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Sermon preached by Mr. J. W. Walder at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, Wednesday,

9th March 1988

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love." Ephesians 3:17

It was no small thing that the great apostle of the Gentiles desired might be granted unto the Ephesian believers. He mentions nothing to do with the things of this world and those things which are temporary and temporal, but he desired for them this great and unspeakable blessing and favour of the indwelling of Christ in their hearts by faith, and the wonder and the sweetness of the experience of being rooted and grounded in love, the love of God.

Well, we will first to notice this most wonderful fact that Christ is pleased by His Spirit and grace to come and take up His residence, fill and dwell in the heart of every one who is appointed unto eternal and everlasting life. These persons, to whom the Spirit writes by the apostle and for whom this great matter is desired, were previously, in their unregenerate state and condition, ignorant, blind, foolish, deceived people, following the lusts of the flesh, indwelt by the spirit of the world, indwelt by an overwhelming spirit of idolatry. There is no doubt but what they joined in with the rest of the Ephesians in their shouting for hours on end in regard to their worship of Diana of the Ephesians. O, what a wonderful mercy when the mighty Saviour of sinners is pleased to come and depose the devil from his usurped throne and to redeem and renew that heart which was possessed by the adversary and to release that person from Satan's kingdom and come and dwell Himself in that heart and take possession of it, and cause the person who is the subject of it to be favoured with the realisation of this vital, almighty, lasting and glorious change; Christ, formed in the heart the hope of glory. Now this is indeed a deep mystery, it is a most profound fact, a most precious and blessed truth. It is something that is to be realised, known and experienced by its effect and is a matter of no small moment. For not only is it a most blessed and sacred matter, but it is also a most needful and vital matter.

In 2 Corinthians 13:5 the Holy Spirit, by the apostle, uses such words as these: "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" O, what a solemn truth, how searching, how discriminating, how separating and how true! an exercised child of God will tremble at times when he cannot find the Saviour within, and on account of the prevailing evils and bondage and darkness and death that he feels, will say: 'Can ever God dwell here?' But what a wonderful mercy if we have some precious proof, evidence and sweet assurance in our hearts and experience that Christ does dwell in our hearts by faith.

I believe that this vital and most blessed matter might be known and proved and understood and realised by its effects; for surely there must be some mighty, effectual and most blessed fruit to this wonderful matter; "Christ formed in the heart, the hope of glory." There will be the fulfilment of that same experience, in some measure at least, that the apostle speaks of:

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and 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." (Galatians 2: 20)

Well, how then may we know in some small degree and measure, first in the initial experience of this, that this blessed Person, Jesus, the Son of God has come, not locally or literally, but has come into our hearts by divine power, His blessed Spirit and grace and that He has been pleased to take possession of what really is the purchase of His blood. I like the verse of good Newton who knew this vital change. He was converted from being a slave trader to a minister of the Gospel, and he knew in his unregeneracy that "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we had our conversation in times past;" (Ephesians 2:2) but the day came when there was that vital change, and he wrote that hymn of which I am very fond:

*Lord, I come to Thee for rest;
Take possession of my breast;
There Thy blood-bought right maintain,
And without a rival reign. (Gadsby's 379)*

Well, I say it is a great mystery. It is indeed spiritual and a thing which can neither be understood nor explained by reason or by natural understanding. They are things which are believed in the measure in which they are revealed and understood by a renewed understanding.

To use just a very simple figure for a moment. We have no doubt, any of us, but what our bodies are inhabited by our souls. We cannot explain it, we cannot fully understand it, we cannot describe it, but it is a blessed fact; it is so. Our souls are God's gift, He breathed them into us, He gives them to us, they are immortal souls, and they reside and dwell in our bodies until they return to God who gave them. So long as they remain in our bodies, we live, we feel, we see, we handle, we walk, we thirst, we hunger, we have an understanding, a mind that is operative and active: when the soul departs, all that ceases, there is no more life, no more motion, no more sight and so on. Now just as the soul dwells in our bodies, so Christ, by His Spirit is pleased to dwell in the heart. How, we cannot explain; how, we cannot describe; but He does by His Spirit and His grace dwell in the soul, and once He comes to dwell there He will dwell there for ever. That soul shall live eternally.

