

The promise of the Holy Spirit

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Preacher: Rev.Prof. F. Dalrymple-Hamilton

[0 : 00] Paul's letter to the Ephesians, as we did last week, but this time in chapter 1, beginning at verse 1. Verse 1.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we should be wholly blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely bestowed on us in the beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he has lavished upon us.

[1 : 27] For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will, we who first hoped in Christ have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Amen. May the Lord bless to us that reading. May it be to his praise and to his glory. We, Father, pray as we sing. The Church of the Acts of the Apostles was in total reliance on the movement, guidance, and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in a way that perhaps we here need to rediscover afresh.

It was Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great Baptist preacher of London, who in the 1880s said, what we require to make an impact on our society is not new forms of administration, new forms of worship, new ideas gained from the world.

[3 : 27] What we need is the movement of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 1, verses 13 to 14.

In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Last week I mentioned that this epistle to the Ephesians is one of four letters that the apostle wrote during his imprisonment in Rome, which you can see at the end of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 28.

In the epistle to the Philippians, he testifies that his imprisonment has served for the fatherance of the gospel so that the whole of the Praetorian guard now speak of Christ.

And these epistles were written in this order, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians, and Ephesians. And the point that that observation leads us to is that apart from the pastoral letters, 1 and 2 Timothy Titus, this was the last major theological work which the apostle wrote.

[4 : 56] He wrote it in AD 62 and faced death as a martyr three years later in AD 65. And so we turn to the first consideration, which is the promise of the Spirit.

Now these first 14 verses of Ephesians 1 deal with the purposes of God and the origins of our salvation which lie in the counsel and determinate will of God.

And it goes on to deal with how in an experimental basis how this has been achieved by those at Ephesus and elsewhere, namely salvation by the Spirit.

Now he's noted a number of different things that happened. The first is they heard the word of truth. The second, as a result of such hearing they now believed.

And the third is following their newfound faith they were sealed with the Holy Spirit. So what can we learn about how the Ephesians came to faith in Christ?

[6 : 11] The arrival of the apostle Paul at Ephesus is described in the Acts of the Apostles in chapter 19 and the first seven verses. Verse 1 reads this, While Paulus was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus and found some disciples.

What does that mean? This word disciple is here being used somewhat loosely since who they were disciples of was in all probability not Christ but John the Baptist.

And that you can say for certain because they talk about the baptism practiced by John the Baptist. So the following question is meant by Paul to ascertain their spiritual standing.

he said to them, Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? Now the question is a perceptive one because the answer indicates that they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit nor about faith in Christ.

They said no. We have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. So following this answer the apostle gives them clear teaching on the person of Jesus and the coming of the Holy Spirit to the believer's life.

[7 : 52] And so what is being taught to them here in Acts 19 is the promise of the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Now that promise apart from its Old Testament indications in the New Testament was first indicated by John the Baptist. He says this recorded by Luke.

John answered them all, I baptize you with water. He who is mightier and I is coming. The throng of whom sandals I am not worthy to untie.

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. So the first promise as far as the New Testament is concerned about the coming of the Holy Spirit comes in the mouth and teaching of John the Baptist.

That promise was reinforced by a Lord when he met the apostles prior to being ascended. In Acts 1 we read this, while staying with them Jesus charged them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father which he said you have heard from me for John baptized with water but before many days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.

[9 : 24] This is the experience you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of fire. Now the sealing of the Spirit I dealt with last week but that sealing is on each and every one of us to assist us, to guide us, to lead us, to uphold us, to encourage us moments of doubt, opposition, persecution and depression.

But today this sealing of the Spirit happens at the moment of our conversion since there cannot be a work of conversion without the working of the Holy Spirit.

This is what Jesus taught to Nicodemus. He answered, truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Many years ago I listened to Stanley Collins, you may remember him, preaching in Charlotte Chapel, and he said this, if you are not born again of the Spirit, you cannot sing with insincerity, blessed assurance, Jesus is mine.

it's a work of the Spirit. The coming of the Spirit. In him you also have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

[11 : 22] So coming back to the experience of the Ephesian believers, the first event is that they had heard the word of truth.

In Acts 19, Paul relates that he's come across these people whom he names as, or whom the text names as disciples. Now the Greek word that's used here simply means a learner, in particular, of mathematics, but also it's applied to other things as well, and it's applied here.

But it doesn't necessarily mean they were fully fledged believers, as it would in English. It may simply mean that they were followers or learners.

And who they learned or followed about was John the Baptist. John, in his ministry, as we've seen, clearly taught the promise of the Holy Spirit as a future event.

Yet, these people who claim to be followers of John the Baptist have no knowledge of that whatsoever. This was not something that either they had learned or taken on board for themselves.

[12 : 47] So they say, no, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit. All they're aware of is the practice of John the Baptist relative to his ministry.

So they were not true believers in the exact sense of that word. So Paul goes on and he says, John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is Jesus.

