

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 18 The Spirit Indwelling

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Transcript

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Chapter 18

The Spirit Indwelling

The Spirit and Christ Go Together "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9). The possession of the Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, for to be without the Spirit is proof positive that we are out of Christ—"none of His": fearful words! And, my reader, if we are not Christ's, whose are we? The answer must be, Satan's, for there is no third possessor of men. In the past all of us were subjects of the kingdom of darkness, the slaves of Satan, the heirs of wrath. The great questions which each one of us needs to accurately answer are, Have I been taken out of that terrible position? Have I been translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, made an heir of God, and become indwelt by His Holy Spirit? Observe that the Spirit and Christ go together: if we have Christ for our Redeemer, then we have the Holy Spirit for our Indweller. But if have not the Spirit, we are not Christ's. We may be members of His visible "Church," we may be externally united to Him by association with His people, but unless we are partakers of that vital union which arises from the indwelling of the Spirit, we are His only by name. "The Spirit visits many who are unregenerate, with His motions, which they resist and quench; but in all that are sanctified He dwells: there He resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we put this question to our hearts, Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house there? Which interest has the ascendant?" (Matthew Henry). The Spirit belongs to Christ (Heb. 1:9, Rev. 3:1) and proceeds from Him (John 1:33; 15:26; Luke 24:49). The Spirit is sent by Christ as Mediator (Acts 2:33). He is given to God's people in consequence of Christ's having redeemed them from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13, 14). We have nothing but what we have in and from the Son. The Spirit is given to Christ immediately, to us derivatively. He dwells in Christ by radication, in us by operation. Therefore is the Spirit called "the Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9) and "the Spirit of His Son" (Gal. 4:6); and so it is Christ who "liveth in" us (Gal. 2:20). Christ is the great Fountain of the waters of life, and from Him proceeds every gift and grace. It is our glorious Head who communicates or sends from Himself that Spirit who quickens, sanctifies, and preserves His people. What high valuation we set upon the blessed Person and work of the Holy Spirit when we learn that He is the gift, yea the dying legacy which Christ bequeathed unto His disciples to supply His absence. "How would some rejoice if they

could possess any relic of anything that belonged unto our Savior in the days of His flesh, though of no use or benefit unto them. Yea, how great a part of men, called Christians, do boast in some pretended parcels of the tree whereon He suffered. Love abused by superstition lies at the bottom of this vanity, for they would embrace anything left them by their dying Savior. But He left them no such things, nor did ever bless and sanctify them unto any holy or sacred ends; and therefore hath the abuse of them been punished with blindness and idolatry. But this is openly testified unto in the Gospel: when His heart was overflowing with love unto His disciples and care for them, when He took a holy prospect of what would be their condition, work, and temptations in the world, and thereon made provision of all that they could stand in need of, He promised to leave and give unto them His Holy Spirit to abide with them forever" (John Owen). Plain and express are the declarations of Holy Writ on this wondrous and glorious subject. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6). "Observe where the Spirit is said to dwell: not in the understanding—the fatal error of many—but in the heart. Most certainly He enlightens the understanding with truth, but He does not rest there. He makes His way to, and takes up His abode in the renewed and sanctified heart. There He sheds abroad the love of God. There He inspires the cry of "Abba, Father." And be that cry never so faint, it yet is the breathing of the indwelling Spirit, and meets a response in the heart of God. "How affecting are Paul's words to Timothy, 'That good thing which was committed unto thee by the Holy Spirit which dwelleth in us.' " The Basis for the Spirit's Indwelling The basis upon which the Spirit takes up His abode within the believer is twofold: first, on the ground of redemption. This is illustrated most blessedly in the cleansing of the leper—figure of the sinner. "And the priest shall take some of the blood of the trespass offering, and the priest shall put it upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot ... And of the rest of the oil that is in his hand shall the priest put upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot, upon the blood of the trespass offering" (Lev. 14:14, 17). Wondrous type was that: the "oil" (emblem of the Holy Spirit) was placed "upon the blood"—only on the ground of atonement accomplished could the Holy Spirit take up His abode in sinners: this at once sets aside human merits. There must be moral fitness as well. The Spirit of God will not tabernacle with unbelieving rebels. "After (or "when") that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). It is to those who obey the command, "Be ye not unequally yoked together" that God promises, "I will dwell in them" (2 Cor. 6:16). When by repudiating all idols, receiving Christ as Lord, trusting in the merits of His sacrifice, the heart is prepared—the Spirit of God enters to take possession for Christ's use. When we give up ourselves to the Lord, He accepts the dedication by making our bodies the temples of the Holy Spirit, there to maintain His interests against all the opposition of the Devil. In considering the Spirit indwelling believers we need to be on our guard against entertaining any conception of this grand fact which is gross and dishonoring to His Person. He does not so indwell as to impart His essential properties or perfections—such as omniscience or omnipotence—it would be blasphemy so to speak. But His saving and sanctifying operations are communicated to us as the sun is said to enter a room, when its bright beams and genial warmth are seen and felt therein. Further, we must not think that the graces and benign influences of the Spirit abide in us in the selfsame manner and measure they did in Christ: no, for God "giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3:34)—in Him all fullness dwells. This lays the basis for the most solemn appeal and powerful exhortation. Is my body a temple of the Holy Spirit? then how devoted should it be to God and His service! Am I indwelt by the Spirit of Christ? then how I ought to lend my ear to His softest whisper, my will to His gentlest sway, my heart to His sacred influence. In disregarding His voice, in not yielding to His promptings, He is grieved, Christ is dishonored, and we are

