

Literal Indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

Benefit of a Literal Indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

Holy Spirit Indwelling Series – Part 5

Going against the illustrations presented in the four previous articles which argued against a literal non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit in favor of a representative indwelling, this article will focus on examining “what if”. What if there was a non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit as some believe today? What purpose would the indwelling serve? Some kind and earnest Christians establish the indwelling of the Spirit is a sign of righteousness, provides faith and conviction, gives knowledge and wisdom, guides decision making, intercedes prayer, and much more. There are basic steps to determine if such a function is literal non-miraculous indwelling. Studying part of the Godhead is not an area which should be left to “I think” or speculation. In this article, the above functions will be examined by the scriptures and it shall be seen what is affirmed or must be discarded.

The initial article in this series proposed the indwelling of the Holy Spirit was a non-miraculous representational indwelling. It was described as a relationship in which man, adhering to the impact of God’s creation and Word, decided to come into obedience to God. At this point, man dwelled in God, God in man, man in the word, the word in man, etc. Man was not said to be literally in God, nor God in man, but there was unity of existence according to God’s word which made them one. Some men propose the Holy Spirit is literally in a man, because the Spirit must perform functions necessary for man. It is important to recognize if the Holy Spirit influences a man in anyway directly, the interaction would be miraculous. To clarify the term “directly”, understand anything which would cause man to do something outside of his own will or be endowed with information he did not come to on his own is the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Because the occurrence is beyond natural (supernatural), it is by definition miraculous. Natural means interacting with a man’s spirituality today are elements of God’s created environment (**Romans 1:18-25**) and the written Word of God. If any proposed characteristics of the Holy Spirit’s assumed literal non-miraculous indwelling are shown to be miraculous or contrary to the Word of God, then the characteristic cannot stand. This is the first step to use in testing a function to see if it is an indwelling. The next step in testing a function to see if it is an indwelling is ask if the task is accomplished by the Holy Spirit through means of the Word or someone/something

else? If the task can be accomplished in these means than what would the purpose of a literal non-miraculous indwelling be?

The third step in testing a proposed function of the Holy Spirit is to determine if the text used is being misinterpreted or not. As Peter wrote in his second letter "*some things [are] had to understand*". Understanding something greater than man (God the Father, the Holy Spirit, Jesus) is not always a simple task. Christians endeavor as did the Bereans (**Acts 17:11**) to come to appropriate conclusions. That being said it is time to examine some of the functions applied to the Holy Spirit.

Is the literal indwelling of the Spirit necessary to identify the Christian as righteous? Discussed in the fourth article was the idea man literally needs an indwelling Spirit as a visible mark to God to identify him as a Christian. Indeed, this would be non-miraculous. However, unless scripture is misinterpreted to come to this conclusion, the idea cannot agree with scripture. It is man's deeds which are characteristic of the Word of God which identify man as faithful and by which he is judged (**James 2:14-26, I Peter 1:17, Colossians 3:25**). The fruit of the inspired Word which was given by the Spirit (**2 Peter 1:21**) demonstrates whether or not a man dwells with the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). Consequently, a literal indwelling to identify a Christian as righteous is not scriptural.

Is the literal indwelling of the Spirit necessary to have faith and be convicted? In the first century Church, man was inundated with the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit. There was no doubt about what it meant to have the Spirit of God because having the Spirit was a visible known aspect. The discussion about personal or direct literal indwelling arrived with the restoration and the spread of Calvinistic doctrine. It increased with the coming of Pentecostalism and the Charismatic faith. What does the Calvinist believe which has caused confusion about the Holy Spirit and how man dwells with Him? The Calvinist believes man is totally depraved from birth. He is a sinner, filthy, and disobedient by nature. It is taught without the direct operation of the Holy Spirit to bring man to believe, he cannot have faith. The Spirit is said to lead man and convict him of God. The man will not continue in the Faith unless continually prompted directly by the Spirit. According to the Calvinist way of thinking, man left to his own choice would stray away from God and not return. Of course, if the Holy Spirit has to operate in this fashion without the control of man, this is miraculous. This belief is generated in part by **Romans 8:14**, "*For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God*". However, to interpret this scripture in such a fashion is a terrible mistake. Properly, man follows the spirit figuratively by being obedient to the Spirit inspired

Word. The Bible also tells us *“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”* (**Romans 10:17**). This is how the crowd on the day of Pentecost came to faith by conviction from the Words of God (**Acts 2:37** – they “heard”, **Hebrews 4:12**). Faith is something man develops, not something he is led to without the Word. Jesus said in **Matthew 7:7**, *“...seek and you shall find...”* not *“be led regardless of your will and you shall find”*. If we are without choice led, there is no need to seek. If the direct operation of the Holy Spirit were indeed a characteristic of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit for faith, then man would have a God of partiality, endowing whom he wishes to the Faith. Scripture clearly establishes God is not a respecter of persons (**Romans 2:11**) and teaches in opposition to man showing partiality (**James 2:1, 9**). Considering the evidence, a literal indwelling necessary for a Christian to have faith or conviction is not scriptural.

