

The Gift and Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

by J. T. Smith

Of all the lessons in this series, this one on the gift and indwelling of the Holy Spirit is perhaps the most difficult. The leading, guiding, indwelling and comforting of the Holy Spirit is not questioned. The problem arises when we discuss *the manner* in which He does them. Therefore, we will endeavor to point out the issue to you, our readers.

Does the Holy Spirit, as a person, immediately and with means literally and actually enter into the body of a Christian, separate and apart from the word? If so, what does He do for the Christian, as a result of this bodily entering, that is not also attributed to and accomplished by the written word? These are questions that must be answered if we are going to take the position that the Spirit enters separate and apart from the word.

The denominations have always taught that salvation is a direct result of the Holy Spirit entering bodily into the individual. That is their purpose in praying the “sinners prayer.” They are beseeching God to send His Spirit down to this poor sinner, and save him.

Often these preachers will go one step further. They say there is no need for them to study their lessons. The Spirit “lay on their hearts” the lesson He wants them to teach. There is no need for them to study and prepare a lesson. The Spirit would probably want them to teach another lesson anyway. Generally no one would deny the fact that they have not studied the Bible. All one needs to do is listen to what they say. However, if what they say is true, you would expect The Spirit could do a better job in providing them with a lesson.

A number of brethren have, in the past, warned about this “personal indwelling” doctrine:

Brother G. K. Wallace said, “If this Baptist doctrine concerning the Holy Spirit is not checked, we are in for a complete apostasy in the church.” B. C. Goodpasture said of this movement of a direct operation of the Holy Spirit among brethren, “Some have been drinking at the fountains of denominational error.” Guy N. Woods said, in refuting the views of Abilene Christian College professors, “We believe that the view we are refuting is a dangerous one.”

What is meant by the “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38? Many believe this is talking about the “gifts” of the Spirit whether in a baptismal measure, or by the laying of the apostles’ hands. These gifts, however, were for the confirmation of the word (Mark 16:20) and were not for every person. They are enumerated in I Corinthians 12:4, 8-10. Also these gifts were given to those who were baptized with the Holy Spirit according to Luke 3:16-17.

There are two instances of Holy Spirit baptism recorded in the New Testament. One is in Acts 2, and the other in Acts 10. Gifts were also received by the “laying on of the apostles’ hands” Acts 8 and 19:1-6). Others think the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2:38 is the Holy Spirit, Himself.

There are two ways this expression can be understood in Acts 2:38. First, the gift of The Spirit is The Spirit Himself. Second, The “gift of The Spirit” is a *gift given by The Spirit*. Lexicographers and commentators are divided on what this expression means. However all seem to agree that according to the Greek tense it could be either of the above. But, as in other cases, the context will determine just how the words are used.

There are several times in the Scriptures that similar expressions are found. Why not let the Scriptures tell us the meaning of this phrase.

John 4:10 “Jesus answered and said to her, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have

given you living water’.” Now, was the “gift of God” God Himself? No one would think so. In Ephesians 4:7 “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Does anyone believe that the gift of Christ spoken of here was Christ Himself? In both cases the context demands otherwise.

The first word (“For”) in verse 39 of Acts 2, is from the Greek word *gar*, and is a very interesting word. I believe it is important to an understanding of the statement in 2:38. The word *gar* means, “a primary particle; properly, assigning a reason (used in argument, explanation or intensification; often with other particles) (Strong’s **Greek Dictionary**). “It adduces the cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement or opinion” (Thayer’s **Greek-English Lexicon**, page 109). Seemingly, many have overlooked this very important point. What is the reason that is given for the preceding statement in 2:38? The statement, “and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” “For (*gar*) the promise...” The “gift” then is not the Holy Spirit, Himself, but “*the promise*.” What was “the promise?” It was included in Joel prophecy. “ ‘And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved’.” (Acts 2:21). The gift of the Holy Spirit, then, is salvation and all that it involves. Obedience to the words of The Spirit causes one to receive the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It puts one into Christ (I Corinthians 12:13) where we receive *all spiritual blessings*. (Cf. Ephesians 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”).

