

# Christ Dwelling in the Heart

by John Nelson Darby

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*The sermon emphasizes the unsearchable riches of Christ and the importance of knowing His love in order to be filled with God's fulness and glorify Christ in the saints.*

**Scripture:** Ephesians 3:16

**Topics:** "Christ In Us", "Grace"

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## Description

John Nelson Darby emphasizes the profound mystery of Christ dwelling in the hearts of believers, highlighting the unsearchable riches of Christ that were previously unknown in the Old Testament. He reflects on the grace extended to the Gentiles, illustrating how God's love transcends human rejection and sin, as exemplified in the life of Paul, who was transformed from a persecutor to a preacher. Darby stresses the importance of being rooted in love and having Christ as the center of our hearts, which enables believers to comprehend the vastness of God's love and glory. He encourages the faithful to recognize their union with Christ and the transformative power of His presence in their lives, leading to a deeper understanding of their identity and purpose. Ultimately, Darby calls for a life filled with the fullness of God, where believers can rejoice in tribulations, knowing that Christ is in them and they are in Him.

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## Transcript

In the former part of this chapter we have the unsearchable riches of Christ contrasted with all that had been previously revealed. In all the Old Testament scriptures there had been nothing of the mystery as we get it here. There had been glimpses now and then, but nothing more. What strikes the apostle's mind is that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. It was outside all the promises. True, it had been written, "Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people," but here it is sovereign grace coming in outside all that had been previously thought of.

The gospel came to the Jews first because God had promised it; but they rejected it. Paul was the strongest proof that the Jews would not have Christ. We find him persecuting the Church and consenting to Stephen's death. He is met in grace from the very place where Stephen, looking up, sees the end of his testimony, and, as he says, he was made "a pattern to all who should hereafter believe." When the enmity of man had been brought to the highest pitch, then God could come in in sovereign grace, in His own personal will above all that man had done to prevent Him. Paul calls himself the chief of sinners, and justly so too; but we find God rising above him, and hence he goes to people who, like himself, had no title. It is astonishing how the two apostles, Peter and Paul, are both fitted for their several parts—Peter cursing and

swearing ere he was converted and could strengthen his brethren, and Paul breathing out threatenings and slaughters. As we have seen, flesh must be put down. It is only an empty vessel that the Lord can use, that no flesh should glory in His presence; it is very humbling that we should need it, but we do need it. This fits him for preaching to Gentiles who had no promise, and we now find God revealing Himself in all the fulness of that love in which He could bless those who had nothing to say to God. Flesh was judged in the cross of Christ, and it was not now merely a question of promises, but of having Christ. I first find out what God is through the Son, but now I find the divine affections all centred in Christ-"the Father loveth the Son," then "the unsearchable riches," everything put into Christ's hands as Heir of all things, and this as man, as we get in Psalm 8. In Proverbs 8:31 I find Him delighting in man. He passes by the angels-blessed, doubtless, in their places; but He passes by them, and takes man's nature upon Him. People keep Christmas, but the world's estimate of Christ when He came is shown by the fact that it could find no better place for Him than a manger. When Christ came the angels sang God's good pleasure in man; but man would not have Him in his life, and so He must die, because if not, like a corn of wheat, He must abide alone. But His desire is to get outside of all man's rejection and to have man notwithstanding. If man would not have Him in life, because man was dead, He must die and take man up in death, to make him partaker of a new and risen life. This was perfect, infinite love, not merely kindness (we get His goodness every day); but His love in coming to take a sinner's place! God's truth is brought out in this. He has taken man clean out of the position in which he was, and the consequence is that now I see man entering into a new position altogether, in the Second Man, who has gone into sin and death and borne the judgment, and now is in the glory of God as a Man, and I with Him. This is unsearchable riches, far more than promise, and the apostle's heart was here opening out to this.