Is the literal indwelling of the Spirit necessary to have knowledge or wisdom in what God commands? **James 1:5** states: *“But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”* **Colossians 1:9** also presents: *“For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,”* Finally, **2 Timothy 2:7** proclaims: *“Consider what I say; for the Lord shall give thee understanding in all things”*. For many the thinking stops here, wisdom and understanding given at a moment’s call. However, such a granting would be the miraculous. So if the text turns out not to be miraculous, how is it that knowledge and wisdom comes? **2 Timothy 2:15** tells the reader: *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* From this verse, it is seen study is commanded of the servant of God which gives knowledge. In the **Ephesians 5:17**, Paul instructs the people, *“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.”* Paul is telling the Ephesians they can understand... not maybe the Holy Spirit will give you understanding (wisdom). **1 Corinthians 1:21** declares: *“For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”* Preaching brings knowledge and wisdom. **1 Peter 2:2** makes it very plain from where wisdom and knowledge come: *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:”* In regard to the Word of God, the scriptures, the Bible, makes it quite clear the Holy Spirit does not need to literally indwell man for him to have knowledge or wisdom: **2 Peter 1:3** states: *“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has*

granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” Everything for life and godliness! How? The true knowledge of Him! **John 17:17** – *“Sanctify them in truth, thy Word is truth.”* The work of the Spirit is done in regard to giving man the knowledge and wisdom he needs. Praying for knowledge and wisdom to come is the same as the prophets reminding God of His promise to Abraham. We have been promised these things, but they will come only if we walk according to His will which means study. The scriptures show a literal indwelling is not necessary for a Christian to gain knowledge and wisdom.

Does a literal indwelling of the Spirit help my decision making? The easy answer would again be **2 Peter 1:3** pointing to the word as a man’s guide. It seems obvious, but there are countless times heard where someone has said, “The Spirit laid it on my heart to (insert words here).” The Lord’s servant should be characterized by patience (**Galatians 5:22**). He should consider the costs of any action (Luke 14:28-31). Time after time, stories are told of someone circling their finger in the air with eyes closed and then sticking their finger on a Bible verse looking for direction. This isn’t how God expects man to mature. **2 Timothy 3:16-17** – *“All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of god may be complete, equipped for every good work.”* For the Holy Spirit to direct a man in His decisions outside of the Word would again be the miraculous and it would not coincide with scriptural teaching.

Is the literal indwelling of the Spirit necessary for His intercession of man’s prayers? The question itself is misleading. It assumes the Holy Spirit intercedes. Intercession means to do something on behalf of someone. This idea the Spirit does this is taken from **Romans 8:26-27**. The passage states the following:

“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. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”

It is important to note outside of these verses every single instance of groaning in the Old Testament and the New Testament save one which references animals is done by man. It is my full conviction the spirit spoken of in these verses is man’s. Consider the times when man aches and pains so much in the heart he simply has no words. The times when his grief over sin or guilt or frustration or loss is so heavy his vocabulary could never do it justice. Consider the prayers of David, so lovely, intense, and expressive. Are these the prayers man typically is used to hearing? Sadly they are not.

Most men simply cannot express such depth. Fortunately, we have someone who searches and knows our hearts and our conscience (**Psalm 44:21, 139:23, Jeremiah 17:10, John 2:25, I John 3:20**). That someone hears the groaning of man's spirit. That someone is God. Now without a doubt, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and the Father are God. So saying God searches the hearts, does not rule out the Holy Spirit being a second "spirit" in the Romans verses and the one interceding. However a read through the remainder of Romans 8 will find the text is completely about Jesus. The reader will also find in **vs. 34** Christ is named as the intercessor for man. Context calls for the intercessor of **vs. 27** to be the same. It can be shown from other verses such as **I Timothy 2:1** that Christians too can intercede for one another. However, the fact that there can be multiple intercessors does not change the context of **Romans 8**. This all applies to the question regarding the necessity of the literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit because it shows a literal indwelling is not a necessity for intercession. Additionally, the idea would possibly never have even occurred if not for the likely misinterpretation of **Romans 8** in the recent centuries.

There are a number of other topics which are said to be functions of a literal indwelling Holy Spirit today. However, they can all be dealt with by similar steps. Does the function require direct operation upon man to accomplish? If so it is miraculous, not a literal non-miraculous indwelling. Is the task accomplished by the Holy Spirit through means of the Word or someone/something else? If so then a non-miraculous literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit isn't necessary. Is the concept based on scriptural misinterpretation? If so then it must be dismissed. Following these steps a man can eliminate all notions of a non-miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 - *prove all things; hold fast that which is good;*

The next and final article will focus on the idea of a miraculous indwelling of the Holy Spirit existing today. It is the intention of this series of articles to demonstrate that only representational non-miraculous reverse indwelling (man in God, God in man, etc.) exists today. The purpose is not to say there is no indwelling at all but rather to ascertain what it means when scripture discusses abiding or dwelling.