

(Power From on High) 13. the Holy Spirit in Second Corinthians

by A.B. Simpson

The Holy Spirit is the anointing, seal, and earnest of believers, revealing Christ's glory and image in us, and making us living epistles and likenesses of our blessed Lord.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:21

Topics: "The Holy Spirit", "Transformation in Christ"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers, illustrating this through five key symbols: anointing, sealing, earnest, living epistles, and photographs of Christ. He explains that the anointing signifies being set apart for God's service, while the seal represents God's ownership and authenticity in our lives. The earnest of the Spirit serves as a guarantee of our spiritual inheritance, and we are called to be living epistles, reflecting Christ's character to the world. Finally, as we behold the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into His likeness, becoming living photographs of Jesus. Simpson encourages believers to embrace these truths and allow the Holy Spirit to work within them.

Transcript

"Now, He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." 2 Cor. 1: 21, 22. "Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Cor. 3: 3. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2Cor. 3: 18.

These three verses present to us five striking and instructive symbols of the Holy Spirit; jewels, they are, of holy metaphor, flashing celestial light from their faces, and speaking of the deepest truths of Christian experience.

I. THE ANOINTING.

"He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God."

The figure of anointing runs through all the Scriptures, and it is crystalized in the very name of Christ and Christian. Christ means the Anointed One, and the Christian is the Christ-one, or the one that has been anointed with the Holy Ghost. We see it in all the ceremonies of the Old Testament. Especially was it employed in the setting apart of the three great officials of the Old Testament; the prophet, the priest, and the king.

Prophets were anointed that they might be set apart as witnesses and messengers of the will of God, and so we are God's witnesses and messengers. Priests were anointed to stand between God and the people, and make intercession in behalf of others; and so we are anointed as God's holy priesthood, to come near into His presence, to worship at His feet, to present the incense of faith, love, and devotion, to bear upon our hearts the sufferings, sins, and needs of others, and to share the priesthood of our glorified Master. And kings were anointed to rule in the name of God, and to stand in glorious majesty representing Jehovah to the people; and so we are a royal priesthood, kings and priests unto God and His Father; and, possessing the Holy Ghost, ours shall be a regnant life, victorious over self and sin, triumphant over temptations and difficulties, and glorious in the dignity of our high calling.

For this threefold ministry we are anointed of the Holy Ghost. Only the Holy Spirit can fit us for so high a calling, and He is given to every follower of Jesus who is willing to receive and obey Him.

The figure of anointing is used with still more wide and beautiful significance. It speaks of holy gladness. "Anointed with the oil of gladness above our fellows." "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over." It is the symbol of healing, "anointing with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up."

This anointing is the privilege of the humblest believer, and of the most unworthy sinner that is willing to receive Jesus and be baptized with the Holy Ghost. There is no more beautiful figure of the anointing, in the Old Testament, than the story of the leper in the book of Leviticus. A poor outcast, unworthy and sinful, he was brought unto the priest in his helplessness and misery; then he was touched with the blood, washed with the water, disrobed, and cleansed; and then he was clothed upon in the garments of holiness; the blood of the oil touched the tip of his ear, his thumb, and his foot, and he, too, became an anointed one.

So, still, the most helpless, hopeless, and worthless may receive the very highest gift of the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Holy Ghost, and say with the apostle, "Now He which stablisheth us in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God"; and then go forth to say with the Master, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; for He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim deliverance to the captives, the recovering of sight to the blind, and set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

II. THE SEAL.

The seal is associated with all the relics of antiquity and all the customs of business in every age. It is used first to authenticate and certify; and so the Holy Ghost certifies the believer, putting the stamp of God upon him, giving to him the witness of his acceptance and the assurance of His full salvation.

Next, the seal is the token of ownership; and so the Holy Ghost sets us apart, stamping us as the property of God, and marking us as no longer our own, but the purchased possession of Jesus Christ, bought by His blood, bound to live for His service and glory.

Again, the seal is the expression of reality. It cuts its impression in the wax and makes it real, tangible and enduring; and so the Holy Ghost makes the things that we have known, real, and turns into actual experience that which was before but theory. He makes truth real; He makes Christ real; He makes divine things facts in our consciousness and our blessed experience.

Finally, the seal transfers the image and the Holy Ghost imparts to our receptive hearts the very image of Jesus Christ, and leaves the stamp of His character upon our lives.

You cannot, however, affix the seal to the hard and settled wax. It must be soft and melted; then the impression is easily made and becomes fixed and abiding; and so God has to soften our hearts before He can seal them. Oh, the blessedness of brokenness! The Holy Spirit is ever seeking to melt our rigidity into tenderness, so that He can impress upon us the stamp of His ownership and His image, and make us the representatives of Christ to all who see and know us.

The sealing of the Holy Ghost is a very definite and explicit act. In the Epistle to the Ephesians we are told exactly when it occurs. "After ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." We first yield ourselves, and then we believe and receive the Holy Ghost by a definite act of committal and faith; then His work begins.

We come and set our seal to the divine covenant; for "he that hath received Him, hath set his seal that God is true." And then, on our seal, which we have affixed with our trusting, trembling hands, the Holy Ghost comes and puts down His mighty seal upon us, the double stamp is given, and we are fully sealed unto the day of redemption. Beloved, have you received the anointing, have you been sealed by the Holy Ghost?

