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Ephesians 3:13-17  
His Spirit in the Inner Man

We're going to continue looking at the book of Ephesians today. We're in Ephesians chapter 3, and we're going to look at verses 13 through the first part of 17. I'll start by reading the passage.

**Eph 3:13** Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. **14** For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **15** from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, **16** that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened (empowered) with might through His Spirit in the inner man, **17** that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith;

I'll probably go over the first couple verses somewhat quickly, as I think they're rather straight forward. And then I want to spend most of our time on this prayer where Paul asks God to strengthen the church by His Spirit in their inner man.

In the first verse, Paul just asks them not to lose heart at his tribulations because it is their glory. There are a variety of views on what he means by this, but I suppose that he simply means that his present imprisonment is something they should not despair over since he is imprisoned for nothing less than proclaiming to them, and causing them to know, the glory of God. Paul's body suffers, but his gospel goes forth. His vessel is harshly treated, but the treasure is spreading all over the Roman Empire. Don't lose heart at my current circumstance, look how wonderfully its turning out for you and the other churches. He may be saying more than that, but I don't see it.

Then he begins to describe to them how and why he prays for them. He says, in essence, here is why I pray, and what I long to see happen in you. Here is why I bow my knees to the Father "from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named".

Before I get into the prayer, let me just say something about this statement. When Paul states that the entire family in heaven and earth gets its name from the Father, he does not mean that God is the one that calls one family "the Johnson's", and another family "the Henderson's", and another family "the Griswold's". He's not giving God the credit for choosing family names. He isn't even talking about natural families at all. You'll notice that this says "the whole family", and not "every family". Its talking about one family, not a bunch of anything. Its talking about the entire "family" of God sharing the name of God, not a bunch of families being labeled by God.

And when God's family, which is obviously the people who have been born of His Spirit and placed in His Son, is said to bear His name, it is speaking of His nature, His character, His Life, identity, person. We, who are born of His Seed, have come to

share His name. Now whether we walk in that name, pray in that name, and do all things in that name, that has to do with whether we know that name. But regardless, if we are born again, we have been named by God.

We often have a shallow and silly comprehension of the name of God. For instance, we think that praying in Jesus' name is just mouthing the word "Jesus" at the end of our prayer. We pray in our own name, stick his name on the end, "in the name of Jesus", and think that if you forget to say that part it probably won't happen, or it's not a real prayer. Or we think that using His name in vain is just when we say an inappropriate word after we drop a rock on our foot. We don't understand that it has much more to do with attaching His name to everything of ourselves that is vanity.

Jesus said to His Father in John chapter 17:6 "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world." He's not talking about a bumper sticker on the back of his chariot that said "I Love Yahweh". He's talking about living in, and in all things making known, the life, nature, character, person, and name of God. That is the sense in which God has given us His name. That is the sense in which His children, those sharing the Life of His only Son, are called the family of God – both those on, and those no longer on, the earth.

Alright, so he starts to pray. He says "here is why I bow my knees to God", "Here is what I pray for you Ephesians". I pray that God would grant you, according to His abundance, to be strengthened (empowered) with might, or power, through His Spirit in the inner man, to the end that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

What is Paul talking about here? What does it mean to be strengthened with power through God's Spirit in the inner man? What does it mean that Christ dwell in the heart through faith? If I were to answer these questions in one sentence, I might say that here we have Paul describing what it means for God's eternal purpose, finished in Christ, to work in you and I.

Remember how we spent four weeks talking about the reality of God's finished work in creating an eternal habitation, the temple of God, through the resurrection? We spoke at length about His completed plan. His realized goal. God has, through the death, burial, and resurrection, of Jesus Christ established One New Man, a body, a temple, a city, a habitation in His saints, and we have become both the eternal dwelling place of God, and the vehicle for His expression in the earth. Well, if Ephesians 2:20 through 3:13 was the "what" of God's purpose, now we've come to the "how".

