

Christ's Indwelling

by Stephen Olford

The sermon emphasizes the importance of Christ's indwelling in the believer's life, and how it brings victory, purity, and energy.

Duration: 30:07

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:10, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 3:16-17, Colossians 1:27, 1 Peter 3:15

Topics: "Indwelling Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of sanctifying the Lord God in one's heart. He urges the audience to give Christ complete lordship over their lives. The speaker shares a testimony of a missionary who initially lacked joy, power, and fruitfulness in her service. However, after seeking a private interview with a servant of God, she realized that she had never truly experienced Christ's indwelling. The speaker concludes by highlighting the need for a supreme empowering to receive the indwelling of Christ, acknowledging that the heart may have reservations about His absolute indwelling.

Transcript

Will you turn with me to the epistle of Paul to the Galatians and the second chapter and at verse 20, Galatians 2 and 20. This is the testimony of the apostle. He says, I am crucified, or better still, I have been crucified with Christ.

Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. 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. I want to lift one phrase out of that verse and draw your attention to consider it in these closing moments of this great gathering and I trust that the message will come right through to those relay centers all over the land.

Christ liveth in me. Those of us who have been at Keswick will thank God to the rest of our days for the rich ministry of Professor Blakelock and I know those of us who've listened to this message on temptation tonight will never forget it. But you know I'll go away terrified from this tent tonight if it weren't for the final words he brought and the text to which we're now going to give our attention.

There is an answer to temptation and the answer to temptation as we know it here is Christ living in me. I want us to consider here this evening the miracle of Christ's indwelling and then the measure of that indwelling and a concluding word on the mastery of Christ's indwelling especially in relation to this matter

of temptation. The miracle of Christ's indwelling even though we speak so simply of receiving the Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts and lives we must never forget that his incoming and indwelling constitute one of the greatest mysteries and miracles in the universe.

Writing to the Colossians Paul had to search for words in his attempt to describe the secret of Christ's indwelling. That which was hidden from angels and men in all ages but now has been revealed to us. Listen to his phraseology.

The riches of the glory of this mystery which is Christ in you the hope of glory. In his teaching the apostle proceeds to show that Christ can only dwell in the human heart first of all by a miraculous operation. Praying for the Ephesian believers he says I bow my knees unto the father of our Lord Jesus Christ 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.

I love Dr. Handley-Mole's comment on this verse. He asks why do we need a supreme empowering just in order to receive the indweller? Does the hungry wanderer need power in order to eat the food which he will soon require if he's not to die? Does the bewildered mariner need power to welcome onto his deck the pilot who alone can steer him to the haven of his desire? No. But there is another aspect of the matter here.

For the heart though it immeasurably needs the blessed indweller has in it that which grids his absolute indwelling. So the hand stretched out to open the door falls again and again shrinking from turning of the key which is to set at last the recesses open to the incoming of the master. Here is the need for the spirit's empowering work.

Yes we need the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit to strengthen our inner man to say yes to the incoming of Christ into our lives. And we need that same strengthening of the spirit to enable us to stand the wonder of his indwelling. For surely it is a thought that transcends our finite minds that the Christ of God in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily should condescend to live in the redeemed personality of man.

But Paul declares not only that it requires a miraculous operation for Christ to dwell in our hearts by faith but a miraculous revelation. It would seem that Paul had two distinct revelations of the Lord Jesus. The first occurred at his conversion when God revealed Jesus to him on the way to Damascus.

This revelation flew the enmity of his heart and led him to surrender to Jesus as Savior and Lord. The second revelation appears to have occurred while Paul was at prayer in Damascus waiting for God's next step for his life. The apostle later recalls this experience when he says, it pleased God to reveal his son in me.

Such a revelation was not only miraculous but utterly transforming and compelling. For immediately following it he was convinced of God's power and purpose for his life and didn't have to solicit any advice from the help of man. I remember a lady, a fellow from China, and she testified to a similar experience.

