

The Indwelling of the Spirit

Few people would question the fact that the Holy Spirit in some way dwells within the Christian. Paul wrote to the saints in Corinth: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you..." (**I Cor. 6:19**). He further wrote, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (**Romans 8:9**). There is considerable disagreement, however, as to how the Spirit dwells within a Christian. It is not our aim in this short article to deal with that issue, but we do want to suggest three facts that must be remembered as one studies the question.

(1) The age of miracles is past. The only people in the gospel age who ever performed miracles were those who either received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:1-4; 10:44-46**) or received spiritual gifts through the laying on of the apostles' hands (**Acts 8:5-23; 19:1-7**). No one receives either of these today. The purpose of the miracles was to reveal and confirm truth (**I Cor. 2:7-13; Mark 16:19,20**). Since all truth has been revealed (**John 16:13**) there is no further need for miracles. One's conclusion, therefore, concerning the indwelling of the Spirit must be compatible with this fact.

(2) The Christian is led by the Spirit through the scriptures, the word of God (Psa. 119:105; II Tim. 3: 16,17; Eph. 3:3,4). He does not have some inner voice, separate from the scriptures, that somehow guides him into infallible conclusions in relation to truth and right. Nor is there anything in the scriptures that suggests that God's providence somehow works through the indwelling of the Spirit. Consequently, one makes a serious mistake if he interprets his feelings or subjective thinking as some kind of message provided by the indwelling Spirit.

(3) Statements concerning the indwelling of the Spirit were not placed in the scriptures as problems to be wrestled with. They were placed there for one's assurance and consolation. A Christian sustains a very close fellowship with deity — so close that it can be said that he dwells in deity and deity dwells in him. In persecution, trials, temptations, and death his recognition of this close relationship sustains him and helps him to become triumphant in Christ. The apostles never felt the need to explain how this indwelling takes place. Pentecostalism and other misconceptions concerning the Holy Spirit force the Christian of this generation to be concerned with this problem. If, however, statements concerning the indwelling of the Spirit become primarily to him a problem to be wrestled with; if his obsession with the "how" of the Spirit's indwelling blinds him to the "fact" of that indwelling, he makes a serious mistake and may fail to find the joy and consolation that should be gained through the Lord's promise.

Differences will continue to exist, but a constant remembrance of these three facts should protect any one of us from dangerous conclusions in relation to this question.

- by Bill Hall

What Determines Right?

NOT REASON: "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching (message preached) to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:21). "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. 55:9).

NOT CONSCIENCE: "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day." (Acts 23:1). (This said by Paul, even though he had persecuted Christians).

NOT CUSTOM NOR TRADITION: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matt. 15:3). "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." (Col. 2:8).

NOT “AUTHORITIES”: “And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your RULERS”. (Acts 3:17).

NOT THE MAJORITY OR THE MASSES: “Enter ye in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby.” (Matt. 7:13).

BUT RATHER THE WORD OF GOD: It is reasonable, will make the conscience good, is God’s “tradition”, authoritative and intended for all.

- by Bill Crews

Do You Really Think You Are the First One to Think of That?

You won’t believe my latest invention. I call it ‘the internal combustion engine’. I’m very excited about all the possible applications of this unique discovery of mine. What? You mean someone thought of that before me!?! Oh, well, I’ll just pursue some other ‘new thing’.

Everyone would regard a person making such a claim as a true lunatic. How could one possibly imagine to have invented something that has been around for 150 years or more and is known and used throughout the world? We would view that fella with extreme suspicion and caution.

Sadly, religious discussions tend to attract this sort of outrageous claim. Frequently we talk to people who suggest that they have come up with something in the Bible that no one ever thought of before. Really? This ancient book has been around for thousands of years, and you want us to believe that you have discovered a truth that no one else ever found? Not likely.

The apostle Paul dealt with some folks who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). The problem was, of course, that when he confronted them with the truth they mocked him and discounted his message (vs. 32). The same danger exists today for those who are always looking for “some new thing.”

Many highly intelligent people have devoted their whole lives to the study of God’s Word. Their written discourses are preserved for us to read and research. Within our own lifetimes we have been surrounded by faithful brethren who have diligently applied themselves to the Scriptures. Now, of course, they are not the absolute standard of what is true and right, but we should not quickly discount their scholarship in favor of our own ‘latter day’ discoveries. Think!

- by Greg Gwin