

2018 was a very significant year for me. It was the year I **rediscovered** Saint Augustine. Augustine lived approximately 1600 years ago from AD 354 to AD 430 (76 years)

For those of you who don't know who he is, he is considered the most influential Christian since the apostle Paul. His writings have permanently marked all three branches of Christianity—Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox.

All three claim him as their own for different reasons. He was a genius on about 4 levels —One of the **greatest writers and articulate orators** of Latin in the ancient world, **a theological genius** that wrote some of the most profound theological treatises ever written, **A psychological genius with unusual insight** into the human heart (long before psychology was a thing), as well as **a philosophical genius** who is still studied by students of philosophy, and also pastor of pastors, and a large congregation in Hippo, North Africa.

He was known not only for his over the top genius, but also for his profound and deep godliness and love of Christ. Last year I spent a lot of my time reading his **sermons on the Psalms** (approximately 3000 pages) given over 30 years to his congregation in North Africa and was deeply affected by them.

Augustine was a profound thinker of truth shown in the 40+ volumes of his teaching on various subjects that have been published. Yet—in spite of his love of knowledge, Augustine emphasized something else as **“the center”** of everything, and it is **THIS** emphasis that has so affected me over the last year.

He emphasized the centrality of love in our relationship with God and others and as the key to properly understanding the Bible.

In particular, he spent much time reminding his people of **how much God loved them** and that this love was supremely displayed at the cross. He taught that God is glorified when we “see” him in his beauty and perceive the infinite love expressed among the persons of the Trinity—The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Their love for each other spills out into a river of love for believers—Augustine taught that is the **“the center”** of everything.

He taught this, because this is what the apostle Paul taught, and what Christ taught (& lived) before him.

This is what I want us to **consider with you** over the next 30 minutes.

Please open your Bibles to **Ephesians 3:14-19** (read).

- PRAYER -

This is one of the most remarkable prayers in all of the Bible. And its position in the book of Ephesians is very significant.

The first 3 chapters of Ephesians describe the incredible sweep of God's massive plan to rescue and transform sinners like you and me.

Then the last 3 chapters detail how we are to live in response to what God has done for us for us.

The big question is: **How do we connect what God has done for us, with how God wants us to live for him?**

What's **the secret hinge** between chapters 1-3 and chapters 4-6? Sometimes it feels like there is no connection. We can't get to the help we need, so we can live the life we are called to.

Its a bit like **child-proof medication bottles**. Press down, squeeze the sides, turn to the left...and presto! off comes the top. But sometimes its not quite that easy. The child-proof top seems to be adult-proof too.

Sometimes Gods provisions seem like medication that we cant get to. We have the right prescription for our problems but can't seem to get the top off the provision to make it useful.

Paul's prayer in Eph 3 tells us how to get the top off the medicine so we can use it. And this is what he teaches us:

We Need Divine Power to Welcome Christ and Fully Appreciate His Immense Love For Us

Last time I spoke to you in our Holy Spirit series, I spoke to you about how God pours out his love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (from Rom 5:5)

Today I want to ***build further on that truth***, by what he teaches us in this text.

Notice first that:

I. We Need Power to Welcome Christ's Presence Within Us (Eph 3:16-17)

This is a remarkable request on several levels. **Who** is he speaking to here? **Eph 2** tells us that they are people who God has brought from death to life and in whom the Spirit of God lives—These are believers!

Now look what it is saying about believers in **verse 17**. They need Christ to dwell in their hearts through faith—and this is only going to be accomplished by a mighty infusion of power within them—the power of the Holy Spirit. (**vs 16**).

But isn't the very definition of a believer, someone who has Christ living in them?

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.” **Col. 1:27**

“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” **Gal. 2:20**

“Remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.” **Rom. 8:9**

Yes. Every believer has the Spirit of Christ living in them. But these verses are talking about something more than that. The key to properly understanding this is found in the word “**dwell**” in **verse 17**.

The word has the idea of **living comfortably**—when where we live is truly “**home sweet home**”. Let me give you an example of this. Some of you have come to Canada from other countries. When you first arrived in Canada, this became your new home...but it wasn't comfortable yet. It had too many things that were different for it to REALLY feel like home.

That takes time. Over time you needed to adjust to your new home until gradually it felt more like home than where you came from.

The difference with Christ's indwelling is that he doesn't slowly adjust to the environment in your heart, but you slowly adjust and fix your inner life until Christ eventually “**feels truly at home**” in your life.

