

# Receiving the Gift of the Spirit

by Chuck Smith

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*The Holy Spirit is God's gift to believers, available to all believers in all generations, and is not a reward for being good or faithful.*

**Scripture:** Psalm 139:23-24, Jeremiah 17:9-10, Matthew 6:8, Matthew 7:7, Luke 11:13, John 20:22, Acts 2:15-17, Acts 2:37-39, Ephesians 5:18, James 4:2

**Topics:** "The Holy Spirit", "Faith and Prayer"

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## Description

Chuck Smith emphasizes the significance of receiving the Holy Spirit as a divine gift promised by God, which is available to all believers regardless of their spiritual maturity. He explains that this gift cannot be earned or deserved, but must be received through faith and prayer, encouraging believers to ask for the Holy Spirit without being hindered by feelings of unworthiness. Smith highlights the importance of recognizing God's will in our requests and the necessity of thanking Him for the gift once it is received. He reassures that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to overcome sin and be effective witnesses for Christ, rather than merely providing ecstatic experiences. Ultimately, the sermon calls for a deeper relationship with the Holy Spirit, urging believers to seek and receive this gift with confidence and gratitude.

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## Transcript

When the day of Pentecost (the feast-holiday of the Jews) had come, the disciples had been waiting in an upper room in Jerusalem. According to the command of Jesus, they had been waiting for the promise of the Father. This was the promise that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh. Their sons and daughters would prophesy; their young men would see visions; and their old men would dream dreams. And upon God's servants and handmaiden He would pour out His Spirit in those days (cf. Joel 2:28-29). So, the promise of God was fulfilled. The Holy Spirit descended upon the waiting church--about one hundred and twenty of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. There was a sound like as of a mighty, rushing wind and there were cloven tongues of fire sitting upon each of them.

The supernatural phenomena that accompanied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit drew a crowd of people who were wondering just what was going on. Some mockingly said, "Oh, they probably got some new wine someplace." And so, Peter stood up in the midst of them and he called for the people to hearken to him. He said,

For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my

Spirit upon all flesh. (Acts 2:15-17)

When Peter had concluded his message concerning Jesus Christ, His death, burial, resurrection, ascension into heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit, the people were convicted and they said,

Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (Acts 2:37-39)

The promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit is for all believers in all generations. Throughout the history of the church, the gift of the Holy Spirit is God's promise to the believers.

Now it is referred to as the gift of the Holy Spirit, and as a gift, it cannot be deserved or earned. God does not give you the gift of the Holy Spirit as a reward for being good and being faithful, or for achieving or attaining a high degree of holiness. It is not a reward. It is not given to you because you have achieved a degree of holiness for the Holy Spirit is given to you to make you holy. Every one of you tonight in your present state of spiritual development, whether you have just started on the path or you have been on it for a long time, can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is for you and it is available to you. No matter how incomplete that spiritual development might be in your life, the Holy Spirit and the gift of the Holy Spirit are God's gift for you.

One of the greatest hindrances in receiving the Holy Spirit is our looking at our own unworthiness. The minute a person begins to seek the gift of the Holy Spirit, Satan begins to point out his shortcomings and his failings. He is always condemning me. He is always telling me that I am not good enough to receive God's gifts and in a sense he is right--I am not good enough. And so, he can make a real strong point as he begins to point out my failings, my shortcomings, and my sins. And he says to me, "Look, you do not deserve it. You are not worthy of it. God does not want to do that for you because, look at you!" And he gets us looking at ourselves and there is nothing more devastating than to be honest when looking at ourselves.

It was Socrates who cried, "Know thyself. Man, know thyself." But the Bible tells us that we really cannot know ourselves because our heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Only God knows our hearts. God said, "I, the Lord, do search the hearts" (cf. Jeremiah 17:9-10). David recognized that God knew all about him. He knows more about me than I know about myself. Thus David prayed,

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me. (Psalm 139:23-24)

Lord, show me what is there in my heart. Self-knowledge is, number one, the hardest knowledge that we will ever come to realize. I mean, to know oneself is difficult. We are so clever and deceptive in trying to make people think we are something other than what we really are that we oftentimes deceive ourselves. We are so good at it, and over and over the Bible tells us not to be deceived. But not only is it the most difficult knowledge you will ever come to attain, it is also (if you should come to attain it) the most painful knowledge you will ever experience--the knowledge of self.

