A Habitation of God Through the Spirit

By Earl Trimble
Vol. 106, No. 06

Ephesians 2:22 is sometimes cited to support the view that the Holy Spirit personally indwells the Christian in a direct and in-Person manner. Often the question will be asked: "How can God dwell in us through the Spirit if the Spirit does not indwell us?" The phrase, "through the Spirit," in this Ephesians verse, is thought by some to mean that God, being in the Spirit, indwells us indirectly, figuratively, or representatively through (by means of) the Holy Spirit who is literally in us in his own Person.

Does this verse in the Ephesian letter, in fact, teach that the Spirit indwells one literally and immediately, as some affirm? This phrase, "through the Spirit," occurs at least four times in the New Testament (Acts 21:4; Rom. 8:13; Eph. 2:22; 1 Peter 1:22, KJV). An examination of the other three references will show that this phrase, through the Spirit does not refer to an indwelling of the Spirit. Notice the similar usages of these four references:

1) "…who said to Paul through the Spirit…" (Acts 21:4)
2) "…through the Spirit do mortify the deeds…" (Rom. 8:13)
3) "…a habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22)
4) "…obeying the truth through the Spirit…" (1 Peter 1:22)

Notice the similar meanings of this phrase, "through the Spirit" in these four references:

"And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to

Jerusalem" (Acts 21:4). The Holy Spirit made known to the disciples at Tyre that Paul would be in danger of his life if he returned to Jerusalem (see also Acts 21:10-14). Here "through the Spirit" means "by the Spirit" (ASV). That is, the Spirit had warned the brethren of the danger that awaited Paul at Jerusalem. This information given the disciples by the Spirit was inspired revelation.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom. 8:13). Who would argue this means if those Roman Christians would mortify the deeds of the body "through the Spirit" that indwelt them, they would live? It is apparent Paul was telling them if they would mortify the deeds of the body through the Spirit's teaching, that is, according to what the Spirit taught, they would live.

"In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). How are Christians built together for a habitation of God? Is our being built together accomplished by the Spirit as he literally indwells us? If so, then would our being built together not be a direct operation of the Holy Spirit? Again, in this Ephesians 2:22 reference, the phrase "through the Spirit" could have been rendered "by the Spirit." Our obedience to the Spirit's teaching builds together as "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). This verse does not allude to a direct, personal, immediate indwelling of the Spirit. It is a misapplication of Ephesians 2:22 to use it to teach that the Spirit indwells us literally in his own Person.

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love on another fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Who would affirm that one's "obeying the truth" is effected "through the Spirit" that literally indwells him? We know that one obeys the truth through, or by, the Spirit's influence exerted through, or by, the inspired Word of God. The Spirit's only influence upon the human heart or conscience is through the

message of the inspired Word of God, and never by direct operation. In like manner we are built together for a habitation of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit through the influence exerted by the Spirit in the inspired Word of life (John 6:63-68).