

The Holy Spirit: Who Receives It, and Why?

Who receives the holy spirit, and why is it given?

Of course it is God who decides who will be given the holy spirit. So how does God decide? The Bible, in Acts 5:32, answers the question:

"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:32)

God gives His spirit to those who obey Him. How do we obey God? What does God tell us to do?

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30)

So, what does repent mean? Just have faith? Confess or admit your sins? Admit and feel sorry for your sins? No. God wants us to both confess and turn from sin. If we'll choose to do that, we're promised His mercy:

"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13)

If we'll come to repentance, choosing to turn from sin and from a life lived apart from God, seeking to do God's will instead, our past sins will be erased:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, NKJV).

Our sins separate us from God, and also earn us perishing, in death, as the "wages" of our sin:

"Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear:
But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." (Isaiah 59:1,2)

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

In repentance those past sins are "blotted out," erased, so they no longer separate us from God. In repentance a person has been "purged from his old sins" (2 Peter 1:9); we have "remission of sins that are past" (Romans 3:25).

In repentance we also have redemption: we are no longer condemned to perish for our past sins. On the cross, Jesus made His death available to cover our death penalty. We can have that coverage, that mercy, that grace, that *redemption* IF we'll come to repentance. Otherwise we'll perish, paying our own death penalty. That's why Jesus warned, "**except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish**" (Luke 13:5).

In repentance, we are no longer separated from God and no longer under condemnation. We are made right or justified or reconciled with God. Now we can begin a new life - "times of refreshing" - in "the presence of the Lord" as we read earlier in Acts 3:19:

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19, NKJV).

So how are we in the presence of the Lord? Through the gift of the holy spirit, given to those who obey and come God on His terms, in repentance. The apostle Peter connected the dots this way:

"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." (Acts 2:38)

So, what's the gift of the holy spirit for? Because we've chosen to begin a new life we are given the holy spirit to help us along the way. The holy spirit will show us the truth, and will help us lead a new life, leading us out of slavery to sin. As long as we choose to be led, Jesus and the Father will lead us and dwell in us through the holy spirit. Jesus says:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." (Jesus, in Revelation 3:19)

The holy spirit is God - The Father and Jesus - dwelling in us:

"And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:16-18)

Jesus and the Father will make their home, their abode, with us:

"Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John 14:23)

A relationship with Him "yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Hebrews 12:11).

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:13,14)

The apostle Paul wrote about becoming a "new man":

"But ye have not so learned Christ; If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;
And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;
And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:20-24)

Why follow the lead of the holy spirit? What is the point in overcoming slavery to sin and being "created in righteousness and true holiness"?

God will not have slaves to sin in His eternal kingdom:

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Corinthians 6:9,10)

God wants family, sons and daughters, to live with Him forever. Creation is not finished: those sons and daughters are being created right now. He is the potter, we are the clay. Anyone who abides in Him in repentance will be made ready to receive salvation. They are promised the gift of eternal life - and will inherit the kingdom of God - at Jesus' return as Paul described in 1 Corinthians 15:50-54.

Meanwhile in this mortal life those who remain in justification have the hope of salvation:

"But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.
For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 5:8,9).

Those who have entered justification shall be saved through a relationship with Jesus:

"Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (Paul, in Romans 5:9)

We are instructed - required - to be overcomers:

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." (Revelation 21:7)

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (Revelation 2:11)

"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (Revelation 3:5)

We remain in justification as we abide in Him and continue in repentance, following the lead He provides through the holy spirit. While we are in justification, we are treated or regarded as righteous: His righteousness is imputed or credited toward us.

We have free will, and can choose to no longer abide in Him, returning to a life of sin. In that case we are no longer justified to God. We have fallen away, even after receiving the holy spirit. We have "[failed of the grace of God](#)":

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" (Hebrews 12:14,15)

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Hebrews 6:4-6)

"If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." (Jesus, in John 15:6)

Peter wrote that we must "give diligence to make our calling and election sure":

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:10,11)

We have this warning:

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews 4:1)