

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1

“11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

'Hearing the Word of Truth'

Our study of the introduction to Ephesians will now move us into the work of the Spirit in our salvation.

As we said before, it should not surprise us to see all of the Persons of the Godhead involved in our redemption! This is God's story and we truly see all the Persons of the Godhead participating!

In verses 3-6, which we studied at length, we saw how the Father of our Lord Jesus chose us from eternity past to bless us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. He adopted us to be holy and blameless & all for the good pleasure of His will. Next in verses 7-12 we saw the focus shift to the work of the Son: We learned how we have redemption through His blood, how all things will be gathered together in Him and the rich inheritance we have in Him.

- So now, as we come to verses 13&14, we will learn about being sealed in the Spirit and how He is the earnest of our inheritance.

Verse 13 tells us the why and how of this sealing: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed...” Now this is closely related to what we studied last week with regard to the all things being done in accordance with the Counsel of God's will.

- Once again, we find a truth that is both simple and very profound!

We see in this verse a reference to hearing, believing and trusting! As we begin, we need to ask some very basic questions, remembering of course what we learned last week:

- Is it possible for us to hear without the help of the Spirit of God?
- Is it possible for us to believe without the help of the Spirit of God?
- Is it possible for us to trust without the help of Spirit of God?

Are these actions that we must take on our own and then the Spirit seals us in Christ, or are all of these part of the sealing work of the Spirit? Now obviously, as good reformers we have to go with that last statement and my job this morning is to try to help us understand why and Lord willing to do so in a way that our children say amen! So my focus will be mostly on hearing for two good reasons.

1) We likely think that we can do without God's help there! I can hear, right?

Yes, there is a physical aspect to hearing and that is why the preaching of the Gospel is so important: God uses means... Mouths and ears, vocal cords and ear drums, even the air and nerves.

And of course Proverbs teaches us that all are created by God: Proverbs 20:12

“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, Jehovah has made them both.”

Now of course studying the words hear and/or hearing could take us a while because they appear over two-thousand times in the Bible!

So what I want to focus on this morning is what Paul means when he says, “after you heard the word of truth” in verse 13.

We did not coordinate this, but Roger used our readings from the Prophet Isaiah in our order of worship this morning which includes that amazing scene with the prophet appearing before God's throne where he sees that he is in BIG trouble & is only comforted by the angel that brings a cleansing coal from the altar to remove his iniquities. This account goes on and teaches us something repeated several times in the New Testament and is critical to understanding what the Apostle Paul is teaching us about the Spirit's work here:

Isaiah 6:8 "Also I heard the voice of Jehovah, saying: "Whom shall I send, And who will go for Us?" [notice 'us'] Then I said, "Here am I! Send me." 9 And He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on hearing, but do not understand; Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.' 10 "Make the heart of this people dull, And their ears heavy, And shut their eyes; Lest they see with their eyes, And hear with their ears, And understand with their heart, And return and be healed."

➤ Now this seems to stand in stark contrast with what the Prophet had just revealed in chapter two:

Isaiah 2: "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. 2 Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. 3 Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. 4 He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore."

Now if we know the Book of Isaiah well we know that this hope in chapter two comes back in the final chapters after the Prophet outlines many judgments and gives us what many consider the 5th Gospel account in Isaiah 51.

➤ So, what are we to make of this strange statement about hearing but not hearing in chapter six?

As always it is best to let the Bible teach us what the Bible means and clearly that is the case here because we see this section quoted in two very important places in the New Testament: When Jesus teaches the parable of the Sower He goes on to instruct His disciples about why he was teaching in parables: This is presented in all three synoptic Gospel accounts and reading from Mark; 4:11 "And He said to them, "To you it has been given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but to those who are outside, all things come in parables, 12 so that 'Seeing they may see and not perceive, And hearing they may hear and not understand; Lest they should turn, And their sins be forgiven them.' "

And we see this quote again used by the Apostle Paul after his final appeal to the Jewish leaders in Rome: Acts 28: "25 So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, 26 saying, 'Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; 27 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them." 28 "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

Now it is important to note that not all of Paul's fellow countrymen were lost and certainly not all of the Gentiles will be saved, so what is the point that Jesus and Paul are making here?

➤ It is simply what we studied last week, that all things work according to the wisdom and counsel of God!

So, the answer to our first question is clearly that we cannot hear without the assistance of the Spirit and we see this demonstrated in the New Testament:

I Thessalonians 1: “2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God. 5 For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.”

