

Christ Dwelling in the Heart by Faith

Preached at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on Lord's day
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"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 fullness of God." (Eph. 3:17-19)

I shall only address you particularly upon the first clause of the 17th verse; "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith;*" but the whole is a remarkable petition and very full. Should God fulfil it in any measure in us, we shall indeed be highly favoured. I noticed a little this morning of the 16th verse, and spoke a little of what this precious and blessed and exhaustless storehouse is "*the riches of His glory,*" out of which the apostle prayed all the blessings subsequently mentioned might come to these Ephesians. Ah my friends, if it would please the Lord to open the treasures of grace in the Person of Christ in the new covenant, a covenant ordered in all things and sure, and supply our needs out of these treasures, no pinching killing want will ever reach our souls! I know living tongues are dumb at best; it does not appertain to any creature to set out in the fullness of it, what God is in Christ; and for myself in particular, I must confess the older I get, the more unequal I feel as in God's sight for the work of the ministry. There are moments when it seems to me I am permitted to look into the nature of the ministry and see what it is that God sends His servants to do, even to make known the mystery of Christ, and those very moments are the moments when I sink, when I most feel my own incompetency, extreme inability, and the unspeakable poverty of my conceptions and language, when attempting to think of or set forth this blessed Person, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Of one thing I am sure, as far as I know my own mind in the matter, and it is this the one particular aim and want of one who is sent to preach, when he is under a right influence, is to espouse the Lord's people unto Christ as a chaste virgin, to make instrumentally a match between Christ and sinners, and in doing so he must set forth the beauties, suitableness, greatness, and glory of that Person to whom sinners divorced from the law are brought to be married. The apostle begs for himself and the saints, that he might have given to him a door of utterance to make known the mystery of Christ as he ought to speak. How it becomes God's servants to make the same request, that the saints would strive together in their prayers for them, that they might be able to speak and make known the mystery of Christ as they ought to speak. God help you, His saints, to strive together in prayer to God for me that I may have given to me a door of utterance to make known the mystery of Christ as I ought to speak. This remark grew out of what I said concerning the fullness of Christ that one has spoken of in the hymn:

"My never-failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace."

And I just hinted at this storehouse of grace this morning, as in election, setting up Christ as the Head of His people, giving Christ to them before the world began, justification, forgiveness, faithfulness, promise, and power to accomplish what the Lord has purposed and said. And if our eyes were but opened by the Holy Spirit of Christ to see this treasure, this fullness, this ample supply set forth in the gospel, put into the Person, the heart of the Lord Jesus, could we then ever think we should die of want? "*He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?*" (Rom. 8:32)

Then I made a few remarks upon the particular form in which the apostle was led by the Spirit to speak of the communication out of that supply to the saints, namely in the form of strength. "*To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.*" (Eph. 3:16) And we need it. We need strength to make us pray; no prayer can reach the throne of grace that is not sent out with powerful energy by the Holy Ghost. We need strength to make us believe when the forces of the sinful heart are all bent against faith. We need strength to make us love, for all the enmity from within, and often the providence of God, is bent against love. And one might run through all the graces and exercises of God's children, and show what weakness there is through sin in them, and how they therefore do need continually supplies of grace, that is, of strength from Christ which the blessed Spirit is sent to convey.

But I rather wish this evening, to take up the first clause of the next verse, a part of the one prayer of the apostle: "*That Christ might dwell in the hearts of the saints by faith.*" I daresay some of you who are the people of God often enough feel very empty of Christ, very empty of faith, so empty as to find a suitableness in the Psalmist's prayer, "*Leave not my soul destitute;*" and as to this indwelling of the Lord Jesus, how far you feel from it! But there is a presence of Christ never withdrawn. The first presence is when the new birth takes place and His precious life is communicated and His gracious preserving presence is then granted. Never does He leave, never does He forsake, those in whom He takes up this His divine abode, in His own precious life; He never will. He has put His name there: "*Here will I dwell, for I have desired it.*" No man loses that, no saint forfeits that, no devil deprives a tempted soul of that, no night of desertion ever causes that to be lost; no wanderings, fierce temptations, lusts, battles, defeats, can ever rob a sinner of that gift of the presence of Christ. But then that is not always felt. If we put the days, minutes, or hours in which we have felt and enjoyed the presence of Christ by the side of the days, weeks, minutes, or hours that we have gone mourning without the sun and felt He was not with us, feared He never had been, never would be, O what shall we say as it respects a comparison? Why, there is on the one hand just a speck, on the other hand nearly a lifetime; a moment compared to years. Ah, but there is this to be said, the worth of Christ's presence is not to be measured by how much you enjoy of it, but by what it is in itself, by what it does!

