

The Sealing Work of the Holy Spirit

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 September 2018

Preacher: John Johnstone

[0 : 00] Ephesians chapter 1, page 976, Ephesians chapter 1. Our theme over the whole weekend, as you know by now, is that when it comes to salvation, when it comes to ordinary people like us becoming Christians, this is the work of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

And we see that that is how this magnificent outpouring of praise from Paul is structured. That in verses 3 to 6, we see the choosing or electing work of God the Father.

In verses 7 to 12, we see the atoning work of Jesus, God the Son. And we looked at that through the word redemption this morning. And in the last two verses of the section, verses 13 and 14, we see the role of God the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

Not just becoming Christians, but in our sanctification and in God taking us to heaven. And the whole process of salvation, the triune God, is at work.

And we see that this isn't an artificial way to break up the passage because there is a refrain here at the end of verse 6, at the end of verse 12, and at the end of verse 14, a phrase that is repeated.

[1 : 45] You can see it at the beginning of verse 6, to the praise of His glorious grace. After we see the work of God the Father, Paul says, to the praise of His glorious grace.

And then we hear about the work of God the Son. Last half of verse 12, to the praise of His glory. Then we hear about the work of God the Spirit.

And the section ends at the end of verse 14, to the praise of His glory. And so this evening, we want to think about God the Holy Spirit.

And how, when we become Christians, the Holy Spirit seals us and acts as a deposit and a first installment for even greater things in the future.

Sealed by the Spirit. And perhaps for many of us, that sounds quite a strange phrase. What does it mean to be sealed by the Spirit?

[2 : 48] Sealed by the Spirit. But this is the language that we have here in Ephesians 1 verse 13. When you believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

And then if you keep your fingers in Ephesians 1, but if you flick to Ephesians 4 verse 30.

Ephesians 4 verse 30 says, And do not grieve the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

So again, we have God the Holy Spirit in this act of sealing found together. And also in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verse 22, we read, 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.

So all these three verses, two in Ephesians, one in 2 Corinthians 1, links together the Holy Spirit and His sealing work. And so it is important for us to understand and to unpack this evening what that means, what that entails.

First of all, before we do that, we need to ask the question, Who is sealed by the Holy Spirit? Who is sealed by the Holy Spirit?

[4 : 17] Is it all Christians? Or is it just some Christians? In some Christian circles, it's taught that only some Christians are sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Suppose, especially in the charismatic church, they think of the sealing of the Spirit as being some secondary experience. People like Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones taught and believed that.

That is not what is suggested, I would strongly argue, in God's Word. Who is sealed by the Holy Spirit? All Christians.

If you are a Christian tonight, then you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Again, verse 13, And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked. In chapter 1, verse 12, Paul is speaking about we who were the first to hope in Christ, that's the Jews.

[5 : 31] And then in verse 13, he moves on to speak about the Gentiles, people like us. And he says, In him you also, you Gentiles, when you heard the word of truth, were sealed.

And so, from the context of the passage, it's clear that everyone is sealed, not just a select few, but all Christians are sealed by God's Holy Spirit.

not just more mature Christians, but all Christians as soon as we become Christians. Romans 8, verse 9, also speaks about that and we read it together.

You, however, are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. If in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.

So there Paul says, very clearly, in Romans 8, verse 9, if you don't have the Holy Spirit, you do not even belong to God. So how can you be a Christian? So from that, also logically, we can see that all Christians, all of you who are believers, have been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

[6 : 47] 1 Corinthians 3, verse 16, just to have another verse to nail that point down. 1 Corinthians 3, 16, don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?

Paul's speaking to the Corinthians in that verse. A church full of spiritual problems. A church full of spiritual immaturity.

A church full of moral problems. All kinds of difficulties that Paul has to address in his letters to the church in Corinth.

Many problems, some of them severe. But to those Christians, he says, you are God's temple and God's Spirit dwells in you.

So again, that underlying, that it's not something special for just particularly holy and mature Christians, but it's something that all Christians receive, the sealing of the Spirit.

[7 : 53] So, point number one then tonight. What does the sealing of the Holy Spirit mean for us today? What is this sealing of the Spirit all about?

Number one, the sealing shows that we now belong to God. The sealing of the Holy Spirit shows that we now belong to God.

In other words, it's a mark of ownership, a mark of ownership that we have become the children of God and we belong to Him.

Think of farmers with sheep and quite often they'll paint the sheep, maybe they'll spray paint some green paint on all their sheep to mark ownership on the sheep.

Those are my sheep because they've got my particular sign on them. It's a mark of ownership or maybe if you have an iPad or a laptop or something you can get some invisible ink if you live somewhere where you think stuff's going to get stolen and you might mark on that with invisible ink that you own that particular gadget and that again is a mark that it belongs to you.

[9 : 18] I was thinking what do I mark for ownership? I don't own too much but really what sprung to mind was my feely bin because you know how annoying it is if someone takes your feely bin.

So we get the feely bin, we slap a big number on it and if you're tight-fisted like me you get paint and just paint a big number three in that feely bin so that no one can take it.

