

THE HOLY SPIRIT

By

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Are you a spirit-filled Christian? The gift of the holy spirit is promised to every person upon his baptism into Christ. Therefore the apostle Paul writes that “If any man has not the spirit of Christ he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9).

THE PROMISE: Christ promised the holy spirit in these words, “Ho be it when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine and shall declare it unto you” (John 16:13–14). Two things Christ intended to be done through the power of the holy spirit. First, that Christ should be glorified. Second that his truth should be proclaimed. Since it is God’s express purpose that men should come to know thee truth and through the truth become free of sin and death, it follows that God’s spirit seeks to bring about the same thing. God’s actions are always consistent with His purpose. In Romans 1:21, the chief sin of the unbelieving world was that “They glorified Him not as God.” Paul writes in II Cor. 9:13 that the saints “glorify God for the obedience of your confession unto the gospel of Christ.” The glorification of God is brought about by the confession of and obedience to the gospel revealed through the holy spirit. The holy spirit accomplishes that which was promised: Guides men into truth, that Christ may be glorified.

PENTECOST? At Pentecost, the issue was not the holy spirit but the fulfillment of scripture concerning One to be seated on David’s throne, to reign as King. The pouring forth of the holy spirit was the proof of this fulfillment, and this proof once given did not need to be repeated. At the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) the language miracle occurred but the wind and tongues of fire were not manifest. That instance was to demonstrate that the kingdom of Christ was to include men other than those of the twelve tribes of Israel. At Pentecost three things happened: there was the sound of wind, there were visible tongues of fire, and there was a miracle of hearing. When Peter spoke, men of various languages heard him at the same time in their own native tongues. Today’s Pentecostal experience fails in all three events.

THE SPIRITUAL VERSUS THE CARNAL: In writing to the church as Corinth the apostle said that he could not speak to them as spiritual but as unto carnal; “for you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are you not carnal, and do you not walk after the manner of men?” (I Cor. 3:3). The church was cursed with cliques, jealousies, immorality, demon worship and perversion of the Lord’s supper (I Cor. 1:12, 3:3–4, 5:1–8, 6:12–20, 10:14–22, 11:17–23). “It is significant,” writes Dr. Frank Stagg in *Glossolalia*, “that although Paul made much of the Holy Spirit, only in I Cor. Does he mention tongue speaking.” While they had the gift of speaking in tongues it did not make them spiritual, for Paul said they were carnal. Instead of glorifying God they were seeking their own glory in boasting of this gift which the apostle Paul said was the least of all gifts. Furthermore, instead of allowing the truth to guide their lives, they were walking in gross sin and error, thus denying the purpose for which the Holy Spirit was

given. Dr. Charles Inwood in “Kewsick’s Authentic Voice” points out that modern man is like the Corinthians in “the craving for something which powerfully appeals to the senses, something you can see and feel, and handle, aye, and photograph; something that will startle the people.” This craving for sensational activities is carnal and worldly, not spiritual. Paul condemns the cliquish self-interest of those who set themselves apart in the church as those who speak in tongues and thus consider that they are a hot-line to God denied to ordinary Christians (I Cor. 11:18–19, 12:1–13). What is it then to be filled with the spirit? “But we receive not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (I Cor. 2:12). The spirit-filled Christian, therefore, is one who lives in keeping with God’s word. The word of God is spirit-breathed. “My spirit is upon thee and my words which I have put in thy mouth” (Isa. 59:21). The holy spirit comes to man in the vehicle of God’s word. Where the word is preached, there is the spirit of God. “Our gospel came not unto you in word only but also in power and in the holy spirit and in much assurance” (I Thess. 1:5). The holy spirit brings forth the gospel, the truth of God, thus the spirit and the word are united. “For he whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for he gives not the spirit by measure” (John 3:34). Here it is clearly seen that the giving of God’s spirit results in one speaking God’s words.

On the day of Pentecost, the filling with the Holy Spirit was followed by the proclamation of the word of God. There is a noteworthy contrast between what Peter did on the day of Pentecost and what is generally done today by those who proclaim to be Pentecostal and filled with the spirit. When Peter stood before the multitudes, after having been filled with the holy spirit, he did not start out by saying, “Now I want to tell you how it felt when I was baptized in the Holy Spirit.” Instead he began preaching the gospel, exalting Jesus Christ, proclaiming that He was seated at the right hand of God, then insisting that men repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Later on, after they had suffered some persecution, Luke records that, “They were all filled with the holy spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:31). Philip who was “full of the holy spirit” explained the word of God to the Ethiopian Eunuch and baptized him (Acts 8:26–41). The apostles and early Christians, filled with the holy spirit, went forth to proclaim the truth of God.

