“Christ At Home In Your Heart”

January 17, 2016

I Peter 3:8-17

Picture Christ knocking at the door of your heart. What’s on my heart today is this. You’ve heard the of old adage “Home is where the heart it.” I’m learning that my *heart* is where my home really is. It’s where you truly live your life.

Back in the year 1951, a Pastor Robert Munger wrote a book that has since become a Christian classic. It’s called “My Heart Christ’s Home.” In it, he says this “It is difficult for me to think of a higher privilege than to make Christ a home in my heart, to welcome, to serve, to please, to fellowship with Him there.”

It’s one of the shortest Christian books you will ever read; just six pages. But it’s probably one of the most important and most practical *and* also one of the most convicting. I’d highly recommend it to you.

Would you take your Bible with me today and open it to the third chapter of the Book of Ephesians. I’d like you to read with me a prayer the Apostle Paul prayed for the Christians in the Church at Ephesus. Look with me at verse fourteen.

Ephesians 3:14 *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, (15) Of 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 with might by his Spirit in the inner man;*

*(17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; (19) And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”*

Paul, you know, was the father of the Ephesian Church. There was no Church at Ephesus when Paul first arrived there in 52 A.D. It’s now ten years later when he writes this epistle. Now, don’t you agree that Paul knew many of the Christians at Ephesus? And what was it that came into Paul’s heart when he remembered them as he prayed to the LORD?

This is what he prayed. *(16) “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; (17) That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;…”* The father is praying for his children.

Do you know *who’s* praying for you? And do you know *what* they’re asking the LORD for for you?

This is really the second time here in the Epistle to the Ephesians that Paul records the exact words of his prayer for them. The first one is found in the first chapter of this Epistle. And it’s this second one that the LORD has laid on my heart to speak about today.

I’ve titled today’s sermon “Christ At Home In Your Heart.” Shall we pray? “LORD, I pray that your word might be life and truth to my heart today and that I might know you better and live more obediently. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

The essence of what I want to share is the first half of verse seventeen. Ephesians 3:17 “…*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;…”*

Did you know that everything in your life begins and end with your heart? And did you know that your heart is really your home? Think about everything you know. Is it really stored up in your mind alone? Aren’t your thoughts about yourself and your life and those you know really stored in your heart?

Can you remember someone who’s done you wrong; maybe someone who’s hurt you; maybe someone you’ve not yet forgiven? Aren’t they and their attitudes or their actions toward you a matter of your heart? And aren’t your attitudes and actions towards them also a matter of your heart?

Here’s a word from the LORD on this. Zechariah 7:10 *“…let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.”*

And can you remember someone who’s been a huge help to your life? Aren’t they and their actions and their attitudes also stored up in your heart? And don’t you remember them with fondness and joy?

Have you received any good news lately? And what happened in your heart when you received that good news? Didn’t it just *fill* up your heart?

If the first medical work that God did was that of an anesthesiologist when He put Adam to sleep, His second was a surgical work when He removed a rib from Adam’s side and made it into a woman. His third role and the one He’s been functioning in since that day is that of a cardiac specialist.

Our hearts need continual attention and continual work because if we let our hearts just wander and stray from the LORD, they get filled with all the wrong stuff.

God made you with a heart. And He made you with a heart that is at its best when it’s filled with Him.

Let me borrow a word from another Pastor [Pastor Rick Warren]. Your heart is a whole lot like your garage. Now, if your garage is filled with semi-useless; junk; stuff that might be better placed in the attic; then your garage won’t have room for its intended purpose; your car.

The very same thing holds true with your heart. Let’s say that you are a critical person. Isn’t that a heart ailment? Let’s say you mope around because you are dissatisfied with life. Let’s say you are a worry wart. Let’s say you are afraid of what tomorrow will bring. Let’s say you allow yourself to be angry for long periods of time. Let’s say you don’t like yourself. Let’s say you think people should consider you as more important than you are. Let’s say you dwell on lust. Let’s say you see yourself as a failure. Aren’t these all heart ailments?

All of these things can be compared to the stuff in your garage. The moment you remove those things, something good happens. You find that you’ve got room in your heart for the LORD Himself. You can then fill your heart with God and with what He says and with what He thinks. Your heart becomes useful for the right thing; the thing God created it for; fellowship with Him.

