

The Book of 2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians 5:5

Session 44: The Earnest of the Spirit, cont.

In our last session, we covered 2 Corinthians 5:5 and the earnest of the Spirit.

I want to say a few things to finish our work on verse 5.

2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if our earthly house of *this* tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. ² For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: ³ If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. ⁴ For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁵ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, **who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.**

So, what is an “earnest” payment. We saw in our previous session that an earnest payment is an “up-front” initial payment that ratifies (put into force) a contract and is regarded as an assurance that the balance will be paid.

I don’t think of what God will do for us as members of the body of Christ (things such as redemption, our inheritance, etc.) as the fulfillment of a contract, but rather, the fulfillment of a promise. Yet, the Bible uses the word “earnest.”

I think it would therefore be perfectly in-line with Paul to say that the things that the Spirit has begun in us, demonstrate the Father’s intent to bring them to their completion. As such, those things would constitute “the earnest of the Spirit.”

Without trying to go overboard with the analogy of an earnest payment, I think the point Paul is making is that by the work of the Spirit, we have evidence of God’s sincere pledge to bring to a fullness those things which He has promised which come out of those things which He is already doing.

Our Bible says “earnest” and not “down payment.” I don’t want to get too far off track but technically, an earnest payment and a down payment are not the same

thing. (If you have ever bought a house, then you know those are two different payments that occur at two different times during the buying process.) I bring this up because I have often heard the “earnest” being referred to as a “down payment.”

Setting that aside, when it comes to the “earnest of the Spirit” God is demonstrating His serious intent to finish everything, for example, our redemption.

Before we talk about our redemption, I want to give a caveat to something I said in session 43. I said that one of the reasons that I do not think that the Spirit itself is the earnest payment is because the earnest payment and the balance payment must be of the same nature. I used the sale of a car as an example. If the car price is \$5,000 and the earnest payment is \$2,000, then the balance is automatically understood to be \$3,000 dollars: not apples, not jewelry, but dollars. In other words, the earnest and balance are both of the same kind.

With that in mind, if the Spirit is the “earnest,” then it could be argued that the balance would be “the rest of the Spirit” which we know is not the case, seeing we have all of the Spirit there is to get. We did not get a little bit of Him up front and we get the rest of Him later when we leave this life.

However (and here is the caveat), in the business world, it is possible for a balance payment to be in a different form from the earnest payment. However, this is only possible if: 1) this change is specified in the contract, and 2) it is agreed upon by both parties.

Let’s take redemption for example. Our redemption includes a number of things, all of which I can identify as being begun by the Spirit, which things serve as an “earnest” or an indicator of the serious intent of our heavenly Father to fully and completely redeem us.

We are a tripart being; spirit, soul and body. When we trusted Christ as our Savior, what part of us was saved? Was our spirit saved? It was. Our spirit was quickened (made alive) by the Spirit of God who was given unto us (Romans 5:5) and our spirit became spiritually alive, whereas before, we were spiritually “dead in trespasses and sins.”

How about our soul? Was it saved? It was. In the same manner, our soul was “saved” in that we were justified unto eternal life, and we received a new identity in Christ in connection with our justified status in Christ. Our soul is comprised of our mind, will and emotions. I realize that is an oversimplification, but this will work for what we are after.

Our soul and spirit are what constitute the real “us.” Our spirit and our soul are saved in the sense that we have been made righteous in our standing before God. But, our soul – our mind, will and emotions – does not always function in accordance with that righteous standing in Christ. Therefore, the Spirit of God (who lives in us) is working to conform our soul (mind, will and emotions) to the image of Christ so that we become godly by renewing our minds (think like God), and our conduct (live like God) is a byproduct of our godly thinking.

So, in a sense, our redemption has a past tense, we were saved when we trusted Christ; we are being saved, not from the debt and penalty of sin, but in our function of practical holiness. We would call this process “being conformed to the image of Christ.” That process is a result of the effectual working of God’s word to transform us, but we are insufficient to produce that effectual work of transforming us, that is the spiritual work that only the Spirit can do. And He is constantly working to do that.

