

Receive the Spirit

by Coty Pinckney 10/3/08

Have you received the Holy Spirit? Are you filled with the Spirit?

While these questions look similar, biblically they are distinct.

Two weeks ago I exhorted you from Scripture to be filled with the Spirit. We need the power of the Spirit to fulfill God's purposes for us, to live the Christian life to His glory. This is true in every area of our lives, from craftsmanship to marriage. So in Ephesians 5:18 Paul exhorts those *who are already believers* to be filled with the Spirit.

But in the text we will consider the next several Sundays, Peter, speaking to those who are not yet believers, says, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and *you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38). Peter is clear: All those who repent and trust in Jesus for forgiveness will receive the Holy Spirit.

Jesus Himself says something similar in John 7:37-38. Giving a great invitation on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, He cries out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" John then explains this in the next verse. "Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him *were to receive*, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Prior to His resurrection, there were those who believed in Jesus who had not yet received the Spirit. Something changed at Pentecost. (I'll say more about this in the sermon on October 19.)

But hear Jesus' promise: Everyone who believes in Him, everyone who sees Him as the One who can meet their desires, as the One who is Himself the object of their delight and satisfaction, will receive the Spirit. That is, the Spirit will dwell in the heart of every believer. We become God's people not only in name but in character through receiving the Spirit.

Paul says the same. In Romans 8:15, speaking to believers, he says, "you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" Every believer is a child of God, adopted into His family. And we receive the Spirit as part of that adoption, testifying in our inner being that we are children of God.

Paul makes a similar point in Galatians 3:13-14. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us . . . so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith." All those in Christ, Jew or Gentile, have the Spirit.

So the question, "Have you received the Holy Spirit?" today is equivalent to the question, "Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord, Savior, and Treasure?" All who are saved have the Spirit. They continue to need the filling of the Spirit in their everyday lives, but the Spirit dwells in their hearts through faith.

Praise God for such a gift! Praise God for His plan of redemption that takes those who deserve His punishment and transforms them into temples of His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)!

The gift of the Spirit in us works greatly to our joy. But there is another purpose. Look again at John 7:37-38. We not only have the Spirit in us; He also flows *out of* us, out of every believer, as living water. Jesus' verbal picture in these verses implies that as the Spirit works in us, we become the source of true refreshment to others. God does not send His Spirit on us only for our personal joy, but also so that we might spread that joy in Him to His glory among all those we encounter.

So believe in Christ and receive His Spirit! This is God's down payment, guaranteeing all His promises to you. And He is a fountain of living water, so that you might refresh with new life all those around you. May those fountains flow!