In other words, here Paul begins to pray that what God has finished through the cross would begin to powerfully work in the inner man of those who have come to Christ. Here Paul describes how the Christ who was crucified, buried, and raised, now begins to dwell in (that is operate in, function in, influence, transform) the human soul. He describes the "what" of God's eternal plan. Here he prays that what God has established in the resurrection would be established in the soul. What God has made obsolete in the cross would be circumcised from the soul. Who God has made the king, the head, would have the liberty to reign in His body, His Kingdom.

In a word, we're talking about spiritual growth, but I use all of these other descriptive words because the term "spiritual growth" already has hundreds of definitions attached to it. Not realizing that growth is the **appropriation of God's finished work to the soul by the Spirit of God**, we create our own understanding

of it, and, incidentally, it almost always has to do with what we think we're good at. For one person it's a disciplined prayer life, for another spiritual growth has to do with learning Scriptures, for another its spiritual disciplines, for another its devotion to a ministry, or music, or controlling inappropriate behavior.

So many have given a lifetime to striving to achieve the wrong goal in the wrong way. We struggle to perform and achieve and change. James Fowler says our lives are consumed with trying to "overcome thoughts in the mind, feelings in the emotions, difficulties in decision-making, and the urgings in our own desires." We fight against ourselves with the powerlessness of ourselves. We make war on the flesh with the flesh and winning is an impossibility. We try to investigate the mind of God with the thoughts of man and find ourselves confused. And we say "why is Christianity so hard?". The answer is – "this is not Christianity." It never has been.

Oh, but its so popular. How could it be that all of these Christian "how to" books, and "self-help" books are inventions of the blind, creations of unbelief? No, there must be something uniquely wrong with me. And so we investigate the world of Christian psychology or inner healing, but find that so often we come out with only a slightly better version of ourselves. From there we conclude that it must be a matter of motivation. I need to find something that motivates me to pursue, to obey, to change. If I could see the power of God, I would be motivated. If I could find the right leader, the best model, the fresh manna. I need to hear the voice of God, feel the hand of God, be romanced by God. Maybe if I study the past, I won't repeat it. Maybe if I fear the future, I'll live in anticipation of it.

God, reveal to me what you want me to do, where you want me to go, how you want me to live. But please don't let that guy say that I am dead and my life is hidden with Christ in God. Don't say that apart from you I can do nothing. Don't tell me that I need to be strengthened by your Spirit in the inner man that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith...because that just doesn't make sense, and I have no idea how to make application.

But there is another misunderstanding. **Spiritual Truth applies itself to the soul when it is seen. When it is known. It makes its own application by changing your universe. Changing where you know yourself to be. Changing what you know yourself to be. Truth applies itself to your soul when it is known. You will never have to figure out how to make application.**

Listen, all of this is just an attempt to say that we've made something so simple and wonderful into something so convoluted, carnal, and hard. **Christianity is Christ. Once again, it is the life of God in the soul of man. And growth is the conquering of the soul by the Spirit of Christ, and it is nothing else.** And this conquering happens when He is allowed to show us the truth of our salvation. This subduing happens when He appears. When He is revealed. When He is revealed in you, you are transformed into His image.

**2Co 3:18** But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

**1Jo 3:2** ...we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

**Col 3:4** When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

**Here we have the soul becoming acquainted with and constrained by and conformed to the reality of spiritual awareness.** In other words, as our verse says, the Christ who is in us by new birth, starts to dwell in us, move in us, operate in us by faith. This is what Paul is praying for here. He's praying for Christians, ones in whom Christ already dwells. So he's not praying that they would be born again. He's praying for something more than that. He's praying that by the awakening of spiritual senses, i.e. faith, the Christ who is their life would both will and work in them according to the Truth.

The soul begins to see with "the eyes of their heart" (Eph. 1:18) and we can "look at the things which are not seen, which are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18), and "behold the glory of God" (2 Cor. 3:18). And in this way we begin to "hear what the Spirit is saying" (Rev. 2:7,11). Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice" (John 10:3,4,16,27). "If anyone has an ear, let him hear" (Rev. 13:9). We begin to "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8).

The life that is in us begins to work in us according to the power of the cross. The power of the resurrection. The power of an indestructible life. "Yet not I, but the one who mightily works in me". "He does exceedingly more than you could ask or think according to the power that works within us" Our verse "I pray that you might be strengthened with might in the inner man by His Spirit".

