

04.02.07 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

Sealed in the Spirit

Bible Readings = Eph. 1:13-14 & 2 Cor. 1:18-22; Rom. 8:14-25

Introduction:

- (1) Last time we were giving our hearts and minds to the message of Ephesians, we looked at the sheer lavishness of the grace of God, who has given us Christ in whom we have all things, and in whom all things will be summed up.
- (2) At the beginning of this series, we noted that each of the Persons of the Triune God is shown to participate fully in the fulfilment of the plan of God.
- (3) The first chapter of Ephesians is fully Trinitarian in its structure: God the Father, the initiator of all things; God the Son, one with the Father as the source of grace and peace, who redeems us and in whom the Father will sum up all things; and God the Holy Spirit, through whom we receive the personal knowledge of all that the Father and Son have done, and all that they are.

This week we will be concentrating on the person of the Spirit, through whom we are sealed in Christ, and who has been given as a pledge of our inheritance.

1. The Greatness of the Gift of the Spirit

- (1) We cannot overestimate the fullness of the blessing that is ours in the New Covenant.
 - While we see covenant as a continuing theme from Genesis to Revelation, and while we know that there is a sequence of covenants, all of which are linked to specific promises (e.g. Noahic, Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic), we are wrong to think of the New Covenant as one of the series.
 - The New Covenant is *the great* covenant to which all the others pointed. It is, as the writer to the Hebrews tells us, a ‘better’, ‘superior’ covenant, built on better promises, and on a better sacrifice etc.
 - The Old Testament contained the promise of the New Covenant to come (E.g. in places such as Jer. 31:31-33; Ezk. 36:22ff. cf. Jer. 23:5; 32:40; 33:14-16; 50:4; Ezk. 34:23-31; Zech. 3:8-10; 6:12f.; etc.), and in Christ, this New Covenant is now come!
 - Jesus understood that he himself was the guarantee and sacrifice of the covenant (e.g. Matt. 26:26ff.; Mark 14:24)
- (2) Paul makes it clear that all the promises of God are fulfilled in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20), including all the promises in relation to the gift of the Spirit.
 - See the way in which Paul portrays the gift of the Spirit as the goal of the Abrahamic covenant (Gal. 3:14)
 - The Cross was with a view to the Spirit being poured out!
 - Gal. 3:14 in the context of the curse which Christ bore; also see Jesus’ words in John 7:37ff.; and Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14ff, where he quotes from Joel 2:28ff.; and the relation of the gift of the Spirit to the ascension in Acts 2:33).
 - Jesus’ own words confirm this: John 16:7 Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you John 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,

to be with you forever,¹⁷ even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. John 14:26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you John 15:26 But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me.

(3) The gift of the Spirit is thus the goal of the New Covenant promises. How to translate Eph. 1:13 ‘the promised Holy Spirit’ or ‘the Holy Spirit of promise’? Or, as in the NJB Now you too, in him, have heard the message of the truth and the gospel of your salvation, and having put your trust in it you have been stamped with the seal of the Holy Spirit of the Promise

- Can you imagine what it would be like not to have the Holy Spirit? He preaches the gospel to us; he reveals Christ and the Father, causing us to cry “Jesus is Lord” and “Abba, Father”; he convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; he sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts; he bears in us his own fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness etc.; he intercedes for us with sighs and groanings too deep for words; he gives gifts to his people, distributing each as he wills; he gives power to our weakness; he fills us; he leads us and guides us; and even this is only the beginning of his ministry!!
 - This is all according to the Father’s will and his initiative. If we were to remove the initiative and action of God from the picture we would have nothing! But *God has purposed that in Christ we would be sealed in the Holy Spirit, given as a pledge of our inheritance.*
 - This is why the gift of the Spirit is given such a high place in the New Testament (e.g. Rom. 8:9 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)

2. Pledge and Seal

(1) The idea present in this passage (Eph. 1:13-14) is also present in the other, parallel readings (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5).

- The ideas are both from the commercial world. A seal (e.g in wax or of some other sort) was placed on goods which had been purchased, identifying the owner and often indicated what was inside the sealed container. The pledge was a down payment (I believe that the word is used in modern Greek of an engagement ring). It indicated that the purchaser would return for his possession, or that he would complete that which he had begun. In either case, the sealed item or pledged item could not be touched by another. They were ‘owned’, and therefore protected.

(2) These ideas are present in the passage.

- We have been *bought by God* through the blood of his Son (in the great act of redemption as in 1:7ff.). We are thus God’s own possession (1:14 cf. Acts 20:38; Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9). 1 Cor. 6:19ff. ‘You are not your own, you have been bought with a price’.
 - The Old Testament background (e.g. in Deut. 4:20; 7:6; 14:2; 26:18ff.; etc.) makes it clear that deliverance (from Egypt) was at the same time the mark of God’s ownership.

- God's seal is on you. You cannot be touched except by the express will of God, *but he never relinquishes ownership of his precious possession.*
- But the idea of the pledge, in particular, indicates that there is more to come! The down payment is made, but the full possession is to be taken. This is linked, therefore to the redemption of our bodies.
 - Compare the tense of Eph. 1:14 to 1:7 and then to Rom. 8:23 And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies
- So our *redemption* and our *inheritance* are linked.
 - This relates to next week, but (a) what is the inheritance? Ours, and/or God's? Cf Old Testament background as in Jer. 51:19 he who is the portion of Jacob, for he is the one who formed all things, and Israel is the tribe of his inheritance; the LORD of hosts is his name Ps. 78:70f. [he brought David] from following the nursing ewes he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people, Israel his inheritance
 - And we need the fullness of the Spirit to open our inner eyes to see this!
 - But we do long and look and hope and wait for the full redemption...which takes the pressure off us! No need to make this creation into the new creation!

3. The Spirit's Fullness

(1) The fullness of the Spirit is to be the normative state for New Testament believers (e.g. Eph. 5:18 'be on being filled' cf. John 7:37ff.)

- We will see much more of this as we go through, but simply put: do you want to be filled? He is present, but do not grieve him (e.g. in holding on to hurts, bitterness, anger, unforgiveness); or quench him (by despising the prophetic word he brings); or turn from the gospel to hear another 'gospel' (compare with Gal 3:1ff...hearing with faith!).
- We have been created for the Spirit's life in us, and ours in him. We have been recreated under the terms of the grace of the New Covenant, and we have received the Spirit. Be on being filled!