

The “Law Written On The Heart”

(by George Battey)



THE "LAW WRITTEN ON THE HEART"

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Questions:

- 1) Did men under OT have the *"law written on the heart"*?
- 2) How does God *"draw men"* to Himself?
- 3) How do denominations draw men to their organizations?
- 4) Did God ever write a check without any money in His account?
- 5) Is having the *"law written on the heart"* another way of saying *"scripture memorization"*?
- 6) What does it mean to have sin *"dwelling in"* you?
- 7) If your house is burglarized, what will you probably do?
- 8) How does God seek to control men and how does the Devil seek to control men?

THE PASSAGE FOR STUDY

Hebrews 8:7-12

⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. ⁸ Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — ⁹ not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. ¹⁰ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts;** and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹¹ None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. ¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

This is a quotation from Jer 31:31-34. An abbreviated version of this same quotation is given again in Heb 10:15-17. Obviously, this is important.

The OT was temporary from its beginning. When the Messiah comes, God would make a "*new covenant*." This new covenant would have four qualities:

QUALITY #1

1) "I will be their God and they shall be my people" (Heb 8:10).

This is the basis of all God's covenants. He wanted to have a special relationship with His people.

1 Peter 2:9-10

⁹ But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, **His own special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

This passage explains the reason God was making a new covenant – to have a special relationship with His people.

QUALITY #2

2) "None of them shall teach his neighbor and none his brother saying, Know the Lord" (Heb 8:11).

There would be no infant membership in the new covenant.

Under the OT, infants were physically born into covenant relationship with God and would have to be taught, as they grew up, to "*know the Lord.*" Thus, there existed a covenant with people who knew nothing about God until they grew up. Some Israelites would never "*know the Lord.*"

Deuteronomy 6:6-7

⁶ "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your

house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

God wanted the children taught all day, every day, because those children were in covenant relationship with Him. It's true that we need to teach our children today, but our children are not in covenant relationship like those were.

Today, there is no membership in the new covenant for infants. No one today is physically born into covenant relationship. They must first be taught:

John 6:44-45

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me **draws him**; and I will raise him up at the last day.

⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be **taught** by God.' Therefore everyone who has **heard** and **learned** from the Father comes to Me.

How does God draw men (v44)? The next verse explains:

- Men must be taught (v45).
- They are taught by hearing and learning (v45).

God draws men by appealing to their reasoning – their mind (intellect). He forces no one, but seeks to persuade men by sound reasoning.

Acts 19:8

⁸ And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, **reasoning** and **persuading** concerning the things of the kingdom of God.

Acts 26:28

²⁸ Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost **persuade** me to become a Christian."

2 Corinthians 5:11

¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we **persuade** men; ...

Unless one is convinced in his own mind, he cannot be a disciple of Christ. This is why there was debating, reasoning, arguing, and preaching all thru the Book of Acts – trying to persuade people. This is why there is little debate and discussion today among denominations. Denominations are not trying to persuade men with reasoning, but rather with:

- **Emotionalism** – feelings, excitement, music programs, drama plays.
- **Materialism** – impressive buildings, money, free giveaways (rewards), robes, candles, incense.

SUMMARY: Under the NT, men would not have to teach a brother in covenant to "*know the Lord*" because everyone in the NT would already know Him.

QUALITY #3

3) **"Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb 8:12).**

In the OT, there was forgiveness of sins, but it was called ***pretermision*** rather than remission.

Romans 3:25-26

²⁵ ... in His forbearance **God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,** ²⁶ to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, ...

How was God able to do this? How could He consider sins "paid for" when no actual payment had ever been made?

ILL: In "olden days," people would "float checks." Here's how it worked: A man has no money in his checking account, but he needs some groceries. He goes to the grocery store and writes a check for a few groceries. Although there are insufficient funds in his account, tomorrow is payday. He plans to get his paycheck and go to the bank first thing. He makes a deposit and when the grocery store presents the check he wrote, there will be sufficient funds to cover the check. This was a common practice before the computer age.

In a sense, God was "floating checks." He was forgiving sins, but there appeared to be no money in His bank account to pay for the forgiven sins. There was a little uneasiness about this during the OT era. The angels and prophets (1 Pet 1:12) didn't understand how God was busy "*writing checks*" with no money in the bank.

