

Widening our horizons

Eph 3:14-21

I frequently use the last two verses of this chapter as a benediction. What I like is that it refers to God who is able to do immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine. It reminds us of the fact that we have a God without boundaries and we should expect and be looking for a God who works in our lives beyond the limits we so often lamely put there ourselves.

I was going to preach on them, but some other words caught my eye in what actually is a phenomenally deep prayer by Paul with almost every phrase meaning something significant and each being a sermon in themselves. Rather than give you an exhaustive exposition, I'm going to share with you the two snippets that came to my attention.

The first snippet is in verse 17: *I pray that Christ may make His home in your hearts.* The NIV is more familiar *that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

My first reaction to these words was that Paul was praying a catch all-prayer that his readers would all know Christ, on the premise there are many other verses where in accepting Christ, God dwells in us. However, I don't think that's the emphasis here because it is clear from the preceding verses in this letter, that Paul is talking to people who have made this step and has talked about the amazing things God has already done for them.

The emphasis here seems to be on the word dwell. The Good News actually gets the sense of this spot on as the Greek word used here is to dwell in terms as settle, make your home there. My wife was upset recently because the dog chewed up a cushion she had spent many hours making. She was particularly upset because it was one mark she had made on the manse which made it home for her.

If we know Christ, He has already arrived, He's already living in us, but had He made our house His home. Does He feel settled? Is He truly part of the family, or is He just a lodger, tolerated because we need Him to help with our housekeeping from time to time?

How does He get to feel at home, to be part of the family? He dwells in our hearts through faith. Faith isn't just believing. The Greek *pistis* embraces the whole idea of trusting. As we trust Him implicitly and follow Him and allow Him to shape us, He truly makes our house His home because He arranges things in a way that blesses our lives. I guess it's rather like having one of those makeover people coming to live in our house. They can change everything in ways we never thought could happen. It's the same with Jesus.

Here's a quote from Wayne A Barber:

Christ is at home in the life of a person who loves Him, loves His Word and is surrendered to His will. Christ is at home in that person, and that person is going to experience the dwelling of Jesus within him. He is going to experience the manifestation of a divine power that he doesn't have on his own.

As we come to break bread this evening God is challenging us. We've allowed Jesus in.

Maybe He's been with us for many years; but how at home is He? Is He comfy? Is He part of everything I do?

Here's snippet number two. Having Jesus change things around changes our perspective on God. God starts to become much bigger. We are going to meditate in a few moments on how much God loved us as we take communion. We comment on this just about every time we break bread. It trips of the tongue quite easily. But His love is amazing love. Here's some of what we read, this time in the message:

And I ask him that with both feet planted firmly on love, you'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

Our God takes us beyond our normal limits. Having Jesus make Himself truly at home changes our perspectives of who we are and who He is. We begin to expect a God beyond our limits. And that starts as we understand that His love is amazing. It has extravagant dimensions. The implication is that God's love is huge beyond imagination.

When we understand the dimensions of God's love, our expectations match how much we understand what we mean to God! And as we understand it, then we'll also have an expectancy that God does immeasurably more than we can ask or imagine as Paul says in vv20-21 *To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, for ever and ever! Amen.*

Even then, we'll still find that God has that capacity to amaze. As we grow and our understanding grows, God gets even bigger still!

So as we come to the table this evening why not change Paul's prayer for ourselves?

Lord, I ask that with both feet planted firmly on love, I'll be able to take in with all followers of Jesus the extravagant dimensions of Christ's love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live a full life, full in the fullness of God. Amen.

14 For this reason I fall on my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth receives its true name. 16 I ask God from the wealth of his glory to give you power through his Spirit to be strong in your inner selves, 17 and I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, 18 so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love.

19 Yes, may you come to know his love — although it can never be fully known — and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.

20 To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: 21 to God be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus for all time, for ever and ever! Amen.