

The Sealing of the Spirit

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[0 : 0 0] I'm going to begin with the Gaelic singing Psalm 103 and from the beginning of the psalm. O thou my soul bless God the Lord and all that in me is bestowed up his holy name to magnify and bless. Bless O my soul the Lord thy God and not forgetful be of all his gracious benefits he has bestowed on thee. O mannum bjallnich bjusenich in yeh Jehovah moor.

O mannum bjalnlich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich,leſia bodnum bjuſenich
 bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich
 bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich kothilich
 bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich
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 bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich bjuſenich Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 22] Thank you.

Thank you. We're going to read from the scripture of the New Testament from Paul's second epistle to Timothy and chapter 2.

2 Timothy chapter 2.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. And may the Lord, at his blessing, through a reading of his word and to his name be the praise.

[8 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

O Lord our God, our Heavenly Father, we thank you that we can come before you, that you are the answerer of prayer. We ask, Lord, that you would solemnize our hearts this evening.

You know us, you know how we are made, you know our thoughts, even before we think them, even before we articulate them. And therefore, Lord, we would ask that worldly issues might be purged from us, that we might, as the exhortation from Paul there declares, that we might rid ourselves of such, and that we might persevere, and that we might lay hold of the truth that is only to be found in Christ Jesus.

We thank you that you are the God of all knowledge and truth and of grace and mercy. And it is on those attributes that we lay hold tonight, because we in ourselves have nothing in us of any good.

[9 : 53] We are, as was said, from head to foot, covered in putrefying sores. Lord, we have our own righteousness, which so often is of crutch, and yet this, as the scripture also declares, is as filthy rags.

And, Lord, when we contrast our state with thine, where thou art holy and lifted up, and eternal and sovereign and immutable and unchangeable, assessing wisdom and truth and your spirit, and know all things, how we ought to humble ourselves and prostrate ourselves.

And that we would be acknowledging your greatness and our insignificance. Yet, Lord, you have, in your mercy, in your grace, you have taken this intimate interest in us, and you have, in your fallen state, reached out to us, and bridged that great chasm that we could never possibly cross.

And you have done this in the most marvellous and incredulous way, and in the only way that it could be bridged. That is, through the sacrifice of thy son, Jesus Christ, the great atonement, and the great reconciliation.

And we thank you that we live in an age where that has been fulfilled. Abraham of old saw this, and it was counted to him as righteousness, and the prophets spoke of it and declared it.

[11 : 42] And John the Baptist, even at the start of the new dispensation, proclaimed, O Lord, the Lamb of God, that cometh to take away the sin of the world.

And we thank you that we live in a time where the truth has been manifest and shared abroad, and that we have in our possession the promised spirit that was covenanted to the disciples, and all who followed on from them, and who lead hold of this great gift.

And yet, Lord, it is to our shame how we often ignore or despise or shun almost these privileges.

Lord, our sinful nature, the old man still rages war against you. And we would ask, and we would plead, and we would implore that we might have your help, and pretending with that spirit of rebellion and that spirit of discontent, and having the great struggle resolved where our pride so often deflects us from where we ought to be.

And that is found in thy word and in thy truth, and engaging with me, and having you rule over us. Help us, Lord, tonight in our study of your word, and in our fellowship, one with another, and grant that our minister, as he opens up the truth of the gospel, might have a sense of thy presence and thy blessing upon the word shared and the word expanded.

[13 : 31] Lord, we so need this in a day and an age where we see thy truth being trampled under foot, and thy word being used, and thy word being used, and thy truth being ridiculed as something old-fashioned and belonging to another generation.

Lord, it is contemporary, and it is living, and it is true, and it is to be honoured and lifted up, not despised, and rejected, and used solely as to the merriment of men.

Help us, Lord, to be witnesses to this truth. Grant that we might say a word in season to the needy, as we see it. Grant that our family members and our brothers and sisters in Christ might also have this unity that can only come from being brought together in the body of Christ with himself at the head.

Help us, Lord, in our workplace, in our neighbourhoods, in our communities, in our families. We thank you that you have placed us in this corner of thy vineyard where so many blessings and days gone by, and we believe today also are manifest.

And yet it would surely do us good to recognise and value these things before thy candlestick us with me, for that is only what we deserve for our corporate and individual.

[15 : 13] our corporate and individual coming away from where we ought to be. Bring us back, Lord.

