

## The Earnest Of The Spirit

“Now he that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 5:5).

The word “wrought” in the text signifies “to work out, achieve, effect by toil ...” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words, Vol. 4, p. 232). Thus God has worked out, achieved for us “this very thing”. “This very thing” he alludes to is the previous statement: “not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed up, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4). How has God wrought “this very thing” that “what is mortal may be swallowed up of life”? The answer, of course, is the work of Christ. The Hebrew writer said, “Since then the children are flesh and blood, he also in like manner partook of the same, that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their life time subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14-15). Christ, by His death, paid the debt for sin; through His resurrection He brought to naught (nothing) him that had the power of death, the devil. Through His resurrection He delivered all them who through fear of death were subject to bondage. By the work of redemptive love and resurrection Christ wrought us for this ... that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life.

God not only wrought us for this very thing — the redemption of our body — He has given us the “earnest of the Spirit”. Three times this expression is found: here, in 2 Cor. 1:22, and once more in Ephesians 1:13-14. The expressions are similar. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 the apostle said, “Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ and anointed us is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” Ephesians 1:13-14 reads, “In whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation — in whom, having also 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.”

Just what is this “earnest of the Spirit” which, according to these passages has to do with our inheritance? Many are the answers given to the question. Some identify the “earnest of the Spirit” with the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to all obedient believers (Acts 2:38f). And, of course various explanations abound as to what that “gift of the Holy Spirit” is. “The baptism of the Holy Spirit” says one. “The personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit” says another. “Salvation” says yet another. Certainly the gift of the Holy Spirit be constructed to imply that the Holy Spirit is the gift, yet on the other hand it can be understood to mean a gift the Holy Spirit gives. Consider the phrase “the gift of God”. The phrase can be applied to Christ, the gift of God. Yet in Romans 6:23 the “gift of God” refers to the gift of eternal life: “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

“Earnest money” is a down payment or a pledge regarding a promised purchase. Since the “earnest of the Spirit” has to do without our inheritance, it seems that it is not the Spirit which is (personally) the gift: rather the earnest of the Spirit is the steadfast

assurance of the validity and value of the promised work of God that there is an eternal home for our mortal frame which give way to an immortal one.

There is great benefit and comfort to the believer if the earnest of the Spirit is His pledge to the believer: His pledge that there is to be an immortal body to house the spirit which at present resides in a decaying, mortal tabernacle. His pledge is that God has prepared a dwelling place for such an immortal one: "In my father's house are many mansions" (John 14:1f) and "I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:2). His assurance or pledge is that God seals them who are His own and will bestow upon them all His promises that He wrought in Christ: the redemption of our spirit and His prepared place for that spirit at the end of this world. Truly we are given "precious and exceeding great promises," the Holy Spirit's pledge to us. Through this promises we can become partakers of his divine nature and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust.

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