

---

**CHRIST'S INDWELLING WORD**  
**A SERMON BY REV. C.H. SPURGEON**  
**PREACHED ON APRIL 10, 1881**  
**AT THE**  
**METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE**

---

*“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” — Colossians 3:16*

THAT is a very beautiful name for Holy Scripture. I hardly remember that I have met with it anywhere else: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you.” Remember, dear friends, that Christ himself is the Word of God, and recollect also that the Scriptures are the word of the Word. They are “the word of Christ.” I think that they will be all the sweeter to you if you realize that they speak to you of Christ, that he is the sum and substance of them, that they direct you to Christ, in fact, as John says of his Gospel, that they were “written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

Remember, also, that the Scriptures do, in effect, come to us from Christ. Every promise of this blessed Book is a promise of Christ, “for all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us; they all come to us through Christ, God speaks them to us through him as the Mediator. Indeed, we may regard the whole of the Sacred Scriptures, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, as being “the word of Christ.”

The text tells us, first, how to treat the Scriptures: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;” and, secondly, it tells us how to profit by them: “in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

I. First, then, we are told here HOW TO TREAT THE SCRIPTURES: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.”

In order that it may dwell in you, it must first enter into you. It is implied, in our text, that the apostle says, "Let the word of Christ enter into you." Then you must read it, or hear it, for, unless you do, you will not know what there is in it. Yet there must be something more than the mere hearing or reading of it; for some hear the truth with one ear, but let it go away out of the other ear; and others are great readers, yet they seem to read only what is on the surface. The letter passes under their eye, but the deep spiritual meaning never enters into their heart. If you read a portion of Scripture every day, I commend you for doing so; if you make a practice of reading right through the Bible in a stated period, I commend you still more. Some I know read the Bible through every year, in due course. This is well; but all this may be done, and yet "the word of Christ" may never have entered into the reader. You know how children sometimes learn their lessons. I am afraid that, at a great many schools, there is no true instruction; but the scholars have simply to repeat their lessons, without ever getting at the sense and meaning of them; and a week or two after, they have forgotten all that they were supposed to have learnt. Do not let it be so with our knowledge of Scripture; let us not merely know it so as to be able to turn to its different chapters, or to be familiar with certain passages in it, or even to repeat all its words. This is but to let "the word of Christ" pass by your door or look in at your window; but Paul says, "Let it dwell in you."

So, I say again that, in order that it may dwell in you, it must first enter into you. You must really know the spiritual meaning of it; you must believe it; you must live upon it; you must drink it in; you must let it soak into your innermost being as the dew saturated the fleece of Gideon. It is not enough to have a Bible on the shelf; it is infinitely better to have its truths stored up within your soul. It is a good thing to carry your Testament in your pocket, it is far better to carry its message in your heart. But mind that you let it get right into you. How differently some people read the Bible from the way in which they read any other book! I have seen a young woman sitting down on board a steamboat, completely absorbed in a very suspicious-looking book. I have passed behind her, and passed before her, but she has not taken the slightest notice of me. Presently, I saw a tear brushed away from her eye; I knew that she was not reading the Bible, and it was my firm conviction that she was reading a novel. I have often noticed how such people let the novels get right into them, trash as they generally are; but when the most of people do read the Bible, they appear to be

anxious to get the unpleasant task finished, and put away. In some cases, they seem to think that they have performed a very proper action; but they have not been in the least affected by it, moved by it, stirred by it. Yet, if there is any book that can thrill the soul, it is the Bible. If we read it aright, we shall, as it were, lay our fingers among its wondrous harp strings, and bring out from them matchless music such as no other instrument in the world could ever produce. There is no book so fitted or so suited to us as the Bible is. There is no book that knows us so well, there is no book that is so much at home with us, there is no book that has so much power over us, if we will but give ourselves up to it; yet, often, we only let it look in at our window, or knock at our door, instead of inviting it to enter our very heart and soul, and therefore we miss its power.

