

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:5

Session 43: The Earnest of the Spirit

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, **who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**

The last half of verse 5 says that God has given us the earnest of the Spirit.

Here is what I was taught back in Bible College:

1. The Spirit is the “earnest” which is part of the price (the down payment) of the things which are promised.

In other words, we can be sure of the future redemption of our body, and we can be sure of having eternal life in the heavenly places (HP), because God has given us a down payment; His Spirit.

In a sense that is true; so what I am about to say is not meant to challenge that, but rather to put it in the perspective that I think Paul meant it.

What if “the earnest of the Spirit” is not talking about the Spirit itself? I was certainly taught that in Bible College, and I have heard that preached my whole life. But, we may be missing what is really going on here.

Let’s begin by examining what is meant by “earnest.” Yes, one definition of “earnest” is to say one is being “sincere, heartfelt, or with a feeling of intensity.”

For example:

Romans 8:19 For the **earnest** expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

2 Corinthians 5:2 For in this we groan, **earnestly** desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:

But 2 Corinthians 5:5 is using “earnest” in a different way. It is using it to describe an initial payment which confirms a transaction between two parties. Here are the definitions:

The word “earnest” means “1) a payment which serves as a pledge given to ratify a contract; 2) the initial payment which is part of the price, or purchase-money; and 3) the first payment which confirms the bargain, and which is regarded as an assurance that all the price will be paid.”

And what is involved in this pledge? Part of what is involved is the completion of our redemption. Yes, our soul and spirit are redeemed, but when God completes the redemption process it will include the redemption of our body!

Romans 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.²³ And not only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, **the redemption of our body**.

Along with the redemption of our body, we have been promised some other things too, but for now let’s just stick to the new body. That is why, in 2 Corinthians, Paul has been talking about getting that new body, a house not made with hands (not by men), but an eternal building of God which will inhabit the heavens.

Now we are set up for the big reveal in the last half of verse 5.

If you are selling a car, and a guy says, “I want to buy your car, but I don’t have all the money today. I can give you an earnest payment today, and I will bring you the balance on Friday when I get paid.” You say, “Okay.”

So, if you are selling the car for \$5,000, and his earnest payment is \$2,000, what will you be expecting on Friday? You would expect \$3,000, right? So what does that tell you about the earnest as compared to the balance?

It tells you that both, the earnest and the balance, must be of the same nature. If the earnest payment is money, then the balance is expected in money.

In other words, if you are being paid in “apples,” then both the earnest (down payment) and the balance will be in apples. If it is in money, both the earnest and the balance are in money. The point being that the earnest of the Spirit is of the same nature of the fullness of our redemption.

But here is the problem, if the Spirit itself is the earnest payment, then the balance is what...more of the Spirit? Did we only get half of Him when we were given the Holy Ghost? Do we get more of the Spirit when we get our new body? No. And this is my point. The “earnest of the Spirit” is not saying that the Spirit itself is the down payment, and because you have the Spirit you know you will get a new body.

The “earnest” is being paid “by the Spirit,” that is how it is the earnest of the Spirit. Look, if I am buying your car (as in our previous example) and when you walk back into your house with my \$2,000 in your hand, and your family asks you, what do you have in your hand, you might say (If you use the vernacular of the Bible) “This is the earnest of Michael McDaniel. He gave me this to demonstrate his intention to come back and redeem the rest of the purchase price of the car.” If you say, “this the earnest of Michael McDaniel, you are not holding Michael McDaniel in your hands, you are holding the earnest payment that Michael McDaniel paid.

If you are talking about the “earnest of the Spirit,” then either you only got a piece of the Holy Spirit when you trusted Christ, and as the earnest, when you get your glorified body, then you will get the rest of Him (which is not true), or what Paul means is that the Spirit is the one making an earnest payment, therefore, that payment can rightfully be called the “earnest of the Spirit” because it was the Spirit that paid it. In other words, the Spirit which lives in you is making an earnest payment.

What is that payment in the form of? It is a payment of things which the Spirit has done. For example:

Romans 8:23 And not only *they*, but **ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit**, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Do you know what firstfruits are? They are the first part of a crop that comes in early, before the main harvest. A harvest has three parts, firstfruits, harvest, and gleanings. The gleanings are the part which come last, after the main harvest. In

Israel, the gleanings were often left for the poor to come in and gather for themselves.

But, back to the firstfruits: when Paul says in Romans that we have “the firstfruits of the Spirit,” is he saying that we only have a little bit of the Spirit, a kind of foretaste of the Spirit, and we are waiting for the main “harvest” where we will get the whole Spirit? No. He is saying to the Romans, we have been given the firstfruits, or the initial things that the Spirit means to give us. Again, this is not about the Spirit itself, but it is about what the Spirit is doing.

What are the “firstfruits” that the Spirit gives? How about these: 1) the first thing the Spirit does once He takes up residence in us in response to our faith in Christ is to put us into Christ. So, the firstfruits of the Spirit would include the things which the Spirit does in connection with our salvation.

But that’s not all. The Spirit also gives us the mercies of God. If you remember that little treasure map I gave you where we cited 19 of the mercies of God. Because those are ours automatically, they are part of the “firstfruits” of the Spirit.