She'd been out on the field for a number of years without any real joy, power, or fruitfulness in her life. She confessed that she'd gone out to the field rather from a desire to put into practice her nursing qualifications and experience, rather than to serve Christ and to win souls. Eventually, however, she became utterly dissatisfied with the monotony of service and the barrenness of her own life.

And she took a tiring long journey away to a spot where a mighty servant of God was ministering along certain lines. After one of the sessions she asked for a private interview with a speaker, and to quote her own words she said, it was all so simple. The man of God asked me, can you say Christ liveth in me? And she said, I had to admit that while I once remembered asking Christ to come into my life, I never realized his indwelling.

Then asked God to reveal his son in you, insisted the servant of God. I did this, said the missionary. I did this, and I've never been the same woman since.

It's a miracle of grace. Tell me, my friend, do you know the miracle of Christ's indwelling? If you don't, will you seek right now here in this great tent, and at those centers all over the land, will you seek the Spirit's operation and revelation to make the Christ you invited into your life long ago an indwelling reality? But let's go a little further in this. Christ liveth in me.

Not only have we here the miracle of his indwelling, but there's a suggestion of the measure of his indwelling. In that beautiful word picture given to us in Revelation 3 and 20, we observe that Christ can be either guest in your life or host. Guest or host.

It's the same distinction that our chairman reminded us of when he quoted the testimony of Dr. Graham Scroggie on the final occasion he was at Keswick, when he said, for me, the great message of Keswick was the distinction between the saviorship of Christ and the mastership of Christ. I want to ask you personally, as you listen there, is Christ savior and Lord, or is he merely savior in your life? Or, to use the language of our text, is he guest or host? As guest, he sups with us. Listen to the words, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come into him and will sup with him. Every genuine Christian knows the indwelling Christ in this measure. Even the person who's only just received Christ will know Christ in the heart.

But one of the saddest facts of Christian experience is that for the majority of believers, Jesus is only known as guest. In no fuller measure is he known. Just guest, guest in the life, like an ordinary guest in a material house, he's given his private room and a certain limited freedom in the other rooms of the house.

Otherwise, the life goes on as usual. I wonder if that represents the measure in which Jesus dwells in your life. Just guest, and perhaps just a tolerated guest.

But look again at Revelation 3 20. You'll see that God's purpose for our lives is that Jesus should dwell in our hearts, not just as guest, but as host. This is when we sup with him.

Look at the text again. 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 will sup with him and he with me.

Jesus is now host in the life, and we are guests. And it's most important here to observe that the believer does not lose his individuality. I emphasize this because of the false teaching which some have tried to read into Paul's words when he says, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.

It is quite true that Paul says not I, but remember that he adds Christ liveth in me. The personality is still there as a habitat and dwelling place for the Lord. Before the I was the master, now the I is the servant.

Before the I was the host, now the I is the guest. I always used to wonder why Paul in his prayer to the Ephesian believer should ask that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith. The earlier chapters of this epistle make it unmistakably plain that Christ had already entered their lives.

So why ask Christ to dwell in their hearts? Once again, it was Dr. Handley Mole in his wonderful commentary on Ephesians that helped me out on this matter. He points out that the word dwell means settled residence, or to be at home. So Paul's longing for the saints at Ephesus was that Christ might be at home, at home in their hearts by faith.

My ministry compels me to live a good deal in other people's houses. Quite naturally, therefore, I am frequently sampling different types of hospitality. On a very few occasions in some houses I'd be made to feel quite definitely out of place.

In such instances I've had to seek refuge in a bedroom or a cold lounge, and I'm telling you that's tough in winter. In most houses, however, I am at home at once. I know that if I wanted to, I would be welcome in every room of the house.

There is complete absence of suspicion, strain, and stress. In addition, there is the delightful restfulness of being wanted and loved and understood. That, my friend, is the difference between being in the house and being at home.

Is Jesus at home in your life? Or are there some rooms marked private where Jesus would not be welcome? What is more important, is the Lord Jesus host in your life, or is he a tolerated guest? When Peter faces up to this truth, he makes no bones about it. Using the imperative mood, he says, sanctify the Lord God in your heart, which virtually means make Christ hallowed Lord in your heart. Yes, he must be given the best room in the house, that's your heart, and complete lordship through the home, which is your life.