Then, when it once gets into you, let it remain there. A person could not be said to dwell in a house even though he should enter into the most private part of it, if he only passed through it, and went away. A man who dwells in a house abides, resides, remains, continues there. Oh, to have “the word of Christ” always dwelling inside of us; — in the memory, never forgotten; in the heart, always loved; in the understanding, really grasped; with all the powers and passions of the mind fully submitted to its control! I love those dear Christian people who do not need to refer to the printed page when you speak to them about the things of God, for they have the truth in their hearts. They have a springing well within their souls at all times; and they have only to hear a Scriptural theme started, and straightway they begin to speak of the things which they have looked upon, and their hands have handled, of the Word of life, because it dwells in them.

What is the good of merely external religion? I heard of some people who met together to pray about a certain matter, but they could not pray because the bishop had not sent the form of prayer which they were to use on that occasion. I think that, if they were believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, they might have managed to speak to God without the necessity of having a written or printed form to guide them. Yet there are many who fancy they cannot offer a proper prayer unless they have it in a book; and they cannot talk about the things of God, or they can say but very little about them, because they have not “the word of Christ” dwelling within them. O dear friends, let it be always in you, from morning to night, abiding

as a constant visitor within your spirit; — nay, not merely as a visitor, let it dwell with you —

“No more a stranger or a guest,

But like a child at home.”

Further, “let the word of Christ dwell in you” so as to occupy your whole being. If it dwells within you, let it take such entire possession of your being that it shall fill you. To push the truth of Christ up into a corner of your nature, to fill the major part of your being with other knowledge and other thought, is a poor way to treat “the word of Christ.” It deserves the fullest attention of the best faculties that any man possesses. The truth revealed by the Holy Ghost is so sublime that its poetry outsoars the eagle-wing even of a Milton. It is a deep so profound that the plumbline of Sir Isaac Newton could never find the bottom of it. The greatest minds have been delighted to yield their highest faculties to its wondrous truths. Dear young friends, you who have only lately put on Christ, I beseech you not to let other books stand on the front shelf, and the Bible lie behind. Do not, for the most part, read those other books, and only read small portions of Scripture now and then; let it always have the chief place. The most excellent of all sciences is the science of Christ crucified, and the Bible is the textbook for all who would learn it. If other forms of knowledge are useful, they are like the planets; but the knowledge of God as revealed in Christ Jesus is as the sun. Let this always be the centre of your system of knowledge and let all the rest that you know move in subordination and subjection to that first and best form of knowledge. If I may know myself and know my Saviour; if I may know my sin, and the atonement by which it is put away; if I may know my way through this life, and my way into the eternal life above, I will be content if I know but little else. Willingly would I meddle with all knowledge; and, though “much study is a weariness of the flesh,” yet would I find a pleasure in such weariness, if I only knew even as much as Solomon knew. But it would be vanity of vanities, and altogether vanity, if you and I were as wise as Solomon, and yet did not know the truth of God. Therefore, “let the word of Christ dwell in you” so as to occupy the whole of your being; let it be the resident, the occupant, the master and ruler of your entire nature.

Once more. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you;” that is, let it be your most familiar friend. We know the people who live in our home, but we do

not really know other people. When someone asked Mr. Whitefield, "What do you think of Mr. So-and-so's character?" he answered, "I cannot say, for I never lived with him." Ah! that is the true test; it is living with people that lets you know what they are. In like manner, if you will live with "the word of Christ," especially if you will let it dwell in you, and abide with you as a constant friend, you will get to know it better; and the better you know it, the more you will love it. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, if you meet with a man who finds fault with the Bible, you may be certain that he never read it. If he would but read it in the right spirit, he would be of another opinion. And if you find a professing Christian indifferent to his Bible, you may be sure that the very dust upon its cover will rise up in judgment against him. The Bible-reader is ever the Bible-lover, and the Bible-searcher is the man who searches it more and more. Various pursuits have a measure of fascination about them, but the study of God's Word is fascinating to the highest degree. Jerome said, when he was pondering a certain text, "I adore the infinity of Holy Scripture;" I have often felt that I could say the same. The Bible is a book that has no bounds to it. Its thoughts are not as men's thoughts, a multitude of which may go to make up half an ounce; but any one of the thoughts of God can outweigh all the thoughts of men. This Book is not a book of pence, or a book of silver, or e'en a book of gold, but a book whose every leaf is of untold value. He shall be enriched indeed who lets "the word of Christ" richly dwell in him.

