

The Work of the Holy Spirit

Stan Crowley

Lesson 5:

The Gift and the Promise of Acts 2:38-39

The Gift and the Promise

- ◆ Acts 2:38 and 39 are two of the most important, but controversial, verses in the Bible.
 - | (Acts 2:38 NKJV) Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
 - | (Acts 2:39 NKJV) "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

The Gift and the Promise

- ◆ Some see Acts 2:38-39 as teaching that:
 - | All Christians of all times will have miraculous abilities.
 - | Some Christians in the age of miracles would have miraculous abilities.
 - | All Christians of all times will have the “indwelling” of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ Some say that the “gift” (2:38) and the “promise” (2:39) are the same thing; some say they are different.

From Lesson 1: Applying Good Study Methods to the Holy Spirit Passages

- ◆ Let other usages by the same N.T. speaker or author have priority in defining his phrases and words.
 - ✓ On same occasion or in same book.
 - ✓ On another occasion or in another book.
- ◆ View each passage first as the original hearers would have heard it.
- ◆ Be very cautious about adopting an interpretation that the original audience could not have understood.

From Lesson 1: Applying Good Study Methods to the Holy Spirit Passages

- ◆ Remember: The purpose of these lessons is to give you information, so you can make an informed decision.
- ◆ The information presented today may suggest conclusions that are different than ones you have previously held.
- ◆ Please at least consider alternative views.

The Gift and the Promise

◆ We will look at:

① The “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

② Connecting links between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

③ The “promise” in Acts 2:39

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

PHRASE: GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

◆ This phrase occurs only twice.

- | Acts 2:38 (which we are studying)
- | Acts 10:45 (Peter at Cornelius’ house)
(Acts 10:44 NKJV) ... the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.
(Acts 10:45-46 NKJV) And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. ...

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

PHRASE: GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- ◆ The phrase “**the gift of the Holy Spirit**” refers to miraculous abilities in Acts 10:45.
- ◆ The same phrase is used in Acts 2:38 (same author in same book).
- ◆ We should consider that the phrase “**the gift of the Holy Spirit**” might refer to miraculous abilities in Acts 2:38.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

WORD: GIFT (*dwreav*)

- ◆ Peter/Luke used *dwreav*(*dorea*) three other times. All refer to miraculous gifts.
 - | (Acts 8:20 NKJV) ... you thought that the gift of God could be purchased ...
 - | (Acts 10:45 NKJV) ... the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles ...
 - | (Acts 11:17 NKJV) “... God gave them the same gift as He gave us when we believed ...
- ◆ We should consider that “gift” might refer to miraculous abilities in Acts 2:38.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

- ◆ Luke uses the word “receive” with the “Holy Spirit” five times.
 - | Acts 8:15-19—Peter and John among the Samaritans
 - | Acts 10:45-47—Peter at the house of Cornelius
 - | Acts 19:2-6—Paul with the Ephesians
 - | Acts 2:33—the Apostles on Pentecost
 - | Acts 2:38

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

◆ Samaritans (Peter and John)

- | (Acts 8:17 NKJV) Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
(Acts 8:18-19 NKJV) And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, “Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.”

Receiving the H. S. refers to miraculous abilities.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

- ◆ What does it mean to “receive the Holy Spirit”?
- ◆ It is a figure of speech called metonymy.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

◆ Metonymy—Definition

- | “It is from the Greek words *meta*, change, and *onoma*, name, hence a change of name; the employment of one name or word for another.”
- | “Sec. 59. Metonymy of the Cause.—By this figure the cause is stated while the effect is intended.”

D. R. Dungan, *Hermeneutics*, pages 270-271.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

◆ Metonymy—Examples

- | “The pen is mightier than the sword.”
- | “They have Moses and the Prophets.”
- | “Receive the Holy Spirit.”

Cause	Result/Effect
pen	writings that influence
Moses and Prophets	Scriptures they wrote
Holy Spirit	Miraculous abilities thru H. S.

Receiving the H. S. refers to miraculous abilities.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

◆ House of Cornelius (Peter)

- | (Acts 10:45-47 NKJV) ... the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. ... the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out ... For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, “Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?”

