

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

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The Promise of the Father

by Dan Trygg

“...behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father *upon* you; but you are to stay in the city until you are *clothed with power* from on high.” Luke 24:49

“Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, ‘Which,’ He said, ‘you heard of from Me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be *baptized with* the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’ ⁸ ‘...but you will lay hold of power when the Holy Spirit *has come upon* you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.’” Acts 1:4,5,8

“‘Brethren, what shall we do?’ ³⁸ Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will *receive the gift* of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.’” Acts 2:37-39

“...because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit... *into our hearts*, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” Galatians 4:6

The language used regarding the potential presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers can be somewhat confusing. Sometimes it sounds like something we are to wait and seek for. Sometimes it sounds like a sure thing, a promise that God *will* fulfill. Sometimes, it sounds like we *have* the Holy Spirit. **Then there are different word pictures used of our relationship to the Holy Spirit.** Sometimes He is described as *being alongside* of us (Jn. 14:17), or *coming upon* us (Acts 1:8), or coming to *dwell within* us (Jn. 14:17). Sometimes He is described as something we are *immersed* or *washed in* (Acts 1:5), while in other places it describes someone as being “*anointed with*” Him (Acts 10:38), or being “*filled with*” Him (Eph. 5:18). Jesus said He would be *like a river flowing* out from our bellies (Jn. 7:38,39). At other places, He is described as being *like a gift to be received* (Acts 2:38).

Some of this confusion has to do with a historical shift that took place in the Spirit’s operation among the people of God. This shift was spoken of centuries *before*, but did not take place until *after* Jesus had paid the price for sin and cleared the way for the Spirit’s coming. Jesus had spoken of this coming shift to His disciples. He said that the Spirit was *with* them, and would be *in* them (Jn. 14:15-17). Earlier in the gospel, John parenthetically explained one of Jesus’ teachings, saying, “but this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him *were soon to receive*; for the Spirit was *not yet given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:39). **Historically, Jesus had to complete His salvation-work, before this new ministry of the Spirit would be possible.** In fact, in Peter’s attempt to explain the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost, he made reference both to the OT prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and the resurrection and victorious ascension of Christ to glory as the basis to understand what was taking place. “**This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. Therefore *having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear***” (Acts 2:32,33).

Galatians 4:6 seems to emphasize this. **The Holy Spirit is given to those who trust in Christ, and become born-from-above children of God. It is part of our inheritance as God’s children.** Paul’s entire argument in this book is that **we receive justification, forgiveness of sins, and everything that Jesus provides by faith, NOT by works of the Law.** We are not just receiving a religious commodity, we are receiving *an exchanged life* (Gal. 2:20). It is no longer *I* who live, ...meaning that I don’t successfully live the Christian life by *my self-efforts, my self-discipline* or *my attentiveness* to keeping the Law. No. No one can be justified by trying to keep the Law (Gal. 2:16; 3:11). *We* can’t do it. *I* can’t do it. The purpose of the Law was to show us that. It was like a mirror that showed us all our failings. The purpose of the Law was to show us our sin (Rom. 3:20), our utter inability to save ourselves, and the unquestionable need for a salvation that comes from somewhere outside of us (Gal. 3:24). The Law indeed served as a custodian, to keep us within certain bounds, if we would listen to it, but it also showed us that we could not keep its righteous standard, and thus we were under its judgment and condemnation (Rom. 4:15). Paul called the Law “the ministry of death” (II Cor. 3:7), because it revealed the lifelessness in our own hearts and souls. There was sin and death in us, both a deceitful willfulness to rebel against God’s standards (Rom. 7:7-25), and a weakness or inability to carry it out, even if we wanted to (Rom. 8:3-8). The “gospel nugget” in Galatians is “But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. **And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’**” (Galatians 4:4-6). True Christians already *have* the Spirit.

The trap that ensnared the Galatian church was the belief that somehow, ...now that they had been saved, forgiven, justified and had received the Spirit..., they could keep the Law. No. **Just as they could not obtain salvation by self-effort, neither could they live the mature Christian life by self-effort** (3:2,3). Paul asks, “...did

you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or *by hearing with faith*? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? ...Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or *by hearing with faith*?" (Gal. 3:2,3,5). **The mature Christian life is not about trying to do right, in our own strength or understanding. It is reckoning on the truth of what Jesus has done in and for us.** Consider yourself dead to sin, and every form of self-agenda. Consider yourself to be crucified with Christ, so that you are no longer in charge of your life. **By faith, accept the word of promise that Christ lives in you through His indwelling Holy Spirit. Be asking for, looking for, and expecting the leading of the Holy Spirit in your life.** The righteous person lives *by faith* (Hab. 2:4; cf. Rom. 1:17; Gal. 3:11; Heb. 10:38).

