

A Dwelling Place For Our God

Ephesians 2:18-22

18 For through him we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. 22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18-22(ESV))

Consider these words for a moment, especially the last few in verse 22 . . .

22 In him (that is, in Jesus Christ) you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2: 22 (ESV))

Can you even begin to consider the possibility of what these words portend for you personally, that the Almighty God, the creator and sustainer of all that exists, actually and “really” wants to live within you, personally?

Who are you? Who am I that God Himself would want to come and live within us?

The Psalmist, King David, expressed it so well in Psalm 8. He asked in verses 3 and 4..

3 When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? (Psalm 8:3-4)

So again, who are you? Who am I that God Himself would want to come and live within us, and not just for a while, but to “dwell” within us, forever?

It is a thought far too high and lofty for me to truly comprehend, especially when I stop to consider just how wretchedly unclean I really am, and then to think that the Pure and Holy Almighty God actually desires to dwell within me.

Some might read these words and say, “But God is not saying that He will dwell within us personally, but rather that He will dwell within the ‘body of believers’, ‘the church’”. And that is also true! He will and He does dwell within the body of the church, the “Body of Christ”. But dear friends, God first wants to dwell personally and intimately within the soul of each person who will receive Him as Savior and Lord. He has told us so, clearly and plainly, in many places within these scriptures. He said to us in Ezekiel 36 that He will put His Spirit within us. Listen!

25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:25-27 (NKJV))

Note in these words that He first provides the remedy for our condition of wretched uncleanness. Verse 25 . . .

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (Ezekiel 36:25 (NKJV))

May I pause and ask, “Do you believe and accept that you are as filthy as these words charge? Or perhaps as the words of Revelations 3 declare you to be . . . poor, wretched, miserable, naked and blind? Well, may I say with all authority, that you are, and that you and I fit these words exactly? And we are in dire need of being cleansed from all our filthiness. And so He declares to us in Verse 25 . . .

25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (Ezekiel 36:25 (NKJV))

And then, after cleansing us, He will put a new heart and a new spirit within us . . .

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:26 (NKJV))

And then, He puts Himself into us, into our mortal flesh, into my heart and your heart, our soul and our mind . . . Verse 27

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:27 (NKJV))

And note here that we are not left to wonder what to do with God’s Spirit in us, because along with His Spirit, He will put His “unction” within us, His personal urging to do the things that He wants us to do.

And His presence and His promises and His provisions are not just for a season, they will continue throughout all of time. Listen, these words from John 14.

16 . . . I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. (John 14:16-17 (ESV))

Folks, may I get emphatic for a moment and ask, "Do we really believe these words? Do you, do I really believe that God Himself is, right now, right at this moment living within us and is urging us on to do good and righteous things that we would not otherwise do?"

Such things are so mystical, so unfathomable that our minds often do really struggle to accept them. We seem to get just so far with them and then rather than reach on further and actually deal with the reality of His presence within us, we just move on to some other easier concept, never fully resolving the reality of Him and His presence. But listen! Just because these things are above your and my ability to comprehend, just because we can't fathom such difficult things, does not nullify their truth. It really is all very, very real. If you, if I, have received Jesus as Savior and Lord, then your heart, my heart, our souls, our minds and our bodies are now filled with His blessed presence. These words from 2 Corinthians 6 . . .

16 . . . you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people."
(2 Corinthians 6:16 (NKJV))

And 1 Corinthians 6 . . .

19 . . . do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (ESV))

Jesus bought you and me with a price, His own blood, His own life. We are His and He has moved in, taken possession and now lives within our souls.

Again, may I ask? Where do your thoughts go when I say those words? Do these things just seem to fly right on by your ability to comprehend? You want to believe it perhaps, but barely get past hearing the words before your mind simply moves on to something more tangible, something more "real" to your daily life.

I confess that it is very much that way with me. But I don't want it to be that way. I really do want to believe these truths. And I want you to believe them also, because God really is really real and He lives within you and me, and is personally involved in all that we do.

As we read a moment ago in Ezekiel 36, if and to the degree that we are surrendered to Christ for our salvation, His Spirit is at work every moment influencing and urging us on to do things that He wants us to do. Those words again,

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:27)

Think about these words for a moment! Unbeknownst to our natural minds, God's Holy Spirit is continually prodding and prompting us to do things we would not otherwise do, those "good works" that we have been studying about over the past recent weeks. And the more we surrender our hearts and minds over to Him, the more He is able to influence and to guide us to do those good works.

