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Ephesians 3:14-21: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 1

by Dr. Wayne Barber

Turn with me to Ephesians 3:14 as we finally get into Paul's prayer. Oh, how he has dignified our salvation! Now he wants to pray for the people he has been writing to. He wants them to know, not just about their salvation, but how to start living in the richness of it. We are going to call this study, "A Prayer for Fullness." Let's read verses 14-21 and see what we have in store for us:

14 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father,

15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name,

16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man;

17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,

19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

20 Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,

21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

What a prayer! It will take us a while to work our way through what Paul prays for this Ephesian church. You know, you've got to stop and remember where Paul is as he prays. Paul is in prison. Remember this. The agenda that he has on his heart is to pray for those who have been entrusted to him. Not only does he instruct them, he also prays for them. Back in 2:18 we see an interesting verse. Look back for just a second. Paul says, speaking of Christ,

"for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father."

Oh, folks, the doors have been opened up. Do you realize that back in the Old Testament only the High Priest could go into that Holy of Holies? The book of Hebrews says that veil has been rent, and we can come in with confidence and with boldness because of the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Think about that! We get to talk to the Father! We get to go right into His presence. I don't have to find an earthly priest and get him to pray for me. I go through my High Priest. Listen, as a believer I am a priest. I am a part of His Holy Temple, and I can go right into His presence.

Look at 3:12:

"in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him."

We have access to the Father. One of the riches of our salvation is this marvelous thing we call prayer. We can go in and hear. We can go in and be heard. That is part of the riches of our salvation.

Verse 14 says very clearly,

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father."

What reason? Remember, he started this prayer in verse 1. You have got to jump all the way back to verse 1. He starts the prayer in verse 1, stops and puts a parenthetical pause for 12 or 13 verses. Then he picks it back up in verse 14. He says in verse 1, "For this reason I, Paul." You can figure out what the reason is. Go back to chapter 2. There are some things he has told them in chapter 2 that he wants them to understand. He wants them to not just mentally know them, but he wants them to live in the reality of those things. Look at 2:5. He says,

"even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)."

Oh, we have been made alive in Jesus Christ. Go down to verse 10:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

Drop down to verse 19:

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household."

That's God's family. Then he sort of wraps it up in verse 22 before he comes into verse 1 of chapter 3. He says,

"in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit."

Now, go back to verse 1 of chapter 3 and see if you can figure it out "this reason." For what reason? He could easily be saying,

"Since you are God's dwelling on this earth, made alive in Jesus Christ, His workmanship, a part of His family, I bow my knees before the Father."

Paul has spent three chapters telling the people at Ephesus what they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. He talked about the riches of their salvation, the reasons of their salvation and the revelation of their salvation. Now he says, since you are God's dwelling on this earth, for this reason, I bow my knees before the Father. He is trying to tell them,

"I am just praying that all I taught you can start becoming reality as you walk and live the Christian life."

Do you realize what you have in Jesus Christ? Have you been listening or maybe you haven't allowed God to teach you in your spirit. You don't realize that He is everything you could ever look for. Maybe you don't realize what you have, or maybe you do, but you are not living in the reality of what that means on a day by day basis. Paul says, "For this reason, I don't want you to just know it. I want you to live in it, in the reality of what I have just taught you."

There are three things we are going to bring out about this prayer. Every time you find a prayer of the Apostle Paul, take a lot of time to study it. His prayer in Colossians 1:9-12 is just wonderful.

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

The whole Christian life lays itself out in front of you. If you want to know what the normal Christian life is study that. Well, it is the same way with this prayer right here in the third chapter of Ephesians. Talk about the Spirit praying in and through us, this is definitely a Spirit-led prayer for the Ephesian believers.

First of all, we see the posture of Paul's prayer. Let's start looking at it. He says,

"For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father."

What is significant about bowing your knees? Well, there are some things significant to it, but let me share something with you. You don't have to kneel down every time you pray. It does not mean that you are any more or any less spiritual than somebody else if you are standing and they are kneeling. In looking into this study, I found several places in Scripture where they stood with their hands raised to heaven, just as humble in their hearts as anyone is who kneels or bows down before the Father. But when they bowed down, it signified something. As long as these things are in your life, the posture doesn't matter as much. It is the attitude of your heart as you approach the Father.

What two things does bowing signify? Bowing our knees before the Father signifies, first of all, a submission to a higher authority. Paul has already called himself a prisoner. He has called himself a bondservant. It shows that the one who bows down and prays is in the presence of the ultimate authority. Turn to Psalm 95:1-6. This shows you the attitude of someone who comes before the Father. This is what you realize about Him. In verse 1 it says,

"O come, let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout joyfully to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us shout joyfully to Him with psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods, in whose hand are the depths of the earth; the peaks of the mountains are His also. The sea is His, for it was He who made it; and His hands

formed the dry land."

Since He is all of these things and since He is absolutely sovereign and absolute authority, it says in verse 6,

"Come let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

It is an attitude of a person in his heart.

When a person bows his knees, he realizes he is bowing his knees to the Father. Oh, but folks, He is our Heavenly Father. Far removed from anything you understand down here, when you walk into His presence, submitted to His divine and Holy will, you are in awe of Him. The bowing of the knee is a sense of submission to a higher authority. You are saying,

"God, whatever you want is what I want."

That is what bowing the knee means. You can do that standing up. You can do that in whatever position you are in as long as your heart is overwhelmed with who it is you are talking to.