Now the presence of Christ in the soul, in the heart by faith, is very blessed, and we may say that it was typified by the presence of the ark of the Lord, the tabernacle, in the very midst of the nation of Israel in the wilderness. There was the holy place and the Holy of holies in which was the ark, and round about this, north, south, east, and west, were the people encamped according to the divine commandment. The glory of that people was the ark, the defence of that people was the ark. Like the presence of God to that people was the ark. Life, prospects to come, all centred in that ark in the midst of them. And my friends, when God is present with a sinner, how true it is that all his hopes, all his feelings, all his comforts, all his satisfaction, all his beauty, all his

prospects, that sinner can say are centred in Him. By precious faith a sinner lays hold of a revealed Christ. If your faith does not move it is no faith at all. If you have never received Christ, it is because you have no faith. If you have living faith you have living wants, and all these wants are centred in Christ and what He has revealed. You lay hold of Him, and thus there is formed an experimental union between Christ and your soul and you are espoused to Christ as a chaste virgin; all other lovers are gone. Hence what Peter says becomes experimentally true: "*Purifying your hearts by faith.*" Ah, if you lay hold of a revealed Christ, as long as there is a power strengthening your faith you hold Him fast and refuse to let Him go. I shall show this in one or two particulars.

For instance, when Christ is in the heart by faith there is real peace in the conscience. Peace in the conscience, what is that? It is the smile of God through the blood of Christ, producing a calmness, a satisfaction, a perception of God's blessing, a sense of acceptance, a perception of God's good will to that sinner, that can never be fully expressed. Peace in the conscience, what does it respect? Holiness, majesty, the glory of God. It respects the sinner's state and standing for time; yes, not for time only but also for eternity. Peace in the conscience, what can compare to it for blessedness? Now when you hold Christ you feel it, and as long as you hold Him you feel it. When He dwells in the heart by faith, you realize that, according to the measure in which He is in you. Mind you, I don't cut a man off who has not got it, who cleaves to it, a stranger who has been circumcised in his heart. He may feel yet a stranger, not like one of the Lord's people. When this blessing comes, this revelation of Christ, the mystery of God, then it is that faith lays hold, because Christ is near enough to the faith that the man has to be laid hold of. And then it is this holy peace is felt peace with God, peace with the divine attributes, peace with every precept of the Lord, every commandment of the Lord because all of them have been fulfilled by Christ, peace with your own soul because an accusing conscience is silenced by the blood of Christ, peace with God's providences because though afflictive there is love in them, peace with respect to eternity though the grave is a gloomy place and death is awful to human nature, but the sinner is not terrified then. Thousands of enemies came against the children of Israel and said: "*Soon we will break your ranks, soon you will be no more a nation;*" but so long as the glory was in the midst of them, so long as they saw the morning and evening sacrifice year by year, so long as the glory dwelt there, they could have said, "*Ah, but our strength lies here!*"

So when the devil roars, sin roars, temporal things say, "You won't remain long as you are, you will soon make shipwreck;" by faith a sinner maintains peace. He knows his God and loves Him. You know this is true, some of you. Has your help not been from the Lord in the past, has He not been your defence, have you not felt Him in your heart the hope of glory, and felt you could say, "How can I sink with such a prop?" And you have been obliged to sing:

"Thrice comfortable hope
That calms my stormy breast,
My Father's hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best."

You have been obliged to say, whatever the enemy may say to the contrary:

"But all this will not do,
Our hope's on Jesus cast;
Let all be liars and Him be true,
We shall be well at last."

Now that is the way in which the Lord Jesus dwells in the heart by faith. Faith lays hold of His Person, His precious merit, His justifying righteousness, grace, mercy, love, and blood, and holding Him fast the conscience is satisfied, the heart is at rest, the affections are full, the understanding is illuminated, and the man stands fast for the time in His precious Head.

