

*Tom's Pen*

*Articles On The Holy Spirit*

*"The Mission And Medium Of The Holy Spirit  
A Needed Book for Today*

by Tom Wacaster

After having re-read brother Wallace's excellent treatise, *The Medium and Mission of the Holy Spirit*, I was astonished at the relevance of the subject matter, and the simplicity with which brother Wallace set forth a defense of the correct means and medium of the work of the Holy Spirit upon the spirit of man. Thirty years ago the church faced a wave of emotionalism which swept across the brotherhood like a wildfire. Before it had completed its ruinous campaign, a number of congregations had been swept into Pentecostalism and lost to the cause of Christ altogether. The residual effects of that movement are still felt today, and I fear that we have not finished the battle on this front even yet. Assessing the problem, brother Wallace wrote: "It is argued that this special activity of the Holy Spirit in the form of direct impression 'illuminates' the scriptures and helps the preacher to understand 'the written word.'" The problem with that position, both then and now, is seen in the consequences of the doctrine itself. Brother Wallace stated it well: "It has been declared with dramatics that this indwelling of the Holy Spirit apart from the Word is in fact mystical but that it does not imply that the Word is incomplete and insufficient - but it does imply just that, from it no other inference can be drawn - and the two statements are contradictory and irreconcilable ... The conclusion of the whole matter is that no one claiming the personal indwelling or illumination of the Holy Spirit can express a truth, or a true thought or sentiment, on the subject of spiritual influence not already revealed in the written word." The unfortunate aspect of this "not-so-new" movement among our brethren is the reliance upon personal experience and/or gentle "leadings" or "nudgings" that accompany us along life's journey. Brother Wallace made this astute observation: "In the nature of things it is impossible for spirit to contact spirit without medium, except through miraculous process, as upon the prophets of God and the apostles of Christ, and to assert it now is to assume inspiration. The influence of the Holy Spirit is either by direct entrance into the heart or it is mediated by the truth - there is no third method thinkable or possible - nor can it be both. The appeal must be made to the Word of God itself, as the source of revealed truth, on this and all other questions." Herein, we think, lies the great challenge to those who would espouse a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the spirit of man. There are only two ways by which the Holy Spirit can influence men. One of these is what we

might call the immediate. By immediate, we mean there is no intermediary, no medium. The other is the mediate, or through some intervening medium or agent. That being the case, those who would argue for some direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon man must, by necessity, concede to a direct expression and guidance as well. If not why not? No, my friends, the Holy Spirit does not operate upon you, or anyone else, directly. His medium is the word. It does no good to argue that the Word is the medium for information, and then some direct operation upon the spirit of man in an immediate way for strength or wisdom. If that were the case, then once I had a knowledge of God's will in my life, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on my spirit in supplying strength and wisdom would be perfect and absolute. In the final analysis, whose fault would it be if I had the information, but not sufficient strength and wisdom to resist temptation? Would not the fault lie at the feet of the Holy Spirit? Can you not see the danger of such a position? We happen to think brother Wallace is right on target. He concludes: "The personal inhabitation of the Holy Spirit would mean personal Holy Spirit guidance in thoughts, words, and deeds, the logical consequence of which would necessarily prohibit and prevent apostasy, making it impossible for one so possessed to fall from grace.... If it is not true the indwelling of the Holy Spirit would be of no aid or help in the time of temptation but would abandon one at the time of his fall to re-enter him after his recovery - in him and out of him, entering and re-entering him. Else the personal Holy Spirit possession is ineffectual in that he fails the indwelling subject in the hour of need."

## *What Is The Gift Of The Holy Spirit?*

by Tom Wacaster

In the previous article we examined the medium by which the Holy Spirit operates. He does not, in my estimation, operate directly upon the spirit of man, whether that man is a Christian or a non-Christian. It seems to me that if the Holy Spirit operates only through the word for the non-Christian, but supplements His operation on the non-Christian with some "extra-literary" operation, then the Word of God is more powerful for the non-Christian than for the Christian. If not, why not? We have taught for years that the word of God is all sufficient. I want now to give some consideration to the gift of the Holy Spirit, as noted in Acts 2:38 wherein Peter states, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Brethren have held differing positions on the precise meaning of the phrase without causing division in the body. This was possible because we generally recognized and taught the all sufficiency of the word. Still, the question remains as to the meaning of the words presently before us, and perhaps one more article on the subject cannot hurt. I do not happen to believe that the promise here was some personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The phrase, "of the Holy Spirit" is the possessive case. The word "of" makes it possessive. When we speak of the "house of Mr. Smith," we do not mean the house that IS Mr. Smith. The language in Acts 2:38 is equivalent to saying, "The Holy Spirit's gift." The same kind of language is used in John 4:10, "If thou knewest the gift of God...thou wouldst have asked him, and he would have given thee living water." Is the gift of God there God Himself, or the "living water"? Again, in Ephesians 4:7 Paul said, "But unto each of us was the grace given according to

