The Seal of the Holy Spirit

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[0:00] Well, let's turn to Ephesians chapter 4. We are going to continue our study of verse 30.

We may just read it. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.
Ephesians 4 verse 30 And earlier on we were looking at the words, Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.
And this evening we want to think briefly on the seal of the Holy Spirit. And before we look at it particularly, I just want to remind ourselves that Jesus' own emphasis in his teaching was on the vital role of the Holy Spirit in bringing a sinner to a saving knowledge of himself and the experience of the grace of God.
And do you remember when Rabbi Nicodemus came to Jesus by night? He came to speak to Jesus, commending him, we know you're a teacher, come from God.
[1:28] Nobody could do these miracles that you're doing except God is with him. But do you remember how Jesus got right to the real point of Nicodemus' visit?

And he said to him, except a man be born again, or born from above, he cannot experience the kingdom of heaven or of God.
And there's a reminder in this even by way of introduction on our utter dependence upon the Holy Spirit to bring us to understand the gospel and to see our need of Christ and indeed to draw us to close with Christ.
No mere mortal can make himself a true Christian. Nor indeed is the matter left to anyone in terms of it being something that we can achieve by personal effort or contribution.
It's simply not a true option for us. Maybe an option we think is worth it, but in God's sight it's not worth it. It's going nowhere, or if it is going anywhere, it's going the wrong way, the way that leads to destruction.
[2:47] And Jesus emphasized how important the life-giving Holy Spirit is in bringing home to us the saving benefits of Christ's death.

Working repentance in us, as we were saying a moment ago in prayer, He persuades and enables us to receive the Lord Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.
He is the one who persuades us and enables us, He empowers us. He imparts new life, spiritual life. And as to us walking in the ways of God, we are dependent upon Him.
That's why the first part of this verse is about not grieving Him. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Clearly, as we saw earlier on, the people in Ephesus, the Christians, were guilty of misconduct, of wrong thinking, of wrong words and of wrong actions.
And they were being told here, not to grieve the Holy Spirit by this way of living. It's not on. It is an offense to Him. It is hurting to Him.
[4:06] Yea, it grieves Him. And when we look at this business of the Spirit's ministry in the life of the people of God, as He brings us on in God's ways, it's important to remember, you see, that we're not left to struggle on our own.

It's not His intention that we should be plagued by doubts and fears about our spiritual life. It's not His work to dement us, to have us bound in fear.
That's the work of the enemy. Remember how the writer of Hebrews talks about that. Christ came to deliver us, to deliver those who were all their lifetime subject to bondage, to this awful fear.
It's not the Spirit's work. And this text, in fact, the second part of verse 30, has help for us in it.
He says, Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God by your conduct. And then he says, By whom or with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

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[5:35] This Spirit is the Spirit who brings home to us the assurance that we belong to Christ. And despite our wanderings too often, He is the one who can really help us and enable us to live for Christ.

And so, I want us to think about the seal of the Holy Spirit as Paul teaches it here. First of all, then, we want to look at the seal itself.
And obviously, when we think about the seal, we can infer from the context that there are those who are sealed.
Paul is saying, You were sealed with whom, that is the Holy Spirit, you were sealed. And to the day of redemption.
Let's think then about the seal. Let's think about this carefully. He says, With whom you were sealed.
[6:47] Or by whom, it is in the version we are looking at here, but it is with whom. He is the instrument, he is the seal that God uses.

We will look at that a little bit more shortly. When we were reading earlier on in Ephesians 1, we saw that Paul talks there about those who believed the gospel and embraced the Lord Jesus Christ, believing they were sealed with the Holy Spirit.
Ephesians 1, 13, the second part of the verse. The same verb is used, You were sealed. And the core meaning of this word seal is interesting because it means to mark in a distinguishing way.
And those of us who have had experience of the craft in bygone days, or the farming scene, will know very well about the earmarks, the legmarks, the crofters used to put on their sheet.
Or, in more recent times, it was a tag, or even when they put tags on them, but a big blob of views, do you remember?
[8:05] So they could be seen miles away. And each person had their own particular marks for their sheep. So at a distance, the shepherd could see, well, these are red marks, but they're not so-and-so's their mind because of where they are on the animal.

