

“The Sealing of the Holy Spirit”
Ephesians 1:13-14
(Preached at Trinity, December 15, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Paul opens this epistle with the declaration of the glorious spiritual blessings we have in Christ. God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ" (V.3)
2. In **Verse 5** Paul speaks of our adoption. God has predestined us to adoption as sons. As the children of God we have become heirs of a great inheritance. This inheritance is immeasurable. We share in the abundance of the inheritance of Christ. Paul says in Romans 8 that we are fellow-heirs with Christ.
Romans 8:16-17 NAU - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ"
3. Paul maintains in this passage what I call the "Jewish priority." They were the first to receive the promise. Jesus came to them first. The Gospel came to them first. They were the first to believe. The inheritance was theirs by promise. And then the Gospel was delivered to the Gentiles.
 - A. In **Verses 11-12** Paul uses the first person plural, "we," referring to himself and the Jewish believers.
Ephesians 1:12 NAS - "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory."
 - B. In **Verse 13** Paul addresses the Gentiles, "You also." We Gentiles enjoy the inheritance promised to the Jews. The Gentiles who have heard and have believed have been grafted into the Body of Christ..
4. If Christ is the heir of all things and we have been joined with Christ then we are also have become heirs of all things. They are ours, our promised possession. We enjoy them now. And yet we haven't received their fulness. At the heart of our possession is eternal life, the eternal enjoyment of the new heavens and the new earth in the presence of Christ.
5. There is a sense that our inheritance still rests in the realm of promise; but it is a promise that has present substance. Paul tells us in **Verse 14** that the Holy Spirit has been given to us as a pledge - "who is given as a pledge of our inheritance"
6. As a preacher I'm tempted to preach a sermon about the work of the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. But the focus of this passage is upon the promise of our inheritance. The Holy Spirit has been given as the pledge of our inheritance.
 - A. The word for pledge refers to earnest money, a security payment. We often call it a down payment. The KJV calls the Holy Spirit "the earnest of our inheritance"

- B. Paul repeats this in 2 Corinthians
2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NAU - "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²² who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."
- C. We also know it in our culture with the use of an engagement ring. It is the promise of the consummation of the marriage. An engagement is a promise of the fullness of what is to come.
- D. The Holy Spirit is our taste of heaven.
 Matthew Henry: "Heaven is the inheritance, the happiness of which is a sufficient portion for a soul: it is conveyed in the way of an inheritance, being the gift of a Father to his children. He is called *the Spirit of promise*, as he is the promised Spirit. The Spirit *is the earnest of our inheritance*, [y. 14](#). The earnest is part of payment, and it secures the full sum: so is the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit's illumination is an earnest of everlasting light; sanctification is an earnest of perfect holiness; and his comforts are earnest of everlasting joys. He is said to be the earnest, *until the redemption of the purchased possession*."
7. The focus here is upon a very particular aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit. He is called the "Holy Spirit of promise" in **Verse 13**.
 Paul says that having believed we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.
Ephesians 1:13 NAS - "having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise"
8. What does Paul mean by this sealing of the Holy Spirit?
 First of all, what it doesn't mean.
- A. Paul is not referring to a second act of grace, a work of the Holy Spirit subsequent to our being filled or Baptized with the Holy Spirit.
- B. This interpretation seems to result from the translation of **Verse 14** in the KJV
Ephesians 1:13 KJV - "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,"
1. The KJV makes it appear that this sealing of the HS comes at some point after we believed. The word "after" is being inferred from the grammar of the word "believed." It is an aorist participle.
 2. It is possible to translate it "after you believed" but the aorist in the Greek does not have time as its focus. The NASB is a better translation of the participle:
Ephesians 1:13 NAU - "having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise"
 3. The CSV is also a good rendering
Ephesians 1:13 CSB - "when you believed in Him, you were also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."
 4. The point is this sealing occurs upon believing, not at some point later. It is a part of God's unified work of salvation. Regeneration, faith, repentance, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit are a part of God's indivisible work of salvation. We use the *ordo salutis* to describe the *how* of our salvation.

- C. Martyn Lloyd-Jones held to this second work of grace interpretation. He believed that the sealing of the Spirit was the same as the baptism of the Spirit and that both occurred at some interval after we believe. He believed that the sealing of the Holy Spirit resulted in great confidence and assurance and great power for witness.
1. "I assert that this 'sealing of the Spirit' is something subsequent to believing, something additional to believing . . . there is always an interval. Believing first, then sealing. You can be a believer without being sealed; the two things are not identical. (pages 250-254 of his commentary).
 2. Lloyd-Jones' understanding was that not every believer had this sealing of the Holy Spirit and that it was something we should seek. In order to truly have great assurance it demands this great work of grace known as the sealing of the Holy Spirit. This is contrary to our confession:
LBC Chapter 18:3 – "This infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long, and conflict with many difficulties before he be a partaker of it; yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may, without extraordinary revelation, in the right use of means, attain there unto"
9. Paul is declaring that this sealing of the Spirit is given to every one of us who believe. Having heard and believed we were sealed. All believers are heirs and all believers receive the Holy Spirit as the pledge of their inheritance and all are sealed until the day of redemption. The Holy Spirit has been given as the substance of God's promise. Paul refers to Him as the Spirit of promise. God works in our lives through the Holy Spirit. He is the executing force within the Godhead. Charles Hodge states:
The Spirit is the executive of the Godhead. Whatever God does, He does by the Spirit.
10. The Holy Spirit as the pledge of our inheritance is a universal gift of God upon all of His people. None are excluded. **Romans 8:9 NAS** - "But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."
11. This morning I want us to consider what Paul meant by this sealing of the Holy Spirit. There were three purposes to this sealing of the Holy Spirit, all regarding our relationship with Christ.
1. Possession - Ownership
 2. Protection or preservation – to render secure
 3. Pledge or to authenticate as genuine
12. Each of these has significance as we consider the sealing of the Holy Spirit
- I. Possession - Ownership
- A. A seal is a designation of ownership
1. This is clearly seen with the branding of animals. Every ranch has its own particular brand. In days past when the open range system was in effect cattle were easily identified by their brand.
 2. Mechanics mark their tools, corporations have coded labels they put on all of the company property.

