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sequence and natural transitions. And the way in which the dominant themes of the Gospel constantly recur makes it inevitable that passages in one part will have a close affinity with passages in another part, without demanding a rearrangement of the material so as to bring such related passages together.

(To be continued)

## NEW TESTAMENT WORD STUDIES

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(SPHRAGIS ; SPHRAGIZO = 'a seal' ; 'to seal'.)

The Apostle Paul on three occasions speaks of the believer as being 'sealed' by the Holy Spirit, using a term frequently employed to indicate the attestation of a fact or the claim to property. Moule commenting on Eph. 1:13 says, 'the idea of the phrase is a double one, attestation of reality (cp. John 3:22; Rom. 4:11; 1 Cor. 9:2) and claim of property (cp. Rom. 15:28). "The Spirit" was at once the proof of the presence of Divine faith in the recipient, and the mark of Divine ownership over him'. Westcott notes that '*sphragis* is used of a visible attestation of the reality of a spiritual fact (1 Cor. 9:2; Rom. 4:11; 2 Tim. 2:19). The "seal" openly marked the servants of God as belonging to Him (2 Cor. 1:22) and assured them of His protection'. 'Here, Eph. 1:13, and in 4:30,' says Salmond, 'the idea seems to be either that of authenticating or certifying them to be of God's heritage, or that of marking them as such'.

Certain interesting features are found in each of the passages where this expression is used of the believer being sealed by the Spirit, which we proceed to examine.

1. *Eph.* 1:13 'In Whom having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise'. Note three main points.

(a) The *Sphere*—'in Whom'—every blessing is acknowledged as coming to the believer in that Sphere, in which Christ is seen to be 'the all'—both centre and circumference. 'In Him',

salvation has been secured; 'in Him', the word of Truth has found expression and communication. 'In Him', they had come to believe and so find an object of faith, a blessed Person filling out the content of that which they had had presented to them in 'the Word of Truth'.

(b) The *Sequence*—'having heard . . . having believed' (R.V.); or 'When ye believed' (Findlay); 'on believing' (Moule). They had heard and believed so were sealed by the Spirit. Evidently from the language employed, the sealing was not subsequent to the act of faith, but simultaneous with it. Faith on their part and the attesting of that fact, on God's part, by the impartation of the Spirit assured them that salvation was theirs and that they had become God's own possession.

(c) The *Seal*—'The Holy Spirit of promise'. It was a definite act performed at a special point of time, 'when ye believed . . . ye were sealed'. This Seal is declared to be:

(i) The Holy Spirit of promise. His coming is in relation to God's promise, and so is in accordance with that 'counsel of His will', purposed in the eternal age; promised in the earlier times, and now pledged for all believers, who, like the Ephesians, have heard and believed the Word of Truth.

(ii) An Earnest of our Inheritance. His presence in the believer is purposeful. He enables them, in part, to realize what their inheritance in Christ is now and leads them to contemplate what it will be in its richness and fulness when Christ shall come and claim the possession to which His Seal has been so securely attached.

(iii) That which is 'unto the redemption of God's own possession'. The seal being given, the claim is made that the sealed are God's own possession; a claim that will be honoured in full, when the Christ comes to 'set free', 'to redeem' His own from their present 'bondage' to the earthly, and bring them to the heavenly sphere to which, by reason of their 'redemption through His blood', they now properly belong.

(iv) 'Unto the praise of His Glory'—is the further end secured. Findlay's note in the *Expositor's Bible* is worthy of careful reading:

We can but quote an extract: 'A seal is a token of proprietorship put by the owner on his property; or it is the authentication of some statement or engagement, the official stamp that gives it validity; or, it is the pledge of inviolability guarding a treasure from profane or injurious hands. There is the *protecting* seal, the *ratifying* seal and the *proprietary* seal. The same seal may serve each or all of these purposes'.

Here the thought of possession predominates (cf. v.4), but it can scarcely be separated from the other two. The Witness of the Holy Spirit marks men out as God's *purchased right* in Christ (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). In that very act it guards them from evil and wrong (4:30), while it ratifies their divine sonship (Gal. 4:6), and guarantees their personal share in the promises of God (2 Cor. 1:20-22).

2. *Eph.* 4:30. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in Whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption'. Note again the main points.

(a) *The Pause*—'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God'.

In the flow of a series of exhortations regarding the conduct of the believer Paul makes a pause; there is another reason for watchfulness in moral issues. This arises from the fact of the Holy Spirit's presence with them as the seal of God's ownership of them. The straying from the path of truth, the indulgence in unwarranted anger, the giving way to unlawful habits, such as seeking subsistence by taking a neighbour's possessions instead of obtaining such as the fruit of one's own labour,—these, and other evil deeds, pain the Holy Indweller, and are contrary to the course upon which He would seek to lead. If the thought to do such things comes to you, pause, he would seem to say, and consider the nature of the Person with Whom you are joined, and Who has such an interest in you, ever seeking to lead you on to '*that day*'.

(b) *The Pact*. 'In Whom ye were sealed', i.e., claimed as His own and guarded as such. It was a pact of God, they were His; they were sealed with His seal, the Holy Spirit of promise, and the consciousness of that fact would ever prevent their giving expression to the evil ways of 'the old man', or the corrupt speech

of the ungodly man. This fact of their sealing could evidently be said of all the saints to whom he wrote. It was not something to be said of just a favoured few, or of a special class of faithful ones, or, of some who had agonised to receive it. And it was the seal for each one of something yet to come.

(c) The *Prospect*. It was 'unto the day of redemption'—the day of their being freed from the limitations of this life, from the bondage imposed by this body of flesh with its possibilities of mistake and ungodliness, or from 'strong desires which war against the soul'. They were sealed with a view to that redemption. Redemption in all its fulness would then be a completed work and they would be at home with their Lord.

3. 2 *Cor.* 1:22. 'Who also sealed us and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts'. As above, the One Who seals the believer is God, and this act is accompanied by the giving to the believer the earnest of the Spirit, Who becomes the Guarantee of the great inheritance to which the believer has been made an heir, being a 'joint heir together with Christ'. It is of interest to note how the Persons of the Godhead are brought together in this connection. The believer is stablished in Christ, anointed and sealed by God, and given the earnest of the Spirit Who dwells in his heart.

In the assurance that is given by this act of sealing, the Apostle bids his readers look on to the glory of God, the ultimate end of all this blessed activity. The out-reach of the soul to that glory, will have lasting moral and spiritual effects upon the life, for, to use another phrase of the Apostle, the believer will be '*alive unto God*'.