We are as sheep that have gone us through. Might it be that you might be the shepherd and bishop of our souls, and that goodness and mercy might follow us all the days of our life. Help us now, remembering those of our number who are not with us for various reasons, particularly those who are laid aside at this time, those who are in hospital or recovering, or even having received news of things that are detrimental or giving rise to anxiety within the family circle, that they might be conscious that you are the God who knows the end from the beginning and does all things well, and all things are done for a purpose, and to thy womb will be.

Help us then, Lord, in all these things, and go before us, now pardoning our sins. In Christ's name we ask it. Amen. We are going to turn now to our study in Ephesians chapter 1.

Ephesians chapter 1, and we're looking this evening at verse 13 and 14. Ephesians chapter 1, and we're looking this evening at verse 13 and 14.

And so on. While we continue our study in this chapter, looking at what is the final verses of this opening passage.

[17 : 31] We've already noted that from verse 3 to verse 14 is one long sentence. In our Bibles there are punctuation marks, but in the original Greek it is one long sentence without comma, apostrophe, exclamation mark, or anything, whatever they have in the Greek language.

There is nothing in the original Greek to indicate how the Apostle wishes the passage to be emphasised.

It's, as one put it, one breathless outpouring. At times it is praise, and at times it is just solid theology.

The writer Sam Gordon says in his commentary that the verses are a casket of distilled Christianity.

A casket of distilled Christianity. And they go from eternity to eternity.

[19 : 02] Showing the plan of God. God's master plan, as Gordon puts it. Now we saw, as we have read through this passage, Paul touches on election, for ordination, salvation, holiness, the doctrines of sonship and adoption.

Last week we noted in conclusion that what God was doing, he was doing to show that the conclusion of all that he was doing would redound to his praise and glory, or contribute to his glory.

And the words we're looking at tonight, I think, the way I approached it to this evening anyway, we are given a picture of what the man or woman of faith is like.

And it may not be a complete picture, but it is a fairly honest picture, nevertheless. So I'd like us to note the things that Paul highlights.

There are, first of all, two elements that mark out the faith of the believer. He says, you trusted in Christ.

[20 : 45] You also trusted. You believed in Christ. These two things are essential to the faith of a believer.

Say a word about that. Then we are given insight into where the ability to believe or trust came.

He says, they heard the word of truth. And they believed that word.

And the third thing we have is that the word of truth working in them is their evidence that their faith is genuine.

They were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. That could not happen. Well, they could not believe.

[21 : 58] We could not believe. We could not trust. Unless it were for the operation of the Spirit. And the operation of the Spirit is not just something that that allows us to believe, but also act upon what we believe.

the Spirit is not just something that the Spirit and the Spirit the Holy Spirit has a description given to him. He is the earnest of our inheritance.

Now, there might be when you try and unravel the words of the Apostle there have already indicated that they're very it's just there's an outpouring and because there's a steady stream of language it is not immediately apparent whether he is talking about the passion of the Holy Spirit or the effect of the work of the Spirit in the believer.

but we have here the earnest of our inheritance which is described as we hope to understand as a result of looking at it the promissory note that God gives to his people.

I'll try explaining what I mean by that. Well, there's two things there trust and belief. I think ordinarily we're encouraged to understand that faith is usually considered to have three main elements in it.

[23 : 55] You've got belief and trust and assent and two are highlighted here and the third of these is implied.

it's implicit in what Paul is saying and as far as we can see from our translation if you look at your Bibles if you use the authorized version you will notice that the word trust in verse 13 is in italics.

Now what that simply means as you'll have heard before is that where we come across a word that's italicized like that it's not a word that you find in the original Greek.

So verse 13 if you read it in the Greek text that word would not appear but in order for the translator to get the best understanding of what is written they have to include words that are not contained and the word trust comes from the previous verses if you remember in whom also we have obtained an inheritance being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.

So that's where you find the word there that we have put into verse 13 the experience of faith where trust is involved is something that is essential to our understanding of what is taking place.

[26 : 01] The person who has faith in Christ is demonstrating that faith by putting their trust in Christ.

Christ. We receive Christ and we rest upon Christ. Usually if we use the word trust in any ordinary use of the word if we apply it to a situation if we for example do if you put your finger on the electric light switch you believe that it's safe for you to do so.

It's not alive it's not something that you'll get a shock by putting your finger on you believe you trust that that is safe for you to do that.