Listen to the Father of the Ephesians as he prays for them. Ephesians 3:17 “…*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;…”*

I also pray this for my children. And I pray it for you as well.

First, the heart.

Those of you who’ve had heart problems know even more than the rest of us how important the heart is. The physical heart is *the most* significant organ in your body. And yet, when was the last time you made the correlation between the significance of your physical heart to your spiritual heart? The spiritual heart is by far a much more important organ than your physical heart.

How do I know that? Listen to what Jesus says about your heart. Matthew 12:35 *“A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”*

Biblically, your heart is like a treasure chest. What you say and what you think and your attitudes, even your behavior are all stored up in that treasure chest of yours we call the heart. What do you think you will be doing tomorrow? It’s determined by what’s going on in your heart today. Let’s say you are scheduled for surgery in the morning. Isn’t your heart going to be filled with either peace or tremendous concern? Isn’t it possible that your heart will be anxious today about what is going to happen at 6:00 a.m. on Monday? You see, even your future is determined by what you allow in your heart today.

Again, listen to Jesus. John 14:29 *“…Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*

This is the LORD’s will for your heart; that it not be trouble; that it not be afraid. Instead, His will is that your heart find peace; His peace. And where does faith exist and operate? It operates in the heart. You see; it’s in your heart where you feel fear; where you might be troubled; where you experience peace; where you worry or where you move ahead by faith. Your heart is really the center of your very existence.

First, the heart.

Second, why? Why pay attention to your heart?

Here’s what the LORD says about you and your heart. Proverbs 4:23 *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”*

In the old days, there was always a keeper of the prison. When a guard was given a prisoner to oversee, his main work was to “keep” that prisoner. “Keep” is a word used to convey “attentiveness.”

God is calling you to keep your heart with all diligence. Diligence is steady attention.

Proverbs 4:23 *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”*

“The issues.” What are the issues? The Hebrew word here is one used to describe the borders and boundaries of a city. In other words what you allow to encroach upon your heart will spell either success inside the boundaries or it will spell spiritual defeat. *You* set the boundaries. Where? In your heart. You decide what you allow into your heart.

Keep; oversee; guard your heart. Why? Because with the heart you set the boundaries of your spiritual life.

Here’s what really happens in the heart.

Watch your thoughts; they become words.

Watch your words; they become actions.

Watch your actions; they become habits.

Watch your habits; they become character.

Watch your character; it becomes your destiny.

This is why you need to keep a close eye on your heart. See that it’s filled with the right things and it exudes peace. Let your heart be filled with the wrong things and it exudes worry and fear and doubt.

First, the heart.

Second, why? Why keep a watch over your heart? Because out of it are the issues of life.

Third, the heart opens or closes the door on salvation.

This past week I was asked to officiate at a funeral. Afterwards a man came up to me and said that what I said, meaning the Gospel, almost got him to think about going to Church. Then, just as soon as he said that to me, he followed it up with. “But the day I go the Church, the roof would fall in.” You all know what that means. Can you see how this man immediately closed his heart to salvation?

Here’s what God’s Word says. Romans 10: 9 *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and* ***shalt believe in thine heart*** *that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. (10) For* ***with the heart*** *man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”*

 Before you can ever say you’re saved, something must occur in the heart. It’s where you either reject or believe the Gospel. Salvation is a matter of your heart. If all you have is knowledge about God and about Christ and about the Cross, you have no salvation because it’s a matter of your heart.

When you hear the Gospel and repent. It’s a matter of your heart. When you believe on Christ, it’s a matter of your heart. When you enter into a relationship with the LORD, it’s a matter of your heart.

One of the great Saints and Pastors of the Christian Church was man named Pastor J. C. Ryle. Here’s his words on the matter of heart. “True faith does not depend merely on the state of man’s head and understanding, but on the state of his heart. His mind may be convinced. His con-science may be pierced.

But so long as there is anything the man is secretly loving more than God, there will be no true faith. The man himself may be puzzled, and wonder why he does not believe. He does not see that he is like a child sitting on the lid of his box, and wishing to open it, but not considering that his own weight keeps it shut.”

First, the heart.

Second, why? Why keep a watch over your heart? Because out of it are the issues of life.

Third, the heart opens or closes the door on salvation.

Fourth, Christian, Christ wants to dwell in your heart by faith. Ephesians 3:17 “…*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;…”*

We do use the word “dwell” quite a bit in our modern world. But the Old English word “dwell” is this; “to inhabit as a permanent resident.” The key idea is continuance and permanence.

