

The Fullness of God Dwelling in Christ

by Edward Payson

The sermon emphasizes that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, and that faith in Christ is necessary to obtain a portion of that fullness.

Scripture: John 6:35, John 14:9, Acts 4:12, Ephesians 3:19, Colossians 2:9

Topics: "Christology", "Sanctification"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about the profound truth that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, emphasizing the importance of seeking God through Christ alone. He explains that faith in Christ forms a channel through which believers can partake in the infinite blessings and fullness of God. Payson highlights the necessity of applying to Christ to obtain a portion of His fullness, as all spiritual wisdom, knowledge, and happiness flow from Him. He urges listeners to come to Christ for spiritual healing, enlightenment, and sanctification, as only through Him can one find God and experience true fulfillment.

Transcript

In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. -- Colossians II. 9.

THIS is asserted of Jesus Christ. It appears, at the first glance, to contain most important truth; truth which cannot but be interesting to all who wish to form just conceptions of our God and our Redeemer. Indeed, there are few passages in the inspired volume which would sooner arrest the attention and excite the inquiries of one who was reading it for the first time.

I. Let us endeavor to ascertain its import, that we may learn what it is designed to teach us.

In attempting this it is necessary to inquire what is meant by all the fullness of the Godhead. The original word, here rendered fullness, signifies that by which any thing is filled, completed, or made perfect. Thus when it is said, the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; by the fullness of the earth is evidently meant, all those things with which the earth is filled or every thing which it contains. So by the fullness of the Godhead is meant, all that the Godhead contains, all the natural and moral attributes of Deity; every thing, in short, which renders the divine nature perfect and complete. This phrase then includes in its import the whole deity or divinity, with its attributes of infinity, eternity, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, holiness, justice, goodness, mercy, faithfulness and truth. Should it be thought that the word fullness does not necessarily mean so much as this, yet it must, I think, be allowed, that all the fullness of the Godhead cannot mean anything less; for if any one perfection or attribute of

divinity be taken away, all the fullness of the Godhead would not remain. There would be something wanting. The divine nature would not be full; or in other words, perfect and complete. Wherever then all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, there every natural and moral attribute of divinity will be found.

Let us next inquire what is meant by the assertion, that all this fullness dwells in Christ. There are, in the original, two words which, in our translation, are rendered to dwell. The first literally signifies, to reside, as in a tent or tabernacle, and is used to denote a temporary residence. This word is used by St. John when he says, The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; literally, resided among us, as in a tabernacle or temporary habitation. The other word signifies, to dwell as in a house, or fixed habitation, and is always used to signify a more permanent residence; because a house is permanent, compared with a tent. Now it is the latter word, the word that signifies a permanent residence, which is used in our text. The import of the assertion which it contains, then, is this: All the fullness of the Godhead resides in Jesus Christ, as in its permanent or fixed habitation.

It is further asserted that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily. The word body is not infrequently used by the inspired writers to signify what is real and substantial, in distinction from that which is shadowy, figurative, or typical. Thus an apostle, speaking of the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic law, says, They are a shadow of good things to come, but the body, that is, the real substance, of which they are only shadows or types, is Christ. In a similar sense the word bodily appears to be used in our text. It signifies really or substantially, and teaches us that all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, not in a figurative or apparent, but in a real sense.

From the preceding examination of the several parts of our text, the import of the whole appears to be this: The whole Deity, with all its natural and moral attributes, actually resides in Jesus Christ, as a fixed or permanent habitation.

II. Let us inquire, whether this statement of the import of our text corresponds with other parts of the inspired volume. A very slight examination will convince us that it does.

In the first place, we are taught in many passages that the Father and the Spirit dwell in Jesus Christ. Our Savior frequently declared that the Father dwelt in him, and added, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. And the Spirit of God, the Spirit which inspired the Jewish prophets, is repeatedly said to be the Spirit of Christ. He is also represented as having the Spirit without measure, and as communicating the Spirit to others. Now the whole Godhead is included in the Father, the Son or Word, and the Holy Spirit. Wherever all these dwell, all the fullness of the Godhead must dwell. But we have seen that the Father and the Spirit dwell in Jesus Christ. And all allow that the Son or Word dwells in him. In him, therefore, the whole Godhead dwells.

