

The Book of Ephesians

Ephesians 3:14-19

Session 28: Paul's Prayer, cont.

Ephesians 3:16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ May be able to comprehend with all saints what *is* the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; ¹⁹ And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

As I mentioned last week, I see this passage a little differently than I did before. Paul's prayer request is for them/us to be strengthened in the inner man by God's Spirit. This strengthening will be a result of the word of God effectually working in you to edify you. This inner-man strengthening is the job of the Spirit and there are a myriad of ways in which you can be strengthened. We listed on the board last week, seven ways you can be SIYIM. I think most of those were obvious enough that I do not need to say much more about them.

But let me talk about a way in which you are strengthened that you may not be thinking about. You are strengthened in your inner man (SIYIM) when you are instructed by the doctrine. Let's say you used to think you could lose your salvation. Then you learned about your justification unto eternal life and your new identity in Christ. Once you learned the doctrine and believed it, the Spirit worked that doctrine in your inner man, and you became convinced of the truth of your justification. As a result, you no longer doubt your salvation. You rest in the assurance of being secure in Christ. When this happened, you were strengthened in your inner man.

While the Spirit does the actual strengthening, we do have a part in the process. Once we identify an area of our life we need to work on, or there is some issue that is adversely affecting us, we need to find the verses in Paul's epistles that are connected with our particular need. We memorize at least one of them, write it

down on a card, and look at it during the day, turning the scripture into a prayer, asking God to strengthen us in our inner man by His word.

Verses 16-19 record Paul's open-ended request for the Ephesians; that they might be strengthened in their inner man. Why does Paul want them to strengthened? So that in their daily lives, Christ can dwell in their hearts by faith, which means that the life of Christ will be lived in them in whatever area of their life they are focusing on at that time.

Ephesians 3:18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

The breadth, length, depth and height of what? Of whatever you are being strengthened about. In other words, Paul prays for us to comprehend the fulness of how the doctrine can work in us, every aspect of how we can be strengthened in our inner man. While there is more we could say about this, this is the foundational truth that we need to be working on. For now, just know that this is Paul's way of saying that the doctrine instructs us in such a way that we can begin to understand every aspect of the godly response to our situation.

Ephesians 3:19 **And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,** that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

That "love of Christ" is both to you (as you are being SIYIM) and through you to the others you are ministering to. For what purpose?

Ephesians 3:19 **And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge,** **that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.**

Being filled with all the fulness of God is the same as coming unto "**a perfect man.**" This has to do with being a fully educated son.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:**

Being filled with all the fulness of God is the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, and it is "standing complete in all the will of God."

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, **that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.**

Remember, this is our foundational pass through the doctrine. It is doing the first things first. We have not exhausted the Ephesians passage, but learning to pray like Paul is a big first step. We have to engage in this edificational process in order for us to be strengthened by God's Spirit.

For this first pass through Ephesians 3, the important thing is not to accumulate all the knowledge available in the passage, but to gain a practical outworking of the doctrine. The more the doctrine works in us, the more we can know about the passage.

In case you haven't picked up on this yet, this prayer is about Christ in you. This is about your edification. This is about the life of Christ being manifest in us. Paul's prayer in chapter 1 was that we might know about the benefits of being in Christ, by knowing about 1) the hope of His calling, 2) the riches of His inheritance, and 3) the exceeding greatness of His power. But his prayer in chapter 3 is about Christ in us, and that is a different issue.

So let this prayer be your prayer for yourself and for your fellow saints. This is a prayer that should be a part of your life from this point forward.

And now we come to the benediction of Paul's prayer.

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
²¹ Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Think about vs. 20 in connection with what I told you about vs. 18. Once you comprehend the breadth, the length, the depth and the height of anything, God is then able to do "exceeding abundantly above all we ask (pray) or think (imagine). I have found this doctrine working in me to produce that very thing.

As I have engaged with Ephesians 3:16-19, and I have prayed in accordance with how I have taught you over these last three weeks, two things have happened: 1) God has done more in my life to transform me than I first **asked Him to do**, and 2) God has transformed me **in ways I didn't even know to ask for**.

Do you understand what I am saying to you? By approaching the doctrine the way I have taught it to you, God has done exceedingly abundantly above what I asked, and above what I thought. What I am teaching you is not theory, as I have seen this work in my own life. I have been strengthened with might by His Spirit in my inner man in several different ways as a result of engaging with the word of God and prayer. But all the work was done by God (the Spirit of God) and God's word, so He gets all the glory for transforming me. He will do that for you too.

