

God's Supreme Purpose

Salvation Sealed by the Spirit

Ephesians 1:11-14

Rev. Freddy Fritz

February 5, 2017

Salvation Sealed by the Spirit

Scripture

We are currently in a series of sermons on Ephesians 1 that I am calling, “God’s Supreme Purpose.” Paul’s emphasis in chapter 1 is not on what we must do for salvation, but rather on what God has done for us in Christ. Ephesians 1:3-14, which is one, long, complex sentence in the original Greek, shows us how each Person of the Trinity is involved in the salvation of God’s people. Our salvation was planned by the Father (1:4-6), purchased by the Son (1:7-12), and sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14).

Previously, we examined the Father’s plan of salvation in Ephesians 1:4-6, and how our salvation was purchased by the Son in Ephesians 1:7-10. Today, we shall examine how our salvation is sealed by the Holy Spirit in Ephesians 1:11-14.

Let’s read about how our salvation was sealed by the Spirit in Ephesians 1:11-14:

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:11-14)

Introduction

Earlier this year we learned that “The Greatest Show on Earth” is coming to an end. Kenneth Feld, chairman and CEO of Feld Entertainment, the producer of Ringling Bros. and Barnum

& Bailey, posted this announcement on the company's website, "After much evaluation and deliberation, my family and I have made the difficult business decision that *Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey*[®] will hold its final performances in May of this year. *Ringling Bros.* ticket sales have been declining, but following the transition of the elephants off the road, we saw an even more dramatic drop. This, coupled with high operating costs, made the circus an unsustainable business for the company."¹ So, after 146 years "The Greatest Show on Earth" will come to an end.

The Apostle Paul set forth in Ephesians 1 the greatest show on earth. Except what the Apostle Paul presented was not entertainment; it was an explanation of the greatest, real-life, eternal, life-changing drama in all history. In Ephesians 1 Paul traced the plan of salvation that began in the mind of God even before the creation of the world and will continue throughout all eternity. Paul's description is one long, complex sentence in the original Greek as he described the Father electing a vast number of people to salvation, the Son purchasing their salvation by his life, death, burial, and resurrection, and then the Holy Spirit applying benefits of Christ's work of salvation to the elect.

In Ephesians 1:3-14 the Apostle Paul set forth teaching about God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, election, sin, forgiveness, redemption, the gospel, grace, creation, the consummation of world history, and several other doctrines. In the section we are going to examine today, we will learn about the work of God the Holy Spirit.

Lesson

Ephesians 1:11-14 shows us several ways the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's work of salvation to the elect.

Let's use the following outline:

¹ See <https://www.ringling.com>.

God's Supreme Purpose

1. The Holy Spirit Effectually Calls the Elect (1:11)
2. The Holy Spirit Glorifies Christ (1:12)
3. The Holy Spirit Inspires the Word of God (1:13a)
4. The Holy Spirit Seals God's People (1:13b-14a)

I. The Holy Spirit Effectually Calls the Elect (1:11)

First, the Holy Spirit effectually calls the elect.

Paul said in verse 11a, **“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”** The Apostle Paul taught that God the Father **works all things according to the counsel of his will**. That is, it was God the Father who, before the creation of the world, chose a vast number of people to be saved. These are the ones who have **been predestined according to the purpose of God the Father**. The Father then sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth to live and die to accomplish salvation for the elect. And so, it is **in him**, that is, it is in Christ, that **we have obtained an inheritance**. This **inheritance** is accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit, who opens our eyes to see what Jesus has done for us, gives us faith to believe in him, and changes our wills to receive him as our Savior. And this work of the Holy Spirit is known as “effectual calling.”

The Holy Spirit's work of effectual calling is necessary for the conversion of every believer because, apart from his work of effectual calling, no one would ever turn to Jesus in faith and repentance. As Paul said to the Romans, “No one seeks for God” (Romans 3:11). That is right, isn't it? How can people, who are by nature spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), seek for God? Left to ourselves, we will go along in our happy, lost, godless way, and we will never seek for God.

Thankfully, though, God loves us, and so he determined to bring us into a right relationship with himself. That is what the

Holy Spirit does. His work, Jesus said John 16:8–11, is to “convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.”