How is it that we know literally that we do live? how is it that we should know and prove that Christ, who is our life, that Christ, who is the life of the soul, that Christ, who is the light of the world, dwells in our hearts as such? Because of the proven, known and experienced effects of that life that is possessed by reason of this precious Person dwelling in the heart by faith; for He is Himself the life of every part, He is that precious Person who imparts, maintains and continues divine life in the soul. Now what a wonderful mercy if we know something of the movement, energy, vitality, effects and fruits of that divine life in the spiritual aspect and sense of those things which we feel naturally such as feeling, walking, handling, seeing, hearing, speaking, eating, drinking and all those things which are compatible with and to life. Can we truly say that whereas once we were dead to God, dead to the things of God, dead to

the ways of God, "Dead in trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1), dead in the world, dead in a profession maybe, no concern, no exercise, no want, no longing, no understanding, but then the day came when all that was changed; life was imparted; this precious Person, Christ, came to dwell in our hearts and to abide there by faith; and to be the life of every part of the new man, the spiritual man which is that in which Christ is pleased to dwell.

He is not only the life of the whole new man of grace, which is the part that is by regeneration called the new man and the new creature in the Scriptures, where Christ dwells in all His grace and Spirit; but being the life of the whole, He is also by the influence of His Spirit and grace and power the life of every part; so may we consider Christ dwelling in the heart by faith in the influence of those different parts of the new creature by His grace and power.

The heart we may understand to be the centre, the spring of every motion, desire, passion and longing; it is the very centre of all of those things which go up toward God in the exercise, longing and feeling of the soul. It is the very centre and seat of the affections and the desires, and that is where Christ is pleased to dwell. But in connection with this there is an indwelling, likewise and in equal measure and degree, in the renewed understanding.

Now let us emphasize that point, the renewed understanding. We have a measure of understanding by nature. We may gather much by study; we may collect about us a great degree of natural knowledge and understanding, but there is nothing of a spiritual, saving, living, divine and eternal nature about it. It is all fleshly, earthly and dead. Although the creed may be good and although the doctrine may be sound, there is no understanding of them in their spiritual sense, no knowledge of them in their saving influence and degree. Christ as the possessor of the soul, as the light of the world dwells in the renewed and enlightened understanding.

Now let us see if we know a little bit about it; if this precious Person is pleased to come and dwell in our hearts and dwell in us in our renewed understanding, as our Prophet and Teacher and as the light of our understanding; then shall we be given to understand; not in a literal sense but in a spiritual sense, the profound depth, meaning, reality and influence of the things of God, of Christ and of heaven. If we are given light in our renewed understanding, by Christ dwelling there as the light thereof; light reveals. It does not manufacture, it does not create, it does not change anything, it makes it manifest, it reveals; it gives such an understanding by revelation that we perceive the blessedness, greatness, suitability, sufficiency and the effect of that thing which is made known to us.

The people of God are continually lamenting on account of feeling their ignorance, their woeful lack of understanding, lamenting that they do not perceive. They feel to know so little, and the effect of this light and of Christ being a teacher in their understanding reveals to them the truth of God and this will cause them to realise how little they know. Natural knowledge, natural learning, natural ability, natural attainments will fill a person with pride, ambition and self-conceit, What God teaches will fill with humility, meekness and

teachability. The more we know the more we shall realise we do not know. We shall go down and down and down in our feelings until we feel ourselves to be a complete dunce. Light makes manifest, light reveals; Christ in the renewed understanding will teach so that we are given an understanding of the truth, an understanding of ourselves, a real, felt, powerful understanding of God's way of saving sinners, of which we could know nothing in feeling until it is made manifest to us, so that we feel the power and efficacy of this truth:

*Much we talk of Jesus' blood;
But how little's understood!
Of His sufferings so intense,
Angels have no perfect sense.* (Gadsby's 154)

A person may study the doctrines of grace all their lives and die in woeful ignorance, except Christ dwell in their hearts, in their renewed understanding as the light of the world and as the Prophet to teach. Mere knowledge cannot save.

He been pleased to teach us just a little? Has He been pleased to reveal to our renewed understanding just a little? so that we are not left in a state of such woeful ignorance that will cause us to perish by reason thereof; for want of knowledge, says the wise man, the people perish. O, can you say, in any small measure in regard to this revelation: "Whereas I was blind, now I see"? (John 9:25) I see my sinnership, I see my danger, I see my helplessness, I see my poverty, I see my ignorance; I see the suitability of Jesus, I see the suitability and sufficiency of God's grace, I understand the greatness and wonder of God's covenant and all that is contained in it in my little measure, I hope that the Lord has taught me a little. What a wonderful mercy, then, if Christ dwells in our understanding, that we have a renewed understanding.

