

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

Introduction:

That there are varying understandings of what is meant by the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” is quite obvious to anyone studying the subject.

- This lesson aims at examining the assertions of men and applications of Scripture to determine the meaning of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- Is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit literal or representational? Is the gift of the Holy Spirit the beginning of His indwelling? What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be sealed with the Holy Spirit? What exactly does the indwelling accomplish for a man? These questions and more will all be carefully answered by gradually moving through this series.

Romans 8:9 validates the reality of the subject under study. However, it is not a full explanation of what the Spirit indwelling is, or how it occurs.

- **Romans 8:9**– *“However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”* NASU
- Thus, the necessity of comprehending what is meant by the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
- My conclusion will be that this indwelling is not literal, or personal, but **representatively** through the Word of the Spirit.

New Testament Usage of the words, “dwell”; “abide”

- Consider this statement of Paul using the same word, “dwells”, in **Romans 7:18**– *“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.”* (NASU)
- Obviously, Paul did not use the word “dwells” in a literal, personal, sense. The word is used representatively. In fact, **Romans 8:9** says that the *“Spirit of God dwells in you.”* Is the Spirit of God not good?
- We use such description frequently. We often speak of someone being “full of” certain things.
 - “Full of Energy”– Representative of moving about without tiredness.
 - “Full of laughter”– Representative of being cheerful or humorous
 - “Full of light”– Representative of someone who is optimistic
 - “Full of wisdom”– Representative of someone intelligent / knowledgeable

- “Full of the Spirit”– Representative of someone walking according to truth and righteousness.
- When we describe someone in these ways, we use these expressions to represent different personality traits.

More passages to consider:

- **Revelation 1:10**, “*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet,*” (NASU) The question to be asked is: Was John literally in spirit? Or was this a representation of his state of mind?
- **I John 4:6** states: “*We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*” (NASU) The context is the discernment between true and false teaching. The spirits here are not literal spirits, but they represent two systems of teaching.
- **II Timothy 1:7** states: “*For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.*” (NASU) Has God given man four literal spirits that are literally roaming around inside of him? No, these spirits represent a man’s state of mind.
- **Romans 7:17** states: “*So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.*” (NASU) Is sin literally living inside of Paul? Or is it the propensity to give into unrighteous desires?
- In all of the verses above, there is a representation of qualities. These things do not literally dwell, abide, or live in the person.

The terms “abide” and “dwell” are the same word at times in the Greek and are often used interchangeably, depending upon the translation.

- Each term gives a picture of how God and the Holy Spirit dwell within His Church and individual Christians representatively.
- **John 6:48-58**– Christ states in **verse 56**, “*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*” (NASU) Putting aside a discussion of whether this has reference to the Lord’s Supper (I believe it does not) Christ said he would abide in those who did as He stated. How exactly was He going to do that? Literally or representatively?
- Many passages discuss how individual disciples “*abide*” or “*dwell*” in Christ, taking this indwelling discussion in the “opposite direction”. How is that going to happen? Literally? Knowing how man dwells in God will aid us in knowing how God dwells in man.
- Consider the following passages:

- **John 8:31,32**– “So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “ If you continue (“abide”, KJV) in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” (NASU)
- **John 14:19-21**– “After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.” (NASU)
- **John 15:4**– “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.” (NASU)
- **Romans 8:9**– “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” (NASU)
- **II Timothy 3:14**– “You, however, continue (“abide”, KJV) in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them,” (NASU)
- **I John 4:15-16**– “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” (NASU)
- Although addressed from the opposite perspective, “indwelling” is obviously not personal or literal in these passages, but representational. Those addressed were being told to abide or dwell in God, or in love, or in His truth. All of the language is representational. In fact, for man to literally abide in all of the things mentioned is impossible.

The Spirit of God Dwelling In New Testament Christians

There is simply no question that the Spirit dwells in us in some way, the only question is “how does He do so?” And closely related to that question is another, “Do passages which speak of an indwelling of the Spirit describe something ordinary or miraculous?”

- **I Corinthians 3:16-17**- “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.” (NASU)
 - This statement is often read to establish that the human body houses the Holy Spirit, but this passage concerns the church as a body, not individual Christians.

For a reference to the individual Christian's body being a temple of the Holy Spirit, we must consult **I Corinthians 6:19-20**.