Now this blessed indwelling of the Lord Jesus Christ has another thing connected with it, namely the eternal love of God. O what brought Christ? What made Christ as a Surety? What gave Him as a Saviour? What brought Him down to suffer, bleed, and die? What brought Him and carried Him through His matchless sufferings, pain, and anguish? What took Him to the grave? What led Him up? What is it, now that He is before the throne, does all this? As to the beginning, as to the sea that has gone on flowing ever since love, the eternal love of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Sometimes this is understood by faith. If we can understand by faith that the world was framed by the Word of God, we can also still more understand that the church was built on love. Love gave the church a Surety; love ordered her ways; love ordained her paths; love fixed her birth, marked out her difficulties; measured and weighed her sorrows. When Christ is laid hold of by faith this scheming ordering love, that fixed everything for the good of the church, is seen, is felt. That is not a strange distant tale for everyone, is it? One says:

"'Tis my happiness below,
Not to live without the cross,
But the Saviour's power to know
Sanctifying every loss.

"Trials must and will befall;
But with humble faith to see
Love inscribed upon them all,
This is happiness to me."

And as long as you hold this, this precious revealed Christ by faith, and will not let Him go, be it for a few minutes or an hour or a day, so long is love apparent in all the ways of God, so long does the fire of love work upon your spirit and make you love God.

"Loved of my God, for Him again,
With love intense I'd burn;
Chosen of Thee ere time began,
I'd choose Thee in return."

Where does this love shine as in Christ? Nowhere is it so comfortably felt as when it is revealed and radiates as the beams of the sun when it shines in its glory. This sun radiates, reaches your body, circumstances, pains, poverty, wants, difficulties; reaches them all! "*Love inscribed upon them all!*"

I wish I knew this more than I do. There is a peculiar power, authority, and glory in this to hush every murmur, still every fear, rebuke every enemy, and comfortably assure the soul it is well and will be well. I believe you can look on death in everything and say with the woman, "It is well," when faith holds Christ fast. "I held Him and would not let Him go," said the church. Ah, it is no mere moralizing that will bring a man to this! Philosophic patience and submission will do in certain things, but when you come to the hour of death and yet find life in your soul, love in your soul, God near you, prospects bright, present things right, that is faith! Faith in the bleeding Lamb, faith holding a revealed Christ! Love shines in it.

Well, you hold Christ by faith and He dwells in your heart as King. There is another result, another blessed experimental fact yourself, your enemies, your sins are all quiet. Job says of himself speaking of his past days: "*I sat chief, and dwelt as a king.*" (Job 29:25) When Christ is revealed He sits as King on the flood of trouble, workings of evil, everywhere in providence, in your heart, in your conscience, in your feelings. O if we could but hold Him! What love He shows in giving, what power He displays in coming over all the difficulties, mountains, and hills, so that nothing can keep Him from the soul; and then He gets within reach of your faith. You know what I mean, some of you. Faith instantly puts forth her hand, lays hold of Him and embraces Him. There is a match, pure affection goes to Him. The soul can for a moment say how I wish I could say that word every day of my life! I have often been troubled because I could not say it "*O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee have had dominion over us; but by Thee only will we make mention of Thy name.*" (Isa. 26:13) Do you ever look round, so to speak, in yourself, and look at your affections, so low and wild; your will, so rebellious; at your desires, that run away; your heart, gone to the ends of the earth? You have looked at these things, at their noise, their tumult. God in human nature has come to the sinner; Jesus Christ the eternal God, has come to the creature; poor helpless creature, and asserted His authority in His precious blood, divine righteousness, invincible grace; asserted His right to this redeemed soul bought with His own most precious blood, and said: "*This is My rest for ever, here will I dwell, for I have desired it.*" And as Joseph put out all the Egyptians when he would make himself known to his brethren, so Christ puts out all authority, rule, and power in this gracious way. Ah my beloved friends, I know He does it! There is no evil lust or master-sin you ever smarted under that won't go down as to its authority, and as to its workings, at that time. When this blessed Jesus comes, your faith lays hold of Him and keeps Him for the time. "Be this religion mine," you say. "I tread the world beneath my feet, And all the world calls good or great." "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

When He reveals Himself there is yet another thing, and it is this the blessed prospect He sets before you of a good finish. Ah, some of us are very anxious about the end! I am. I am very concerned at times about my dying day. It may be far from me, but I don't find the thought of it far from me, and many a time I don't know how it will be, I am full of fear. But there are moments when there is no fear, the prospect is bright, hope is strong, when eternal things are seen; and what is it that occasions all this sweet prospect, bright prospect, certain comfortable prospect? What is it causes you to say, "Yes, I to the end shall endure?" What makes you sure there is a heaven? What makes you sure there are living fountains of water for you to partake of in heaven? What assures you that there you will never need a temple made with hands, nor candle lighted by any man? What brings a demonstration of all these things to you? Why, Christ in your heart! He comes in the Father's name, sings the Father's righteousness, declares the

