

The Holy Spirit and The Christian

By Ferrell Jenkins

In recent years there has been a resurgence of interest in the Holy Spirit and His work. Some brethren have undoubtedly been influenced by denominational doctrines of the direct operation of the Spirit in conversion, or of His enlightening them as to the true meaning of the Bible, or directing their everyday affairs. Much good material has been written which carefully deals with all of this. This writer has no illusions of being able to make a new “revelation” to the readers; perhaps we will be able to present the material in such a way as to be helpful to some.

The Holy Spirit dwells in the Christian. Does anyone deny this statement? I think not. The scriptural evidence for such an assertion is abundant. Consider carefully Acts 2:38; Romans 5:5; 8:9, 11, 26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 3:2; 4:6 (cf. 3:26-27 on how they became sons); Ephesians 1:13; Philippians 2:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; Hebrews 6:4; 1 John 3:24; 4:13. The disagreement is over the MANNER of the indwelling of the Spirit.

Some Guidelines

A few guidelines will keep us from going too far afield in this study.

(1) **The Scripture is harmonious.** Whatever we read about the power of the gospel or the activity of the written word in the lives of aliens or Christians is true. But these facts do not contradict what we read about the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Christian. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). It is by the word of truth that we were brought forth (James 1:18) and it is by obedience to the truth that our souls were purified (1 Peter 1:22). This is emphasized to avoid any misunderstanding. We respect the Word of God in its entirety and believe that what is said here with regard to the indwelling of the Spirit in the Christian is in harmony with all other information.

(2) **We do not believe that the indwelling of the Spirit is miraculous.** J. D. Thomas stated this well:

The fact of the personal indwelling does not mean that any of the erroneous denominational theories about the Holy Spirit discussed...are true. It does not imply that there

is a present-day baptism of the Spirit, nor present-day miracles, direct operation of the Spirit in conversion, or tongue-speaking (*The Spirit and Spirituality* 26).

(3) In the same connection **we do not believe that there is, or has to be, any sensible evidence of the Spirit’s presence.** Some, who are faced with the Bible teaching, press for information as to what the Spirit does in the life of the Christian or how one knows he has the Spirit. The same questions might be asked concerning remission of sins. We simply accept the testimony of the Scripture in either case. Moses E. Lard dealt with this problem more than 135 years ago in this way:

Surely a literal indwelling is not doubted on the ground that we have no *sensible* evidence of the Spirit’s presence. For neither *a priori* nor from the Bible have we any reason to conclude that such evidence would be afforded us. And gratuitously to assume it, and then make the assumption a ground on which to doubt the indwelling, is more unwarrantable indeed (*Lard’s Quarterly* March 1964:19).

(4) **An objection** is made that it is impossible for the Spirit to dwell in a multiplicity of Christians without “fragmenting” the Spirit. This should be considered before proceeding. In John 14:17, Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would “abide” with them and would be “in” them. Is this possible? No Bible believer would doubt it. Roy Lanier, Sr. says:

This proves two things. 1. It proves that the Holy Spirit can be in more than two persons at a time. 2. It proves that there is nothing unreasonable, impossible or unscriptural about the Holy Spirit dwelling in a human body. And since Paul says “your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you,” and he is speaking of all Christians, I conclude that the Holy Spirit dwells in my body as well as in the body of an apostle, though not in the same measure, or manifestation (*Firm Foundation* 20 Oct. 1964:673).

Omnipresence is a characteristic of divinity. It is frequently pointed out that Psalm 139:7-10 teaches

that the Spirit possesses this attribute and is therefore Divine. If God and the Spirit can be in all places without being fragmented, then could not the Spirit dwell in Christians without being fragmented?

(5) **The Spirit is not the same as the word.** I don't really think any gospel preacher believes that the Spirit is to be identified as the written word, but there are some Christians who do believe it. And they have gotten this erroneous impression because some preachers can't read one of these plain passages without saying "through the word; not separate and apart from the word." The word is that which was revealed by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:10; Ephesians 3:3-5) and is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

Building The Case

In such a short space it would be impossible to adequately consider all of the Scriptures relating to the indwelling of the Spirit. It is my intention to build the case on a consideration of three main ideas: (1) The gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38); (2) Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit, and (3) The Holy Spirit is given to the Christians as an earnest (Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

The Gift of the Holy Spirit

We remember that the Holy Spirit was promised to the Apostles (John 14:16-17) for the purpose of guiding them into all truth. We should also note that there is a general promise of the Holy Spirit to believers (John 7:39). The apostles received the Spirit on Pentecost (Acts 2), but in the sermon Peter promised that those who would repent and be baptized would have forgiveness of sins and would "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). We emphasize the connection between repentance and baptism; we ought also to observe the connection between remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

There are two different interpretations of the expression "the gift of the Holy Spirit." One holds that the Holy Spirit is the gift; the other holds that the Holy Spirit is the donor and that the "gift" is some spiritual quality or blessing. It is important to note that the word *gift* is from the Greek *dorea*. It is always used in the singular in the New Testament. When "spiritual gifts" (often used in the plural) are spoken of the Greek word is *charisma*. (See Romans 1:11; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 9, 28, 30-31). These words should not be confused.