I'm marking my ownership on that feely bin, it's mine, it belongs to me and we do that don't we? We mark things that belong to us to show that they belong to us or if it's a kid's water bottle at school and there are millions of water bottles at school and so you might get a pen that doesn't wipe away a permanent marker and just write your name and they all get lost anyway so maybe that's a bad example but we mark things in terms of ownership and that's what this is about partly that the Holy Spirit comes to reside in you as Christians to mark you out as belonging to God and that is a very precious truth that we no longer belong to Satan that we are no longer slaves to sin as we were thinking about this morning but we have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light that we are not independent and that's a wonderful thing and it's a good thing to remind yourself of tomorrow morning when you get up whether it's to go to work or do whatever God has in store for you to do tomorrow to wake up and pray to the Lord and talk to him at the start of the day and to remember that you are marked as belonging to him and that motivates us reminds us who we are in relation to God we're not just going about our business on our own we are the people of God we are marked as belonging to him by the Holy

Spirit it's quite a it's both a sobering verse and an encouraging verse because we often think don't we we all often say to people you know would you watch that television program on Netflix if Jesus were beside you would you speak to a person like that if Jesus were beside you but actually the

truth is Christ is with us by his spirit we are temples of the spirit we're sealed by the spirit God is with us through the spirit and so we are always living before our God and so that should encourage us to live holy lives in all areas of our lives again 1st Corinthians 6 20 do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you whom you have received from God you are not your own you were bought with a price therefore honour God with your bodies so it's a challenging thing but it's also a hugely encouraging fact that we belong to God in terms of your own identity maybe we don't think to ourselves who am I and scratch our heads but if we do that now for a moment if we pause and think well who am I am I'm John

Johnston I'm a I'm a husband to Sarah I'm a dad to my four children I'm that's part of my identity I'm proud to have ginger hair that's part of my identity that some of us share and that's a great thing that we should be proud of and all these different things I'm somebody's son I'm hopefully somebody's friends and all these different things are part of our identity of how we think about ourselves but the greatest thing about ourselves of course is that we are children of God and that gives us great dignity and that should fill us with love and that's an amazing thing who am I I'm not worthless you're not worthless so many people struggle these days with feeling that sense of worthlessness but if you are a Christian God has placed his seal upon you and said you're mine you belong to me and nothing is going to change that and that's a wonderful thing and we should try and think along those lines just as in the Old Testament God's ancient people the Jews were called his chosen people his possessions the apple of his eye and now

[14 : 24] God is saying to us that we are the same that we belong to him and so part of what the sealing of the spirit means is ownership that we belong to God secondly the sealing of the spirit shows authenticity the sealing of the spirit shows authenticity in other words it shows that our Christian faith is real that it's the real deal and that's often the way of a seal as well we might think of a laptop you might have or a PC and often on those if you have a legitimate one there's unless you're a Linux user or something there's usually a seal showing that you have genuine Microsoft software on your laptop or your PC or whatever you use there's that Microsoft seal to show that this has the genuine software on it or if you buy a pair of Levi jeans I don't own a pair of Levi jeans but Levi jeans how do you know if you buy them that they're not just knocked off jeans from the banners or somewhere like that they're they're they're copies they're cheap fakes imitations how do you know that your jeans are real and that's why Levi have their own distinctive studs in certain places and they have each pair has its own number and they have the the red Levi tag all these things to show authenticity that this is a real pair of Levi jeans or if you have a a university degree and you've spent years working for the often that piece of paper you get has a seal on it showing this is a genuine degree that you have it's not one you've paid 50 quid for from the US or something like that it's real or if you think back of to the ancient kings who had those signet rings and they would seal their letters and scrolls and so on to show this is real this is for me this letter carries my authority ownership sealing yes ownership we belong to God but secondly the sealing of the spirit shows that we are genuine that we are real Christians that we aren't fake Christians what does that look like in practical terms the holy the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives tells ourselves and other people that we are genuine Christians so let's unpack that a wee bit more first of all how does the Holy Spirit internally inwardly show us that we belong to God well we read about that in Romans 8 Romans 8 15 the spirit you received does not make you slaves so that you live in fear again rather the spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship and by him by the spirit we cry Abba father and then comes Romans 8 16 the spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children the Holy Spirit testifies with our spirit that we are God's children there is the seal of the Holy Spirit God internally inside of us he's the one when we pray who causes us just to pray father as we pray to God and we instinctively know that we are his children and that he is our loving heavenly father and it's God's Holy Spirit who enables us to pray like that and to know that and to feel that so that's God's seal of his Holy Spirit within within us inside us showing that we are genuine Christians and that's why we can know the love of God and we experience the love of God and we experience the peace of God through God's spirit who dwells within us but it's not just an inward way it's also outward the Holy Spirit can also show other people that we are genuine Christians that we belong to Jesus how does that work well we can think of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians and as the Holy Spirit works in us and sanctifies us then we should be more and more fruitful and as we meditate on God's word God's spirit comes alongside his word and changes our hearts so that we are like in that man in Psalm 1 whose roots go down into the waters and who bears fruit the fruit of

the spirit because he meditates on

God's word day and night and so as you as God's people bear that fruit as you exemplify love and joy and peace and patience as you're kind and good and gentle and faithful and faithful and as you exercise self-control then other people can see that in your lives and so that too shows God's spirit at work in you shows that you are genuinely a Christian and so the Holy Spirit is a seal showing ownership that we belong to God the Holy Spirit his ceiling shows that our Christian faith is real the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children thirdly the Holy Spirit is a seal in that he is a guarantee for our future the Holy