The things which are ours positionally are also part of the firstfruits of the Spirit.

The components of our new justified identity in Christ – forgiven/imputed righteousness/atonement – these are all part of the firstfruits of the Spirit. The components of our new sanctified identity in Christ – dead to sin/alive unto God/adopted sons and daughters – these are part of the firstfruits of the Spirit.

The spiritual blessings which Paul lists in the book of Ephesians, are all part of the firstfruits of the Spirit because they are the “things” which we possess first, before the rest of what God wants to do in us.

This is why we were told to “walk after the Spirit” in Romans 8:1; we “walk” in connection with those things which the Spirit has done. And Paul says that if we do, we will not “walk after the flesh.”

But is that all there is to what the Spirit is doing? No, in addition to the positional work of the Spirit, there is also a work to bring our everyday function up to the level of our standing.

So, these are not part of the “firstfruits” but they are something that God does by the Spirit which comes later? How about not being conformed to this world? How about having our minds renewed? How about making us godly so that we learn to think like God, live like God by doing things His way, and labor with God in what He is doing. We don’t get these automatically. But these are things which the Spirit is working to produce in us.

How about our Sonship Edification? The Spirit is using everything that you are going through to conform you to the image of God’s Son. This is not a firstfruits thing, but this is the goal for every member of the body of Christ. We need the firstfruits in order for these practical, more advanced spiritual things to take place in us.

But don’t lose the point. I am talking about this because of the phrasing:

The firstfruits of the Spirit – is not referring to the Spirit itself, but to something the Spirit has already done in us members of the Body of Christ.

The earnest of the Spirit – is not referring to the Spirit itself, but to something the Spirit is continuing to produce in us, the Body of Christ.

The “firstfruits of the Spirit” are the necessary preliminary things which must be in place, so that the “earnest of the Spirit” (which is His transformative work in us which shows up in our thinking and behavior) can be a reality for us. We cannot have the latter without the former.

That transformative work in our inner man, the ability to have the life of Christ made manifest in these mortal bodies, is the pledge, the down payment, or the earnest payment that proves God’s intent to, not just redeem our body, but to finish the work He began in us of conforming us to His Son, in the “day of Christ.” And why is that work the “earnest?” Because the transforming of our inner man is objectively observable in our everyday lives.

It is the proof that this is not some “pie-in-the-sky” type of thing; it is not some cleverly devised deception; neither is it some desperate attempt to make sense of the world; it is the visible proof (earnest) that God has started a work in us, which He will complete (pay the balance) once we get our new body.

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that **he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:**

That work which God began in us of conforming us to Christ, which God has predestined will take place, will be completed in the day of Jesus when we get our new body. Paul says he is “confident of this very thing.”

So, the earnest of the Spirit is the tangible proof of what God intends to do with us in the future. We get the “earnest” while we are on the earth, in this life. If you want to have confidence that our future conformity to Christ, our future new body is real, all you have to do is look at the earnest payment that is happening in your life right now.

How do you know the car buyer is likely coming back? Because you have \$2,000 of his money. How do we know this sonship life is real, and what it holds out for us in eternity is real, because we not only have God’s Spirit (which is kind of subjective because we only know that by faith) but we have an earnest payment – we are being transformed right now, in ways we can see it, and those around us can see it.

Therefore, the work that the Spirit is doing in us, that is the pledge or down payment or “earnest” of the balance; the full and perfected work of the Spirit which will take place in us after we have gone to be with the Lord, and after the Blessed Hope.

By the way, the work of the Spirit in us is objective evidence that we really do have the Spirit of God. If we are being changed by God’s word, we know that it is God’s Spirit which is doing that spiritual, inner man work.

So, to review: We have the firstfruits of the Spirit, which is not a tiny part of the Spirit, but it is the “first things” which are done for us by the Spirit. These are those things which the Spirit does in connection with our position in Christ.

Is that all the Spirit wants to do? No. What else is the Spirit doing? He is doing the spiritual work in our inner man to conform us to the image of God’s Son. And when we are transformed by the doctrine, that is the “down payment” or earnest pledge that the work that God has begun in us while we are here on this Earth, He

will bring to a completion after we have received our new body. In other words, the transforming work of the Spirit in our inner man is the proof or earnest, that God will complete the work of conforming us to His Son.

And if that spiritual work of our edification is the earnest, or down payment (so to speak), then the redemption of our body will signal the completion of our conformity to Christ, which is the only way we can be presented to the Father, perfect, complete and blameless! That is the balance, paid in full!

The work of the Spirit in our inner man is the witness that we have passed from death unto life and that is the pledge that God will complete that work in us.

As we will see, this sheds light on other scriptures which are related to this.

If you are reading / watching this session, do you know you can join us live on Zoom? We publish session notes and note-takers that allow you to interact with the lesson. You can request these resources or inquire about how to join us live on Sundays or Tuesdays by contacting us by phone at (888) 605-3202, or email staff@mbiworldwide.org.

If you are not sure about where you will spend eternity, we care about you and we want you to have eternal life. Scan the QR code below to watch a short video that will explain how you can have salvation through Jesus Christ.



The Most Important Decision