

How To Receive The Greatest Gift

Catherine Booth

"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him." (Isaiah 64:4).

In the upper room, about 120 disciples waited for the gift of the Holy Spirit. They had an earnest appreciation of its importance. How do you think they felt as they thought of the past, remembered the ignominious crucifixion of their Lord, looked forward to the future, and contemplated the work to which He had called them?

And what had Jesus called them to do? They were not to go and set up an idol or a monument of Jesus Christ alongside other idols in the temples of the heathen gods. They were to go into the city of Jerusalem, where Jesus had just been crucified between two thieves. They were to proclaim Jesus as the long-expected Messiah of the Jews. They were to begin setting up the Royal Spiritual Kingdom in contradiction to the temporal and earthly kingdom. Then, God commanded them to go out from Jerusalem and subjugate the world to His sway!

Poor Peter, Thomas, John, Mary and the rest of the women--how would they feel? They would feel, "We might as well stop and die here, as go out as we are, until we do get the equipment of power. We need something more than what we have got." So, they waited and prayed, "Lord, pour it out upon us; we are ready. We are helpless; we are powerless--we can do nothing. You know what you have called us to do, and you have promised us power to perform it. Now, here we are. It is useless for us to begin until we get power." They appreciated its importance.

God never gives the gift of His Spirit to any human being who has not come to the point that he would sell all he had to get it. The Holy Spirit is the most precious gift that God has to give in earth or in heaven. Think of the Holy Spirit filling you, filling you with himself, God taking possession of you. Think of being moved, inspired, energized, empowered by God, by the great indwelling Spirit moving through all your faculties and energizing your whole being for God. That is the greatest and most glorious gift He has to give today.

The Father is not likely to give the Holy Spirit to people who do not highly appreciate Him. You must appreciate Him so highly that you will forego all other gifts for Him--everything else, creature love, creature comfort, ease, enjoyment, and aggrandizement for this one thing. Have you come to this? Are you telling this to the Lord Jesus? Are you seeking the filling of the Holy Spirit?

I have often thought of the Savior, when so many who had been hearing Him forsook Him and fled. He had been trying to lead them higher, even to real spiritual union with himself. They were not willing to go all the way--to pay the price--to suffer the consequences. So, if you want this blessing, I know of no other way than I have just described.

I had to come to this before I received the filling of the Holy Spirit. The last idol of my soul had to be renounced, and it was hard work, as it always is because we love idols. Idols would not be idols if they were not loved. We have to lay our real Isaac, our beloved and only Isaac, upon the altar. It is hard work, but it has to be done because He is a jealous God and will have no rivals. Do you so appreciate this blessing that you are willing to give up your Isaac? If so, you may have the filling of the Holy Spirit today. God will fill you with His Spirit.

The disciples of Jesus Christ waited in obedient faith for Him to fulfill His promise. They did as He asked them. Jesus told them to wait in Jerusalem, and they did not go off fishing or to the beach. Peter didn't say, "I can wait as well on the beach as in Jerusalem. I wonder why the Lord told me to go to Jerusalem? I think it was unreasonable. I think I will go back to my fishing nets." No. Jesus had cured the disciples of their unbelief by the last few days' experiences. They had learned better than to dictate to their Master, and they knew He had a good purpose in sending them to Jerusalem. So, they went there and did as He told them. Back to the upper room they went.

They had learned better than to reason, "I have been running about ministering to the Savior a long time. I'm afraid my friends will think I am neglecting home duties and the claims of old friends. I really must go home and see to matters there for a while. I may as well wait there for the Holy Spirit as at Jerusalem." Mary had learned better than that. She went back to Jerusalem. We have their names. They entered the upper room, shut the door, and waited--obedient faith! One of the poets said:

"Obedient faith that waits on Thee, Thou never will reprove."

God sends the disobedient faith away empty. People are crying out about their faith, but it is a disobedient faith. If the Lord has told you to wait in any particular place, way, company, or time, and you disobey Him, He will not fill you with the Holy Spirit. At last, even if on your dying bed, you will have to come to these conditions.

Obedient faith! While there is one spark of insubordination, rebellion, or dictation, the Spirit will never fill you. Truly, only submissive and obedient people enter this kingdom. Anywhere He tells you to go, anything He tells you to sacrifice, or fly from, you will have to do. The Holy Spirit is one of His choice gifts that He has reserved for His choice servants, those who serve Him with all their hearts--obedient faith.

Dear Father, I confess that I have not fully appreciated the gift of the Holy Spirit as I ought. I have taken His indwelling for granted, and have not sought His filling as I should. Cleanse me, fill me, and empower me to serve you only for the sake of your kingdom. Amen.