[20 : 51] Spirit is a guarantee for the future if you buy a shouldn't really advertise hoovers when I'm preaching that's not what you're meant to do but if you buy a Dyson Hoover you get quite a lengthy guarantee I believe five years five year guarantee that and you get this piece of paper saying that that you can keep and if anything breaks on your Hoover then you can get it replaced and you have that piece of paper as a guarantee but God gives us a guarantee and it's not for five years it's not time limited it's a permanent guarantee and it's not a piece of paper but it's God himself his spirit dwelling in us is a guarantee a guarantee of what a guarantee that he who began a good work in us will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus

Philippians 1 verse 6 God himself is a guarantee his presence within us that he will complete what he started because sometimes we have doubts and Satan likes to bring doubts into our mind and we might think am I really a Christian and will I really get to heaven and does God still love me and why does he love me and so God gives us a spirit as a guarantee to say yes you belong to me and I will complete the work that I am doing so that's the third thing in terms of the sealing of the spirit that it's a guarantee for the future and finally God's Holy Spirit living in us is a deposit or a down payment and a taste of things to come God's Holy Spirit within us is a down payment a taste of things to come now if we look at our Bibles we see in verse 14 the Holy Spirit verse 14 who is the guarantee and then above the word guarantee you'll see the number four the footnote you go down and you see or down payment the Holy Spirit as a down payment of things to come so when I got engaged as you do I gave Sarah an engagement ring and that's almost like a down payment as a sign of things to come you're going to get married it's a pledge of greater things to come I hope well she's gone to the toilet with Esther so I can I can say that without embarrassing her unless she's listening I say but that is true or if you buy a house you have to be a down payment you pay a down payment you pay that down payment as a sign that the rest will follow over the next 20 or 25 or 30 years or whatever your particular sentence is that you will pay off that house that you will buy that house and the Holy Spirit within us is like that engagement ring he is a down payment of something wonderful to come he's a down payment of our inheritance look at verse 14 again the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory we're not in heaven yet we don't have yet all the blessings

God is God is going to give us God is going to give us our bodies aren't perfect yet but one day they'll be like Jesus perfect physical body our souls haven't yet been perfected but one day they will be God wants to give us a taste of heaven now a down payment showing and pledging that the best is yet to come and that down payment is God himself God the Holy Spirit living within us God the Holy Spirit is himself the seal he is the seal and when we become Christians we receive him and that tells us that we now belong to him he owns us we live for his glory

God the Holy Spirit his seal that seal that we are genuinely the children of God and so we can call God our father and God the Holy Spirit his seal is also a guarantee that he will complete the work that he has begun in us and it's a foretaste it's a down payment that we have a greater inheritance to come an inheritance which will never perish or spoil or fail or fail kept in heaven for us in the old testament there are lots of different signs and marks that God uses to show his love and commitment for his people the rainbow that was God's sign to show his commitment never to flood the earth again and always to bring the seasons and cause the sun to shine and the rain to fall so that things grow that was God's special sign the rainbow and still is there was also the sign in the old testament of the Passover feast the feast of the feast of the Passover a sign to us that if we are covered in that blood then we can escape the judgment of God and here in the new testament we have this wonderful sign of God himself God the Holy Spirit sealing us sealing us sealing us and that's something not for an elite bunch of Christians but it's something for you if you're a Christian here this evening

Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 to 14 one big long sentence one outpouring of Paul an outpouring of praise to God that doxology and may all these things that we've been thinking about may they shape our thinking may they burn into our minds so that we can think each day how great our salvation is how committed the triune God is to us Father Son and Holy Spirit who has saved us who is saving us and who will save us and we can praise him for that let's pray Father God we marvel at all you do to save us we marvel that you have chosen us we marvel Lord Jesus that you are our ransom we marvel Holy Spirit that you indwell us and we do pray that we would be filled evermore with the Spirit that we would know Lord God his help in our struggle against sin his help as we seek to do good in your name that we would know that sense that we belong to you that we are your children

[28 : 58] Father we do pray that we would be more conscious of your dwelling within us of your dwelling within us hear our prayers for we ask in Jesus name Amen let's conclude with Psalm 16 from Sing Sam Psalm number 16 and we'll sing verses 5 to 11 those seven stanzas Sam 16 on page 17 Sam 16 verses 5 to 11 O Lord you are to me my cup and portion sure the share that is assigned to me you guard and keep secure the land allotted me is in a pleasant sight and surely my inheritance to me is a delight for all planned allotted me is in need of God if we have a chance of showing you enough who or something and I send you to it

I love you God