Father's love and mercy in a poor destitute sinner's heart, and your faith is again strong, strong enough to hold these things, believe these things, rejoice in these things, triumph over death, hell, and the grave. In these mercies you feel nothing can daunt your spirit or make your heart droop for the time being, because this God is with you. *"What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams, and ye little hills like lambs? Tremble thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob."* (Ps. 114:5-7) Well, you know it was this, they saw God. As when Jesus walked on the tempestuous Sea of Galilee, as when He said, *"Peace, be still;"* when He fed five thousand with a few loaves and fishes; as when He opened the eyes of the blind; stopped a funeral and said, *"Young man, I say unto thee arise;"* just so, when He comes, exerts His mighty power in the soul, and faith receives Him, He dwells there as King, makes His voice mightier than the raging of the sea when the waves have lifted up themselves. He dwells by faith in the heart and there is a certainty then, the prospect is bright. Now a man speaks without staggering through unbelief; now he holds fast his God, and can remember all the way the Lord has led him, and bless God for His kindness to him.

And I tell you there is yet another thing when Christ is revealed, there will be an explaining of a great matter, there will be an opening of a great perplexity, "How is it a child of God can be subject to such lusts, such sinfulness?" He says, "If I had grace could I be subject to these things, could I indulge these things? If I had grace, should I not be different in my mind, purer in my affections, more zealous in my spirit, more fervent in prayer, constant in believing?" But when Christ comes He will open this and make it out: *"What will ye see in the Shulamite?"* His smile cheers the hidden man of the heart, His presence works the most holy feelings; and even this does no longer terrify: *"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."* (Matt. 5:48) That is a word that has begotten the greatest fear and shaking in some of our spirits. Now the Lord opens the mystery of grace up. He has led us into the painful mystery of iniquity as it works; but now in His presence, as He is held by faith. He opens the mystery of holiness. What would the sinner will but what God wills? What would the sinner do but what God commands? What would he hold but what God gives? O the content with God's will; the submission to God's dispensations, the choosing God's Word, esteeming it more than one's necessary food; the cleaving to the promises, desiring to be conformed to God's will, as the suffering Saviour, in weakness, under a cloud, tempted, reproached! He says: *"Still I would be with Him, with Jesus, leaving all things to do His Father's will and knowing no other will; with Jesus, who was so intent on doing His Father's will that He saluted no man by the way; blind though He saw, deaf though He heard. I would like to be like that, I would have the world beneath my feet, I would be holy."*

This will clear a man of the sanctification of the flesh and instruct him in the sweet sanctification of the Spirit; in that chief of Satan's wiles the betterment of the human nature; and instruct him in the sweetness of God's mysterious grace, how grace begets holiness wherever it is, and Christ in his heart by faith is the ground root of holiness as much as justification. And I tell you this, the precepts will be dear to you, your pleasure will be in pleasing the God of all grace, if ever Christ dwells in your heart by faith; I am certain of it. "Let everyone that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." Says the soul: "That is just what I want; break these snares, these chains that gall me, these imperious lusts; purge away guilt that burdens my conscience; bring Thy holy peace that will not lead to licentiousness, but will on the contrary fill me with warm affections,

holy desires after Thee, sweet repentance and godly sorrow for sin that needeth not to be repented of."

Just one word more and I will leave it this evening. If Christ dwells in your heart by faith you have got a real strength in your feelings for the time; but mind you, it is not a strength of which you will boast, in which you will strut about and consume on your own flesh, but a strength that very much goes out in a sense of weakness which makes you cast yourself on the Lord. I wish I knew how to properly express it, because I am certain there is a religious strength that many professors boast of, that is not strength at all, but presumption. Where this heavenly strength is deprived from the presence of Christ it makes a man feel he is not fit for anything without Christ, not fit for any trouble without Christ; he can bear no affliction without Christ, can stand in no difficulty without Christ, submit to no trouble without Christ. But he can bear all, he has got on the whole armour of God, when he has got Christ. Well, this poor creature is a blessed creature, and though in his weakness he often feels ready to fall, yet he has in his soul that which is greater than the devil, the flesh, and the world. He is a strong man, though so weak; he is strong in grace, the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Now my brethren, do as God helps you look at this, and if I have been enabled to set out the truth in this particular point as it is in Jesus and in the Word of God, may the Lord help you to follow it and fulfil in you this prayer of the apostle: "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*" May He command His blessing to rest upon us. Amen.