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The Holy Spirit

In Old Testament times, God placed His Holy Spirit upon certain people—on the prophets, of course, and on Moses and David and Samuel and Samson and many others. And, in Joel, He promised, *“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit.”* (Joel 2:28-29)



In Chapter 2 of Acts we read that, on the day of Pentecost, shortly after Jesus rose from death and ascended to Heaven, his followers were all together in one place, and the Spirit of God came down and rested on each one like tongues of fire. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in many different languages.



Peter answered some who scoffed by saying this was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. He said, *“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”* (Acts 2:38-39)

What does this mean for us today? Briefly, it means that the Holy Spirit is available to anyone who is a follower of Jesus—to all who ask, or are willing to receive, what God has already given.

Available for what? Let’s look ...

1. Conscience and Guide. *“... when [the Spirit] comes, He will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.”* (John 16:8)

“When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...” (John 16:13a)

Probably the most important function of the Holy Spirit, for each of us personally, is to give us guidance for right thinking and behavior. We are so easily led astray by our own appetites or inclinations, or temptations coming at us from all directions, that we need a divine Guide. If we rely on our own thinking, too often we do a wrong thing or make a foolish mistake. *There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.* (Proverbs 14:12) The Holy Spirit helps us do what’s right and avoid doing what’s wrong.

All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons [adopted children] of God. (Romans 8:14) If we want God to adopt us and eventually take us to be with Him forever in Heaven, we need to start by following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

2. Helper and Comforter. *“... the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.”* (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit helps us in many ways. He helps us choose right actions instead of wrong ones. He also helps us get things done. (He helps me write these messages. Without His help they would be meaningless or not done at all.) He gives us strength when we’re faced with a daunting task. And He gives us comfort by reminding us who Jesus is, and all that He has done and is still doing for us.

The Spirit’s presence with us is the source of our faith in God’s love and His forgiveness for our sins. And, very importantly, He helps our prayers: *Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.* (Romans 8:26)

3. The Fruit of the Spirit. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world*

might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17) Of course you already knew that. But it’s very important to remember that God sent Jesus not just to save us from Hell; He also wanted to save us for the destiny He planned for us since before Creation—eternal joy in His loving presence.

God loves you, just as you are, but He doesn’t want to leave you as you are. He wants to transform you into a better person than you are now. He wants to develop in you all of the character traits of Jesus. This is a partial list: *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23)* How does one get these characteristics? They are “the fruit” of the Holy Spirit’s work in us as He helps us grow to maturity in Christ. Why does God want to change you to be like Christ? That’s simple—He wants you to be the best you that you can be, for your sake, because He loves you.

4. Gifts of the Spirit. This has been the subject of a lot of controversy for a long time. I don’t intend to try to resolve disputes. I’ll just mention some things that are pretty obvious, based on the Bible, and maybe add a guess or two.

The Bible itself is a gift of the Spirit. *All Scripture is breathed out by God (2 Timothy 3:16)* In Greek, breath and spirit have the same root—so all Scripture is given to us by God’s Spirit (breath).



In that sense, one can also say that every one of God’s gifts is a “gift of the Spirit.” But there are also special “spiritual gifts,” abilities that people would not have unless the Holy Spirit gave those abilities to them. Here are a few of them:

- Words of wisdom—for example, to help get a discussion onto the right track, or to resolve uncertainties
- Words of knowledge—knowing some truth that one hasn’t actually learned, like knowing how to fix something, or making a development breakthrough
- Extraordinary faith—the kind that actually causes mountains to move
- Power to heal the sick, especially when medical science has not been sufficient
- Working of miracles, small or large, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit
- Words of prophecy—to know, and speak forth, a message from God to those who are listening

- Discerning spirits—to be able to distinguish between good and evil spiritual influences
- Speaking languages (tongues) that one doesn’t know
- Interpretation of tongues—translating so others can understand the message.

Some have made a mess of this. Here is what I have come to believe. Feel free to disagree.

- Spiritual gifts are still being given by the Holy Spirit to the followers of Jesus today.
- The spiritual gifts are for God’s ministry purposes, not our personal purposes.
- Not all of the gifts are given to any one person. Some have one; some have more.
- A person can be given different gifts at different times. Sometimes a gift is given for use on a particular occasion.
- A spiritual gift (e.g. speaking in tongues) is not a necessary or sufficient proof of Holy Spirit Baptism.

Do you want a particular spiritual gift, to be used for God’s glory, and not for a selfish reason? Then you should ask for it. If He wants you to have it, He will give it to you—but that will depend on Him, not you.

