

The Gift of the Spirit

In John 14.15-18, Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” In the next three or four devotions I want to share a few insights about the Holy Spirit that we learn from these words of Jesus.

The first insight I want to share is that the Spirit is a gift from God. Jesus said, “And I will ask the Father, and he will *give* you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth” (vs 16). In response to Jesus’ prayer, the Father sends the Holy Spirit as a gift from above. By the way, notice that the whole Trinity is involved: Jesus prays, the Father sends, and the Holy Spirit is sent. The Holy Spirit is not something we have to agonize over or earn; rather, he is a free gift from the Father. Acts 2.38 says, “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.” On an earlier occasion, Jesus said, “If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven *give* the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!” (Luke 11.13).

Clearly, the Spirit is a gift from God. The only thing we have to do to get the Spirit is to open our hearts to God by repenting of our sin and believing in his Son, Jesus. In response to faith the Spirit is given, not in response to our works. Paul said, “I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard?” Again, he writes, “Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believed what you heard?” (Gal 3.2, 5). The answer to Paul’s question is that they received the Spirit by faith not by works of the law. We can’t deserve the Spirit, but we can open up our life to the Spirit by believing in Jesus.

In the Old Testament God promised to give us the gift of his Spirit. Joel 2.28 says, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people.” Notice that the Spirit is not restricted to any particular race or gender; rather, the Spirit is given to all who turn to God. Ezekiel 36.26 promises, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and

move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” When God’s Spirit comes into our life, he transforms our hard, unresponsive hearts into hearts of obedience. Only the Spirit can radically transform a person from the inside out.

So when do we receive the gift of God’s Spirit? Though the Holy Spirit was initially given on the Day of Pentecost, we personally receive the gift of the Spirit at conversion when we are born again. Jesus spoke of being born of the water and the Spirit (see John 3.5). Paul said, “For we were *all* baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink” (1 Cor 12.13). Notice that Paul says that every Christian has been baptized by the Spirit, and it is this baptism that puts one into the body of Christ. So if you are a Christian, then you have the Spirit (see Rom 8.9). A Christian does not need to pray for the Spirit to come into his life; a Christian needs to allow the Spirit already in his life to transform him fully into Christ’s image. This requires daily surrender and obedience to God’s word.

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