

Man Dwelling in God and God in Man

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Extracted from Scripture Truth Volume 5, 1913, page 162.

The simplicity of scripture is part of its greatness. Though we be christians, years upon years of our lives may be deprived of pleasure and joy in God's things because we fail to take God's Word as it stands.

There is, some say, one unique feature about the English language which makes it shine above all languages known on earth. It possesses the word "Home". Nothing compares with it in any other tongue. All that it spells to us of affection and interest must be told in other countries in explanations and circumlocutions galore. The one word is enough for an Anglo-Saxon. The Epistle of John speaks again and again of our dwelling in God, and of God dwelling in us. In speaking of either of these great verities we have to confess how wonderful they are.

Romans 5 tells us about boasting in God (the "boast" in God, verse 11 is the same word in verses 2 and 3, see New Trans.). That was full of blessing when first we realized it.

But dwelling in God is the finding of a home in Him. It is not merely the discovery of, and our delight in, all that He is and has done for us in Christ.

But may we find home in God?

And may God find home in us?

We ask these questions. We are made in the asking to feel how stupendous they are. Is there any light on their meaning? Is there any possibility or their realization?

First, as to their meaning, there can be no doubt that their glorious realization is seen in Christ. Even in His life on earth God was in Him, and He in God.

All the history of Adam and his race proved that there was no correspondence, no compatibility, between God and man. The divergence became more and more manifest as time rolled on, till it culminated in the rejection of God's Son, the disclosure of the state of fallen man's heart and nature. How, then, could God dwell in men, or they in Him?

In Christ, in incarnation, there was a new beginning. The mysterious birth of our Lord was required, (we guard, with all awe, the deep mystery of Christ's Eternal Being as the Son. But we speak above of His coming into the world as Man) and was given as a sign that God was setting aside the old and customary order, and was commencing a new order, in which everyone derived birth immediately from Him; not by the intermediate agency of man. Until Christ died and rose again He remained alone (John 12: 24); now others have come to be associated with Him, He is the Firstborn among many brethren, though, be it noted ever peerless in this new order; for He inaugurated it in virtue of what He is in Himself, in His own Person and right. We come into what He inaugurated by the gift of grace alone, and by the power of God acting in grace.

But we are the children of God, born of God; not born in successive generations from one another as in our natural life, but each one born immediately and directly of God.

Now in Christ there was perfect compatibility, absolute correspondence, between God and Man. God dwelt in Him; who can gainsay it? He dwelt in God; who can deny it? The ever-blessed God found in that Holy Person a temple, a residence, a home, in which every part was congenial to His nature, and

corresponded with His will. There was not a single element which could cause friction or produce disparity. The motives of His life, the "reins", the "inwards" were of a sweet savour to Him His ways were ever pleasing in His sight. At no point was there ever the turning even of the eyes in another direction. The garden of Gethsemane, which showed how real were the sorrows He was facing, only brought out the sweetest and most holy correspondence to the 'Father's will. We say it reverently: God found His home there in Him.

But He dwelt in God. Is this a little more difficult to understand? Do we not more readily comprehend what comes down to us (though all is wonderful), than what rises up to God? How perfect was the Lord Jesus! Holy from His birth, intrinsically so, He had nothing in common with the pursuits of this sinful world. There was no home for Jesus here. His affections and all the activities of His holy Being were trained on what suited God. His meat was to do His will. As Man, He fixed His heart Godward, and found in God all that man could desire. In Him the devil was given the lie. The enemy of our race had subtly infused into the first man's mind that he could do better for himself if he shook off allegiance to the Deity, and acted contrary to God. In Jesus we see the new order of Man, the woman's seed, destroying the works of the devil. His heart with all its affections so infinitely pure; His mind — all steadfast and true, found unceasing delight in God. He reposed there He retired there, His communion lay there, in God.

The storm raged about Him; earth and hell were all let loose upon Him; and the wrath of God against sin was borne by Him at Golgotha for our sakes; but when all was finished, this Holy One said, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit". He retired even in the hour of dying into His dwelling place with God. We say, and we say rightly, that His body was laid in the grave, and that His spirit entered Hades: but in the language of our present theme He went "home". He commended His spirit into the Father's hands. It is not His divesting Himself of humanity and retiring into simple Deity (as some wrongly assert) at the time of His death — for He is servant forever. (see Exodus 21) — but of the spot which He esteemed "home" when His work was done.

He is risen now. The temple was raised again in three days, as He said. In heaven seated and crowned the heart of God reposes in Him, finds complacency in Him. Forever and forever does the fulness of the Godhead dwell in Him bodily. Moreover, as Man He is sufficient to fill out every wish of the heart of God. All of loveliness is there, all perfection, all grace, all faithfulness, all stability and durability of God. In Him the nature of God finds its counterpart for complacency. as well as its display for blessing to the creature.