There's a seal. There's a seal of recognition. A seal of ownership. And whether it's, I mean, you could, we could elaborate on this overmatch, but whether it's sheep or cattle, the crafter or the farmer was bound to put his own seal on the animal.
Then again, we could understand it as something of an official stamp. A seal.
It may be on HMS Customs seal on something or other where there's clearly a seal on a door, maybe an articulate vehicle carrying whiskey or something like that.
There's a seal put on to ensure that it is safe and it is identifiable as officially sealed.
[9:22] Our Lord Jesus Christ's tomb, remember when the stone was put on, it was sealed. The command was given that the centurion ensured that the seal was put on.

In Revelation 5, you have another reference to this idea of sealing. The book that was taken had seven seals on it and no one could open the book but the Lamb of God.
He alone is the one who would deal with that. Or we could take another angle on it, perhaps it's the one that is favoured, as I said earlier on, a seal of ownership.
It identifies the thing or in this case the person who is sealed as belonging to the owner.
There's no dispute about it. And this is the emphasis that's here in our text. It's the emphasis that's in Ephesians 1.13 which we read.
[10:37] And the seal is the Holy Spirit himself. And the language in the original emphasises that it's a sedative case.

He is God's seal upon the people of God. those that are brought to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are sealed by the Holy Spirit himself and by that I mean his indwelling of them is the seal.
He comes as the seal. He is the Spirit that was promised. Paul himself makes much of this that it was not only for the Jews but for the Gentiles too.
They would have the same Holy Spirit of promise as the seal of ownership that is of belonging to God.
And the prophets in the Old Testament looked forward to the time when this would come to pass in a mighty way. until the day would come when the Spirit of God would be poured out from on high and the peoples would be blessed with the ministry yes the seal of the Holy Spirit.
[12:09] Ezekiel 36 27 Joel 2 28 Afterwards I will pour out my Spirit on all peoples. And he is depicted like this as the Spirit of promise and we said earlier on today Jesus made much of this because he knew that the time would come when the Spirit would come as the seal upon those

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Jews and Gentiles who would believe in him.

You remember Acts 1 4-8 The disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father and they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire.
And the Spirit himself of course is the one who applies the redemption purchased by Christ to us and he is pictured here as God's seal upon believers.
believers. And one of the things I think is worth weighing here and meditating on perhaps thinking over this and looking at the references in the Bible the Spirit of God himself is so self-effacing so gracious so willing to put himself behind and Jesus to the fore but he is here performing this important function he stoops down to be the seal of God's ownership of believers the world over.
And that brings us secondly to what we would call the sealer and the truth of the matter is that in this passage we are told do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.
[14:19] In other words this Holy Spirit is God's spirit God's seal upon his people and therefore the one who seals them the sealer is God himself is the Father.

The Father is referred to again and again by Paul simply as God. In Ephesians at the very beginning of Ephesians 1 chapter 1 verse 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
And Paul is comfortable with referring to God and meaning the Father. 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 3 the Father is referred to as the God of all comfort.
But it's the Father that is being referred to. And salvation is applied to the people of God to the elect of God.
It is God's will that that happens. All things are of God who has reconciled us to himself through the death of his son.
[15:38] And clearly there if you think about that slowly all things are of God that must mean the Father who has reconciled us to himself through the death of his son.

Well that hurts back to God and it means simply the Father. So again and again we find in Pauline usage when he talks about God often he means simply the Father.
And he does this again and again. A little further on in 2 Corinthians 1 verses 21 and 22 it is God the Father understood that makes us stand firm in Christ.
And he is the Father who anoints through believers and seals them with his seal which is the spirit himself.
The NIV has set his seal of ownership upon us. And that's a really good translation. The Father has set his seal of ownership upon us.
[16:56] And that's a wonderful privilege for believers in Christ that they have been sealed in this way by God the Father. And it is the spirit who graciously condescends as it were to be used as this seal.

