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The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

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There seems to be no disagreement among believing students of the New Testament that the Holy Spirit is given to every person who obeys Christ. Just as surely as each one who repents and is baptized enjoys remission of sins he also receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38, 5:32. Thereafter, the faithful Christian is the temple of God and the Spirit of God dwells in him. I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19.

However, there is much disagreement over what is meant by the Spirit dwelling in the Christian. Lately many articles have been circulated attempting to prove He dwells in us personally in a manner separate from the word. This is a position which a careful study of the scriptures does not warrant. Instead, the Bible shows that the Spirit dwells in the Christian, not personally, but through, or by means of, the word of God.

To illustrate, my father, though deceased, continues to dwell in me. Of course, he does not do so personally, but through the things he taught me and to the extent I abide in them. Even so the Spirit of God dwells in me in matters pertaining to the gospel, not personally, but through the word of God, the Bible, of which He is the revelator.

The Purpose of The Indwelling of The Spirit

In order to benefit by a study of the indwelling of the Spirit we need to have a clear understanding of why He dwells in us in the first place. Perhaps learning the "why" will also help us understand more about the "how" of His indwelling. The scriptures show that His indwelling accomplishes the following purposes.

He leads the Christian in God's way, the way of life. In Romans 8:13-14 we read, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

Again, the Spirit testifies with the Christian's spirit that he is a child of God. Paul wrote, "The Spirit itself (Himself, American Standard Version) beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Romans 8:16.

Dwelling in the Christian He is also a seal, or proof, of God's ownership and in such serves as an earnest, or assurance, of God's promise of eternal salvation. To Christians in Ephesus Paul wrote, "In whom also ye trusted, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:13-14. He is then a seal proving that one belongs to God and in this also serves as an earnest assurance of God's promise to give eternal reward. Think of an injured mountain climber who must be left on an icy cliff while his friend goes for help. The injured man is in danger and in pain, and in that condition must be left alone. However, as an earnest of his intention to return with help, the friend leaves his ring which during the long hours ahead constantly reminds the injured man of the cherished promise of rescue. Even so, during the painful trials of this world the Spirit is God's earnest assuring Christians He will keep His promise to return and give them an eternal home in heaven.

Finally, the Spirit strengthens the faith of the

Christian and so helps him achieve that heavenly home. Of himself Paul said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Ephesians 3:14-16.

How Does The Spirit Accomplish These Purposes?

Having examined the scriptures to determine the purposes for which the Spirit dwells in us let us next determine how they are accomplished. This should also shed much light on the "how" He dwells in us because by whatever means He accomplishes His purposes for so dwelling is seen also the means of His indwelling. Citing again my earlier illustration, notice that my father's purpose was to guide me in the things of this life. He did so through his teaching. Thus, to the extent that he dwells in me to this day he does so through the many things he taught me. Likewise, the means by which the Holy Spirit accomplishes his purpose is also the means by which he dwells in me. He accomplishes His purposes through the word of God and through that word He also dwells in me.

Some think they see a fallacy in this position and try to expose it by asking, "If it is true that the Spirit dwells in man through the word would a man who believed and practiced only a part of the word have a part of the Spirit dwelling in him?" Plainly, the answer is no. Such a man is in precisely the same position as one who believes the gospel and lives a part of it but refuses to obey the Lord in baptism. Although he believes and lives part of the word he nonetheless has failed to put on Christ and is never referred to in the Bible as a believer as were those mentioned in Acts 2:44 and 5:14. Even so, the man who believes and practices a part of the word is never said to have the Spirit of God dwelling in him. This is never said of anyone except those who obey God having been baptized into Christ. God gives His Spirit "...to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32.)

The same principle holds true among those who have been baptized into Christ. In all that a Christian does which is in harmony with the word of God he has the Spirit of God. Romans 8:5-11, 13-16. When he violates the word he also forfeits the presence and favor of the Spirit and does not regain that blessed relationship unless and until he repents. (See Peter's description of Simon, an erring Christian, in Acts 8:13-23.)

This conclusion is also seen in the Spirit's work in leading the Christian through life. Paul's statement in Romans 8:13-14 that we are led by the Spirit of God is prefaced with several significant facts. In verses 1-2 Paul shows that men are made free from the law of sin and death by obeying the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; in other words, the gospel. From this it is seen that the Spirit leads men to become Christians by the word. How, then, does He continue to lead the Christian after this initial obedience? Notice the contrast Paul makes in verses

5-8 between the carnal mind and the spiritual mind. Since these two are opposites it follows that whatever characterizes the one the opposite of it will characterize the other. The carnal mind is characterized by disobedience to the law of God. Paul said it "...is not subject to the law of God." The opposite of this is the spiritual mind, one which is guided by the Spirit. However, since the carnal mind is one which is not subject to the law of God, and since the spiritual mind is just the opposite of this, it must be concluded that it is simply the mind of man subject to, and led by, the law of God as it was revealed by the Spirit. Thus, the Spirit leads Christians through the word of God.

