

The "Earnest" Of The Spirit

The "earnest of the Spirit" is related to Christians in the scriptures (2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:3-14). As in all biblical things we must apply such blessings to our lives in a fashion which is defined by the scriptures.

What Is "Earnest?"

The word "earnest" is defined as "first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge, that pays a part of the purchase price in advance and so secures a legal claim to the article in question, or makes a contract valid." Its like a security deposit, a guarantee, or a proof of intentions.

When earnest is given by one side in a contract or agreement, it demonstrates they are "earnest" in fulfilling their full obligations spelled out by the contract. For instance, if one desires to purchase a property, he might make an offer with which he attaches a 5% earnest check. If the offer is accepted, the earnest check applies towards the purchase price. In this case the earnest check shows "earnestness" by the prospective buyer. If his offer is accepted, and he does not follow through with the purchase, he loses the earnest money. Therefore, "earnest," which relates to an agreement, is meaningful.

What Is "The Earnest Of The Spirit?"

What is it that has already been granted before we receive the full inheritance and "redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:3-14)? It would be all things done by the Holy Spirit to benefit a Christian to this point. Here are a few things which would represent an earnest. The Holy Spirit has given Christians an "earnest" in that He has already given us the opportunity to be saved, whether we are Jews or Gentiles. The Holy Spirit has given those who obey the gospel the promised "gift," which is all blessings one gets as he or she obeys the gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:7). The primary blessings would be forgiveness of sins and fellowship with God. The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16). The Holy Spirit makes intercession for Christians before God, with groanings that cannot be humanly uttered (Romans 8:26-27). All of this means that while we live on earth, this side of Heaven, and this side of incorruption and immortality, we can receive part of what the Holy Spirit ultimately gives to those who are saved in Jesus Christ.

Even before we get eternal life in Heaven, the Holy Spirit has given us salvation from past sins, and comfort through the word. It is exciting to

think that all these incomparable things are just an “earnest” of what is to come in Heaven. Did God have to give us the earnest of the Spirit? Obviously not. But He chose to, so we might have hope and comfort.

How Do We Receive The “Earnest Of The Spirit?”

We receive the earnest of the Spirit if we are in Christ. Those who are not in Christ have not received the earnest of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Ephesians 1:13-14). How does one get in Christ? One gets into Christ by obeying the gospel (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27). This requires a sinner to believe the gospel, repent of one’s sins, confess Christ as Lord, and be baptized in the name of the Lord. We receive the earnest of the Spirit when we obey the gospel of Christ.

How Do We Know We Receive The Earnest Of The Spirit?

The blessings which are an “earnest” must be accepted by faith. By faith we trust we can have salvation. By faith we trust we are forgiven when we obey the gospel of Christ (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). By faith we trust the Holy Spirit is bearing witness that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16), and by faith we trust the Holy Spirit is making intercession for the saints of God (Romans 8:26-27). If we live by faith in these things, we will also trust that God’s final reward for us, “Heaven,” will come in His time.

Could someone demand more than the “earnest” which is given by the Holy Spirit? Indeed, trusting the evidence of what God has already done for us is not enough for some people. God’s evidence of truth does not give them satisfaction. To them the “earnest” is not sufficient to produce the faith which God requires (Romans 10:17; Hebrews 11:1). They look for things not promised, such as physical evidence or a direct supernatural operation from God. They look for God to speak to them directly, to see a vision, to see a miracle performed, or to perform a miracle themselves, or to experience something like a bolt of lightning, or a burning within their bodies. They want “proof” beyond the earnest of the Spirit. But man is in no position to demand anything from God, much less to demand something beyond the “earnest of our inheritance” which God mercifully gives.

How did Paul know he was saved and that he could trust the other promises of God? Remember that Paul was saved, and he had faith in his salvation (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 1:12). But what proved that he was saved? Paul’s visions, miracles, and prophecies did not prove that Paul was personally saved. They proved that God could save anyone who obeyed the gospel of Christ, but they did not prove that Paul was living by the gospel. In fact, Paul said that his final reward could still be lost (1 Corinthians 9:27). The way

Paul knew he had salvation and the hope of everlasting life was because he knew the gospel to be the truth, and he had obeyed the gospel, and continued to live by it.

Paul's proof that he had the earnest of the Spirit was in the promises of God which were already fulfilled in his life, which were given through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had delivered some of these promises. He had baptized Jews and Gentiles, He had granted forgiveness through Christ, and He had borne witness of those who are children of God. And upon those promises which God already fulfilled, God assures everlasting life in Heaven. This is the proof Paul had of his daily salvation, and the proof that he had hope of eternal life. Paul knew this proof held true in his life because he committed his life to what God offered (2 Timothy 1:12). Paul trusted that if he participated in the promises of God through Christ, he would receive what God promised. Paul accepted God's proof by faith, and so must we.

The earnest of the Spirit assures us of what is to come. By the "earnest," such as the forgiveness of sins, which the Holy Spirit has already given, we know God's other promised blessings await us after this life is over. The Holy Spirit comforts us by giving us an earnest of our inheritance.

Adapted From Carl Lungstrum