



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#172)
Empowered by the Holy Spirit

HOW can we be HOLY?

- ✓ There is **NOTHING** in our nature that makes it possible. Our natural inclinations are to be the **OPPOSITE** of holy.
- ✓ It is the **Holy Spirit** who makes us holy. Without him, we are nothing.

God chose you ... to be saved. You are saved **by the Spirit** making you **holy** and by your faith in the truth.
2 Thessalonians 2:13b (ERV)

[You] have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **through the sanctifying work of the Spirit**, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood ...
1 Peter 1:2 (NIV)

- ✓ Many aspects of our salvation have a direct **connection to the Spirit's work**.

But you were **washed**, you were **sanctified**, you were **justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and **by the Spirit** of our God.
1 Corinthians 6:11b (NIV)

- ✓ Having the Holy Spirit within us **is a matter of life and death!**

But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are **controlled by the Spirit** if you have the **Spirit** of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the **Spirit** of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)

... you have no obligation to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you live by its dictates, you will die. But if through **the power of the Spirit** you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are **led by the Spirit** of God are children of God.
Romans 8:9, 12b-14 (NLT)

The Holy Spirit – the gift from God.

... the **Holy Spirit**, who has been **given to us**.
Romans 5:5b (GW)

... the **promised Holy Spirit**, ...
Ephesians 1:13b (NIV)

The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that **the gift** of the **Holy Spirit** had been poured out on the Gentiles, too.
Acts 10:45 (NLT); see also Acts 11:15.

(See also Acts 8:18-23: The Holy Spirit cannot be *purchased*.)

There are a few more passages that tell us it's a **gift** from God, and that it's not deserved or worked for. But *the greater emphasis is on our responsibility*. (Some passages mention *both*.)

POWER ... FROM GOD TO US ... FOREVER!

- ✓ When Jesus was about to leave, he said that he would send the **Spirit, who would never leave**.

And I will ask the Father, and he will **give** you another advocate to help you and **be with you forever**—the **Spirit** of truth.
John 14:16-17a (NIV)

- ✓ For all eternity, there will **never be a time when we cease to be dependent on the Spirit for our power!**

... this **all-surpassing power** is from God and not from us.
2 Corinthians 4:7b (NIV)



WE WILL NEVER BE UNPLUGGED FROM OUR POWER SOURCE – THE SPIRIT!

Do you want this power source, this gift? Do you want the Holy Spirit?

⇒ The Bible tells us **how to RECEIVE the Spirit**, and **how to REPEL the Spirit**.

We will start with: How to RECEIVE the Spirit.

- ⇒ From the "**God's sovereignty**" perspective, we have learned that it is a **gift** from God. We will never be able to boast that we earned it, or in any way deserve it. But we can take comfort in knowing that God will not take back what he has given.
- ⇒ From the "**Human responsibility**" perspective, we will see that there is a **connection** between receiving this gift (or *not* receiving it) and what *we* do. We cannot justify laziness or stubbornness, but must actively **choose** to rely on God for it. For those who's salvation is genuine (i.e., a genuine heart-change has occurred), there will be an **ongoing** desire to live under the Spirit's control. (Fakes can have a **temporary** desire, perhaps fed by emotion or expectation of a reward.)

What must we do, to RECEIVE the Holy Spirit?

As always, context is important.

These verses include: (1) a general statement, (2) issues related to salvation and obeying Jesus, and (3) special situations that might not be repeated in *our* context today.

A GENERAL STATEMENT.

- ✓ **Given to those who ask.** It's definitely *undeserved!* It's also a *gift* from God. (Other things may be implied by the asking, such as a willingness to *trust* God for it.)

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the **Holy Spirit** to those who *ask* him?"

Luke 11:13 (CSB)

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RELATED TO SALVATION.

Salvation concepts are mentioned in the context of all of these verses:

- ✓ **Repentance and baptism.** (More verses about baptism later.)

Peter replied, "**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the *gift* of the **Holy Spirit**."

Acts 2:38 (NIV)

- ✓ **Obeying God.** The context includes: (1) the Good News about Jesus, repentance and forgiveness, as well as (2) the statement "We must obey God rather than people" (= the reason they kept on telling others the Good News).

"... the **Holy Spirit**, whom God has given to those who *obey* him."

Acts 5:32b (GW)

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- ✓ **Responding to the Good News message.** (These people had already expressed a willingness to accept what Peter was saying.)

Even as Peter was *saying these things* [= the Good News message], the **Holy Spirit** fell upon all who were listening to the message.

The Jewish believers who came with Peter were amazed that the *gift* of the **Holy Spirit** had been poured out on the Gentiles, too.

Acts 10:44-45 (NLT); see also Acts 11:15-16.

(More repentance/baptism verses.)

As we've seen in the past, "baptism" can refer to (1) a heart-change, done by Jesus, and (2) physical baptism in water. In the New Testament era, these two were not separated by long periods of time, as they often are today.

- **Jesus baptizes** – referring to what happens in the *heart*.

