

## A Promise to All<sup>1</sup>

Acts 2:38, 39

On Pentecost, Peter promised every Christian two things: the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Please note his words, "Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to Himself."

This promise for all can be summed up in the word salvation. To be saved is to have one's sins remitted, or forgiven. And, to be saved is to receive the Holy Spirit. The most natural way to understand Peter's thought - "the gift of the Holy Spirit" - is that the Holy Spirit Himself is the gift. Suppose someone said, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins and receive the gift of ten dollars." The meaning of such a promise would be unmistakable. Anyone, having heard it and being baptized, would expect to receive ten dollars. Many scriptures teach that a measure of the Spirit Himself is given to those who are saved.

The Spirit Himself is the seal or signature that we are among those who belong to God. (Ephesians 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22; Revelation 7:3, 4; 14:1) And, the Spirit Himself is the pledge or earnest of our salvation, a down payment of the eternal blessings that await the faithful. This thought is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 1:22, but Paul clearly states it in 2 Corinthians 5:5: "Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge." Several other passages support the position that the Spirit is the gift Peter spoke of: Galatians 4:6; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Acts 5:32. This promise of forgiveness and the Holy Spirit is made to every person willing to repent and be baptized.

As great as it is, the Bible does not indicate there is anything miraculous in this promise. There were miraculous measures of the Holy Spirit given in the first century during the days God was revealing his will through the spoken words of the apostles and other inspired men. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide His apostles into all truth (John 14-16). But that promise was made only to His apostles, not to us today. And that work is now finished (Jude 3). The Spirit does lead us today, but only through the Word which He gave to the inspired writers. We have their words, which produce faith in us today. But though not miraculous, the measure of the Holy Spirit we are promised is wonderful!

Think for a moment of the magnitude of such a promise: to have all past sins wiped out of God's mind and to become a child of God, a recipient of eternal life. It's hard to comprehend; it's hard to believe. But God is serious, and His promise is not lightly made. He seals the transaction with His own divine Spirit. At that moment of cleansing, He gives His Spirit as a pledge of, or down payment on,

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the full measure of salvation to be given when this life is over. In effect, God says in this promise, "I will save you from a life of sin now, give you a seal indicating that you are My child, and I will pledge to you that when you have finished a life of faithful service to Me, I will give to you an eternal home of happiness and glory." This promise of God is available to everyone. Peter said, "For you and your children, and for all who are far off,..." and the conditions are not burdensome. You must repent of past sins and be baptized, immersed in water. Have you done that? What small conditions for such a great promise!