



Ephesians

Part 21

Ephesians 3:14-21
Week of August 1, 2021

Before Connect Group

- Read Ephesians 3:14-21
- Watch the sermon by going to <http://switzerlandcommunitychurch.org>

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:14-21, ESV

Sermon Notes

You cannot understand the battle we have on this earth between the Spirit of Christ within us and the sinful passions of our flesh until we understand that the inner man is a New Creation in Christ Jesus.

If you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ today, then there is something very important that you need to know; a work is happening in you. *Philippians 1:4-6 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.*

Previously, we compared the way Paul introduces his prayer in chapter 1 with how he does so here in chapter 3. While in chapter 1 Paul opens his prayer with a joyful response to the faithfulness of the gentiles, pointing toward what he is going to say, this prayer here in Chapter 3 Paul opens with a description of his position before the father of all. An intensification that points back to the weight of the Gospel and mystery he has laid out in chapter 1-2. The way that Paul describes his posture while praying is a description of reverence. We cannot confuse our unhindered approach to the Father, with an invitation to approach him without concern or reverence.

The God to whom we pray is the father of all, the creator God, the sovereign hand over all things. He is the one from whom all blessings flow. He is the one who will judge all things according to His righteousness. He is the one who because of His immeasurable grace and mercy sent His Son Jesus Christ to die in our place that we might be saved and lifted up with Him. He is the one who is building us up into a glorifying temple for His Glory. The one who was not known on this earth has made himself known first through Moses and the prophets, yet to us through the greater image in His Son who came in the flesh. Through whom we have full, unhindered access to the Father who is in heaven. Paul is fully aware of the weight and glory of God. I pray that you and I see this clearly this morning. Because if we do, it makes the content of Paul's prayer here even more dangerous and humbling.

Working through this text has proven more difficult than I would have thought at first glance. Sometimes when we read through texts like this in Scripture, we are prone to just toss it up to old exaggerated descriptive language. However, if we slow down this morning, we find that there is more to think through in just the words of vs. 16 and 17a. We want to attempt to bring along the process with the hopes that God would grant you eyes and hearts that would come alive with the clarity of His grace and love that even this small text speaks over us this morning.

The Problems

- The setup in this text is concerning.
- At the beginning of vs. 16. "That according to the riches of his glory... You may be filled with the fullness of God."
- This sounds great, but when you sit back and meditate on this verse, you are drawn to other texts in Scripture, such as Ex. 33.
- *Exodus 33:18-23 Moses said, "Please show me your glory." And he said, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live." And the LORD*

said, "Behold, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock, and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back, but my face shall not be seen."

- How can it be that once the man was only allowed to glance at God's back, yet now we read bold texts like "access" and "confidence"?
- Moses is a servant of God who displayed great faith. Why would he not have the capacity to be filled with the fullness of God, yet Paul is praying that we are?

The Inner Man:

- The difference is this idea presented here by Paul of the "inner man."
- Some will debate whether or not this is the mind, the soul, the heart. While this is an important understanding, there is better time being spent to navigate the context and uniqueness of this idea here in our text.

The Inner man is Created by God "According to the Riches of His Glory"

- *Ephesians 2:4-10* But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- We have spent the better amount of three months laboring over this grace and mercy through Jesus who has brought us to salvation through the forgiveness of our sin and the unity that glorifies his name.
- In this work of salvation, there is something very real that happens in you.
- This is the real work of the Gospel in your life, that you would experience the reality of death to life. And that you might understand what 2:6 says "raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."
- The main point I want us to see about this inner man here is that it comes from the work of God alone.
- In chapter 3 you see words like "may grant you", "to be strengthened." They point to the truth that the source of everything for the glory of God in your inner being is from the source "God himself from the overflow of the riches of his glory".
- This is important because too many Christians have allowed themselves to slip into the lie that God has worked grace through Christ, but you are responsible to do something in your inner self to become worthy of such grace.
- This creates a dichotomy that is not true within the work of the Gospel.
- While Paul does indeed acknowledge us to "walk in a manner worthy" understanding this today is imperative in order that we can appropriately navigate that text.
- You cannot understand the battle we have on this earth between the Spirit of Christ within us and the sinful passions of our flesh until we understand that the inner man is a New Creation in Christ Jesus.
- You will find your boldness to walk worthy from a true realization that you are not the one who is doing this work.
- Hear the true joy of the Gospel that if God has opened the eyes of your heart and

accomplished the divine work of bringing you from death to life, then he continues His work by creating and building you up in preparation for Him.