I know that's a pretty pathetic illustration but the word trust implies that you are wholeheartedly convinced that what you're doing you're going to benefit from it you're not going to suffer loss because of it.

Now there's no getting away from what we have in these verses the simple meaning of it is. The believer in Christ is the person who has put their trust in Christ and who are believing who he is just as we have at the beginning of I think it's the epistle to the Hebrews the person who has faith must believe that God is.

[28 : 01] Must believe that God is the one who has purposed salvation and that is something that marks each believer out.

Here Paul connects it with the source of it. How can we believe our trust in Christ? We can do so because we have been exposed to the word of truth.

truth. The Bible is God's word. It is a true word and it's not just the truth concerning God but it's the truth concerning God's way of salvation and that's encapsulated in what Paul is saying here.

you have heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation he says and having heard it you believe in what that gospel speaks of in the person of whom it speaks the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Martin Lloyd-Jones says at this point it is not just a truth or it is not just true but that is something that you do believe that is something that you do understand the word of God is true the word of the gospel is true that goes without saying but it is by means of this word that we receive salvation and that's what Paul is emphasizing here that if you want to find an emphasis this is where it is the whole purpose of what he has to say is your relationship with this Christ that you trust and believe thereby resulting in the salvation of your soul and you think about it as Lloyd

[30 : 16] Jones says the truth of which the gospel speaks is the truth concerning Christ it is the good news of salvation by a redeemer and you will not and cannot hear better news than this that God saves sinners by way of his son Jesus Christ and it is a word that conveys the truth that contains that greatest news the good news that you have ever heard I'm sure there are many of us and we've celebrated or enjoyed times of of good news coming our way but none better than this fact when we have discovered it for ourselves and maybe

I'm not really very sure maybe you can correct me on this at the point at which you personally believed in the salvation of your soul through Christ Jesus there may be at that point an element of doubt concerning the reality of what you have believed or how genuine it is or how lasting it is there may be there's no question that there's a joy in the heart of the believer at that moment where they close in with Christ but when you hear of somebody else somebody that you know or when you believe that somebody you know has come to faith in that Christ there is a sense in which your joy for that person is equally as great as your own

I'm not saying it's well I don't know what I'm saying really I believe that for yourself there's nothing better for you there's nothing more enjoyable for you there's nothing more pleasurable for you than to know that your soul is saved but I'm just going to the point at which that took place there may be at that moment a measure of well it's too good to be true or there needs to be greater light but once you have come to faith and you see another person come to faith perhaps at that moment you know with certainty what that person who has come to faith is enjoying or what they've come to receive for themselves anyway it is through the word of truth that this salvation is possible it is through the gospel the gospel in the hand of the holy spirit that the word becomes effectual and we often have heard said that

God's word spoke to us for example it used to be much more common than it is now and I'm not saying that it's not happening today but it was part of the lingua franca of the past generation where people would say well the truth spoke to me the word of God spoke to me and very often that expression was common place maybe it was too common maybe people just used that expression without it really being the case but there is no doubt that when a person came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that is what had to happen God's word spoke into their situation whatever that situation was and Christ was revealed to a needy soul and the needy soul laid whole of the

Christ that was presented to them in the word of truth and that is what Paul is bringing to our attention here now there is no Christian and again I think I can say this with certainty but again there was a question in my own mind there is no Christian who is a Christian who did not come to put their trust in Christ who did not come to believe in Christ except by way of the gospel now you could say there are those who were Nazarites from the womb but then again how do we know the spirits work in the experience of the Nazarite in the womb is it exclusive of the word of truth even though they are pre birth is it impossible for the spirit to present

[35 : 58] Christ to the child in the womb through the word well it could be and it probably is not but without a shadow of doubt no person can come to put their trust in Christ without being presented with Christ in the gospel and that's what Paul is saying here Don Fortner the commentator writes in the fullness of time every sinner chosen by God is redeemed by Christ no one else he is redeemed by Christ and as such they are called by the spirit of God through the gospel and the activity of the spirit there is highlighted in these verses in the sense in which our passage is composed it's difficult to you might think that there's an order of salute us here before us where x happens then y follows and then z follows that but the the handiwork of the spirit in presenting