This phenomenon is what Rev 12:7-12 appears to be about. (See Albertus Pieters, Studies In Revelation, Ch. 15, "*The War In Heaven.*")

This "*passing over*" of sins could only be done for a little while. Eventually there had to be an actual payment made for sins.

The NT would be different than the OT. The NT would not be based on potential payment or theoretical payment for sins. Rather, the NT would be based on the actual payment for sins – the blood of Jesus Christ. (See Mt 26:28; 1 Cor 11:25).

QUALITY #4

4) "I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their hearts" (Heb 8:10).

Notice, there will be laws under the NT system – contrary to those who believe there is no law for Christians under the gospel system.

Having the law "*put in the mind*" and "*written on the heart*" was something that occasionally occurred even under the OT.

Deuteronomy 6:6

⁶ "And **these words** which I command you today **shall be in your heart**.

Deuteronomy 11:18

¹⁸ "Therefore you shall **lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul**, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 30:11-14

¹¹ "For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹⁴ But **the word is** very near you, in your mouth and **in your heart**, that you may do it.

Although this occurred, it was rare. Though all Israel was under the covenant with God, only a few had the "*law written on their hearts*." This was the "*remnant*."

Romans 11:2-5

² God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, ³ "LORD, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life"? ⁴ But what does the divine response say to him? "I have reserved for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." ⁵ Even so then, at this present time there is **a remnant** according to the election of grace.

"A remnant" means a handful – a few strays. Just a few Israelites had God's law on their hearts.

Having the *"law written on the heart"* was very similar to what the OT would call *"circumcised in the heart."* (More about this later.)

Here was the problem: The entire nation of Israel was under covenant with God, but only a few had the *"law written on their hearts."* Others were trying to teach their brothers in covenant to "know the Lord." Under the NT, this problem would be eliminated.

Bob Waldron:

"What was infrequently attained in the OT is to be the norm under the new covenant." (Christ In You, p. 48)

Everyone under the new covenant would have the law written on the heart. If the law of God is not on a person's heart, he is not in covenant relationship with God. So this is very important!

John 15:6-7

⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and **My words abide in you**, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

"My words abide in you" = the *"law written on the heart"*

If the law of God is not written on a person's heart, he is cut off and thrown into the fire (v6).

REPEAT: The only people in covenant with God are those who have the law written on their hearts.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Q: What does it mean to have the "law written on the heart"?

Let's begin by noticing what it is not: **It is not memorizing scriptures.** While scripture memorization is good, this is not the "law written on the heart." Often when a brother explains the Holy Spirit dwells in Christians thru His written word, people argue: *"If that's so, then all one has to do is memorize scripture and he has the Holy Spirit."* NO. Memorization alone is not the "law written on the heart."

John 5:38

³⁸ "But **you do not have His word abiding in you**, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe.

These Jews had scriptures memorized, but they did not have the word "*abiding in them.*" What was their problem? They weren't doing what the scripture said.

John 8

³¹ Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "**If you abide in My word** [not memorization], you are My disciples indeed.

³⁷ "I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because **My word has no place in you.**
[not memorization]

⁴³ "Why do you not understand My speech? Because **you are not able to listen to My word.** [not memorization]

⁵¹ Most assuredly, I say to you, **if anyone keeps My word** [here's a hint] he shall never see death."

⁵² Then the Jews said to Him, "Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, 'If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death.' ⁵³ Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make

Yourself out to be?"

⁵⁴ Jesus answered, "If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God. ⁵⁵ Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you; but **I do know Him and keep His word** [another hint].

To "*know God*" means more than simply acknowledging God's existence. Likewise, to have the word written on the heart means more than memorization.

The theory of scripture memorization reduces the "law written on the heart" to merely being "hears only" and not "doers" of the word (cf. Ja 1:22).

WHAT IT IS

We have seen what the "*law written on the heart*" is not. The question now: What is it?

The basic meaning is: **CONTROL**

The "law written on the heart" means the law is in a man's mind to this degree:

- The law **Controls** his life.
- The law becomes **a habit** – he responds automatically the way God wants.
- The law becomes his "**second-nature**."

Think about that: The law of God can become second-nature to a person.

2 Peter 1:3-4

³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of **the divine nature** [God's nature becomes ours], having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Q: How does one get the word of God to control his thinking – to the point it becomes *second-nature* – a habit?

A: By practice!