Ephesians 2:10 For **we are his workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

By the way, if our spirit was not already saved, the part of our redemption which constitutes practical holiness could not take place. The order of events within our redemption are in perfect order, by the wisdom of God.

And lastly we have a part of our redemption which will take place in the future. Actually, two things take place in the future.

The first to take place is the redemption of our body.

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**.

This will take place at the event of the Blessed Hope. As far as our redemption goes, the redemption of our spirit can be seen as the “earnest” and the redemption of our body can be seen as the balance. Our salvation in Christ serves as the pledge that God will keep His promise to redeem our body. And when it comes to the future completion of our redemption, the redemption of our body is necessarily first.

What comes next? The completion of our being conformed to the image of Christ. I believe the redemption of our body takes place first because it will be necessary to shed this body of flesh in order to bring us unto perfection, which is the completion of our conformity to Christ.

And how do we know that God will complete that work of conforming us to the image of His Son? Because we have an “earnest” of the Spirit which has already been at work in us to do just that.

Whatever work has been done in this regard, will count toward the balance. That is, that work will survive and count – because it is the gold, silver and precious stones at the Judgment Seat of Christ (JSoC). God will not have to repeat the work that has already been done in you, but He will have to provide the balance.

Here is my point: the work He has already done can be viewed as the “earnest of the Spirit” which demonstrates our Father’s intent to finish His work in us.

Do you see the pattern?

The redemption of when we were saved is the necessary earnest, which is God’s pledge to finish the redemption of our body.

The work of conforming us to the image of His Son while we are living right now on this earth is the earnest, which is God’s pledge to finish conforming us to the image of His Son.

And that’s not all. I have already talked to you in our previous session about the “firstfruits of the Spirit.” That does not mean we only got a little foretaste of the Spirit when we trusted Christ; the firstfruits of the Spirit are the first things the

Spirit did for us in response to our faith in Christ. For example, the Spirit put us into Christ, and not only that, but He also made us to be part of His body.

Not only that, but the Spirit applied our new identity in Christ to us so that we truly are righteous in our standing before God; we have the very righteousness of Christ imputed to us. Not only that but the Spirit administered to each of us, individually, the elements of our sanctified position in Christ whereby we are dead to sin, and alive unto God. We were also given the Spirit of adoption (Romans 8:15), so that while we are yet on this Earth, we are, in truth, sons and daughters of God by way of adoption. That is the relationship we now have according to Romans and Galatians, but again, we have the “earnest” of our adoption which “balance” will be fulfilled when we get our new body.

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.**

Paul tells us in Galatians that we already have part of our adoption now (that would be the earnest) and we will get the rest at the Blessed Hope when we get our new body.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,⁵ To redeem them that were under the law, that **we might receive the adoption of sons.**⁶ And **because ye are sons**, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.⁷ Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

The only way we become sons (or daughters) is by adoption, which we are given a part now, which will be fulfilled later. But again, this is part of the firstfruits of the Spirit (the things the Spirit administered to us) because we are in Christ.

While those “firstfruits things” had to be accomplished in order for us to: 1) become the godly creatures we were intended to be, and 2) do the things God intended for us to do, we must have been given these “firstfruits of the Spirit.” In other words, these are among the first things which the Spirit of God does in us as they are

administered to us individually. All of those firstfruits of the Spirit are given to us even before we knew about them. And if you noticed, the “firstfruits” have to do with things pertaining to our positional standing in Christ.

And since the Spirit is the One doing the work, I can look at those things as an “earnest” (or a pledge) of that which is yet to come in the full “redemption of the purchased possession” which we will not have until this life is over.

Now, if you want to think that the Spirit being given to you is the earnest payment, I won’t argue with that. I said last time that there is a sense in which I see the Spirit itself being the “earnest” because He is the One who is doing the spiritual work in our inner man. But, I don’t view the Spirit as part of the purchase price. What I see is the present work of the Spirit being the earnest of the promised work He will complete in the future.