This guarantee of ownership. And it is important I think to see that this guarantee is something that comes into our hearts by the spirit.
And we're to recognize that. The sealer is God the Father. The seal is the spirit. And if God seals us with his spirit then we're to recognize that and to respond to that.
Be sensitive to it. Sometimes assurance is elusive to the Lord's people. But the more we dwell on the place of the spirit of God as the seal upon the heart of the believer as the seal of ownership the better we will be.
We will take it from God. It is God's seal of ownership. It's not the right of anyone to say you haven't got the seal. It is a response to the truth of God.
[18:23] That assures us that believing the report we believe it by the spirit of God who is God's seal to us. And that's important I think to grasp and to hold on to.

We don't think enough of it. For example, we were reading earlier on, no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit.
What does that mean? That's something really profound and encouraging. There are many people who have studied the Bible in the original languages.
Greek scholars from a past generation and still who study the New Testament who know what the New Testament says and means when it calls Jesus Lord.
But they do not believe he is the divine son of God. They do not credit to him unabridged deity as well us through humanity.

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[19:49] And why not? Because no one can say Jesus is Yahweh Lord except by the Holy Spirit. And we ought to take encouragement from that.

Sorry I'm looking at you. But I'm serious that we ought to take encouragement from it. We call Jesus Yahweh. We call him Lord.
We call him God the very God man the very man by the Holy Spirit. If we are settled in that, if we will have it no other way, let us take encouragement from the Lord that we believe the truth as it is in Jesus.
Let us be childlike in a response and recognize and recognize the Holy Spirit in his wonderful condescension as the seal.
The Father as the one who seals, the sealer, and lastly, the sealed. Now, of course, we've been anticipating this, I know, but we want to flesh it out for a wee while before we finish.
[21:10] The sealed are obviously true followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are made true followers by the effective work of the Holy Spirit in them.

He brings us to newness of life and not we. We're never told be born again. We're told you must be born again.
We're not told we can do the job ourselves. We're told this is what we need and we look heavenward. We look towards the Spirit of God who regenerates the soul that is dead in trespasses and sins.
We look to him who brings us into newness of life. And however, the question of when this experience begins or when the seal of the Spirit becomes ours.
This is something that has been a problem to many a person. Sometimes at one level we may not be all that sure when. but with regard to the seal of the Spirit that is the Spirit of God becoming the seal to our hearts that we belong to the Lord.
[22:50] There are people in the church throughout history and down to this present time who have taken different views of when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Some people take the view that a person is sealed by the Spirit or receives the Spirit as the seal when they believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.
Others say it is something that happens after you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. People who are of a charismatic persuasion whether they are Protestant or Baptists or some Presbyterians or Lutherans or whatever Roman Catholic charismatics too even they would see the seal of the Spirit much like the baptism of the Spirit something that is post our believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.
And much controversy has arisen over this. Most of these folks hold that although a person can be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ the fact of the matter is that they need a second blessing.
They lack the seal of the Holy Spirit or the lack of baptism this confirming thing. Some also suggest that the evidence of that seal or baptism is a speaking in tongues or in manifesting some particular gift such as healing.
[24:50] But Paul here lays emphasis in another direction.

Paul himself spoke with tongues. But Paul talks about Christian believers who were truly Christian believers who were sealed with the Holy Spirit and who simply didn't speak in tongues.
He doesn't say they were defective. He doesn't say they weren't sealed with the Holy Spirit. He says they were sealed with the Holy Spirit though not all spoke in tongues.
In 1 Corinthians 12 verse 30b all do not speak with tongues. At least if you read the context that's clearly the inference that's to be drawn.
And as we understand it, all who by grace who truly believe on Jesus have the Holy Spirit in all his fullness. And they have him as the seal of God the Father upon their heart.
[26:05] We read earlier on in 1 Corinthians 12 from the beginning and in verses 4 to 11 where Paul refers to the diversity of spiritual gifts given by the Spirit for the good of the body of Christ, the spiritual body of Christ.