The Spirit also bears witness through the word. Many people mistakenly think the Spirit bears witness to our spirit telling us in some mystical way of our being God's children. The text, however, does not use the word "to," but "with" which shows the testimony of two witnesses is involved in Paul's statement in Romans 8:16. One witness is our own spirit and the testimony it offers is the life we are living. The second witness is the Spirit of God who, when we serve God acceptably, testifies that we are children of God. But how does the Spirit give this testimony, and how can we then know whether or not we are children of God? John tells us how saying, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." I John 2:3. And again, "But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him." I John 2:5. The idea, then, is simply one of a man's comparing his life to the word of God which was delivered by the Spirit in order to determine whether or not he is a child of God and an heir of eternal life. As Paul said to the Corinthians, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith..." II Corinthians 13:5. Therefore, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit through the word of God.

This same conclusion is also true of the Spirit's work as a seal of God's ownership and as an earnest of our eternal redemption. The idea presented by Paul in Ephesians 1:13-14 using the terms seal and earnest are actually parallel to the idea discussed above on Romans 8:16 and Paul's use of the term witness. To be sure, the Spirit is a seal upon Christians showing that they belong to God and He serves as God's earnest that the promise of eternal inheritance will be kept. But how does He do this? By what means do we know that we belong to God and have assurance He will save us? Again, the answer is supplied by John saying, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life." I John 2:24-25. John also said, "And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." I John 3:24. Just as the mountain climber's ring assured his companion of rescue so does the word of God, revealed by the Spirit, assure the Christian of

eternal redemption. Therefore, the Spirit seals us and gives us assurance unto the day of redemption through the word of God.

Finally, this conclusion is also true of the Spirit's dwelling in Christians to strengthen their faith. Immediately following his prayer in Ephesians 3:16 for Christians to "be strengthened with might by his (God's) Spirit" Paul went on to indicate both the result of this strength and the means by which it is obtained. In verse 17 he said, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith..." But this faith by which Christ dwells in our hearts, and by which we are strengthened by the Spirit in our inner man, comes by hearing the word of God. Romans 10:17. Therefore, the Spirit strengthens the faith of the Christian and helps him achieve eternal salvation through the word of God.

Thus, it is seen that every single purpose served by the indwelling of the Spirit is accomplished by the word of God. If this is not so let some one step forth and show a purpose of the indwelling of the Spirit which is not accomplished through the word. More than this, let him show from the scriptures some purpose served by the indwelling of the Spirit which must be accomplished by a personal indwelling. If no such scriptural purpose is to be found then why all the fuss contending for the idea? What purpose of God would be served by it?

Of course some have asserted that the Spirit dwells in us to intercede in prayers at the throne of God according to Romans 8:26. Notice, however, this verse says nothing about what the Spirit does in the Christian. In fact, the very idea of intercession to God suggests not what the Spirit does in the Christian, but rather what He does in heaven. Further, what the Christian is able to do in prayer is not aided by any personal indwelling of the Spirit, but instead by the revelation of the Spirit which is the word of God. Even in it is the word which instructs us in what to pray. I John 5:14-15.

The Spirit Dwells in Christians Through the Word

Since every purpose served by the indwelling of the Spirit is accomplished through the word of God it is not surprising to find the scriptures using the terms Spirit and word, or their equivalents, interchangeably.

In Romans 8:9-11 Paul uses the terms Spirit and Christ interchangeably. In verses 9 and 11 he says the Spirit is in the Christian, but in verse 10, talking about the same facts and ideas, he says Christ is in him. In other words, the Spirit and Christ are equal terms in these verses. But Christ dwells in the Christian through faith which comes by hearing the word of God. Ephesians 3:17, Romans 10:17. Consequently, it must be concluded that the Spirit is in the Christian by the word of God.

In Ephesians 2:21-22 Christians are pictured as a temple in which God dwells through the Spirit. But I John 3:24 says we are in Him and He in us when we obey His commandments. Thus, God dwells in us through the Spirit, which is also said to be accomplished through the word.

In I Thessalonians 5:19 Christians are warned not to quench the Spirit and in verse 20 they are told not to despise prophesyings. The relationship between these two statements is obvious. Prophesyings are the product of the revelation of the Spirit. When one receives them (we have them recorded today in the writings of inspired men, I Corinthians 14:37, Ephesians 3:1-6) he receives the Spirit, but when he despises and rejects them he quenches the Spirit. Therefore, the Spirit is received by, and dwells in, the Christian through the word.

In Ephesians 5:18-19 Paul commands Christians to be filled with the Spirit. Notice that this, being a command, is something Christians are to do; the Christian himself is responsible for having the Spirit in him. What is it that one can put in himself which will serve to obey this command? Can he literally take hold on the Spirit and place the person of the Spirit within himself? It seems the advocates of the personal indwelling idea hit a problem here similar to that encountered by those who contend the cup of the Lord's supper is a literal container. Such an idea would require its advocates to do with a container what Jesus said to do with the cup; they must divide it and drink it. Likewise the Spirit is to dwell in man, but the man is responsible for putting Him there. If the personal indwelling advocates are right in their idea then let them demonstrate how a man can literally take hold on the person of the Spirit and confine Him within one's body! But instead of waiting for them to perform such an impossible stunt why not let Paul himself explain what is meant by this command. Writing to the Colossians on the same subject he simply said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you ..." Colossians 3:16. Surely, the conclusion is wondrously simple and inescapably clear. We are filled with the Spirit and He thereby dwells in us when the word which He revealed dwells in us and is manifest in our lives.