Now let me say a word about two misconceptions regarding how this works:

1) We hear this saying, "You are in Christ, and Christ is in you" as if these are one in the same. There is a sense in which Christ is in you (through the person of the Spirit – Romans 8:10) when you trusted Christ, but Paul is talking about something different when he talks about Christ in you, or Christ being formed in you, or the life of Christ being made manifest in our mortal body, or Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. By these, Paul isn't referring to a justification issue (something which happened when you trusted Christ), but a sanctification issue, something that has happened as a result of edification, the renewing of the mind, the transformation of the inner man, our conformity to Christ. When Paul talks about "Christ in us" he is talking about the sanctification effect of the life and character of Christ being produced in us by the Spirit's effectual working of the word. This does not automatically happen when we trust Christ, but it is the process of edification.

Some folks think that this is all the same for everyone, and in justification it is. But when it comes to you having the life of Christ made manifest in you (which is a sanctification issue), we are not the same. That is why there is a reward attached to things which do not happen automatically.

Paul said there are vessels of honor and vessels of dishonor.

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.²⁰ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour.²¹ If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work.

What am I saying by citing this passage? I am saying that we need Paul's doctrine to work in us so that we "depart from iniquity," in order that we might be a "vessel of honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." That did not automatically happen when we trusted Christ, but I want it to happen for every member of the body of Christ, and so we preach what we preach to that end and purpose.

When you act in obedience to the truth, the truth behaves, and the result is righteousness – conformity to God's will in thought, purpose and action. The truth is communicated through the word of God, having its source in God.

The second misconception is 2) When the Bible says that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, some take that "by faith part" to mean that the way Christ dwells in us is simply because we asked Him to come and dwell in us and we trust, "by faith," that He is doing that.

But that is not what it means. Christ dwelling in our heart is a by-product of the work which the Spirit does in us as He strengthens our inner man. Just like Christ does not save you by you asking Him to save you, He saves you in response to your faith in His all-sufficient work on the Cross. It may sound like semantics, but it isn't.

I can remember when people taught that the way to be filled with the Spirit was to confess all of your sins, and then ask God to fill you with His Spirit. But that is not how it works. Being "filled with the Spirit" is a by-product of being "led by the Spirit" not us just asking for God to suddenly fill us with His Spirit.

There is something that I want to talk about to close out the session for today. Because this is happening in our “inner man,” I want us to realize why God, in this DoGG, is concerned with the inner man, and why it makes sense that Paul’s requests have nothing to do with our body or our physical circumstances.

There are those in our day who tend to think that the physical is all there is, and there is no such thing as a soul. But the apostle Paul would disagree with that.

1 Corinthians 15:45 And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit.

Genesis 2:7 And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Like Adam, you are a living soul. So, what is a soul?

The soul is an immaterial substance that contains consciousness and animates (that makes living) the body.

I don’t mean that the soul is consciousness, but rather that it has consciousness within it. The soul is a very complex thing.

There are at least five kinds of conscious states which exist: 1) A sensation is a state of awareness or sentience; a conscious awareness of sound or pain. Some sensations are experiences of things outside of ourselves like a tree or the color red. Others are awareness of states within us such as pains or itches.

Emotions are subclasses of sensations and so they are forms of awareness of things. In other words, I can be aware of something in an angry or sad way.

So, let’s talk about some terms: mind, soul and spirit. Think of the soul like a chest of drawers. Then think of the mind and the spirit as two of the drawers in that chest. I am a soul therefore I am an immaterial substance.

Within me are different faculties, different powers or abilities. My mind is a faculty of the soul. My spirit is a different faculty of the soul.

Just as you have one body with a number of “organs” within it, in the same way, your soul has “organs” within it too. Just as the organs of our body have a distinct function within the body our soul has “organs” which also have distinct functions.

We could say our spirit is an “organ of our soul.” Our spirit has a particular function in our soul. The spirit is the organ that “died” at the fall of Adam, and is regenerated at conversion. How this “being dead in trespasses and sins” has been handed down from Adam is a bit of a mystery, for spiritual death cannot be passed down to successive generations by anything physical. Our fallen condition is not the result of our genes.

Our spirit can be compared to the physical eye, serving the soul as a “light,” or “lamp.”

Proverbs 20:27 The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.

Another way of saying this could be that the spirit of a man is the “light” by which the Lord searches our hearts.

Jesus makes the analogy that the physical “eye” is the “light of the body.”

Luke 11:34 The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.³⁵ Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.³⁶ If thy whole body therefore *be* full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

In the same way, if the human spirit is unregenerate, the mind has no true, personal knowledge of God. The Holy Spirit regenerates and sanctifies the believer; the human spirit is the primary locus of that illumination.

