

THE SEAL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30
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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The word “seal” in the N.T. is sometimes used in a literal sense and sometimes in a figurative sense.
2. The word “seal” is used in the N.T. to refer:
 - a. To a benevolent gift in Rom.15:28. (Thayer, 609: “When I shall have given authoritative assurance that this money was collected for their use.”)
 - b. To the devil, Rev.20:3.
 - c. To the book with seven seals, Rev.5:1.
 - d. To the things the seven thunders uttered, Rev.10:4.
 - e. To the sayings of the prophecy of the book of revelation, Rev.22:10.
 - f. To the servants of God, including Jesus Christ, Jno.3:33,34; 6:27; Rom.4:11; 1Cor.9:2; 2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30; 2Tim.2:19; Rev.7:3-8; 9:4.
 - g. To *the seal of the Holy Spirit*, 2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30.
3. In this study we shall be studying *the seal of the Holy Spirit* as mentioned in 2Cor.1:21,22; Eph.1:13; 4:30.
4. Our main reason for doing so: For years Denominational preachers under Calvinistic influence, or as out-right Calvinists:
 - a. Have held to and boldly preached the false concept of the sealing of the saints, all saints or all converts to Christ, with the Holy Spirit (that the Holy Spirit himself is that seal by some kind of personal indwelling or direct, personal guidance of the believer).
 - b. Have contended for this idea as a part of their doctrine of Adamic sin and the impossibility of apostasy, or the perseverance of the saints.
 - c. Have asserted that the Holy Spirit himself is that seal, and that saints, even all present-day saints, are thus sealed with or by the Holy Spirit like an object inside a sealed envelope or as preserves placed in a sealed jar.
5. Also, because there are different, conflicting, confusing ideas among members of the Lord’s church on the seal of the Holy Spirit.

6. We want to know what the Scriptures teach the seal of the Holy Spirit is or what it means to be sealed by the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit of promise, and how it is done.
7. It is our contention that the seal of the Holy Spirit or the seal of the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit of promise is something the Holy Spirit does, not what the Holy Spirit is; that it is something God does by means of the Holy Spirit.
8. It is also our contention that the seal of the Holy Spirit and the earnest of the Spirit are not one and the same thing, but are similar to a cause and effect relationship.

II. DISCUSSION

A. FIRST, SOME QUESTIONS DESIGNED TO FOCUS THE ISSUE.

1. Is the seal of the Holy Spirit the Holy Spirit himself, or something given by or done by the Holy Spirit?
2. Is the seal of the Holy Spirit something the Holy himself is, or is it something the Holy Spirit does?
3. Is the seal of the Holy Spirit miraculous in nature and for all time, or for the 1st century only?
4. Is the seal of the Holy Spirit the non-miraculous personal, literal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, or the non-miraculous representative indwelling of the Holy Spirit by means of the inspired word?
5. Is it none of the former and thus something else? If so, what?
6. These questions are pertinent to the issue and deserve an answer

B. TO ANSWER, WE BEGIN WITH 2COR.1:21,22 ANALYZED IN CONTEXT WITH THE DEFINITION OF THE WORD SEAL AS USED IN THE PASSAGE.

1. First, note Paul's use of the words "us," "our," and "you" in the passage. Obviously, in this context:
 - a. The word "us" refers to Paul, as one of the apostles of Christ.
 - b. The word "you" refers to the believers, the converts to Christ, or to the Christians at Corinth.
 - c. The word "our" refers to the "us," not to the "you".

- d. The “us,” not the “you,” of this passage, had been “established...in Christ,” “anointed,” “sealed,” and “given the earnest of the Spirit.”
 - e. The “us,” not the “you,” of this passage, had been “given the earnest of the Spirit in our (not your) hearts.”
 - f. He who did this for the “us” and “our,” not the “you” and “your,” was God.
 - (1) Whatever was said to have been done in this passage was done by God to or for the “us,” the apostle Paul, not the “you,” or the Corinthian Christians.
 - (2) Of course, when fully understood by the definitions and applications of the terms used and the purpose behind it all, we shall see It was something God did for Paul through the agency of the Holy Spirit for the benefit of others, including the saints at Corinth.
 - (3) Thus god by the agency of the Holy Spirit, in this case, miraculously established, anointed, sealed “and gave Paul the earnest (assurance) of the Spirit,” (as the meaning of the word “earnest” and its application was fully established in the lesson on “The Earnest Of The Spirit”).
2. Next, be made aware of the definition of the word “seal” as used in 2Cor.1:21,22 as well as in Eph.1:13 and 4:30.
- a. There are two different words in the original Greek which are translated “seal” or “sealed,” as well as several different uses of the word in the N.T., which are as follows according to Vine, III, 331,332; Thayer, 609:
 - (1) It comes from *SPHRAGIZO*, meaning: “to set a seal upon, mark with a seal, to seal.”
 - (2) It also comes from *SPHRAGIS*, meaning: “a seal”
 - (3) From these two original terms by definition the word “seal” falls into *four primary categories*, meaning to set a seal upon or mark (1) to close for security and permanency, (2) for security and secrecy, (3) for ownership and security, (4) for *authentication or certification*; i.e., to prove, confirm, or attest.