Expect To Receive The Holy Spirit

Catherine Booth

"I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." (PSA 130:5)

Faith is inseparable from expectation. Where there is real faith there is always expectation. I often hear people pray for the Holy Spirit from their throats instead of their hearts. When I see how they talk the minute they get off their knees, how they live, and with whom they associate, I say, "You may pray till your dying day, and if you do not change, you will never be filled with the Holy Spirit." If they expected anything, they would wait for it. Common sense tells us that.

In the upper room, the disciples waited. For how long? The Bible says they waited ten days, until the Day of Pentecost had fully come. I have no doubt they prayed far into the night, so far as they could keep their natural powers awake. They waited. They did not set the Lord a time limit. They were wiser than that. They did not say, "Now we will go and have a couple of days praying. That will be a long time. We will just shut out all else and wait on the Lord for a couple of days. If He does not come by that time, it will be outrageous to wait beyond that. Whoever heard of a prayer-meeting two days and two nights long?" They did not set they Lord a time limit! They obeyed. The disciples went and waited until the Holy Spirit came.

You may say, "I have not been filled with the Spirit." No. Because you did not wait until He came. You got hungry, or fell asleep, or hugged your idol. You did not wait until HE CAME! Suppose the disciples had given up on the fifth day and said, "There must be some mistake. He knows we are here, all ready, and the world is perishing for our message. There must be some mistake. We should begin without Him." But no, they waited on and on and on, until He came. Can you imagine what sort of prayer went up from the upper room? Do you think they were the lazy, lackadaisical, prayers that we hear now and then for the Holy Spirit?

Oh! Think how Peter agonized and wrestled. Think how Thomas pled. Imagine how Mary would have wept, beseeched, and entreated. Consider how they were all of one heart and one accord. They wanted one thing. They were there to receive the Holy Spirit. The disciples cared for nothing else but Him. They cried for Him as hungry children cry for milk. They wanted Him and His indwelling. Did the Lord ever disappoint anyone who waited like that? Can anyone say so? Did you ever hear of such a case? Never. HE CAME!

Nowadays, some people set God time limits in everything. They think a good deal more about their dinners than about Him. People think a great deal more about conversations with their friends and doing the polite thing with them, than they do about the precious waiting Holy Spirit of God. They think a great deal more about their businesses than the business of God. "Oh!" they say, "It is business, and business must be attended to." But what about the Holy Spirit and the Kingdom of God? Must not your soul be saved? Must you not become a temple of the indwelling Spirit of God? Put a MUST in there! Your soul is much more important than your body. I have given you the most common-sense, simple, exhibits and illustrations of these truths that I possibly can. Was it not so? Did they not wait for Him as I have described, and did not the Holy Spirit come?

On Pentecost, the Holy Spirit filled both the men and the women. They began to speak as the Holy Spirit gave them words. The Holy Spirit still comes. Sometimes, my bodily senses are aware of His coming. When He comes, we only know that something so influences our bodies that we cannot describe it. When the Holy Spirit comes into a human soul, He opens his eyes, quickens his perceptions, enlarges his capacity and swells him with glory. His body will feel His power and sometimes be prostrated. What did the Apostle Paul say? "I have been into the third heaven and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful to utter." Do you think God intended such experiences and visions only for Paul and the Apostles?

Since Paul's day, many people have had such experiences. And many more might have them if they are willing to be wrapped in His arms and pressed to His bosom to know Him in the Scriptural sense. You must be willing to be given up and consumed by the Holy Spirit. Your heart and flesh must cry out after the living God, as David's did. You must pant after Him as the deer after the water-brooks. If you seek the Spirit's filling, long to come and appear before God. If you will so long for God that you cannot live without Him, God will come and reveal himself to you. Will you thus wait in obedient faith?

I want you to come up higher and not slide back and become cold and indifferent to these things. Here is the hope of the world, if there is any hope for it--people getting filled with the Holy Spirit. People must wake up to God and His glory and the interests of His Kingdom. The world needs people filled with the Spirit. People with eyes to see spiritual sights others do not see, with ears to hear the crying of multitudes dying for lack of knowledge, with hearts to feel so they could go and weep over them, with hands to break the bread of life, with zeal to die for them if need be.

Dear Father, for too long I have set limits on what I wanted you to do for me and on what I would do for you. I have not waited where and when I should have, and I have missed the blessings you have offered and promised me in your word. Forgive me for telling you how I wanted to be filled and for setting limits on my obedience. Help me repent of every sin and resolve to obey you in every matter. Fill me with your Spirit and holy power so I can be a faithful, effective witness for you in Jesus' name. Amen.

Contributed by Betty Hightower