

## THE INDWELLING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Through the years, much (and sometimes too much) has been said and written about the “indwelling of the Holy Spirit.” In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, brethren were generally of the concept that the Holy Spirit dwelt in Christians either (1) LITERALLY, or (2) REPRESENTATIVELY (through the “word” of God). Gus Nichols was a strong force for the literal position, and Guy Woods was a strong force for the representative position. The matter was discussed publicly and in lectureships, as well as having been publicly debated. In the final analysis, both Nichols and Woods agreed that their positions represented their “opinions” and neither wanted their views to be taken as clear cut doctrine, or matters of fellowship between brethren.

Having been on both sides of these opinions, I have had an insight to both positions, and have observed what I believe to be weak, unprovable or misapplied, arguments, with Acts 2 :38 and Acts 5:32 being used. These are key passages and both likely refer to other functions of the Spirit rather than the “indwelling” measure of the Spirit. Without going into a study of these 2 passages, we propose another view that appears worthy of consideration, that being the view that the term “indwelling of the Holy Spirit” is a **figurative expression**, describing the fellowship Christians have with the Holy Spirit, as well as the fellowship we have with God the Father and Christ the Son of God and Saviour of the world. In other words, the language is FIGURATIVE, and is to be taken **in contrast** with the literal indwelling view. It appears to be a stretch to say that the word “figurative” is no more than language of “representation.”

Several times in scripture we find reference to deity being “in” or “abiding in” deity, or deity abiding in believers. Most of the time it is clear that such passages are understood “figuratively” and not directly or Representatively. However, in 1 John, there are several references to an “indwelling” of deity with each other or with believers, and with believers indwelling deity (God, Christ, or the Holy Spirit). Sometimes certain qualities are involved in indwelling, such as “love” (1 John 4:17). Consider the following texts.

- 1) “He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).
- 2) “I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.”(John 14:20).
- 3) “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24).
- 4) “He abideth in us” (1 John 3:24).
- 5) “God dwelleth in us” (1 John 4:12).
- 6) “We dwell in him, and he in us” (1 John 4:13).
- 7) “God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15).
- 8) “He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16).

### Now some questions to consider.

- 1) How does God dwell with and in at the same time?
- 2) How is a believer in God while Christ is in the believer?
- 3) How is the believer in God while God is in the believer?
- 4) If this is literal, and God is in the believer who in turn is in God, does this put God within Himself?
- 5) How can we dwell in God literally or representatively while we dwell literally in Him?
- 6) How does a believer dwell in love?
- 7) Is this indwelling literal or representative or figurative?
- 8) How can God literally dwell in any believer?

Our life “in Christ” is when we **get into** Him. We are “baptized into Jesus Christ”

and at the same time baptized “into his death” (Rom. 6:3). We are not literally baptized into either Christ **or** His death, but this is symbolic, or a **figure of speech—figurative language**. Again, we are “baptized into Christ” to “put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Neither is done physically or literally, but spiritually or figuratively. Now, since our life in Christ begins “figuratively”, how does it end up “literally” or “representatively?” GOD is said to be IN us; CHRIST is said to be IN us; and the SPIRIT is said to be in us. If any of these is literal, why are not all three of them literal? Or, if one is figurative, why are not all figurative?

We understand that “literal” and “figurative” are opposites, and are not the same. We are not literally or representatively (someone doing it for us) baptized, but it is to be taken figuratively. We sometimes draw circles on the chalk board to show how we are IN Christ and OUT of the world of sin, but we understand that Jesus is not literally standing in our presence as we are baptized, so as to get into Him literally, or that the chalk circle is literally Christ. If God dwells in us figuratively and Christ dwells in us figuratively, how is it possible for the Spirit to dwell in us literally?

How do we explain our dwelling in God and He dwelling in us **at the same time**? How do we explain our dwelling in Christ and He dwelling in us **at the same time**? How do we explain our dwelling in the Spirit and He dwelling with us **at the same time**? Our efforts to do so become extremely confusing as we mix the literal with the figurative.

In 1 John 4:13, we read, “*Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*” Brother Roy Lanier Jr. (who holds to the personal or literal indwelling of the Spirit), does, however, make an excellent comment in his EPISTLES OF JOHN Commentary, page 150, that describes my view that the term “indwelling of the Spirit” simply refers to the “fellowship of the Spirit”, which all believers have. Lanier states:

By this the writer means that we can have assurance of God's **fellowship**. This is almost a restatement of 3:24, “And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him.” This means is described subsequently as the gift of the Spirit.”

Bro. Lanier may not have meant to describe my position, but it certainly does do so, in that the term “gift of the Spirit” as simply God's fellowship extended to us as we believe and obey His word, and this fellowship is with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit and to all believers who also enjoy this fellowship. “Ye also may have **fellowship** with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ...we have **fellowship** with one another...” (1 John 1:5, 7). Paul said we are “called unto the **fellowship** of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). Again, “if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any **fellowship of the Spirit** if any bowels of mercies” (Phil. 2:1). “*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and he **communion of the Holy Ghost**, be with you all.*” (2 Cor. 13:14). The Greek word for “fellowship” in Phil. 1:2 and for “communion” in 2 Cor. 13:14, is the same, *koinonia*.

In 1 John 3:24 and 4:13, there is a reference to the “Spirit”, which is not to say that there is a literal or personal indwelling of the Spirit involved. One passage says that we “know that he abideth in us” which is “**by** the Spirit which he hath given us.” Yes, we know that God abides in us because the Spirit inspired word tells us so. Just as **by** the Spirit (His revealed teachings) we are baptized into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), and the Spirit

9His revealed teaching )makes overseers (Acts 20:28) and we know that Jesus is Lord by the Holy Spirit (His revealed teaching) (2 Cor. 12:3). The work of the Spirit is to reveal "all things" necessary to life (1 Cor. 2:9-10; 2 Pet. 1:3). Then, 1 John 4:13 is saying that we can **know** that there is that mutual "indwelling" because God has given us **of** the Spirit, not because there is a literal indwelling of the Spirit that causes us to know that, but the revelation **of** the Spirit makes this known. Lanier says we have a "mutual abiding" with the Lord (p. 158), and regarding God abiding in us and we in him, says, ""There is a mutual spiritual indwelling, a reciprocal abiding, the closest **fellowship** and communion possible" (p. 154.) These quotations are not to say bro. Lanier is agreeing with the view herein set forth, but his statements themselves fit our view that the term "indwelling of the Holy Spirit" is simply a way of describing the fact that we have and enjoy the "**fellowship of the Spirit.**"

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