Christ to the believer through the word is also to be seen or understood as equipping or enabling the unbelieving heart to receive that Christ at the same time as the spirit is revealing Christ to him I remember in my process of coming to faith and in a sense it was complicated and there were all kinds of thought processes involved in it and I was never coming to the place where I was happy that I was recognizing Christ for what he was I had an intellectual awareness of what the scripture said I knew what the words were

I knew what the scripture was saying I was familiar with the Bible and I knew there had to be more than just that familiarity on my part and I was struggling to move from the knowledge that I had that I felt needed to be transformed by the work of the spirit in order for it to become saving and now I'm not saying that's the kind of language I would have used but that's the kind of conclusion that I come to today as far as understanding what was going on but then I was praying and all of a sudden I was really struggling with the idea of this believing in Christ I believed that I believed in Christ but I wasn't fixed

I wasn't content that what I was doing was enabling me to experience salvation and I couldn't do any more and yet the scripture that came to me at the time was so simple and I had been so familiar with it like many others seek and you shall find and I thought to myself well it came with such power and I was a bit like Sarah when she was told that she was pregnant I was laughing to myself it can't be as simple as that and yet that's what I had to believe seek and you shall find in other words follow the path that you run and you will get what you're looking for and that's the way it turned out now Paul says they were sealed with the spirit of promise seal as as I said it doesn't follow the way of an order salutes you heard and were sealed there's a great deal of debate about

Paul's words here and the way that he uses the word seal I think it's Charles Hodge who says in the scripture you have at least three uses of the word seal because the word seal can be used in different ways it is for example if you get a seal it confirms the genuineness of something like we have the Harris tweet odd mark the Harris tweet is not considered a genuine article unless it is stamped with the Harris tweet odd mark it gives it a seal of authenticity without it you can question it but with it gives you the confirmation that what you have is original sometimes a seal is used to establish ownership if you come into possession of something then there is a mark upon it and it's probably in modern context there are labels put on a thing that say well this is an

[42 : 04] Armani handbag or something there is a mark on it there is a seal of ownership or identification in that respect but also in the respect of the origin of it and the source from which it came and then it moves from that to the one who has a right to it who has ownership of it who possesses it rightfully and then when you remember when the Lord Jesus was buried they took him and they put him inside a grave in which no man had ever laid and a stone was rolled across the mouth of the cave and then it was sealed a seal was put on it saying well whatever the seal was not meant to be broken it was made secure now any one of these words can be can be

I suppose imposed if you want imposed is not the wrong word it can be brought into your thinking with regard to what the spirit is doing in his role on behalf of Christ in bringing the gospel to bear on a needy soul Charles Spurgeon says that the Bible requires us to understand and we read this ourselves that there are two witnesses to what the spirit is doing one witness we have within ourselves the spirit of man within himself is testifying to the genuineness of our faith my faith my relationship with Christ my relationship to sin my relationship to those who are believers in Christ and the spirit of man within him but stimulated or prompted or guided by the

Holy Spirit is what testifies to the veracity of the reality of what we have that makes us believers but then there is the spirit also working reinforcing that externally as it were so that we have a double portion of the spirit's work in the experience of the believer William Hendrickson speaks of the experience of authentication to give authenticity to what is going on in your life as a believer then this is what you look for it indicates or implies the ownership this you are a believer somebody who has come to faith and that makes you someone who belongs to someone else you are someone who is now

God's in Christ you are now someone who has been bought with a price what says that to you who says that to you the person of the Holy Spirit bringing the word to bear upon your mind upon your heart Paul writes grieving of the Holy Spirit of God whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption read on in this epistle that you find these words I think it's chapter 4 the word the work of the Spirit there tells us of that fact now this reminds us that not only is the authenticity of the work being of God but also we are told those who are sealed are given the earnest of the Spirit again there's complexity in the way this is understood is the

Spirit there the earnest is the Spirit himself the earnest you are given the Spirit of God you are no longer you are no longer a shell you know when when we think of the picture that we are given in the scriptures of of the the man and woman who are Christless they are like derelict buildings lifeless until the Spirit of God takes up occupancy and with the occupation of the Spirit comes life so is the earnest of the Spirit in that sense is he the earnest of which this passage speaks or is the earnest of the