- The “*temple*” of **I Corinthians 3** is the church as a body. The materials are the souls of men. The Spirit lives representatively in the church because the church is composed of those obedient to the Word of God, given by the Spirit of God to man.
- When man does not obey, he essentially tries to destroy the temple of God. He is straw, wood, hay - and God will destroy Him.
- Only those who are obedient to God and are united with God in His church will be allowed to remain (**Isa. 59:1-2, II Thess. 1:8**).
- This verse does not set forth a literal dwelling of the Spirit of God within an individual, nor within the church today. It was addressed to a church in possession of many spiritual gifts in the age when miraculous manifestations of the Spirit were present in the church. No such situation exists in our day (**I Cor. 13:8-13**).
- **II Timothy 1:14**— *“Guard, through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, the treasure which has been entrusted to you.”* NASU
 - Concerning Timothy, Paul identified himself (“*us*”) as having the indwelling Spirit along with his young protégé.
 - This must be a miraculous indwelling of the Spirit. The treasure entrusted to Timothy was the Gospel. He was to guard it through the Holy Spirit.
 - Paul, without question, was an inspired apostle who had the Gospel committed to him through that inspiration, and that by the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.
 - Timothy is said to have the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. This indwelling occurred through the laying on of Paul's hands. *“For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.”* (**II Tim. 1:6**, NASU) See also **I Timothy 4:14** in this connection.
 - Timothy was to “*kindle afresh*” (“*stir up*”, KJV) the gift given him by Paul, which he obviously received in a miraculous way. The spiritual gift Timothy received is mentioned in the same context where the Holy Spirit is said to indwell Timothy. This was the miraculous indwelling of the Spirit.
- **I John 4:11-13**— *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides (“dwells”, KJV) in us, and His love is perfected in us. By this we know that we abide (“dwell”, KJV) in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.”* (NASU)
 - John stated that he knew God dwelt in him because *“He has given us [apostles, MW] of His Spirit.”* (v. 13)

- He is correcting false teaching in his day which repudiated the apostles.
- **Verse 14** proves this: *“We [apostles, MW] have seen [I Jn. 1:1] and testify [bear witness, I Jn. 1:2] that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.”* NASU
- **Verse 14** is a direct reference to **I John 1:1-2** which shows that John is speaking of the apostles.
- When the Scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the apostles we understand that this occurred miraculously (**John 14:16-17**).
- The promise that the apostles would receive the Holy Spirit involved a miraculous reception of the Spirit (**John 14:26; 15:26-27; 16:13**).
- The very first mention of the indwelling of the Spirit is the promise of the miraculous indwelling of the Spirit!
- The indwelling of the Spirit is mentioned only five times (**Rom. 8:9; I Cor. 3:16; 6:19, II Tim. 1:6; I Jn. 4:13**). Each instance involves either a church that had spiritual gifts, or an individual who had a spiritual gift. Since this is so, separating the indwelling of the Holy Spirit from the miraculous is quite difficult, if not impossible.
- An observation made by one student of this subject is worthy of notice in this discussion: *“There are other passages that teach that the dwelling of the Spirit was a reference to miraculous gifts. “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (I Corinthians 3:16; see also I Corinthians 6:19). These statements were made to a church that had miraculous gifts. The letter was written to the church I Corinthians 1:2). The church at Corinth had miraculous gifts (Chapters 12, 14). One of the main things that is discussed in the Corinthian letter is spiritual gifts. Would it not seem that a letter which was written to a church (with one of the main things discussed being spiritual gifts), when the Spirit was said to dwell in the church, be a reference to the miraculous gifts that were in the church. If not, why not?” (Franklin Camp, The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption, p. 235-236)*
- Whatever we conclude about the indwelling of the Spirit today, we must recognize that it is not the same as the first-century miraculous indwelling of the Spirit. It is neither “Holy Spirit baptism” as in the case of the apostles and the household of Cornelius (**Acts 2:4; Acts 10:44-48**); nor is it a miraculous gift bestowed by the laying on of apostolic hands (**Acts 8:14-18**). These factors move me to conclude that such an “indwelling” today is representatively, through the medium of the Word of the Spirit.

Being “Filled With The Spirit” and “Full of the Holy Spirit”

It is my conviction the terminology “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” or “*full of the Holy Spirit*” are phrases representing the miraculous, as the Bible uses it.