And so, if I listen to Satan's accusations (and he can find a lot wrong in my life), then often the result is that I listen to him saying I am not worthy. And then I do not even ask God. I get to the place where I do not

expect God to bless me because how could He bless me as imperfect as I am? And thus, many people are in the very position that James spoke about when he said, "Ye have not, because ye ask not" (James 4:2). And it is just that simple. You could have, if you would ask. But Satan, by pointing out your flaws and your weaknesses, has bullied you into not even asking; and thus, you have not because you ask not.

As a gift, it cannot be discerned or earned; it can only be received. Jesus said to His disciples, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). And when Jesus, in the seventh chapter of John, was inviting those who were thirsty to come unto Him and drink, He said, "And he that drinks of the water that I give, out of his innermost being there will flow rivers of living water." In his commentary, John said, "This spake He of the Spirit which they that believed on Him should receive" (John 7:38-39). He cannot be earned. He must be received.

When Peter and John went to Samaria to the new believers who had come to Christ through the preaching of Philip, it says, "They prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit" (Acts 8:15).

So a gift is not something that you beg for, it is something that you simply receive. The Holy Spirit is God's gift to you, in order that you might have power in your own life to overcome sin and to be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ. And He is given in order that this power working through your life might enable you to be a real witness for Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is not given to us to make us feel joyful, so that we might have an ecstatic spiritual experience. He is given to you in order that you might have power to witness for Jesus. So it is a gift (it has to be received) but you must ask for the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said, "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke 11:13). God is not going to force something on you that you do not want. There has to be that desire. God will not violate your free will. He has given you a free will. If He would violate it, then there is really no free will. So you must ask the Lord for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the Bible we are commanded to ask. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount said, "Your heavenly Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8). And then later on in the sermon He said, "Now ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened" (Matthew 7:7). We must initiate. We must ask. We must seek.

In Matthew 21:22 Jesus said,

And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

In John 14:13 He said,

And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

In John 15:16 He said,

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

And Paul said in Ephesians 3:20,

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

So God has many things for us; however, we must ask.

James tells us that we must ask in faith--nothing wavering. Now I have to confess that there are many things I ask God for that I have difficulty asking in faith. The difficulty lies in the fact that I am not certain if it is God's will. And if it really is not God's will, then I do not want it. I have an unwritten agreement with God that: "Anything I ask for in prayer, if it is not according to Your purpose and my best then, Lord, do not do it." Underwriting every prayer, this is a given. I do not have to say it--God knows that I want His will above everything else and I often offer my prayers only as suggestions. "Lord, if You are open for suggestions this is what I would like to see happen, but You do what You know is best."

I think that any man is a fool who asks with no regard to the will of God. I do not want anything that God does not want for me. And through my lifetime I have prayed earnestly and fervently for many things that I did not receive. As time went by, I realized the hand of God and I became thankful that God, in His wisdom and in His love, did not give me those things I was asking of Him. As a wise Father (knowing much more than I knew) He was helping to avert a tragedy that could have happened had He answered my prayers.

In his first epistle, John said, "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us." So when I am asking for something that I know is according to the will of God, then I have great confidence--tremendous confidence in prayer. I know this is God's will and thus, it gives me confidence because we know that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if He hears us, then we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. I mean, it is a slam dunk! If I am asking according to His will, then I have the petition that I have asked of Him.