ILL: Teaching one of your kids how to drive a standard transmission is a difficult process. There are four distinct stages which your child will pass thru in the process of learning to drive a standard transmission:

- **The Stalling Stage** – where the car stalls out at every traffic light. It takes forever to get anywhere. Better not be in a hurry or you're doomed. This stage lasts for 1 week.
 - **The Bucking Stage** – the car is not stalling out in this stage of learning. It bucks thru intersections as the student tries to get it going. This stage lasts for 1 week.
 - **The Peeling-out Stage** – your kid is smart. He has thought things over and has figured out how to avoid stalling and bucking. When the light changes, he peels-out from a dead standstill. This stage lasts 1 week – long enough to ruin a set of tires.
 - **The Normal Stage** – your kid has practiced long enough that he does not stall, nor buck the car, nor does he peel-out. If he continues to practice, he will not consciously be thinking about the clutch, the gas pedal, or the gears. It will all be done subconsciously.
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1 Timothy 4:7

⁷ ... **exercise** yourself toward godliness.

This passage means Christians must practice the word of God over and over until it becomes a habit (second-nature). Only by constant practice of the word can a Christian respond correctly to any given situation.

ILL: Professional baseball players still take "*batting practice*" before a game – even though they have been batting all their lives. Why? Because when a 95 MPH fastball is coming, the batter has only **.43 seconds** to do something. He does not have time to think consciously about what to do. He must be so practiced he responds automatically in the correct way.

Likewise, Christians must be so practiced in godliness that they respond without having to think consciously about each thing they do. Godliness has become automatic (habit, second-nature) because of continued practice.

James 1:21-22

²¹ Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness **the implanted word**, which is able to save your souls. ²² But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

Verse 22 explains verse 21. The "implanted word" is "the law written on the heart." This is more than mere memorization. The word, by continuous practice, controls our lives and we respond correctly to each given situation. Only in this way can the "implanted word" save one's soul.

"INDWELL" – THE MEANING

Having the "law written on the heart" means:

- Practicing the word until it becomes second-nature (habit).

- Having the word **control** us.

A Bible word that expresses this process is the word "**indwell.**"

Indwell – biblically means **control** in this context.

TWO MASTERS

The Bible presents the picture of two masters. Either master will control a person.

Matthew 6:24

²⁴ "**No one can serve two masters**; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve **God and mammon**."

Here are two masters: **sin** and **God**.

- When GOD is the master (controlling), it does not mean the person is unable to do anything **bad**.
- When SIN is the master (controlling), it does not mean the person is unable to do anything **good**.

Q: How can this be? If sin is the "master," how can the person do any good? (John Calvin said this was impossible.)

The Bible recognizes the difference between: (a) **a master** and (b) **an intruder**.

ILL: Ken and Barbie had their house burglarized. When the burglar came in, he was *an intruder*. He did his dirty work and then left. He did not stay and begin to reside there. When Ken and Barbie came home and saw the damage done, they repaired the damage and restored the house to its original order. Ken and Barbie remained in control (owners). The Burglar was an intruder.

When GOD is the master of a person's life, He *controls* that person's life. Occasionally sin will enter like an intruder. Sin does its damage and then leaves. However, sin does not stay and begin to reside in a faithful Christian's life. After the sin is committed, the Christian will repair the damage done and restore his "house" to its original order. (See 1 Jn 3:4-10).

When SIN is the master of a person's life, it *controls* that person's life. Occasionally a good streak may come over this person – he does something noble or right. However, after the good is "*committed*," this person will "*repair the damage*" and restore his "house" to its original disorder. (See 1 Jn 3:4-10).

ROMANS 6

Look at the master-servant language in Rom 6.

Romans 6:1-7

¹ What shall we say then? Shall we **continue in sin** that grace may abound? ² Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin **live any longer in it?** ...

⁶ knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be **slaves of sin**. ⁷ For he who has died has been **freed from sin**.

Do you see the imagery of slavery? Sin controls the sinner.

Romans 6

¹² Therefore do not let sin **reign** in your mortal body, that you should **obey** it in its lusts.

¹⁴ For sin shall not **have dominion over** you, for you are not under law but under grace.

¹⁶ Do you not know that to whom you present **yourselves slaves to obey**, you are that one's **slaves whom you obey**, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? ¹⁷ But God be thanked that though you were **slaves of sin**, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. ¹⁸ And having been **set free from sin**, you became slaves of righteousness. ¹⁹ I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as **slaves of uncleanness**, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness.

²⁰ For when you were **slaves of sin**, you were free in regard to righteousness.