The strongest case for the contention that "gift" in Acts 2:38 means the Holy Spirit's gift is made by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. (*The Mission and Medium of the Holy*

Spirit 38ff.). He cites several illustrations to prove his point. He says "*the farm of John Brown* is in the possessive case and means John Brown's farm." He cites John 4:10 and Ephesians 4:7 where "gift of God" and "gift of Christ" means something that God and Christ have given. He then parallels this with Acts 2:38. The construction in the Greek is the same in these cases, but Wallace fails to tell us why English translators (even of the "old Bible") fail to translate the definite article in the first two passages, but translate it in Acts 2:38. They evidently see a difference. He also overlooks the parallel in construction in Acts 10:45. The passage says that "the gift of the Holy Spirit" was poured out on the Gentiles; verse 44 says that "the Holy Spirit" fell on them. In this case the "gift" of the Holy Spirit was the Holy Spirit. Of course, here we have a miraculous manifestation also – speaking in tongues, which is elsewhere designated by the term *charisma*.

Lenski says that the "genitive is appositional... so here the gift is the Holy Spirit" (*The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* 109). He says the construction is parallel to verse 33, where "the promise of the Holy Spirit" means "the promise which is the Spirit." He cites A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, as evidence. It is amusing that Wallace cites the same "incomparable master and teacher of the New Testament Greek" for his contention, but fails to make a direct quotation from Robertson. Someone has misappropriated scholarship!

The truth probably lies between extremes and is illustrated by an experience related by R. L. Craig. He tells of writing a "well-known scholar," who, in effect, said:

The original language of Acts 2:38 does not DEMAND that "the gift" be the Spirit himself nor does it DEMAND that it be something emanating from Spirit, either. This must be determined by the context or by an explanation by other scripture (*The Preceptor* Aug., 1967:6).

Learning that a word MAY be used a certain way does not warrant the assertion that a scholar says it IS used this way. We need not be in doubt, however. Robertson did tell us which he thought it was in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (III:36). He says "The gift consists...in the Holy Spirit (genitive of identification)." The genitive of identification is the same as the genitive of apposition. (See also Dana & Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* 79). The translator's note in the NET Bible says this "is a genitive of apposition; the gift consists of the Holy Spirit."

In 1854, Moses E. Lard reviewed a position similar to that taken by Wallace and made this comment:

Certainly the gift of the Spirit is the Spirit itself given. The common version (King James) of the passage is very faulty, faulty inasmuch as it completely hides the true sense from the common reader. Render it as follows and all is clear: *And the Holy Spirit shall be given you.* A child can understand this; and it expresses the exact import of the original. But what did Peter mean in saying, “the Spirit shall be given to you,” or, if any prefer the expression, “you shall receive the Spirit as a gift?” (*Lard’s Quarterly*, Oct., 1864:104).

McGarvey says that the expression means “the Holy Spirit as a gift” (*New Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* 39). There may be more, but I know of three modern versions which have interpreted the expression to mean the Holy Spirit as a gift. Most versions stick to the literal translation (“gift of the Holy Spirit”), and leave the interpretation to the readers. This is to be preferred.

This is not one of those passages that we hear commented upon in some Bible classes, “Well, it means just what it says.” The question is “What does it say?” I believe that the Holy Spirit is the “gift” to those who repent and are baptized.

Sealed by the Spirit

Two other passages shall be considered. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul says “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge” (NASB). Ephesians 1:13-14 declares that “In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance....” These passages state that God sealed the Christian “with the Holy Spirit.” The word *seal* is used in several important senses. (1) A seal authenticates a document and proves its *genuineness*; (2) it is a mark of *ownership*, and (3) it is a means of *security*. Arndt and Gingrich define and comment on the word “seal” (Greek *sphragizo*) as follows:

Mark (with a seal) as a means of identification...so that the mark which denotes ownership also carries with it the protection of the owner (see Rev. 7:3)...: This forms a basis for understanding the symbolic expression which speaks of those who enter the Christian fellowship as being sealed with or by the Holy Spirit (804).

