# THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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There are few subjects that evoke such controversy in the minds of men as those which deal with the Holy Spirit and his role in the life of saint and sinner. This is a truly distressing thing, for the purpose of the Spirit was not to bring controversy but comfort. One such doctrine that we will discuss in the course of this article is that of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer.

**The Biblical Doctrine of the Indwelling is Indisputable**

I, in all my research, have never found a group of professing Christians who did not hold some belief in the indwelling. This uniformity is rather remarkable, and attests to the scripturality of the idea. Furthermore the Bible says it in no uncertain terms, “But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, ifindeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.” (Romans 8:9) “Do you not know that you are the temple of God andthat the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16) We are commanded to be “filled with the Spirit, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; butbe filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord…” (Eph. 5:18-19) again we note, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of theHoly Spiritwho isin you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19) “And ifChristisin you, the bodyisdead because of sin, but the Spiritis life because of righteousness.” (Romans 8:10) There is no room for doubt or confusion, but where confusion and disagreement do come into play is when the manner and nature of the indwelling is discussed. We shall discuss the two primary views briefly in this article.

**The Personal, Literal, Direct Indwelling**

The view is held by a great many in the religious world, perhaps the majority. It teaches that the person of the Holy Spirit, literally inhabits the Christians body in some mystical, truly inexplicable way. This is the core belief of all the great cult leaders who have claimed guidance separate from the scripture, though we grant that not all who hold this belief are so radical.

One of their own writers said, “One of the basic rules of biblical interpretation is that words must be understood in their literal sense unless such a literal interpretation creates contradiction or absurdity.” I charge that this interpretation does just that! It creates contradiction with other scriptures, and it is absurd! One of many examples of the contradiction is in the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write to Christians commanding them to, “prove all things.” (1 Thess. 5:21) What proof can a man give that he has the person of the Holy Spirit him? By personal testimony? That is all one can offer, and the plain truth is that our testimony carries no more weight in the grand scheme of things than that of the Holiness preacher who can claim the very same thing! It is also an absurd suggestion. As brother Bill Davis pointed out, “If the Holy Spirit is deity, and he dwelt in a human body, would that person not be divine?” (Citing as an example, Jesus Christ, a human body was literally indwelt by deity and it resulted in a God-man.)

Not even the Apostles had such a personal indwelling, not of Christ, God or the Holy Spirit. The danger of this doctrine is not only what it leads too, but even in its most conservative state it muddles the true message of the Bible in regards to how a Christian has the beautiful relationship with God that is his for the taking.

**The Representative Indwelling**

This position is the second most common, but very much in the minority, especially among the sectarian world. The view states that the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the Christian, figuratively and through the medium of the Word (the Bible). Often-times those of us who hold this view are labeled “word only” as if we don’t believe that there is a Holy Spirit, or as if we believe that the Bible is a He. I do not believe that the Bible is the Holy Spirit. I don’t know anyone who claims that. I believe that the Bible claims of itself that it is the sole medium through which the Holy Spirit interacts with man. True religion is begun, carried on and completed by the Holy Spirit – but it is carried on an completed in the same way it is begun: through the medium of the word. One says, “Well I understand that the Holy Spirit convicts, converts, comforts and guides through the Word, I even see ho he intercedes through the Word, but what about the indwelling, where do you get the idea that that is done through the word? Let the Spirit himself answer in the scripture. In Ephesians 5:18-19 we read, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; butbe filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord…” Now we agree that when you have a difficult passage, if you can find a parallel passage you should allow the simple one to interpret the difficult one. Let us notice a parallel passage to Ephesians 5:18-19, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” (Colossians 3:16) One says, “be filled with the Spirit…” the other tells us how, “let the word of Christ dwell in you…” Allow the easy to explain the difficult.

I read a letter not so long ago that a “personal indwelling” preacher, so far as I know, wrote in response to an article challenging that position which had appeared in a prominent religious journal. He said to the Brother who wrote the article, “This controversy existed long before you were born, back to the days of the Restoration Movement, I should think it a little presumptuous for you to try and solve it.” That is quite the point! Let no man try to solve it. If we approach this subject from subjective, emotional arguments we will only have division. Let the Spirit himself solve it, turn to the scriptures and see what they teach. Only there can we find unity!