Responsibilities and Consequences of The Indwelling of The Spirit

Just as there are responsibilities and consequences attached to the Spirit's command to be baptized into Christ so also are there consequences attached to His dwelling in the man who is baptized. Further, since the Spirit dwells in us through the word of God it follows that a man's responsibility to the indwelling Spirit and to the word will be one and the same, and from whether or not one bears these responsibilities will logically flow the consequences. Let us consider this question from both a negative and a positive point of view.

Negatively, one's responsibility toward the indwelling of the Spirit is stated like this. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." I Corinthians 3:16-17. The Christian must be careful not to defile the temple of God. This simply means he is not to use his body

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to serve purposes which are out of harmony with God's will; he is not to yield himself as an instrument of unrighteousness unto sin. Romans 6:13. If he does so the consequence will be destruction; "Him will God destroy." In Romans 8:13 Paul said, "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die."

Positively, one's responsibility toward the indwelling of the Spirit is stated like this. "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 Christian is to realize that he is the temple of the Spirit of God and conduct himself in all things so as to give glory to God. He does this in yielding himself as an instrument of righteousness unto God. Romans 6:13. It necessitates his being filled with the fruits of righteousness in Christ for these serve to the glory of God. Phillipians 1:11. In short, he is to speak as the oracles of God and minister only as God gives him ability "...that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ..." I Peter 4:11. In so doing the Christian is promised reward beyond his richest expectations. Paul wrote, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Romans 8:16-18.

Consequently, let every person be encouraged to receive the Spirit of God in obeying the gospel of Christ, and let him thereafter keep himself a fit dwelling place for the Spirit through faithful continuance in the gospel.

(Editor's note: Brother R. L. Morrison has put this excellent article in tract form, and it may be secured from "The Lamplighter Press", P. O. Box 1861, El Centro, California 92243. The price is 10 cents per copy. The tract should be widely distributed both by churches and individuals. Order from Brother Morrison.)

"GENTLE NANNIE"

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walk alone. More than twenty years of life were yet to be her lot, years of aching loneliness for her departed husband, but years rich in service for her Lord. With an intensity of purpose that almost defies description she set herself the task of writing letters to preachers and churches all over the world urging them to send "Ancient Landmarks" and later "Truth In Love" (gospel papers edited by one of her sons) to non Christians in their communities. She had learned

to use a typewriter when well past sixty years of age, and her writing was often slow and laborious; but her daily quota of letters (twenty per week) was fulfilled in spite of sickness, travel, or any other obstacle. Literally thousands of such letters have gone into the mails these past few years. She believed (and daily prayed) that perhaps there would be some soul in heaven because of her work who might not have been there otherwise. That would be reward enough!

The years marched by with ceaseless tread. Her children grew up, married and began to raise families of their own. Grandchildren and then great-grandchildren brightened her days as the sun of her life began to dip toward the horizon. Her health remained good, and the inner strength of an indomitable will kept her active and vigorous long after a less resolute character would have "retired". For her there could be no "retirement"; the word simply had no meaning as it related to her life. She could as easily "retire" from Christianity as to retire from her work!

But man is mortal, and must keep "that appointment with death". On September 23, 1961, in the Shannon Hospital at San Angelo, Texas, after an illness of one week, and only four months short of her ninetieth birthday, "the gentle Nannie" closed her eyes in the final sleep. The very next day, Sunday, September 24, her funeral service was conducted from the Westside Church of Christ in Cleburne, Texas, with H. Osby Weaver of Dallas speaking. Under the bright blue skies of a perfect fall day, amid the scenes of her childhood, her body was laid to rest. In death she shares a common stone with the one with whom she shared her life. The dual inscription on it reads: "Jefferson Davis Tant, 1861-1941" and "Nannie Yater Tant, 1872-1961."

-F. Y. T.

NEWS

Leslie Deieselkamp, P. O. Box 498, Yaba, Nigeria, Aug. 31, 1967. We have been here one year. The visible results of this work is less than fifty percent of what we saw in our former work here (in 1959-60) in the same length of time. Yet we have seen 289 baptisms in the twelve months. Furthermore, many men have received much training, enabling them to go out for effective evangelism. We have helped in the establishment of 3 or 4 congregations that seem able to survive and be true to Christ. We have been sick some, but I was never prevented from preaching except for a few nights. I have preached while sitting down in a chair, both inside the meeting houses and even in the streets. But we are well now, for which we give thanks. The civil war has been considerable handicap, but we are still able to preach Christ here. Many native brethren are fearful and worried, and they deserve your prayers.