Sinful habits have to go. New priorities need to be pursued. Everything unlike Christ needs to be driven to the dump or put out on garbage day. Missing items that should be there need to slowly be added—things like love for others who you wouldn't naturally choose as friends (people who don't enhance your personal portfolio).

We get rid of bitterness and start practicing forgiveness. We stop indulging in lustful fantasies and instead start practicing gratitude and unselfishness. We stop waiting around for people to care for us, and we start intentionally caring for others. Less mindless texting and more thoughtful praying.

We stop living for work and finding our identity and security in our bank account, and start working to live by finding our identity and security in eternal things that last beyond the grave.

As we clean shop—we make our inner being **a place that Christ feels more and more at home in**. The more our inner life becomes like him, the more Christ enjoys living there.

So how do we bring this about? We can't. Our wills are too weak to carry out the garbage. When we do, we turn around and bring it back in after dark. Our affections and desires are warped. We love the garbage more than the new furniture Christ wants. Our habits are so deeply entrenched that we can't—indeed we don't want to—change.

We need power to welcome the interior renovations that Christ wants for us. A parallel text to this is what Christ says in Rev 3:20:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.” **Rev. 3:20**

Communion with Christ without any hindrances. Welcoming Jesus fully and without reserve. Paul prays for this because its something we have to grow into if we are going to change.

Our part in all of this is faith— greater and greater dependence on Christ so that we increasingly define our lives by Jesus, what he has done for us in his life & death, and especially what his giving showed us about God heart of love toward us.

I would define this faith by two characteristics—desperation and dependence. Until we get to the place we become utterly dissatisfied with our inner lives, we will not be desperate enough to seek Christ with all our heart and soul.

“He did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.” **2Chr. 12:14**

“Blessed are those who keep his testimonies, who seek him with their whole heart.” **Psa. 119:2**

This verse in Psalm 119 makes it clear that keeping Gods word (living in obedience to him) only happens when we seek Him with our whole heart. As long as we hold back part of our heart for ourselves, Christ will not live comfortably there.

That is the first request. **Power to make our heart a place where Christ can live comfortably.** In **Jn 15**, Jesus tells us, that we need to abide in him. In **Eph 3** Paul tells us we need Jesus to abide in us. Personal transformation can't even begin without this.

We welcome Christ's presence so that we may can “see” what we are blind to see without him. Do you notice what we need to see but are blind to without his comfortable living in our hearts? Look at **verse 18:**

2. We Need Power to Fully Appreciate Christ's Love For Us

“Strength to comprehend”. This is not talking about our love toward God or our neighbour. That is super important—But that's not what is being taught here. What we need strength for is to know how immense **God's love for us** truly is. Do you see this?

Verse 19 says this is a knowing that can't be known. This is no mere intellectual knowledge. It's not a mere comprehension of certain doctrinal facts. It is a revelation to the heart. This is what the Holy Spirit does—he gives us power to “**see**” & rely on Christ's love for us!

This love is displayed most fully on the cross. It is there we see God's incredible love towards those who have so little love for him:

“Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” **Eph. 5:25**

“To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.”
Rev. 1:5

“Our Lord Jesus Christ himself....who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace.” **2Th. 2:16**

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” **Rom. 8:35,37**

Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. **Eph. 5:2**

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love.”
John 15:9

“The Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” **Gal. 2:20**

As I tell you all this, I feel like a man trying describe whats it like to skydive when I’ve only seen You Tube videos but have never done it myself.

There have been times where I have tasted what is described here. But it is not my regular experience. But it could be. It could be your regular experience. It is not for the elite but for every believer. But it is never automatic. It must be prayed for...**EARNESTLY WITH ALL OUR HEARTS.**

Now listen very carefully (Pause). **This is the central truth and reality in Christianity.** This is what Saint Augustine stressed over & over in his preaching.

It is living with Christ’s uninterrupted presence and knowing Christ’s unending love that makes everything else possible.

We all know on one level that Christ loves us. But on a deeper level we disbelieve it. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to “**see**” what we cannot see....so that we **grasp** what we cannot grasp....that we **believe** what until now we have been unable to believe.

It begins with prayer. Prayer for the Holy Spirit’s power. Do you want this for yourselves? Will you pray this for yourself...and for others here? If you dont want this...would you be willing to pray for this power so that the Spirit would change your “wanter” to want what Christ wants?

ALL forward movement in our christian life comes from comprehending Christ’s love for us. Without this, the cap on the child-proof bottle stays locked and God’s solution to our problem will remain out of our reach.