- This is most clearly drawn from the language “he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit.”

The Agent of Building the Inner Being is the Spirit of God.

- Any other agent, including ourselves, is just a form of law.
- *John 16:12-15* “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you.
- The Law vs. The Spirit This is one of the differences we see from Exodus 33 and Ephesians 3. The Law is unable to build the inner man. It is only able to condemn.
- *Romans 7:5-6* For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code.
- The Law rules over our flesh... When we were under the Law, our inner being was indistinguishable from our outer being. The Law in its perfection, pointed to perfection... all while revealing to our flesh the fulness of our imperfection.
- *Romans 7:18-25* For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself serve the law of God with my mind, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin.
- There is a clear difference for those who are in Christ between the New Creation in the Inner Being and the sin of the flesh.
- The sin of the flesh no longer defines us.
- Those who do not truly know Christ will hear me say that this morning and find within themselves clear justification to go on sinning.
- Apart from the Spirit of God there is no understanding for the things that I am trying to elevate today.
- For those who know Christ this morning, this truth will drive you to “bow your knees” before the Father with an overwhelming desire to set aside your flesh and live boldly from the strengthening of your inner being.
- There is much desire to preach morality, to preach outward adjustment. Even worse, you may begin to believe that your outward conformity has the ability to do the work of sanctification within your inner being.
- We pray for one another before our Father in heaven for His over whelming work of sanctification through the Holy Spirit from the source of His rich glory. That you may see and understand the weight of what Paul is saying to you. You are loved and you are in His hands! There is no substitute for the Cross that has paid for your sins, there is no replacement for the blood that was shed as a sacrifice to atone in fullness for our

lives, there is no victory other than the resurrection to which we can hold that would declare anything greater.

- If you leave here today, the only thing for which I could hope is that your inner beings are securely focused on the work of the Spirit in you, sensitive to the moving and working of righteousness and holiness.
- May you stand straight up in boldness before the Father. A reverent boldness that bows a knee yet stands against sin.
- May you know that though the passions of your flesh seem wild and overwhelming, the Spirit of God is working more power in your inner being than the flesh could overwhelm.
- Would you confidently wage war on sin and pursue righteousness because you have seen the beauty, tasted the glory, and want more of the fullness of God within you?
- It is this work that leads to eternal joy and hope.

The Result of the Inner Being is Eternal.

- That is where we end our time this morning. This should cause you to walk away with all the encouragement and joy you need to live out your faith.
- The Creation of your inner being through Christ, your sanctification by the Spirit, is the thing that will be ushered into eternity.
- *2 Corinthians 4:16-18 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*
- Today, we leave here with our eyes, the eyes of our hearts, the inner being, in all strength and power, focused upon our lives consumed in Christ Jesus.
- *Colossians 3:1-4 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

1 Corinthians 11:23-29 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

Connect Group Discussion Questions

- Why should the Christian pursue the transformation of the inner person by the Spirit instead of looking to pursue that transformation by our own works.
- How do our works and abilities compare with the works and abilities of God in our lives? How does this encourage us to submit to the glory of God in our lives and pursue Him in every aspect of our Christian walk?
- What is the difference between the new creation in Jesus Christ and the sin of the flesh? For the Christian, where should our identification come from?
- What role does the Spirit of God play in the transformation of our inner being? How is this different than our instinct to perform better on our own?
- How do we seek the things that are above in our life? What things in the world challenge our ability to seek the things of God?

Challenge For The Week

As Paul talks about being transformed in the inner man, he does so with the understanding that only the Spirit can affect change within a person and only the Spirit and do the work of sanctification.

- Where are you resisting the work of sanctification within your inner person? How can you submit to what the Spirit is trying to do within you?
- Who do you know that needs an encounter with the Holy Spirit? How can you be praying for them during this time?