

HIS INDWELLING PRESENCE

Intimate Studies in the Things of the Spirit

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CHAPTER TWO

HIS PROMISED INNER PRESENCE

“He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17).

It is a far cry from the hopeless situation of man outside the Garden of Eden, the entrance guarded against his return, and the gracious promise of the divine presence, not merely with man but actually within him.

The words of our Lord mark a distinct step in advance in the development of the divine program of redemption.

He has been to another garden, Gethsemane, there to retrace the First Adam’s sinful steps of self-seeking, with resolute refusal brushing aside all suggestion that He spare Himself the suffering of Golgotha. **“Not My will, but Thine be done”**—with these words, a victor over self and Satan, the Son of God took the path to Pilate’s judgment hall, there to be passed by mock justice on to Calvary’s hill. Bearing His cross, as though He were the chief of sinners, He suffers Himself to be crucified in the company of malefactors, counted accursed FOR US. **“For it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree,”** suspended between heaven and earth, outcast of both, acceptable to neither.

But now, from the Cross comes the triumphant cry: **“It is finished.”** The Son of God is victor; He has become the Saviour. **“Finished,”** complete, is the work which Immanuel came into the world to accomplish.

- In His person, the God-Man, God and man have met.
- In His work the barrier of sin has been broken down; sin’s power to separate is a thing of the past.

Man and God are again in communion.

But, are they? Potentially, yes; actually, no. Objectively, He has met sin’s penalty for us; subjectively, sin’s power remains in us. Jesus is but Immanuel—God with us; He must be supplanted by the Spirit—God within us. Jesus did a work for us; it must be supplemented by the Spirit’s work in us.

Hence Jesus’ words, which are worthy of careful weighing:

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you”
(John 16:7).

In these words Jesus deliberately placed limitations upon His own ministry—limitations that require its augmentation by the ministry of the Spirit. Jesus’ promise that He, the Spirit, would come to be in us, that He would dwell perpetually with us as an inner presence, with the assurance that His coming thus to indwell us would prove greatly to our advantage and spiritual profit—this, “**the truth**” our Lord Jesus seeks so sincerely to impress upon us on the eve of His departure, is the heart and soul of the message unfolded in the subsequent pages of His Indwelling Presence. That in the wisdom and plan of God the Holy Spirit should come to live in us and what this means for Him and for us, we must now proceed to consider.

I. His Condescension

The Spirit is taking up His abode with men. According to the terms of the proposal, what was occasional in the Old Testament, what was individual in the life of our Lord, is now to be universal with all believers. There is to be no withholding, and no respect of persons: “**He . . . shall be in you.**”

For the Spirit as for the Son, this involves the same condescension of leaving the heavenly home and circle of fellowship. As the Son “**came forth,**” was “**sent forth,**” from the Father, so now must the Spirit suffer the same deprivation of position in glory (see John 16:28; 15:26; Galatians 4:4,6).

As during the Incarnation the Son was resident upon earth, in like manner during the dispensation of the Spirit He has accepted the earth as His residence. As by virtue of the Son’s absence for the accomplishing of redemption, in a very real sense there were but two persons of the Godhead in heaven, so, likewise, during the present absence of the Spirit, and in just as true a sense. What it meant to both Son and Spirit to leave the Glory to become earth-dwellers, who of men can apprehend!

But for the Spirit there are elements of condescension that would seem to surpass that involved for the Son (barring, shall we say, the humiliation of the Cross). Of the Father’s sending Him into the world the Son rejoiced to say, “**A body hast Thou prepared Me.**” It was a pure, holy, sinless body that He was given to inhabit. Since the Son “**came not to call the righteous but sinners,**” in all who heed His call, the vilest, the most degraded, even the murderer and the harlot—in all such, when once accepted of the Father in His abounding grace, it is the province of the Spirit to take up an abiding residence.

When we contemplate the sin to which believers cling, the passions indulged, the unchaste thoughts entertained, the envies, jealousies, hatreds, all of which are unspeakably repugnant to His holiness, yet from which He cannot withdraw or disassociate Himself, since He has come in to “**abide.**”

When we view the picture, so capable of many more distressing details, what shall we say of the Spirit's condescension, during the blessed dispensation now ours, in coming to indwell us, to claim us for Himself and to make us fit for His presence forever.

II. Our Benefaction

"It is expedient for you that I go away . . . If I depart I will send Him unto you."

What is the benefaction that this departure of Jesus, only to send us the Spirit, brings to us? Jesus our Lord assures us that this advance step in the divine program is of tremendous import to us. Wherein does it consist?

The Spirit becomes a personal possession—personal to each one. This could never be true of relationship to Jesus. He was an historical person, who was born, lived, spoke, wrought, moved about, in places definitely capable of designation. If a person were in the place where He was, he might enjoy His presence; otherwise he was deprived of it. The Apostles were chosen to be "**with Him.**"

To respond to His call, that they might hear His teaching, see His mighty works, come to know Him, be His witnesses, they must needs leave their homes and occupation and become itinerant with Him. Only some artificial, monkish mode of life could continuously adapt itself to such conditions.

But the Spirit does not call us to be with Him; He comes to be "**with us.**"

Wherever we live our lives, there He is, adapting Himself to the circumstances surrounding His beloved. Hence there is no Mecca for the Christian faith, no sacred shrine, no foregathering to find Him whom believers worship and serve. Though they be scattered to the ends of the earth, He is with them, dwelling in them, walking in them, the living Christ by His Spirit their intimate, personal possession.

But more; this indwelling Spirit, one with our spirit, is more than a presence with us. He is a molding, transforming power.

To the end of Jesus' ministry, taught of Him though they were, His followers, even His intimates, remained unstable, cowardly and undependable: His was but an influence without. When, however, the Spirit was come, these same men became at once the embodiment of fidelity, courage and conviction. True, Jesus had left them, but His Spirit within made them as new men. So does He desire to work in every believer.

All self-effort toward transformation of character is futile. The vile pictures hung upon the walls of memory by indulgence in illicit imaginations, in obscenity, in habits of profligacy; the remorse that lingers from animosities, jealousies, ugly self-seeking—how have men sought in vain to purge their souls of these; how many suicides tell the tale of hopeless effort to be free from their relentless lashings.

No, it is only the Holy Spirit of God who, coming into the life, can impart purity of mind and holiness of heart, where sin had wrought its havoc. To set sin's captive free—this He has power to do; this He delights to do.

III. The Exhortation

There is but one exhortation that befits our so great benefaction from His so great condescension.

It is that we respond with a glad, joyous, ceaseless "Thank you." We are accustomed to return such thanks for benefits received at the hands of friends; how much more for this from Him.

A very close friend in Christ, who has entered into the intimate things of the Spirit, we have frequently heard in prayer making thankful acknowledgment of this unspeakable blessing, thanking and praising Him for giving the Holy Spirit, pouring out the most genuine gratitude for His coming as a personal presence to indwell the heart. We could not but feel that such thanksgiving, beyond the honoring of the Spirit through this recognition of His presence, became a real forward-looking means of grace and growth.

Then we began to consider how many Christians we knew who have the habit of giving praise and thanks for this, the supreme benefit of the believer's life, that He, the Holy Spirit of God and of Christ, has come in, never to leave us, but to abide forever.

We were surprised to discover the almost utter absence of such habit among our friends. He has come in! In utmost appreciation of a benefit so confessedly beyond compute let us learn to say a daily "Thank you."

~ end of chapter 2 ~

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