In the second place, Jesus Christ is represented in many parts of the inspired volume as possessing and exercising all the perfections of Deity. We are informed that all things were made by him, that without him was not anything made that was made; that he upholds all things by the word of his power, and that all power in heaven and on earth is his. He must then be Almighty. We are informed that in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, that he knows the Father, even as the Father knows him, and that he knows what is in man. Speaking of himself he says, all the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the heart. He must then be omniscient. We are informed that he is with his ministers always to the end of the world, and that wherever two or three are assembled in his name he is in the midst of them. While residing on earth, he spoke of himself as being in heaven, and after he ascended to heaven he was

represented as still being on earth. He must then be omnipresent. In fine, we are informed that he fills all things, that he filleth all in all, and that he is all in all. In him, of whom this is said, all the fullness of the Godhead or every natural and moral attribute of the Deity must surely dwell.

Having thus given a brief statement of the import of our text, and confirmed the truth of that statement by an appeal to other parts of revelation, I request your attention to some important inferences which naturally result from it.

1. If all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, then in Jesus Christ alone can God be found. The scriptures inform us that mankind have, without a single exception, forsaken God, that they have all gone out of the way, have all gone astray like sheep, and turned every one to his own way, and that the way of peace they have not known. Having thus wandered from God, they have lost him, lost knowledge of him, lost his image, lost his favor, so that they naturally live without God in the world. But they must return to him, they must find him again, or be lost forever; for he is the Father of lights, the Fountain of holiness and felicity. Agreeably, an apostle declares it to be the will of God that the sons of men should seek after him, if peradventure they may find him. Now if we wish to find a man who is always in one place, we must go to that place, go to his residence. It is vain to seek him or to expect to find him anywhere else. So, since the whole Godhead resides in Jesus Christ, as in a permanent habitation, we must repair to Jesus Christ, if we would find God. We shall in vain attempt to find him, to acquire knowledge of him, or to gain his forfeited favor, if we seek him anywhere else. Thus the scripture, speaking of spiritual wisdom and understanding, or, in other words, of the knowledge of God says, Where shall it be found, and where is the place thereof? Man knoweth not its place, neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, it is not in me; the sea saith, it is not with me. Where then is its place, seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living I God understandeth the why thereof and he knoweth the place thereof. What he knows he has revealed to us. He has informed us, that it is all placed in Jesus Christ, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are laid up in him. In him alone then can we find God. Accordingly he says, I am the way and the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me. No one knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father. Let every man then, who would find a lost God, come without delay to Jesus Christ, in whom he dwells. In him, God is, if I may so express it, always at home. In him he will always be found. No where else will any find him. They may seek him in the works of creation; they may search for him in the dispensations of his providence; they may look for him in his word; but never will they find him, till they come to Jesus Christ; for even the scriptures, we are informed, make men wise unto salvation only through faith in Christ Jesus. But if we come to him, we shall be enabled to say with the primitive Christians, God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

On hearing these remarks some will perhaps say, we do not understand what is meant by finding God. It is not easy to make an impenitent sinner understand what is meant by this expression, though it is perfectly understood by every real disciple of Christ. So far as it can be explained to others, I will, however, endeavor to explain it. To a careless, thoughtless sinner, God does not appear to be a present reality. He may assent to the fact that God is every where present, but he does not feel his presence, it does not appear real to him; it does not affect him, it does not influence his conduct. He comes, perhaps, to the house of God on the Sabbath. He is told that God is here; but he does not perceive his presence. There is no weighty impression upon his spirits of a present God, none of that awe or reverence or godly fear which the presence of God ought to produce. He hears hymns sung in which strong emotions of

admiration, gratitude and love to God are expressed; but he does neither feel such emotions himself, nor perceive any thing to excite them in others. He stands up to pray, but he perceives no being present to whom his prayers may be addressed. If he has been taught that prayer is a duty, he may perhaps enter his closet and attempt to pray. But he does not feel that God is present there to hear him. He speaks, as it were into the air, and his prayers, as such a person once expressed it, do not seem to rise above his head, do not appear to ascend to heaven. Should his conscience be awakened, and should he in consequence begin to feel that there is a God, and to cry for mercy, God appears to be at a great distance from him, and he cannot come near, cannot find any way in which to approach him. He cannot understand what the apostle meant when he said to Christians, ye who were formerly afar off are now brought near by the blood of Christ. But let such a man come to Christ, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, and a great change will take place in his views and feelings. God will then become to him a present and most interesting reality. Then he will perceive his presence every where, especially in his closet, and in places of public worship. His heart will glow with those emotions which are expressed in the songs of praise; his affections and desires will ascend to heaven with the public prayers, and in private devotion he will be able to say with the Psalmist, It is good for me to draw near to God; and instead of living as he once did, without God in the world, he will like the primitive saints walk with God.