Receiving the Holy Spirit refers to the same thing as receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Both expressions refer to miraculous abilities.*¹⁶

① The "Gift of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

◆ Some Ephesians (Paul)

| (Acts 19:2 KJV/NKJV) He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost/Spirit since ye believed? ...

(Acts 19:5-6 KJV/NKJV) ... they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost/Spirit came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.

Receiving the H. S. refers to miraculous abilities.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

◆ On Pentecost (Twelve Apostles)

- | (Acts 2:33 NKJV) ... having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear.
- | The promise involved “power.”
(Luke 24:49 NKJV) ... I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.”
- | They received power.
(Acts 2:4 NKJV) ... they [the Apostles, sjc] were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Receiving the H. S. refers to miraculous abilities.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

EXPRESSION: RECEIVE + HOLY SPIRIT

- ◆ Luke uses “receive” with “Holy Spirit” to refer to miraculous abilities—unless Acts 2:38 is the single exception.

Acts Ref.	Action	Object	Results
8:15-19	receive	Holy Spirit	visible signs
10:44-47	received	Holy Spirit	tongues
19:2	received	Holy Spirit	tong./proph.
2:33	received	promise of H.S.	tongues
2:38	received	gift of H.S.	???

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

WORD: YOU

- ◆ “You” does not necessarily mean everyone in the audience.
- ◆ Example: John said that Jesus “... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.” (Mat 3:11 NKJV)
 - | Would everyone in that audience have miraculous abilities AND be condemned?
- ◆ Sometimes the word “you” is used to express a principle.
- ◆ Acts 2:39 puts limits on “you” in 2:38.

① The “Gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

SUMMARY

- ◆ The language of Acts 2:38 indicates that “receiving” the “gift of the Holy Spirit” refers to miraculous abilities.
 - | The phrase “gift of the Holy Spirit” means miraculous abilities the only other time it is used (same writer/book).
 - | Peter and Luke always use the Greek word translated “gift” to refer to miraculous abilities.
 - | Luke never uses “receiving” with “Holy Spirit” to mean anything else except miraculous abilities.

The Gift and the Promise

◆ We will look at:

① The “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

② Connecting links between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

③ The “promise” in Acts 2:39

② Connecting Links Between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

WORD: FOR (BECAUSE)

(Acts 2:38-39 NKJV) [38] ...[A] “Repent, and ... [B] be baptized ... and you shall receive [C] the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] “For the promise is to ...

- ◆ Verse 39 is strongly linked to verse 38 with the word “for” (i.e., because).
 - | In verse 38, something is promised: he who does [A] and [B] will receive [C].
 - | Verse 39 explains WHO had been promised [C] (the “gift of the Holy Spirit”).

② Connecting Links Between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

◆ Those who who:

- | **[A]** lose weight and

- | **[B]** stop smoking

(to increase life span)

- | **[C]** will receive a discount on life insurance

THE PROMISE IS THE DISCOUNT

◆ Those who:

- | **[A]** repent and

- | **[B]** are baptized

(to receive remission of sins)

- | **[C]** will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

THE PROMISE IS THE GIFT OF THE H.S.

② Connecting Links Between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

WORD: FOR (BECAUSE)

(Acts 2:38-39 NKJV) [38] ...[A] “Repent, and ... [B] be baptized ... and you shall receive [C] the gift of the Holy Spirit. [39] “For the promise is to ...

- ◆ Verse 39 is strongly linked to verse 38 with the word “for” (i.e., because).
 - | In verse 38, something is promised: he who does [A] and [B] will receive [C].
 - | Verse 39 explains WHO had been promised [C] (the “gift of the Holy Spirit”).

② Connecting Links Between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

WORD: PROMISE

- ◆ The explanation of **promises** ties much of Peter's speech together.
 - | Peter recalls Joel's promise that some would have miraculous abilities (Acts 2:16-17).
 - | Peter explains that the miracles that the people had seen that day were in fulfillment of a "promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33).
 - | Peter promises "the gift of the Holy Spirit" to some believers (Acts 2:38).
 - | Then Peter explains the scope of that "promise" (Acts 2:39).

