

The Outpouring of the Spirit, #4

The Blessings of the outpouring of the Spirit on the believer, #1

Intro: We have considered so far the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit in Joel and how that that outpouring was said to be fulfilled first in the apostles and then upon those upon whom they laid their hands. The work of the Spirit was two-fold: 1) revelation of the word; 2) confirmation of the word. Last week we noticed the blessings that this process of revelation and confirmation brought to the unbelieving world.

Now we can also see that the outpouring of the Spirit brought blessings to the believers as well. These blessings came about indirectly through the work of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and other prophets who proclaimed the gospel and performed miracles.

But from the NT we can see that the Holy Spirit had a more direct effect upon those who obeyed the gospel. So let's consider tonight the blessings of the outpouring upon the believer. In our earlier study we showed that...

The outpouring of the Spirit came upon the early church through the laying on the apostles' hands. It was the normative experience for those heard and obeyed the gospel. We have had a tendency to downplay the charismatic nature of the NT Christianity, basically I think because of a few problematic passages and some unnecessary presumptions about a few key texts that have influenced our thinking in the wrong direction. But notice the consistency with which the NT stresses this miraculous work of the Spirit in the early church.

The people of Pentecost were promised a share in the outpouring of the Spirit (Ac 2:38-39). This was in keeping with Jesus' promise concerning those who "believe" (Mk. 16:17).

The disciples in Samaria were given the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Ac. 8:17).

The disciples in the churches of Galatia received the Holy Spirit with the result of miracles being performed (Gal. 3:1ff).

The disciples in Corinth received the Spirit, possessing nine distinct spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:13).

The disciples in Ephesus received the Spirit manifested by prophecy through the laying on of Paul's hands (Eph. 19:1-6).

The first rule of exegesis is, "What did the statements of Scripture mean to those who first heard them?" Understanding the background experience of the churches with the Spirit will help us also understand more accurately the statements made to them about the Holy Spirit in the epistles directed to them! So then let's consider what blessings this reception of the Spirit provided for those who received the outpouring of the Spirit.

The Spirit bore witness that they were God's children.

How would God make known to the unbelieving world that this new group of disciples following Jesus Christ belonged to Him? How would He demonstrate beyond doubt that the church of Christ was the fulfillment of the OT prophecies concerning the coming king and His people? I believe that God did that through the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit upon these new disciples. Let's consider the evidence:

Paul's statements to the Ephesians

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

I submit that Paul's statement to the Ephesians should be understood in light of the Ephesians' experience. In Ac. 19 we are told that when Paul came to Ephesus he found some disciples and he asked them a most interesting question. "Have you received the Spirit since you believed?" This question indicates Paul's desire as an apostle to impart the Holy Spirit to new disciples through the laying on of his hands. However, in this case, these disciples had not heard of the Holy Spirit. By this Paul knew that they had not heard the gospel, since the promise of the reception of the Spirit after baptism was a part of the gospel message. Thus, after confirming this he taught them the gospel of Jesus Christ, baptized them in Jesus' name, and then laid his hands upon them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying (Acts 19:6).

Paul's words in his epistle should be understood in light of the Ephesians' experience. After hearing the gospel of salvation they were "sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise".

The expression "Holy Spirit of promise" points back to the prophecy of Joel that the outpouring of the Spirit would come upon all flesh.

The word "seal" is of special importance here. The word "seal" conveys the idea of putting a mark or stamp on something to establish its authenticity or to identify it as belonging to someone. Paul is here affirming that God put His seal upon these new believers as belonging to Him, marking them as His authentic children, through the outpouring of the Spirit. Who could deny that these disciples were truly God's children when the manifest miraculous work of the Spirit was taking place through them?

Later in the same epistle Paul would affirm that the Spirit's presence indicated that these disciples were the true temple of God!

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself

being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

In chapter four he urges them not to “grieve the Spirit by which they were sealed for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30).

To grieve the Spirit is to make the Spirit sorrowful by failing to let the Spirit’s revelations have their effect in the disciples’ lives!

And so I would suggest that we should read and understand these Holy Spirit statements in light of the Ephesians’ experience described by Luke in the book of Acts.

Paul’s statement to the Corinthians

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

What is the background information for understanding these statements?

We know that both Paul & Timothy had received the outpouring of the Spirit.

We know that the Corinthians had received the outpouring of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13ff).

We know that the concept of “anointing” was associated with the coming of the Holy Spirit on someone and miraculous power it brought.

“You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him. (Acts 10:38)

The Corinthians, like the Ephesians, along with Paul and Timothy had been “sealed” with the Spirit.

The idea is that by the reception of the outpouring of the Spirit God clearly marked them as authentic disciples, His children.

The spiritual gifts working among them gave clear evidence to them and to the unbelieving world that they belonged to God.

This may also help us understand the statement of Paul in Romans 8 about the Spirit’s testimony of sonship.

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (Romans 8:15-16)

The reception of the Spirit by the Romans enabled them to know that they were children of God. Thus, the Spirit was “bearing witness” by charismatic gifts that they were God’s children (Cf. Rom. 12:6).

Paul makes a similar argument to the Galatians.

He shows that they were sons of God through faith in Christ in being baptized. But furthermore he shows that the reception of the Spirit is the evidence that they were the sons of God!

And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" (Galatians 4:6)

Compare this statement with the earlier ones where Paul mentions the reception of the Spirit and the miracles that came through it (Gal. 2:1ff).

Now the next argument grows logically out of the first. If then the Spirit's presence in them was proof that they were God's children, then it is also proof that the inheritance God has promised will be forthcoming in due time.

The Holy Spirit assured them that the inheritance God had promised to them would be given to them!

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

The word "pledge" translates "arrabon", a Greek word conveying the idea of a prepayment, down payment, earnest. Cf. real estate

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. (Romans 8:16-17)

Conclusion: And so the early church had a very real sense of their belonging to God that was tied to the miraculous manifestations that came to them through the outpouring of the Spirit. In addition the presence of the Spirit speaking through them in their Spirit-guided prayers and prophecies and in the performance of miracles assured them that the inheritance God had promised them would at last be given to them.