The Bible example of spirit-filled preaching is the simple proclamation of the truth of God. The burden of the apostles was not to tell someone how they felt or to encourage someone to have an ecstatic experience; rather it was to reveal the truth of the gospel: that God in the person of Christ has entered human life, has defeated sin and died for sin, has risen from the dead and today is seated at the right hand of God as our High Priest and King. This is the “full gospel.” Anytime you have the gospel plus something else, the something else becomes another gospel. Spirit-filled men are gospel-filled, and proclaim the gospel. The evidence of being spirit led is when one is preoccupied with the crucified and risen Lord.

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH: The concept of what it means to be filled with the spirit has become so confused that many believe that the spirit-filled person is one who never engages in controversy but rather casts over every issue a mantle of sweetness, tolerance, and acceptance so that his endorsement of every wind of doctrine is evidence of the Holy Spirit. Consequently the charismatic attitude is that doctrine counts for little and that doctrinal differences are to be glossed over with a veneer of artificial love,

artificial because one who loves God loves truth. Christ called the holy spirit the “spirit of truth” and truth is ever opposed to error. The day of Pentecost is a case in point. Here was the greatest religious controversy of the day. The Jews in Jerusalem, from every one of the twelve tribes, were there to observe a great festival in following Moses. Today’s charismatic preacher would say, “Now these are good religious men, believers in God, and certainly we do not want to bring up doctrinal differences.” But, not so with the apostle Peter. When filled with the holy spirit he went right to the core of doctrine: Jesus is Lord, not Moses. Christ reigns as King on David’s throne. The Kingdom is not something in the future as these Jews were thinking. Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins! This latter is the most controversial of all. Why bring up baptism? Why? Because he was Holy Spirit-guided.

Christ considered the rejection of his words the same as rejecting Him (John 12:48). Yet many follow their experiences which are said to come of the holy spirit but which contradict the teaching of Christ. It is very common today to see revivals, crusades and other movements where both, liberals and “conservatives” co-operate, all claiming to be guided by the Holy Spirit. The Truth is down-graded and experience is exalted. The Holy Spirit is actually being rejected, for, were he present truth would not be compromised and men would be told to “repent and be baptized” as they were at Pentecost. Instead they are told to “invite Jesus into their lives,” with neither repentance nor baptism.

SPIRIT-LED: “For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). The person who claims to be a child of God must be one who is led by God’s spirit. “But we received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God” (I Cor. 2:12). All truth which God teaches us is taught by the holy spirit. Any person led by the holy spirit is a person who is living in keeping with God’s commands. For example, a spirit-filled woman is a woman who minds her household, who is in subjection to her husband, who teaches her children the way of God. Why should the woman who runs around speaking for prayer groups and telling of her experiences be considered more spiritual than the woman who serves Christ by being a godly wife and mother? A spirit-filled man is one who gives an honest day’s labor for a day’s pay, who according to Paul is “not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11). A spirit-filled youth is one who refuses to enjoy the pleasures of sin about him, choosing rather to suffer ostracism if necessary in order to keep himself pure in mind and body. Soft sentimentality is no evidence of a person being led by the holy spirit. Jesus certainly was filled with the holy spirit when He told the Pharisees that they were vile and rotten, a den of snakes and children of the devil. The apostle Paul was spirit-led when he rebuked the apostle Peter, when he disputed with the Jews and when he wrote his stern and forceful criticism of the Galatians for allowing the Jews to turn them aside from the gospel.

One who is led by the spirit is one who puts to death the deeds of the flesh. He is one who exercises self control, “For God gave us not a spirit of fearfulness: but of power and love and self control” (II Tim. 1:7). Instead of one acting and speaking without control over his mind and tongue, the spirit-led person is one who exercises self control. The holy spirit helps us in our infirmities (Rom. 8:26). The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self control; against such there is no law (Gal. 5:22–23). The spirit-inspired scripture teaches that God is

calling out a people to be redeemed and made into His own image, to have fellowship with Him forever. This purpose must guide every facet of the Christian's life. If one is spirit-led God's purpose will be reflected in his business, in his marriage and home, in his investments (Examine your will. Does it reflect your purpose in God's kingdom?), in recreation and in dress. (How can a woman be spiritual and yet dress immodestly so as to incite lust? How can a man be spiritual when he dresses effeminate?)

What shall we do to be sure that we are led by the spirit? First, obey the command by that first spirit-filled apostle Peter, who said, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38). Second, we must know the truth the spirit reveals through the word (John 17:17). "He that is spiritual, judges all things" (I Cor. 2:15). We can only judge by the word of truth the spirit has inspired. To attain spiritual maturity one must live, not by bread alone, but "by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." This sincere feeding upon the word of God is the means of filling up on the spirit and thus being led by the holy spirit.

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