

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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The Person and Role of the Holy Spirit: The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Today we conclude our series of four talks on the Person and Role of the Holy Spirit. In the first talk we considered the Person of the Holy Spirit, and whilst many would talk of the Spirit as a power or influence, the clear presentation of Scripture is that He is a person. It is vital that we understand this; that the Holy Spirit is much more than a power or influence - He is a person. Moreover He is God - God the Holy Spirit, co-equal with God the Father and God the Son. The second and third talks dealt with the Ministry and the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Today our subject is the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit. I suggest we will only appreciate something of the teaching of the ministry, baptism and indwelling of the Spirit if we have a correct understanding of who He is.

As we look at our subject today, we do well to consider the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as perhaps the greatest of all blessings. Never in the Old Testament pages do we read of the Holy Spirit indwelling men or women. It is true that the Holy Spirit came upon the Old Testament saints to enable them to carry out some special service or work, but this was a temporary thing. The Holy Spirit never indwells persons in the Old Testament times; this is New Testament, Christian blessing. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not something which is reserved to a special group of believers or anything of that sort, but the purpose of God for every child of His in this dispensation. By that, I mean from the Day of Pentecost until the day when the church is completed and raptured to glory - when Christ will come and take every believer to be with Himself. We believe that the church period is almost at an end, and that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ is very near. However, we have seen in recent days how foolish it is to set a date on the Lord's return. The Bible clearly says that He is coming but that no man knows the day nor the hour (Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32). We need to always keep our thoughts within the boundaries of Scripture and not to speculate on things which have not been revealed in God's Word.

I want to take up the subject of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in two ways. First, we will think about the teaching of the indwelling of the Spirit as Scripture presents it and then we will consider the practical effect this truth should have in our lives. In other words, we will look objectively at what the Bible teaches and then subjectively at what this truth means to us.

The Bible Teaching

Where better to start than to listen to the words of the Lord Jesus Himself in John 14. He is preparing His disciples for the time when He would be leaving them, and in John 14:16-17 He says, "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". How wonderful indeed, the Holy Spirit of God in the disciples, and by extension in us! At the beginning of the Gospel of Matthew we were introduced to Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us (Matthew 1:23). Now as He is about to leave this world and go back to heaven, by way of the cross, He introduces us to the Comforter who would not only be with us but would be in us. To be indwelt by a divine Person - how wonderful indeed!

Turning to Acts 2:1-13, we read about the day of Pentecost and the descent of the Holy Spirit on those who had gathered in Jerusalem. The evidence of the Spirit's power was witnessed by all and the church period or dispensation had begun. We live in that same period and although some of the sign wonders seen at the beginning are not seen now, the Spirit is the same. His power is not diminished in any way, and there are still souls being added to the church daily, such as should be saved. Praise God! In the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, or the Acts of the Holy Spirit as it has been called, how wonderful it is to see the effect of the Holy Spirit on those who had only a few weeks before been discouraged, fearful and downcast. Peter, who had denied his Lord with oaths and curses when quizzed by a young girl, was now preaching boldly to crowds (Acts 2:14-4:22). The boldness of Peter and John made the people marvel and take account of the fact that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). What a change! I wonder if our neighbours, friends and workmates think the same of us. Have we this testimony that we have been with Jesus? - Quite a challenge!

The Gospel was preached to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles; repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit indwelling each believer - what a wonderful beginning of a company, who would be called Christians for the first time in Acts 11:26. We see the Gospel preached in the Acts but when we come to Romans we

have the Gospel taught. How necessary for all believers is the truth taught in the Roman epistle and its fundamental teaching will serve us well as we study the truth of God. In Romans 5:5 we read that the Holy Spirit has been given to us. In Romans 8:9 we read that He, the Spirit of God, dwells in us. You will see as you read through Romans 8 that the Spirit has a capital 'S'. It is the Person of the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.

We might ask the question, "When do we receive the Holy Spirit?" or "What do we have to do to get the Holy Spirit?" Whilst I believe the answer is clear, there has been some confusion amongst believers. There are some who would pray, asking the Holy Spirit to come to them, that they may receive the Spirit. This is not intelligent, neither is it necessary. If we turn to Ephesians 1:13-14 we get the clear answer: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also 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". I don't think the Apostle Paul could have been much clearer. Note the sequence in these verses - they heard the word of truth and trusted in Christ and as a consequence of believing were sealed by the Holy Spirit. In the *Schofield Study Bible* there are three very nice thoughts in relation to the sealing of the Spirit. The seal would speak of:

- a finished transaction;
- ownership; and
- security.

