

THE INNER MAN

“That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ...” (Eph 3:16-17)

There is an old story about the little boy who was made to stand in the corner. He said with a sneer: “I may be standing up on the outside, but I am sitting down in the inside. This is quite possible. Every human being has these two natures. Our outward nature which can be seen by others, and our inward nature which cannot.

Outwardly, we can pretend. Jesus warned of false prophet that appeared to be sheep, but inwardly were ravaging wolves (Matt. 7:15). He accused the Pharisees of being like whited sepulchres. They appeared nice on the outside but within were full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness (Matt. 23:27). The real nature of the Pharisees was determined by their inward nature. Jesus reminded us that a tree is known by its fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, and a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The Pharisees brought forth corrupt fruit, because they were corrupt within.

Inwardly, there is no need to pretend. Our inward nature is private property. It cannot be seen by others. It is that unseen dimension over which we maintain sovereign control. Scripture teaches that no man knows the things of a man save the spirit of the man which is in him (1 Cor. 2:11). This inward nature is sometimes called the heart. Jesus lamented that some people honoured Him with the lips, while their hearts were far from Him (Mark 7:6).

The importance of the inner man cannot be emphasized too strongly, for it is here that conversion takes place. We may be able to join a church by submitting to an outward ritual, but we can only be truly born again when we obey from the heart. True Christians are not conformed by outward rules, but are transformed by a new nature within (Rom. 12:2).

In Old Testament times the Tabernacle and Temple featured an inner chamber that was called the Holy of Holies. That room was so sacred and holy that only one man was permitted to enter it. It was here, however, that he encountered God.

We too have an inner chamber so sacred and holy that no one is permitted to enter. It is here, however, that we must invite Jesus Christ. It is here that the new creation takes place. It is here that God writes His new covenant. It is here that Christ dwells by faith. It is here that the believer has constant contact with God. While the outward man is perishing, it is here that we can be renewed every day. This amazing truth transforms our vile bodies into temples of the Holy Spirit. C. S. Lewis offers this critical insight into the inner man. “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure to keep it completely and perfectly intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully ‘round about with hobbies and little luxuries, avoid all entanglements, lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your own selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken, but something far worse. It will become unbreakable, impenetrable, unredeemable”.

James reminds us that fresh water and salt water cannot flow from the same spring. A fig tree cannot bear olives, or a grapevine figs. (See James 3:11,12) Our problem with sin must be corrected at its source. Jesus said it like this: **“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23).**

This is why we need to be: **“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph 3:16-19).**