

How You Can Have and Keep the Holy Spirit

Rod Reynolds

As recorded in Scripture, the Holy Spirit was given to the Church of God on the day of Pentecost following the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues [languages, as each listener heard the message in his own language, verse 6], as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:1-4).

This was obviously a special manifestation of the Holy Spirit, as the phenomena mentioned is not typical of the giving of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Later that day, preaching to a crowd gathered for the Feast, Peter said: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Then it says, “Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:41).

There's no indication here that when these people were baptized and received the Holy Spirit the same type of phenomena occurred as is described in the first few verses of Acts 2. Although on occasion the giving of the Holy Spirit **may be** accompanied by unusual signs, such as speaking or hearing someone speak in a foreign language, **that is not normally the case.**

However, the Holy Spirit does effect a change in character, in one's mind and heart, when it is granted as a down payment of eternal life. “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of **power and of love and of a sound mind**” (2 Timothy 1:7).

With the help of the Holy Spirit, one can begin to overcome the fleshly nature and live according to the righteous requirements of God's laws. “For what the law [i.e., Old Covenant] could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, **that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.** For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For **to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace**” (Romans 8:3-6).

The fruits of the Holy Spirit are not manifested in eccentric behavior, losing control of oneself, fainting, weird dancing, speaking unintelligible gibberish, or other nonsense. “But the **fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.** Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-25).

“...for the **fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth**” (Ephesians 5:9).

In other words, the Holy Spirit can help you overcome the lusts of the flesh, and live in accordance with God's standards of behavior, as defined in his word (cf. Romans 12:21). "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son" (Revelation 21:7; cf. Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 25; 3:5, 12, 21).

What does it take to receive the Holy Spirit? And once received, can it be lost? In this article we examine the question of how you can have and keep the Holy Spirit.

(1) Repent.

A necessary condition for receiving the Holy Spirit is repentance. Repentance in this context means to turn from rebellion and disobedience to God, and humble yourself before God and his law, and begin to obey. "...sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). Only those who come to understand what sin is, and who determine to strive to rid their lives of sin with God's help, may receive the Holy Spirit in the sense of becoming new creature, undergoing a life changing reformation that leads to growing into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

"Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, '**Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**'" (Acts 2:37-38).

Genuine repentance requires a change of mind and heart, and turning from sinful conduct to that which is righteous, that is, lawful according to God's word (Ezekiel 18:1-32; 33:7-20; 2 Peter 2:21).

(2) Set your goal and pursue it.

As a Christian, your number one goal ought to be the kingdom of God, and his righteousness: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

When you repent and are baptized, you are entering into a covenant relationship with God. Typified by the Old Covenant with Israel, entering into this covenant implies faith toward God and obedience to his laws.

Through Moses, God told the people of Israel after he brought them out of Egypt: "Now therefore, **if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant**, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And **you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel" (Exodus 19:5-6).

After speaking the words of the ten commandments from Mt. Sinai, God gave further details of his law to Moses, and Moses recited the law of the covenant to the people. And the people,

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having heard, responded: "**All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient**" (Exodus 24:7).

However, the physical people of Israel failed to remain faithful to the covenant. On the whole, they persistently refused to obey God as they had promised, although there were notable exceptions. So God rejected them eventually, and they were sent into captivity (Nehemiah 9:13-37; 2 Kings 17:15-20).

Similar but **better promises** are granted to spiritual Israel—the Church of God—under the New Covenant, of which the Old Covenant was a type. "But now He [Jesus Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a **better covenant, which was established on better promises**. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. Because **finding fault with them**, He says: 'Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because **they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them**, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will **put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people**" (Hebrews 8:6-10). Writing to the Church Peter wrote: "You also, as living stones, are **being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2: 5).

But the Church, the individual members and the body as a whole, also must remain faithful to their commitment, in order to remain under God's grace. "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, **if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off**" (Romans 11:22).

Keeping your commitments, keeping your word, is one of the most important lessons you can learn in life. And this is especially true of the commitment you make or made to God at the time of your conversion and baptism.

