

The Dwelling of the Spirit

Introduction: Until one desires to avoid sin, he cannot hope to do so, but even desiring to avoid it is not enough. To avoid sin one must let the Spirit of God dwell in us. There is so very much helpful information in the scripture that we have covered up with our controversies until we have lost sight of the teaching. Therefore we do not realize the simplicity and power of the teaching of the Bible on this subject.

I. Indwelling of the Spirit.

- A. *Indwelling* is a theological term meant to signify the work of the Spirit set forth in Romans 8:9-11 and other passages.
- B. We will look at this and a few other passages on the subject, not primarily to study the subject of the dwelling of the Spirit Himself, but to consider the value of this blessing.
- C. Rom. 8:9-11: "But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the *Spirit of God dwelleth* in you. But if any man hath not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the *Spirit of him that raised up Jesus* from the dead *dwelleth* in you, *he that raised up Jesus* from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that *dwelleth* in you."
 1. In verses 4-9a, most likely we have a contrast between our fleshly interests and our spiritual interests, but in verse 9 we encounter the Spirit of God. This I believe refers to the Holy Spirit.
 2. The contrast in verse 10 seems to be between the human flesh and the human spirit.
 3. Verse 11 once again refers to the Holy Spirit.
 4. Notice equivalent expressions: the Spirit of God *dwells* in us. Christ is *in* you. *Having* the Spirit of Christ. In subsequent verses, being led by the Spirit of God (vs. 14) is equivalent to the dwelling of the Spirit in us.
 5. The issue is the nature of the Spirit's dwelling in us.
 - a. There is no virtue in upholding error so we want to be as honest as possible in dealing with this matter.
 - b. The difficulty is caused by the word *dwell*. Here it means, "to be fixed and operative in one's soul: of sin, Rom. 7:17; of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:9" (*Thayer*, p. 439).
 - c. Should *dwell* be taken literally?
 - (1) There is an indication in the verse itself that the language is not literal.
 - (2) Paul says to the Romans, "Ye are not in the flesh."
 - (3) Does he mean that the Roman Christians no longer had any flesh?
 - (4) They no longer were in the flesh. Maybe they had died. No, he does not mean they are literally disembodied, that they are not in literal flesh.
 - (5) "Flesh" here stands for the ways of that person concerned only with the body and material things.
 - d. Likewise *dwell* does not necessarily mean the Spirit is literally inside our bodies.
 - e. Note some examples of dwelling in.
 - (1) "Let the word of Christ *dwell* in you" (Col. 3:16).
 - (2) God said, "I will *dwell* in them" (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 4:12-15).

- (3) Jesus and God will make their abode with a man (John 14:23).
- (4) We know He (God) dwells in us, by the Spirit which He gave us (1 John 3:24).
- (5) Spirit, Spirit of God, Spirit of Jesus refers to the same Spirit.
- (6) Paul said that Christ may *dwell* in your hearts through faith (Rom. 8:10; Eph. 3:17).
- (7) 1 Cor. 3:16, a literal indwelling of the Spirit in the church?
- (8) 1 Cor. 6:19, our body a temple of the Holy Spirit?
- f. A whole lot of our problems come from our thinking of our bodies ^{as a bucket or} as a ~~literal container~~ physical container, and the Holy Spirit as water that is put into the bucket.
 - (1) None of the deity dwells in us literally but as we let God by His will, Christ by His example, and the Spirit through His word, guide our lives, they do dwell in us (Gal. 3:2).
 - (2) Consider 1 Kings 8:13:
 - (a) "I have surely built thee a house of habitation, a place for thee to dwell in forever."
 - (b) Then look at verse 27: "But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!"
 - (c) Solomon was considering a literal building.
 - (d) If he said that God cannot literally dwell in a building such as the temple, then He certainly could not literally dwell in a man.
 - (3) Even when the Holy Spirit worked miracles by men, there was no physical feeling that allowed the Spirit-filled man to know that the Spirit was in him (Samson - Judges 16:20; Elisha - 2 Kings 2:14).
- g. If the Spirit literally dwells personally in our bodies, then He is either active or not. If He does nothing except through the word, then His literal dwelling is for no purpose. If he does something that is not through the word, then it does not pertain to life and godliness, nor does it have anything to do with making man complete (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Conclusion: In many different passages the point really being emphasized in the idea of the Spirit's dwelling in us is that the divine influence has been exerted in our lives, and we are conducting ourselves in keeping with that influence.