

## The Dwelling Place as Fortress

***“Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively [living] hope [reborn unto a living expectation] through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away, kept [treasured] in heaven for you who are kept [guarded] by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed at the last time”*** (I Peter 1:3-5).

It is all well and good to talk about the Holy Spirit dwelling within our spirits. But for how long? On what conditions? Is He a “Holy Guest,” coming and going as conditions are favorable? Does He stay with us when all is well, but, like a temperamental Guest, leave when things do not suit Him? Or does He come to stay? Does He bring with Him His own armor to make of the human habitation a fortress of faith—a bastion of Divine power? Are we safe within the walls of the fortress? Or do we instate Christ within the flimsy walls of a human shelter—vulnerable incessantly to the attack of the enemy? Does Christ depend on our human resources to hold the dwelling against the incursions of Satan? Peter gives the exultant reply in his first letter to the “Diaspora.” The early believers, struggling against the political despotism of Rome and the religious despotism of Jerusalem, were in need of just such assurance as Peter gives to them here—that they were indeed no longer prisoners of earthly despots, but citizens of the Kingdom of God. The body might suffer indeed from the inequities of a world gone mad—the oppressions of Rome and the burdens and batterings of the Pharisees, but the spirit, now possessed by Christ, would be forever invincible to all the forces of Satan and his earthly domain.

**Reborn unto a living expectation . . .** Salvation is a new birth—a rebirth of the spirit, which has been void of the vitality of the Spirit of God and dead in the mortality of human flesh. It is not an ideological realignment. It is not a new religions identity. It is a new life. It is just as real and vital as the original birth, but it now has the quality of eternity. To ask whether or not it can be removed is to ask whether or not a child can be unborn. But the child can be slain. Yes, indeed. But to say the believer can be slain is to belie the word “eternal.” The Scripture had well used another term. If the new life is only conditional, then it is not eternal.

The word “hope” is inadequate. In English, it always implies a degree of uncertainty. The Greek word knows nothing of uncertainty—it means “expectation.” It means something that one has reason to assume will not be disappointed. It is the difference between “I hope it will happen” and “I expect it to happen.” And, of course, a promise from God is never as uncertain as an expectation from a human.

**Through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead . . .** If the new life of the believer is transient and conditional, then the resurrection of Christ was only partially effective. His resurrection is the guarantee of life to all who will accept it.

**Unto an inheritance undefiled, incorruptible, and that fadeth not away . . .** A more forceful translation would be “uncorrupted” and “unspotted” and

“unfading.” And so the inheritance is itself unconditional. In the process of human inheritances, there are always the terms and conditions. Sometimes these terms and conditions cast a shadow over the inheritance. Nor is it free from potential diminishing, as in the case of trusts and other instruments dependent on economics. But the inheritance of Christ is quite free from any possible modification or deterioration.

**Kept in heaven for you . . .** The Greek word for “kept” is τηρεω (*téreo*), which is the basis of our word for “treasure.” Our inheritance is kept like a treasure in heaven. Its value is based upon the fact that the creation and securing of beings who would glorify Him is to God Himself the greatest of treasures. It is the highest result of His creative power.

**Guarded by the power of God . . .** God has established His fortification around us to preserve us for the inheritance. The terms and conditions of earthly inheritances are commonly broken. Humans often fail to live up to the expectations. The inheritance may be lost. Not so with the inheritance which God has reserved for us. Sometimes a guardian may succeed in keeping the potential heir from failing the conditions. The heir is exceedingly fortunate, though sometimes may not realize that. In the case of those of us who have been reborn, God is Himself the Guardian who keeps us for the inheritance, though we may not always realize the value of His efforts. John 10 gives us the great allegory of God’s shepherding care—*“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father’s hand”* (John 10:28,29).

**Through faith unto salvation . . .** The basis of our rebirth in the spirit and our eternal identity with God is faith. But it is not our own faith—something of human exercise—it is the gift of God and thus of Divine origin. *“By grace are ye saved, through faith; and that not of yourself it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast”* (Ephesians 2:8,9). Faith is an energy process from God through which His Spirit is established in us and becomes the basis of all His energy within us as well as our communication with Him. Trust is not the same as faith. Trust is an exercise of the human mind and emotion. It is based upon the mental grid on our cortex, which is itself affected by a myriad of human factors. It is thus quite unreliable. If feelings of faith are the basis of our interaction with God, then we are in a quagmire of human inadequacy. So then, in a figure, the fortress of our faith is constructed by the power of God and is thus invincible to Satan’s inadequate forces. Our flesh is constantly battered by Satan, but that is something outside the fortress of our spirits. Christians can be affected by Satan in the area of the flesh, but can never be penetrated by Satan in the area of the spirit. The guarantee of this is that Christ has entered our spirits and established the fortress of faith. We humans are no match for Satan, but Satan is no match for Christ.

*But what of Christians who are “backslidden” and not “walking with Christ?”*

These, of course, are human categories. If Christ is in our spirits, we cannot be removed from Him, whatever our fleshly conditions. However, it is quite possible that a believer is not interacting with Christ, because of some fleshly factors. If one is engaged in sin, he is in the same condition as the man in I Corinthians 5, whom Paul delivered unto Satan *“For the destruction of the flesh,*

*that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (I Corinthians 5:5). In this case, the man was not repentant of his misdeeds. It was not that he had sinned, but rather that he was unrepentant. So Christians may sin in the flesh and have difficulty in their relationship to Christ, and suffer certain penalties in the flesh, but there is no indication that Satan has invaded their spirits. As children in the home, whose misdeeds may bring penalties, but never cause them to be unborn, so Christians may suffer in the flesh and still remain members of the family of Christ. When one is in such condition, it is very likely that one will not have the same degree of fellowship with Christ, but that does not mean that Christ has departed from one’s spirit.*

The bottom line is that our spirits are the dwelling place of God, who, **through His Spirit**, has established a fortress of faith within. While Satan can affect our outer flesh, he cannot invade our spirits. Paul says, *“Though our outward man perish [is corrupted], yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (II Corinthians 4:16).*

The true test that Christ is still with us, in periods when we may feel “out of fellowship” or “away from Christ” is that we really care about that. The very fact that we struggle with our relationship to Christ is the indication that we want Him with us. We do not want to be “out of fellowship.” Our spirits reach out to Christ, even though the flesh is giving us trouble. In a sense, we cling to “spiritual life” as humans cling to “fleshly life.” As Paul said to the Hebrews, *“Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35,36).*

We conclude here with the rest of Peter’s statement (1:6-9) as an ultimate encouragement. *“In whom you rejoice, if now for a little bit you have been made sorry in many kinds of testings, in order that the trial [for approval] of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perishes, though it be tried [unto approval] through fire, may be found unto praise and glory and honor in the revelation of Jesus Christ: whom not having seen, you love; in whom though now not seeing, but believing, you rejoice now with inexpressible joy and glorified, acquiring the consummation of your faith—the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:6-9).*

David Morsey  
December 1992

[www.harvestermission.org](http://www.harvestermission.org)