Secondly, it signifies an intense passion, an intense emotion in prayer. Every time Paul prays he is very specific. His prayers are not general. In being specific and in being detailed, he is very passionately, very emotionally involved in this prayer. When a person will fall down on their knees, it is always a picture of that intensity, of that passion and of that emotion. In Ezra 9:5-6, Ezra was appalled and heart-broken over hearing of the intermarriage of the Israelites with the pagan neighbors.

5 But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God;

6 and I said, "O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads, and our guilt has grown even to the heavens.

It says in Ezra that he fell down on his knees and stretched out his hands in confession to the Lord on their behalf. He was very intense, very emotional, very involved with what he was doing.

In Daniel 6:10 we see Daniel praying. You know, King Darius wasn't too bad a guy. He kind of liked Daniel, but he made a mistake. He listened to his commissioners and his satraps when they said,

"Make a decree that says no man can worship anybody but the King."

He forgot all about Daniel. As a result, Daniel went to the lions' den. When Daniel heard that the King had made the decree it says in Daniel 6:10,

"He continued kneeling on his knees three times a day, praying and giving thanks before his God."

You see, there was an intensity here. He realized the severity of the situation, the seriousness of it, and it drove him to his knees.

In Acts 20:36 we find one of the most emotional, intense and passionate times of Paul. He had called the elders of Ephesus, the very church that he is writing to in the book of Ephesians, the one he warned about watching out for the savage wolves and this false doctrine. We find him on the island of Miletus. He gets them together, and it says,

"He knelt down."

They cried and wept over him. It was a very serious moment. It says that he knelt down and prayed with them all. So the whole posture of prayer sometimes is not in what your body is doing. It is in what your heart is doing before God. You may not be kneeling. You may be in a crowded subway or someplace. You may be in another city. You may be on a plane. Wherever you are, if your attitude is filled with awe and submission and you are intensely concerned and God has burdened your heart, that is what it means to bow your knees before the Father.

This is not some trite prayer he prays in prison. This is something that is deeply, intensely burned into his heart. He wants these people at Ephesus to be able to live it out in front of the people. So there is passion. There is submission. There is awe, and there is emotion. Paul's prayer posture then is very clear. It is an attitude of his heart.

Secondly, I want you to see the person to whom Paul was praying. He says,

"I bow my knees before the Father."

When I say "person," we know that this is God in three persons. He had a definite personality. We know Him as Father. Paul's Heavenly Father cares about us. We are of His household. We are of His family.

I want to go beyond that and talk about the Father Paul is praying to. It does not teach here the universal Fatherhood of God. Look at what he said:

"I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name."

There are a lot of liberal teachers out there who say that this verse teaches that God is everybody's Father in a spiritual sense and therefore, everybody, universally, has been saved already. It does not teach the spiritual Fatherhood of God. It does not teach the Brotherhood of man in a spiritual sense at all. The Bible is very clear. When it comes to the spiritual family, there are two fathers. There is God, and there is Satan, the devil himself. If you will look with me in 1John 3, I will show you that. 1 John 3:10 talks about the children of God:

"By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious; anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother."

There is a distinction here from being the offspring of Satan and the spiritual offspring of Christ.

Look in John 8:39. We find it again. Here Jesus is talking to the Pharisees and some of the religious Jews:

"They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham. But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.'"

Verse 41 continues,

'You are doing the deeds of your father.' They said to Him, 'We were not born of fornication; we have one Father even God.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on my own initiative, but He sent Me.'"

Look at verse 44.

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him."

In Ephesians Paul is saying that the Father, from whom every family gets its name in heaven and earth, is the spiritual family. There is a sense that God is Father of all creation. How can we say that? In the sense that nothing was created except that He created it. But when it comes to a spiritual family, you have to be born again and be birthed into that family. Then every believing family, whether it is in heaven or on earth, can claim God as their Father. They have free access to Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are all of His household. So he prays to the Father. But who is this person? It is the one who is the Father of all believers. We have access to Him, but He is not the Father spiritually of every person. If you do not know the Lord Jesus, you are a child of the devil, an offspring of the devil.

As Ephesians 2 tells us, believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, are a part of God's household. So we see his posture, and we see the person he is talking to. He is not talking to the father of people who aren't believers. This is family talk. Paul is interested in the family. Paul is intensely, emotionally submitted to whatever God wants. He knows His will is that the family there at Ephesus, the believers at Ephesus, the faithful saints, as chapter 1 tells us, not only know their riches in Christ, but they live in those riches and experience the riches of their salvation every single day.

Let's begin to look at the petitions of Paul's prayer. That is going to take us a while. These verses are just filled with meaning. We come to the list of requests that Paul makes for the family of God at Ephesus, those of God's household. He goes to His Father, free access through the Lord Jesus, the Son. Verse 16 says,

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,."

Paul did not say "out of," but "according to." Let me give you the difference in that. If you are going to grant someone something **but of** your riches, that is different than granting somebody something "according to" your riches. If a millionaire gives \$100 to the church, he has given **"out of"** his riches. But friend, if a millionaire is going to give "according to" his riches, then he is going to have to give a gift that speaks of his wealth.

Folks, this is beautiful what he is praying here. He says,

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory."

That little phrase, "of His glory," means they are all His. They are all His because of who He is. Where are they resident? They are resident in His Son, Jesus Christ. Let's think through this. He is going to grant you according to all of His riches in Christ Jesus. Do

you think riches means money? If you do, you are sadly, sadly mistaken. It is far better than money. What he is talking about is the riches of our salvation. Now folks, we have already looked into the vault of God's wealth. We've already looked at it, and we know what these riches are. Look in chapter 1. Let's just go through it. Verse 3 of chapter 1 says,

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

Friend, that is in savings box number one. We have got, in Him, every single spiritual blessing you could ever hope for or want. It is yours. It is mine, and it is already in the vault, Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 4: "just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." Listen, holy living and living blameless before Him is our birthright in the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be living that way. It is already resident there. It is already in Christ.