2. If all the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Christ, then no man can obtain a portion of that fullness, except by applying to Christ. The truth of the inference is so obvious as scarcely to require either illustration or proof. Did all the light in the universe dwell in the sun, no man, it is evident, could obtain light except from the sun. Were all the water which exists in the world collected into one reservoir, no man, it is obvious, could obtain water without applying to that reservoir. Equally evident is it that since all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, no man can obtain a portion of that fullness without applying to Christ. This truth will appear exceedingly important and interesting to all who are aware of the fact, that unless we can obtain a portion of the fullness of God, we must pine in eternal want. The mercy which pardons sin, the divine light which illuminates the understanding, the grace which purifies the heart, the strength which resists temptation, overcomes the world, and endures to the end; the consolation which supports the soul under trials and afflictions; the triumphant faith, and the hope full of immortality, which are requisite to give victory over death, and all the everlasting joys and glories of heaven flow from the fullness of God, and no man can partake of them without partaking of that fullness. A participation of that fullness is then the one thing needful to every child of Adam; and better, infinitely better would it be for any one to be destitute of every thing else than to want this. Better would it be for us to be deprived of possessions, friends, reputation, health, sense and reason, than to lose forever this one thing needful. If any think that this is too strong language, I answer, it is not stronger language than the scriptures warrant us to use. They represent it as the greatest of all blessings to partake of this fullness; and the want of it as of all evils the most terrible. Addressing those who were destitute of it, our Savior declares that they were poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked. At the same time, he counsels them to come to him for a supply; thus intimating that from him alone they could obtain it. All his invitations speak the same language. When he stood and cried, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; that is, if any man feels a want, let him come unto me and receive a supply, he plainly intimated that in him alone the water of life could be found, that by him alone human wants could be supplied. Well then, might an apostle exclaim respecting him, Neither is there salvation in any other.

3. From the fact that all the fullness of the Godhead resides in Jesus Christ, we may infer the necessity and the worth of that faith in him, on which the inspired writers lay so much stress. That you may have just views of this subject, look first at him. See in him an infinite, inexhaustible fullness of all spiritual blessings;

a fullness of light sufficient to illuminate all minds; of mercy to pardon all sins; of grace to sanctify all hearts; of happiness to make all human beings forever blessed.

Then turn and look at mankind. See them as they are described in the word of God, spiritually blind, sinful, guilty and wretched. Now what is necessary to banish all their evils, supply all their wants, and secure to them endless felicity? Is any thing, can any thing more be necessary, than to form such a channel of communication between them and Jesus Christ, that the fullness of the Godhead which dwells in him may flow out to them? If such a channel could be formed, would not this fullness of light, mercy, grace, and felicity pour itself into their souls till, in the language of an apostle, they were filled with all the fullness of God?

My hearers, faith, faith in Christ, and faith alone does form such a channel of communication as this. This is the appointment of God. He has established such a constitution, that whenever any sinner begins to exercise faith in Christ, he shall begin to partake of that fullness which dwells in Christ, and the degree in which he partakes of this fullness, will be just in proportion to the strength of his faith. We may illustrate this truth by a reference to events which took place during his residence on earth.

The whole multitude, we are informed, sought to touch him; for there went virtue out of him and healed them all. On another occasion, a diseased female said, if I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be whole. She did touch it, and healing virtue instantly flowed into her enfeebled frame. In both these cases, it was the touch of faith which drew virtue from Christ. They touched him, because they believed, or had faith that there was in him virtue sufficient to heal their diseases.

Agreeably, our Savior said to the patient last mentioned, Thy faith hath saved thee. Just so now, when a sinner, who feels that he is sick in soul, exercises faith in Christ, though he cannot, as then, manifest his faith by touching him, yet he finds that a spiritual healing virtue is imparted to him. He finds that his understanding is enlightened, that his sins are pardoned, that his wounded conscience is healed, that his heart is sanctified, and that peace and happiness, such as he never tasted or even conceived of before, are shed abroad within him.

Hence an apostle informs us, that he who believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself, that is, the happy effects which result to him from believing, are a witness within that there is such a person as Jesus Christ, and that to believe in him is to partake of his fullness. These effects of faith are illustrated by our Savior himself in an address to his disciples. I, says he, am the vine, ye are the branches. This comparison he pursues at considerable length, and clearly teaches them, that by faith a union was formed between him and them, analogous to that which exists between a vine and its branches, and that as life and sap flow from the vine into every branch, so his fullness flows into the souls of all who believe in him.