Acts 16: “13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. 14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”

And from our Lord Jesus Himself: Matthew 11: “25 At that time Jesus answered and said, “I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. 26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. 28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.””

So, let me go back to our verse and explore how this works... Paul said, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed.” Our salvation involves hearing, believing and trusting. As I said last week IF we think that we can do the hearing, the believing and the trusting in our own strength, then we are in for a life of questioning and doubts.

- **Have I been listening as I should, have I believed the right things, am I really trusting God?**
- **On the other hand IF we rightly see how dependent we are on the work of the Holy Spirit then we can rest in that work and have the full assurance that Jesus promised to those who come to Him.**

Here is where using the examples of children can help us and remind us why Jesus often said that we need such child like faith. As I said earlier, the hearing part is the most difficult because we can too easily assume that we can hear all on our own... You are all hear hearing my sermon, right? BUT, what if our friend Michael Benick visited with a German friend who knew no English. All of the mechanical parts of speech and hearing would still be working, but his friend would not really hear the sermon.

- **This is what it means to pray that God would give us ears to hear!**

The next question is do we believe what we hear? Those rebellious Jews in front of Jesus or Paul could understand the language they were hearing but they did not believe what was being said. That is what it means when Paul says that God opened Lydia’s heart... He gave her the right understanding of what we being said and a willingness to believe it.

- **And finally our trust involves action, being willing to do what we heard and believed.**

So here are a couple of examples where parents help children to hear, believe and trust & they are examples that we can learn from in our Christian walk:

Start with a young child of say three. They have the ability to understand the language their parent is using, may not know how or why they should believe what they hear but they must choose whether to act on the command or instruction... Which comes from trust. Use the examples of “hot or stop”

As the child grows we see more clearly how this works as they can believe or reject what is said and have more power to obey or disobey.

Example of fire danger for a 13 year-old boy.

At this point Pastor Martin Lloyd-Jones stresses an important point to keep us out of those dangerous ditches we spoke of last week...

“We must understand clearly that God through the Holy Spirit does not work or act upon us mechanically. God does not force our wills; God does not compel anyone against his will to believe the Gospel. That is not His way of working. We are not treated as automata. What happens is that God persuades the will; He makes the truth attractive to us. So, no man has ever believed the Gospel against his will; he has been given to see it in such a way that he desires it, he admires it, he likes it!”

Now obviously some need more persuasion than do others...

We can think of Saul of Tarsus who had to learn that it was hard to kick against the goads... It took the Damascus road experience to convince him to follow Jesus. On the other hand, we see young Timothy who we are told brought joy to Paul’s heart when he remembered his history, **“³ I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, ⁴ greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵ when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also. ⁶ Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power & of love and of a sound mind.”**

I would certainly put myself much closer to Paul’s camp needing a LOT of persuasion.

- **At the same time it has been a joy to see tender hearts in my own children, others, as they were raised in the faith. Our prayer and desire is that the children that God blesses us with at Church of the King would not have a spirit of fear, but of a spirit of power & of love and of a sound mind.”**
- **By the power of the Spirit they can hear, belief and trust the promises of God!**

Sadly many of us older folks need those hard knocks to get our attention!

I want to encourage our younger members this morning to learn these lessons well, and learn them early:

- **Be those who hear when God speaks to you through your parents, here at Church or with godly friends.**
- **Be those who believe what you hear rather than thinking you want things your way.**
- **And finally be those who trust!**

A good place to start would be to join with us in reading through the Book of Proverbs in this month of July! And parents, you can assist those who are too young to read it on their own.

The Book of Proverbs can be summarized by this passage from chapter 3: “Trust in Jehovah with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. ⁷ Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear Jehovah and depart from evil. ⁸ It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. ⁹ Honor Jehovah with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; ¹⁰ So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. ¹¹ My son, do not despise the chastening of Jehovah, Nor detest His correction; ¹² For whom Jehovah loves He corrects, Just as a father the son in whom he delights. ¹³ Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; ¹⁴ For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. ¹⁶ Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.”

As we prepare to respond with the singing of Great is Thy Faithfulness: I will close with a very similar admonition from the Apostle Paul who knew all too well that we are fully dependent upon the Spirit of God to hear, to believe and to trust!

I Corinthians 2: “6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written:

**“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard,
Nor have entered into the heart of man
The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”**

10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?

Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.”

Communion Meditation: Isaiah 55

**““Ho! Everyone who thirsts,
Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat.
Yes, come, buy wine and milk
Without money and without price.**

2 Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.

3 Incline your ear, and come to Me.

**Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you—
The sure mercies of David.”**