III. THE EARNEST.

This is also a very significant word. It has been reproduced in almost all languages from the original Hebrew. The very same Hebrew word reappears in the Greek language and in other tongues.

It represents the first installment in the purchase. When I buy a piece of land, I make a payment on the signing of the contract, and the seller is bound by my payment to make good to me the deed in due time, and I am bound to follow it up with the complete payment. It is a first installment, a part payment, binding the whole transaction.

It has still another sense closely akin to this. In Oriental countries and ancient times, the seller, also, gave a first installment, as well as the buyer. Taking a little handful of soil from the land purchased, he put it into a bag and handed it to the purchaser as a pledge of the whole property's being transferred to him in due time. It was the very same soil as he had bought, though only a portion of it, but it was the guarantee that all the rest should be duly transferred.

So the Holy Ghost is to us the payment in part, and the pledge in full, of our complete inheritance. He is the first fruit of the harvest, He is the first portion of the inheritance. He brings into our heart and life the very same blessed reality which heaven will complete; the only difference will be in measure and degree. And so we have the double earnest. First, we have Him in our hearts as the earnest of the spiritual inheritance which heaven will bring. But a little later, in the fifth chapter and the fifth verse, we have a little different phase of the earnest. "Now He which hath wrought us for this very thing is God, who hath also given us the earnest of the Spirit." Now, the very thing of which Paul is speaking there is not our spiritual

inheritance, but our physical inheritance in God. It is the resurrection body, it is the glory which Christ is to bring, when we shall be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, and he clearly states here that the Holy Spirit is the earnest of this, also.

What can this mean but the blessed truth and the still more blessed experience to many of us -- the Holy Ghost's imparting to the body the very principle of the resurrection life, quickening it, exhilarating it, strengthening it, inspiring it with divine life and vigor, lifting it above disease and pain, and anticipating, in some little measure, the glory of the resurrection.

IV. EPISTLES OF CHRIST.

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Corinthians 3:3.

We have here a new figure of the Holy Spirit as the great Recorder transcribing Christ and His character and life upon the living tablets of human hearts and lives. It is a beautiful figure; each of us is represented as a volume published to the world, and carrying to men the message of Christ. It is the only volume that many ever read. It is the Bible bound, not in Russia, nor Morocco, nor cloth, but in human lives. This is the work of the Holy Ghost, and this is the highest ministry of every consecrated life. Beloved, are we thus revealing Christ to the world? Are we thus carrying the living message of His love and will to men and women around us? Are we written on by the finger of the Holy Ghost? Oh, how sacred were those holy tables of stone on which God's own fingers recorded the ancient law, and which He deposited for safe keeping in the Ark of the Covenant! How much more sacred the tables on which the Holy Spirit is now inscribing the very life of Jesus, and entrusting to the keeping of our consecrated lives!

God help us to receive the message and then to publish it so truly, so sweetly, so wisely and so consistently, that it may be known and read of all men, and that it shall minister Christ to a world that will not read His Bible, and does not know His grace. As has been happily said, "Each of us is either a Bible or a libel." God help us to be living epistles of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost.

V. PHOTOGRAPHS OF JESUS.

"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3: 18.

This is the last of these metaphors of the Spirit, and it carries the thought to a beautiful and perfect climax. We are not only books, but we are illustrated books; we are not only epistles of Christ, but we are photographs of Christ. In the center of the volume of our life is a living picture, which the Holy Ghost is ever perfecting, and in which He is revealing to the world the very glory of Jesus.

The idea is very striking, and exquisitely fine. We are represented as gazing with fixed look upon the face of Jesus Christ, and, as we gaze, His likeness is reflected in our countenance; the Holy Ghost is taking a picture of Jesus, not on a sensitive plate, as in our photographic art, but on a human face, and the face becomes a living illustration to the world of the glory of our Lord.

In order that this picture may be perfectly taken, we must keep our own face steadfast, and our eye fixed upon Him, and as we do so His glory is reflected in our countenances, and His very image is reproduced in our faces. It is also necessary that we must gaze with open face. There must be no veil nor cloud

between. As in the photographer's art, the little covering must be removed from the face of the camera in order that the impression may be taken; so the world, the flesh, and every obstruction must be put aside, and with unclouded face and single eye we must look steadfastly to Him; and as we become occupied with Christ, and abide in His fellowship, His glorious likeness is reproduced in us, and we stand before the world, not only living epistles but living likenesses, of our blessed Lord. Sublime conception! We are illustrated volumes, revealing to the world our blessed Savior, even as He revealed to the world His glorious Father.

It was His to be the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person. It is ours to be the image of His glory and the express image of Him. As He represented God, so we are to represent Christ, and men will know Him by what they see of Him in us.

This is the blessed work of the Holy Ghost. He is the Artist that stands behind the canvas and brings out the glorious, heavenly picture. Not only so, but He makes a living picture. We are not stereotyped and put away in a cabinet, but the picture is renewed from day to day, and each day should be brighter than the past. It is "from glory to glory," even brighter and brighter until it shall be lost in the light of heaven. It is not even "from grace to glory." We are to reach the stage of glory, and then go on "from glory to glory" in increasing luster forever.

Beloved, have we understood these things? Oh, may the Holy Ghost enable us to realize and fully prove the blessed meaning of these five heavenly symbols of the Holy Ghost -- the anointing, the seal, the earnest, the living epistles, and the living photograph of the Savior's face! Amen.

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