I believe I have shared the following story with you some time ago. When I was a student at the University of Cape Town, I led a Bible study for fellow students. We met in the home of a lady who lived near the University, and she baked a variety of cookies for us each week to have along with our tea. There were about 15 students in the Bible study, and I suspect that some of them were there just for the cookies and tea! Anyway, in one of our studies we were dealing with the issue of effectual calling. One of the students vehemently disagreed with the teaching that the Holy Spirit effectually calls people to salvation. One reason he may have disagreed with the teaching is that he did not profess faith in Christ at that time. The topic came up periodically over several weeks. Then, one week he arrived and was very excited. He said that he now believed in effectual calling. We asked him to explain. He said that friends had often invited him to evangelistic services. He went but never responded to the gospel. Recently, however, he was invited and one of his friends said that perhaps that evening he would become a Christian. My friend determined that if he ever did become a Christian, it would definitely not be *that* evening! He was determined to resist any push to believe in Jesus. However, to his great surprise, he said, at the end of the sermon, he felt himself responding to the gospel almost in spite of his predetermined desire not to respond. And he was delighted to have done so!

You see, the Bible teaches that there are two kinds of calling. One is the *general* call. This call is general, external, and universal. It is an open invitation to all people to repent of their sin and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. It is heard by all who hear

God's Supreme Purpose

the gospel invitation. Jesus himself offered this invitation to people when he said in Matthew 11:28, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," and also in John 7:37, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink." However, since no one seeks for God, when people hear these words they do not respond. People prefer their own ways, and do not want to trust in Jesus. That is why Jesus said in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day."

So, something more than a general call is needed. And that is where the effectual call of the Holy Spirit comes in. The *effectual* call is internal, specific, and effectual. That is, people not only hear the words of this call externally, but they are enabled to respond to it positively. The Holy Spirit regenerates a person who is then enabled to believe in Jesus and repent of his sin.

The clearest illustration of effectual calling in the Bible is Jesus' calling of Lazarus back to life from the dead. Lazarus was the brother of Mary and Martha, and was dead and buried for four days before Jesus arrived on the scene. Lazarus in his grave is a picture of every single person in his or her natural, spiritual state: dead in body and soul, bound with grave clothes, lying in a tomb, and sealed with a great stone. James Boice continues:

Let's call to him, "Lazarus, Lazarus. Come forth, Lazarus. We want you back. We miss you. If you will just get up out of that tomb and return to us, you'll find that we are all anxious to have you back. No one here is going to put any obstructions in your way."

What? Won't Lazarus come? Doesn't he want to be with us?

The problem is that Lazarus does not have the ability to come back. The call is given, but he cannot come.

Ah, but let Jesus take his place before the tomb. Let Jesus call out, "Lazarus, come forth," and the case is quite different. The words are the same, but now the call is no mere invitation. It is an

effectual calling. For the same God who originally called the creation out of nothing is now calling life out of death, and his call is heard. Lazarus, though he has been dead four days, hears Jesus and obeys his Master's voice.²

Jesus has of course returned to Father. And the Father and the Son have sent the Holy Spirit to apply the work of salvation, planned by the Father and purchased by Christ, to the elect. And one of the ways the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's work of salvation to the elect is by effectually calling the elect.

So, first, the Holy Spirit effectually calls the elect.

II. The Holy Spirit Glorifies Christ (1:12)

Second, the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ.

Paul said in verse 12, “. . . so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.” Paul wrote here about himself and his fellow Jews who were the first to hope in Christ. You may have noticed the change in pronouns that Paul used in verses 11-14. He was speaking of the Jews in verses 11-12, “In him *we* have obtained an inheritance... so that *we* who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.” In verse 13 he spoke of the Gentiles, “In him *you* also, when *you* heard the word of truth, the gospel of *your* salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.” And then in verse 14 he spoke of all believers, “. . . who is the guarantee of *our* inheritance until *we* acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

Paul's main point, however, is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to glorify Christ, as he said in verse 12, “. . . so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.” Jesus taught that this was the work of the Holy Spirit in John 15:26, “But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you

² James Montgomery Boice, *Romans: The Reign of Grace*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1991-), 915.

from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me,” and in John 16:13–14, “When the Spirit of truth comes... he will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.”

Several decades ago there was a major push to promote the person and work of the Holy Spirit, who was called the “Forgotten” Person of the Trinity. Some churches talked about the person and work of the Holy Spirit in such a way as to become unhealthy. They talked about having the Holy Spirit, having a second experience of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (as a sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit), and so on. When churches talked more about the Holy Spirit than about Jesus, one could be sure that it was not the Holy Spirit who was at work in that church!

You see, the work of the Holy Spirit is to exalt and glorify Jesus Christ. So, when a church makes much about Jesus and his work, one can be sure that the Holy Spirit is at work in that church!