JUST ONE SIN

Sin becomes a master if one allows even one single sin to enter and "*set up residence*." He doesn't have to let a whole family of sins enter his life for sin to dwell in his life. If he let sin's "*little brother*" come to live – sin is indwelling his life. What this means is: If a man commits a single sin and takes no steps to repent and seek forgiveness, sin has found a place to live. When sin moves in, it's not coming to submit to the man and become his servant. Sin moves in to become his master!

ROMANS 7

This idea of sin "*controlling*" continues in Rom 7.

Romans 7:5-6

⁵ For **when we were** in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. ⁶ But **now we have been** delivered from the law, having died to what we

were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.

Here is more of the slavery-master language. Sin was the master. Sin used our flesh to keep us in bondage. In your Bible, underline these two phrases:

- "when we were ..." (v5)
- "now we have been ..." (v6)

This is a "before" and "after" passage. In a moment (vv13-25), Paul is going to describe a struggle he had with sin. He uses himself as the example, and he uses the present tense.

Romans 7:14

¹⁴ For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, **sold under sin.**

In the verses which follow, Paul is not describing his experiences as a saved Christian. He is describing the "when we were in the flesh" (v5) time of his life. Keep this in mind while reading thru Rom 7.

Romans 7:15-17

¹⁵ For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. ¹⁶ If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. ¹⁷ But now, it is no longer I who do it, but **sin** that **dwells in** me.

Here's an important point. "Sin dwelling in" a person means sin has control of that person. In your Bible, underline the words "dwells in" and in the margin write the word "control." That's what "dwells in" means in this context.

Paul explains *how* sin dwells in men: *by appealing to their flesh*. He also explains *how* God seeks to control men: *by appealing to their mind*.

The point of Rom 7: *As long as there are no terms of forgiveness, a man will stay enslaved to sin.* Paul is not saying this struggle with sin will end when men obey the gospel. He's simply pointing out that *the struggle can be won only under the gospel system*, because there are terms of forgiveness – *the blood of Christ is now available.*

Romans 7:20-25

²⁰ Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but **sin** that **dwells in** me.

²³ But I see another law in my members, warring against **the law of my mind**, and **bringing me into captivity** to the law of sin which is in my members. ²⁴ O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? ²⁵ I thank God — through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Again, notice the words "dwells in" (v20). Underline these words in your Bible. Write "control" in the margin. Also, notice God seeking to control men by appealing to their minds with words while the Devil seeks to control men by appealing to their flesh (vv23, 25).

ROMANS 8

We come now to Rom 8. We have been reading about "*indwelling*." Sin is indwelling the lives of sinners.

Q: What does "*sin indwelling*" mean?

A: It means sin controls the lives of sinners.

Now we will read about the Holy Spirit indwelling men:

Romans 8:9

⁹ But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed **the Spirit of God dwells in you**. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.

If "**sin indwelling**" means "**sin controlling**" then the "**Spirit indwelling**" means the "**Spirit controlling**" (in this context). This passage teaches that if the Holy Spirit does not control your life, you are not saved.

HOW?

The "indwelling of the Spirit" is a very controversial issue in our brotherhood. This controversy has never been over whether the Spirit indwells or not. All faithful gospel preachers admit the Holy Spirit indwells Christians. So the question is not "if" the Spirit indwells. Rather, the question is "how" the Spirit indwells. Actually, two questions need to be answered:

- What does "indwelling" mean?
- How does the Spirit "indwell"?

FIRST: As noted already, contextually and biblically, "*indwell*" means to **control**. "Indwell" in this context does not mean "*live inside a person's body.*"

SECOND: If "*indwell*" biblically means "*control*," the next logical question becomes: How does the Spirit control us?

- Does the Holy Spirit control us **directly** without any instrument (with His "bare hands")? The direct-operation of the Spirit upon men is Calvinism and the logical conclusion is that men lose their free-will. They become robots and are manipulated by an all-powerful Being – the Holy Spirit. This also becomes the foundation of the "once-saved, always-saved" doctrine.

- Does the Holy Spirit control us **indirectly** by use of an instrument? If the correct instrument is used, men could retain their free-will because it would not be mortal men versus the all-powerful Holy Spirit.

Look at the context of Rom 8:

Romans 8:1-2

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ² For **the law of the Spirit** of life in Christ Jesus has **made me free from** the law of sin and death.