② Connecting Links Between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

WORD: PROMISE

◆ Peter recalls Joel's promise.

| (Acts 2:17 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

(Acts 2:18 NKJV) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

This would be the promise on the mind of the audience when they heard Acts 2:38-39. ²⁷

② Connecting Links Between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

WORD: PROMISE

◆ Peter recalls Joel's promise.

| (Acts 2:17 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams.

(Acts 2:18 NKJV) And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

***Acts 2:17-18 is the problem (not Acts 2:38-39).
Acts 2:38-39 is the solution—it limits the promise.***

The Gift and the Promise

◆ We will look at:

① The “gift of the Holy Spirit” in Acts 2:38

② Connecting links between Acts 2:38 and 2:39

③ The “promise” in Acts 2:39

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

- ◆ We will look at the scope of the promise.
(Acts 2:39 NKJV) “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”
- ◆ We will look at:
 - | “You”
 - | “Your children”
 - | Those “afar off”
 - | Those who received a “call” (related to this specific Greek word).

We will let Scripture interpret Scripture.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

TO YOU

- ◆ “You” refers to some of those there.
- ◆ Recall: “You” does not necessarily mean everyone in that audience.
 - ┆ Would miraculous gifts really be given to “all flesh” (Acts 2:17-18)?
- ◆ Likely Stephen and Philip were there, who later demonstrated miraculous abilities (received through the laying on of the Apostles’ hands).

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

TO YOUR CHILDREN

- ◆ The expression “your children” is used 7 times in the New Testament.
 - | (Mat 7:11 and Luke 11:13 NKJV) “... you ... know how to give good gifts to your children ...”
 - | (Eph 6:4 and Col. 3:21 NKJV) ... fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath ...
 - | (1 Cor 7:14 NKJV) For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.

Here, “your children” means one generation.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

TO YOUR CHILDREN

- ◆ The 6th passage is an interesting usage by Luke.
 - | (Luke 23:28 NKJV) But Jesus, turning to them, said, “Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.
 - | This is a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem that would occur in A.D. 70, forty years later—in the lifetime of their children.

Again, “your children” means one generation.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

TO YOUR CHILDREN

- ◆ In all 7 occurrences in the N.T. (including 3 usages by Luke), the phrase “your children” always means only the next generation.
 - | *Unless Acts 2:39 is the only exception.*

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

TO YOUR CHILDREN

- ◆ Interpreting “your children” in Acts 2:39 to mean only the next generation fits the duration of the miraculous age.
 - | Children born to adults in that audience (in A.D. 30) would live just past A.D. 100.
 - | Miraculous gifts would end just past A.D. 100, soon after the last Apostle died.
 - | Miraculous gifts would last for only one more generation!!

The promise of salvation will last until Christ returns.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

TO THOSE “AFAR OFF”

◆ The only other N.T. passage referring to those “afar off” is Eph. 2:13-17.

| (Eph 2:13 NKJV) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

(Eph 2:14-16 NKJV) ... that He might reconcile them both to God in one body. ...

(Eph 2:17 NKJV) ... you who were afar off and to those who were near.

Jews (those near) and Gentiles (those afar off) were to equally share blessings in Christ. 36

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

SUMMARY

- ◆ Acts 2:38-39 teaches that miraculous abilities were to be available for:
 - | “You”—some Jews of that era (“you” spoken to an audience can express a principle)
 - | “Your children”—Jews of the next generation
 - | Even those “afar off”—the Gentiles (e.g., those of Cornelius’ house)

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

NOTE THE PARALLELS

Acts 2:17-19	Acts 2:38-39
all flesh	Jews (you) <u>and</u> Gentiles (afar off)
sons and daughters	your children
<u>men</u> servants and <u>maid</u> servants	those who repent and are baptized
pour out Spirit; prophecy	receive gift of H. S.

Miraculous abilities for some obedient believers are clearly promised in 2:17-19.