So the issue is whether my being filled with the Holy Spirit is according to the will of God. Because the Scripture commands us actually, in Ephesians 5, "not to be drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Holy Spirit." So it is a command of God; and thus, I can be assured and I can be confident that it is God's will that I be filled with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, when I ask God for this gift of the Holy Spirit, I can be very confident that I am asking according to His will. And if we ask anything according to His will, He not only hears us, but then we have received that which we have asked of Him. And so, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him? So we ask God in faith and in confidence for the filling of the Holy Spirit.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). I think a great hindrance that many people have in asking for the Holy Spirit is that they are expecting or wanting some kind of supernatural evidence to affirm that God has answered their prayer. It seems to be very difficult to just, by faith, believe the promise of God. I want God to give me a sign. "Give me some kind of sign, Lord, that You have given me the gift of the Holy Spirit."

There seems to be a lot of "Thomas" in all of us. He said, "I will not believe until I can see the print of the nails in His hands and put my hand into His side." In other words, "You are not going to convince me. I am not going to believe until I can see it." And so, when Jesus appeared to the disciples and Thomas finally was with them, He said, "Look, Thomas, go ahead and touch it if you would like. Go ahead and feel the side here. Do not be unbelieving." And Thomas said, "Oh my Lord and my God!" And Jesus said, "You see and you believe, but blessed is he who believes though he has not seen" (cf. John 20:27-29).

Now I think that many times we are seeking some particular sign to verify that God has filled us with His Holy Spirit. And if we do get that kind of supernatural sign that we are longing for or desiring, that many times God says to us, "Well, you have had the holy tingles and you believed, but blessed are they who believe without the holy tingles"--referring to those who just take God at His word and do not require a sign.

Now we read testimonies like Dr. Finney's and we read of about waves of liquid love flowing over him until he finally cries out, "God, I do not think I can take any more. Please stop!" And I am certain it was absolutely a glorious experience for him. And we then look for some kind of similar experience. We hear others testify of their experiences and we want to have an experience that sort of correlates with theirs. And so often we are looking for signs rather than simply receiving by faith the gift of God because He has promised it--not requiring a sign.

And this would also be true for the sign of speaking in tongues. Now as you walk in the Spirit, and you develop in your relationship with the Holy Spirit, He takes over more and more of your life. It is very likely (and quite possible) that you will begin to have all kinds of glorious supernatural experiences as God's Spirit is working in your life and you are responding to that work of the Spirit.

Sometimes there is a response of weeping; and sometimes there is a response of tremendous joy and overwhelming love. And there are many different kinds of responses that we can have as we are walking in the Spirit and as we are being led by the Spirit. It is always a glorious thing to realize that God's hand was upon you (God was guiding you) and God was working His perfect plan. And when you see it, you say, "Oh the Lord was leading me." Now at the time you may not realize it, but then as the event begins to come together, suddenly you realize--"God's hand was directing me!"

Several years ago I was called to visit one of the ladies from the church here who had been in a serious car accident and had broken her back. And so, I went over to Saint Joseph's Hospital to pray for her. And there in the six-bed ward were two other ladies from my church. And so, I was able to minister to all three of them. I did not know the other two were there, but when I came in they got all excited and thought I had come to visit each of them. And so I prayed for all three ladies.

As I was leaving the room and walking back to the elevator, I was excited. I said, "Lord, I love Your efficiency." I do not know how many rooms are in Saint Joseph's Hospital--an awful lot! But here, Lord, You are so efficient. You put the three ladies from my church in the same room so that I could see three with one visit. This is great efficiency, Lord. I love it!" And I was just loving the Lord and saying, "Lord that is so wonderful."

And I got in the elevator and pushed the button for the ground floor. When the elevator opened, suddenly I looked around and I was lost! There was a nurses' station--not the lobby! And I stepped back in thinking, "Oh, somebody else probably stopped the elevator on this floor." But it said, "G"--ground floor. So I was really confused and a nurse there saw my confusion.

She said, "Are you looking for the lobby?"

I said, "Yes, what did they do with it?"

She said, "Well, you took the service elevator."

And I looked up at the service elevator, "Employees Only" sign. I said, "Oh, I am sorry." I said, "I was not paying any attention upstairs."