Only then can you honestly say, Christ lives in me. Young people here this evening, and older ones too, I want to ask you, as we pause just at this moment in this message, may I put it to you as a personal question? Is there a room marked private in your life, or can you honestly say, Jesus is at home in your life? Not shut away up into the attic of your life, but having access to every room, that friendship room, that reading room, that music room, that recreation room, that business room, that church room, that home room. May I ask the question, is Jesus guest or host in your life? I know that there were 14 years of my life, when Jesus was shut up in the little attic of my house, while I lived my life as I would.

The greatest crisis in my life, came when I flung wide open every door and said, thou Christ of God, be thou Lord of all my life. What is the measure of his indwelling in your life? Well, the third consideration is the whole essence of this answer to temptation. The miracle of his indwelling is absolutely necessary, so is the measure of his indwelling.

But given those two, we can know the victory or the mastery of Christ's indwelling. It is only when the believer knows the miracle and measure of Christ's indwelling, that he can know the mastery of Christ's indwelling. Paul had to be able to say, Christ liveth in me, before he could say, for me to live is Christ.

And no greater statement did Paul ever make on the life in Christ than this. For in that one phrase, he sums up the whole Christian experience in relation to Christ. In that one comprehensive utterance, there is life from Christ, life with Christ, life in Christ, life for Christ.

Paul is saying in effect, living is Christ. Which is the equivalent expression of that word to the Colossians, Christ is our life. Now a study of the relevant passages makes it crystal clear that to know the mastery of Christ's indwelling is to know, first of all, the mastery of indwelling victory.

Get that, the mastery of indwelling victory. Listen to this very carefully. The victorious Christian life is just the life of the victorious Christ.

May I say that again? The victorious Christian life is just the life of the victorious Christ. Therefore, if you can say, Christ liveth in me, and for me to live is Christ, then you have the secret of victory over every foe, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Concerning the world, Jesus said, be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

So the mastery over the world is to know the indwelling overcomer of the world, even Christ. However much the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, or all that is in the world may seek to seduce and allure the believer, he can be more than conqueror, for he has the indwelling Christ, the overcomer of the world within him. He who faced the temptations in the wilderness, one, two, three, and in every other order, and overcame those temptations, that wonderful Christ of God dwells in me.

And this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith. What faith? The faith that rests in Christ to overcome the world through me. Concerning the flesh, we read that Jesus has condemned sin in the flesh.

Now he lives in my heart and in your heart to conquer every subtle form of this condemned and crucified flesh in our lives. This means to say that when he's allowed to reign over our thoughts and words and actions, we shall think, speak, and act like Jesus in every given situation of life. Concerning the devil, we have the assurance from the word of God that Jesus partook of flesh and blood, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death.

That is the devil. And John tells us that greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. No wonder when Sambal was asked whether he had the mastery over the devil, replied, no, no, but I have de-master of de-devil living in my heart.

I notice also that from the New Testament teaching, to know the mastery of the indwelling Christ is to know not only the mastery of indwelling victory, but the mastery of indwelling purity. That word of Paul to the Colossians is full of significance. Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Surely it is because of the indwelling Christ that Paul could know this hope of glory. And the indwelling Christ is the secret and guarantee of holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Writing to his converts, as we've been reminded in the Bible readings, the aged apostle could say, when he shall appear we shall be like him for we shall see him as he is, and every man that has this hope in him purifies himself even as he is pure.

Here then is the mastery of a life of purity. Christ in me, the hope of glory. How can I sin with the pure one living in my heart? How can I go on practicing sin, as we were hearing, with the pure one living in my heart? If Joseph were living today and faced with the same fierce temptation to fall to the seductions of that wicked woman, I'm sure his language would be something like this.