Look at verse 5:

"He predestined us to adoption as sons."

In other words, we can live daily with the security of knowing He will never disown us. The Roman law said you could never disown your children if you adopt them. You could never disown an adopted son. We are birthed into the family, but Paul chooses this word to let you know not only are we birthed into the family, we can never be kicked out of the family. You are eternally secure in Jesus Christ. That is part of the riches of our salvation.

Verse 7 says,

"In Him we have redemption through His blood."

We have been purchased off the slave block. The Lord Jesus has come. In Colossians Paul says

"having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."

He has taken our sins and has nailed them to the cross. I love that. Back in those days when somebody had a debt, they put a big sign on the door. Everybody could ride by and know the debt. If a man wanted to show kindness, he would go over, walk up to that and write across it *tetelestai*, the word that means **it is finished**, paid in full. That is exactly what was said of Jesus when He was on the cross in John 19:30...

When Jesus therefore had received the sour wine, He said, "**It is finished!**" And He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit.

He paid it in full. He has been to the cross for you and me. Therefore, we have been redeemed off the slave block of sin. We have been forgiven. It is an act of grace. God lifted that sin off of us, like the scapegoat in the wilderness when they put their hands on that goat's head and sent it off into the wilderness. Those sins will never come back to haunt us again.

In verse 9 of chapter 1,

"He made known to us the mystery of His will."

Now you know what that mystery is. You are beginning to understand it. We are all made one new man in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are put into one body.

In verse 11, He gave us an inheritance with His Son.

In verse 13, He sealed us with the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, here in 3:16 he is saying,

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

Now understand something. **He is not praying that they will get these riches** They already have them. He is praying that they be strengthened **according to** these riches. He is saying,

"You've got them. Now be strengthened by that which you have. Live in it. Live out of it."

Folks, we have a reservoir of riches of wealth, spiritually, which God has given us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul intensely says, "Oh,

God, don't let them walk out with heads filled with information. God, let them walk out understanding they have these riches. Let them be strengthened in the inner man with power. Let these riches be a part of the source of their strength in their walk."

You may find out this week that you have lost your job. You may find out this week that someone has done you wrong. Where are you going to be strengthened? Friend, Paul is saying you know something about your salvation. When you run back to the Lord Jesus Christ, in Him is the reservoir of what you are looking for. Let the Spirit of God with power strengthen you in the inner man. Let these truths so get down inside of your life that you become different. All of a sudden what you have inside of you begins to work inside of you. All of a sudden people see a difference in your life. You are doing things and you are living in a way that is on a higher plane than what you lived before. In other words, don't just sit and soak. Grab hold of the fact that you have got all the wealth that ever could be, spiritually, in the Lord Jesus Christ. Learn how to tap into it. Learn how to draw it out. It is in your account. It is in your name. The Lord Jesus lives in you. When you have your problems, run to Him.

Learn to be strengthened according to the riches that He has given you in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 3:16: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS—PART 2

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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Turn to Ephesians chapter 3. We have been studying the doctrine of Ephesians and now it is time to see how it applies in our life. Paul is praying in the last part of chapter 3. There are a lot of people who don't even know what is theirs in Christ, much less have tapped into it. Paul prays for these Ephesian believers. He prays that they would experience the fullness of God in their lives.

Let's read the prayer in verses 14-21 and get a glimpse of where we are headed:

Paul is praying, in Ephesians 3:16 particularly, that the Ephesian believers might start living in the light of what they now know about their salvation. He has spent some time telling them about their salvation. Now he is saying,

"Live in the light of what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ."

He spent three chapters talking about the riches of their salvation, the reasons of their salvation, and the revelation of their salvation. He wants them to have a high view of salvation.

THE KEY TO THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Folks, the key to the whole Christian life is having a high view of your salvation. The greatest miracle that can ever happen to an individual is to be saved by the grace of God. Folks, until we see that as the very ultimate of our life, we are not going to understand the prayer that Paul is praying in Ephesians 3. Paul prays for these Ephesian believers that they would live lives that correspond to the wealth that they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 16 is our focus, so let's read it one more time:

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

Paul is saying,

"You be strengthened according to the riches that you already have."

He is not praying that you get the riches; we already have them in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are being strengthened according to those riches.

If I were a millionaire and I was going to give out of my riches, I'd give you a token gift of \$100 or \$1,000 or \$10. That is just out of what I have. But if I am a millionaire and I am going to give to you according to what I have, I am going to give you a \$500,000 check or an \$800,000 check. If you give "according to," that immediately increases the proportion. Paul is saying,

"I want you to be strengthened according to, not out of, the riches that you have in Christ Jesus."

You say,

"Well, what are those riches?"

REVIEW OF YOUR RICHES IN CHRIST EPHESIANS 2

Ephesians 1:3 sums them all up:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in

Christ."

Jesus is the storehouse of all the spiritual blessings that we could ever ask for, hope for or experience. He has already been given to us. We have received Him into our heart. He is the heavenly vault. How many of us are spiritual millionaires and are living like paupers? So many Christians don't seem to understand that. They have not learned to tap into what is theirs in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is the reason behind the writing of Ephesians, to know who you are, to know whose you are, to know what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wants the Ephesians to see these riches. He wants to make sure that we don't mistake riches for something that is tangible or material. These are not all of the riches, but let's just go through them quickly.