Last session, we talked about the definition of firstfruits, which I said are indicators of some things the Spirit has done in us. But, as we move on through Paul’s epistles, we come to something very similar, but these are simply referred to as the “fruit of the Spirit.”

Is there a difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the firstfruits of the Spirit? I think there are some differences. The firstfruits of the Spirit have to do with the positional truths of those things which constitute our justified and sanctified positions in Christ. They are unchangeable, unalterable, and eternal, and are already complete.

For example, we are already righteous before God because of the imputed righteousness of Christ. We will never be more righteous in our standing before God than we are now; we will never have more of the imputed righteousness of Christ than we have now. That means we are as justified in the eyes of God as we will ever be. Our glorified body, the completion of our adoption, the completion of our being conformed to the image of Christ will not improve any of the “firstfruits” of the Spirit.

However, when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit, those are things which are not automatically ours in Christ, but constitute things pertaining to our functional life. Do you follow what I mean? Let's read about them.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.²⁴ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Just to take a few of these for an example, we know that the first "fruit of the Spirit" mentioned is love. The kind of love that Paul is talking about is generated in us by the scriptures back in Romans 12.

Romans 12:3-8 generates godly love in us for the other members of our local assembly (selflessness) and is expanded (Romans 12:9-10) to the local assembly by our affections and preferences (kindness). This constitutes the first core feature of godly love.

Romans 12:11-12 moves us from the church to the outside world, to our workplace, school, or place of business, and then is expanded to the world at large.

The next core feature of godly love concerns saints who are part of the body of Christ, but not part of the local assembly of which we are a part, it includes the lost whom we "value and esteem" in a different way from the saints, and finally, the godly love we have for saints of "low estate."

I don't need to reteach all of this as we covered it when we were in Romans, chapters 12 and 13 as we learned the sonship decision-making skills of wisdom and justice.

Let's not lose the point: My point is to say that godly love has several avenues and we can have it working in us in some, and not so well in others. Love is not something we ask God to give us; it is something that is generated in us by the Spirit of God as we engage with the specific scriptures which are designed to create love by our godly thinking and godly living.

That engagement is made up of reading, studying, meditating, memorizing, praying and living those scriptures (RSMMLP). We fill our minds with the doctrine, and we find ways to put it into practice. We evaluate ourselves, we make any needed adjustments and we go again.

As we purposefully engage in this process, the Spirit is performing the spiritual work of renewing our minds and conforming us to the image of Christ, until one day, we will have been transformed by the doctrine to such a degree that we no longer have to think about how to think or how to act. We will think and act like Christ because we will have been edified unto godliness in that area.

So we have the earnest of the Spirit as He works to produce godly love in us, and one day, that work will be completed and we will have every aspect of love fully working in us.

And we could do the same thing for each of the items listed there in Galatians 5. The same “comforts” afforded to us here will be of the same nature of those afforded us in Heaven. What is meant by “comforts?” It means that our life in the heavenly places (HP) will also consist of godly love, peace that passes understanding and joy unspeakable.

Edification (practical sanctification), requires two things from God: 1) His word, and 2) His Spirit. The word of God cannot do its perfecting work in us apart from the Spirit of God. (And other than to use the general terms in the Scripture to describe it, i.e., effectual working, the Bible does not explain the mechanics of the process whereby the Spirit takes the written word we have in our minds, and uses that to actually change us into the image of Christ in our inner man.) At the same time, the Spirit of God will not do the work of conforming us to the image of Christ apart from God’s word. The Spirit cannot make the “bricks” which make up the “edifice” or “building” of our inner man, without the “clay” of God’s word.

Okay, back to the lesson where we are talking about the “comforts” afforded to us when we get our new body and we are in the heavenly places.

I was talking about the renewing of our mind which is something the Spirit is involved in, as being part of the “earnest” or “down payment” of that which is to come; once we enter into the life to come, that process will come to its full.

In other words, on the basis of the Spirit being the earnest of a “like” payment in full, it is not that we get more of the Spirit when we get to Heaven; as He is not the currency of the earnest payment, but we get the fulness of the same works which He began working in us while we were on Earth, only in eternity His work will be completed and perfected in us.

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