Here is the changing of masters. As sinners, men are enslaved to sin and death. However, when men obey the gospel they change masters. Now the "*law of the Spirit*" controls them. The instrument used by the Holy Spirit to control men (indwell) is His word. As noticed throughout this study: God appeals to the mind of man with words – reasoning and persuading with sound argumentation.

When the Holy Spirit controls men thru His divine instrument (the written word), this is what the prophet meant when he spoke of the "law written on the heart."

CONCLUSION

There are five points to remember:

- 1) "Indwell" = "control" (see Rom 6, 7, 8).
- 2) The Spirit must "control" your life.
- 3) If the Spirit does not "control" you ⇒ "you are none of His" (Rom 8:9).

- 4) The Spirit "controls" (indwells) us thru an instrument ⇨ His written word (Rom 8:1-2).
- 5) The Spirit "controlling" (indwelling) = the "law written on the heart."

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Question #1: Is the "law written on the heart" the same as Holy Spirit indwelling a person?

A: Yes. Compare the following passages:

Ezekiel 36:25-27	Hebrews 8:10-12
<p>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.</p>	<p>¹⁰ ... I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>¹² For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."</p>

Notice: Having the "Spirit within you" (Ezk 36) corresponds to "I will put my laws in their hearts" (Heb 8:10).

Question #2: Is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit the same as "circumcision of the heart"?

A: Yes. Compare the following passages:

Ezekiel 11:19-20	Ezekiel 36:25-27
<p>¹⁹ Then I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh, ²⁰ that they may walk in My statutes and keep My judgments and do them; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God.</p>	<p>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.</p>

Notice: Removing the "stony heart" is equivalent to "circumcised in heart." Both refer to the Spirit indwelling (controlling). The Spirit controls men when they have practiced the word to the point it controls them (habit; second-nature).

Question #3: Isn't "circumcision of the heart" something God does – not something we do?

A: Man is involved in the process.

Jeremiah 4:4

⁴ **Circumcise yourselves** to the LORD,
And take away the foreskins of your hearts,
You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,
Lest My fury come forth like fire,
And burn so that no one can quench it,
Because of the evil of your doings."

Deuteronomy 10:16

¹⁶ Therefore **circumcise the foreskin of your heart**, and be stiff-necked no longer.

In both these passages, men are told to circumcise their own hearts.

Deuteronomy 30:6

⁶ And the LORD your **God will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Here God will circumcise the hearts of men.

By putting these passages together, we learn that God circumcises men's hearts when men submit themselves to God's word. This is parallel with "save yourselves" (Acts 2:40 – KJV) and "[Jesus] shall save His people" (Mt 1:21). Both God and man are involved in the salvation process. (See also Mt 23:37).

Question #4: What is "uncircumcision of the heart"?

A: This describes someone who refuses to submit to God's rule. When someone stubbornly rebels against the word of God, he has an "uncircumcised heart."

Psalms 78:5-8

⁵ For He established a testimony in Jacob,

And appointed a law in Israel,

Which He commanded our fathers,

That they should make them known to their children;

⁶ That the generation to come might know them,

The children who would be born,

That they may arise and declare them to their children,

⁷ That they may set their hope in God,

And not forget the works of God,

But keep His commandments;

⁸ And may not be like their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation,
A generation that did not set its heart aright,
And whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Look closely at this passage in Ps 78. This is a divine commentary on Heb 8:7-12. Ps 78:5-6 speaks of God's law which should be taught to each new generation. The Hebrews passage says, "Each man shall teach his neighbor and brother to know the Lord" (Heb 10:11). Ps 78:7 speaks of the "law written on the heart" when it speaks of men "keeping God's commandments." Ps 78:8 speaks of men with uncircumcised hearts. An uncircumcised heart is a rebellious, stubborn heart which is "not faithful to God."

Acts 7:51-52

⁵¹ "You stiff-necked and **uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit**; as your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers,

An uncircumcised heart is someone with an attitude. People like this "resist" the Holy Spirit. How did men resist the Holy Spirit? By resisting the prophets who spoke the words put into their mouths by the Spirit (v51).

Question #5: What is a "circumcision of the heart"?

A: This describes someone who has humbled himself before God's word. Such a person is submitting to the rule of God.

