

Continuing in the Word, "Strengthened and Indwelt"
Ephesians 3:14-17a

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The Spirit of God is at work in a Christian's heart to make that believer a fit dwelling place for Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God is strengthening the believer, establishing him or her in the faith. The Son of God is present and established as Lord in our hearts more and more as the Holy Spirit does His sanctifying work. Our passage tells us that this is occurring in our hearts, in our "inner man".

What affect should this inner work have on our "outer man"? Is this inner strengthening and indwelling to show up in our words and actions? Yes. Paul states in Galatians 5:24,25, *"And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit."* If Christ is in us then the works of the flesh are to be done away with. If we have the Spirit of God we should live our lives according to His ways. That would include speaking and acting in love, with joy and peacefulness, being longsuffering, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled (Galatians 5:22,23).

This is also reflected in Romans 6:13, *"And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God,"* or in James 2:17, *"Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead,"* or 1 John 3:18, *"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."* We find it all throughout the Bible. Inner change is to result in outer change. If that is not the case something is wrong.

We can think of this concept in the terms of being physically sick. We go to the doctor and he tells us that yes, there is an internal problem that must be addressed. He gives us the proper medication or performs the necessary procedure, and we come back for a check-up several weeks later. What would we think if after the exam he says, "You are all better, the internal issues have been completely resolved, and you are good to go," but we find that our external symptoms are still present and if anything worse? Would we not disagree thinking that if our inner problems had been resolved our external symptoms should have changed for the better?

Spiritually our internal problem is sin, and the external symptoms would be that we practice sin. The cure is salvation through Jesus Christ, and as the Holy Spirit works Him into every area of our life we should find we are "getting better" inside and out. Changed belief should result in changed behavior. If that is not the case, something is not right. Either we don't have the cure, or we are resisting the cure's healing work. In spiritual terms, either we have not believed on Jesus Christ for salvation or we are "quenching" the Spirit's work in our lives.

Let's believe and be changed inside and out. The process will not be easy at times, but the results are Christ-likeness, inside and out.

God bless,

Pastor Jim