

Unwrapped Gifts – The Gift of the Holy Spirit

1/14/18 - Pastor Randy

"You fathers—if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! So if you, sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him." - Luke 11:11-13

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you, to your children, and to those far away—all who have been called by the Lord our God." - Acts 2:38-39

I would imagine that if I came over your house today I would not find wrapped gifts lying in your living room under a Christmas tree. Even if you are one of those people who leaves their Christmas tree up until Easter, I am certain the gifts will not still be there.

Gifts are meant to be opened and used. They look nice when they are all dressed up in wrapping paper, but an unopened gift is an unused gift, and an used gift is a wasted gift.

Over the next few weeks we will be looking at what the NT teaches us about the gifts God has given us in order to equip us to be who He has called us to be and do what He has called us to do.

Two weeks ago I shared a message intended to prepare you to overcome the giants that you will face in 2018. In that message I stressed that the giants God has committed Himself to help us overcome are those enemies that oppose us from becoming the men and women that God intends for us to be, and doing the things God has called us to do.

The NT speaks of the "gift of the Holy Spirit" and the "gifts of the Holy Spirit." The gift of the Holy Spirit refers, not to something given to us by the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit himself. The Holy Spirit is a gift to us from the Father and the Son.

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The “gifts of the Holy Spirit” refers to specific gifts that are given to us by the Holy Spirit. These gifts are various means by which the Spirit equips us to do what God has called us to do.

I. God's greatest gift to us is the gift of Himself!

Look at our opening text again. Jesus is making an argument from the lesser to the greater. If we – sinful as we are – are still loving enough to give good gifts to meet the needs of our children, then God whose love is greater than ours will give us the greatest gift, the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the primary gift. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are secondary. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of a person, not the gift of a particular ability. It is the gift of God's presence with us and in us. In each of Luke's writings, *The Gospel of Luke* and *The Acts of the Apostles*, he referred to the power that would accompany the gift of the Holy Spirit:

You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

- Luke 24:48-49

“...Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon...”

- Acts 1:4-5; 8

The Baptism in the Spirit results in spiritual power in the life of the recipient but the power is not the gift; the Holy Spirit is the gift!

II. The Gift of the Holy Spirit is an Experienced Reality.

“As I began to speak,” Peter continued, “the Holy Spirit fell on them, just as he fell on us at the beginning. Then I thought of the Lord's words when he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’ And since God gave these Gentiles the same gift he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to stand in God's way?” Acts 11:15-17

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Peter is describing what happened when he went to the home a Roman Centurion named Cornelius, who had become a worshipper of the God of the Jewish people. Peter was led supernaturally to Cornelius home to share the good news of salvation through Jesus. As Peter was sharing with them, they were filled with the Holy Spirit in a such a tangible manner that Peter described it as the Spirit “falling on them”.

The Holy Spirit was an experienced reality for NT Christians and he should be for us as well. What that means is that we know we have the Holy Spirit, not just by faith because the Bible tells us so. We know he has been given to us because we experience His presence with us. The Father and the Son sent the Spirit to us so that we would experience the presence of God. Christianity is not just good news to be believed it is good news to be experienced. What does that mean? In what sense should we experience the Holy Spirit? We should experience him speak to us in our spirit. The voice of the Spirit will never contradict anything truth revealed in God’s word. John’s gospel tells us that the work of the Holy Spirit would be to bring to our remembrance all that Jesus has taught us. The voice of the Holy Spirit convicts us when we sin, comforts us when we are hurting, and guides us in the path he wants us to go.

In Acts 16 we have a record of Paul and Silas’ second missionary journey. They wanted to go to Asia but the Holy Spirit prevented them so they went to Galatia. Then they headed north for the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit did not allow them to go there. That night Paul had a vision of a man from northern Greece pleading with him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us!” They concluded that God was calling them to preach the Good News there. When they arrived God led them to a group of women whose hearts were open to the good news and they accepted Christ.

We should not only experience the voice of the Holy Spirit, we should also experience Him working in us and through us to transform us. We should experience the Holy Spirit transforming our hearts by His love, breaking our addictions by his power, and healing our bodies and minds by His grace.

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III. The Holy Spirit's Goal is to Transform us into the Image of Christ.

"But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image." 2 Corinthians 3:16-18

The goal is not just to make bad people better and broken people whole, but to recreate us in the image of God so that God's glory will fill the earth through His people.

Jesus death and resurrection made provision for us to become one with Christ. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to make us like Christ. Because of Jesus we are accepted by the Father. Because of the Spirit we begin to look and act like our Father and Savior.

In 2 Timothy 1:7 Paul reminded Timothy that the Holy Spirit that has been given to us is not a Spirit that produces fear in us but power, love, and self-discipline. Let's look at these three:

1. Power - The Holy Spirit empowers us. When Peter was sharing the good news about Jesus at Cornelius' house he said that Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit's power. That power enables him to deliver people from the oppression of the Devil. The Holy Spirit empowers us to overcome every spiritual attack against every demonic power.

2. Self-Control – The Holy Spirit enables us to live a self-disciplined, self-controlled life. Not only does the Spirit enable us to overcome the power of the devil, He also enables us to overcome our own sinful and selfish desires. How easy is it for someone to provoke you to anger? How easily discouraged are you by life's disappointments? Do emotions such as fear cloud your ability to make good judgments. Do lust, greed, and pride dictate your decisions or can you say "No" to those passions when they are stimulated? The Spirit has been given to us to help us say "no" to our fear, lust, greed, and pride.

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3. Love – Romans 5:5 tells us that the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit *who has been given to us*.

This statement means that the Holy Spirit fills us with an awareness of God's extravagant love for us and he fills us with love for God and for others. One of the most noticeable changes I experienced when I was filled with the Holy Spirit was that I began to actually care about other people. I went from being someone who was completely self absorbed and totally unconcerned with the needs of other people to experiencing God begin to fill me with a love and a passion to serve others.

Why don't we experience the change that God has made possible for us by giving us the Holy Spirit? Because we don't unwrap the gift and put it on. The Holy Spirit is a person. He can be resisted, grieved and quenched. Being filled with the Spirit is a daily necessity that requires prayer, worship, renewing our mind on God's Word, and submitting ourselves to God's will. When we don't do these things on a daily basis we quench His power in our lives and we fall short of living with the victory He wants us to have.

None of us have arrived. We all need to press on and press in to walk with the Spirit more closely. The good news today is that the Father and the Son have sent the Spirit to fill our hearts and lives with a Christ-like love, power, and self-control. Let's unwrap the gift. Let's be good stewards of this awesome relationship we have with the Spirit and watch what he will do in us and through us in 2018.

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