Secondly, He is pleased to dwell in the conscience and that conscience is not that which we possess being the daughters and sons of Adam, as created in him, for God has given every man a conscience; but when a person is quickened by the Spirit and Christ is pleased to come and dwell in him as his life, then he has a renewed conscience. There is that which belongs to the new creature and the new man, and by reason of the indwelling of Christ there is the possession of a very tender conscience in the love and fear of God. In that conscience the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is pleased to dwell as his Priest. O, there He is pleased to exercise all the benefit, efficacy, sweetness and suitability and power of His High Priestly office, grace and work. The atonement of Christ terminates in a believer's conscience. There it has its end, its object and all its blessed effect. It is that precious blood of Christ, the High Priest, which gives, brings, and only can maintain peace, rest and joy. What a wonderful mercy to possess a pure conscience, a good conscience, a tender conscience! Now do we know a little of this? O, my friends, has this precious Person ever manifest His power within us in exercising His Priestly office and work in a tender, feeling conscience, applying the efficacy and power of His sweet and precious blood, causing His atonement really to terminate within our conscience so that we knew what it is for Him to dwell there by faith in the exercise of His grace and spirit and work; that we are not ignorant of Jesus and His

power within, but we have felt and known in our little measure, some of the benefits and blessings that He has secured by His High Priestly office and work.

Now the next thing is the heart. He dwells there and in a special and particular way He is pleased to manifest that He dwells in the heart. He makes it His throne, and He comes and sits upon the throne of His people's affections as their glorious, almighty and blessed Sovereign. That is a good hymn of Anne Steele:

*Thou only Sovereign of my heart,
My Refuge, my almighty Friend;
And can my soul from Thee depart,
On Whom alone my hopes depend ?* (Gadsby's 927)

Now having this blessed, sovereign right, His gracious sovereign power and love, His sovereign sceptre in the affections of His people; He governs every motion there. There is the request of another hymnwriter:

*O dwell in me, fill all my soul,
And all my powers by Thine control.* (Gadsby's 1075)

Do we know anything at all about a sovereign, gracious influence upon the affections, moving them, warming them, prompting a desire, influencing and directing it to the right place, in the right direction? Do we know what it is to feel a stirring within our hearts and affections that we cannot produce ourselves? A little springing up that is spiritual and heavenly and eternal, that which is above and beyond any power of the flesh or of the mind or of the natural feelings, that which sometimes is sweetly surprising? The Lord is pleased to influence His sovereign power and to surprise us by the sweetness of the effect and fruit of it. He dwells in our hearts if we know anything of the power and influence of sovereign grace, love and power; King Jesus has been pleased to depose the usurper and has come and has mightily taken His sovereign right, and there He will remain and continue to all eternity: King in the heart, dwelling there by faith.

He is also pleased to dwell in the will by His almighty, gracious and divine power. It is His prerogative to influence the renewed will, making the person willing in the day of His power. He will so influence the will that it is made acquiescent to the will of God, in His Word, in His gospel, in His precepts, in His mind and purpose concerning our pathway and all that concerns us in circumstance and soul exercise. What a wonderful mercy if we know just a little of this. In our unregeneracy, in our natural state and condition our will is at enmity, it is obstinate, it is perverse, depraved, influenced by the power of sin and of Satan. Our will is wholly, totally and completely wicked, evil, antichrist, opposite to everything that is good. We have a strong, determined and yet puny will, determined to everything that is evil. What a wonderful mercy if it is now different. I am well aware that we have still an old nature, no one more aware of it perhaps than myself. O, that which is such a grief, such an affliction; what a wonderful mercy if there is the renewed will and Christ dwells in that will by His power, His blessed influence and spirit and grace; and there are times when that new will, where Christ is, predominates, it overcomes. He is pleased to work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. He is pleased to work in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight. He is pleased to

strengthen us by His Spirit in the new inner man and we are not only caused to will but also enabled to do that which is good in His sight. There is a constant and conscious sense of the truth that without Him we can do nothing, that is nothing good, but the apostle said: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Philippians 4:13)

*Every work that thou must do,
Will thy gracious Saviour,
For thee work and in thee too,
Of His special favour.* (Gadsby's 780)

'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith' fill every part of our heart. If we know something of the effects in our little measure, have some humble proof that this is the case and we have ground to hope that Jesus Christ has come, He has turned out the devil, deposed him from his usurped throne, spoilt him of his kingdom and set up the kingdom of His own grace in our hearts, there He will abide, and there will be that precious, sacred, indissoluble, eternal union: "I in them, and thou in me that they may be made arrest in one." (John 17:23)

Now we must look at Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith; that is as to the realisation of it and the enjoyment of it and the feeling of it. It is by faith which is the precious gift of God. None can feel or experience it but a believer, Christ, dwelling in the heart, is not an imagined thing, it is not a myth, it is not something that is merely talked about; it is a blessed reality, is a fact, it is substantial, vital, real. Now the realisation, the feeling sense and enjoyment of it, is by faith, that faith which is God's gift.

