

NUMBERS 11:24-30 RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Day of Pentecost is a celebration of the beginning of the Christian Church and the receiving of the Holy Spirit. This receiving of the Holy Spirit is difficult for many Christians to understand, because there's so much of it in the Bible, and under different circumstances. It gets confusing, and thus many Christians avoid talking about, or even thinking about the Holy Spirit. Sure, we say we believe in the Trinity, but then we concentrate our discussions and prayers on God the Father and Christ Jesus the Son. The Holy Spirit is relegated to the corner as some kind of oddity.

I often teach that the Holy Spirit is a gift of Baptism citing Acts 2:38, "Peter said to them, "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." Now, by the time we get to our reading from the book of Acts we can hardly say that the apostles were not yet baptized. So how do we explain our reading that tells us that they were filled with the Holy Spirit? Shouldn't they have been filled with the Holy Spirit already?

And how do we explain our text which tells us that the Lord God took some of the Spirit that rested on Moses and put it on the seventy elders? That sounds like the Holy Spirit can be cut up like a piece of pie, and I can give you some of my pie, but then I have less pie, and it's got to be a very big pie to be spread out to seventy men, or maybe they just got small pieces.

The way to understand this is to picture the Holy Spirit not as a pie, but as fire as He's pictured in the book of Acts. This isn't a partitioning of the Holy Spirit from Moses to the seventy, but rather this is an extension, like lighting seventy candles from one candle, or seven candles as in my illustration.

When we light the altar candles from our candle lighter the flame is not diminished on the candle lighter. As the lighter goes from one candle to the next there's the same amount of flame on the first candle as on the last candle. Tongues of fire rested on the apostles in the book of Acts. The Holy Spirit rested on the seventy elders in our reading from the book of Numbers.

So, the same Holy Spirit is resting on everyone whom the Holy Spirit comes to. The Holy Spirit isn't divided up like a piece of pie, nor is He reduced. However, that doesn't answer why the apostles had to receive the Holy Spirit again. They had already received Him in their baptisms. Let's look at that from the teachings of Jesus.

In the Gospel of John Jesus said, "the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:26). "When the Helper comes,

whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness about Me” (15:26).

Jesus said this while He was alive with the apostles. Then after He was crucified for the sins of the world He was resurrected and appeared to the apostles and said “behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high” (Luk 24:49).

When the Holy Spirit comes upon us in our Baptisms that’s for receiving the forgiveness of our sins and to make us a child of God by clothing us with the righteousness of Jesus, all of which He won for us by dying upon the cross to pay for our sins. Now the Holy Spirit comes to the apostles again to help them remember what Jesus had taught them ,and to teach them more about Jesus. The Holy Spirit witnesses about Jesus to them so that they may witness about Jesus to others, and He does the same things for you after your baptisms.

So, the Holy Spirit is continuously coming to us throughout our lives for various purposes, and some of those purposes are only for a short time, like the apostles speaking in other languages, and the seventy elders in our text prophesying. As it said, “they did not continue doing it.

To help us to see that the Holy Spirit came to the elders and the apostles for various purposes for short periods of time, and that He does the same thing for you listen to this reading from First Corinthians.

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills” (12:4-11).

The Holy Spirit continuously comes to you throughout your lives, and not just in your baptisms. He comes to you any way that He wants to, but you’re assured that He has come to you through your baptism, through the Word of God and through prayer. In the Gospel of Luke Jesus told us to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit (11:13).

However, the gift of the Holy Spirit isn’t to glorify yourselves by saying such things as, ‘Look at me I can work miracles or speak in tongues because I

have the gift of the Holy Spirit.’ Now it’s not likely that we would hear many people say something like that, because we don’t see miracles or hear people speaking in tongues that much anymore, but what about the more common gifts of the Holy Spirit, the gifts of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23). Some people don’t get the self-control gift and instead of using the gifts of the Holy Spirit to glorify Jesus, they use them to bring praises to themselves, and they brag about their random acts of kindness.

Jesus said that the gift of the Holy Spirit is for bearing witness about Jesus. Seventy men were chosen to go to a tent to be installed to help Moses. Sixty-eight of them showed up and prophesied. Two of them didn’t show up but remained back in the camp and they prophesied there. Some thought that was a bad thing. Moses thought it was a good thing.

Yes, I’d love to see everyone in church every Sunday. But what if the Holy Spirit is using you somewhere other than in church on Sunday, and there you’re witnessing about Jesus? You show loving kindness, a gift of the Holy Spirit, while you’re out on the golf course, at the coffee shop, or at work, and then doors are opened for you to speak about Jesus. You might mention that you should be in church, or would rather be in church, and then you talk about Jesus and why you do go to church when you can. You might not even think that you had been gifted by the Holy Spirit, but when you talk with your non-Christian friend and show them patience and gentleness, when they show you resistance to talking about Jesus you’re showing the fruit of Spirit to them.

No, don’t stop people from speaking about Jesus outside of the church. Don’t let others stop you from speaking about Jesus outside of the church. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you with what you say. You don’t need to be prepared ahead of time. You can’t be prepared ahead of time, because you don’t know what the circumstance is going to be.

Take the ending of our reading from Acts (2:21), “Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”. That’s an easy passage to remember and it can spark all sorts of conversations like: ‘Who is the Lord? What does it mean to call upon His name? What does it mean to be saved?’ The answers to those questions is the core of Christianity. So, I’ll give you a little primer to get you started, knowing that it’s the Holy Spirit who’s guiding you all the way.

The Lord is Jesus, the Son of God. To call upon His name is to not only believe that He is the Son of God, but it is to trust Him, that He can do what He promises you, which is to save you from eternal punishment for your sins and to grant you eternal life in heaven. May the Holy Spirit rest upon you to witness about Jesus. Amen.