- The Old Testament must first be examined for this terminology.
 - In Exodus, Moses was told to build a tabernacle. God informed Him that He had chosen Bezalel (**Exodus 31:2-3**) to superintend the work of building and “*I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge ... that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship.*” (NASU) His assistant, Aholiab (**Exodus 35:35**) was apparently equipped similarly by God. What this meant was they were given miraculous knowledge and abilities to perform their tasks. This was not something they learned or acquired with practice over time, but rather it was given directly by God to them.
 - **Deuteronomy 34:9** is another Old Testament example showing someone full of the Spirit of God. Moses laid hands upon Joshua and imparted wisdom to him directly. Unlearned wisdom and knowledge directly given is miraculous, is it not?
 - **Micah 3:8** demonstrates Micah full of power by the Spirit to prophesy. This is miraculous ability given to him by deity.
- In the New Testament, several examples of people being filled with the Holy Spirit occur.
 - **Luke 1:15--** Zacharias is told by an angel that his unborn son, John, would be filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb. Some attempt to portray this as not being miraculous, by referring to **John 10:41** where it states, “*John performed no sign*”.
 - However, as with Bezalel and Aholiab the miraculous does not always have to involve a sign.
 - The miraculous element in **John 10:41** was that “*everything John said about this man was true*” in reference to Christ. The fact is, John had inspired knowledge, given by the Holy Spirit from the womb. This explains his accuracy regarding Jesus.
 - Zacharias wife was filled with the Holy Spirit in **Luke 1:41-45**. It was manifested by miraculous speech of the Holy Spirit.
 - Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit in **Luke 1:67** and prophesied.
 - **Luke 4:1** shows that Jesus was “*full of the Holy Spirit*” and was being led by that Spirit into the wilderness. The Spirit directly operating upon Christ qualifies this as a miraculous occurrence.
 - **Acts 2:4** mentions that the apostles “*were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*”

- **Acts 4:8**, and also **verse 31** shows that the apostles “*were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*” This resulted from the place being “*shaken*” where they were gathered – obviously a miraculous occurrence, not seismic.
- In **Acts 6:3-5**, men were being chosen to serve the neglected widows. They were specifically to be men “*full of the Spirit*”.
 - That this is not just a reputation for Godly behavior is obvious, because their good reputation was a separate quality.
 - Their miraculous endowments were visible characteristics which distinguished them as obedient to God (**Acts 5:32**) and therefore identified them as trustworthy to the people.
- Later, Stephen, one of those selected men, following performing miraculous signs and wonders, would deliver an inspired speech to the Sanhedrin.
 - He was “*full of the Holy Spirit*” in **Acts 7:55** (NASU). This filling enabled him to see into heaven itself and observe the glory of God! (**v. 56**) **Acts 6:8** said he was “*full of grace and power*” an obvious reference to being filled with the Spirit because he “*performed great wonders and signs among the people*” (NASU)
 - Apparently, he received the miraculous measure of the Spirit through the laying on of apostolic hands (**Acts 6:6**).
- Paul was “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” in **Acts 9:17**, in fulfillment of the promise made in **Acts 2:38** to those who were baptized “*for the remission of sins*”, and thus he received the “*gift of the Holy Spirit*”-- a miraculous gift enabling Paul to do his work as an apostle. Perhaps, in this one instance, Ananias was the exception to the rule regarding the apostolic laying on of hands for the reception of the miraculous gifts of the Spirit?
- **Acts 11:23-24** identifies Barnabas as “*full of the Holy Spirit*” as he exhorted the Christians at Antioch. I believe his teaching was inspired, in order to aid the Christians there and that he did not speak of his own accord. After all, he is listed in **Acts 13:1** among the “*prophets and teachers*” in the church there.
- Saul (Paul) in **Acts 13:9** “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” had some very terse and pointed things to say to Elymas, the magician, who was opposing the truth.
- **Acts 13:52-14:1** shows that “*the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit*” as they entered the Iconium synagogue to preach the Gospel to Jews. “*The disciples*” must, in context, refer to Paul and Barnabas not to the

whole group of disciples in the church (**Acts 13:50-52**). Paul and Barnabas spoke with inspired speech from the mind of the Holy Spirit.

- **Ephesians 5:18** is the final verse in Scripture using the phrase “*filled with the spirit*”. Paul wrote, “*And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord*”.

(NASU)

- This statement is a command to be filled with the Spirit. Does the passage mean that one is filled with the Spirit as he is filled with the word? This may be the meaning for us today, but did the Ephesians understand that statement to mean they were to be filled with the word of God?
- To answer that question, consider the language of **Acts 2:4** (where the apostles, “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” began to speak “*as the Spirit was giving them utterance.*” Too, consider **Acts 4:31** where the apostles, “*were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.*” Then, give thought to **Acts 6:3-10**, where seven men “*full of the Spirit and wisdom*” were selected by the church, one of whom was Stephen, of whom it was said, “*Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people ... but they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.*” (NASU)
- These three examples of spirit-filled persons all “spoke”. Their speaking was not ordinary, but inspired teaching.
- Unless **Ephesians 5:18** is the exception, there is no mention of a single person in the New Testament “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” who did not possess a miraculous measure of the Spirit!
- Therefore, I conclude that in **Ephesians 5:18**, the Ephesians who had miraculous gifts were told to engage them. Those with gifts did have control over them (**I Corinthians 14:27-32**). They could exercise them or not, according to their own wills (see also **II Tim. 1:6**, where Timothy was told to “*kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.*” (NASU)
- This does not make the example of Christians singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs an anachronism, for we still are able to do so today. Many of them (those who had such a spiritual gift) may have done so under the inspiration of the Spirit, but we have able hymn writers and songbooks!