What is faith? "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). The word translated here as "assurance" can mean "steadiness of mind, firm resolve, courageous resolution". The word translated as "conviction" can mean "inner confidence, testing, proving". **Faith hears the word of promise, and grabs hold of it as truth. It steadfastly persists in the confidence that God is dependable, and that His word is true.** It latches hold of the hope, or promise, and firmly resolves to see it come to pass, or to believe that it will come to pass. **With regard to the power of the Spirit, faith would be the confident expectation that God has indeed given the Spirit to us as His children, and that He intends to empower and lead us to accomplish His purposes.** Faith cries out to see the hope fulfilled. It moves forward in the expectation of God's dependable nature. It prays. It watches. It looks for the leadings and stirrings of the Spirit. It is willing to take risks to discover the leading of God. Faith also waits. It waits through the anxiety and impatience. It waits through the trial and temptation. It waits for the working of God. It waits for the rising up of righteousness within the inner self. Paul wrote, "For we by the Spirit, out from faith, are waiting for the hope of righteousness" (Gal. 5:5). It trusts in the word of promise, even when it feels nothing. **It does not depend upon sight, or feeling (II Cor. 5:7). It depends upon the word of promise.** It firmly, insistently and repeatedly comes to God, looking for a breakthrough, or new insight, even if it has been disappointed in the past. **It is convinced that God's word is true, even if it has not yet experienced it. For that reason, it presses after the promise, proving out the word with persistence.**

When Jesus talked about the promise of the Father, He was referring back to OT prophecies. For example from Ezekiel 11:19,20, "And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them. And I shall take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances, and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God." Cf. Isa. 44:3; 59:21; Ezk. 36:26,27; 37:14; 39:29; Joel 2:28,29. **It was clear that the people of Israel had broken the covenant God had made with them at Mt. Sinai.** They brought discipline and judgment upon themselves, until they were driven from the land. At this moment of disaster, **God began to speak of making a new covenant with the people of Israel, a covenant whereby He would put His Spirit within them and change their hearts. This is the covenant Jesus established through His death and resurrection. The coming of the Spirit was to enable an entirely new life, a life of obedience and love from renewed hearts.** The new covenant, and the promise of the Father, were not primarily about speaking in tongues. That is just the way God chose to let Israel know that the Spirit had come at Pentecost. None of the OT passages about the new covenant, or the coming of the Spirit, talked about speaking in tongues. What they did talk about, however, is becoming people who were obedient, people who really would live to honor God. **"Then they shall be My people, and I will be their God."**

The promise of the Father is here. Peter had said, "the promise is to you, and to all who are far off..." (Acts 2:39). **The Spirit has been given.** He has been poured out upon the church. He is our inheritance, as children of God. As many as are in Christ have been baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ. We were all made to drink of one Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). **Nevertheless, Paul commands us to "be (being) filled with the Spirit", or "fill (yourselves) with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18). There is a need for ongoing maintenance and attentiveness to our walk in the power of the Spirit.** We have a choice. We can either walk in the Spirit, or we can walk in the flesh. To walk in the Spirit, will bring life, peace and the Christlike fruit of the Spirit's inworking in our lives. If we walk in the flesh, we will experience defeat, deception, division, death and disaster. If we set our minds on the things of the flesh, and the distractions of this present world, we dishonor God and grieve His Spirit (Rom. 8:5-8). The fire of the Spirit is quenched, and we see little of His powerful presence in our lives. We will experience confusion, dullness and a loss of vitality. **If we set our minds on the Spirit, and the things of the Spirit, ...if we make investments of time and energy to develop our spiritual lives and learn to listen to God..., if we honor Him and obey His promptings, we will grow in our sensitivity to Him, and He will empower us** (Rom. 8:9-17; Gal. 6:7,8). "The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey Him" (Acts 5:32). God has specifically given us His Spirit so that we might know Him, and what He has for us (I Cor. 2:12,13). **Be sure of this: God wants you to know Him. He wants you to be filled with His Spirit, and be led by Him. "The promise is for you...!"** Don't miss out!