the measure of the gift of Christ." But none would argue that Paul, in that passage, was arguing that Jesus is the gift. The passages just quoted are identical in structure with "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38. Brother Foy E. Wallace was correct when he pointed out, "The 'dorea of God' [gift of God, TW] in John 4:10 was that which proceeded from God... The dorea of Christ [gift of Christ, TW] was that which proceeded from Christ...On precisely the same premise the dorea of the Holy Spirit [gift of the Holy Spirit, TW] was that which proceeded from the Holy Spirit. Those who argue that "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is in the objective genitive, and therefore refer to the Holy Spirit Himself as the gift, have not, in my estimation, proven their case. A. T. Robertson, respected Greek scholar, pointed out that the "genitive" is the simple possessive. By "genitive" we mean a NOUN functioning as an ADJECTIVE! If we say, "That is Tom's office," the word "Tom" [a noun] is serving as an adjective. "The gospel of John," has "John" serving as an adjective to modify the gospel. The "accusative" in any language denotes the goal toward which the action of the verb is directed. In the phrase "gift of the Holy Spirit," the accusative is "gift," that is the object - that thing which they would receive. "Holy Spirit" is the possessive or genitive, modifying the "gift." Grammatically, in the verse under consideration, "receive" is the verb, "gift" is the objective, and "Holy Spirit" is the possessive modifier. Brother Wallace has correctly pointed out that "it is outside the range of grammatical structure to have the verb 'receive' governing both the accusative noun 'gift' and the possessive genitive noun of 'Spirit.'" The "gift of God" in John 4:10, being in the possessive genitive cannot mean that God Himself is the gift. The "gift of Christ" in Ephesians 4:7 cannot mean Christ Himself for the same reason. Why then, do we think that the "gift of the Holy Spirit," which has precisely the same construction as both of our examples, means that it refers to the Holy Spirit Himself? One position is that the "gift" in Acts 2:38 is synonymous with the "promise" in Acts 2:39. Since the "promise" has to do with salvation, it is concluded that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the gift of salvation which the Holy Spirit bestows upon those who are obedient. While I do not happen to agree with him, the late brother Foy Wallace, Sr. presented and defended this position in his book, *The Mission and Medium of the Holy Spirit*.

Another position holds that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" is the miraculous element promised to the early church. This, I believe, to be the correct position. It must be remembered that the promise by Peter unto that audience was given in the 1st Century, not the 21st. In addition, that promise was given in the framework of the miraculous. Holy Spirit baptism was in evidence, as well as tongue speaking. The audience was witnessing the exercise of the miraculous even at the time the promise was given. With that in mind, please consider the following reasons for holding this position.

First, consider the word "receive." This same word is used throughout the NT where the miraculous activity of the Holy Spirit was evident. This word is used in John 7:39, a passage that is quite obviously a promise of the miraculous operation of the Spirit. It is used in John 20:22, where Jesus promises the apostles the reception of the HS. It is used in Acts 8:15-17 in which Peter and John went to Samaria to impart the miraculous gifts to the new converts there. It is used in Acts 19 where Paul inquired as to whether or not those brethren had "received" the Holy Spirit. John, in 1 John 2:27, referred to his audience's "anointing" which they had "received," a passage that obviously refers to the spiritual gifts. Since Peter, in Acts 2:38, promises them that they shall "receive the gift of the Holy Spirit," it would seem that we could learn the meaning of his words by comparing them with those passages mentioned above. Admittedly the more difficult passage of all of these is Acts 2:38, as evidenced from the different positions that

brethren have held through the years. By giving consideration to those passages that quite obviously speak of the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit, and using them to help us interpret the more difficult passage, in this instance Acts 2:38, it would seem that the only logical conclusion would be that Acts 2:38 speaks of the same measure of the Holy Spirit, i.e. the miraculous. We conclude, therefore, that the promise in Acts 2:38 has a reference to the miraculous element promised to the early church.

Second, the precise expression “gift of the Holy Spirit” occurs only twice in the Bible: here in Acts 2:38 and again in Acts 10:45, at the household of Cornelius. The second passage is without doubt the miraculous reception of the Holy Spirit, experienced by Cornelius and his household. Using the clear and unmistakable passage in which the “gift of the Holy Spirit” refers to the miraculous, we then use that to determine the meaning of the same phrase in the more difficult passage, Acts 2:38.

Third, there is the word “gift.” It is interesting that this word gift (dorean) is used in Acts 8:20 to refer to the miraculous workings of the HS. Then, in Acts 10:45, it is used to refer to that which came upon the household of Cornelius. In Ephesians 3:7 Paul speaks of the “working of his power” granted unto him “according to the gift of that grace of God.” Was Paul simply referring there to some “ordinary personal indwelling”? We think not. In Ephesians 4:7 Paul uses the same Greek word “gift” to refer to the miraculous measure of the HS. If the “gift” in other passages refers to the miraculous, why not in Acts 2:38?

Someone might respond, “Well, if that promise in Acts 2:38 is the miraculous, then we ought to have miraculous powers today?” But in Mark 16:17-20 our Lord promised that certain “signs would follow them that believe.” We have recognized that this promise was limited to the first century church. It was not a universal, on-going promise. Why can we not see, therefore, that the same limitations that apply to Mark 16:17-20 also apply to Acts 2:38? The miraculous gifts were bestowed through the laying-on-of-hands of the apostles (Acts 8:18). On Pentecost, the apostles were present, ready to distribute to the church that “gift” which would enable them to powerfully preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The setting, the use of the words “receive” and “gift,” along with the very purpose of miracles themselves, leads me to the conclusion that this “gift of the Holy Spirit.”