In Ephesians 1:4, we are chosen before the foundation of the world. We are divinely significant to the Lord.

In Ephesians 1:5, we are adopted into the family of God. We are eternally secure. You see, in their culture, you could not disown a child that you had adopted. Therefore, once we have been adopted into the family, nobody can ever kick us out! We are eternally secure in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians 1:7 it says we have been redeemed and forgiven of our sins. The word "redeemed" means we have been purchased off the slave block of sin. If you are still living in sin, a slave to sin, you must not know the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why 1 John 3:6 says that he that is born out of God cannot habitually sin and claim to be a Christian.

"No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him."

Do we still deal with it? Yes. Before Christ we chased after sin. After Christ, it chases after us. We are no longer its slave. That is part of the riches we have in Christ Jesus who lives in us.

In Ephesians 1:9 it says we have had revealed to us the mystery. Now what is the mystery? Paul has clearly told us that it is when the Jew and the Greek can be made one in the body of Christ. It is the mystery of His church that we are a part of His body here on this earth.

Ephesians 1:11 says we have obtained an inheritance. We have got something to look forward to.

Ephesians 1:13 says we have been sealed with His Spirit until the day of redemption. Ephesians 4 adds "until the day of redemption."

All of these I just mentioned are just a part of our riches that we have in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying,

"I have told you what they are. Now I want you to live in accordance to that. I want you to be strengthened according to what you already have in the Lord Jesus Christ."

REVIEW OF YOUR RICHES IN CHRIST EPHESIANS 2

Let's go to Ephesians 2.

In Ephesians 2:4 we have new life in Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:12 says,

"He who has the Son has the life."

You don't have eternal life until you receive Jesus. When you receive Jesus it means you have His eternal life.

In Ephesians 2:6 we are seated in the heavenlies with Christ. What does it mean to be seated in the heavenlies with Christ? It simply means that now we don't need to be standing up. We can continue to sit down. Often I sense the Lord speaking to me and saying,

"I am far above principalities and powers. Let Me rule and reign in your life. Stop trying to help me out. Sit down. You are seated in the heavenlies with Christ."

In Ephesians 2:10 we are His workmanship created for good works.

In Ephesians 2:19-22 we are a part of His family, part of His kingdom and part of His temple.

The whole of Ephesians 2 sums it up and says we are His dwelling on this earth. We are the temples of God that the Holy Spirit lives in. All of these spiritual riches are ours in Jesus Christ. If you are saved you don't have to get any of those, you already have them, and you have a blank check with His name and signature. You just need to learn how to tap into them and live in the reality of what is already yours in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, let's look at his prayer in Ephesians 3:16 and note the three aspects of living the Christian life in the victory that is in Jesus.

POWER

First in Ephesians 3:16 Paul writes...

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power."

The first thing he prays for is that the believers at Ephesus be shown or established as being spiritually able.

One of the saddest things to me is the spiritual condition of Christians in America. We are living in an anemic country when it comes to spiritual living. You can go into a church and find people grumbling, critical and living like they are defeated. This is the norm in most churches. Why are believers living in defeat? Primarily because they are not looking into this Book to find out what is theirs in the Lord Jesus Christ. They are not studying the Word. They are not trying to glean,

"God, what did You do for me at salvation? What is mine in the Lord Jesus Christ? What are my responsibilities in all of that?"

A LOW VIEW... OF SCRIPTURE... OF SALVATION

Nine out of ten Christians cannot tell you what God did for them when He died for them on the cross. When you have that low view of salvation, it is automatically reflected by a **low view of scripture**. They would rather read a book about the Bible than study the Word. When a believer is not getting into the Word, he or she will have a low view of Scripture that they would rather hear what some man says about it rather than what God says about it. Then it follows that such individuals have a low view of their salvation. If you add those two together you have nothing but a lifestyle of total defeat.

Folks, when you realize what happened to you when you got saved and what the Word of God means to you now that you are saved, you begin to tap into what has been yours all along.

STRENGTHENED

However, you have not yet learned to be established as mighty in the ability that God wants to give you. The term "strengthened" there in verse 16 is the word that means "made mighty." It is the Greek word *krataioo*. Some Greek verbs end in an "o" but this verb ends in two o's which conveys the thought of something beyond just being "strengthened." It means "*to be shown to be strong, to be shown to be mighty*." It is almost the same thing that Paul prays in Philippians. The idea then is that you are to get what is on the inside of you to the outside so that you might be shown to be strong.

Let me give you an example of that. Look over in James 2:21. What we are going to find here is almost an apparent contradiction. If you didn't know about the verbs ending with those two o's, you would have a lot of confusion in your mind. Paul says,

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; ... not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

James 2:21 says,

"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?"

If you read that the wrong way it may appear that his offering Isaac was what gave him his justification. You know better than that. In Genesis 15:6 it says he believed and it was accounted unto him as salvation, as righteousness. Why then does it appear James says he was justified by offering Isaac? The verb ends with little **double o**. When it ends that way it simply means that **Abraham was shown to be what he had already become**. It was demonstrated that Abraham was justified. He was established as being justified. In other words, something had already happened to him. Now this transaction is put on display for all to see. So what Paul is praying in Ephesians is,

"Yes, be strengthened, but more than that, be established as being strong people, as being mighty."

But now wait a minute. What is the illustration of somebody being mighty? How would you know that a believer is being strengthened, being established as being strong in the Lord Jesus Christ? Look at the verse. It will tell us. Ephesians 3:16 says,

"that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power."

