

**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.”**

## **“Sealed with the Spirit of Promise”**

**As we finish up our study of this grand introduction that the Apostle Paul gives to the Saints at Ephesus, we are now considering the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation. This morning I want to focus on what the Apostle means when he says that they were “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”**

**Now last week we saw the vital work that the Spirit does with regard to how we hear the Good News, how we believe the Good News and how we trust the Good News.**

- **Now it is important to note that the Apostle says that being sealed is something that happens after this work has been accomplished!**

**This work of the Spirit is one of authenticating the truth of the Gospel!**

**It is what convinces us that our relationship with God is real...**

- **And yes it is more of an experience than an understanding.**

**This is why the work of the Spirit has often been so controversial... When we speak about an experience, then we can often find extremes that can be very dangerous, but that does not mean we can just ignore what is being taught here and elsewhere.**

**Let me begin with some real-life examples to help us better grasp how all of this should be understood.**

**IF I were to ask some of the young children here if their parents loved them I am pretty sure we would get a chorus of yes & AMEN.**

- **Now what if I asked them to tell me why they know their parents love them?**

**Would they show me a birth certificate that proves they are their children?**

**Would they show me the last birthday card they got from mom where she wrote “I love you.”**

**Would they take me to their room and show me all the nice things that their parents bought them to show their love? Now they could do any or all of these things and it would make the intellectual case for why the parents love their children.**

- **This is like what Paul has done in reviewing the work of the Father and the Son in our salvation!**

**BUT, does all of that really get to the heart of why our children know that mom or dad love them?**

- **At bottom they know about this love because they are in fact their sons or daughters and have walked in their love all their lives.**

**I could do the same exercise with our married couples asking how they know that their husband or wife loves them?**

**They could show me the marriage certificate or the last anniversary card that said with all my love.**

**They could show me the beautiful home the wife has created or the hard work the husband does to provide for the family.**

Again, these are all part of the reality of that love, but is that really how any of us would answer that question? At bottom I can say that Linda is the love of my life because she is the love of my life:

- We know this love is real and are sealed in that love for our lifetime!

Now of course human examples often come up short, especially in a fallen world. In these cases, if a divorce reared its ugly head both would fall to the ground.

- However, this does not take away from the principle that we find here and of course when we come to God sealing us in a relationship, then no such failures will be found.

So how do I know that God loves me? Just as I did with those other examples, I could show you my certificate of baptism! I could take you to the various verses in the Bible that tell me that God loves me as His child. I could point to the many blessings here at the Church or in my home & family that He has poured out for me to show His love. But again, at bottom I would simply say that I know God loves me because we are in a loving relationship!

- A relationship sealed by the Spirit in the promises of God.

I have been drawing many of my insights for this series from Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones and he certainly thought this was a very critical point:

“I am increasingly persuaded that it is our failure to understand this precise statement that accounts for so much lethargy and failure among us as Christian people at the present time. At least I will go so far as to assert that any Christian who is not experiencing the joy of salvation is in that state very largely because of a failure to realize the truth taught in this particular verse of Scripture, for in it we are brought face to face with the way in which we can enter into the fulness which we should be experiencing in Christ. To ‘rejoice in the Lord’, and to rejoice in Him always, is an essential part of God’s purpose for us in Christ. Our Lord Himself, at the end of His life on earth, said not only, ‘My peace I give unto you’, but also ‘My joy’ [John 15:11]. That is the heritage of a Christian. Christian people should be full of joy and of peace and of happiness. Not only so, but if we feel that we are ineffective as Christians and that our usefulness is not very evident, then I suggest that it is again due to this selfsame thing, namely, our failure to realize what is meant by God’s sealing of His children by ‘that holy Spirit of Promise’. Furthermore, it is one of the most vital of all the New Testament doctrines with respect to revival and reawakening in the Christian Church.”

Now Pastor Martin’s passion in this area carried over into four chapters so I will not be able to exhaust this subject this morning, but it is one that we will return to many times in our study of this Epistle.

So for this morning I want to review some other Scriptures that will help us understand what the Apostle is teaching here and why it is so important for us today.

