

## The Holy Spirit and The Means Of Grace

“How much more shall the Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” • Luke 11:13.

There are few promises in the Bible that are so broad and all encompassing as this promise. The Holy Spirit is the gift of gifts! The

He is given to apply Christ and all the benefits of redemption to God’s elect that is salvation! He is sent to us from the Father and Son. He regenerates us. He indwells us, as the Spirit of Christ, calling us to faith and realizing the mystical union between us and Christ, so that being united to Christ through faith we have living communion with Christ in grace and glory. In Christ we receive all the benefits of his redemption, salvation full and free - justification, adoption, sanctification and glorification! The Spirit brings us into communion with all three persons of the blessed Trinity he establishes the covenant with us, and us in the covenant! The Holy Spirit is undoubtedly the great gift God bestows upon sinners. Having the Spirit of Christ, we have all things (2 Corinthians 3: 17-18). The

Now, the Lord is teaching us that we are to pray for the Holy Spirit. We have no greater need in our lives, day by day, than the saving operations of the Holy Spirit. In fact, in light of our own sinfulness, our utter dependence upon Him for communion with Christ in any grace, our duty to walk in holiness as our Father is holy, our own spiritual poverty and eternity to come, we have no other need. What is health and comfort if we have not the Spirit? The

But, by the promised workings of the Holy Spirit alone are the love of the Father and the fruits of the mediation of the Son communicated to us. Without His working we have no interest in these things at all. Without them we are unable to make any acceptable returns of obedience unto God. We need the Spirit! The

We need Him for all evangelical obedience otherwise we will be living in the dead letter! Obedience that rises from love and gratitude as willingness to deny self and follow Christ in obedience to the Father is the immediate effect of the Spirit of sanctification working within us. We must receive it from Christ, by the Spirit, or we have it not at all. John Owen: “He is a heathen, he hath nothing of the Christian in him, who doth not pray that God would work in him what he requires of him.” The

Especially, we need the Holy Spirit to breath spiritual life and saving efficacy into the outward means of grace, (2 Cor. 3:18). The means of grace are necessary because Christ has ordained them and works in and through them. But, we must detest and flee from formalism and ritualism. There is no intrinsic power in the means of grace. Church attendance, listening to sermons, receiving the sacraments, reading our bible and praying are lifeless without the Spirit. To trust in such things is fatal. It is dead works of the worst sort. The means become effectual means of salvation only by the working of the Holy Spirit, and the blessing of Christ, by whom they are instituted. (L.C. # 161). We must have the Spirit to carry us, in Christ, to the Father through those means! The

The most powerful means that ever was ordained for our good will be dead and heartless if Christ is not there by his Spirit to put life in it. In the Lord’s Supper it is the Spirit of Christ who quickens and makes the flesh of Christ to be indeed. And as it is with the flesh of Christ, so with all other ordinances. The Scriptures profit nothing, preaching profits nothing, the sacraments profit nothing; none of these will be meat indeed unless the Spirit of Christ quickens them. The

We should therefore desire that Christ would join his Spirit to all the ordinances of God and make them effectual. Come to the ordinances in dependence upon Christ, who is the life and scope of all, for a blessing upon them and for his presence in them. If we did that we would not find such dullness and deadness in them. Formality is the sin of this age. It is the sin of those that have a bit of religion in them. They will hear a sermon now and then, look at a book, and perhaps pray morning and evening, but never look up to the living and quickening Spirit, Jesus Christ. So all they do is dead and loathsome, like salt that has no savor. So, all their performances are like sacrifices that had no fire in them. The Lord loathes all our flat and lifeless services and, indeed, our persons too, being fleshly and not having the Spirit (Jude 19). The

What need there is to sanctify all we take in hand by prayer! When we go to hear a sermon, when we take up the Bible to read a chapter, alone or in our families, we should lift up our eyes and hearts and voices to heaven; we should say to Christ: “Lord, join your Spirit, be present with us. Without you the Word is dead; our hearts are dead and will harden under the means and darken in the light, and we shall fall under the heavy condemnation of these presumptuous and formal times, if you leave us to ourselves.” (Richard Sibbes “Glorious Freedom, p. 18-19) The

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