



“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I Corinthians 3:16).

The Indwelling Spirit

Central Truth: The Holy Spirit lives permanently in each believer.

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One of the most precious of Christian doctrines is the truth concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It teaches that God is not away off in heaven, separated from His people. He is personally present with and within each one who believes.

The Holy Spirit works in the sinner to bring him to personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He convinces the sinner of personal guilt, calls him to forgiveness in Jesus, grants him power to trust, bears him again into the family of God, and seals him unto eternity. But the ministry of the Spirit does not end when one is saved; it has only begun.

The Holy Spirit takes up permanent and unceasing residence in the human spirit. We call that “the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” It is no “second work of grace,” as some claim, but is the very essence of being saved.

Salvation is not something God gives apart from himself. It is God himself, in the person of His Holy Spirit, moving into the human spirit to live the life of God in the body of a man. God lives in each believer by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

I. IN WHOM DOES THE SPIRIT DWELL?

“If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot

receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you” (John 14:15-18).

Notice the central truth of this study: “The Holy Spirit lives permanently in each believer.” Who? The “Holy Spirit.” What? He “lives.” How long? He lives “permanently.” Where? In “each believer.” The Holy Spirit lives permanently in each believer. Hallelujah! That includes you and me.

No less than thirteen times the New Testament refers to the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer in Jesus. God said it and repeated it because it is true.

Jesus said that a person who drinks of “*the water that I shall give him*” will find within himself “*a well of water springing up into everlasting life*” (John 4:14). He said those who believe in Him will have “*rivers of living water*” flowing forth from within (John 7:38). What did He mean? “*This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*” (John 7:39).

Think about that! The “*water*” which Jesus gives one who believes is the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit remains within the believer (“*the water that I shall give him shall be in him,*” John 4:14). The Spirit will carry on ceaseless activity in the believer (as “*a well of water springing up,*” John 4:14).

That is the essence of the promise Jesus made in John 14. He promised that the Holy Spirit, who was then “*with*” the disciples would be “*in*” them (verse 17). He promised that indwelling would mean “*I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you*” (verse 20). He promised that He and the Father would come and make their abode with the person who trusts Him (verse 23). What a precious promise!

Three conclusions can be drawn from that teaching. (1) The absence of the Spirit of God from the spirit of man shows that a person is unsaved. One is not just unsanctified; he is unsaved. “*Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Romans 8:9). Those who have not received the Spirit are to hear the gospel, repent, believe, and be saved (Acts 19:1-7).

(2) The Spirit indwells every believer, even the backslidden and disobedient. Consider the Christians in Corinth. They were spiritually immature, fussing over favorite preachers, unconcerned about sexual immorality, confused in marriage affairs, abusing their liberty in Christ, desecrating the Lord's Supper, practicing perversion of spiritual gifts, denying the resurrection of the dead, and like sins. But to them the inspired

apostle Paul wrote, *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's”* (I Corinthians 6:19, 20). The Spirit lives within to lead you to spiritual maturity, not because you have already become spiritually mature.

(3) The indwelling Spirit comes as the gift of grace, not on the basis of man's merit. Jesus “gives” the water to be within us (John 4:14). The Holy Spirit is “given” unto us, and broadcasts the love of God in us (Romans 5:5). The earnest of salvation comes by the presence of the Holy Spirit who is “given” unto us (II Corinthians 5:5). Not one time does the Bible say that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell as a result of discipline of the flesh, attending prayer meetings, or any other religious exercise. His presence is by God's grace, not by man's merit.

II. WHEN DOES THE SPIRIT BEGIN INDWELLING?

“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:19, 20).

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the human spirit of the Christian begins immediately at conversion. In fact, it is His presence within which makes one saved. A person is not saved at one point in time only to receive the indwelling of the Spirit at some later point in time.

When Paul wrote *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”* (Ephesians 3:17), he was recognizing that the indwelling presence of God in the Christian begins at the instance of personal faith in salvation.

It is not necessary for you, or any other Christian, to seek to receive the Holy Spirit. You received Him when you believed. He who already indwells you must be given the consent of your will that He may fill you with His power.

That means the Holy Spirit is received before water baptism. Cornelius and his household experienced that. It was because *“the Holy Ghost fell on them”* (Acts 11:15) that Peter and the Jewish believers who accompanied him to Caesarea could not *“forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 10:47).