Romans 2:26-29

²⁶ Therefore, if an uncircumcised man **keeps the righteous requirements of the law**, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷ And will not the physically uncircumcised, if **he fulfills the law**,

judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and **circumcision is that of the heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter; **whose praise is not from men but from God.**

According to this, the "circumcised heart" is also an attitude. It is an attitude of humble submission to God's rule (law). One obeys God. God controls this person thru His law.

The "circumcised heart" is also the forgiven heart. One has his sins "cut off" by God. God performs this operation when one humbly submits to baptism.

Colossians 2:11-15

¹¹ In Him you were also **circumcised with the circumcision made without hands**, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. ¹³ And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

The submissive sinner who obeys the gospel becomes a forgiven Christian – a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). This spiritual "Jew" is now ruled (controlled) by God thru the instrument of the written word.

Question #6: What does Rom 2:14-15 mean?

A: This passage describes those few Gentiles living during the OT era who were submissive to God's moral law. These died in a saved condition even though they were not under Mosaic OT law.

Romans 2:14-15

¹⁴ for when **Gentiles**, who do not have the law, **by nature do the things in the law**, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ who show **the work of the law written in their hearts**, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

Gentiles "did not have the law." That is, they did not have a written law like the Jews had. Their law was "by nature." This means the law they had did not come by special revelation. Moses' law came by special revelation. It was given to Moses and the prophets directly from the Holy Spirit (2 Pet 1:21). The Gentiles had a moral law which was not given by special revelation. They learned this law naturally ("by nature"). They learned by word of mouth from their ancestors and by their own ability to reason and deduce facts.

Just as physical laws are learned by observation, reason and deduction, moral laws can also be learned by observation, reason and deduction. Gentiles could use their reasoning abilities and deduce such things as, "I should not take my neighbor's wife away from him or he will get jealous and perhaps kill me." It does not take an Albert Einstein to deduce the moral laws which govern God's rational creatures.

Rom 2:14-15 teaches when Gentiles would "do the things in the [moral] law," they were submitting to God's rule for their lives. They were showing their faith and trust in God by submitting to His moral government. If they humbly submitted, God would consider them faithful and save them in the end – just as He saved faithful Jews who had the "law written on their hearts" by humble submission. Just as only a "remnant" of Jews was saved (Rom 11:5), so too only a few Gentiles would submit and die in a saved condition. Think of the Queen of Sheba (Mt 12:42), the Ninevites (Mt 12:42), the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mk 7:26ff), and Job (Ja 5:11). These were all Gentiles. None of them became proselytes of Judaism. All of them were saved "by grace thru faith" (Eph 2:8).

In summary, Gentiles had God's moral law "written in their hearts" (v15) when they "did" what the law told them to do (Ja 1:21-22). They were saved by pretermission (Rom 3:25-26) just like Jews who had the law "written in their hearts" and "did" what God told them to do.

Question #7: What lexicon defines "indwell" as "control"?

(In other words, this present study is saying, "indwell" means "control" and when the Holy Spirit "indwells" a Christian, this simply means the Holy Spirit is "controlling" the Christian. Therefore, what lexicon defines the word "indwell" as "control"?)

A: Greek lexicons support the conclusion that "indwell" means "control." The Greek word for "indwell" is οἰκέω.

- Liddell & Scott's Greek-English Lexicon says this word οἰκέω can mean **"to manage, direct ... to be managed, governed"** especially in reference to "good" and "evil" "dwelling in a [certain] place" (Unabridged edition, p. 1004). This definition fits perfectly with the context of Rom 7:17, 20 and Rom 8:9. Although Liddell & Scott did not explicitly use the word "control," the words "govern" and "manage" are equivalent to the word "control."
- Abbott-Smith Lexicon says οἰκέω is used "metaphorically" in Rom 7:17, 20 and Rom 8:9 (p. 311). In other words, this is not a literal indwelling envisioned in these passages.
- Thayer's Lexicon says οἰκέω is used "figuratively" in Rom 7:17, 20 and Rom 8:9 (p. 439). This means the "indwelling" envisioned is not a literal indwelling. It is a figurative indwelling.
- Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich's Lexicon points out οἰκέω can be used as a transitive verb meaning "inhabit, dwell in something literally" or it can be used intransitively, which is not a literal indwelling. This lexicon lists Rom 7:20 and Rom 8:9 under the intransitive (non-literal) usage (p. 559).

In other words, it is not a literal usage to say "sin dwells in" someone and it is not a literal usage to say the Holy Spirit "indwells" a Christian.