The rule of “*singing and making melody with your heart*” (**Eph. 5:19**) still applies to us as it did to them.

- The examination of the phrase “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” in either Testament overwhelmingly demonstrates the miraculous in those ages. I therefore conclude, that this phenomenon always involves the miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and that as a result, no such indwelling occurs among Christians today (**I Cor. 13:8-13**).

The Sealing of the Holy Spirit

In some passages, there is the idea of someone being sealed with the Spirit (**II Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30**). The persons who were “*sealed*” in these texts were the apostles, the Jews, and the Gentiles.

- **II Corinthians 1:21-22** states, “*Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.*” (NASU)
 - Be aware that Paul’s purpose in writing II Corinthians was to defend his status as a true apostle of Christ, in the face of some who were doubting it.
 - The “*us*” in this passage are the apostles of Christ. How had they been established and anointed? **Mark 16:20** shows the disciples confirmed the word they were sharing by signs (miracles).
 - **Hebrews 2:3-4** shows God confirmed the teachings of His Word through miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Even Christ identified his miraculous works as that which gave witness to Him (**John 5:36, 10:38**).
 - The apostles were confirmed (established) as authoritative by signs and miracles (**II Cor. 12:12-13**) and Paul says such signs accompanied his work there.
 - **I John 2:27** clearly identifies the “*anointing*” of the Holy Spirit as miraculous, for the Christians had received inspired truth no one needed to teach them.
 - My conclusion is that this “*sealing*” in the **II Cor. 1:21-22** passage is miraculous in nature. They were able to perform miracles. This gave them a pledge, security, guarantee, earnest in their hearts knowing God will keep His promises (**v.20**).
- **Ephesians 1:13-14** reads, “*In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*” (NASU)
 - The apostle Paul writes this letter to the Church at Ephesus, who, just like the Corinthians, possessed miraculous gifts. **Verses 13-14**, are discussing the

conversion of the Ephesians. They heard the gospel, believed it, and following their obedience were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

- To have a greater understanding of this, we must recall what occurred in **Acts 2**. The Jews heard, believed, and based upon that belief, repented and were baptized. Following their baptism, hands were laid upon them and they received the gift of the Holy Spirit – the miraculous. They were sealed.
- This same situation occurred with the in **Acts 8:14-17** with the Samaritans.
- **Acts 19:5-6** is very important to understanding **Ephesians 1:13-14** because this was when the Ephesians received the Holy Spirit. They were sealed with it by the laying on of hands.
- Here in **Ephesians 1**, Paul equates receiving the miraculous of the Holy Spirit to being sealed. The visible manifestations marked them as followers of God.
- In **verse 14** the term “*pledge*” (“earnest”, KJV) is used as in **II Corinthians 1:22**. The promise of the Holy Spirit, as prophesied by Joel and fulfilled in Acts 2, was a guarantee of the inheritance of eternal life. It validated the faithfulness of God that man would be heir to an eternal kingdom.
- It was a look forward to God redeeming/acquiring again His possession. That possession, in my view, was the miraculous.
 - The Ephesians, and ultimately all of mankind, would be liberated from the miraculous when God redeemed His possession.
 - To be clear, the miraculous was given as a guarantee of the inheritance of God, until the time it would be removed/redeemed. This would be done to “*the praise of His glory.*” How so?
 - The miraculous would cease (be redeemed/removed by God) in order to make room for the “*perfect*”, the unity of the faith, the Word of God (**I Corinthians 13:8-10; Ephesians 4:11-16**).
 - The removal of the miraculous, replaced with only the Word of God, would enable men to grow into mature men on their own (**II Timothy 3:16-17**).
- **Ephesians 4:30**– “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption*”. (NASU)
 - Simply put, the Holy Spirit went to great lengths to demonstrate the power of God. Through His miraculous works the Word was confirmed, the Church was edified, and God was glorified.
 - The seal of the Spirit was evident in the first century Church. Yet, this was all done in bringing man to the written Word of God.

- To turn away from the Christian walk to the things of the World would certainly grieve the Spirit of God.

From these passages discussing the seal of the Spirit, we again conclude this to be a miraculous phenomenon as we did with the “gift of the Spirit” and the “filling of the Spirit”. Since the miraculous is no longer present today, the “sealing of the Spirit” and “the indwelling of the Holy Spirit” are no longer needed, nor are they even possibilities for Christians today.

Mark W. White
15839 Barrow Cove Dr.
Cypress, TX 77429
Mwwhite.2014@gmail.com