

THE "GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT" IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

One of the oldest questions of dispute among our brethren is the meaning of the phrase "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" in Acts 2:38. Some say that it refers to the Holy Spirit *Himself* as a gift (i.e. the indwelling of the Holy Spirit). Others say that it refers to the gift that the Holy Spirit *gives* (e.g. salvation, or some other such gift). The problem is compounded by the fact that the language will allow either interpretation.

Now, I have no illusions of settling this matter! Indeed, I myself have changed my mind on the meaning of the phrase several times in my preaching life. I have believed that the gift of the Holy Spirit was "salvation" – that which follows remission of sins. And, I have believed of the gift of the Holy Spirit as the "seal" which is given after our conversion (Ep.1:13-14). But recently, I have learned some things that make me consider changing my mind yet again!

Take a look at this phrase within the *context* of the book of Acts. Study the Scriptures below, giving attention to the highlighted sections. As you study, remember that a "*gift*" is something that is both "*given*" and "*received*." In other words, "give" and "receive" are complimentary terms; if something is "received," it must first be "given!" With that background, carefully study the following verses...

Acts 2:14-18, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That *I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. 18 And on My menservants and on My maidservants, I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.*'"

Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; *and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*'"

Acts 5:32, "And *we are His witnesses* to these things, and *so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given* to those who obey Him." (Note: How does the Holy Spirit bear witness? "Therefore, they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was *bearing witness* to the word of His grace, *granting signs and wonders* to be done by their hands," Acts 14:3, cp. Hb.2:3-4.)

Acts 8:14-19, "Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them *that they might receive the Holy Spirit*. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, *and they received the Holy Spirit*. And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands *the Holy Spirit was given*, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, *that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.*'"

Acts 10:45-46, "And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because *the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God.*"

Acts 19:1-6, "And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples he said to them, 'Did you *receive the Holy Spirit* when you believed?' So, they said to him, 'We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.' And he said to them, 'Into what then were you baptized?' So, they said, 'Into John's baptism.' Then Paul said, 'John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.' When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid hands on them, *the Holy Spirit came upon them*, and they *spoke with tongues and prophesied.*"

These verses consistently show that the "*gift of the Holy Spirit*" refers to the *reception of His miraculous powers*. This view is well-worth considering; and I am considering it! But What do YOU think?

--Lanny Smith