- Louw & Nida's Lexicon say the usage of οἰκέω in Rom 7:17 and Rom 8:9 is "a figurative extension of meaning of οἰκέω" (1:731). This agrees with the other lexicons. The "indwelling" of sin and the "indwelling" of the Holy Spirit are not literal indwellings.

The context of Rom 8:9 argues for the meaning of "control." See Rom 6-7 where sin "indwells." This means sin "reigns over" (6:12) "has dominion over" (6:14) and "brings one into captivity" (7:23) so that the sinner "obeys" (6:16) and is a "slave" (6:6) who needs to be "freed from sin" (6:7) and "delivered from sin" (7:24). Clearly when sin "indwells" this means, sin "controls." If "control" is the meaning of "indwell" for two entire chapters, the next usage in Rom 8:9 must mean the Holy Spirit "controls" the Christian when He "indwells" the Christian. Both lexicons and context support the usage of "control."

Question #8: Did the Holy Spirit "indwell" OT saints?

A: Yes. Just like OT saints had the "law written on their hearts" (see Dt 6:6; 11:18; 30:14), OT saints also had God's Holy Spirit dwelling in them – in the sense of "controlling" them thru the word.

Isaiah 63:10-14

¹⁰ But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit;
So He turned Himself against them as an enemy,
And He fought against them.

¹¹ Then he remembered the days of old,
Moses and his people, saying:
"Where is He who brought them up out of the sea
With the shepherd of His flock?

Where is **He who put His Holy Spirit within them,**

¹² Who led them by the right hand of Moses,
With His glorious arm,

Dividing the water before them
To make for Himself an everlasting name,
13 Who led them through the deep,
As a horse in the wilderness,
That they might not stumble?"
14 As a beast goes down into the valley,
And **the Spirit of the LORD causes him to rest**,
So You lead Your people,
To make Yourself a glorious name.

(See also Gen 6:3; Ps 51:10-12; 139:7; 143:10.)

Not many people under the OT had the "law written on their heart." They were few in number. They were called the "remnant" (Rom 11:5). Likewise, not many had the Holy Spirit indwelling (controlling) them, but a few did. The few who had the "law written on the heart" were the same ones who had the Holy Spirit indwelling (controlling) them.

Conclusion: The following are equivalent expressions – they refer to the same thing:

- The "law written on the heart"
- "Circumcision of the heart"
- The "indwelling of the Spirit"

Question #9: What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit"?

A: The "gift of the Holy Spirit" is explicitly mentioned only two times in the Bible (Acts 2:38 and Acts 10:45). In Acts 10, the "gift" is clearly miraculous power. This miraculous "gift" is described in the next chapter (Acts 11:15-17) as being "the same gift" which was received "in the beginning" (Pentecost). If the "gift" of Acts 10 is the "same gift" as received on Pentecost, the "gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) must be miraculous power from the Spirit.

According to Mk 16:16-18, if people would, "believe and be baptized," they would be saved and miraculous gifts would follow them. This is

parallel with Acts 2:38 where people were told to, "repent and be baptized" so they could be saved, and then they would receive miraculous power ("the gift of the Holy Spirit"). According to Acts 8:14-18, this "gift" was received when apostles would lay hands on a baptized person. Later (1 Cor 13:8-10) it was revealed that these miraculous powers would cease when the NT scriptures were "perfected" (completed).

The first common objection: "If the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' is miraculous power and is no longer available today, how can 'repentance' and 'baptism' be required today? After all, repentance and baptism are listed in the same verse with 'gift of the Holy Spirit.'" This objection is answered in the same way Mk 16:16-18 is explained. In Mk 16:16-18 "belief" and "baptism" are immediately followed with a promise of miraculous powers ("these signs shall follow those who believe ..."). Mk 16:16-18 is parallel with Acts 2:38. If these were the only two passages in the NT, readers might logically conclude that miracles still follow baptized believers. However, other passages (e.g. 1 Cor 13:8-10) were later revealed showing miraculous abilities were limited to the first century. No passage was ever given limiting belief, repentance, and baptism to the first century.