Now this is a condensed version by Luke of what Paul probably actually did see. He would have said that Jesus Christ is the expected Messiah from the teaching of the Old Testament.

And he has come in particular to die in our place for our sins and to rise again on the third day. So he brings this truth to the Corinthians and he says this, I deliver to you as of first importance which I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures.

scriptures. That is the gospel that Paul passes on. It's what he passed on here in Acts 19.

[14 : 21] Then we read, they believed. This teaches us something which is really important about the preaching of God's word.

Faith, Romans 10, comes by hearing. and hearing by the word of God. In other words, it's pregnant with the ability to create faith in the person of Jesus.

And this took place when the apostle explained to them the difference between the teaching of John the Baptist and the reasons for Christ to have come.

Now the text doesn't actually go into all that. But it's certainly the case. And you can see what he said to the Acts of the Apostles in other examples.

Acts 17 talks about Paul preaching on Christ in the synagogue. And in 1 Thessalonians he gives you the result of all that.

[15 : 33] They themselves, that's the inhabitants of Thessalonica, report concerning us, what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come.

All of that is a result of Paul's ministry in the synagogue. And what he said about Paul in the synagogue is that he debated with them, that is with the congregation in the synagogue, about the coming of the Messiah in the person of Jesus, who died in our place to forgive our sins.

And so the final point he makes is that they are now sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This sealing occurred at the moment of their conversion.

Verse 6 of Acts 19, On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

So the church at Ephesus had its beginnings in a very small way. But from these actions grew a mighty work for God.

[17 : 09] Acts 19 tells you this, the teaching of Paul, continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

He was continuing to lay a great foundation faith, upbuilding those who had come to faith as reported at the beginning of Acts 19, and going on to preach to others who had not yet believed.

So now we come to something which is important, which is the indwelling of the Spirit. God's in him, you also have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Now we come to something that Paul is making clear in his teaching about the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

It's this, that in the New Testament, of which we are part, the Holy Spirit would come to dwell in the life of every believer.

[18 : 39] Now our Lord indicates this in his teaching in the upper room to his then disciples in John 13 to 17.

And in John 14, 16 to 17, he says this, I will pray the Father, and he will give you another counselor.

The word another indicates that the counselor that is to come is another like me. He will be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive because it neither sees him or knows him.

You know him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you. In other words, he is saying that as a result of this prayer, God the Father will give to them the gift of the Holy Spirit, not now, but at some point in the future.

He says they already know him because he dwells with you. But he's keen to emphasize this is only a temporary experience.

[20 : 03] they will go on to experience the Holy Spirit in a greater way when this prayer is answered. What they experience now, this dwelling with them, is identical to the gift of the Spirit in the days of the Old Testament dispensation.

salvation. In those days, the Holy Spirit dwelt not with everybody, but with select individuals such as kings and prophets and a number of wise men and women in Israel.

This is what he means by saying, you know him, for he dwells with you and shall be in you. What has made the difference is the coming of Jesus Christ in the incarnation.

He, the Spirit of God, will now dwell with those who believed. Truly, truly, I say to you, Nicodemus, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Now, it's at this point we transfer to the teaching of Paul to the Corinthians, where he says this in chapter 3, 16, 17, do you not know that you are God's temple, and God's temple, God's Spirit dwells in you?

[21 : 44] If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. for God's temple is holy, and that temple you are.

In other words, what he wants them to do is to realize what they are. They are the temple of the living God.

This is not only true collectively, but personally, individually, each and every one of them. To make clear what is being said here, I draw to your attention that there are two Greek words used for the idea of temple.

The first of these is a Greek word called heros, and what it describes is the gateway and the outer courts of the temple. the temple in Jerusalem had a court of the Gentiles.

This is the word that you would use to describe the court of the Gentiles, but that is not the word that is being used here. The second word is the word naos, and it refers to the holy of holies, i.e., that part of the physical temple in Jerusalem where the high priest entered once a year to celebrate and to officiate before God alone on the day of atonement.

[23 : 27] Now, says the apostle, this is what you Corinthians are. Each and every one of you has in you the holy of holies.

The Holy Spirit dwells in you in the same way that he dwells in that very sacred place in the physical temple in Jerusalem.

And turning back to Corinthians, he says this, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you which you have from God.

You are not your own. You are bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

This is the fundamental result of the teaching of the promise of the Holy Spirit. true for each and every one of us today.

[24 : 38] And it has practical implications. And these practical implications are simply this, that if I and you together, singularly, and collectively would take this to heart, believe it, and put it into effect, we would sweep this neighborhood for God because we would be a mighty force in the hands of God.

In him you also who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

May God help us, each and every one, to apply that word to ourselves, singularly, collectively, and let us ask God to give us the increase in blessing that that word promises.

and so we continue to pray as we sing, oh, breath of life comes sweeping through us.

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