As the Spirit brings us face to face with the truth, we begin to experience the power of the cross. **Truth shows us there is nowhere to run, no way to avoid it. It's a finished work.** Faith sees it, and it automatically begins to work in us. The power of the cross working in the soul because it is accomplished by Him. You see that the only reason you didn't know this power before was because you walked in darkness. You walked in a make-believe world of shadows and imaginations. Truth makes you confront something that God has done, and the reality of it bears in upon you, and, like I said, it starts to re-define your universe. And this is not an overstatement because you see that the cross has you somewhere other than where you thought you were. The cross has you dead to a man that you identified with. And it makes you confront it. The truth leaves you no options but to be conformed because its all there is that is real. The more you see by faith, the more your options vanish away because there were never real to begin with. Its like waking up from a dream.

I hope you're following me. Faith makes you face into God's finished eternal purpose, and the power of His cross works in you because it is accomplished by Him. You come to know and experience its power. You start to see just how powerful that judgment and death really are. You see what is excluded. You see what is cut off. There's no use arguing, it's finished. You can't disagree except in your imagination. Its not up for debate, God is showing you what is real. And it works powerfully in you. You see it...and then the resurrection, which was once a historical fact about Jesus, starts to become a present reality about you. You were raised up with Him. Oh my goodness, I see it! Wait, this is what the Bible says! I had read the words and never known the power of it. Truth conforms you to itself because it is real, and everything else is clearly a lie.

You face it. Its always been real, but its never powerfully worked in you because ignorance turned your back to it. But you understand at last that this is an entirely different kind of knowing. **Its not just a different subject known, it's a different kind of knowing.** It's a knowing that doesn't even come out of you, but rather is given to you. This is faith. Faith is God's knowing, being stitched into your soul by the Spirit of God. And every other kind of knowing is fine for everything other than spiritual reality....but you understand that to know anything spiritual, it must be known by the Spirit.

And of course, Paul says this too. Paul explains that the natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit. They must be revealed. (1 Cor 2:14) We have received the Spirit of God for this very purpose, to awaken to what He has given. (1 Cor 2:12). We become able to comprehend and know realities that surpass knowledge (Eph 3:19). We know by the Spirit. We "abound in real knowledge and spiritual discernment" (Phil. 1:9). We are filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9). Paul prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true knowledge of Him. (Eph 1:17) Paul promises that in every way that we are otherwise minded, God will reveal even this to us. (Phil. 3:15)

And though Scriptures describing the revealing of Christ to the soul abound in the New Testament, much of evangelical religion tries to squelch this kind of so-called "personal revelation". And part of the reason they do it is somewhat valid, but most is based in fear and hypocrisy. The valid part has to do with the sad fact that some of the flakiest and most ridiculous things seen by the human race have been done by religion claiming special revelation from God.

But the primary reason why such a revealing of Christ by the Spirit of truth is frowned upon and discouraged is because leaders claim that it is too subjective to be trustworthy. It is not, as they say, "concrete" like the written word of God. But in saying such things they fail to realize that their darkened carnal mind is every bit as subjective in its interpretation and understanding of the written word of God as the person they are criticizing. Christian religion can complain that the teaching of the Spirit (which, if true, always agrees with the written word of God since the same Spirit is the author of both)...they can claim that the teaching of the Spirit can end up being nothing more than mans opinions and wishful thinking about God, but I would argue that that is precisely what our doctrines and theologies are without the illumination of the Spirit. The religionist says "no, our doctrines are safe because they came out of this book". I say "no, your doctrines came out of your mind as it read that book".

Listen, I'm obviously not saying we abandon Scripture. Anybody that knows me knows how much I value and read the Scripture. I am, however, insisting that we abandon our darkened mind in favor of the beautiful mind of Christ. He is the one that grants His own understanding whether it is from the written word of God, or the seeing of the Word that was with the Father before a book ever described Him.

Getting back to our subject...the Spirit of Truth, if we allow Him, brings us face to face with the inescapable finished work of the cross. And as we face it, we become obedient to it. I mean, we align with it. I mean we line up and accord with it, because its real. And growth happens. What is growth again? Growth is the soul of man conquered by the Spirit of Christ. We are conquered by truth. It leaves us no options because it is real.