193 In the first chapter we find his prayer is to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ; we have Christ as Man, and God in power, making the revelation of the inheritance, etc. But in this third chapter he bows his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is seen here in His own personal relationship as Son. Mark, it is our Lord, not the Lord. Thus saints are brought into closer relationship than any other created intelligence, and angels, instead of being jealous, are delighted at it. The poorest saint knows his union with Christ, and knows it by the Holy Ghost. We own Him as Lord, but He is not ashamed to call us brethren. I am brought into Christ's place, and, as Paul says, it is all by grace, it is all of God.

Christ identifies Himself with the Church-"Why persecutest thou Me?" It is all association with Himself. The apostle asks here that the saints may enter into the fulness of communion; not as in the first chapter, that they might know it outwardly, but that being strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith-Christ Himself in your own souls, that He may be the centre of your hearts by the Holy Ghost, a consciousness that Christ fills you, not merely with knowledge, but that you may be rooted and grounded in love. The love of God shed abroad by the Holy Ghost should flow in your hearts; then you would rise above everything-trial, tribulation, the result of all is love. This is the way the Holy Ghost reasons, not the way man reasons. God's love was shown in giving the nearest thing to Him for that which was farthest from Him. Solomon was large of heart, but if I could have such a large heart, God must be the centre of it, or else I should find only sorrow and vanity, as Solomon did.

194 "That ye may be able to comprehend," etc. If I am walking in self, I cannot see beyond the petty things of this world; but when I get beyond the region of self I am able to judge about sin, sinners, to have a true judgment about everything; and I am able to understand the breadth and length and depth and height. He does not say of what, that has to be filled in; but in order to make all practical I must "know the love of Christ." If I were going into the Queen's presence, how glad I should be if someone would tell me what to

do! Well, this knowledge of the love of Christ is the very thing that calms my heart when I think of the immensity of the glory that is to be revealed in me. Christ is next me. I have known Him intimately down here and as risen too; for He is just the same as when He said, "Children, have ye any meat?" When I read that the glory of God doth lighten the city, is that too dazzling, too much for my eye? The next words that I read are that "the Lamb is the light thereof." You see, the heart gets into a condition where it is at home, and therefore the poorest, simplest saint is quite easy in all this glory, because Christ is in it all, and Christ is in his heart. I may be a poor earthen vessel, but then I have got the treasure inside. By faith in my heart He speaks to me; He manifests Himself to me as He does not to the world. It is a wonderful thing, for me to say that I know Christ's love, at the same time that I can also say it passeth knowledge. And now the apostle, having shown the saints the exalted position, rises up to it, and says it is "that ye might be filled into all the fulness of God." Wondrous place! wondrous purpose of love to have brought me here! Now how shall I look on tribulation? Oh, I can glory in it! I can joy in God, not merely joy amid the circumstances, but joy in God Himself.

195 "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think"-this is often wrongly put forth as though it said, "able to do for us" (quite true, of course, in its place, because He is able and does do for us); but it is not the thought here; it is "able to do in us"- "according to the power that worketh in us." (v. 20.) The Church has been looked at as all that we have been speaking of, in order that Christ may be glorified in us. "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe in that day," although the apostle is not here looking at what it will be in the future, but what it is now by faith. Moses reflected in his face the glory of God when he came down from the mount; so should the Church now. The angels are looking on; there is wisdom in the Church, although very feeble. The angels ought to see in the saints the glory of God; but how little, beloved friends, how terribly little, can be seen! How everything has failed that has been put into the hand of man, as far as man is concerned-the law, the Son of David, Nebuchadnezzar, the Church! Man has spoiled everything, as far as he had the power. And, dear friends, would that you knew you were weak, then you would be better able to say, "Now unto Him be glory," etc. When Paul said, "I was with you in much weakness," we learn God had "much people in that city." There must be weakness in the vessel. The object known is Christ; the place, our hearts. God is looking for Christ being known by us, and God glorified us, not merely Christ dwelling in us by the Holy Ghost, but in our hearts-my heart; my thoughts, my feelings, the same as Christ's. The Lord give us to know how God has treated us, that we may know the heart's obligation to love, and that obligation not a legal one.

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