- (a) There is no reason to understand or to interpret the seal of the Holy Spirit, either as it relates to Paul in 2Cor.1:22, or to the Ephesians in Eph.1:13; 4:30, as being for the purpose of keeping something secret or closing for security reasons.
 - (b) Therefore, the first two uses of the word seal must be rejected as its meaning in our passages being studied.
 - (c) This leaves us with: “for ownership and or authentication or certification; i.e., to prove, confirm, or attest” for its meaning.
- b. Our Lord’s use of the word seal in referring to himself in Jno.3:31-34 makes its meaning clear, when used with reference to persons or things being sealed.
 - (1) These verses refer to the testimony of God in and through Jesus Christ.
 - (a) “And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth...,V.32a.
 - (b) “He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true,” V.33.
 - (c) “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God...,” V.34.
 - (2) It is plain to see that the word seal here denotes the authority which was stamped on the testimony that Christ had received from God; it’s authenticated, certified!
 - (3) The statement in V.33 is followed by its explanation in V.34.
 - (4) The Spirit which God had given to Christ by which he “speaketh the words of God” was the means by which the seal on the words of God was set. Cf. Mt.3:16,17; Ac.2:22,32,33. See Lk.4:18,19; Isa.35:3-6; 61:1ff; Mt.12:28; Lk.11:20.
- c. In this same sense of a stamped authority and authentication the same word seal is again used by Jesus in Jno.6:27 in again referring to himself: “for him hath God the Father sealed.”
 - (1) The meaning of this statement in V.27 is unmistakable.

- (2) God had sealed Jesus by the unlimited divine authority of his spoken words, by the Spirit, which God had given him, which was miraculously manifested through him. Cf. Jno.3:1,2; Mt.9:6-8; Ac.2:22; 10:38. Cf. Also Mt.28:18; Heb.1:1,2.
- d. In 2Cor.1:22 Paul uses the same word with the same meaning in referring to what God had done for him: That is, God had established, anointed and sealed him by means of the Holy Spirit.
- (1) It refers here to God's seal or public sign of confirmation, certification and authentication of Paul as an apostle of Christ preaching the gospel of Christ.
- (2) But how did God do this? Mk.16:19,20; Ac.2:1-4; Heb.2:3,4; Eph.3:1-12; Rom.15:18,19; 1Cor.9:1,2; 2Cor.12:12.
- (3) Therefore, this sealing of Paul in 2Cor.1:22 must refer to what the Holy Spirit did in operating through Paul miraculously; it is something the Holy Spirit did, or something God did by means of the Holy Spirit through Paul and for Paul in order to fulfill his commission and mission.
- e. In Cor.9:2 the word seal – “for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord” -- is used to refer to the miraculous endowments the Corinthian Christians received and had imparted to them by the laying on of Paul's hands after their conversion to Christ.
- (1) The Corinthians had such spiritual gifts, gifts that only an apostle could impart and which Paul had imparted to them after converting them by his gospel; thus they were the seal, the proof of, his apostleship and his gospel. Cf. 1Cor.1:4-7; 2Cor.12:12,13.

C. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE CASE OF THE EPHESIANS AND THEIR BEING SEALED WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD OR WITH THAT HOLY SPIRIT OF PROMISE IN EPH.1:13; 4:30?