He will *baptize* you with the **Holy Spirit** and fire.

Matthew 3:11b (GW); also Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33.

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- **God's people were told to baptize** new disciples (in *water*) "in the name of" the Father/Son/Holy Spirit. (They were also told to *teach* them how to obey Jesus.)

Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the **Holy Spirit**.

Matthew 28:19b (GW)

- **These two baptisms are connected** (or at least are *supposed* to be connected); but this passage shows that the water baptism didn't "cause" the spirit baptism:

While Peter was still speaking, the **Holy Spirit** came to everyone who heard his message [about the Good News].

Then Peter said, "No one can refuse to *baptize* these people with water. They have received the **Holy Spirit** in the same way that we did." So Peter ordered that they should be *baptized* in the name of Jesus Christ.

Acts 10:44, 46b-48a (GW)

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AN INCREASED PRESENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ALREADY-MADE PEOPLE.

- ✓ **The result of prayer.**

After they *prayed*, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the **Holy Spirit** and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 4:31 (NIV)

People sometimes look at the part that says "the place... was shaken," and wonder...

Could this happen today?

It would probably be unwise to say "No." But we need to consider the context. They didn't ask for the Holy Spirit or for a shaking of the building. Rather, they asked for boldness to obey God, and to faithfully proclaim the Good News in the face of persecution.

Today, not too many people ask for these things.

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A FEW SITUATIONS THAT ARE NOT LIKELY TO BE REPEATED.

When the New Covenant came into effect (through Jesus), certain things needed to happen, in order to demonstrate or confirm (to the Jews) that the *new* covenant had indeed come. This included demonstrating that *non-Jews* could also be saved and could receive the Holy Spirit.

Once this was proved, it did not need repeated.

- ✓ **The result of the apostle's prayer and laying-on of hands.**

Peter and John went to Samaria and *prayed* that the Samaritans would receive the **Holy Spirit**.

Then Peter and John placed their *hands on them*, and the Samaritans received the **Holy Spirit**.

Acts 8:15, 17 (GW)

See also Acts 19:6, where it was confirmed that "Jesus has finished the work that John (the Baptizer) began." John's work was completed.

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✓ **The laying-on of hands, involved in the commissioning of the apostle Paul.**

Paul had just become a follower of Jesus. He was about to receive the Holy Spirit, and then water baptism. This receiving of the Holy Spirit was to prepare Paul for his ministry— and for the great amount of suffering he would experience for Jesus (Acts 9:15-16).

Placing his hands on Saul, [Ananias] said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the **Holy Spirit**."

Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Acts 9:17b–19 (NIV)

Though the Holy Spirit prepares each of us for the work he has planned for us, it probably won't happen in this specific way!

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**Do you want to *avoid* this power source?
Do you want to keep the Holy Spirit away?**

⇒ There are many ways we can keep the Spirit away from us. *The Bible even shows us how!*

Here is: **How to REPEL the Spirit.**

- ⇒ **By what you DON'T do.** NOT doing the things mentioned in the "How to RECEIVE" section will keep us from becoming holy. It will keep the Holy Spirit at arm's distance (or further away).
- ⇒ **By what you DO.** Scripture mentions a number of things that will *hinder* the Spirit from doing his work. Some of these things are proof that a person is unsaved. Others prove that the person needs to repent. *If the person has had the heart-changes that come with salvation, that repentance will eventually occur.*

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What must we do, to REPEL the Holy Spirit?

If it happens, it's our choice. God isn't going to *refuse* to give the Spirit to those who *want* the Spirit. Just ask – Luke 11:13! But be aware that this asking implies a willingness to do those things that are *compatible* with asking.

To keep the Spirit away, there are many things we can do. Here are some of them. Obviously, Scripture tells us to NOT do these things!

IT IS POSSIBLE TO UTTERLY REJECT THE HOLY SPIRIT.

- ✓ **Speaking against the Holy Spirit:** "blasphemy" of the Holy Spirit.

"I tell you the truth, all sin and blasphemy can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the **Holy Spirit** will never be forgiven. This is a sin with eternal consequences." He told them this because they were saying, "He's possessed by an evil spirit."

Mark 3:28–30 (NLT)

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Have I committed this "unpardonable" sin?

- ✓ These "blasphemy of the Holy Spirit" verses require a serious look at the context.
- ✓ Those who were in danger of being guilty of this sin were the devout "Bible believers" of Jesus' day. The problem is that they had *reinterpreted* the Bible, based on what they would have called "good biblical commentaries." So when Jesus demonstrated the *real* focus of Scripture, they viewed his actions as being powered by an *evil* spirit (called a demon, in Mark 3:22) – and not the Holy Spirit.
- ✓ So, thinking themselves to be good "Bible believers," they did what they thought *any* good "Bible believer" should do: condemn what they viewed as being "works of the devil."
- ✓ A person with such a view would *never* want to receive the Holy Spirit (who they *wrongly*-recognized as being an *evil* spirit).
- ✓ **If we are willing to take these verses as a warning, and learn from them (and repent), then we have NOT committed this eternal sin.**

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OTHER THINGS WE CAN DO, TO REPEL THE SPIRIT.