My wife was born in Ontario, Canada. And until 2012, she was living here in the US as a “permanent resident.” That’s the same idea as we read here in Ephesians. Jesus owns the home. He owns your heart. But how grieved He must be that so many of us want Him only when we need Him. His greatest joy is to “dwell” in your heart; and to dwell continually and permanently.

Where do you feel the most at home? Why, in your home, of course. And where does Christ feel the most at home? In His own home. When you came to know the LORD as your personal LORD and Savior, Christ did enter your heart. Your heart became His home. But the real question is this. Is He *at home* in your heart? Is He “dwelling” by faith in your heart?

Of all the things the LORD Jesus wants to do for the Christian, this must be among the greatest. He wants to settle down and simply enjoying living in your heart. After all, it is His home, isn’t it? Of course, it is.

And what does that look like?

It means, first of all that, every day and every hour you recognize that your heart is really *His* home.

I Corinthians 6:19 *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and* ***ye are not your own****?”*

And folks, this a gradual thing; for most of us anyway. Before we really come to believe that our hearts are really His home, we spend so much our lives living as though we are the owners. And, by His grace and continual patience, we come to a gradual awareness that we aren’t owners and He isn’t a tenant.

Second, every day you recognize that He lives in you and wants to live through you.

Colossians 1:27 *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is* ***Christ in you****, the hope of glory:…”*

Galatians 2:20 *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*

Do you see yourself as a garage? And do you see that you’ve got lots of stuff in the garage? Well, in order for the LORD to live His life through you, you’ve got to remove anything that crowds Him out.

Third, every day you need to recognize your inadequacy and His sufficiency.

Ephesians 3:20 *“Now unto* ***him that is able*** *to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,…”*

Folks, the only way to truly live the life of a Christian, you need to see *your* insufficiency alongside *His* sufficiency.

Fourth, it means that you recognize and enjoy His personal love to you.

I John 4:16 *“And* ***we have known and believed the love that God hath to us****. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.”*

When Christ dwells in your heart by faith, you feel and sense His might love filling your thoughts. I’ve found that it’s not enough to know (mentally) that I am loved by the LORD. It *is* enough to know personally that I am intimately loved by Him.

What all this means in a nutshell is that Jesus is your LORD. He is the Sovereign LORD Who finds great happiness in living in and through you. He is happy to direct and bless your life.

Your heart is His home, of course. And so, the LORD in the Book of Proverbs says this. Proverbs 23:26 says this. *“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.”*

Conclusion. You need to take time today to clean out the garage. It’s your choice. The LORD won’t clean the garage for you. But when you decide that you’ll have Him living and being at home, He’ll help you.

Otherwise there’s no room for the car. The same holds true for your heart. What are those things that are crowding out the LORD Jesus? What value are they? Are they really more important than a full enjoyment of His company?

In conclusion, then. If Christ is not living in you, then you are not His own. But, if you aren’t truly secure in your salvation, you can simply come in repentance and faith to Him.

* To Repent = to change your mind about God, Christ, your sin, and God’s free gift of salvation.
* To Believe = to simply trust Jesus Christ alone as the One Who paid the entire penalty for your sins.

The LORD Jesus Christ paid the penalty for every sin you ever committed. He became your Substitute on the day He died on Calvary two thousand years ago. For you, here’s the greatest news in all the world is this: The Father gave His Son to pay the penalty for all your sins. Jesus Christ died on the Cross as your Substitute and wants to be your Savior today. You need to cry out to Him for His free gift of salvation? What could possibly hold you back from having a saving relationship with your Creator?

Think about the LORD as the One Who’s is to live completely and continually in your heart. The Father sent His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ, to achieve for you what you could never achieve on your own. He purchased salvation in order to bring forgiveness to your heart. Will you come to Him by simple faith in His Son, the LORD Jesus Christ today?

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Will you, right now, repent of your sins and pray this prayer to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and LORD? Remember, today is the day of Salvation. Here is that prayer, *“Father, I realize I am a sinner. I believe that Jesus died in my place on the cross. I repent of my sins. I want to be completely forgiven today. I am trusting you right now to save me. Thank you. Amen”*

Jesus said, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him and he with Me.”* Revelation 3:20

Shall we pray?

Sing Hymn # 417 “It Is Well With My Soul”