Its like gravity. Its not open to discussion. You can reject it, but only by pretending its not real. I suppose it would be possible for a person to trick themselves into a state of deception and confusion where they denied the existence of gravity. It certainly wouldn't change the reality of it, but it might be possible to live in ignorance of it. But as soon as that person was willing to see the truth, gravity wouldn't be a suggestion. Its not Isaac Newton's opinion. It would be a reality that stood apart from opinion and necessarily demanded obedience. That is how knowing the truth works. It is not a suggestion. It is a reality that stands apart from opinion and seeing the truth necessarily demands obedience.

And it has power. Power to conform you to itself. Its like the power of gravity. You can't resist if you're in the realm where it operates. Maybe if you were in space, gravity could be a concept that you could believe in or not. But if you were translated out of space and into earths atmosphere, its no longer an option. Well, if you are in Adam, if you are not born of God, then you can decide whether or not you want to believe in what God has done in the cross. But if you have been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and made to dwell in the Son of His love, then truth will show you that the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus is real. And faith will cause it to work in you. Faith will cause Christ, who is in you, to dwell in you.

So, if you're hearing me correctly, you are understanding that Christ is not in you to tell you what to do. Christ is in you to empower you in the inner man by His Spirit. He's in you to conform your soul to His image, and then you can decide what to do or not to do...but as you grow, your decision becomes constrained by reality. Your decision comes out from truth, it is compelled by the parameters of truth.

One of the most common Old Covenant teachings unfortunately alive and well in the body of Christ today is this notion that Christian growth or Christian maturity is the ability to receive God's daily instructions and carry them out. But that is not what God desires from you. He doesn't want to change your day planner. He wants to change your soul. Growth isn't when God tells you what to do, but rather when you choose what to do constrained and motivated by the reality and truth of His indwelling Life.

This reminds me of a question that somebody asked me recently about spiritual gifts. They asked me why it was necessary for Paul to tell the body of Christ how to prevent problems with spiritual gifts. And the thought behind the question was that, if the Spirit was genuinely the author and source of these manifestations, why would Paul want to control the meeting by, for instance, putting a limit on how many prophesies are given, or the roll of tongues in a meeting.

Well the answer has a lot to do with what we're talking about. When we talk about manifestations of Christ, whether it is a spiritual gift, or an expression of His nature, life, love, wisdom, etc., we are not talking about Christ taking over the body of individual Christians and doing things according to His will. His operation in His body is not like a puppeteer with a puppet. He works in His body according to faith.

In other words, He brings an individual into the Truth, the Light, the mind of the Lord...and then that truth becomes the reality and Person out from which we live and speak and act and decide. And faith becomes the means by which all things that are in the believer by new birth are made manifest. Knowing the truth, in this way,

conforms the soul to the indwelling Person. BUT that does not mean that the soul becomes a puppet of that Person...but rather "the fragrance of knowing" that Person.

The soul is always in charge of when the mouth speaks or the hand acts. The life of Christ revealed doesn't start or stop the action or words, but it defines and fills with reality, and so spirit and life are saturating words or actions. "The words that I speak to you are Spirit and truth". "You have the worlds of eternal life". That's true of service, teaching, or spiritual gifts. The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. In other words, you can't say "Jesus MADE me do it". Jesus doesn't control what you do, but what you are. Jesus doesn't take over your body, He transforms your soul. **You control what you do, He defines what you are.**

God's business with you is in the inner-man. Jesus taught that in so many ways. So many are trying to find God's will in the outer-man - in the actions, direction, service, discipline, etc. of the outer man. But this is not how God works in you. And this is not growth. God works in you by empowering your soul by His Spirit in the inner man. That is accomplished by faith. And the goal is that Christ, who is in you by new birth, would reign supreme and occupy every city in your soul. And then what you do, and feel, and want, and think is constrained by what you are. Not your convictions, not your religion, but Christ your life. This is growth. This is Christ starting to dwell in you by faith. And this is what Paul is praying for the Ephesians in chapter 3.