He emphasizes all were washed by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. That's what he's talking about.
We were all washed and all made to drink of one Spirit. And that's true of the Lord's people in every generation.
Therefore we're not to make other Christian believers feel that they're inadequate, that they're missing something, that they ought to have as a second experience, a post conversion experience.

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Even the reference in Ephesians 1.13 that we read earlier, it means believing you were sealed with the Holy Spirit.
[27:26] It's not after you believed you were sealed. The verbal form is a participle. It simply means believing you were sealed.

We're not to drive a wedge in there, and it's important to see that. Well, what are we to do then in the light of all this?
Surely the answer is simply that we are to seek to be aware of the indicators of the Spirit of God's presence within us.
And it's not about us speaking in tense or having the gifts of healing or discernment or anything else. It is that we are going in the way the Spirit wants us to go.
If you live by the Spirit, said Paul, then walk by the Spirit or in the Spirit. In Galatians 5, 22-23, Paul lists nine segments of the fruit of the Spirit.
[28:41] Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

And when we are seeking grace to improve upon these in our own lives, they are indicators that the Spirit of God is at work in us.
We are restless with our sin. We are discontented with our sin. That sinful thought patterns and appetites occupy us.
That these traits that are the opposite of love and joy and peace and long-suffering and so on. The opposites are too prevalent and we hate that in ourselves.
The Spirit is working. When people have no thought of these things, they are unconcerned. It is not a problem.
[29:54] The Spirit is not working. The Spirit is not working. Giving us an indication that He is at work.

When we can pass by a text like we are looking at here, don't grieve the Holy Spirit of God. The Spirit is not dealing with us in a saving way.
He is not indwelling us. When the Spirit of God is working, we are sensitive to what He is saying.
And in this way He assures us that He is the seal of God, the seal of ownership of the Father in our hearts.
with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Day of redemption here of course means when time as we know it shall be no more and the resurrection occurs and the just and the unjust will be raised and the Lord's people will be gathered together.
God shall openly acknowledge His people before men and angels and devils and He shall acknowledge them as His own.
[31:19] He will let everybody know what they may not have known before they are mine. When He makes up His precious possession He shall claim His property in that great day.

And this should encourage us to dwell more on the ministry of the Spirit of God in the life of the believer as the one who is given to us as the seal of God the Father in our hearts.
Why do I believe this doctrine and that doctrine and so on? Because the Spirit of God has confirmed it to me.
That's important. Paul said, I know whom it is I have believed. And I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.
Why did he believe that? Because God is faithful who called us into the fellowship of his son.
Because Jesus said that of all the father has given me, I have lost not one.
[32:43] The good shepherd laid down his life for his sheep and he took it again in order that they may have life forevermore in all his fullness. We believe these things.

We lay hold of them. The Spirit of God confirms the gracious word to us. My dear friends, let's not complicate our lives by giving the enemy room in our thoughts to discourage us, to distract us, to make us feel we're not really the Lord's.
Let's see what the Lord gives us. Let's be concerned. I didn't say it in the morning, but it's perfectly possible for a believer to grieve the Spirit of God by not simply taking God at his word.
No, I can't be. If I was, I would be this or that and the other. I take God at his word and deed. Christ died for sinners.
This I read. And in my heart I find the need of him to be my Savior. Can we not say that?

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[34:05] Is that not true of us? Surely it's true. And in my heart I find the need of him to be my Savior. Then living, dying, let me bring my strength and solace from this thing that he who lives to be my king once died to be my Savior.

Let's listen to what the Spirit is saying in the word and simply receive it and rest upon it and don't grieve him by pushing it away.
Amen. to

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