

## **Anointed, Sealed, The Earnest Of The Spirit**

“Now he that establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us is God; who also sealed us, and gave us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts” (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

In previous verses (17-20) Paul addressed the critics in Corinth who charged him with “fickleness” — being unstable and “wishy washy” because, although he had indicated his intention to make a trip to Corinth, he altered those plans. Paul defended himself: he denied those charges hurled against him by his “super critics” and showed that the word he had preached among was steadfast, certain: that he was God’s minister and just as the things he taught about God were faithful — so was his word in things according to the flesh. His intentions were sincere and there was a valid reason for his alteration of them: God was his witness that he forbade to come to Corinth when he had indicated otherwise in order that he might “spare them” (1:23).

In verses 21-22 of this chapter he affirms that “he that established ‘us’ (Paul) with ‘you’ (the Corinthians) was Christ.” In his first letter to this church Paul had shown that God had confirmed his message to them by the spiritual gifts he had given them (1 Cor. 1:6-7) and what he had done for the Corinthians in “establishing them” He had done for his apostle who had brought His word to them.

The phrase “establisheth us with you in Christ, and anointed us, is God” shows a turning from God’s establishing of the Corinthians “us with you” to a further declaration of God’s “anointing” of Paul. While some think that the “us with you” and the “us” refer to Paul and the Corinthians in both instances, it is very likely there is a distinction between the Corinthians and Paul: it is Paul who was “anointed,” “sealed,” and given “the earnest of the Spirit,” not Paul AND the Corinthians.

Anointing was a common practice in ancient times: one reads that both prophets and kings were “anointed”. The word “Christ” which identifies Jesus, means “the anointed one” and Jesus quoted from Isaiah 61:1-2 in a Nazarene synagogue, applying the passage to Himself. The passage reads, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor ...” When Jesus read this extended passage, He began His comments by saying, “Today hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears” (Lk. 4:21). The word “anoint” carries the thought of “commission”: God “anointed” Jesus to preach glad tidings to man; He also “anointed him with the Holy Spirit and power” (Acts 10:38). And, as He anointed or sent His Son, so He sent Paul to the Gentiles.

But not only did God anoint Paul, He sealed him and gave him the earnest of the Spirit. Most likely the apostle meant by this that God, having commissioned him as His apostle to the Gentiles, empowered him with the Holy Spirit to work miracles to confirm the testimony he gave concerning the gospel. When Jesus commissioned the apostles to preach the gospel (Mk. 16:15), He then said, “And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues ... and they went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and

confirming the word by the signs that followed” (Mk. 16:17-20). A similar thought is expressed by the Hebrew writer: “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? which having from the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard: God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by manifold powers and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will” (Heb. 2:3-4).

By affirming that God had anointed (commissioned) him to the work he had done among the Corinthians and that his words had been established by the signs he had wrought there, how could the Corinthians have felt confident in God’s gospel (which concerned them), yet be suspect about the words of the messenger who brought that message to them? If his words about his personal intentions could not be believed, how could they believe what he preached about the gospel of Christ?

Jim McDonald