Speaking in a parable to some of the Jewish leaders who opposed him, Jesus said, "A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, "Son, go, work today in my vineyard." He answered and said, "I will not," but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, "I go, sir," but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?' They said to Him, 'The first.' Jesus said to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you'" (Matthew 21:28-31).

When we said "yes" to the terms of the covenant with God that leads to salvation, we agreed to put God first in our lives, to put seeking his kingdom first, seeking his righteousness first, ahead of all other considerations.

That then, ought to be your number one goal in life. Every day, every hour, every minute, that goal ought to be, if not in the forefront of your mind, at least in the back of your mind, and it ought to be the number one force and motivation for how you live your life.

That leads us to the next point:

(3) Seek God daily.

In order to have a meaningful and productive relationship with God you must commune with him on a daily basis. You do that largely through Bible study, prayer, fasting, and striving to put into practice the principles of God's word.

The words of God themselves are a manifestation of his Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). By daily Bible study you may drink in of God's Spirit. Peter wrote, "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby**" (1 Peter 2:1-2).

Jesus promised that he and the Father would dwell in those who keep his word. You must know God's word and be mindful of it if you are to keep it. "If anyone loves Me," said Jesus, "**he will keep My word**; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14:23-24).

Berea was a city in Macedonia about 45 miles west of Thessalonica. It is said of those who heard Paul preach the gospel there, "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and **searched the Scriptures daily** to find out whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

David wrote, "Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; **But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night** (Psalms 1:1-2).

David also wrote, "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice" (Psalms 55:17).

Paul wrote, "Pray without ceasing," meaning daily (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul wrote to Timothy, "...without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day" (2 Timothy 1:3).

We need to be mindful continually of our need for ongoing repentance, striving to overcome the flesh and the world, and make a habit of seeking God in daily Bible study, and prayer. Also, we should set aside time on occasion to humble ourselves to God in fasting. These tools are very important to maintaining the Spirit of God and growing spiritually.

(4) Walk in faith.

We've already touched on faith and being faithful. But the importance of faith to having and retaining the Holy Spirit is difficult to over emphasize. Repentance, faith, and the other points we are covering in this article all go hand-in-hand.

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Paul summed up his work in Asia (Asia Minor) in the following words, as he spoke of himself, "Testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, **repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ**" (Acts 20:21).

Faith is a fundamental aspect of godly character. Without faith, godly faith, you cannot please God. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

The people of the physical nation of Israel failed in fulfilling their calling because they, most of them, lacked faith. Speaking of the Israelites of old, Paul wrote: "For indeed **the gospel was preached to us as well as to them**; but the word which they heard did not profit them, **not being mixed with faith in those who heard it**" (Hebrews 4:2).

Jude reminds us that the people who fell in the wilderness, not having received the promised land, met destruction because they lacked faith. "But I want to remind you, though you once knew this, that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe" (Jude 1:5). The word translated "believe" is πιστεύω (*pisteúō*), which means to have faith, or to believe. Faith is a firm belief. We must believe the testimony of God's word if we are to please God and if we are to have and maintain the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit of God is given us through faith. Without faith we are dead in our sins, under the curse of the law, which requires the penalty of death for our sins. But we can be forgiven and receive the promise of the Spirit of God through faith, that is, a firm and committed belief in God and his Word.

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13-14).

The promise of God's kingdom is to those who are of faith. "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all" (Romans 4:16).

Faith and the Holy Spirit go hand in hand. Faith comes by hearing the word of God with a believing heart. "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). "... **faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God**" (Romans 10:17).

Read and study God's word daily, let it inspire, motivate and guide you. Practice living by the Word of God in believing faith.

If we fail to have or maintain godly faith, we also are in danger of losing out on the promises of the Kingdom of God, just as those who fell in the wilderness not having received the promise.

Paul wrote to Timothy: "Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in **faith**, in purity. **Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.** [The gift includes the Holy Spirit, as well as the office in the ministry to which Timothy was ordained.] Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. **Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you**" (1 Timothy 4:12-16).

(5) Obey God.

Many deceivers have come teaching that faith and obedience are somehow antithetical to one another. That if you have faith, you need not concern yourself with obedience.