1. These two passages contain the same word seal, from the same original Greek word, with the same meaning as in 2Cor.1:22; as well as Jno.6:27.
2. Therefore, on the basis of the principle of the consistency of the language of the Bible, we must allow it to be miraculous in nature and manifestation, just as we were forced to do in 2Cor.1:22; et al.
3. Since there is nothing in the language itself or in the context of Eph.1:13,14 and 4:30 to force another interpretation or place another meaning upon the word seal, how could we possibly reach any other conclusion on its meaning?
4. It was the authority of the same Spirit that sealed the “the word of truth,” which the inspired apostle had preached to the Ephesians.
5. And that is how the Ephesians were sealed “in Christ” “with that Holy Spirit of promise,” through the inspired word of truth, which the apostle Paul assured them was “the gospel of your salvation,”... “which is the earnest (assurance, guarantee) of our inheritance (eternal life)...,” Vv.13,14.
 - a. Moreover, this is in harmony with:
 - (1) Jno.20:30,31, which states that the miraculous signs of Jesus recorded by John served to authenticate the word of God that we might believe in Jesus.
 - (2) Cf. Isaiah’s appeal “to the law and to the testimony” to confirm one’s doctrine, Isa.8:20.
6. In Eph.1:11-14 Paul said to the Ephesians:
 - a. “In whom (in Christ) also we (apostles and Jews) have obtained an inheritance...who first trusted in Christ,” Vv.11,12.
 - b. “In whom (in Christ) ye (Ephesians) also trusted,” V.13a.
 - c. “...after that ye (Ephesians) heard (having heard) the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,” V.13b.
 - d. Omitting the parenthetical part of V.13 for the moment, we go on to V.14, to complete the thought of V.13, which says: “Which (that is, “the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”) is the earnest (assurance, guarantee) of our (Jews and Gentles) inheritance,” V.14.

- e. Adding the parenthetical part of V.13, "...in whom (in Christ) also after ye (Ephesians also) believed, ye (also) were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."
- 7. "That Holy Spirit of promise" in Eph.1:13 is "the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed" in Eph.4:30.
 - a. But it is also the same promise the Holy Spirit had given to the Jews on Pentecost in fulfillment of the prophecy of Joel, as quoted by Peter in Ac.2:14-18,21,38,39, which was a two-fold promise.
 - (1) A promise of deliverance or salvation from past sins, Ac.2:21, 36-38a.
 - (2) A promise of the Holy Spirit, or spiritual gifts, or the signs which were to follow believers, Ac.2:14-18; 2:28b,39; Mk.16:17,18.
 - b. It was that same two-fold promise of the Spirit through the inspired word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, which was the seal and the earnest or assurance or guarantee to the Ephesians, that they had entered into the same inheritance, the same possessed heritage of redemption as the Jews, signed, sealed and stamped with the guarantee of the same Holy Spirit in the same way by the same means. Cf. Eph.2:11-22; 3:1-6; Ac.15:5-11.
- 8. The theory of a direct, literal, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit as a seal for Christians unto the day of their redemption is not in Eph.1:13,14, nor Eph.4:30 – it simply is not there!
 - a. Neither is the theory of a non-direct, non-miraculous, non-manifesting, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit for that purpose taught therein!

D. FINALLY, WE CONSIDER THE TYPE OF LANGUAGE USED: LITERAL OR FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE?

- 1. To say as some contend that the Holy Spirit himself is the seal in 2Cor.1:22; Eph.1:13; 4:30, is to make the language figurative, thus making it a figure of speech known as a metaphor – a figure of speech of the same nature employed by Jesus in Jno.10:9: "I am the door."
 - a. In other words, instead of the Holy Spirit sealing, establishing, authenticating, certifying, proving, confirming by some means, the Spirit is himself

supposedly represented as being a seal – as Jesus was represented as being a door.

- b. Thayer, 609, claims seal is figurative in all these passages: “Metaph.:...respecting God, who by the gift of the Holy Spirit indicates who are his...”
 - (1) However, this is not Thayer’s definition of “seal,” but his commentary on it when he interprets these passages according to his theology.
 - (2) Here, as he sometimes does, he ceases to function as a lexicographer and become a Commentator.
 - (3) In his comments he makes seal something the Spirit is rather than something the Spirit does; rather than something God does by means of the Spirit.
2. Since figurative language is the exception to the rule in Bible interpretation, the one who claims the Holy Spirit himself, rather than something the Holy Spirit does, is the seal, is obligated to prove, to scripturally justify, his claim by the principles by which one determines if the language used is literal or figurative, which are as follows: **A word is to be understood in biblical interpretation as literal unless:**
 - a. It is used in mockery.
 - b. It is said to be figurative.
 - c. It is a contradiction to interpret it as literal, or would cause one passage to contradict another.
 - d. It is absurd to interpret it as literal.
 - e. It is contrary to common sense to interpret it as literal.
 - f. It would prohibit good or enjoin evil to interpret it as literal.
 - g. It would involve an impossibility to interpret it as literal.
(from D.R. Dungan, Hermeneutics, Ch. VIII, pp. 195-203)
3. The only possible reason for interpreting the expression “the seal of the Holy Spirit” in our passages as figurative language, and thus make the Holy Spirit himself a seal, is that to interpret it as literal language “poses a contradiction,” which would of necessity force the language to be interpreted as figurative.
4. But what does it contradict to interpret it as literal language, except the pre-conceived idea that the Holy Spirit himself is a seal?

