

Spirit of Confusion Part 2 Kyle Click

To say there is a misunderstanding about the Holy Spirit would be an understatement.

The issue in the churches of Christ today stems from a reaction to the extreme views of the Pentecostals and miraculous healing. This has caused brethren to view the Holy Spirit to be detached and uninvolved. In our last article, we discussed the idea of who the Holy Spirit is and what He does, past, present, and future as described in the Bible. Now that we understand who the third person of the godhead is, let's break down the two most common views of the Holy Spirit's operation in us today that are found in the Lord's church.

These two views reflect on what does the "gift of the Holy Spirit" mean? This question is based on Acts 2:38, "Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." The first view is commonly held in Bible Belt congregations and explains that the "gift" is the Holy Spirit which is miraculous in nature and is given by the laying of the apostle's hands. This argument says Acts 1 & 2 are only talking to the apostles and the Christians who were there at Pentecost. Because of this understanding of Scripture, the Holy Spirit does not literally indwell us today but is in the Word only. This argument uses Acts 2:1-4 as evidence that this is speaking only to apostles. The brethren who hold this view make sure that it gives no room for Pentecostalism. If this position is true, then it is saying that Acts 2:38 is only three-quarters applicable: repentance, baptism, and forgiveness, omitting the gift of the Holy Spirit for Christians today.

The other common view is the personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. This view believes that the Holy Spirit indwells Christians today. The "gift of the Holy Spirit" is the Holy Spirit Himself and is a seal or a pledge for the one who obeys the gospel, (2 Corinthians 5:5, Ephesians 1:14). To sum up this idea nicely brother Mike Vestal puts it this way "We become Christians by lovingly obeying the truth in repentance and baptism at which point He forgives us of our sins and gives us the non-miraculous Holy Spirit in a non-supernatural way as an assurance that God will give us the inheritance."

In conclusion, the Holy Spirit is a subject where many brethren have differing views. Whether Biblical or not, it can be a heated topic in the brotherhood. However, the gift of the Holy Spirit is a promise of God and promises have nothing to do with salvation. We don't have to fully understand a promise of God to receive it and not understanding does not make a Christian not right with God. We cannot let this divide the brotherhood and become a fellowship issue. We are all baptized into Christ and members of His one church for which Jesus died. We must not divide over promises God has made because if one is a true New Testament Christian, one will receive the promise whether they understand it or not. "Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment" 1 Corinthians 1:10.