the losers. The greatest blessing we possess is the indwelling Spirit: let us seek grace to conduct ourselves accordingly. What "Indwelling" Denotes "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom. 8:9). Three things are denoted by the Spirit's "indwelling." First, intimacy. As the inhabitant of a house is more familiar there than elsewhere, so is the Spirit in the hearts of Christ's redeemed. God the Spirit is omnipresent, being everywhere essentially, being excluded nowhere: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7). But as God is said more especially to be there where He manifests His power and presence, as Heaven is "His dwelling place," so it is with His Spirit. He is in believers not simply by the effects of common Providence, but by His gracious operations and familiar presence. "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" (John 14:17). The world of natural men are utter strangers to the Spirit of God, not being acquainted with His sanctifying operations, but He intimately discovers His presence to those who are quickened by Him. Second, constancy: "dwelling" expresses a permanent abode. The Spirit does not affect the regenerate by a transient action only, or come "upon" them occasionally as He did the Prophets of old, when He endowed them for some particular service above the measure of their ordinary ability—but He abides in them by working such effects as are lasting. He comes to the believer not as a Visitor, but as an Inhabitant: He is within us "a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14). He lives in the renewed heart, so that by His constant and continual influence He maintains the life of grace in us. By the blessed Spirit Christians are "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30). Third, sovereignty: this is also denoted under the term "dwell." He is owner of the house, and not an underling. From the fact that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle points out the necessary implication that he is "not his own" (1 Cor. 6:19). Previously he was possessed by another owner, even Satan—the evil spirit says, "I will return into my house" (Matthew 12:44). But the Spirit has dispossessed him, and the sanctified heart has become His "house," where He commands and governs after His own will. Take again the figure of the sanctuary: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16). A "temple" is a sacred dwelling, employed for the honor and glory of God, where He is to be revered and worshipped, and from which all idols must be excluded. What the Indwelling Spirit Is The indwelling Spirit is the bond by which believers are united to Christ. If, therefore, we find the Holy Spirit abiding in us, we may warrant-ably conclude we have been 'joined to the Lord.'" This is plainly set forth in those words of the Savior's, "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one" (John 17:22, 23). The "glory" of Christ's humanity was its union with the Godhead. How was it united? By the Holy Spirit. This very "glory" Christ has given His people: "I in them," which He is by the sanctifying Spirit—the bond of our union with Him. The indwelling Spirit is the sure mark of the believer's freedom from the Covenant of Works, under which all Christless persons stand. And our title to the special privileges of the new covenant, in which none but Christ's are interested is but another way of saying. they are "not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). This is plain from the Apostle's reasoning in Galatians 4:6, 7, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son." The spirit of the old covenant was a servile one, a spirit of fear and bondage, and those under the same were not "sons," but servants. The spirit of the new covenant is a free one, that of children, inheriting the blessed promises and royal immunities contained in the charter of grace. The indwelling Spirit is the certain pledge and earnest of eternal salvation. The execution of the eternal decree of God's electing love—"drawn" (Jer. 31:3), and the application of the virtues and benefits of the death of Christ by the Spirit (Gal. 3:13, 14), is sure evidence of our personal interest in the Redeemer. This is plain from 1 Peter 1:2: "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the

Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." God's eternal decree is executed and the blood of Christ is sprinkled upon us when we receive the Spirit of sanctification. The Spirit's residing in the Christian is the guarantee and earnest of the eternal inheritance: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22). The Evidences of the Spirit's Indwelling What are the evidences and fruits of the Spirit's inhabitation? First, wherever the Spirit dwells, He does in some degree mortify and subdue the evils of the soul in which He resides. "The Spirit (lusts) against the flesh" (Gal. 5:17), and believers "through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13). This is one special part of His sanctifying work. Though He kills not sin in believers, He subdues it—though He does not subdue the flesh as that it never troubles or defiles them any more, its dominion is taken away. Perfect freedom from its very presence awaits them in Heaven; but even now, animated by their holy Indweller, Christians deny themselves and use the means of grace which God has appointed for deliverance from the reigning power of sin. Second, wherever the Spirit dwells, He produces a spirit of prayer and supplication. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Rom. 8:26). The two things are inseparable: wherever He is poured out as the Spirit of grace, He is also poured out as the Spirit of supplication (Zech. 12:10). He helps Christians before they pray by stirring up their spiritual affections and stimulating holy desires. He helps them in prayer by teaching them to ask for those things which are according to God's will. He it is who humbles the pride of their hearts, moves their sluggish wills, and out of weakness makes them strong. He helps them after prayer by quickening hope and patience to wait for God's answers. Third, wherever the Spirit dwells He works a heavenly and spiritual frame of mind. "They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:5-6). The workings of every creature follow the being and bent of its nature. If God, Christ, Heaven, engage the thoughts and affections of the soul, the Spirit of God is there. There are times in each Christian's life when he exclaims, "How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with Thee" (Ps. 139:17, 18)—such holy contemplation is the very life of the regenerate. But, says the sincere Christian, If the Spirit of God dwelt in me, could my heart be so listless and averse to spiritual duties? Answer, The very fact that you are exercised and burdened over this sad state evidences the presence of spiritual life in your soul. Let it be borne in mind that there is a vast difference between spiritual death and spiritual deadness: the former is the condition of the unregenerate, the latter is the disease and complaint of thousands of the regenerate. Note it well that nine times over, David, in a single Psalm, prayed, "Quicken me!" (119). Though it be so often, it is not so always with you: there are seasons when the Lord breaks in upon your heart, enlarges you affections, and sets your soul at liberty—clear proof you are not deserted by the Comforter!

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