The promise is explained and limited in 2:38-39.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

THE CALLED

- ◆ There is one more phrase in Acts 2:39. (Acts 2:39 NKJV) “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.”
- ◆ This single phrase makes many people:
 - | Reject the other (considerable) evidence.
 - | Apply the passage to every Christian.
- ◆ We will see how this specific word “call” is used in the N.T.

We will let Scripture interpret Scripture.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

THE CALLED

- ◆ “Call” can refer to becoming a Christian.
 - | (2 Th 2:14 NKJV) ... He called you by our gospel,
 - | (2 Tim 1:9 NKJV) ... and called us with a holy calling ...
 - | (Heb 3:1 NKJV) ... partakers of the heavenly calling ...
 - | These are all from the Greek words *kaleo* (*kaleo*) and *klesis* (*klesis*).
- ◆ In Acts 2:39 is a different form of the Greek word: *proskaleoma* (*proskaleoma*).



HOLY SPIRIT

REFERENCE SOURCE BOOK

A graphic of a spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover and a cream-colored page. The spiral binding is on the left side. A horizontal line is drawn across the page, just above the main text.

AN APPOINTMENT

proskaleoma
(*proskaleoma*)

The Greek word *proskaleomai* is used in two ways.

#1: PHYSICAL SUMMONS

- | It means to call to oneself; to summon to come to a physical place.
 - n (Acts 13:7 NKJV) ... This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.
 - n (Acts 20:1 NKJV) ... Paul called the disciples to himself ...

The Greek word *proskaleo* is used in two ways.

#2: APPOINTMENT TO A TASK

| b. call to a special task or office

(*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*—Arndt and Gingrich)

| to call to the performance of a thing, appoint, Ac. 13:2; 16:10

(*Analytical Greek Lexicon*—Moulton)

The Greek word *proskaleo* is used in two ways.

#2: APPOINTMENT TO A TASK

It is used three times with this meaning (all Deity appointed).

ⁿ (Acts 13:2 NKJV) ...“Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”

ⁿ (Acts 16:10 NKJV) ... go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

ⁱ (Acts 2:39 NKJV) “... the promise is to ... as many as the Lord our God will call.”

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

THE CALLED/APPOINTED

- ◆ Understanding the meaning of the word “**call**” in “as many as the Lord our God will **call**” (Acts 2:39) is extremely important.
 - | This particular Greek word is nowhere used to refer to the gospel call.
 - | It is used to refer to an appointment to an office or special function.

③ The Promise in Acts 2:39

THE CALLED/APPOINTED

- ◆ The phrase “as many as the Lord our God will call” does not broaden “the promise” to all believers of all time.
- ◆ The phrase actually limits the promise to those who were specifically appointed to have miraculous abilities.
 - | Those baptized with the Holy Spirit
 - | Those upon whom an Apostle laid hands

The phrase some feared would support those who believe in miracles today actually proves that miracles were limited to the early church era!⁴⁷

The Gift and the Promise

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- ◆ Acts 2:38-39 promised miraculous abilities were only for specialty-appointed believers of that era.
 - | The context of Peter's speech and every key word and phrase suggested that meaning to the Pentecost audience.
 - | Was there any reason they would have understood this part of the speech as describing some sort of "indwelling"?

We have let other Scriptures—not men—define the key words and phrases used. 48

The Gift and the Promise

THE FLOW OF PETER'S SPEECH

- ◆ Peter addressed the miraculous events that had caused the gathering (1-13).
- ◆ He explained the passage in Joel that promised miraculous abilities (14-21).
- ◆ He proclaimed that Jesus had “poured out” the miracles (22-37).
- ◆ Peter said that miraculous abilities were to be for some of that era (37-39).

The Gift and the Promise

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

- ◆ Acts 2:38-39 promised miraculous abilities would be available to special-
appointed believers of that era.
 - | It is one of several passages promising some obedient believers of that era miraculous gifts through the Holy Spirit. (Mark 16:16-18, Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, Acts 2:16-18, Acts 2:32-33, Acts 2:38-39)
 - | The only promise to believers relative to the Holy Spirit was miraculous gifts.

The promised H. S. was miraculous abilities.