But in fact, faith and obedience go hand in hand. You can have the Holy Spirit only if you believe God, as we've seen, and only if your faith is a genuine faith which is manifested in how you live your life, in other words, in your obedience to God's commandments.

When Paul testified of his work before King Agrippa, in defense of himself against some Jewish accusers, he said: "But [I] declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, **that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance**" (Acts 26:20).

John the Baptist said to some who had come to be baptized, "Therefore **bear fruits worthy of repentance**, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:8-10). The Bible in Basic English translation renders verse 8 as follows: "Let your change of heart be seen in your works." And God's Word to the Nations translation: "Do those things that prove you have turned to God and have changed the way you think and act" (Matthew 3:8). John Gill comments on the verse as follows: "If you have a proper sense of sin, and true repentance for it, do such works as are suitable to it, and will show the genuineness of it" (*John Gill's Expositor*).

Disobedience to God is a manifestation of a lack of faith, and an unfaithful spirit: "Give ear, O my people, to my law; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old, Which we have heard and known, And our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from their children, Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done. For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, That they may **set their hope in God**, And not forget the works of God, But **keep His commandments; And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God**" (Psalm 78:1-8).

The Spirit of God is called the “Spirit of truth,” which abides with those who keep the commandments of God.

Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom [which] the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him [it] nor knows Him [it]; but you know Him [it], for He [or it] dwells with you and will be in you” (John 14:15-17; the pronouns in verse 17 in the original referring to the Holy Spirit are all neuter, see our articles, “What Is the Holy Spirit,” and “Origins of the Trinity,” for more on these subjects).

God gives the gift of the Holy Spirit as a down payment on eternal life, only to those who obey him. The apostles testified to their persecutors: “And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom [which] God has given to **those who obey Him**” (Acts 5:32).

“Has given” is translated from an aorist form of the Greek word δίδωμι (*didōmi*), which should be translated in this case “gives.” God gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey him. In the Concordant version this verse is translated, “We are witnesses to these declarations, as well as the holy spirit which God **gives** to those yielding to him.”

One who willfully disobeys God's laws is placing a barrier between himself and God, and may not receive, or may not retain indefinitely, the Holy Spirit.

(6) Stir up the Spirit.

We are warned, “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19).

There are various ways in which one might “quench” the Spirit, that is suppress it or lose it entirely.

One way is simple neglect, failing to do the things we've been talking about that cultivate, nurture and strengthen the Spirit of God dwelling in us.

We've already read the Scripture in 1 Timothy 4:14, “**Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership.**”

Jesus said, “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for **our lamps are going out.**’ But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came

also, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open to us!' But he answered and said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:1-13). Oil is one of the symbols used in Scripture for the Holy Spirit (cf. Exodus 28:41; Psalm 89:20; 133:2; Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38).

In Hebrews we read: "Therefore **we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.** For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, **how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him,** God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Hebrews 2:1-4).

Hence Paul wrote to Timothy: "Therefore I remind you to **stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind**" (2 Timothy 1: 6-7).

Jesus Christ warned the Ephesian Church, and this same warning can apply to us: "Nevertheless I have this against you, that **you have left your first love.** Remember therefore from where you have fallen; **repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place--unless you repent**" (Revelation 2:4-5).

And to the Laodiceans, and this warning is for us as well, Jesus said: "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing"--and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked--I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'" (Revelation 3:14-22).

(7) Never quit.

When we entered into the covenant with God when we were baptized, it was a lifetime agreement, likened to a marriage covenant in the Scriptures.

"Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives? For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be

called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another-- to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:1-6).

If we turn from the commandments to a life of sin and rebellion, we will lose the Holy Spirit, and come under condemnation.

Speaking of those who, once converted, turn aside, Peter wrote: "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'" (2 Peter 2:20-22).

"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25).

"See that you do not refuse Him who speaks [Jesus Christ]. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven" (Hebrews 12:25).

"Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of **endurance**, so **that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise:** For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him. But **we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul**" (Hebrews 10:35-39).

If we remain faithful to our commitment to God, we can retain the Holy Spirit, and we can reap the rewards of the faithful in God's Kingdom.

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