Hence an apostle, speaking of believers, says, Of his fullness have we all received. Well then, might St. Peter call faith in Christ, precious faith; for what can be more precious than that which forms an indissoluble union, and a free communication between a lost, needy, guilty sinner, and a Savior in whom dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. He who has this faith is incalculably rich, though he should possess nothing else, and he who has it not, is miserably poor, though he should possess all which the world can give; for

4. If all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ, then he who is destitute of faith in Christ, or he who has never made a believing application to Christ, has no share in that fullness. His mind is not enlightened; his sins are not pardoned; his heart is not sanctified, he has no part in the kingdom of

heaven. It is written that, though he who believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, yet he who believeth not the Son is condemned already and shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him. It is true that such a man may have many qualities which appear amiable and estimable in the view of men; his moral character may be fair, and he may possess the external form of religion. But he has not a particle of that fullness which dwells in Christ, and his doom is pronounced in those words of our Savior, From him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have.

5. Does all the fullness of the Godhead dwell in Jesus Christ? Then all the spiritual wisdom, knowledge, holiness, and happiness which exist in the world, and all which are possessed by the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, proceed from him. You cannot find either on earth or in heaven, a good man who does not derive all his goodness from Christ, or who will not humbly and gratefully acknowledge that he does so; one who will not say with St. Paul, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God; that is, my spiritual life is constantly supported by supplies which faith draws from him. And how amiable, how glorious, how worthy of all love, admiration, and praise, does our Savior appear in the view of these truths. See him containing in himself all the infinite fullness of Deity. See myriads of his believing disciples in all parts of the world daily, hourly, living upon this fullness, and drawing from him those supplies which are necessary to the promotion and advancement of religion within them. Every hour virtue flows out of him, to heal them all. Some of them are poor, some of them afflicted, some of them tempted, some of them sick, some of them dying; yet to all and to each, he imparts just what their situation requires. To each he says, My grace is sufficient for thee. And while he is thus imparting grace to many thousands on earth he is pouring a flood of glory and felicity into ten thousand times ten thousand of his servants in heaven, filling them to overflowing with all the fullness of God. And who can conceive the benevolence, the tenderness, the compassion, with which he looks down on his great family, and sees them all deriving life and nourishment from him! Must not the affectionate feelings with which he regards them, far exceed in tenderness, in intensity, those with which a mother contemplates the infant to which she gives support? Can we disbelieve him, when he says to his church, Though a mother should forget her infant son, yet will not I forget thee? And if there is happiness in doing good, in communicating happiness, how exquisitely happy must our Savior be! If we should feel exquisite gratification in feeding a hundred famished orphans, what must he feel while he feeds so many thousands of once perishing immortal souls with the bread and water of life!

6. Does all the fullness of the Godhead dwell in Jesus Christ? How safe, how happy, how enviable then is the situation of those, who believe in him? They are inseparably united to one in whom all the fullness of the Godhead permanently dwells; a way of communication is opened by which this fullness will forever flow out to them. What more can they wish for, or conceive of? Well might our Savior say to one in this situation, I know thy poverty, but thou art rich: poor in thyself, but rich in me. My professing friends, if you are what you profess to be, this enviable situation is yours. If you would enjoy all its advantages, you must pray unceasingly for increasing faith, since the supplies which you obtain from the fullness of Christ will be in exact proportion to the strength and constancy of your faith. And if you wish your faith to be strong, you must look not at your own emptiness merely, but at his fullness; not at your poverty, but at his riches. You must contemplate him as he is exhibited in our text. You must endeavor to obtain enlarged views of what is meant by all the fullness of the Godhead. You must remember that he loves to impart it, that he has promised to impart it, that he cannot but impart it to all Who believe in him; and that his language to every believer is, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness. And remember too, that when you approach his table, if you come in a proper manner, you come to Christ himself; if you receive these sacramental symbols in a proper manner, you will receive Christ himself, and of course will

receive a portion of that fullness which dwells in him. If you do this, you will know experimentally the truth of his declaration, My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me and I in him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

Finally, does all the fullness of the Godhead reside in Jesus Christ? then let every one present, who has not already done it, be persuaded to apply to him for a share of this fullness. That you may be induced to take this step, let me ask, is there nothing in all this fullness which you need? Have you all the spiritual wisdom and knowledge which you need? Have you no sins to be pardoned, no sinful propensities to be subdued, no temptations to overcome? Is your preparation for death, and for heaven completed? Have you provision made sufficient to supply your wants through eternity? If not, I invite you, in Christ's name, to come to him for a supply. I invite you to a friend, a brother, in whom all the fullness of the Godhead dwells, and who will take far more pleasure in imparting to you this fullness, than you will in receiving it; for he says himself, It is more blessed to give than to receive. But why do I invite you? Let me rather set before you his own invitation. Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/edward-payson/the-fullness-of-god-dwelling-in-christ/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net