

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
January 8, 2017

Let the Word Dwell in You

Colossians 3:16

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

We started to choose a “Verse of the Year” from the year before last. Two years ago, we chose from Luke 11:1 “Lord, teach us to pray”, and last year, we chose from Hosea 6:3 “3 Let us know; let us press on to know the LORD.” This year, we chose from Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Then, what does “the word of Christ” refer to? When we let the word of Christ dwell in us, what kind of blessings will we receive? Let’s think about this together.

1. The Word of Christ

First of all, what is “the word of Christ”? The word “of” has many meanings. If we interpret that Christ speaks of, then it means that the word that Christ had spoken. In English Bible, some show that the words Christ directly spoke are shown in red. They are written as “Words of Christ in red” or “Red Letter Edition”, but are the words written in red the only words of Christ?

The prophets in the days of Old Testament wrote a lot of prophecies on Christ. According to Peter 1:11, “The Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and

the subsequent glories.” That means the Old Testament is the word of Christ spoken through prophets.

The New Testament carries the words of apostles, but they are also “the words of Christ”. Even through Christ actually spoke on earth, Christ did not necessarily write it down by himself. The apostles who were recalling His word, wrote the direct word of Christ. But it was Holy Spirit that made them recall the word of Christ, therefore, it was Christ that spoke through the apostles. That is why the New Testament also carries the word of Christ. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” God spoke through Christ and Christ spoke through his apostles. Therefore, “the word of Christ” does not only refer to the direct word of Christ but also the entire Bible.

“The word of Christ” also means “the word about Christ”. The entire Bible carries the word that Christ spoke, but at the same time, it speaks about Christ. As John 5:39 says “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,” the Bible shows Christ, its main theme is “Jesus Christ”.

Therefore, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you” means we should read the Bible as Christ speaks, read the Bible to find Christ in it, and meet Christ through the Bible. The Bible is very interesting as an object of historical study and moving as a literature. It also contains full of wisdom of life and lessons. It is very useful however you read it. But unless you focus on Christ, you cannot read it correctly. If you remove Christ from the Bible or put him aside, then you are not

reading the Bible as “the word of Christ”.



You are now looking at the part of Jesus’ face drawn by an artist, but this piece was actually written with the word of the Bible. The artist added the contrast to the characters from the Bible. When you look at them from far, it is made so that the face of Christ will emerge. This art piece teaches us that every page you read in the Bible you will always find Christ and you will meet Him through the word. Let us continue to read and study the Bible in this way in this year, too.

2. The Dwelling Word

In the first part, we have learned about “the Word of Christ”, next should we learn about the word, “dwell,” written in today’s verse here, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” This word has two meanings put together in original text; in English, it could be described “in” and “home.” That indicates the situation; “you are living in one home with someone.” I would say it’s like “under the same roof.” It suggests the close relationship as a family living together.

In the Bible, this word, “dwell,” is used to describe that God is with people who believe in God. According to 2 Corinthians 6:16, it says, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them,

and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” This is a promise between God and people; the highest Holy existence, the Creator of all, will be living with us “under the same roof,” no longer looking at our smallness and sinfulness. This unbelievable thing is that Jesus Christ had achieved. God declares, saying, "I am your God, and you are mine.” Through Jesus Christ we could say to God, “You are my God, and I am yours.” This is such an amazing grace. This year, we may also accept God day by day and taste the joy living with God.

Romans 8:11 says, “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” It teaches that Holy Spirit “dwells” in spirits of the believers. The Spirit doesn’t sometimes visit you, but lives with, “dwell in” the believer’s spirit as always. The same Romans 7:17-20, insists, “So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me... Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.” It describes the sin “dwells” in people’s heart, likewise “stuck” and people are not able to let it go by their own power. So, Paul who written this cried out in Romans 7:24, “Wretched man that I am!” However, this grief is changed into the shout of victory, because the believers will have the Spirit dwelling in themselves, instead of sticky sins, the Holy Spirit never leave you after all.

So, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly” implies that we shall accept the words of Christ and live our daily lives with the world of Christ, for God will be with us, and the Spirit also dwells in us.

The word of Christ is only written in ink on the bound papers,

unless you read them. It also remains in your brain as insensible memories unless you accept them in your heart after reading. It would not let you live in the word of Christ unless you take actions based on what you read and accept in your heart. As long as you let the word of Christ dwell in you, you cannot bear the fruits of Holy Spirit, and the fruits of the word of Christ. If you haven't accepted the word standing before your door yet, accept it in your home of heart. If you haven't invited the word of Christ into your private rooms, call the word out of the guest room. We all have "room of doubt", "room of frustration", and "room of fear". Let the word come into those rooms. Not like the Spirit sometimes visit your heart, but the Spirit dwells in your spirit as always. This is how you "let the word of Christ dwell in you."

3. The Blessings

Reading, studying, and meditating the Bible, these are necessary for that let the Word of Christ dwell in us. You need to do these things everyday little by little, and it will bring blessing to you. In physical exercise or study, it is important to do it everyday little by little. It is said that exercise or study in 15 minutes a day is way better than in 2 hours consecutive exercise or study. "Letting the Word dwell in us" is also the same. With the accumulation of everyday efforts, you can share the testimonies , saying, "I was led by the Word," "I was encouraged by the Word," and "I was fulfilled with the Word."

1 Peter 2:2 says, "Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation." People who let the Word dwell in them can receive the blessing of "growth of faith".

When each of us let the Word dwell in him/her individually, the church such people gather will be able to build the spiritually rich fellowship. Colossians 3:16 says, “let the word of Christ dwell in YOU richly,” This “YOU” means church. “Teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” means the fellowship of church, and “singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” means worship of church. When everyone in the church “let the Word dwells in him/her”, the Word dwells in the church. Then, the fellowship that is “teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom” will grow, and the worship service that is “singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God” will be offered.

In John 15:7, Lord Jesus said “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.” The Lord said “If my words abide in you”. He meant that if we keep his word in us, we will be able to abide in Christ. When we let the Word dwell in us, Christ will dwell in us. This is the biggest blessing that comes from the Word. The inner happiness and satisfaction of those who let the Word dwell in them can not be compared to others. We shall stay in Christ by the Word and receive the blessing that we can live with Christ.

(Prayer)

Dear Father, as an individual and church, please guide and help us enjoy the Word and let it dwell in us. Help us taste the richness of the Word and fulfill our soul with it. Bring us up with your pure word in this year, too.. In the name of Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.