[47 : 39] Spirit the ministry of the Spirit that tells you and teaches you what you are I think it's Charles Hart who says one explains the other the Spirit himself is the purchase of the Redeemer's death now think of that and we do have to go back to what Christ has promised you know if you go to John chapter 17 we find there the promise given to the church that when Christ goes he is going to leave his Spirit he is going to bequeath his Spirit he is not going to leave you an orphan he is going to leave you with his Spirit and that is not going to happen except by way of his death on the cross and that is what Paul is saying the work of the

Spirit what he does is contingent upon the Lord dying on the cross the Lord Jesus finishing the work that the Father gave him to do but thinking of him in this way as the earnest of our inheritance now if it is not the Spirit but the fruits of the Spirit that are spoken of that again is another dimension to it we can't have one without the other in any case but we have the earnest of the Spirit in the sense that what he is what he is doing in the believer is giving to you the believer if that's what you are the confirmation that you are what you profess to be because of your trust in

Christ and because of your belief in Christ originally in the usage of the word when we speak of the earnest it speaks of something that is given to you that is part payment for what will be the completed work that is one understanding of what it involves it is a security a pledge in I don't know the best way of doing it but we have come across this word and explored it in various ways I was thinking of I remember when I left school I left there were some boys who left school with me went into the trades and I remember one boy in particular he didn't I don't know what he was receiving as a weekly wage was £15 or £12 or something a week as an apprentice but the person he worked for deducted from that money which he devoted towards tools that he was buying and the tools were his own but they were coming out of his wage the wage was his own but the tools would not be his own until the contract was completed in other words when his apprenticeship was done and dusted but it allowed him possession of these tools which were vital to his trade before he had earned the wage that could purchase them and I suppose there are illustrations that are better than that one but

Martin Lloyd Jones to find somebody who's well able to explain what is going on here he says when we look at what the spirit is here shown to be doing the seal assures me that my part in the inheritance and the earnest are one and the same that one follows the other or one accompanies the other there's an assurance that comes from knowing that the spirit is ours the spirit has seen us the spirit is at work directing us to Christ showing Christ to us revealing Christ in us

J.C. Philport has an interesting but I believe accurate take on this he says he's talking about the earnest every holy desire every heavenly affection every gracious longing every spiritual enjoyment every believing experience that you have you know where your where your belief encourages you to experience things that can only be an accompaniment of belief your hope your love for Christ your love for the people of God all of these things they are yours as an earnest of what you will have the fullness of in due time they are pledges and they are things that remind you and teach you that what

[53 : 57] God has begun he intends to continue until the day of Christ Jesus and that's what he concludes this section with unto the praise of his glory we can't get away from the bottom line what God is doing in us by way of the spirit not only ensures our salvation as we come to faith in Christ it also encourages us to understand that what he is doing is a beginning it is a part of the whole but it is but a part and the whole will be a completeness of all of these experiences that we have in miniature where our loves will grow where our hopes will find fruition and so on well it is as I said a passage that's quite long and quite convoluted and when you begin to look at and try and unravel it it can be more awkward to deal with but if we fix our attention on the truth that Paul is speaking here about the in

Christ relationship of the believer beginning by the hand of the spirit bringing them and each one of us to a completeness or a certainty that the experience that we have is genuine that God's seal is upon it you know the devil will have you believe that what knowledge you have of Christ you have gained by your own endeavours it's the product of your own intellect it's the product of many years of exposure to the gospel and in many respects there are many things we can do with the powers of intellect but we cannot and we are not able to put our trust in Christ in a saving way without his help and that is the bottom line well may God bless to us these few thoughts shall we join in prayer once again

Lord our God as we look at these wonderful truths we pray that any darkness that we have introduced into your light that you by your light would dispel it and that we would see the glory of the salvation that Christ has secured for his people that no other has been able to present to us as a worthy replacement there is none who can satisfy the needs of our soul but Christ and through his spirit he brings us to that place where we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of our soul bless bless your people as they bring themselves to the mirror of your word that they may see in that word the evidences that will convince them of their security in Christ and that it is not a carnal experience they have but a spiritual one so help us to continue in your name in this world of ours that is a threat to all your people as they live their life of faith in the world grant to us that you would remember all that we would bring before you in prayer any who are unwell amongst us we commend to you and ask that you would heal them and assure them of your own individual attention be they in hospital or at home or suffering from the ravages of time remember the grieving and sorrowful pour out your spirit upon us insidious nation and open the eyes of our understanding that we see God who is good and there is none good but

God bless us we pray for giving sin in Jesus name and now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit be with you all now and always Amen