Now, let’s look at another passage of Scripture where the word *gar* is used. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27). Notice, verse 27 gives the reason for the preceding statement. The Galatians *are* the children of God. Paul goes on to explain the reason for this. “For (*gar*) as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” The same principle that gives us *the reason* for the preceding statement in Galatians 3:26 also gives us the *reason* for the preceding statement in Acts 2:38.

Thus it is my contention that the “gift of The Spirit” is that which The Spirit makes available. He makes all spiritual blessings available through Christ. Therefore, all spiritual blessings in Christ are the Spirit’s gift to “you and your children and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:39). This would include every person of every nation.

What About The Indwelling of the Spirit?

All will admit that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian through the medium of the Word. The Holy Spirit uses the “word” as a means by which He convicts, converts, and sanctifies. “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). The “sword of the Spirit” (the word of God) is the instrument used by the Spirit. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Romans 1:16). “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness” (Romans 6:16-18). “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

However, in addition to this, some argue that the Spirit *as a personal being* also inhabits personally the body of each Christian, *separate and apart from the word*. Some of the passages that are used, “proof texts” if you please, are Acts 5:32, “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those

who obey Him.” Galatians 4:6 “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” Romans 8:26-27 “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.²⁷ Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” I Corinthians 6:19-20 “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” I may not be able to explain what, or in what manner the Holy Spirit dwells in us, but if separate and apart from the Word, *what is His function*. Does He provide revelation? If not, what?

Some believe that His dwelling in us has nothing to do with revelation, but with the *providence of God*. How could we know that? The only way we can know and believe anything about God and His ways is by the things revealed in His word. “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Where does the Bible teach that the Spirit dwells in us to work God’s providence? Nothing is said in the Bible about the providence of God being wrought by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the word.

I suggest that every effect or emotion generated within us is engendered by the word. Every effort or emotion that I shall name, that are attributed to The Spirit can also be attributed to the word of God. (The passages that are given have reference to the word).

1. Begets (James 1:18)
2. Birth (I Peter 1:23)
3. Quickens (Psalm 119:107)
4. Cleanses (Ephesians 5:26)
5. Purifies (I Peter 1:22)
6. Saves (James 1:21-22)
7. Justifies (Romans 3:27-28).
8. Led (Psalm 119:105)
9. Witness (I John 5:10)
10. Brings forth fruit (Colossians 1:5-6)
11. Walking by the Spirit (II John 4; III John 4)
12. Strength (Colossians 1:10-11)
13. Comforts (I Thessalonians 4:18)
14. Lives within us (Galatians 2:20)
15. Spirituality (John 6:63)
16. Enlightens (Psalm 119:130)
17. Understands (Psalm 119:104)
18. Sanctifies (John 17:17)
19. Resists (II Timothy 3:8)
20. Draws to God (John 6:44-45)

I don’t believe there is a single effect or emotion in the Bible that is attributed to the Holy Spirit that is not also attributed to the word.

The Entire Godhead Is Said To Dwell In Christians

God dwells in the Christian. I John 4:15 “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, **God abides in him**, and he in God.” Colossians 1:27 “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is **Christ in you**, the hope of glory.” I Corinthians 6:19 “Or do you not know that your

body is the temple of the **Holy Spirit who is in you**, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” What therefore, is said of one member of the Godhead is said of all.

We are told in Ephesians 5:18 “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit.” The word “filled” here comes from the Greek word *pimplemi* which means, “What wholly takes possession of the mind is said to ‘fill it’” (Thayer). The Christian is to think on things spiritual. “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). He is to allow the seed of the kingdom (the word of God) to bring forth “fruit unto God” in his life. This fruit is called “the fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). Hence, when we “renew our minds” (Romans 12:2), and fill our hearts with the seed of the kingdom, we are filled with the Spirit of God, and bring forth the “fruit of the Spirit.”

The question still remains, how do the members of the “Godhead” dwell in us? We have found from the Word of God that They all do. Paul says it is by faith. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love...” (Ephesians 3:17). “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”(Galatians 2:20). Yes, all of the members of the Godhead, including the Holy Spirit, dwell in the Christian. But, they do so through the word, as man believes and obeys the word of God.

How do They dwell in us? The same way we dwell in them. I John 4:15 “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.” My understanding of these passages is simply that it is a relationship. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). If not, then when someone explains how we dwell in God, then in that same way we dwell in Him. So says John.