The late T. W. Brents commented on Ephesians 1:13 in this way:

Then it follows, most certainly, that if we are now sealed with the Holy Spirit, as these Ephesians were, it takes place after, and *is something more than hearing, believing, and receiving the Word*. Their sealing was to them an earnest of their inheritance; that is, a pledge of God’s faithfulness on their part, that they “grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Eph. 4:30.” (*The Gospel Plan of Salvation* 642).

Brother Wallace argues that 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 refers to the apostles, but he overlooks that Paul identified the “we” in verse 10 as himself, Silas, and Timothy. Timothy is also included with Paul in the address (1:1).

It is our conviction that when a person obeys the gospel he is given the Holy Spirit (besides the argument above, see also Galatians 3:2 and 4:6). In this way God seals the person, in effect, saying, “This person belongs to me; let everyone take note.” The other side of the coin is that the Christian greets this reception of the Spirit as a *guarantee* (*earnest* or *pledge*) of the eternal inheritance. Let us proceed to this final point.

The Holy Spirit as Earnest

The verses cited above inform us that God gave us “the Spirit in our hearts as pledge.” The King James and American Standard versions use the word “earnest.” Just what does this word mean? Wallace disagrees with those who say the word means “down payment.” He says:

who said that the word in this text means a down payment – Paul did not say so nor teach so. Such an application is an example of stretching a figure of speech too far.

He then charges that

Those who are making the word earnest mean a *down payment* are the users of the new translations – but the new versions take out the word *earnest* and put in such words as *assurance* and *pledge* and *guarantee* – so to hold on to their *down payment* they will fall back on the old version which they have all relegated! (79).

Brother Wallace has become so obsessed with the “new Bibles” (vague enough to indict all recent translations) that he seems to deny any position which is made clearer by them. He says that the word

earnest (Greek, *arrabon*) does not mean “down payment.” Let us consider the evidence.

Arndt and Gingrich define the term *arrabon* this way:

first instalment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that pays a part of the purchase price in advance, and so secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid. . . . In any case, [arrabon] is a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments.

They translated 2 Corinthians 1:22 as “has deposited the first instalment of the Spirit in our hearts,” and commenting on Ephesians 1:14 say, “The Spirit is the first instalment” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* 109). One must keep in mind that this lexicon takes into account the usage of the word in the Greek sources and papyri as well as the New Testament. William Barclay describes this word as “the foretaste of what is to come” (*New Testament Words* 58).

See also B. F. Westcott and *The Speaker’s Bible* on Ephesians 1:14. Even A. T. Robertson, that “incomparable master and teacher of the New Testament Greek” (when I agree with him!) says that “God’s gift of the Holy Spirit is the pledge and first payment for the final inheritance in Christ” (*Word Pictures* IV:519; see also page 214).

From those who know, the evidence is overwhelming that the word *earnest* means a down payment or pledge. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, teaches the same thing and points out that a similar word in modern Greek means an engagement ring.

To restate our argument on these verses, we believe that the Holy Spirit is given to the Christian. This is God’s seal of ownership, and to us it is an *earnest* or *down payment* of the eternal inheritance which we shall receive. There is no comfort in this teaching for the advocate of the impossibility of apostasy. The Christian can “grieve” the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). In other words, we can forfeit the down payment and not receive the inheritance.

Conclusion

We believe that these considerations are sufficient to establish our case and that the other scriptures given in the beginning of the article support this conclusion. One might wish for more information concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit just as he does about the nature and existence of God and the fact of divine pardon and remission sins. We must be content with the statements of divine revelation on all of these matters. Let us seek to grow in knowledge and in appreciation of what God has done for us. And while we are teaching against extreme doctrines let us never lose sight of even one divine promise.

This article appeared in a “Special Number” of *The Gospel Guardian* (August 15, 22, 29, 1968). Later, a few changes were made and the material was published as a tract by the C. E. I. Store. The tract has been out of print for several years. You may freely copy and distribute this material in its entirety without any further permission. *The Finger of God*, our study book on the Holy Spirit, contains a lesson on this topic. The book is temporarily out of print, but we are hopeful of having it ready for distribution again soon. I am certain that my writing style would be some different today, but I have chosen to retain the old style because the article continues to reflect my understanding.

The entire special issue of *The Gospel Guardian* is currently available in Adobe PDF format at TheyYetSpeak.com. There you will be able to read several articles with differing views on the Holy Spirit.

Ferrell Jenkins provides a wide variety of Bible study material for your use at BiblicalStudies.info and at BibleWorld.com.