WARNING: All such things can have serious consequences.

- ✓ **Lying to the Holy Spirit.** When we do this, we have let *Satan* fill (control) our hearts.

Then Peter said, "Ananias, why have you let Satan fill your heart? You lied to the **Holy Spirit**, ..."

Acts 5:3a (NLT)

Lying to God's *people* is equivalent to lying to *God*. God showed how serious this is, by putting him to death.

- ✓ **Testing the Spirit.** When we are trying to get away with sin.

Then Peter said to her, "Why did you agree [with your husband] to test the **Spirit of the Lord**?"

Ac 5:9a (CSB)

God showed how serious this is, by putting her to death.

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- ✓ **Rejecting God's instructions about holiness.** (This can be done in many ways; but here, the focus is on avoiding sexual sin.)

It is God's will that you should be **sanctified**: ... For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a **holy** life. Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his **Holy Spirit**.

1 Thessalonians 4:3a, 7-8 (NIV)

Rejecting God's *instructions* is equivalent to rejecting *God*.

- ✓ **Resisting the Holy Spirit.** It was the *religious* people who did this – the people who killed Jesus... and who would soon kill Stephen.

"You always resist the **Holy Spirit**! ... you who have received the law ... but have not obeyed it."

Acts 7:51b, 53 (NIV)

This occurs when we have God's Word... yet don't obey it.

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- ✓ **Insulting the "Spirit of grace"** (and a few other things that are listed in this passage). Such people deserve a *horrible* judgment.

So think how much more *punishment* people deserve ... who insult the **Spirit of God's grace**.

Hebrews 10:29 (ERV)

After all that the Spirit has done... do we decide that "our own way" is *better* than the Spirit's way?

- ✓ **Quenching the Spirit's fire.**

Do not *quench* the **Spirit**.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NIV)

This would include *anything* that hinders or stifles the Spirit's work in us. It's like pouring water on a fire.

1 Thessalonians describes several things that could accomplish this. But we should not limit it to just those specific things.

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- ✓ **Grieving the Holy Spirit.**

And do not *grieve* the **Holy Spirit** of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Eph 4:30 (NIV)

- Some people use the second half of the verse (regarding being "sealed for the day of redemption") to "prove" that a Christian *can* grieve the Spirit and remain saved.
- Paul was writing to the church at Ephesus – people who claimed to be following Jesus. Yet they had (or would soon have) fake "believers" in their midst. (Paul *warned* them about false teachers in Acts 20:16.) For such people, *the second half of this verse doesn't apply*.
- If we find ourselves doing anything that grieves the Spirit, *we need to repent*, instead of making excuses that we can "keep doing it and still be saved"! Otherwise, we are in danger of being like Israel in the wilderness, who *grieved* God *until he destroyed them* (Psalm 78:40; Isaiah 63:10). *Those who persist in this may actually be unsaved.*

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??? "Those who persist in this may actually be unsaved" ???

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓
This is not a new concept... it's *always* been this way!

- In both Old and New Testaments, the prophets and apostles would make statements (such as promises) to the *group* – the nation (Israel) or the church (local group of Jesus-followers). Yet in other Scripture passages, we learn that each of these groups would contain some *individuals* who's *hearts* were not changed.
- Both Old and New Testaments tell us about the need for a *heart* change, in order for the promises to apply to the *individuals*.
- This being the case, some of the statements made to the group would *not* apply to the *unchanged* individuals (who we could call the "fakes") – but only to the *changed* ones (who we could call the "genuine").
- So, ultimately, the statement about being "sealed for the day of redemption" would apply only to those with changed hearts, who would repent when they grieved the Holy Spirit ... not to those who would constantly *choose* to grieve the Holy Spirit.

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A serious warning to "temporary believers"

(to those who *keep* repelling the Spirit and *don't* repent of it).

Scripture often mentions people who look "saved" for a while, but who then abandon the faith.

It seems that these people can experience (to a degree) many of the characteristics that we commonly associate with salvation – *but it never actually changes their hearts*, and they eventually return to their old ways. (Compare to 2 Peter 2:20-22.)

It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, ... who have *shared* in the **Holy Spirit**, [and many other things] ... and who have fallen away, to be brought back to repentance.

Heb 6:4, 6a (CSB)

★ If you have repelled the Spirit, don't waste time trying to decide if you have reached the "point of no return." Instead, repent! If you're willing to repent, then you obviously haven't reached this point! ★

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YOUR MISSION

God offers to empower us, so that we can *receive* the Spirit, instead of *repelling* the Spirit.

The temptation to return to our old ways (and thus, repel the Spirit) can be strong. *But the power of God is stronger. (We must be willing to rely on it.)*

If you want the Spirit:

Consider the consequences of *both* ways – receiving and repelling.

Repent whenever necessary (which may be often), and let the Spirit control your life!

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Credits

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