Is there a difference between might and power?" Oh, yes. The word "power" here is the word *dunamis*. That word means "to be able to do something, be capable." Basically Paul is saying,

"I want that which is inside of you to get on the outside of you. I want people to look at you as you live your Christian life and let them see that you have a divine ability that is operating inside of you. I want it to be more than just what you say. I am praying that it will be in how that you live."

The verb *krataioo* is in the aorist passive infinitive. Aorist tense means that it takes place, it happens, it is a reality to you. Passive voice means that you can't strengthen yourself, God is going to do it. The infinitive means what are we here for? It is a purpose tense. What are we here for? Every believer is not here just to go to church and talk about it. We are here to go out into the community and demonstrate having it real in our life.

"Are you are telling me that I am supposed to be established in the midst of all my circumstances as somebody who has divine ability to live victoriously in Jesus?"

Absolutely. If you are saying, "I am weak" that is the greatest place you have ever been in your whole Christian walk. Until you come to that place of realizing what you can't do, you can't understand why Paul is praying for that which God alone can do in your life. Christ has come into your life. You have the riches of all spiritual blessing resident in Him. Be strengthened with power.

THE SPIRIT STRENGTHENS BELIEVERS

Well, Paul prays that they might be strengthened. Who is it that is going to strengthen us? I told you the verb was in the passive voice. Passive voice means you can't strengthen yourself, somebody is going to have to strengthen us. The text is so clear:

"according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit."

Now, hold on.

"You mean there is somebody that lives in us that is going to do the strengthening for us?"

That is exactly right. God the Holy Spirit lives in you. When you received Jesus, you also got His Spirit and His Father.

The assignment to do the strengthening is not in God the Son, it is God the Spirit. The Spirit of God comes into a man the moment he becomes a Christian. Now, you are not living life alone. You may be acting like it, but you are not. If you are trying to fight your problems by yourself, if you are trying to figure them out on your own, if you are not coming to the Word, letting the Holy Spirit of God enable you and reveal to you the things of God, then no wonder you are confused. You have a divine partner living in you, and He is in you to strengthen you with power so that you have an ability that you didn't have before. If you will learn to tap into Him, then you will begin to learn to live in the reality of His presence.

Look in Philippians 2:12-13. I want to show you God the Holy Spirit at work strengthening you...

"So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."

It was God's pleasure to put His Spirit in you and in me. That is what makes us unique. That is what makes us brand new creatures.

How do you know it is God, the Holy Spirit here? Look in John 14:15-18. Jesus promises that He is going to come. He is talking to His disciples in that very private time before the cross. It says in verse 15,

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you."

John 14:18 says,

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

How does He comes to us? In the person of His Spirit. Folks, the Spirit of God lives in us. If you haven't learned yet to "tap into" Him, no wonder you have not been established with your friends, established at your work, as an individual who possesses a divine ability as a believer, a new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You say,

"Now, wait a minute, I am having trouble here. If I have the Lord living in me and if all these riches are mine, then why do I live such a defeated life? Why doesn't God just kick me into gear. I should be growing. Why am I having such a struggle?"

Good question. Look at Galatians 5. You know, we've got a problem here. The Spirit has a big problem, and it is called the flesh. Do

you know what the flesh is? That is that part of us that does what it does without God. That is one way to say it. The flesh is nothing more than what a man is without God. It is still resident in our bodies that are decaying every day.

In Galatians 5:16-17 it says,

"But I say, walk by the Spirit."

What do you mean "walk by the Spirit"?

I mean in accordance to the Spirit.

What is the Spirit doing in my life?

He is there to reveal the Word to you, to convict you of righteousness, of sin and of judgment. Let Him rule and reign in your life. Paul is saying,

"Live letting the Spirit of God rule and reign in your life. Live in accordance to it. Don't frustrate the Spirit of God. Don't grieve Him. Don't quench Him, as we will see coming up in Ephesians."

Well, look at Galatians 5:17. Paul says,

"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please."

"Oh, I understand now. He is praying for me to be strengthened, to be established as being mighty in a domain of His kingdom on this earth with ability that is divine. Now I realize the Spirit of God lives in me to do that strengthening through me."

Exactly right. You can spot a person who is living in accordance to the Spirit. Do you know how? The greatest sign of a person living in accordance to the Spirit is when he messes up he is willing to deal with it and call it sin and let God cleanse him and forgive him.

And so Paul prays that we might be established.

Secondly he prays that the Spirit of God will do the establishing, the strengthening.

"Where does this strengthening take place? Where does it go on? If God is in me, I sure don't feel Him in there. Now if He is in there, where is He working inside of me?"

THE INNER MAN

The text tells you. He says in Ephesians 3:16,

"to be strengthened with power through [or by the means of] His Spirit in the inner man."

What in the world is the inner man?

Let me see if I can explain it very simply.

The outer man is where the body and soul reside. What is the soul? It is the mind, will and emotions.

The inner man becomes whole when the Spirit of God comes in, which is the process called salvation. In that inner man, the new person that God has made you, the new creation you are in Christ...this is where God does His work. That is His focus, not the outer man.

Look in 2 Corinthians 4:16:

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day."

What is the inner man? Oh folks, that is where the nature of God dwells in each one of us. We have the nature of God within us. Where? In the inner man. That is what we need to be nourishing.

Look with me in 2 Peter 1:4, and we will be through.

"For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

Even though our bodies are corrupting, we can escape the corruption that is in this world when we nourish the inner man and let the inner man, the Spirit in the inner man, give us a divine ability to live above and beyond what our circumstances are all about.