Once a person has trusted Christ as Savior, the Spirit of God takes up residence in their human spirit. It is in our spirit that the word of God is effectually worked by the Spirit of God to transform us by the renewing of our mind.

We cannot separate our mind from our soul, like we could the legs of a table which we could remove and put them in some place different. The legs of a table would be called separable parts. That is, they can be separated from the whole of which they are parts, and still exist.

The mind and the spirit are inseparable parts. Even though they are parts of the soul, you don't want to think of the soul as being made up of all these parts, like a table. The soul comes first and it already contains all these faculties in it, and one faculty is the mind and another faculty is the spirit. So, how many faculty members are in a soul?

It depends. First, let's define a faculty; it is any range of genuinely different powers in the soul. For example, very primitive animals clearly have faculties of sensation, but probably not faculties of thought. Higher animals, like dogs, would have faculty of thought in addition to faculty of sensations. Because we have a faculty of sensation, we are aware of things.

But sensations are not the product of the mind. The mind, the spirit and sensations are all separate faculties of the soul. But it is because we have a faculty of mind that we can understand concepts, thoughts, beliefs, volitions and things like that. So, just to be clear, we are talking about different components (or faculties) of the soul. Remember when we talked about states of consciousness? Sensations are one kind of consciousness, while thoughts, beliefs, desires and volition are the other four.

Sensations are not the same things as thoughts. Thoughts can be true or false, sensations can't. Emotions are not the same thing as beliefs. Beliefs are things we take to be true, emotions are things we feel.

All of these faculties have causal correlations in the brain. But, we are not our brain. There is an idea out there that we are only meat wagons with brains, and that there is no soul. But I want to say two things about that: 1) once again this is because we think the hard sciences (which can offer us absolutely nothing about the soul or spirit) are the primary means of discovering who or what we are (and that is false), and 2) there are things that are true of me (my soul) which are not

true of my brain and body. And if that is the case, then I cannot be just a brain and body.

I (as a soul) am able to be separated from my body (disembodied), but my brain is not.

The scripture gives us examples of disembodied souls which can still reason, speak, hear and feel.

Luke 16:22 And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

²³ And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.

Luke 16:27 Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: **²⁸ For I have five brethren;** that he may testify unto them, **lest they also come into this place of torment.**

Revelation 6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar **the souls of them that were slain** for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: **¹⁰ And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?**

We hear stories where a person has died on the operating table, and is outside of his body “watching” two doctors trying to revive him, hearing the younger doctor say that they should “let him go, he has lived a good life,” while hearing the older doctor reply, “I can’t do that, we need to keep working on him.” They do keep working, and he revives. Now, even though that illustration is chocked full of anecdotal information, it at least serves up the possibility of the soul’s disembodiment. There is no such possibility if the brain were removed for a person to continue to “hear” and “see.”

The point here is that there is something true of me, that is not true of my brain, and that is enough to prove that I am not my brain.

But even though I am a living soul, which is distinct from just my brain, I do not think that as a soul, any of us possess necessary immortality. Do you understand what I mean by “necessary immortality?” I do believe the human soul will never cease to exist, but that is because God sustains it. God could annihilate it if He wanted to. This kind of runs hand in hand with the understanding that the only reason the creation (and everything in it) continues to exist one more moment is because God, by His omnipresence is actively engaged in sustaining it. And I mean everywhere (even in the desert where there is nothing but sand) even in the very core of the earth, all the way out to outer space, at every galaxy, every planet and every star and all of the spaces in between. He is fully present, at every place in the entire creation, at every moment, not only observing everything that takes place, but is actively sustaining it to continue its existence.

But let's not lose the point: I do not believe we, as souls, are immortal in the sense that we are self-existent. But, if we are talking about souls being immortal in the sense that they never will cease to exist, then yes, they are immortal – but that is because of the action of God to sustain them forever.

The natural state of a soul is to exist within a body. The soul functions best when it is embodied. This is one reason why, at the Blessed Hope, in preparation for our heavenly vocation, we will receive a glorified body so that throughout eternity, we (that is, our soul) will be embodied so that it can interact with the physical creation. That being said, a soul can exist without a body.

Let's return to the point: Like Adam, we are a living soul. Paul's prayer, being about spiritual issues and not physical issues has to do with the transformation of our soul; the real us.

I think it is fitting that we end this session with a prayer that comes right out of Paul's doxology in Ephesians 3.

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,
²¹ Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.