As I just tried to illustrate with some human examples, the love of God is not something that we simply know with our mind, but it is poured out into our hearts:

Romans 5: “5 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; 4 and perseverance, character; and character, hope. 5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us. 6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

[remind them of the verses we studied about the forgiveness of sins]

Examples of how our mind & heart “know” things: A sunset; A symphony; A relationship

**The Apostle Paul takes the troubled Saints at Galatia to this very truth showing why we are sealed with the Spirit of Promise:**

**Galatians 3: “13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. 15 Brethren, I speak in the manner of men: Though it is only a man’s covenant, yet if it is confirmed, no one annuls or adds to it. 16 Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ, that it should make the promise of no effect. 18 For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no longer of promise; but God gave it to Abraham by promise.”**

**The Apostle Peter also reminds us that the peace and joy that we are to experience is not based on our circumstances:**

**I Peter 1: “6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, & glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”**

**Our ultimate hope lies with eternity, but the Apostle Paul reminds us that our walk with Jesus is a real walk that we take in real life:**

**Philippians 2: “9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”**

**Now all this talk of working out our salvation and experiencing the work of the Spirit makes reformers very nervous! Pastor Martin gave this warning:**

**“How slavish we can become in our use of terms! And how we rob ourselves of the blessings of God as a result! We are so afraid of excesses, we are so afraid of being labelled in a certain way, that we claim the baptism of the Spirit to be something unconscious, non-experimental, a happening that does not affect a man’s feelings.”**

- **The sealing of the Spirit should be a real experience and it should bring real peace and joy!**

**Let me conclude with a statement of this truth that seems outlandish at first but is clearly taught in the Scriptures...**

- **Our being sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise is better than if we could walk with Jesus Himself!**

**How can I know this?**

- **Because it is what the Lord Jesus taught us!**

**Let me quickly walk us through the events during and right after the earthly ministry of Jesus to see why this is true.**

**In John chapter seven we hear this from Jesus: “37 On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. 38 He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” 39 But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”**

**Now obviously the Spirit of God is not just absent until Jesus is glorified: We know that King David prayed that God take not His Spirit from him and we saw the Spirit at the Baptism of Jesus and working through the disciples as they are sent out.**

- **However, Jesus does say the Spirit was not yet given in the way He would be after He was glorified.**

**We come back to this as Jesus teaches His disciples at the Last Supper which is recorded at length by John as well: In chapter 14 at verse 15 we read this, “If you love Me, keep My commandments. 16 And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.”**

- **The Spirit of God has dwelt with them but at Pentecost He will be in them!**

**Jesus goes on to discuss this even saying that it is good for Him to go because then the Spirit will come.**

- **In other words they are going to be better off with the Spirit than they have been in the very presence of Jesus!**

**And of course we see this clearly in the Book of Acts which we studied at length. Right at the beginning we see Jesus telling them to remain at Jerusalem until the Spirit comes as promised:**

**Acts 1: “4 And being assembled together with them, [Jesus] commanded [the disciples] not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, “which,” He said, “you have heard from Me; 5 for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” [as usual, they ask the wrong question, but Jesus stays on point: “8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”**

**The Spirit does come at Pentecost and the rest as they say is history!**

**The disciples go forth in power & take the Gospel to the then known world. They are not perfect men, but they are no longer the weak, doubting, and proud men they had been when walking with Jesus.**

**So, it is appropriate to ask which would we rather have:**

- **Jesus present with us in our Christian walk, or the Spirit of God Who seals us in the promises of God?**

**The answer comes in the 8<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Romans where we see how this experience of sealing should work out in our lives... After declaring that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus the Apostle says this at verse 9:**

**Romans 8: “9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. 12 Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**

**14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”**

**16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”**

➤ **How do I know that God loves me?**

**I know my Father’s love because I am sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise!**

**We will respond with the singing of Arise my Soul Arise, where Pastor Wesley declares this grand truth in the final verse:**

**My God is reconciled;**

**His pardoning voice I hear;**

**He owns me for His child,**

**I can no longer fear;**

**With confidence I now draw nigh,**

**with confidence I now draw nigh,**

**and Father Abba Father! Cry.**

**Communion Meditation: II Corinthians 1**

**“19 For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us—by me, Silvanus, and Timothy—was not Yes and No, but in Him was Yes. 20 For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. 21 Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, 22 who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”**