What a prayer!

Ephesian 3:17: A PRAYER FOR FULLNESS, PART 3

by Dr. Wayne Barber

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We are in Ephesians 3:17. In verses 14-21, Paul is praying that the Ephesian believers might live in the fullness of all that they have in the Lord Jesus Christ. What God expects of us and wants to see in us is not weak, anemic lives, living discouraged and depressed. He wants us to walk in His fullness. He gave us the Lord Jesus Christ in whom are all the spiritual blessings. He wants us to walk in reality, in the fullness of all that He has given us in Jesus Christ.

The first principle in doing that is found in verse 16, in Paul's prayer. If you will examine this prayer very carefully, you will see the whole Christian life laid out before you. In verse 16 it says,

"that He would grant you, according to [not out of] the riches of His glory to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man."

The word "strengthened" means "to be made mighty."

"Do you mean that we as believers can be made mighty? How?"

Well, Paul says, "with power." The word there means

"the ability to do that which we could never have done before, the capacity, the divine ability to live a life on a higher plane."

Paul is praying for these believers to learn to tap into that which they already have in Jesus Christ. You see, the area in which we are strengthened is the inner man. That is the spiritual part of our life.

Let me make this practical to you. As we yield to the Holy Spirit of God who resides in our spirit, as we surrender to Him, as we allow Him to control us, we experience the fullness of all that He has given us in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 4:30 says,

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."

The divine Holy Spirit of God lives in believers, and we are not to grieve Him. We are to cooperate with Him.

Ephesians 5:18 says,

"And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."

That word "filled" means "to be controlled." It is in the present tense which means "ongoing."

We are never to grieve the Spirit. We are to continually be under the control of the Holy Spirit of God. When you and I are willing to do that, we start tapping into that which is ours in Christ Jesus. Then comes the fullness of God. The degree of my surrender determines the degree of my realization of the fullness that He offers.

We are going to see in the text that being strengthened in the inner man, with a divine ability through the Holy Spirit, is so that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. I wonder how many of us really understand that. When Thursday morning comes around and there is no choir around you and nobody to encourage you, do you, as a believer, have that high view of your salvation? Do you understand the fullness and the riches of God, that are within you? Have we learned to tap into that which God has given?

Well, let's continue the prayer. I think perhaps it will turn some lights on as to what the normal Christian life is all about. This is the Christian life; this is why Jesus saved you and me, not for heaven only. He saved you and me to do a work in us and to us and through us. We must learn to cooperate with Him fully, not to grieve the Spirit but to be controlled by His Spirit.

Ephesians 3:17 says,

"so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

A lot of people, when they see this, don't know what to do with it.

"I have not lived like that. I've been going to church. I am a good person. I try as hard as I can. Isn't that the Christian life?"

No! It is learning to recognize self for what it is and learning to die to it by saying yes to God day by day and moment by moment.

Therefore, many Christians are living anemic, weak and subnormal lives.

Look at what Paul says in verse 17. That little phrase "in order that" or "so that" is the Greek word *hina*, which always introduces a purpose clause. Paul is saying,

"I am strengthened with ability, God's ability, by the means of His Spirit being in me in my inner man."

As that happens, something else takes place in order that Christ may dwell in my heart. Now that is a powerful phrase. What does this phrase mean?

"that Christ would dwell in my heart"

First note that Paul is not praying for these Ephesian believers to receive Christ. They have already received Christ. In 1:13 it says, "you were sealed in Him (Christ) with the Holy Spirit of promise."

We know we have not only received Him, but we have been baptized into His body. The seal of the Holy Spirit is upon us until the day of redemption.

In Colossians 1:27 Paul goes a step further and makes sure we understand writing of believers at Colossae

"to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

You have to have Christ before you can talk about His dwelling in your life. He says in Colossians that Christ in us is the hope of glory. So Christ is in our lives.

What Paul is praying for here is not that they receive Him, but that the Christ who is already there might dwell in their hearts.

DWELL

What is the term "dwell"? First of all it is aorist infinitive. Aorist means that it may become a fact, a known reality, that people everywhere would look at the Ephesian church and say,

"These believers have understood what the Christian life is all about, that it happened to them, that it was an established fact."

The Greek infinitive (mood) indicates purpose. In other words, why did Christ come into your life? He came in to do what we are talking about here, (His purpose was) to dwell in your heart by faith.

Well, what is the term "dwell" (*katoikeo*)? The verb *katoikeo* comes from two words, the word *kata*, which means down, and *oikeo*, which means to reside or dwell in a house. In the context it is very clear Paul is not saying that Christ should be in your house. He is already there if you are a believer. What is saying by using this verb is that Christ should be comfortable in your hearts. He should be at home and settled down in your heart. This really begins to build.

"You mean Paul is praying that the Lord Jesus might be comfortable while He is in my life?"

Absolutely! We are to make sure we make Him comfortable in our life. That is why he says in 4:30,

"Don't grieve the Spirit."

It is the Spirit of Christ in you. We are to make sure He is at home, that whatever He needs is there, that He is not offended or grieved by anything we do, so that He might dwell in our hearts by faith.

MY HEART CHRIST'S HOME

The heart is the center of an individual's life. It is the seat of his desires, his feelings, his affections, his passions, his impulses and in many situations could be interchangeable with the word "mind." That is where Christ comes to dwell, in that inner man, in our hearts. We want to make sure that we make Him feel at home in our hearts. Our hearts, here in verse 17, are pictured, in a vague sense, as a house. He wants to be in the house of our hearts, and He wants to be at home while He is there.

