

Fact Sheet for **“Let Christ Dwell in Your Heart”**  
**Ephesians 3:1-21**

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When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians he was a prisoner of the Romans. We don't know whether this was in Caesarea (Acts 24:27) in A.D. 57-59 or in Rome (28:30) in A.D. 60-62. Paul was imprisoned by the Romans following a riot in the temple. Paul, on the steps of the Antonia Fortress, addressed the Jews on the temple mount. All was fine as he rehearsed his salvation experience, until he related Christ's words to him about the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). Then the place erupted and Paul was imprisoned.

Ephesians 3:1 begins with the words “For this reason...” The best way to grasp Paul's line of thought is to first read the two previous chapters. Notice the pronouns in these two chapters. At times Paul will be talking about all believers, at times about Jewish believers, and at time about Gentile believers. (*Read chapters 1 and 2.*)

Ephesians 3:1 begins with the words “For this reason...” Paul is referring to the fact that salvation in Christ is now open to the Gentiles. Paul speaks again of this mystery, something that was hidden until then. (Earlier he mentioned this mystery in 1:9.)

**ESV <sup>1</sup> ¶ For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles-- <sup>2</sup> assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. <sup>4</sup> When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.**

Pause for a moment and let's go on a small rabbit trail. Remember what Paul wrote in 2:19-20? The offices of apostle and prophet were foundational offices for the church when the NT was not complete. Apostles and prophets received direct revelation from God, and the church was to believe and follow what they said. With the completion of the NT these two offices are not now active.

**<sup>6</sup> This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>7</sup> ¶ Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. <sup>11</sup> This was according to the eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, <sup>12</sup> in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.**

Think about verse 12. Christians can approach God boldly and with confidence because of our faith in his son, Jesus Christ. There is no need for an intermediary, someone to approach God on our behalf.

**<sup>13</sup> So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.**

Verses 14-21 are Paul's final words for the first major division of this letter. In these three chapters Paul has given a lot of theology. In the last three chapters he will switch to an emphasis on application. Notice that verse 14 also begins with "For this reason..." Paul has spoken of his own circumstances briefly but now gets back to the Gentile believers in Ephesus. Here is his prayer wrapping up this first section. Notice that he mentions every person of the Trinity. Notice too his use of some key words he used in 1:15-19.

**<sup>14</sup> ¶ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, <sup>16</sup> that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, <sup>18</sup> may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.**

Paul prayed that these Ephesian Christians (1) would be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit. Paul also prayed that (2) Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith. By these two Paul did not mean that they would become Christians. They were already Christians. These two have to do with their daily lives. And in context Paul was about to launch into three chapters of application.

When Paul prayed that they would be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit he meant the power to overcome sin. (Compare his words in Romans 6:6 and 1 Corinthians 10:13) As Christians we have access through the Holy Spirit to the power to overcome sin. The real question is, "Are we really willing to use it?" I know that the patterns of some sins can run deep in a person's life, but ultimately we can gain victory over them through the power of the Holy Spirit who is within us.

When Paul prayed that Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith he meant that Christ would become the very center of their lives, the dominating factor in their attitudes and conduct. In 1986 Robert Boyd Munger authored a pamphlet titled "My Heart--Christ's Home". Here is what someone has written about that pamphlet... "Imagining what it would be like to have Jesus come to the home of our hearts, Munger moves room by room considering what Christ desires for us. In the living room we prepare to meet Christ daily. In the dining room we examine together what appetites should and should not control us. We even explore the closets in our lives that Christ can help us clean out."

Here's the take-away this morning... I don't think there is much of a problem today, as there was when Paul wrote Ephesians, in realizing that salvation has been opened to the Gentiles. But Paul's prayer for the Ephesians still echoes in our culture. We live in a day when personal dedication to Christ as seen in a holy lifestyle, holy attitudes, holy words, and holy appetites comes at a premium. It's relatively easy to become a Christian. It's difficult to live for Christ. Often our knee-jerk reaction is not to do the right thing. And Christians, when they are struggling with sin, can approach God boldly and with confidence because of our faith in his son, Jesus Christ.

Now Paul finishes the first section of his letter with this benediction...

**<sup>20</sup> ¶ 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, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.**