On His part, too, Jesus, the ever blessed Man. lives unto God. His Holy nature as Man finds its untold, unmeasured bliss in God He knows God infinitely, perfectly, with all the powers of the One risen from the dead. He is in the condition and the place where God has designed to put man in the closest relationship and privilege, and in the full light of all that God is. From that nearest and dearest place — may we not reverently say — the heart of Jesus rises up in ever happy and holy delight in God. "Thou shalt make me full of joy with Thy countenance" (Acts 2: 28.) "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto Thee" (Hebrews 2: 12).

How unrestrained must be the intercourse of Jesus with God! How perfectly intelligent is our risen Lord in all the ways of God! He proved them in the depth. when He went into death; He knows them in the heights where He is in the glory. He knows all the nature of God, and all His attributes; and is there in the deepest enjoyment of them all. To every part of God's glory there is the response in the nature of the Man Christ Jesus; so that our blessed Lord, looking as Man Godward, finds everything in Him to yield complacency and delight, and the most intimate worship. We tremblingly touch a chord

on this great Organ, and our hearts are thrilled by the heavenly harmony that springs out at the touch.

And now as to the realization of this ourselves. The Epistle of John presents God dwelling in us, and our dwelling in God, not as the attainment of the few, but as the ordinary (some people call it "normal") state of the child of God. We are horn of God, and are God's children. We can approach God in the filial confidence and affection of those whom grace has given the right to be in His presence. We have been given His Spirit also, who trains us in obedience and love, and who conducts our souls in perfect liberty into the holy scenes where God is. By His power there is conferred upon us the capacity to understand God, even as in Christ we have a life which is able to enjoy Him. We are qualified in the way of nature, life, relationship, intelligence, to find our home in God.

Then again, we are not left to speculate as to the Deity, according to all the surmises and reasonings of the human mind. God is fully revealed, and is in the light, that is, He has been so adequately displayed in Jesus that nothing remains concealed of His nature or attributes. At the same time, and in the very circumstances in which He was fully revealed, all my sins have been covered, never to rise against me any more; my sinful life has been ended under condemnation in the death of Jesus for me; and by God's gift and God's grace I live through Him. My guilty history is so dealt with — my state — my sins that my coming into God's presence is not to be reminded of anything which could make me uneasy or ill at ease there. Forever no! The heart draws near to God in happy and holy freedom; we have access by one Spirit to the Father; and there are set at ease — made at home in God. All that the renewed heart sees in God makes it feel more and more at home. Holiness — my home. Righteousness my home. Light — my home. All that He is — my home, my joy, my boast, my ecstasy. I dwell in God.

Do not ask me to change this home for another. Do not tell me I shall be better off if I make more of this present world. I have found in God my treasure, my fame, my life, my recreation, my repose, my all. What a God He is!

Do not direct me to a crucifix. Do not assure me that the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon, or the cinematograph pictures are necessary to make religion palatable, or the faith of God effectual. Oh, tell me more of God — my God; already well-known in the love of Jesus.

But still there remains the other wonder. It does not require a great stretch of imagination to see that God must be the Fountain of true delight; and that the redeemed one is put where he may find delight in Him. But it is almost incredible, almost beyond belief; that God should so speak of dwelling in us? It is not merely that He has saved us, and put His power into us, transforming our lives, and that He then uses us in His service. But it is His feeling at home in us; finding nought to prevent it, but everything congenial to Him in the children He has begotten, in the saints He has saved and delivered and blessed. If we on our side can, and do, commit ourselves unreservedly to Him in the sense of being at home with the One we know He on His side has qualified us through His Son to be subjects of His complacent delight. He is able to view our inbred sin as though it were not, through the death of Jesus: and our sins though numberless, are all blotted out, gone, by the blood. Our life in Adam, in which God found no complacency, is judged and gone for faith in Christ's death: we are not what we once were, but are new creatures in Christ by grace, children of God. Our tastes are according to God; we love what He loves: we hate what He hates. Above all we have unbounded confidence in Jesus our Lord and love to think of Him, speak of Him, worship Him, serve Him. The Holy Spirit finds it His congenial task to set more and more of His glories and love before us.

I have no doubt there would be greater results from this if it were uninterruptedly enjoyed. We should bear witness that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. We should love because

He first loved us. We should meet our brother's need: we should not be misled by the many false prophets in the world. We should have confidence towards God in praying, and should have the petitions which we ask of Him. Many results there would be but it is the thing itself one would like to know more of.

The words of Scripture are simple. The privilege they set before us is most precious and profound. May we know more of dwelling in God, and of God dwelling in us.