

"Hearing and Believing, Seal and Earnest" Ephesians 1:13-14

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Ephesians 1:13-14

"13 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, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph 1:13-14 av)

See also this famous passage from John 3:

"1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. 3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? 5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. 8 The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. 9 Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? 10 Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? 11 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. 12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things? 13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: 15 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 17 For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth

evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (Joh 3:1-21)

Over the past several weeks, we have been trying to unpack some of the very rich promises that our blessed Lord Jesus brings to the church and to His people. In a previous sermon we summarized these things:

He enumerates the blessings that we receive: As Francis Faulks put it in the Tyndale Commentaries: “election from the very beginning; sonship by adoption; redemption, which is forgiveness; insight into God’s all-embracing purpose; the privilege for both Jews and Gentiles to be His people; the sealing of the Spirit, which is the earnest of the final inheritance.” We will be speaking of these one at a time and all together in the sermons of the next days.

These things are called “spiritual blessings in heavenly places” which means that they originate in Heaven in God Himself and are administered to our souls by the Holy Spirit sent by the Lord Jesus to us. These are not things that are visible to the physical senses: you cannot touch, taste, feel, smell, or see them with the body, and you will always go astray if you think that you can. They are riches that go to the soul and the spirit, not the body or the physical world.

I would like to say several things this morning concerning the great subject before us this morning: In the verses before [vs 1:13, 14] the holy apostle is speaking of the Lord Jesus. God has revealed that it is His purpose and plan to “gather all things up in Jesus Christ.” Things in heaven and things in earth are all going to be ordered and arranged in the Lord Jesus Christ. His kingdom will rule over all, as the Scriptures say, and all things will fall under his dominion and authority in heaven and in earth, as Psalm 2 teaches us, and many other places.

The future therefore is assured and certain. But what is going on now? We do not yet see all things put under His feet. What is the manifestation of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus now? What is going on in the present world? What is taking place in your world, in your family, in your church? There are several things that need to be said.

I. There are spiritual things taking place which only those who are born again can see and appreciate. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, Jesus said, and if you have not been born again you will not understand the things I am saying today.

A. Four things have taken place in your soul that result in the trust in Christ spoken of here. Hearing and believing; sealing and earnest.

B. Because these are spiritual things, those dead in trespasses and sins cannot see them, nor do they appreciate them. The carnal man corrupts everything he thinks he knows; he twists them and deforms them into something corrupt and vile. He strains at gnats and swallows camels. He makes a vain show in the flesh. He has not because he asks not, for he does not see these wonderful things proceeding from the will and gift of God from heaven, but he thinks they are earthly things that can be manipulated and turned to his own advantage.

C. The natural man only knows natural things; he cannot see the kingdom of heaven. Even Nicodemus that ruler of the Jews could not understand, because He had not been born of the Spirit. The passage in John 3 that we read a moment ago states the truth under the figure of a natural birth; this passage in Ephesians puts the truth into theological terms: hearing and believing; seal and earnest.

D. Being born of the Spirit is precisely the subject before us in this passage. This is not a list of “How to be born of the Spirit,” as if the gift of God could be manipulated; but these are the things that accompany the New Birth and verify and define it.

II. What are these four things, how are they related. I will deal with them in pairs.

A. Hearing and Believing. “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,” Trusted is borrowed from vs. 12 and properly so. You trusted like we [the apostles] did. Several things here:

1. First: two things happened; something outside yourself; something inside yourself.

a) Outside: You heard the word of truth,

(1) You were not saved because of something you dreamed up within yourself. There was the word of truth that came to you. You heard it. There are many summaries of the word of truth that you heard. John 3:16 is one of them: “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The summary in Eph. 1 is more full, but it does not contradict John 3:16, nor does John 3:16 contradict it. The summary in Eph 1 is this: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;” Do not set one summary against the other. They must be interpreted in the light of each other, and other summaries.

(2) You do not get to make up something to believe. You are called with the word of authority and power. It is called the “gospel of

your salvation.” We all have the same gospel of salvation. If you are saved, this message is your message. If you reject this message you do not have any salvation, because your salvation comes the same way my salvation comes and the same way any body else’s salvation comes: through the gospel of your salvation.

(3) Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Ro 1:16)

b) Something happened inside yourself: You believed.

(1) You embraced the truth and saw that it is the truth. You received it as the truth. That Jesus is the Son of God; that he died for your sins; that he will come again to judge the living and the dead. Not just that the Bible is true; the devil knows that; but that Jesus died for sinners and forgives your sins and you love him for it.

(2) No one can see this, for this faith is in your heart and your mind. You are called to confess the truth, but that can be imitated and pretended.

2. Second: The description of the believing heart is given by the Lord Jesus in the great Sermon on the Mount:

“3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” (Mt 5:3-12 av)

This is not the way to be born again, but is descriptive of those who are. These are the Lord’s sheep.

It is faith that makes us poor in spirit; mourning for sin, humbled and meek, hungering and thirsting, etc.

B. The next two things are something that happened to you: the seal and the earnest.

1. The seal of the Holy Spirit: Paul said something similar in Romans 8: “15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. 16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” (Ro 8:15-16 av)

2. A seal is a sign of authenticity. Only the Holy Spirit can authenticate the Gospel to you. Not human reasoning, not human gain, not human pleasure, not human force and power. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to made the gospel real to you. The Preaching of the Gospel is the instrument that God has chosen to bring faith to people; it is the Holy Spirit that makes preaching effective. Preachers should pray that God will anoint their preaching; and God’s people should pray that God would anoint their preachers. It is very important to pray for your minister.

3. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of adoption, as we read in Rom. 8. It is by His witness alone that we can have assurance that we are the children of God. You cannot just barge into the presence of God and say, “Hello there. I’m your new kid.” He will say, “Depart from me, I never knew you.” You must have a garment of righteousness and this is confirmed only by the Holy Spirit.

4. Jesus said the same thing in John 14 in answer to the third question of the disciples in this chapter:

“22 Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?

23 Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

24 He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.

25 These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.

26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

27 Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (Joh 14:22-27)

5. The second thing is: the earnest, which is the Holy Spirit. The earnest is a different figure from seal, but is closely related. An earnest is a guarantee of performance. You pay earnest money to guarantee that you will perform the contract to which the earnest is attached.

- a) We have not received all the promise of the Gospel yet. The complete fulfillment comes at the resurrection of the dead.
- b) The Holy Spirit is given to us to guarantee that we surely will be raised from the dead in righteousness and complete redemption.

But I will speak of this more next time. There is too much for this short time. May God bless you.

Amen and Amen.