

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XX

May 23, 2010

No. 21

The Sealing Of The Spirit

Jerry Fite

What happens after you hear the word of salvation and believe in the Lord? Paul answers our question with these words: *“in whom having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God’s own possession, unto the praise of His glory”* (Ephesians 1:13-14). We learn that following believing in the Lord, we are “sealed” with the Holy Spirit.

The Greek word, SPHRAGIZO, translated “sealed” is the verb form of the noun, SPHRAGIS. A seal designates “ownership” or “authentication”. When Abraham received circumcision it was a *“seal of the righteousness of faith”* he had while still in an uncircumcised state (Romans 4:11, Genesis 15:6). It was a “sign” that he truly belonged to God, and God truly looked upon faithful Abraham as being righteous. A seal also denotes “security”. Pilate attempted to have the stone covering the tomb of Jesus “secure” by having it sealed *“So they went, and made the sepulcher sure, sealing the stone, the guard being with them”* (Matthew 27:66) The combination of ownership and security characterizes the word “seal”.

So, when Paul says we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit following believing in Christ through the word, he is saying that through the Holy Spirit God identifies us as truly belonging to Him, and we should have an understanding of security in such a relationship with the Lord. The Holy Spirit’s work in creating the feeling of belonging and security will continue *“unto the redemption of God’s own possession”* or when we are raised from the grave (Romans 8:23).

Paul also reveals that such sealing of the Holy Spirit is *“an earnest of our inheritance”* until our resurrection from the dead. The example of putting down “earnest money” as a promise we will fulfill our end of an agreement is illustrative of the concept behind Paul’s words. The Holy Spirit in some way has been given as a promise to bridge the time from our salvation from sin to the redemption of our body from the grave. Does God tell us how?

Some would assert that receiving the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit is this down payment until the resurrection. The power to do miracles is the seal that connects us with the Lord. But such a concept is contradicto-

ry to Jesus’ words. He says, *“Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works?’ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matthew 7:22-23). The ability to do miracles in the name of the Lord certainly is not down payment for feeling secure in our salvation. Jesus says these miracle workers were never authentic before him, yet they did miracles.

Paul describes the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of “promise” This promise is what the Spirit reveals through the word. From the time we believe in the Lord through the word of truth of our salvation until the day of redemption from the grave, what we possess as a down payment is the promise of a bodily resurrection and an inheritance reserved in heaven for us (I Corinthians 15, I Peter 1:3-5)

With the promise from a faithful God in our heart, we walk by faith with the confidence that we truly belong to God. The Holy Spirit thus seals us with security through His revelation until the resurrection from the dead.