If you are not being strengthened in the inner man with power by the Spirit of God, it is very obvious that you are not making Christ at home in your hearts. Why? Because Christ is His Spirit that lives there. If you are living a lifestyle that is not pleasing to Him, if you are grieving Him, then no wonder you're discouraged, defeated and generally a "mess" spiritually speaking. No wonder your life is falling apart. There is a very basic truth in Scripture and when you come to grips with it, it becomes very understandable what victory is all about.

Victory is not me doing for Him. It is me being strengthened.

That enables the Spirit of Christ to be welcomed in my heart.

ROOMS IN OUR HEART

I starting thinking about what rooms would be in our hearts. There are five areas I want us to look at.

THE ROOM OF THOUGHTS

First of all, the room of our thoughts.

What is your thought-life like? "Now, come on, you are meddling." That is exactly what happens when you start talking about the heart. You start meddling real quickly. By the way, I am not meddling just with you. This is also meddling with me. We are all in the same boat. None of us have arrived, so nobody can point any fingers. Let's look in Luke 9:47. I want you to see something about the thoughts of the heart. You say, "You could have translated that "mind." Yes, I could, but it is the word "heart." Let's stay with what the text says and try not to be complicated with it. Let's associate the fact that thoughts in the heart have something to do with one another. The context in Luke 9:47 is after the transfiguration. They have come down from the mountain. Jesus has just healed the demon possessed boy, and then we have a test here. Verse 46 says,

"And an argument arose among them as to which of them might be the greatest."

It appears here that the disciples are the ones fighting over this. They were saying,

"I am better than you are. I will be on His right hand. No, left hand. I guarantee you I will be on one or the other."

Look at Luke records in verse 47.

"But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side, and said to them, 'Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for he who is least among you, this is the one who is great.'"

I just want you to see that somehow the thoughts are attached to the heart. How are your thoughts? In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul says we are take every thought into captivity in the obedience of Christ.

"We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,"

You know, thoughts do a lot of damage to a person, especially in the arena where Christ dwells. You are not to allow thoughts to be entertained in your life. You already know what they are, and you are letting your mind be eaten up with things that are making Christ uncomfortable in your life. That is just simple proof of the fact that you have not yet learned to tap into the resources you have in Christ Jesus. When you are made strong with His divine ability, then victory is not you overcoming your thoughts, victory is Jesus overcoming you. That is what victorious Christian living is all about.

You are going to find in the book of Ephesians that the Word of God is involved in this process. How many times have we said this? It is like a broken record.

Get in the Word.

Get in the Word.

Get in the Word.

Folks, you can't stop having lustful thoughts. You wake up in the morning, men, and you say to yourself, "I will not have a lustful thought today." Friend, you won't make it 30 seconds out of your prayer time before one bombards you. You don't live life that way. When you come to God and say,

"God, I am aware that my body causes these thoughts, and I am susceptible to all these things. I know the devil is out there tempting me. God, I have trouble with my thought life. This is making Christ uncomfortable. Strengthen me by the means of the Spirit. As I get into the Word of God, overcome me by Your Word. Then let Christ be comfortable so He can dwell in my life."

That is the way it works. The victory is Christ overcoming you.

You see, folks, your thoughts could be clogging up the whole process of what God is trying to do with your life. You are entertaining thoughts that are not right and you know it. Young people, you are allowing certain things to get into your mind and they are making

Jesus very uncomfortable. Perhaps people around you have become aware of that and have tried to confront you on that, but you have not been willing to deal with it. You see, when Christ dwells in our heart, He is at home. We have done everything to accommodate Him. He feels absolutely at home in our hearts.

By the way, if you ever leave the Word for a while and think that church is going to give it back to you, it will not. You are just going to get more frustrated. When you finally come to the cross and let God's Word get into your life instead of you getting into it, then it changes. If you have strayed from the Word and are not in it daily, I promise you are miserable, critical, and the most judgmental person in your church. Christ is no longer dwelling in your heart. The Spirit has not strengthened you with that which you could not have done yourself. You are left with what Adam gave us.

THE ROOM OF ATTITUDES

Secondly, there is the room of our attitudes.

Look in Matthew 19:8. We have an inference here to attitudes. This is the chapter where Jesus talks about divorce. I have never yet talked to a divorce person who would not agree that if he could go back and do it again, experiencing the fullness of God and tapping into the fullness of God, his life would have been different. In Matthew 19:8 notice what Jesus said.

"He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way.'"

Divorce was never commanded, as somebody told me one day. It was never instructed. It was only permitted. The only reason it was permitted was because of the hardness of people's hearts.

Folks, do you realize the attitudes that are in your heart affect your relationships? You may be married and, nobody knows it, but you are going through a difficult time in your home. You hardly speak to one another. You are fighting with one another. Why? Listen, somebody has to drop anchor at some point. When you allow the Holy Spirit of God to strengthen you with the divine ability to love when you couldn't have loved before, to forgive when you couldn't have forgiven before, then something unique and powerful begins to happen. Christ feels at home in your life and you begin to see what victory is all about. Your marriage may still end up on the rocks but you, for all eternity, will be changed by the power of the Holy Spirit of God in your life. That is the key. I am not throwing a rock at anybody. If we would learn to tap into what God has given us, make Him feel at home in our life, make Him feel at home in our attitudes, then even our marriages, even our relationships would be different.

