

Do You Really Believe You Are the Temple of God?

Scripture tells us that man is God's temple (see 1 Cor. 3:16). In order to fully understand this analogy, we must recall the division of the Jewish temple into three parts.

There was its exterior, seen by all men, with the outer court, into which every Israelite might enter, and where all the external religious service was performed. There was the holy place, into which alone the priests might enter, to present to God the blood or the incense, the bread or the oil that they had brought from without.

Although near, the priests ministering in the holy place were still not within the veil; into the immediate presence of God they could not come. God dwelled in the holiest of all, in a light inaccessible, where none might venture. The momentary entering of the high priest, once a year, was only to bring into full consciousness the truth that there was no place for man there until the veil was rent and taken away.

In man, as in the physical temple of the Israelites, there are three parts. In the body you have the outer court, the external visible life, where all the conduct has to be regulated by God's law and where all service consists in looking at how things are to bring us close to God.

Then there is the soul, with its inner life, its power of mind and feeling and will. In the regenerate man this is the holy place, where thoughts and affections and desires move to and fro as the priests of the sanctuary, rendering God their service in the full light of consciousness.

Then there is, within the veil, hidden from all human sight and light, the innermost sanctuary, "the secret place of the most high"—the spirit—where God dwells and where man may not

enter, until the veil is rent at God's own bidding. In the believer this is the inner chamber of the heart, of which the Spirit has taken possession and out of which He waits to do His glorious work, making soul and body holy unto the Lord.

However, this indwelling, unless it is recognized, yielded to, and humbly maintained in adoration and love, often brings comparatively little blessing. The one great lesson that the truth—that we are God's temple because His Spirit dwells in us—teaches us, is this: to acknowledge the holy presence that dwells with us. This alone will enable us to regard the whole temple, even to the outmost court, as sacred to His service and to yield every power of our nature to His leading and will.

The most sacred part of the temple, that for which all the rest existed and on which all depended, was the holiest of all. Even though the priests of old might never enter there and might never see the glory that dwelled there, all their conduct was regulated, and all their faith motivated, by the thought of the unseen presence there. It was this that gave the rituals they performed, such as sprinkling blood and burning incense, their value. It was this that made it a privilege to draw nigh.

It was the most holy, the holiest of all, that made the place of their serving to them a holy place. Their whole life was controlled and inspired by faith in the unseen, indwelling glory within the veil.

It is no different with the believer. Until he learns by faith to tremble in the presence of the wondrous mystery that he is God's temple because God's Spirit dwells in him, he will never yield himself to his high vocation with the holy reverence or the joyful confidence that he should. As long as he looks only into the holy place, into the heart—as far as man *can* see and know what passes there—he will often search in vain for the Holy Spirit, or only find cause for bitter shame that his

workings are so few and frail.

Each of us must learn to know that there is a holiest of all in the temple that he himself is; the secret place of the Most High with us must become the central truth in our temple worship. This must be to us the meaning of our confession: "I believe in the Holy Spirit."

And how is this deep faith in the hidden indwelling to become ours? Taking our stand upon God's blessed Word, we must accept and appropriate its teaching. We must believe that God means what the Scriptures say.

I am a temple, just such a temple as God commanded to be built of old; He intended for me to see in this physical structure what I am meant to be.

There the holiest of all was the central point, the essential thing. It was all dark, secret, hidden, until the time of the unveiling came. It demanded and received the faith of the priest and the people.

The holiest of all within me, too, is unseen and hidden, a thing for faith alone to know and deal with. Let me, as I approach the Holy One, bow before Him in deep and lowly reverence. Let me there say that I believe what He says, that His Holy Spirit, God, one with the Father and the Son, has entered in, and even now makes His abode within me.

I will meditate and be still until something of the overwhelming glory of the truth falls upon me and faith begins to realize that I am His temple and that in the secret place He sits upon His throne. As I yield myself in silent meditation and worship day by day, surrendering and opening my whole being to Him, He will in His divine, loving, living power shine into my consciousness the light of His presence.

As this thought fills the heart, the faith of the indwelling,

though hidden, presence will influence; the holy place will be ruled from the most holy. The world of consciousness in the soul, with all its thoughts and feelings, its affections and purposes, will come and surrender itself to the holy power that sits within on the throne. Amid the terrible experience of failure and sin, a new hope will dawn.

Though I may have earnestly sought to, I could not keep the holy place for God, because He keeps the most holy for Himself—if I give Him the glory due His name, in the holy worship of the inner temple. He will send forth His light and His truth through my whole being and, through mind and will, reveal His power to sanctify and to bless. Through the soul, coming ever more securely under His rule, His power will work out even into the body.

With passions and appetites within, with every thought brought into subjection, the hidden Holy Spirit will through the soul perpetrate ever deeper into the body. Through the Spirit the deeds of the body will die, and the river of water that flows from under the throne of God and the Lamb will go through the body with its cleansing and quickening power.

O friend, do believe that you are the temple of the living God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you! You have been sealed with the Holy Spirit; He is the mark, the living assurance of your sonship and your Father's love.

If, until now, this has been a thought that has brought you little comfort, see if the reason is not here: You sought for Him in the holy place, amid the powers and services of your inner life that come within your vision, and you could hardly discern Him there—so you could not appropriate the comfort and strength the Comforter was meant to bring.

No, my brother, not there, not there. Deeper down, in the secret place of the Most High—there you will find Him. There faith will find Him.

And as faith worships in holy reverence before the Father, and the heart trembles at the thought of what it has found, wait in holy stillness on God to grant you the mighty working of His Spirit, wait in holy stillness for the Spirit, and be assured He will, as God, arise and fill His temple with His glory.

And then remember, the veil was but for a time. When the preparation was complete, the veil of the flesh was rent. As you yield your soul's inner life to the inmost life of the Spirit, as the traffic between the most holy and the holy becomes more true and unbroken, the fullness of the time will come in your soul.

In the power of Him, in whom the veil was rent that the Spirit might stream forth from His glorified body, there will come to you, too, an experience in which the veil shall be taken away and the most holy and the holy shall be one. The hidden glory of the secret place will stream into your conscious daily life: the service of the holy place will all be in the power of the eternal Spirit.

Andrew Murray (1828-1917) was an ordained minister in the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa and the author of numerous devotional works that have become classics, including *Abide in Christ*, *Absolute Surrender* and *Waiting on God*. Adapted from *The Spirit of Christ* by Andrew Murray, (Bethany House Publishers). Used by permission.