5. Since there is not one scriptural reason to interpret this language as figurative language, it must be taken literally. *In that case, therefore:*
 - a. The seal belongs to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The seal is something the Holy Spirit does, not something he is.
6. Therefore, since God's miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit through men has ceased (1Cor.13), that leaves us with the position:
 - a. That the seal of the Holy Spirit was something given by the Holy Spirit which was miraculous and for the first century only.
 - b. And/or that the seal of the Holy Spirit as applied to believers in general was and is something given by the Holy Spirit, which was and is a non-miraculous, non-literal, representative indwelling of the Holy Spirit by means of the inspired word. Cf. Jno.14:23; Eph.3:17; etc.
7. We have shown conclusively from 2Cor.1:21,22 that "the seal of the Holy Spirit" is something the Spirit does or that God does by means of the Spirit, for it says: "...God...who hath also sealed us;" that is, sealed Paul.
 - a. God is here said to have "established," "anointed," "sealed," Paul and given him "the earnest of the Spirit" in his heart.
 - b. But how did God do these things? He did one the same way he did the other.
 - (1) He did all of them miraculously by means of the Spirit, Mk.16:19,20; Heb.2:3,4; Ac.2:1-4; 2Cor.12:12; Eph.3:1-5; Gal.1:11,12.
8. Once again, the nature of the sealing is the same in all three passages.

III. CONCLUSION

1. The consequential end of the theory of a direct, personal Holy Spirit possession would necessarily be inspiration in the one who possessed the personal Holy Spirit.
 - a. If not, why not?

- b. Since revelation, inspiration, confirmation and authentication was the work of the Holy Spirit, why else would he personally dwell in anyone?
 - c. In fact, even with the Apostles of Christ, it was not a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them, but the power of the Holy Spirit which they possessed.
- 2. So how does the Holy Spirit seal Christians today since the age of miraculous operations of the Spirit through men has ceased?
 - a. By functioning through the apostles of Christ by means of the inspired word of truth, which is the gospel of our salvation.
 - b. In the miraculous period of the church it proceeded from the apostles of Christ to the church through inspiration.
 - c. That period having been closed, the avenue through which it flows now is the word of truth.
- 3. This stamp of the Holy Spirit on us today through the word of truth is the same seal but in different form or action.
 - a. Upon the apostles and others in the early church it was by direct inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Upon us today it is through the medium of the word of truth, the sword of the Spirit, which bears the signature of the Holy Spirit as proof that it is of God.
 - c. Every present-day believer is sealed or stamped by the Holy Spirit as he follows the doctrine of Christ in the Spirit-revealed written word, the Bible, which was sealed by the Spirit's miraculous work.
- 4. Once again, the seal of the Holy Spirit is associated with God bearing witness in Jno.3:31-34; 6:27; 1Cor.9:2; 1:4-7; 2Cor.12:12.
- 5. Since the Holy Spirit bore witness by signs, wonders and miracles (Mk.16:19,20; Ac.5:32; 2Cor.12:12.; Heb.2:3,4), it is reasonable that the seal is the Holy Spirit's was of authenticating the N.T.
 - a. This authentication would serve as the Holy Spirit's action of notarizing the document, the N.T.
 - b. This notarizing or witnessing is evident from Ac.1:8; 2:1-4,32,33; 4:33; 5:32; 15:8.
- 6. The Holy Spirit continues to bear witness today by means of the once confirmed Scripture as the O.T. continued to bear witness in Paul's time, Heb.10:15-17.

7. Jesus appealed to the O.T. principle of the necessity of two witnesses to establish a matter, Jno.5:31-37.
 - a. Since the N.T. is a will or covenant, a legal document, it requires two witnesses to verify its authenticity.
 - b. The Holy Spirit, by means of miracles, notarized (confirmed or sealed) the N.T.
 - c. The Holy Spirit and the apostles served as witnesses of the N.T., Lk.24:48,49; Ac.1:1-8; 5:32; 2:32,33.
 - d. The N.T. once confirmed or notarized, does not need to be reconfirmed any more than other legal documents do.
 - e. What better stamp or seal and earnest or assurance could we have than the witness of the Spirit through the inspired word, the gospel of our salvation? Rom.8:16.
8. The failure to make dispensational application of these Holy Spirit passages results:
 - a. At best, in utter confusion.
 - b. At worst, in false doctrine and false, misleading, confusing, disappointing expectations of a direct, personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit.
 - c. With some thinking that as a result of such indwelling of the Spirit they have direct guidance of the Spirit separate and apart from the written word.
 - d. With others thinking that the Spirit thus indwells but does not directly guide; that he, in effect, indwells but does nothing; at least nothing separate and apart from the word.