I planned to preach this series of sermons toward the end of last year. The election had just taken place, and Donald Trump had won the election. You know that his campaign slogan was, “Make America Great Again!” And so, for a while, I was tempted to call this series of sermons, “Make Christ Great Again!” Of course, Christ is already great, and I did not choose that title because it seems rather irreverent. However, too often Christ and his glorious work of saving the lost is not well-highlighted, and I want to emphasize the greatness of Christ. That is in fact the work of the Holy Spirit: to glorify Christ.

So, the Holy Spirit effectually calls the elect, and he glorifies Christ.

III. The Holy Spirit Inspires the Word of God (1:13a)

Third, the Holy Spirit inspires the Word of God.

Paul said in verse 13a, **“In him you also, when you heard**

the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him.” The point I want to emphasize here is that it is the Holy Spirit who inspired **the word of truth**. As James Boice says, “Just as the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ and may not be separated from him, so also does the Holy Spirit always speak through and with the Word of God, the Bible, and is not to be separated from it. The Holy Spirit never speaks or works apart from Scripture.”³

2017 is the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther posted his Ninety-Five Theses on the door in Wittenberg. It seems strange to us, but apparently, that is the way in which debate took place in those days. And one of the great recoveries of the Reformation was *sola Scriptura*. By that they meant that the people of God and the Church of Christ were to be guided by the Word of God alone and not by Scripture *and* Tradition. And one of the glorious truths that came out of that was that it was the Holy Spirit who brought men and women to faith, and then the Holy Spirit enabled them to persevere in that faith once they believed.

The Reformer’s believed in the person and work of the Holy Spirit because it was taught in the Word of God. They delighted in truths taught in the Word of God, such as John 3:8, “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit,” and 1 John 5:6b, “And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth,” and 1 Corinthians 2:12–14, “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him,

³ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 31.

and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.”

The reason the Reformers delighted in these verses, and others like it, is because they recognized that the work of the Holy Spirit is to inspire the Word of God. Our understanding of God, who he is and what he has done in saving sinners, is utterly dependent upon the Word of God. And it is the work of the Holy Spirit to produce it, preserve it, and enable us to understand it. As James Boice says, “The Bible is the means God uses to call and bless people, as the Holy Spirit, who is God, reveals the Lord Jesus Christ and his work through its pages.”⁴

So, let us pay attention to the Word of God. Let us read it, study it, memorize it, discuss it, pray it, sing it, and apply it. That is what the Holy Spirit enables us to do with the Word of God.

So, the Holy Spirit effectually calls the elect, glorifies Christ, and inspires the Word of God.

IV. The Holy Spirit Seals God's People (1:13b-14a)

And fourth, the Holy Spirit seals God's people.

Paul said in verse 13b that we “. . . **were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.**”

In his commentary on Ephesians, Charles Hodge points out that there are three purposes for which a seal is used, and each one illustrates the work of the Holy Spirit. First, a seal is used “to authenticate or confirm as genuine and true.” This is like a seal on a dollar bill. It indicates that it is a genuine dollar bill. Similarly, the Holy Spirit's seal indicates that the one who has trusted in Jesus Christ is genuinely God's child.

Second, a seal is used “to mark as one's property.” This is like your name that is stamped on the outside of your Bible to show that it is your Bible. Similarly, the Holy Spirit's seal indicates

⁴ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary*, 31.

that we are God's own possession.

And third, a seal is used "to make secure."⁵ This is the seal that was placed by the Sanhedrin on the tomb of Christ. Similarly, the Holy Spirit's seal makes the Christian secure in his new faith and relationship.

Paul said in verse 14a that we "were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, **who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.**" The Greek word for **guarantee** (*arrabon*) means "a *pledge*, i.e. part of the purchase-money or property given in advance as *security* for the rest."⁶ Like a down payment on the purchase of a property, the Holy Spirit is proof that we belong to him and much more is yet to come.

So, the Holy Spirit effectually calls the elect, glorifies Christ, inspires the Word of God, and seals God's people.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the work of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation in Ephesians 1:11-14, let us praise God for Spirit's role in our salvation.

Paul concluded this section in verse 14b, "**. . . to the praise of his glory.**" It is the right response to God and his glorious work of salvation. Let us praise God for the Holy Spirit who effectually calls us to salvation, glorifies Christ, inspires the Word of God, and seals us for all eternity. Amen.

⁵ Charles Hodge, *Ephesians*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 48.

⁶ James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 16.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons.
2. www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp.
3. www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FreddyFritz.

Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

Answers for Life!

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org

Web site: www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org