Let us think about each of these in turn for a few moments.

A finished transaction

I'm not sure if the practice still exists today, but there was a time when after a deal had been concluded there was a wax seal put on the agreement. I suppose that is where we get the phrase "signed and sealed". Once we have believed in Christ we belong to God and the deal is complete and cannot be undone. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Nothing or nobody! (see Romans 8:35-39)

Ownership

Where I live there are cattle and sheep in the fields, and even from a distance you can see the tags in the ears of the cattle and the coloured marks on the backs of the sheep. They belong to the farmer, they're his with his mark upon them and he looks after them. As believers we belong to the Good Shepherd. We're His sheep, He knows us and we know Him and He cares for us. (John 10:14)

Security

We seal our envelopes to ensure that the contents are not seen by others. We lock our doors at night to stop thieves entering our houses but, as we know, these seals are easily broken. The seal of the Holy Spirit can never be broken. Were we to read on in John 10 we would read "and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28) Once we have believed in Christ we can sing,

*"Now I belong to Jesus,
Jesus belongs to me.
Not for the years of time alone,
But for eternity!"*

What wonderful blessing, to be sealed with the Holy Spirit, but more than this He is the earnest or guarantee of our inheritance and will not leave us until we are safely in glory.

However we must not miss the further thought brought out in Ephesians, that we are a holy temple in the Lord - a habitation of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:22) Collectively as believers we, as living stones, are built together and compose a spiritual house, where God dwells by the Spirit. From the beginning of time, God's desire was to be able to have an intimate relationship with mankind. In the Garden of Eden, God communed with Adam and Eve until sin came in and spoiled things. Their attempt to cover up their nakedness was futile and God demonstrated that blood had to be shed if sin was to be covered. This is why there was so much blood shed in the Old Testament days and all pointing forward to the time when the Lamb of God would bear away the sin of the world (John 1:29). God dwelt amongst His earthly people, Israel, on the basis of shed blood. Now that Israel has been set aside for the time being because of their refusal of their Messiah, God's dwelling place is not physically in Jerusalem but spiritually in the church. The church is the collective term for every blood-bought believer of this dispensation. There is both privilege and responsibility attached to this wonderful truth that we are the dwelling place of God through the Spirit. Peter in his first epistle speaks of our position as holy priests before the thought of us being a royal priesthood. (1 Peter 2:5, 9)

This would teach that whilst we need to be concerned with the spiritual needs of those living round about us, our first responsibility and happy privilege is our service Godward and from this will flow our service manward. Recently I heard a brother speaking of the Christian life as being life with a capital 'L'. He pointed out that the first straight line was vertical and the second was horizontal. This is just what we have in John's Gospel - the living water, which is a picture of the indwelling Holy Spirit in the life of a believer, springing up to God in John 4 and flowing out to man in John 7.

So not only does the Holy Spirit dwell in the hearts of individual believers of this dispensation but He also dwells in the church. It is the Lord's desire that we meet together with fellow believers but we need to consider the practical responsibility on us to ensure that the conditions are right as we do so. We often remember the Lord's promise to be in the midst of the two's or three's who gather together in His name (Matthew 18:20), and what a blessed privilege to know the presence of the Lord as we gather, but what a responsibility too. Where the Spirit of the Lord is - there is liberty. However we are warned that we can grieve the Spirit, in Ephesians 4:30. We can also quench the Spirit according to 1 Thessalonians 5:19. Perhaps the twofold thought is seen too in these warnings, that individual unholiness may well grieve the Spirit and our collective failures may well quench His operations amongst us as we gather.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul says to the believers at Corinth as he sought to correct what was wrong in their gatherings. In 1 Corinthians 3: 16 he states, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Later on when he speaks to them individually, concerning personal holiness he says, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). The force of these words should not be lost on us today both individually and also as we meet together with other believers.