5. Holy Spirit Baptism. God has “poured out” His Spirit. The Holy Spirit is available. If we want to be filled with the Spirit, or “baptized in the Spirit,” all we need to do is ask, receive, and believe. As one preacher put it, “Don’t ask for more of the Holy Spirit. God has already given all of His Spirit to you.”

We are to *be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18)*, but as D. L. Moody is reported to have said, “We need to keep being filled with the Holy Spirit, because we leak.” Or, as someone else has said, “It’s not a matter of how much of the Holy Spirit you have; the real question is, How much of you does the Holy Spirit have?”

God’s Holy Spirit is with us, now and always. He’s around us, upon us and, if we’ll receive Him, He is in us, helping us to obey and be at peace with God, and helping us to become more like Jesus. He is the proof of this amazing fact, which we must never forget or doubt: **God LOVES us!**

Blessings to all of you. May we all have a blessed 2024, as we are filled with and guided by God’s Holy Spirit!

Brother Roland

The “Good News Guide”

This is a monthly newsletter that is free, and freely available to anyone who wants it. I love to get a note from someone who has seen a copy, saying, "Please put me on the mailing list." If you'd like a second copy to share, let me know. If there's someone else who wants to be on the mailing list, let me know. For inmates I need first and last name, DOC number, usually their SID number, and address.

This newsletter is intended primarily for jail and prison inmates, but it is truly a joy for me when an inmate is released and still wants to receive it. All I need is a change of address. Keep telling me where you are each time you move, and I'll keep sending you the “Good News Guide.”

Questions

If you have a question about Bible truth or the Christian life, I'll be glad to share my thoughts with you, and maybe with the other readers of the “Good News Guide.” Write to me.

Bible Studies

Inmates sometimes write to me asking for Bible studies. I don't have any to send you, but you can get some good ones from **Mount Hope Prison Ministry, 25 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, MD 21740**. Also, I'm working on an updated list of organizations from which you can request resources.

Your Prayers

In Matthew and Luke Jesus said to His disciples, **“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”**

I know those of you who are incarcerated pray for yourselves and your families. It's natural and perfectly right for you to do that. But, being locked up, you have a lot of time that you could spend productively in prayer. How about planning to spend a good amount of time each day in earnest, caring prayer ...

- Praising God, acknowledging His goodness, His mercy, His loving kindness, His truth, His power, His beauty, His wisdom, and so on. Challenge yourself to think of new ways to express how wonderful our God is. When you do that, you are simply agreeing with what is true.
- Thanking God, not only for the blessings you and your family have received, but also for all of the blessings you missed by not following Jesus earlier, and also for whatever trials have come your way in order to correct your waywardness. Every good thing that comes to us (whether we receive it or not), even correction, is a gift of God.
- Asking for more grace for yourself, your family, and your neighbors, to be more willing and better able to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- As Jesus said, praying for more workers to help bring in the harvest of souls to God's kingdom, and praying guidance, strength, peace, joy, and protection for those who are doing that work.
 - Pray for jail and prison chaplains, who carry a heavy burden as they try to help so many who still resist God or who have turned away and given up hope.
 - Pray for pastors and teachers who work to help others, especially children, to "be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. 2:4)
 - Pray also for those who work in smaller ways to advance or support various works of Christian ministry, sharing the truth and love of God.
 - Then pray for the millions of Christians who have taken seriously the Great Commission to go and witness for Jesus, that they may have Holy Spirit "go power" to actually do it.
 - Finally, pray for those who are prayer warriors, dedicating significant time to praying for God's will to be accomplished.

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The Holy Spirit

God loves us, and His Spirit is with us now and always. Believe it! Follow Him! And rejoice!

Puzzle:

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Words:

* Names of the Holy Spirit

BREATH OF GOD
 COMFORTER
 HEAVENLY DOVE
 HELPER
 HOLY SPIRIT
 PARACLETE
 SPIRIT OF GOD

* Holy Spirit Manifestations

BAPTISM
 PENTECOST
 POWER

SECOND BLESSING

TONGUES OF FIRE
 WISDOM FROM ABOVE

* Spiritual Gifts

DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS
 GREAT FAITH
 HEALING
 INTERPRETATION
 MIRACLES
 PROPHECY
 SPEAKING IN TONGUES
 WISDOM
 WORDS OF KNOWLEDGE

* Fruit of the Holy Spirit

FAITHFULNESS
 GENEROSITY
 GENTLENESS
 GOODNESS
 HOLINESS
 JOY
 KINDNESS
 LOVE
 PATIENCE
 PEACE
 SELF CONTROL