But we must be warned and understand that the "other side", the demonic world, is also always busily at work, influencing and provoking us on to "bad works".

But thanks be to God, whenever we are about to involve ourselves in something that is against God's will and against His holiness, His Spirit warns us away from it. Those words from 1 Corinthians 10,

13 No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

May I give us one more example of our difficulty with truly believing and trusting all this to be true, that God really does live within us and He influences and guides the matters of our daily lives?

There is a philosophical doctrine that some choose to follow called "Deism". And as I understand their premise of belief to be, they believe that yes, God is Almighty. And yes, He did create all things, and still sustains all things.

But unlike the doctrines we are preaching here today, the Deists are said to believe that God does not involve Himself much in the daily affairs of men, that it is only as we pray and ask Him for help that He takes notice of our needs and gets involved with us.

We might think that to be a strange doctrine, and even unthinkable. But may I say that most of us actually live as if that is the kind of God we serve, that yes, we believe in Him, but He is most often not one of our "first thoughts". And we don't often think of Him as being present with us and in us at every moment, in all that we do.

I can recall a coach that worked at French Camp some many years ago. He expressed his understanding of God's role in our daily life as being similar to that of a "football coach" . . . that just as the coach trains up the players and puts them out onto the field to do the best they can do with what they have learned, so also, God trains us up

through His word and puts us out onto the “field” of daily life, and there we are expected to do the best we can with what we have.

And yes, granted, that kind of thinking does have some reality to it, because our free will does most often dictate our behavior. But such thinking falls woefully short of God’s intention for us. And such thinking comes very near to the doctrinal beliefs of the Deists. I had to say to that coach, “If I have to believe that while I am on the field I am on my own, I will be lost”. “I need Jesus every moment, in everything that I do, in every thought and in every behavior”.

And these words before us today, along with all the other many similar words in these scriptures, tell me that God really wants me to recognize and to accept His immediate, indwelling presence, every moment, even and especially in those “heat of the moment” difficulties on the field.

And in those times, which might be many and often, when I can’t necessarily “feel” His presence, He is still just as real and just as presence and just as indwelling within me. . . . And may I take this thought a step further? When I do good things, God is right there. But unfortunately, the opposite is also true. When I do wrong things, immoral, or unkind sinful things, He is also right there with me and in me, enduring all that I do wrong.

In other words, I will often require the pure and Holy Lord Jesus to go with me into all sorts of circumstances. He lives within me and so, He is present in all the matters of my life, whether my conduct be good or it be evil.

So what then, is my problem? What is your problem? Why do we struggle so much with simply believing and trusting that God really does live within us and wants to guide and direct all the matters of our daily lives?

A few days ago, I heard a preacher express that there is often a wide gap between what we “profess” with our mouth and what we really believe and act on. In other words, we can “say” that we really believe these words we are studying here today, but how can we make them turn into reality? How can we “walk” each moment of each day in a manner that really trusts that Jesus is in us and is guiding every step of it, every thought, every behavior?

May I suggest that we begin by accepting that it will require both of us, first God, and then myself, yourself. Recall the verse that we studied last week from Colossians 3 regarding the peace of God? Those words in verse 15 of Colossians 3 . . .

15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. (Colossians 3:15)

We have to begin by “letting” God have first sway within us. But then immediately, we also must take a step, almost simultaneously, much like what took place with the Israelites as they were about to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. God took the first step by commanding them to cross over. But it took the foot of the Levite Priests stepping into the edge of the water for the water to part.

This is what you and I must do every moment of every day. We must quieten our minds to the rush and the noise of the day, and in prayer, listen for God’s still small voice. And then, immediately when we sense an “unction” from His Spirit, we should quickly and boldly step forward.

Some might ask, “Would this kind of behavior be just for special, out of the ordinary, matters of our day” . . . perhaps, at first! But then, it should become our every-moment behavior.

Folks, the “Kingdom of God” has truly come to the earth, and you and I who have fully trusted in Christ as our Savior have Him within us and are living and walking within His Kingdom. And in His Kingdom is “Joy Unspeakable” as we begin to sense His immediate presence and His immediate guidance.

It is real, so very real! And my question for us today is, “When will you, when will I commit ourselves to reaching on further into a deeper relationship with Christ, one where we really experience His presence, every moment, of every day.”

I want it to be now folks, today. And I intend to do the things we have been talking about here today. Will you go there with me? Listen as we close . . .

20 Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; 21 nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you." (Luke 17:20-21 (NKJV))