My dear friends, I should like you so to read the Bible that everybody in the Bible should seem to be a friend of yours. I should like you to feel as if you had talked with Abraham and conversed with David. I can truly say that there is hardly anybody in the world that I know so well as I know David. In making The Treasury of David, I have laboured, year after year, in that rich field of inspiration, the Book of Psalms, till I do assure you that David and I are quite familiar friends, and I think I know more about him than about any man I ever saw in my life. I seem to know the ins and outs of his constitution and experience, his grievous faults and the graces of his spirit. I want you to be on just such intimate terms with somebody or other in the Bible, — John, if you like, or Mary. Sit at Jesus' feet with her. Or Martha; it will not hurt you to make the acquaintance of Martha, and do a great deal of serving, though I do not want you to get cumbered with it. But do find your choicest friends in the Scripture. Take the whole company of Bible saints home to your heart, let them live inside your soul. Let old Noah come in with his ark, if he likes; and let Daniel come in with his lions' den, if

he pleases; and all the rest of the godly men and women of the olden time, take them all into your very nature, and be on familiar terms with them; but, most of all, be especially intimate with him of whom they all speak, namely, Jesus Christ your blessed Lord and Master.

As for the doctrines revealed in the Bible, you should have them at your fingers' ends. The great truths of the Word of God should be as familiar to you as a scholar makes his much-loved classics to be, or as the mathematician makes his plus and minus, his a and his x, familiar to him from hour to hour. So do you prize "the word of Christ;" "let it dwell in you richly in all wisdom."

II. But now, secondly, I am to tell you HOW TO PROFIT BY THE WORD OF CHRIST, if we once get it to dwell in us.

First, seek to profit by it yourself: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." Let it make you wise. The man who studies his Bible well will become a wise man. If God the Holy Ghost teaches him, I believe that he will become a wise man even in something more than a spiritual sense. Every Scotch child used to be taught the Book of Proverbs; it was one of the class-books of Scotch schools; and I have heard it said that this particular form of instruction has largely helped to make our Scotch friends so sharp and clever; and I should not wonder if that is the case. They certainly are as wise a race of people as we are likely to meet with. I wish our Irish friends also would study the Book of Proverbs. If it would make them as cool as it has made our Scotch friends, it might improve them without taking away any of their natural humour and warmth of heart. I wish that English people also would read more of the Bible. I can truly say that when I have met with men in whom "the word of Christ" has dwelt richly, I have often found them very shrewd even about common-place things. I recollect a man, in a certain workshop, making a great many very rude remarks, and at last he was silenced by one of the workmen who said to him, "I think, sir, you are referred to in the twentieth chapter of Proverbs." He did not explain his meaning; but the man who was thus addressed went home, and when he looked up the chapter, he found these words in the third verse, "Every fool will be meddling." It was an admirable rebuke for him, and all the better because he had an hour or two before he knew exactly what it was; and when he reached his home, and was at leisure to think, he could look up the passage, and see how appropriate it was to his case. If you will take the Word of God for your guide, even in domestic and

business matters, you will often manifest a shrewdness which, perhaps, may not be natural to you, but which will come to you through “the word of Christ” dwelling in you richly in all wisdom. That, however, is only a small part of the profit which it will bring to you.

