you become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes and positions himself in your heart. He enters the centre of your life and influences everything. This is what Paul says in 1 Cor. 6:19: a Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. So Paul here is praying that the Spirit will do his work in the Ephesians' hearts so that Christ will be able to live there.

Now, this is confusing. Is Paul saying that the Spirit lives in our hearts, but we have to pray that Christ will live there too? Does the Spirit prepare the way for Jesus? That doesn't make sense. The members of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have different roles, but they work together. When we become Christians, Jesus comes into our lives along with the Holy Spirit. That's why we sometimes describe the process of becoming a Christian as “asking Jesus into your heart.” Jesus is living in the heart of every Christian. So why is Paul praying for “Christ to dwell in your hearts”?

To understand this part of Paul's prayer, we need to explore the meaning of the Greek word translated as “dwell” (3:17). When I moved to Bracken Ridge to pastor a new church, the church rented a house for our young family to live in. It was a nice place and was ours in a way, but we couldn't do everything we wanted with the house because it was owned by someone else. After 12 months of living there, we took the opportunity to buy the house. Immediately it became our home. It was ours. If we wanted to take out walls, we did so without a second thought. This house was now ours completely. This is what “dwell” signifies. When Jesus dwells in our hearts (3:17), he is not a temporary tenant there, but he is the owner of the whole place. He has settled down there and he does what he chooses.

The reality is that our hearts are often crowded places with lots of tenants. Jesus lives at the centre of our lives, but so too do our fears, our curses, our idols, our passions, our pain, our habits, etc. When it comes to

our behaviour or choices, many residents are clamouring to have their say at the centre of our lives, and Jesus' voice can be ignored.

Paul is praying that the Spirit will work powerfully so that we have the strength to evict the other tenants. This way Jesus can have the whole place. The house of our life becomes his home. He can do whatever he wants in us and through us. Wouldn't that be great in your life? Free to please Jesus. Not fighting constantly with all those powerful influences that oppose our following Jesus. Of course, that seems impossible for us, but it is what Paul prayed for, so we should be praying the same way.

There appears to be a progression in Paul's prayer. Jesus fully dwelling in our hearts is the first crucial step towards experiencing a work of God in and through our lives that is beyond our wildest dreams. Turning our hearts from Jesus' house to his home is where it starts.

You could make Paul's prayer your prayer today (perhaps you could kneel again): "I pray that out of my Father's glorious riches he may strengthen me with power through his Spirit in my inner being, so that Christ may dwell in my heart through faith." Of course, for such a significant transformation, you will need to keep praying this prayer.

QB PRAYER POINTS

1. Praise God for his deep desire to live in us and with us. Thank him for his grace in calling you to become his child and filling you with his Spirit.
2. Pray for your church – that there will be a growing desire for Jesus to govern and direct the lives of your church family. Pray for your leaders – that they will live godly lives and follow the direction of Jesus.
3. Pray for Queensland - that as our culture moves away from biblical guidelines, there will be a growing desire in Christians to follow and obey Jesus and be God's grace-filled presence in their community. Pray particularly for RI teachers and Christian schools influencing younger generations with God's truth..