We may believe many things and have no personal proof of what we believe. We may believe many things and not be able to prove it. The nature of God given faith is this we believe because we feel. That person who knows what it is to feel the presence of Christ, the love, power, influence, light and life of Christ within the soul, being able to descend into his heart and really find some evidence of the Saviour there, says, I believe it, because I feel it in me. He dwells there by faith. O, what a precious faith is that, whereby a believer, a true believer, is caused and enabled to believe because he has got the witness of it, has the feeling of it. As I have sometimes attempted to express the point, if we know what it is to feel in our hearts the effects of what Christ did as the Saviour, those effects as declared in God's Word, we know what it is to feel pardon, rest, redemption and we can say I know that Christ came into the world and I know that He died upon the cross because I have got the effects of Him doing so in my heart, I have got proof of Him coming and I believe because I feel. What a wonderful mercy to have this witness within! That Jesus dwells in the heart by faith. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in Himself:" (1 John 5:10)

Now lastly 'that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.' Another sweet, blessed, sacred desire, 'rooted and grounded in love.' That love which he desires that these believing Ephesians should be grounded and upon which they should be founded, is the love of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost. This is the love of God, who is love, and from whom all love is derived and by whom love has so wonderfully and blessedly been exercised, demonstrated, manifested and communicated. Love, eternal love; God is the

Fountain from whom this motive, this principle and all good has proceeded. The love of God is free, sovereign, eternal, unchangeable, unfathomable, incomprehensible, deep, high, long, broad, beyond comprehension, beyond understanding, and yet knowable and to be tasted, felt, enjoyed and understood in that measure in which it is revealed, shed abroad and made known and will be very fruitful very effectual wherever it is felt, realised and enjoyed.

The apostle first says that they might be rooted in this love. O what a fertile soil! We have a figure before us, the plant or tree, planted and rooted in the fertile soil of the love of God. Now it is very clear and plain from nature without much observation that a tree planted in fertile soil is healthy, strong in growth, fruitful. Its leaves are manifold and fresh. A tree planted in stony, infertile and starved soil will be stunted, fading, unfruitful and a very poor specimen. Now what a wonderful thing if you and I are among those trees of God's right hand planting, that are rooted in love, that live and spread out their roots which go deep down into the fertile soil of God's love, and bear fruit to His glory, the fruits of true love, submission, obedience, godly fear and all those precious things which are the fruits, effects, influence and exercise of love. Blessed ground, fruitful soil, O, what a wonderful mercy to feel just a little of this eternal love in its influence in our spirit.

The believer is not only rooted, but grounded, by which I understand settled or founded upon this blessed eternal and immutable love, the unchangeable, firm and blessed foundation of God's love. Now the stability, strength and beauty of a building is the stability, soundness and firmness of the foundation. What is a building without a firm foundation? Glorious as the edifice may appear it will soon crumble, crack and fall without a good foundation. Now what a wonderful mercy to be founded, grounded upon God's love, settled upon it. This is indeed a glorious and blessed source of hope, trust, salvation, peace and expectation of glory. O, may we never attempt to rest on any kind or sort of feeling of love in our hearts toward God, but may we seek to be founded and resting upon His love toward us. This is the foundation. I know it is sweet; I know it is blessed; I know it is longed for and to be much desired to feel love toward God in our poor hearts. It is the effect of His love but it is not the foundation; it is God's love which is the foundation. Now what a wonderful mercy to become well settled and founded upon it; to really be enabled to say and feel; He has loved me eternally, and He ever will love. O, how great is this love which is eternal, unfathomable, free, sovereign, boundless and beyond expression, comprehension or thought! and yet which may be known, felt, enjoyed and trusted: "Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end." (John 13: 13)

They were great things that the apostle desired, great things, but, my friends, will less suffice? Are they not needful and vital? I say, will less suffice? 'That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.'

The Lord grant that the desire may be feelingly fulfilled in each of our hearts.

Amen.

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