She said, "That is all right."

I said, "Well, how do I get to the lobby."

She said, "Very simple--just go down there to the first hallway, turn right and then you will turn right again and you will be in the lobby."

I said, "Thank you."

And I was going on my way thinking what a stupid mistake, but as I turned down this little corridor, there was a girl standing and weeping. And she looked up and she screamed, "Chuck!" And she came running up and just began to sob almost hysterically. And I finally got her calmed enough and I said, "What is wrong? What can I do? Tell me. Let us pray. But tell me what can we do? What can we pray for?"

And she said, "Chuck, my dearest friend in the whole world (the man who led me to Jesus Christ) is this very moment having brain surgery." She said, "This man is such a wonderful Christian. He has been a missionary over in Africa and they sent him home to have this surgery. And the doctors give him very little hope for being able to walk again. The brain tumor has already affected his walking ability and they feel that..." And she said, "I cannot bear the thought of such a beautiful man of God being crippled." She said, "I am just devastated!"

And so, we prayed together and I gave her some Scriptures, pointing her to Jesus. And she said, "I was so desperate. I was just here praying, 'God I cannot handle this. Please send someone along to help me--to pray with me.'" And she said, "I looked up and here you came walking down the corridor!"

And, you know, the light went on! It was not a stupid mistake. I suddenly had that rush--"God's hand is on me." He is leading me by His Spirit. It was that exciting feeling of God directing me. God's hand was on me and talk about a rush! Talk about an exciting thing--the realization that God used me! It got me so excited upstairs about His efficiency that I was not paying any attention to signs on elevators. If I had gotten in the main elevator, I would have been out the lobby and gone. But He had to get me in this other corridor, in order to meet the need of this young girl who was crying out of desperation to God for help.

So, as you walk in the Spirit and as you continue in the things of the Spirit, you will have exciting experiences that will thrill you to the core of your being. You will have blessed experiences and you will see the power of God and you will see the various manifestations of the Spirit. It is always thrilling to be a part of what God is doing.

But that is not the proof that you have the Holy Spirit. And that is not what we are to look for-- these ecstatic kind of experiences. We just want more of God and we want Him to have more of us. "Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit." And as you ask, then you receive by faith.

And you should then begin to properly thank Him for this gift. I mean, it is being quite ungrateful when someone gives you such a glorious gift and you go without thanking him. And as you begin to thank Him, many times that is when a person takes the position of faith--like Abraham.

He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. (Romans 4:20)

As you begin to give glory to God and give thanks to Him for His glorious gift of the Holy Spirit, when you have asked according to His will, then you have received that which you have desired of Him. And thus, if you ask for the Holy Spirit, it is according to His will. So it would only be proper for you to begin to thank the Lord for the power of the Spirit and for the filling of the Spirit. And it is in that position of thanksgiving through faith that so often people begin to then experience some of those supernatural, glorious ecstasies of the power of God in a very real way in their life. It is yours. It is a gift. God has given it to you. Ask Him and then receive and begin to thank Him and praise Him.

Shall we pray?

Father, how we thank You for the Holy Spirit and that You did not leave us comfortless orphans. You sent the Holy Spirit that He might abide with us; that He might indwell us; that He might lead us and empower us. Lord, we need all those things. We need the presence. We need the power. We need the leading of the Holy Spirit. Lord, it is our desire to walk in the Spirit so that we would not fulfill the lusts or desires of our flesh. The flesh life is very strong, Lord--only Your Spirit is stronger. And so, fill us with Your Spirit; in order that we would forsake the flesh and not obey the desires of it, but obey the Spirit. And so, Lord, we need it. We desire it. And we ask for Your Holy Spirit tonight to come and to fill us until we overflow and there pours forth from our lives rivers of living water. Lord, we thank You. We receive now and we give thanks to You Lord. As we yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit and to the power of the Spirit, Lord, we just give thanks now for this glorious gift whereby we might better serve You. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You, Lord.

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