3. The books in my office are identified by a stamp upon the pages designating they belong to my library.
- B. Through the Holy Spirit believers are sealed; that is, separated and set apart for God, and distinguished and marked as belonging to him.
- 2 Timothy 2:19 NAS** - "Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness."
1. God has set His seal upon us. We were marked and set apart in eternity.
Ephesians 1:4 NAU - "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"
Ephesians 1:5 NAU - "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself"
 2. We not actually sealed as belonging to Him until the work of the Holy Spirit. He applies the Gospel to our hearts enabling us to believe. And then His indwelling presence in us marks us as belonging to Christ.
 3. This mark of God upon His people is the mark of holiness through the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. As the pledge of our inheritance He works in us the glorious foreshadows of the promise of our perfection, the full sum of our inheritance.
- II. Protection or preservation – to render secure
- A. Kings often had particular seals to mark their letters and correspondence
1. The signet ring bore the particular crest of the king. Whenever they had official correspondence written it would be rolled up into a scroll. They would then drip wax upon it to seal it and while the wax was still soft they would press their signet ring into the wax.
 2. It might be a royal decree or an official letter to another king. It was important to protect against forgeries, tampering, or unauthorized reading. Only the designated party had the authority to break the seal. The seal protected it and secured it until the right party received it.
 3. This idea is clearly portrayed in **Revelation 5**
Revelation 5:1-5 NAU - "I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a book written inside and on the back, sealed up with seven seals. ² And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the book and to break its seals?" ³ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the book or to look into it. ⁴ Then I *began* to weep greatly because no one was found worthy to open the book or to look into it; ⁵ and one of the elders said to me, "Stop weeping; behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."

4. We also see this sense after our Lord was crucified and placed in the tomb. The authorities wanted the grave sealed to prevent unauthorized entry
Matthew 27:62-66 NAU - "Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, ⁶³ and said, "Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I *am to* rise again.' ⁶⁴ "Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first." ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." ⁶⁶ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone."

- B. The Holy Spirit is God's agent in protecting and preserving us
 1. He secures us through regeneration and faith and repentance. He works in us to persevere. He works in us ever increasing holiness giving us an ever increasing hatred of sin.
 2. He protects us from corruption that would lead us to perdition. Many products are protected by a seal to prevent tampering. Such seals render the contents secure. The Holy Spirit secures us. Apart from His work within us we would surely fall away and perish.
 3. The false believer will flee from the flames of persecution. The Holy Spirit gives us boldness during times of persecution
Luke 12:11-12 NAU - "When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say; ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

III. Pledge or Authenticity – to authenticate as genuine

- A. The king's seal rendered a document as genuine – it was his mark that would be placed at the bottom of the document
 1. Correspondence from the king was important and official. It was important to validate it as genuine. The official seal designated it as being authentic
 2. We also use such seals today. A piece of property is purchased, a home, a car and the documents are signed, but there is also the notary seal showing the document and signature to be authentic.
 3. U.S. currency today bears certain marks today to guard against counterfeiting. They mark the bills as being genuine. Software companies place holographic seals upon their software to set them apart as being genuine.
- B. The Holy Spirit in us is God's seal that we are genuine.
1 John 3:24 NAU - "We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."

1. The Holy Spirit is the “first fruits” of our inheritance
Romans 8:23 NAU - "And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for *our* adoption as sons, the redemption of our body."
2. The Holy Spirit is given as our pledge
2 Corinthians 1:21-22 NAU - "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, ²² who also sealed us and gave *us* the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."
3. He testifies within us that we are the children of God
Romans 8:16 NAU - "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God"
Galatians 4:6 NAU - "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!"
4. He works in us holiness, the evidence that we are born of God. We can witness the fruit of the Spirit in our life.
5. He works in us faith, the substance of our confidence before Christ. It is through faith that we know the promises of God are true. It is through faith that we have confidence in the Gospel of Christ—in the cross, in His perfect blood shed for us. It is through faith that we look for His return.
6. Spurgeon – “Never be content, my dear hearers, unless you are sealed, unless you are sure, by the inward witness and testimony of the Holy Ghost, that you have been begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Conclusion

1. This is the Holy Spirit’s work of sealing us. It is God’s great work within us through the gift of His Holy Spirit, the pledge of our inheritance. What is the result of this sealing?
2. We are assured of being the people of God whereby we can cry out Abba Father. We are protected and secured until the end.
3. Paul says that having this glorious gift of the Holy Spirit, follow Him, submit to Him, do not grieve Him.
Ephesians 4:30 NAU - "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."
4. We must remember who we are as the people of God. We have God’s mark upon us, the sealing of the Holy Spirit – His mark of ownership, His mark of protection, His mark of pledge or authenticity.
Remember what you are.
Ephesians 5:8-10 NAU - "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Light *consists* in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord."