

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (CONT.)

“...THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT” (ACTS 2:38)

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."

WHAT IS THE “GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?”

The phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38 is in the genitive case in the Greek. This grammatical construction permits many potential translations based on the phrase by itself. Of these possibilities, there are only two which could possibly apply based on the context:

(1) Subjective Genitive - “the gift from the Holy Spirit”

EXAMPLE FROM SCRIPTURE:

John 4:10 - Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

IF THIS IS THE CORRECT INTERPRETATION, THEN WHAT IS THE “GIFT” WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN RECEIVED FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT AFTER THEIR BAPTISM IN ACTS 2?

- a. **Salvation:** Does scripture support the idea that salvation is from the Spirit? Does the context of Acts 2:38 support this?
- b. **Miraculous Gifts (1 Cor 12):** Can the two promises made in Acts 2:38 be universally applied to **ALL** who repent and are baptized (Acts 2:39)? Is there any evidence in scripture that all Christians received miraculous gifts?

(2) Appositional Genitive - “the gift which is the Holy Spirit”

EXAMPLES FROM SCRIPTURE:

MARK 1:28 - “THE REGION OF GALILEE”

LUKE 2:41 - “THE FEAST OF THE PASSOVER”

JOHN 2:21 - “THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY”

ACTS 4:22 - “THE MIRACLE OF HEALING”

ACTS 16:14 - “THE CITY OF THYATIRA”

ROM 4:11 - “THE SIGN OF CIRCUMCISION”

HEB 6:1 - “A FOUNDATION OF REPENTANCE”

REV 2:10 - “THE CROWN OF LIFE”

IS THERE ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE FROM SCRIPTURE THAT THE SPIRIT HIMSELF IS GIVEN TO THE CHRISTIAN?

Acts 5:29–32 (ESV)

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, “We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

Romans 8:9–11 (ESV)

⁹ You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹ If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 6:18–20 (ESV)

¹⁸ Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Galatians 4:4–7 (ESV)

⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

ATONEMENT AND SANCTIFICATION:

ROMANS 5:1–5 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³ Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵ and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

ARTICLES / COMMENTARIES

What Is the “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38?

By Wayne Jackson

To a multitude assembled on the day of Pentecost the apostle Peter declared:

“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38, ASV).

The identity of “the gift of the Holy Spirit,” as that expression is used in Acts 2:38, has long been a matter of interesting discussion among Christians. Good and respected brothers hold differing viewpoints as to the meaning of the terminology employed in this passage.

Aside from the radical notion that this verse asserts the perpetuity of miraculous gifts throughout the Christian age — an allegation that would conflict with information elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 13:8ff; Eph. 4:8ff) — there is room for honest disagreement among the Lord’s people on this matter, without there being a breach of fellowship.

At the outset, I would like to briefly discuss several concepts that brethren entertain regarding this matter, that I personally believe to be incorrect.

Salvation

Some argue that the “gift” of the Holy Spirit mentioned in this passage is a reference to salvation from past sins. But this theory appears to gloss the very language of the verse. It seems very clear to this writer that “the gift of the Holy Spirit” is something **different from** and **in consequence of** the reception of the forgiveness of sins.

Note the dual use of the conjunction “and” in this context:

“Repent ye, **and** be baptized ... unto the remission of your sins; **and** ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

If baptism is different from repentance, should not a similar recognition be given to the distinction between salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit?

Moreover, other passages also suggest that the reception of the Holy Spirit is a blessing given in consequence of salvation.

“And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6).

Miraculous Gifts

Some contend that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 was the reception of supernatural signs, as bestowed by the apostles’ hands. If such a view is correct, it would seem that a reasonable approach to the passage would suggest that all who were baptized that day (cf. 2:41) received not only forgiveness of

sins, but also supernatural gifts, so that literally hundreds of disciples were performing miracles subsequently in the city of Jerusalem.

This view, however, suffers from the lack of any supporting evidence in the book of Acts. There is absolutely no indication, from Acts 2 through chapter 5, that anyone other than the apostles possessed miraculous gifts. Note the following:

“and fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the **apostles**” (Acts 2:43).

The miracle performed by Peter and John in Acts 3 seems to have been an unusual event; the Jewish leaders commented:

“for that indeed a notable miracle hath been wrought through **them**, is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:16).

There is no hint that multitudes of Christians were duplicating such signs in the city. Again:

“And by the hands of the **apostles** were many signs and wonders wrought among the people, and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. But of the rest durst no man join himself to them; howbeit the people magnified them ...” (Acts 5:12-13).

The religious awe with which the multitudes held the **apostles** suggests they were doing signs not characteristic of the saints generally.

It is only when one comes to Acts 6:6ff that mention is made of the imposition of the apostles’ hands, and the subsequent exercise of miraculous gifts by others (cf. Acts 6:8).

It has been suggested that the terms “gift” (dorea) and the verb “receive” (lambano) in Acts 2:38 indicate a miraculous phenomenon, and thus in this context denote the supernatural gifts made available through the laying on of the apostles’ hands.

That such is not a valid observation can be verified easily by the consultation of a Greek concordance. Compare, for example, dorea in John 4:10 and Romans 5:15,17, and lambano in John 12:48 and Mark 10:30.

Moreover, the fact is, the most common Greek term for those gifts conveyed by the imposition of apostolic hands is the word charisma (cf. Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4,9,28,30,31; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6).

It is alleged that Acts 2:38 is parallel with Mark 16:16ff, in that both sections promise salvation and the reception of signs. I personally do not believe that the passages are grammatically or contextually parallel in all respects. Mark 16:16ff contains a **general** declaration that miraculous gifts would accompany the body of believers, confirming their divinely given testimony.

On the other hand, the persons **directly addressed** in Acts 2:38 individually were promised both remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. It does not seem reasonable that they would have understood the

promise to have been **unlimited** with reference to forgiveness, but **limited** in regard to the gift of the Spirit.

The Word Only

Other good brethren hold that “the gift of the Holy Spirit” is merely a metaphorical expression suggesting that only the Spirit’s influence, by means of the inspired Word, indwells the Christian. In my opinion, this concept does not adequately explain all of the biblical data on this theme.

A frequent line of argument in support of this position is to assemble two lists of passages that show common effects produced by both the Spirit and the Word. This is, however, the fallacy of analogy. (Compare the typical Oneness Pentecostal argument whereby lists of similar traits relative to the Father and the Son are assembled in an attempt to prove that the two are the same Person.)

The fact that the Holy Spirit uses the Word as his instrument of instruction (Eph. 6:17), does not speak to the issue of whether or not he indwells the child of God.

The “Word only” view seems to fall under the weight of the context of Acts 2 as a whole. For example, in Acts 2:41 Luke records:

“They then that received his word were baptized ...”

Peter’s auditors on the day of Pentecost “gladly received his word” (v. 41), hence, the influence of the Spirit through that word, **before** their baptism. This is evidenced by their question, “What shall we do?” (v. 37), as well as an implied penitent disposition.

Yet the promised gift of the Spirit was given **after** baptism. Since the Spirit operated on the Pentecostians through the Word **prior** to their baptism, just what did they receive as a “gift” **after** their baptism?

The Indwelling Spirit

It is my conviction, as well as that of numerous highly esteemed brethren, that the Holy Spirit, as a “gift,” is bestowed upon the obedient believer (Acts 2:38; 5:32; 1 Cor. 6:19), and is an abiding presence in his life.

Let us consider several facets of this matter.

According to Acts 2:38, the baptized believer is promised “the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Is this a gift **consisting of** the Spirit, or a gift **given by** the Spirit?

Actually, from a strictly grammatical viewpoint, it could be either. Some, though, have suggested that grammatically the phrase cannot refer to the Spirit as a gift. That simply is not correct.

The expression tou hagiou pneumatou in Greek is in the genitive case. Greek grammar books list more than a dozen uses for the genitive¹. It is context, either in its narrower or broader sense, that will determine the thrust of the genitive case in a given circumstance.

The fact of the matter is, almost every Greek authority known to this writer contends that the genitive of Acts 2:38 is expegetical (appositional), i.e., the Holy Spirit **is** the gift². These sources are not cited as theological experts, but as **language** authorities; the authors obviously did not feel that it is grammatically **impossible** for the gift to consist of the Spirit himself, as some have alleged.

That “the gift of the Holy Spirit” can be the Spirit himself is demonstrated by a comparison of Acts 10:45 with 10:47, even though the respective contexts reveal that different endowments of the Spirit are under consideration in Acts 2 and 10.

It is probably safe to say that most of the scholars within the restoration heritage have also argued this interpretation of “the gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38, even when differing on the nature of receiving the Spirit.

J.W. McGarvey³ wrote:

“The expression means the Holy Spirit as a gift, and the reference is to that indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, and without which we are not of Christ.”

Moses Lard⁴ commented: “Certainly the gift of the Spirit is the Spirit itself given.”

For further reference we would suggest consulting Goebel Music’s massive work, *A Resource and Reference Volume on the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit*⁵. This is a study that no serious New Testament student can afford to ignore on this topic.

SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

The most forceful argument for this view that the “gift” of the Spirit is the Spirit himself, is the subsequent testimony of the New Testament regarding the reception of the Holy Spirit by the believer. Note the following.

THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF BEARS WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT

Within the Roman letter, in a context which discusses the indwelling Spirit as a possession of the saints (cf. Rom. 8:9,11,16,26,27), the apostle Paul declares that the Holy Spirit and the human spirit bear dual witness to the fact that we are children of God (v. 16).

DOES OUR SPIRIT ACTUALLY DWELL WITHIN US?

Some would suggest that only the Holy Spirit’s influence through the Word is here considered. Notice, though, it is the indwelling Spirit **himself** who bears testimony with us (see also 8:26).

Compare the language of John 4:2 where it is stated that while the Lord representatively baptized disciples, he “himself baptized not.” There is a difference between what one does **himself** and what he accomplishes through an agent

OUR BODY, THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paul inquired of the Corinthian saints:

“Or know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body” (1 Cor. 6:19).

The Greek word for “temple” is naos, and it is an allusion to that holy sanctuary of the Mosaic economy wherein God actually made his presence known (cf. Ex. 25:22).

Here is an interesting question. If the Holy Spirit bears a relationship to men today **only** “through the Word,” and yet, admittedly, he influences the alien sinner through the Word, would it be proper to suggest that the sinner’s body is “the temple of the Holy Spirit” to whatever extent he is affected by the Word?

CHRISTIANS MADE TO DRINK OF ONE SPIRIT

Consider 1 Corinthians 12:13.

“For in one Spirit [i.e., the Spirit’s operation by means of the gospel] were we all baptized into one body ... and [an additional thought] were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

What is the difference in the Spirit’s relationship to us **before** baptism and **after** baptism? In Paul’s dual references to the Spirit in this passage, is he suggesting the identical concept in both statements?

THE HOLY SPIRIT SENT INTO OUR HEARTS

In Galatians 4:6, the Spirit is said to be sent into our hearts **because we are** (i.e., in consequence of being) sons of God. Would not this suggest a relationship that is different from the mere influence of the Word, since the sinner has the leading of the Word **before** he becomes a child of God?

THE “EARNEST” OF THE SPIRIT PROMISED TO CHRISTIANS ONLY

If the relationship of the Holy Spirit is exactly the same to both sinner and saint (i.e., only through the Word), can it be affirmed that the sinner, to whatever extent that he is influenced by the Word, has the “earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5; cf. Eph. 1:13,14)? Do not these passages, and those above, set forth a precious promise that is exclusively confined to the Christian?

Points to Consider

Sincere respected brethren believe that there are strong arguments that negate the idea that the Spirit personally indwells the child of God. We will consider several of these.

Is the Spirit divided?

It is argued that if the Holy Spirit actually dwelt in all Christians, he would be divided. If we may kindly say so, this constitutes a rather materialistic view of deity.

The fact of the matter is, the apostles of Christ were filled with the Spirit of God (Acts 2:4), and yet, the Spirit was still one (cf. 1 Cor. 12:9).

It is countered, though, that the Holy Spirit did not actually dwell in the apostles. Rather, it is alleged, the Spirit was only with them in the sense that they were miraculously endowed with divine power.

However, it must be noted that the apostles had the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost (cf. Mt 10:8; 12:28). This is obviously what the Lord had in mind when he affirmed that the Spirit was “with” (para) those disciples; yet additionally, the Savior promised, “he shall be in (en) you” (Jn. 14:17).

In view of this passage, how can it possibly be argued that the Holy Spirit cannot be in a person?

WOULD THE INDWELLING OF THE SPIRIT MAKE ONE DEITY?

It has been suggested that if the Holy Spirit actually dwelt in someone that would be a form of “incarnation,” hence, the person would be deity. This is an erroneous assumption. The Spirit was in the apostles (Acts 2:4), but they were not deity. Peter refused to be worshipped as though he was a divine being (Acts 10:26).

In an incarnation, deity **becomes** flesh (cf. Jn. 1:14), but such is not the case when the Spirit simply indwells the believer’s body. When God called to Moses “out of the midst” of a bush (Ex. 3:4), that did not imply that the bush was divine.

DOES THE INDWELLING SPIRIT DEMAND MIRACULOUS POWERS?

Others would contend that if the Holy Spirit personally dwells in the Christian then he would be able to perform miracles. The connection is unwarranted. John the Baptist performed no miracles (Jn. 10:41), and yet he was “filled with the Holy Spirit **even from his mother’s womb**” (Lk. 1:15).

Incidentally, the preposition “from” in this passage is the Greek term *ek* meaning from the inside to the outside, thus suggesting that John was filled with the Spirit **even while in his mother’s womb**. This certainly excludes the notion that the Holy Spirit can dwell in one **only** through the agency of the Word.

WHAT ABOUT THE SAMARITANS?

It is further argued that even though the Samaritans had been baptized (Acts 8:12), they had not received the Holy Spirit (8:16), hence, there is no indwelling of the Spirit at the point of baptism.

This assertion, however, overlooks a very important phrase in verse 16. The text states:

“for as yet it was fallen upon none of them: **only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.**”

Why did not the sentence conclude with the words, “as yet it was fallen upon none of them” if absolutely no reception of the Spirit was being affirmed? Certainly such would have been sufficient to complete that thought.

Rather, a qualifying clause is added: “only (monon de — literally, ‘but only’) they had been baptized ...” Thus, the sense likely is: “for as yet it had fallen upon none of them: but only (in the manner bestowed when) they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.”

This compares well with the promise of the Spirit at the time of one’s baptism “in the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 2:38).

Concerning Acts 8:16, McGarvey⁶ notes:

“previous to the arrival of Peter and John the Holy Spirit had fallen **with its miraculous powers** on none of the Samaritans.”

GOD AND CHRIST INDWELLING THE CHRISTIAN

It is contended that both God and Christ are said to dwell in us, though they do not actually inhabit our bodies. So, similarly, is the case with the Spirit.

However, we are expressly told that God dwells in us **by means of the Spirit**. Paul says the Ephesians were “a habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22), and John affirms, “we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us” (1 Jn. 3:24; cf. 4:13).

Benefits of the Spirit’s Indwelling

There are residual benefits to acknowledging the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian. Let us consider a couple of these.

THE CONFIDENT LIFE

Every child of God is painfully aware of his inability to live perfectly before his Creator (cf. Rom. 7:14ff). Frequently, we have deep spiritual needs of which we are not even aware. We ought not to despair, however, for:

“the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8:26).

There are several important truths affirmed in this passage:

- We have needs which we do not adequately know how to address.
- In this regard, the Spirit continually helps us (literally, constantly bears the load with us).
- This assistance he “himself” (personally) provides.
- He takes our unutterable groanings and, by his ongoing intercessory activity, conveys our needs to the Father.
- God, who searches the hearts (where the Spirit abides — Gal. 4:6), perceives the “mind of the Spirit” — and responds to our needs consistent with his own will (cf. Rom. 8:27).

What a thrilling concept of the Spirit’s activity in our lives. Moses Lard has a wonderful discussion on this passage in his *Commentary on Romans*⁷.

Holiness

The Greek world into which Christianity was born tended to deprecate the human body. There was a proverbial saying, “The body is a tomb.” Epictetus said, “I am a poor soul shackled to a corpse.”

That concept accommodated a fleshly mode of living. Since only the soul was important, and not the body, one could give himself wantonly to the indulgences of the flesh.

It is this factor that certainly lies behind Paul's rebuke of carnal indulgence in the church at Corinth. The body is not to be given over to fornication (1 Cor. 6:13ff). One of the apostle's effective arguments for the sanctity of the Christian's body is that the Holy Spirit indwells that body as the temple of God, hence, those saints were to glorify the Father in their bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

We are confident that an awareness of the Spirit's abiding presence can be a powerful motivation to godly living. J.D. Thomas⁸ has noted that the doctrine

"of the personal indwelling of the Spirit and a strong providential activity aids our own spiritual development towards its highest potential. Though the age of miracles is over, spiritual relationships and spiritual activities are not over! The awareness that the third member of the Godhead personally and actually dwells within us is a tremendous incentive to holiness."

Conclusion

In affirming that the Holy Spirit dwells within the child of God, one need not suggest

- that miracles are performed today,
- that the Spirit "guides" or "illuminates" us in some way apart
- from the Scriptures,
- that he operates directly upon the saint's heart.

The fact of the Spirit's indwelling is a different issue altogether from the various modes of his operation as such were effected in the apostolic age.

A word of caution would appear to be in order as to the manner in which this controversy is addressed in our speaking and writing. Though most Christians acknowledge that this particular issue is not a matter of "fellowship," some, when addressing viewpoints that differ from their own, do so in a very condescending and caustic fashion. We do not believe that such a disposition is in the interest of candid investigation. Let us approach subjects of this type with a spirit of mutual respect and kindly accord.

REFERENCES

1. J. Harold Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of New Testament Greek*, Eerdmans, 1963, pp. 28-31.
2. Cf. the lexicons of: Arndt & Gingrich, 209; Thayer, 161; Robinson, 196; also the works of Kittel, II, 167; Vine, 147; Robertson, *Word Pictures*, III, 36; Moulton, Howard, Turner, *Grammar*, III, 214; *Expositor's Greek Testament* II, 91.
3. McGarvey, J.W., *New Commentary on Acts*, I, p. 39.
4. *Lard's Quarterly*, II, p. 104; cf. also Lipscomb and Sewell, *Questions Answered*, p. 318.
5. Colleyville, TX: Gobel Music Publications, 2000.

6. *Ibid.* p. 142, emphasis added.
7. pp. 276-278.
8. *The Spirit and Spirituality*, Biblical Research Press, 1962, p. 52.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Acts 2:38; Ephesians 4:8; Galatians 4:6; Acts 2; Acts 2:43; Acts 3; Acts 4:16; Acts 5:12-13; Acts 6:6; Acts 6:8; John 4:10; Romans 5:15, 17; John 12:48; Mark 10:30; Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6; Mark 16:16; Ephesians 6:17; Acts 2:41; Acts 2:38, 5:32; 1 Corinthians 6:19; Acts 10:45; Romans 8:9, 11, 16, 26, 27; John 4:2; Exodus 25:22; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 2 Corinthians 1:22, 5:5; Ephesians 1:13, 14; Acts 2:4; Matthew 10:8, 12:28; John 14:17; Acts 10:26; John 1:14; Exodus 3:4; John 10:41; Luke 1:15; Acts 8:12; Acts 8:16; Ephesians 2:22; 1 John 3:24; Romans 7:14; Romans 8:26; Romans 8:27; 1 Corinthians 6:13; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20¹

¹Jackson, Wayne. "What Is the "Gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38?" *ChristianCourier.com*. Access date: October 19, 2016. <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/715-what-is-the-gift-of-the-holy-spirit-in-acts-2-38>

"THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD" - The Gift of The Holy Spirit

Mark A. Copeland - 2009

INTRODUCTION

1. On the day of Pentecost, Jesus poured out the Spirit of God on all flesh...
 - a. As prophesied by Joel - [Ac 2:16-17](#)
 - b. As proclaimed by Peter - [Ac 2:33](#)
2. In his sermon, Peter offered hope to his guilt-stricken audience...
 - a. He offered remission of sins
 - b. He promised the gift of the Holy Spirit -- Provided they repent, and were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ - [Ac 2:37-39](#)
3. What is the gift of the Holy Spirit?
 - a. Is the gift **the Holy Spirit Himself**?
 - i. As in "the gift of \$100"?
 - ii. In which the \$100 is the gift?
 - b. Is the gift **something from the Holy Spirit**?
 - i. As in "the gift of John Brown"?
 - ii. In which John Brown is the giver of the gift?
4. The grammatical construction in English allows for either meaning...
 - a. The Holy Spirit is the gift
 - b. Or the Holy Spirit is the giver of the gift

As we endeavor to discern what is "the gift of the Holy Spirit", let's review some of the different arguments given for both positions. Beginning with...

1. The Grammatical Arguments**a. For The Holy Spirit as The Gift...**

- i. "gen., receive the Spirit as a gift, [Ac 2:38](#)." - **Arndt & Gingrich**, Dorea, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, p.210
- ii. "With the exegetical gen. of the thing given, the Holy Ghost, [Ac 2:38](#)." - **Thayer**, Dorea, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p.161
- iii. "In [Ac 2:38](#), 'the gift of the Holy Ghost', the clause is exegetical, the gift being the Holy Ghost Himself." - **Vine**, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, p.147
- iv. "The genitive is appositional, as in v.33 the promise is the Holy Spirit, so here the gift is the Holy Spirit." - **Lenski**, The Acts Of The Apostles
- v. "of the Holy Spirit - this clause is an appositional genitive with 'the gift' and means 'the gift, namely, the Holy Spirit.'" - **Kistemaker**, Acts, New Testament Commentary, p.110 -- **That the Spirit is the gift in [Ac 2:38](#) is the general consensus of Greek scholars**

b. For The Holy Spirit As The Giver Of The Gift...

- i. The phrase can easily be Objective Genitive instead of an Appositional Genitive
 1. E.g., the gift of John Brown; John Brown is the giver of the gift
 2. E.g., the gift of God; God is the giver of the gift - [Jn 4:10](#)
- ii. The meaning must be determined on the basis of doctrinal truth rather on grammatical form - **Franklin Puckett**, The Holy Spirit, p.14 -- **This view questions the doctrinal bias of Greek scholars quoted above**

Then there are...

2. The Contextual Arguments

a. For The Holy Spirit as The Gift...

i. The immediate context

1. Jesus spoke of the Spirit to His apostles as "the Promise of the Father" - [Ac 1:4-5](#)
2. Peter spoke of the outpouring of the Spirit as "the promise of the Holy Spirit" - [Ac 2:33](#)
3. Having just mentioned the "the gift of the Holy Spirit", Peter then says "For the promise is to you..." - [Ac 2:38,39](#)
4. What promise is Peter referring to in [Ac 2:39](#)?
 - a. The immediate context suggests the promise already mentioned and just offered as a gift
 - b. i.e., the promised Holy Spirit who has been poured out is now available as a gift to those who obey

ii. The remote context

1. The Spirit is given (i.e., a gift) to those who obey God - [Ac 5:32](#)
2. The same phrase ("the gift of the Holy Spirit") is used elsewhere when it clearly means the Holy Spirit Himself as the gift - cf. [Ac 10:44-47](#) -- **That the Spirit is the gift in [Ac 2:38](#) is supported by both the immediate and remote context**

b. For The Holy Spirit as The Giver Of The Gift...

- i. The promise in verse 39 pertains to the blessing of salvation, the consequent result of the remission of sins – **Franklin Puckett**, The Holy Spirit, p.22
- ii. The promise relates to the Abrahamic covenant, fulfilled in and through Christ ([Gen 12:1-3](#); [22:18](#); [Ga 3:14-16](#)) - *ibid.*, p.22-26
- iii. This view interprets Paul's phrase "the promise of the Spirit" ([Ga 3:14](#)) as that which the Spirit promised
 1. But Paul may have meant receiving the Spirit was part of the blessing promised to Abraham's spiritual descendants
 2. Note the immediate context, in which Paul had been talking about receiving the Spirit - cf. [Ga 3:2,5-9,14](#)

Certainly not as strong, but worthy of consideration are what others have understood in the past. What might be called...

3. The Historical Arguments

a. For The Holy Spirit as The Gift...

- i. "The Holy Ghost is one of the promises of the New Testament, [Ac 2:38-39](#)." - **Barton W. Stone**, Works of Elder B. W. Stone
- ii. "The phrase 'the gift of the Holy Ghost' occurs [Ac 2:38](#), and [10:45](#), and in both places must be understood as equivalent to the 'the Holy Spirit as a gift' - **T. W. Brents**, The Gospel Plan Of Salvation
- iii. "The gift of the Spirit promised in [Ac 2:38](#) was the Spirit itself" - **David Lipscomb**, Queries and Answers
- iv. "The expression means the Holy Spirit as a gift" - **J.W. McGarvey**, New Commentary on Acts of Apostles
- v. "Certainly the gift of the Spirit is the Spirit itself given." - **Moses Lard**, Lard's Quarterly
- vi. "The gift of the Holy Spirit is not some definite thing the Holy Spirit gives, but the Holy Spirit as a gift." - **R.L. Whiteside**, Reflections
- vii. "I believe the Holy Spirit is the gift to those who repent and are baptized." - **Ferrell Jenkins**, The Finger Of God -- **That the Spirit is the gift in [Ac 2:38](#) is a view that has been held by many; these are but a sampling of those in the Restoration Movement**

b. For The Holy Spirit as The Giver Of The Gift...

- i. "The 'gift of the Holy Spirit' is justification by faith or spiritual salvation." - **Franklin Puckett**, The Holy Spirit, p.26
- ii. "The gift of the Holy Spirit promised...is the gift given by the Spirit, not the Holy Spirit Himself." - **Richard E. Black**, "What Do You Know About The Holy Spirit?", edited by Wendell Winkler, p.201 -- **This view has increased in popularity in certain circles, though it is comparatively still a minority view**

Finally, here are some thoughts as to the doctrinal import of this passage. What we might call...

4. The Doctrinal Arguments

a. For The Holy Spirit as The Gift...

i. Different from the "gifts" of the Spirit

1. "We must distinguish the gift of the Spirit from the gifts of the Spirit. The gift of the Spirit is the Spirit himself, bestowed by the Father through the Messiah; the gifts of the Spirit are those spiritual faculties which the Spirit imparts, 'dividing to each one severally even as he will' ([1Co 12:11](#))." - **F.F. Bruce**, Commentary on the Book of Acts, p.77

2. "We need, however, to distinguish between "the gift" of the Holy Spirit and what Paul called "the gifts" (ta pneumatika, [1Co 12:1](#); [14:1](#)) of that self-same Spirit. "The gift" is the Spirit himself given to minister the saving benefits of Christ's redemption to the believer, while "the gifts" are those spiritual abilities the Spirit gives variously to believers 'for the common good' and sovereignly, 'just as He determines' ([1Co 12:7,11](#)). Peter's promise of the 'gift of the Holy Spirit' is a logical outcome of repentance and baptism." - **Richard N. Longenecker**, Expositors' Bible Commentary, Vol. 9, p.283
 - ii. **Related to the indwelling of the Spirit**
 1. "Since the gift of the Spirit in [Acts 2:38](#) is promised to all believing penitents who are baptized into Christ, and since the Spirit dwells in all Christians, this is the gift of the Spirit which was promised in [Ac 2:38](#). - **James D. Bales**, The Holy Spirit And The Christian, p.13
 2. "This indwelling is not accompanied by miraculous manifestations, but by moral and spiritual fruit ([Ga 5:22-23](#))." - *ibid*.
 3. If the "gift" is the Holy Spirit Himself, then it likely refers to the "indwelling" of the Spirit
 - a. A blessing enjoyed by all Christians (cf. [1Co 6:19](#); [Ro 8:9-11](#))
 - b. Which we shall examine more fully in another study
 - b. **For The Holy Spirit As The Giver Of The Gift...**
 - i. As indicated before, this view is that Peter refers to the gift of salvation given by the Spirit (cf. Puckett)
 - ii. This view is generally held by those who...
 1. Oppose any concept of a literal, personal indwelling of the Spirit
 2. Believe the Spirit's indwelling is entirely mediated, i.e., through the Word only
 - iii. This view is generally held by those who...
 1. Warn against the potential dangers of the opposing view
 2. Believe it provides a stronger case against certain doctrinal errors
 - iv. Yet these words by **R.L. Whiteside** regarding this view are very sobering: "...much perversion of Scripture is indulged in to support sectarian error, and some perverting is done occasionally to refute the arguments of errorists." - Reflections, p. 218

CONCLUSION

1. What is the gift of the Holy Spirit in [Acts 2:38](#)? I am mostly persuaded by ...
 - a. The overwhelming consensus of Greek scholars
 - b. The immediate and remote contexts in which the phrase is found
2. Like many others, I believe "the gift of the Holy Spirit" is **the Spirit Himself...**
 - a. Given to those who become children of God - cf. [Ga 4:6](#)

- b. A promise related to the indwelling of the Spirit - cf. [1Co 6:19](#)
- 3. The Spirit as the gift is an important element of the promise made to Abraham: "in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..." - [Gen 22:18](#)
 - a. A promise fulfilled by Jesus blessing us, in turning us away from our sins - [Ac 3:25-26](#)
 - b. A promise fulfilled by the work of the Spirit, whom Jesus poured out richly upon us that we might be justified and sanctified - [Tit 3:5-7](#); [1Co 6:11](#)
- 4. Even if "the gift of the Holy Spirit" in [Ac 2:38](#) refers to something the Spirit gives...
 - a. Other passages speak of the Spirit as being given to the Christian - [Jn 7:37-39](#); [Ac 5:32](#)
 - b. What a wonderful gift, one that refreshes the Christian like "rivers of living water"!

We shall learn more of the refreshing benefit of the Spirit in the life of the Christian, when we take a look at the indwelling of the Spirit...²

² Copeland, Mark A. "The Holy Spirit of God: The Gift of the Holy Spirit" *Executable Outlines*. Access date: October 19, 2016. http://www.ccel.org/contrib/exec_outlines/hs/hs_07.htm