

Bethany Bible Church; AM Bible Study; January 10, 2018
The Holy Spirit—Our Helper; Lesson 12; His Indwelling

BELIEVERS—THE DWELLING PLACE OF GOD

Theme: Every genuine believer in Jesus Christ should rest assured that the Holy Spirit is not only with them but also fully in them.

In our last study, we began to consider the Holy Spirit's indwelling ministry in the life of the believer; and particularly the blessedness of His indwelling ministry. This morning, we consider the persons in whom He graciously indwells. How important this is! As Dr. Charles Ryrie has well put it, "The permanent and universal-among-all-believers indwelling ministry of the Spirit is at the heart of the distinctiveness of the Spirit's work in this church age."¹

In a previous study (Lesson #5; which was titled, 'The Spirit's Work in The Old Testament'), we affirmed that the Holy Spirit worked in the lives of Old Testament saints; "because wherever there is spiritual life or activity from God, there is the work of the Holy Spirit." But we also noted at that time that His work in the Old Testament seemed to be presented to us in what we might call a 'person-specific' way. What we meant by this is that His work appeared back then to have been limited to only certain Old Testament saints for specific ministries; and even then, only for brief periods of time. But before our Lord ascended to the Father and sent the Holy Spirit, He told His disciples that Pentecost would bring about a dramatic difference in the way the Spirit would minister toward the saints. At the time when they were still living under Old Covenant principles, He told His disciples, "He [that is, the Spirit] dwells *with* you" (which summarized the Spirit's work in Old Testament era); "and will be *in* you" (which summarized the Spirit's work in the New Testament era; see John 14:17; emphasis added)²

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Formerly, the Spirit was "with"; but now, in relation to the believer, He is "in". What then does the Bible tell us about this marvelous and unique indwelling ministry of the Spirit that Jesus spoke of—this New Testament difference in which the Holy Spirit would relate to the saints? Specifically, in whom does He dwell?

First, we should understand that Jesus was not speaking of something new to the plan of God; but rather that ...

I. THE INDWELLING MINISTRY OF THE SPIRIT IN ALL BELIEVERS IS THE FULFILLMENT OF AN OLD TESTAMENT PROMISE.

- A. At Pentecost, as people gathered to see the remarkable manifestation of the Holy Spirit's presence in the lives of the Lord's humble disciples, Peter explained that what they were seeing was "what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). He then quoted from Joel 2:28-32; where God promised, "I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh" (v. 28), "And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days" (v. 29).

- B. The Holy Spirit's indwelling, then, should be understood as the fulfillment of Old Testament promises with respect to the glories of New Covenant realities. In speaking prophetically of His saints under the New Covenant, God promised, "I will put My laws in their minds, and write it on their hearts" (Jeremiah 31:33). He said, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them" (32:39); and "I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me" (v. 40). Under the New Covenant realities brought about by Jesus, a walk with God would no longer be merely an outward expression of the efforts of the saints; but rather primarily an inward dynamic produced in and through them by the Holy Spirit. Thus, as the apostle John wrote, "Now he who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us" (1 John 3:24).

So; the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of an Old Testament promise in accordance with the plan of God. But upon whom is this promise fulfilled? We should note, secondly, that while the ministry of the Holy Spirit was upon only specific individuals at certain times in the Old Testament era ...

II. THE INDWELLING MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOW UNIVERSAL TO ALL BELIEVERS IN JESUS CHRIST.

- A. You can say that one way that the Bible affirms this to us is 'negatively'. In Romans 8:9, Paul writes, "But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you." This was not said by Paul in this way in order to bring into question whether the Spirit truly dwelt in any of these Roman believers. Rather, he said this as a way to affirm to them that they truly were believers in whom the Spirit dwelt. He went on to tell them, "Now if any one does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." Paul's argument in this passage would not have made sense unless it could be assumed that everyone who is truly a redeemed believer in Christ is, in fact, indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul's words in Romans are very much like those found in the book of Jude; where Jude writes about those who are "ungodly"; and says that these are they who "deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4) and are said to be persons "not having the Spirit" (v. 19).
- B. Now; that's a negative way of framing the point. But the Bible also affirms this to us in 'positive' ways. Paul says that "no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:3). In Acts 5:32, the apostles preached the gospel of Jesus to the officials and said, "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him" ('obedience' here being a word that signifies the act of repenting from unbelief and genuinely believing the gospel; see Acts 6:7). An important affirmation of the Spirit's indwelling of all believers is found in His ministry of "sealing" those who trust in Jesus; "in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:13b-14).
- C. And here is an important thing to remember: In the Bible, this indwelling is affirmed to remain true even of Christians who may have stumbled in sin and who, at times, behave in a very un-Christlike manner. For example, Paul said that he could not speak to the Corinthian believers as he wished, "but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ"

(1 Corinthians 3:1); saying, “For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?” (v. 3). Yet, in spite of the way he rebuked the profound immaturity of these believers, he could still encourage them to obedience by telling them, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (v. 16). He also exhorted them to “flee sexual immorality” (6:18); saying, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (v. 19). He likewise urged the Thessalonian believers toward sexual purity; saying, “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 4:7-8).

Putting all this together, then, we can conclude that ...

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT’S INDWELLING IS A THEOLOGICAL FACT OF WHICH EACH GENUINE BELIEVER CAN BE ASSURED AND CONFIDENT.

- A. The foundation for this assurance comes from the promises of God in His word (which very promises we have been studying in this lesson). But it can also be assured to us in a secondary and supportive way by the practical manifestation of the Spirit’s work in us—the most empirically verifiable of which is His “fruit” produced in us. Paul wrote, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). As the fruit of the Holy Spirit grows to be exhibited in our lives (since the flesh cannot produce these fruits; see vv. 19-21), we can be further confident of the Spirit’s indwelling presence in us.
- B. There is a sense, then, in which we can be assured ‘experientially’ that the Holy Spirit indwells us. But we must always remember that the clear promises of God in His word always takes authoritative priority over our “experience”. If we have believed on the Lord Jesus, we shouldn't seek the Holy Spirit as a 'gift' to be given to us afterward; nor should we seek to have 'more' of the Holy Spirit after we have believed; nor should we seek some outward 'sign' as a proof that He is in us. Rather, we should rest joyfully and confidently on the promise of God that the Spirit has, indeed, taken up full and permanent residence in every true follower of Jesus; and then, on the basis of that promise, personally submit to His presence and trust Him to empower us and produce His fruit in us.

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As Dr. Rene Pache has very wisely written, “May we, therefore, learn to believe that the Spirit is in us, children of God, simply because the Bible tells us so. Then, when we have believed (and not before) we shall see this Spirit bring forth in our hearts that love, joy and peace which we had hitherto sought in vain ...”³

³Charles C. Ryrie, *The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), p. 96.

²All Scripture readings are taken from *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³Rene Pache, J.D. Emerson, trans., *The Person and Work of The Holy Spirit* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), p. 104.