

MEET THE HOLY SPIRIT, PART 3

“And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38b, NIV)

SOME GIFTS ARE ENTIRELY FREE. Others aren’t so much gifts; instead they are what we will be given after we get past “the catch.”

In-between, though, we find what we might call rewards. No one is trying to sneak something past us. The presentation is clear up front: If you’ll commit to doing something, you will find that a wonder of benefits will come your way. And that’s a great in-between, because some of those free gifts are not things we would ever want (like low-end golf balls or a “world’s worst golfer” paperweight).

This was the case at the end of Peter’s Pentecost message. The people had asked what their response should be to the work of Jesus among them—work done in fulfillment of the prophecies of a Redeemer and work now made vibrantly available via the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Peter responded with a definite action. “Repent and be baptized, every one of you,” he told them, “in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

We have established in previous weeks that the Spirit of God is his presence in and among those who believe in Jesus. God came in the flesh as Jesus the Messiah; now he is here in the Spirit, indwelling all believers. No wonder Peter called it “the gift” of the Holy Spirit! Can we really imagine anything better?

This entire scene was revisited when Peter was sent (by the Holy Spirit) to the home of Cornelius. This Roman centurion was known as a God-fearer, but he had not heard the message of salvation in Jesus. Once he had, he knew exactly what he wanted: his whole household to be saved. And sure enough, when they had given their lives to Christ, the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out on them, too. Here was the confirmation that the prophecies of Joel really were for “all people.”

Part of our understanding of the Trinity that is Father, Son, and Spirit comes from this interwovenness of the salvation and the Spirit’s outpouring. Appeal to the Father by the work of his Son Jesus, and you receive the Spirit. You can’t have one and not the other (even if you’ve never wanted to be one of “those Pentecostals”). The Spirit who is Counselor and teacher and guide—as we will explore in weeks to come—is God’s gift to you as a believer. And it’s a gift you really want this time!

Opening questions What is the best golf gift you have ever received? How about the most disappointing? • What amazes you most about the possibility of God indwelling you?

READING Acts 2:37-39, Acts 10:34-48, 1 Thessalonians 1:4-6

Receiving the gift (Acts 2)

What does this text show us about how the gift of the Spirit is received? To whom was the promise of forgiveness and the Spirit given?

‘God shows no favoritism’ (Acts 10)

How did Peter’s opening words reflect his own amazement? How again was the message of Jesus connected to the work of the Holy Spirit?

The message and its origin (1 Thessalonians 1)

According to Paul, where did the message he had carried to the Thessalonians come from? What was this message? How did they receive it? Are you prepared to receive the message in the same way?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2016 Links Players International. A 4-minute video accompanies today’s study at <https://youtu.be/m3w2kfWFLps>