It is true that Peter declared before the Jewish court in Jerusalem that God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). But Jesus explained the kind of obedience God requires for receiving the Holy Spirit. In response to the question, *“What shall we do, that we might work the*

works of God?” Jesus replied, *“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent”* (John 6:28, 29). The Holy Spirit comes to indwell a person when he believes on Jesus.

Every Christian has the Holy Spirit of God living the life of God in his human body. He is living the life of eternity right here in time. And that includes you!

III. HOW CAN ONE KNOW THE SPIRIT INDWELLS?

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him. If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:21-23).

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8-10).

A. God has declared it. That settles the issue! *“He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you....I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you....We will come unto him, and make our abode with him”* (John 14:17, 20, 23). Take God's word for it. Do not argue about it or ask for proof of it. God said it and that settles it.

B. Feelings are no sure sign. The devil has the same access to your feelings as God has. Satan will make sure that you never have assurance, if you depend on how you feel. The clear word of God is more reliable than changing feelings.

C. Life interests show it. If the Holy Spirit lives in you, He will produce the fruit of the Spirit in you. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance”* (Galatians 5:22, 23). When you feel love, joy, and peace in your inmost soul; when you find longsuffering, gentleness, and goodness in your attitude toward others; when you find faith, meekness, and temperance in your relationship with God, it is proof that the Holy Spirit lives within you. The flesh will never produce those graces; they are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. *“For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth”* (Ephesians 5:9).

IV. WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SPIRIT'S INDWELLING?

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:10, 11).

Every blessing God has secured to the believer in Jesus is made available and real to Him by the indwelling Spirit. Consider these blessings which attend His indwelling presence.

A. It sanctifies the physical body of the believer. It joins the physical body to Christ in such a way that *“your bodies are the members of Christ”* (I Corinthians 6:15). The result is that *“your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost”* (I Corinthians 6:19).

B. It is the seal that one is saved. When one believes in Jesus he is *“sealed with that holy Spirit of promise”* (Ephesians 1:13). That sealing is not temporary, but reaches even *“unto the day of redemption”* (Ephesians 4:30). The *“seal”* is like the brand the rancher puts on his cattle. It is the mark of identification by which one is shown to belong to God. His indwelling presence is that continuing and unchanging mark.

C. It is the guarantee of salvation. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is called the *“earnest of the Spirit”* in Ephesians 1:13, 14; II Corinthians 1:21, 22; II Corinthians 5:5. *“Earnest”* means a down payment of a part of that which is to be received in fullness later. It is a payment-in-kind. God is so concerned that we be assured of salvation that He has given himself, the third person of the trinity of God, as proof that He will complete what He has begun in the salvation of the body, soul, and spirit of those who trust Jesus.

D. It is the evidence of God's constant concern and ministry in His dear children. He never leaves us alone. He takes up personal residence with and within us. Each can say, *“Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God”* (Galatians 2:20). We have been *“builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit”* (Ephesians 2:22). *“Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us”* (I John 3:24). We never get away from Him and His care because He lives within us. Praise the Lord!

E. It makes available all of His resources, enabling us to serve God effectively. Christian service is not rendered in the strength of the flesh but

in the power of the Spirit. *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)”* (II Corinthians 10:3, 4). Christian service is not performed by natural talents but by spiritual gifts. *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”* (I Peter 4:10, 11).

Praise God for the blessing of the indwelling of His Holy Spirit in each one who believes in Jesus. Dear Christian, accept this blessed truth with joy. Do not argue the question. Do not wrestle with the clear statements of Holy Scripture. Accept it. Rejoice in it. Live in the sufficiency of it. And above all else, *“Be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18).

Questions

1. What is “the indwelling” of the Holy Spirit?
2. How does John 4:14 teach His indwelling?
3. How does John 14:15-23 speak of His indwelling?
4. What does I Corinthians 6:15, 19, 20 say of His indwelling?
5. When does the Spirit begin His indwelling?
6. How can you know assuredly that the Spirit dwells in you?
7. How is His indwelling related to the fruit of the Spirit?
8. How does His indwelling show God's concern for you?
9. How does His indwelling enable you in Christian service?
10. How can you make sure you do not grieve the indwelling Spirit of God?