Do you want wisdom with which to master yourself? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Do you need something to cheer a naturally sinking spirit? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Do you wish for that which will calm an angry mind, a temper all too apt to be suddenly excited? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Are you in a calling where you are sorely tempted, and do you long to know how to be kept from falling into sin? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Is your position a very difficult one? Are you scarcely able to balance the claims of different relationships? “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Are you expecting to have a time of intense strain and trial such as you have never experienced before? Prepare yourself for it by letting “the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” It shall give you all manner of wisdom by which you shall be able to baffle even the subtlety of the old serpent himself. We used to have, in many of our churches, a number of solid, substantial men, “men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do;” and an equal proportion of deeply-taught godly matrons, true mothers in Israel. Well, those stalwart Christians were brought up on such spiritual meat as I have been commending to you. They were diligent students of the Word of God; and if we are to have a succession of such, men and women, they can only be qualified by going to the University of Scripture and taking their degree by permitting “the word of Christ” to dwell in them richly.

The next way of using “the word of Christ” to profit is to seek to profit others by it: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” We are to know the truth ourselves so as to be able to teach and admonish one another.

First, we are to seek the profit of our fellows by teaching one another. No one man can ever teach such a vast congregation as I have, so as to give the separate instruction that is needed by each one; this work must be done by the members of the church themselves. “The word of Christ” must dwell in you, and then you must become a Mutual Instruction Society. Every Christian should exercise the office of the pastorate according to his ability and his opportunity. In such a church as this, every one of the members

must look well not only to his own spiritual affairs, but also to the wellbeing of others. What sweet and gracious instructions the older ones among you can give if you tell out your experience! It is very interesting to any of us to hear it, but how helpful it is to the beginners in the divine life!

And if, in addition to relating your experience, you talk of the Scriptures that have been opened up to you, the promises that have been fulfilled to you, the passages in the Bible that have been applied to your heart by the Holy Spirit who inspired them, you will greatly instruct your fellow-Christians. A dear brother in the Lord said to me, the other day, "I do not often meet now with those people who talk about the things of God to one another. Even when I meet with Christians, their conversation is generally concerning a meeting or a Conference that is going to be held, or something that is to be done; but we do not seem to talk much about Jesus Christ himself, and about experimental truth, and about the sorrows and the joys of God's people." I wish we did talk more of such things. It is well to be busy for the Lord; but it is better still to be in communion with him. You who are deeply taught in the Scriptures should try to teach others also for their profit.

One way of teaching one another is mentioned in the text: "in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." A learned minister, a little while ago, discovered that no hymn ought to be sung unless it was distinctly directed and addressed to God, and was intended to be full of praise throughout. Well, we do have some remarkably wise men nowadays, at least, in their own estimation, but it appears that the apostle Paul thought that "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" were to be used for instruction and admonition as well as for the praises of God. And, to my mind, there is no teaching that is likely to be more useful than that which is accompanied by the right kind of singing. When I am preaching, I often find a verse of a hymn the very best thing I can quote; and I have not the shadow of a doubt that, frequently, a verse of sacred poetry has struck a man who has been altogether missed by the rest of the sermon. Think how compactly truth can be taught by means of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," and how likely it is to be remembered when the very measure and rhyme and rhythm help the memory to treasure up the message. I shall never forget what repentance is while I can say,

"Repentance is to leave



The sins I loved before,  
And show that I in earnest grieve  
By doing so no more.”

It is well to have truth put into the form of a verse that the memory may be able to lay hold of it, and to retain it. Do try, dear friends, to get so full of “the word of Christ” in all forms of it, that you may run over with it. You know, it cannot come out of you if it is not first in you. If you do not get “the word of Christ” into you, you will not be instructive in your general conversation.