Turn to Matthew 18:35. All of this flows like a river together. Matthew 18 is about restoring a brother, discipline. It moves on down into concerning divorce. It is amazing how the thought pattern just flows there. In verse 35 look what Jesus says,

"So shall My heavenly Father also do to you if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Oh, folks, is Christ at home in your attitude? If He is not, then you are a bitter person. You haven't yet learned how to tap into that which God has, which is His divine ability to do in and through you far beyond what you could have ever done. You can't forgive, but God will forgive in and through you. When Jesus is accommodated in your life, then you begin to experience His power to do what you could never do.

THE ROOM OF ATTITUDES

Thirdly, there is the room of our emotions.

Look in John 14:1:

"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me."

I want you to see something here. Somehow the emotions are associated with the heart. I don't understand all of that, but somehow they are. Jesus said, "Don't let your hearts be troubled." The word "troubled" has the idea of being anxious, the idea of being fearful, the idea of dreading something. Listen, when that attitude gets into our emotions and our emotions get involved in our hearts, we are not accommodating the Lord Jesus Christ at all. We are not trusting Him.

Luke 18:1 says that...

"Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,"

Listen, you've got an option here. You either worry or you pray. Which are you going to do?

Paul says the same thing in Philippians 4:6.

"Be not anxious over anything, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving in your heart, let your requests be made known to God."

What are you anxious about? What is your heart troubled over?

Are you going through something but you don't realize that the very emotion that you are allowing to pervade in your life is something that is not accommodating the Lord Jesus who wants to be at home in your life?

We don't ever think about this. It is very obvious if I have been overtaken by an emotion that I am not being strengthened in the inner man by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is very obvious that somehow I have grieved Him. Somehow I have not surrendered to Him. How clear can the scriptures be? Folks, when we don't accommodate the Lord Jesus in our emotions, all kinds of havoc can come from that.

What is bugging you? What emotion has overwhelmed you? Folks, we are only to be overwhelmed by the Lord Jesus Himself. No wonder Paul prays this prayer. He doesn't want them to end up on a shelf for the weak, anemic, depressed Christians. He wants them to be walking in the fullness of what God offers.

THE ROOM OF ATTITUDES

Fourthly, there is the room of the hidden things.

In our house my idea of cleaning up is putting everything into a closet where nobody can find anything. Or I can put it under our bed. I think our bed is only supposed to be about twelve inches high, but we have to climb up on it because we have got so much stuff crammed up under it. Do you clean house that way? I bet every one of us are just alike. Now some of you are just these picky cleaners. The rest of us are all in the same boat. You just stack it wherever you can stack it. If it's got dust on it, leave the dust on it. That's the way I look at it.

Now listen, some people do that with rooms in their heart. They hide things away. They tuck them away. There are secret hidden things in their hearts, and they think nobody knows. Oh, yeah? God does. He is not at all being accommodated by the fact that they are still there.

Look at I Corinthians 14:24-25. Here Paul is talking about a problem in the church. Chapters 12-14 have to do with that. He says:

"But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed."

So evidently you can keep secrets in your heart. There can be a room that you keep locked. You don't want anybody to touch it. That is truly a private room. That is where you have your pity party that nobody knows about.

Look in I Corinthians 4:5. There is going to come a day when this is going to be made known to all. I think the hidden rooms of most people's hearts are hidden motives, motives they don't want anybody else to know about. They have motives that are not accommodating to the Father or to the Lord Jesus. Verse 5 says,

"Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts."

You see, there are a lot of things that are hidden, locked in closets in our life. We don't want people to know about them. They are not accommodating to the Lord Jesus for them to be there.

When we are strengthened with might and power in the inner man, that means we are dealing with sin. Sin is decreasing. The Holy Spirit of God is increasing in our life. We deal with the hidden secret things of our life.

THE ROOM OF CHOICES

Romans 6:17 gives us the fifth room, the room of your choices:

"But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

A conscious choice is made in the area of the heart. When we make the right choices to honor Christ, He is being accommodated in our life. We are being strengthened with might in the inner man by the means of His Spirit that lives within us.

I was doing a service one time at a camp. A group of young people came up to do a drama and it was so good. This young teenager had just come to know Christ. You got the information as the drama unfolded. He was a brand new Christian. Now Christ

lived in him. The boy that played Jesus was perfect for the part. He followed the other boy everywhere he went because Jesus was now in his life. This other boy was trying to get used to the fact that now Jesus lived in his life. But there were some things in his life he did not want Jesus to have any control over. He did not want Jesus to even bother him with these things. So he kept trying to push Him away. I think the clincher came in the drama when a phone call came to the house. He walked over and picked up the phone. Here came Jesus to listen to the conversation. The young man was very irritated and said, "Get away from me. This is my phone call. This is my life. Don't you bother me." That is the same attitude that so many of us have. He got back on the phone and was invited to a wild party one night after a football game. He said, "Oh, man." He pushed Jesus away, stuck his hands around his ears and said, "I will be there." Well, he tried to leave, but Jesus just wouldn't let him go. Jesus followed him everywhere he went, while he was getting dressed, while he was getting ready to go. Finally, the boy got so irritated (I know that theologically this has problems, but it drove the point home) he turned Jesus around to a wall, took his hand and nailed his hand to the wall. He nailed his other hand to the wall. Then he nailed his feet to the wall, walked out, slammed the door and said, "There, I am going to live my life. Don't you bother me anymore."

That is Christianity, folks, in the 20th century. Until you become strengthened with divine power in the inner man by the means of the Spirit, Jesus may be in your life, but friend, you are not accommodating Him. No wonder you are miserable. What thoughts, what attitudes, what emotions, what hidden things are in your life that maybe even effect you physically? What is it that is in your life? That is what Paul prays.

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