I trust we have clearly demonstrated the truth that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer and this is in contrast to anything known to saints of the Old Testament. Even the great men and women of God in Old Testament days did not have this wonderful blessing. In Psalm 51:11 David under the conviction and in repentance of his grave sin prays, "Take not thy holy spirit away from me". No Christian need pray this prayer, nor should we pray for the Holy Spirit to come to us. He indwells us and it has been helpfully pointed out that we don't need to be concerned about getting more of the Spirit, but rather we need to be concerned about the Spirit getting more of us! To be filled with the Spirit as we have in Ephesians 5:18 is not to put more of the Spirit 'in' but rather to 'clear out' more of the things in our lives which would hinder His work in us and with us. It is really the law of displacement; the Holy Spirit is in us and will fill us as we make room for Him in our lives. What power we would have if we were filled with the Holy Spirit. Think of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, and the way he spoke and acted as the stones rained down on him. We read that he was full of the Holy Spirit, and this was why he was able to endure such a terrible death and to pray for the forgiveness of those who were killing him. (Acts 7:55-60)

The practical effect

This leads us on in our thoughts to consider the practical effect this truth has on our lives. How much does the Holy Spirit have of us? Are there parts of our lives which are closed to Him, no-go areas, or does He have full access? Do we limit Him or does He control us? Perhaps we only need to look at Galatians 5 to see the beautiful effects of a Spirit filled life. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness [or kindness], goodness, faith [or fidelity], meekness, temperance [or self control]." These nine lovely attributes are spoken of collectively as the fruit of the Spirit and if we are under the control of the Holy Spirit these things will be seen in our lives.

I must confess to being a hopeless gardener. I would not be able to distinguish one tree or shrub from another in the winter time. However, when the summer comes and the flower or fruit appears, I would have a much better idea. If I see apples, I would know that I was looking at an apple tree; if I saw plums, I would know that I was looking at a plum tree. You may be thinking, well that is pretty obvious, and so it is. In the case of the apple tree, the fruit is the evidence that the tree is an apple tree. So it is with us. The fruit of the Spirit, produced in our lives, gives the evidence that we belong to God, evidence that we have been born of God and are a new creation in Christ.

Perhaps we need to open our Bibles at Galatians 5:22-23 and quietly meditate on these things spoken of as the fruit of the Spirit. I believe that all these nine things are spoken of as 'the fruit' and not fruits to show that the Holy Spirit will produce all of these things in our lives - if we let Him. The Lord Jesus said to His disciples that the Father would be glorified in their bearing much fruit. (John 15:8). Fruit is for God's glory and pleasure and isn't it wonderful to see just how closely the Persons of the Godhead, the Father, the Spirit and the Son are together in the desire to see fruit in the lives of believers. The opposite of these nine graces are seen all around us in the world today and so as believers, indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God, we should so shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

We often sing to the Lord Jesus:

*“Thy name encircles every grace,
That God as man could show;
There only could He fully trace
A life divine below.”*

What a perfect example to follow, One who displayed all these lovely features often under the most testing of circumstances. How much do we measure up, I wonder? Bearing fruit is quite simply being like Jesus and is only possible by the power and under the control of the Person of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God.

There is another very important effect of the indwelling Holy Spirit which the Apostle John brings out in his first epistle. He brings out the fact that as children of God, we are able to discern what is truth and what is error. (1 John 4:6) There is an instinctive refusal of what is not the truth by those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. I recently read about a man who found himself in a crowd listening to the doctrine of one of the well known sects. He had not been a Christian for very long and there was concern that he would be seduced by what was being said. The speaker was pulling to pieces the Christian beliefs and twisting Scriptures to make his argument, which was very persuasive. There was another Christian there who had stayed to listen because he had recognised the danger that the young believer was in. At the end of the meeting he made his approach with a view to helping the young Christian but this is what the man said: “Yes, that sure was some speech but there was a voice in my soul saying ‘Lies! Lies! Lies!’ all the time he was speaking”. The unction of the Holy Spirit which John talks about had enabled that young believer to resist wrong doctrine. We live in days when the doctrine of the Person of Christ is under constant attack. Thank God that even the youngest believer has the Holy Spirit and is able to know the truth!

As we close I want just to bring one final point to your attention. In the last chapter of our Bibles we read that the Spirit and the bride say “Come”. (Revelation 22:17) Again with the thought of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ before us, I believe another effect of indwelling Holy Spirit would be to create in our souls a longing to see the One who died for us at Calvary. What a moment that will be when our eyes shall behold Him and not another!

*Face to face, oh blissful moment,
Face to face what will it be,
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me.*

The response of every believer indwelt of the Holy Spirit, surely should be, “Even so, come Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20)

May God bless you all.

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