In addition to instruction, there is to be admonition. That is a very difficult thing to administer wisely. I have known a brother try to admonish another, and I have felt that he would have done better if he had left the task alone, for he has only caused irritation and resentment; but there is a gracious way of admonishing which cannot be too frequently practised. When I first began to preach, I am afraid that I used to say a great many strange things, which, of course, I do not do now; but having, on a certain occasion, said something rather striking, and perhaps not quite wise, there was an excellent Christian man who wanted to set me right. He did not come and thrust himself upon me in a very solemn manner, and provoke me to scoff at him, and his reproof also. Neither did he say anything so as to irritate me; but finding my Bible lying about, he stuck a pin into it at the words, “Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” When I was at home, I looked at that pin, and I looked at that text, and I said to myself, “Whose house was I in last?” When I recollected, I said, “That is the man who stuck that pin in there, depend upon it.” I never felt vexed with him; on the contrary, I was very grateful to him, and I always loved and admired him; and I thought, “Now, if he had spoken to me about what I had said, it is possible that he might have stuck the pin into me where I should not have liked it; but as he only stuck it into my Bible, it did not irritate me.” You see, also, that I gratefully recollect the rebuke even to this day.

Sometimes, the best way to give an admonition will be by singing a psalm or a hymn. The clerks in the old meeting houses, when they used to be allowed to choose the hymns, have often taken away much of the evil effect of an erroneous sermon by their wise selection of the closing verses. Now and then, if you are discreet, you can quote an appropriate verse, as

people say, “accidentally for the purpose,” and you can bring in a portion of a psalm that shall exactly say for you what you might have said in a blundering way; and the dear brother who has done wrong will accept the rebuke without being enraged by it. When you attempt to snuff the candle, do not put it out by your clumsiness; but take the golden snuffers, in the form of a verse of a psalm, or a hymn, or a spiritual song, and even while you sing it, you will be administering the admonition and the instruction which it is your duty to give. I wish to put this matter so that it shall be remembered by you, and I want especially, to press it home upon you, dear friends, members of this church of more than five thousand souls. What can we do unless you all look after one another? And how shall we ever get on unless, in addition to preaching, there shall be continual mutual instruction going on, wise and joyful and cheerful, and accepted in a kind, loving, and generous spirit? God fill you with “the word of Christ,” that you may thus teach and admonish one another!

But, lastly, “the word of Christ,” when it dwells in us, is to profit us in our relation to God himself; for, after all, the main object of our singing, the principal purpose of our teaching and admonishing, must be the glory of God: “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” Oh, may “the word of Christ dwell in you” so richly that you shall bless God from morning to night! May you so overflow with holy thought and sacred knowledge that your whole being shall be a hymn of praise to the Most High, and your entire existence shall be a glorious hallelujah! I do not think that we any of us sufficiently value the divine ordinance of praise; neither do I think that we ever shall till “the word of Christ” has taken full possession of our souls.

You have been upstairs to pray, you say, and you have got no comfort from the exercise. Let me suggest that the next time you go upstairs, you sing a psalm. “Oh, I have been up and down!” says one, “trying to arouse myself into earnestness of supplication.” May I also propose to you that you do not try that method again for a while but begin to praise God. How many times a day do you praise him? I think you do get alone to pray, and you would be ashamed if you did not, once, twice, or three or even more times in the day; but how often do you praise God? Now, you know that you will not pray in heaven; there it will be all praise. Then do not neglect that necessary part of your education which is to “begin the music here.” Start at once praising the Lord. Many of our doubts and fears would fly away if we praised God more; and many of our trials and troubles would altogether vanish if we began to sing of our mercies. Oftentimes, depression of spirit,

that will not yield to a whole night of wrestling, would yield to ten minutes of thanksgiving before God. Praying is the stalk of the wheat, but praise is the very ear of it. Praying is the leaf of the rose, but praise is the rose itself, redolent with the richest perfume.

Praise God, then, “in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” and if you say you do not know how to do it, then “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” It is a praise-begetting thing. Out of every Book of Scripture will stream praise unto Jehovah. Out of every promise will spring a sonnet. Out of every divine truth, enjoyed and lived upon, will rise a spiritual song. The whole revelation of God is the condensed essence of praise; you have only to give it a fitting opportunity, by setting it simmering on the fire of a grateful heart, and you shall find a sweet cloud of holy incense rising from it, acceptable to the Most High. Therefore, beloved, be much with your Bibles, and let your Bibles be much with you for your own profit, for the profit of others, and for the glory of God. So be it, for Christ’s sake! Amen.