How can I do this great wickedness and sin with Jesus in my heart? But indwelling purity is not only negative in its outworking, it's preeminently positive. It certainly exposes and condemns sin, but it also

attracts all who hunger and thirst after righteousness. There was never anything false, strange, or repulsive about the purity of Jesus.

His was the beauty of holiness. But one more blessing which results from the mastery of Christ's indwelling is the mastery of indwelling energy. Not only victory, not only purity, but victory.

Christ is my victory. Christ is my purity. But Christ is also my energy.

There is no divine energy which does not reside in Christ. Paul tells us that it pleased the Father that in him, Christ, should all fullness dwell. Then further down in the same epistle, the apostle makes this astonishing statement, in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are complete in him.

This gives us every confidence to believe that there is no experience of life for which Jesus enough isn't adequate. We can draw on his energy at any moment for every situation. My dear friend, there is no demand made upon your life.

Indeed there is no temptation coming to your life which cannot be faced by the power of the indwelling Christ for the energy for meeting that situation, that temptation, that demand, is a demand indeed on the life of Christ in us. That's why Paul says in Philippians 4 and 13, I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Or as Philip translates it, I am ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives in me.

Some time ago I was invited to a friend's house for tea. After the meal he asked me to come and inspect his private workshop located in the back garden. Being mechanically minded, I jumped at the idea and followed him.

The little shed was nothing to write home about, nor indeed were the furnishings, but his work was brilliant. I remarked, you spend a lot of hours here late into the night. Yes, he said, but I've got good lighting.

I said, but don't you find it rather cold in the winter? Oh no, he said, I've got good heating, and he showed me a fire he had rigged up. Then I said, but your work is absolutely wonderful. How do you turn out woodwork so beautifully? I exclaimed, my friend, uncovering what was obviously his cherished tool, I've installed a home lathe.

And then with a flourish of his hand he said something I've never forgotten. It's easy, he said. I have power laid on and I can do practically everything.

I've never forgotten those final words. I have power laid on and with it I can do practically anything. Listen again to Paul.

I am ready for anything through the strength of the one who lives within me. What a transforming truth. This is the message for which Keswick has stood down through the years, that in our Lord Jesus Christ there's all sufficiency.

He is adequate. His victory, his purity, his energy are mine. As I count upon him through the rest of faith, I can prove him to be in me and through me all I need to live this victorious life.

And it was a wonderful day when as a lad of 21 years, smashed and broken by a life of willfulness, disobedient and sin and backsliding, I was brought to my knees by the words of a letter from my father, the central thought of which was, Stephen, my boy, there's only one life. It will soon be past. Only what's done

for Jesus will last.

Crumbling to my knees I cried to God, oh God, thou who has made Jesus my savior, make him my Lord and I crowned him Lord of my life. And ever since that moment I have known, despite failures and failings, that he can be and is victory, purity, energy for every situation of life. I want to ask my congregation here in the great tent and away there across the landline, is he Lord of your life tonight? Is he Lord of your life tonight? Is he guest or is he host? Is he merely savior or is he Lord? There's a little chorus that's made more impression upon my heart than any other chorus I know in the whole repertoire of young people's choruses written by a man in Belfast and used at the young people's convention there.

It goes like this, enter my life more fully, take now complete control of who thou has been my savior. Thou shalt be Lord of all. Will you pray that tonight? Will you? Let us bow together in prayer.

Tell me my beloved friend, young person, do you really desire to walk the way of victory? Do you want to know a complete answer to temptation? Do you want to know power in your life? Will you make him Lord? Hear it now. Will you do it now? Silently as you bow your head there, away out there on the green grass, away at those relay centers, here in this great tent. Let me repeat those words again.

Will you pray them after me as a prayer? Reverently, meaningfully, irrevocably, enter my life more fully, take now complete control, true thou hath be my savior, thou shalt be Lord of all. Father in heaven, hear the prayer that ascends to thee from hundreds of hearts we believe here today and seal with thy spirit all true response and grant that the lordship of Jesus may be demonstrated in life after life as they go down from Keswick and as people go away from churches all over the land tonight that they may know that victory, purity, and energy

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