

Doctrine: The Holy Spirit

What the Holy Spirit Does in Us: 6, Seals Us

Once a person has come to faith in Jesus, they often begin having serious questions. They now know that some people are saved and others are not. They have come to believe in heaven and hell. And so, they often have questions like: How do I know that I belong to God? I feel my sinfulness more than ever; can I be lost again? The answer to these questions is found in the Spirit's work of sealing us "until the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

In the culture of the New Testament an emblem similar to that of a brand or crest, was a seal. It might be a mark left on cattle or even slaves. Some seals were made when a ring or a device was pressed into warm wax or soft clay. Seals left a specific mark and gave certain meanings to the things on which they were left. Similarly, the seal of the Holy Spirit is a mark set upon us. We are marked as believers, signifying who we are and whose we are.

First, a seal signified identification. God gives us the Spirit, and this gives us a recognizable identity. People will see that we are Jesus-people (Acts 4:13).

> *Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit* (Ephesians 1:13b).

Dynasties and powerful families used a seal, in the likeness of a family crest for example, much as we use logos for corporations today. If I showed you the image of large yellow arches in the shape of an "m" what would you think of? (McDonalds, of course). If the hood of a car has a small metal image of a running horse what would think of? (A Ford Mustang). These seals or logos represent an identity. When, for example, you see golden arches you think of hamburgers, fries, and pop. You don't think of caviar. Paul is saying, "You trusted in Christ when you heard the gospel and you became identifiable." Your life, by the Spirit, identifies you with Jesus and no longer the world.

Second, a seal also signified ownership. I belong to God. He treasures me.

> *He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come* (2 Corinthians 1:21b-22).

Peter writes that we are "God's special possession" (1 Peter 2:9). Nothing has a greater claim on us – not a spouse, a parent, a child, a friend, a boss or society as a whole. We should not allow anyone to convince us otherwise.

Third, a seal signified security. (See also John 10:26-30)

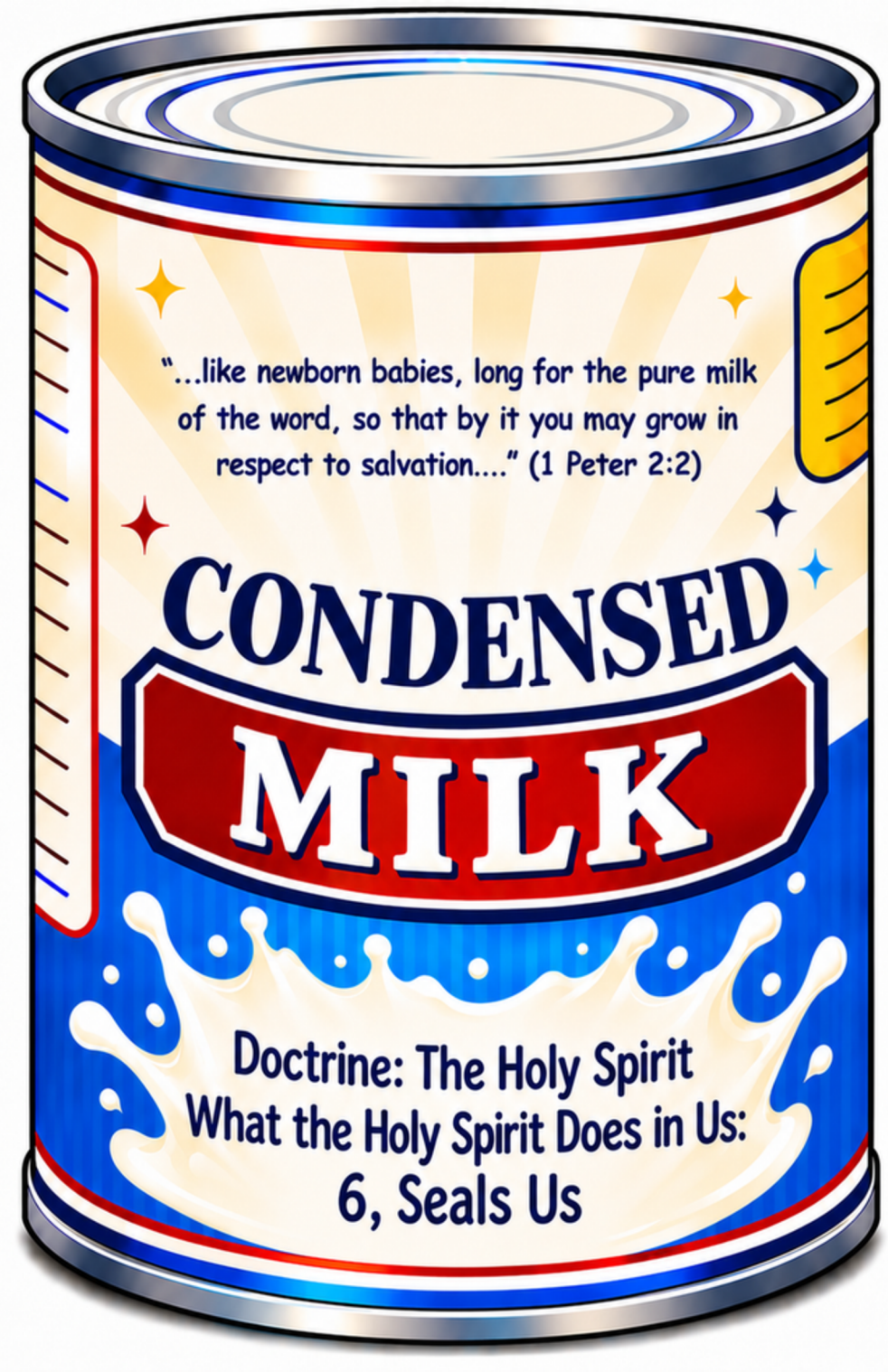
> *…you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession – to the praise of his glory (*Ephesians 1:13b, 14).

The Bible describes the Spirit as a "deposit" (Gk. Arrabon) – a first century business term for a legally binding down payment or engagement ring. In other words, we have assurance of ultimately receiving our full inheritance -- a new heaven and earth, new bodies, eternal life, sinless perfection -- because we are already experiencing something of that life in this life, by the regenerating and indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is God's guarantee that the rest is coming. You can bank on that. You cannot lose your salvation.
Fourth, a seal signified value. We don't seal things if they have no value. We seal them precisely because they do. The presence of the Holy Spirit in your life shows that God values you. You might feel small or inadequate or struggling or ashamed of yourself but the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life is a seal showing that you are valued. He wants you and he is preserving you for the day when he can take you for himself, heal your wounds, reward your obedience, and make you perfect.

How can we receive this marvelous gift of the Holy Spirit? Paul tells us:

> *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).*

The way we receive the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and all his other benefits, is by hearing and believing the "word of truth". When we trust in Jesus and his atoning work on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins, we receive the Spirit. People cannot be sealed by the Holy Spirit until they hear gospel words and believe them (Romans 10:12-14, 17). And so, your family and friends must also hear *words* to be saved. But be alert; Satan wants to prevent that.


"...like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation...." (1 Peter 2:2)
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