The second common objection: "Doesn't Acts 2:39 teach all Christians throughout all ages would have the 'gift of the Holy Spirit'?" No. Acts 2:39 is Peter's application of Joel's prophecy given in Acts 2:17-18. When Joel said, "I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh" (v17), Peter said the "gift of the Spirit" was, "for you, your children and for all who are afar off" (Jews and Gentiles) (v39). Both Joel and Peter were teaching miraculous powers were for all nationalities – not just Jews. Next, Joel said, "Your sons, daughters, young men, old men, maidservants, menservants" would have these miraculous powers (vv17-18). Peter, in essence, said the same thing when he said, "Even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (v39). Both Joel and Peter were teaching miraculous powers were for all classes of people (male, female, young, old, free, slaves).

For a more detailed study of this subject, see the article, "*The Gift Of The Holy Spirit*," found in the 1991 Preachers' Study Notes (pp. 69-88),

posted at the following web address:
<http://www.willofthelord.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/1991-PSN.pdf>.

Question #10: Is there a danger in believing the Spirit "literally" indwells a Christian?

A: Yes, there are dangers in believing false theories about the Holy Spirit. Consider the following dangers:

- 1) The "literal" indwelling theory often takes passages that apply to the miraculous age and applies them to the present age.

The "gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38) was miraculous power (see Acts 10:45) which applied only to the miraculous age. This gift ceased when the NT scriptures were "perfected" (1 Cor 13:8-10). Yet, many people think the "gift of the Spirit" still applies in the present age. They are expecting something more than the gospel message. They are expecting something in addition to the gospel message.

Misapplying any passage destroys credibility.

- 2) The "literal" indwelling theory sets people adrift on a sea of subjectivism.

People begin looking for something "extra" in addition to the word. There is nothing more than the written word to guide Christians in their decisions and conduct. The written word contains "all things necessary for life and godliness" (2 Pet 1:3-4) and "thoroughly equips" Christians in "every good work" (2 Tim 3:16-17). Nothing "extra" is needed.

- 3) The "literal" indwelling theory says that men acquire the same nature as Jesus.

Jesus was the only One in whom the godhead dwelt "bodily" (i.e. literally) (Col 2:9). He was the only Being who was God in flesh (Jn 1:1-14). Yet, if the Holy Spirit (God) literally entered into a human, that human would in essence be equal in nature with Jesus Himself. This simply does not

occur. Jesus is God's unique Son (Jn 3:16 – "only begotten" = "unique"). There is none other like Him. There is scripture to support the literal indwelling of deity in the person of Jesus (Col 2:9; Jn 1:14). There is no scripture teaching the literal indwelling of deity in Christians.

4) The "literal" indwelling theory denies the all-sufficiency of the scriptures (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:3-4).

As mentioned in point #2 above, the written word alone is sufficient to "thoroughly equip" Christians. If more than the scriptures are needed to live the Christian life, then 2 Tim 3:16-17 and 2 Pet 1:3-4 are simply wrong.

5) The "literal" indwelling theory leads to the logical conclusion of "once saved, always saved."

If, as some teach, the Spirit "strengthens" Christians in their "inner man" in addition to strength received from the written word, no one could possibly get weak and fall away. After all, if a person began to get weak, the Holy Spirit, according to this theory, would "strengthen" the weak Christian separate and apart from the word. How could the Spirit fail to strengthen the Christian enough to keep him from falling away?

6) The "literal" indwelling theory has the logical conclusion of making "God is a respecter of persons."

If Christians are "strengthened" in addition to the word (apart from the word), why aren't all Christians strengthened equally? Why do some get weak and fall away? Is God showing favoritism by strengthening some, but not others? This would be the logical conclusion if the "literal" indwelling theory were correct. We know that God does not show partiality (Acts 10:34), but the "literal" indwelling theory says otherwise.

7) The "literal" indwelling theory contradicts plain Bible passages.

According to Acts 8:12-16, the Samaritans (a) believed the gospel and (b) were baptized. If we believe Jesus, they were saved at the point of baptism (Mk 16:16). Yet, after being saved by obedience to the gospel,

the scripture plainly states, "[The Holy Spirit] had fallen upon none of them, they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16). If the Holy Spirit literally entered their physical bodies when they were saved, Acts 8:16 is simply wrong. How could the Holy Spirit be literally inside their bodies and at the same time the scripture says, "He had fallen upon none of them"? Both statements cannot be true at the same time. Any theory which contradicts plain Bible passages is wrong.

8) It is never safe to believe or teach something the Bible never taught.

No doctrine is safe if it is not taught in scripture. The "literal" indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not taught in the scriptures. Therefore, the "literal" indwelling theory is not a safe doctrine.

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