

Sermon Notes & References

The Seal of the Spirit

¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NAS)

March 16, 2008

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^A John 13-17, especially 14:16-17

^B Exodus 31:3, Numbers 11:16-30, Numbers 27:18, Deuteronomy 34:9, 2 Peter 1:21

^C Luke 9, 10, Acts 8:39-40, Acts 11:28, Mark 16:20

^D 1 Samuel 16:13-14; Judges 13:25, 15:14, 16:20, 1 Corinthians 13:8-10, James 4:14-15

^E Ezekiel 37:14, John 3:3-10

^F John 14:16-17, 7:38-39, 16:7, 20:17, Hebrews 9:12, John 20:21-22, Genesis 2:7

^G ... on union in Christ: 2 Corinthians 5:17

^H Romans 10:9-17, 1 Corinthians 2:14

^I Galatians 3:2

^J Involvement of God the Father, 2 Corinthians 1:22 and context

^K Colossians 1:5

—{1}. **Ephesians 1:13-14** **The Seal of the Spirit**

A. Introduction

1. Christians can at times talk so glibly about the Holy Spirit. Yet as **Abraham Kuyper, the great Biblical scholar, has said, 'We don't know what spirits are. We don't know what our own spirit is.'** —{2}. How then can we comprehend the nature of that Person of the Holy Trinity who is variously named, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, or just, the Spirit? I pray that our looking into this text will provide some illumination:

2. Text: ¹³ **In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,** ¹⁴ **who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.**

3. Today is Palm Sunday, introducing 'Passion Week'
 - a. so called since it culminated in the suffering – or passion – of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, bearing the punishment for our sins, which was followed by His burial
 - b. an important week – ¼ or more of the gospels are spent recording its events and some very profound teachings of the Lord Jesus, on topics covered only briefly elsewhere
 - c. one such topic is the Holy Spirit, found in John 13–17
 - d. in John 14:16–17, Jesus promised the Holy Spirit to His disciples: ¹⁶ **I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever;** ¹⁷ **that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."**
 - e. so Jesus teaches us of a distinction in the Holy Spirit's work
 - (A) between that of His abiding with a person
 - (B) and that of the Holy Spirit's dwelling within a person
 - (C) the phrase, 'receiving the Holy Spirit', can mean either
 - (D) but which is meant in being sealed by the Spirit?
 - (E) to understand properly what it is to be sealed by the Holy Spirit, let's examine each of these

distinctions in His work.

B. The Holy Spirit's Abiding with a Person

1. this is spoken of as His coming, resting or falling upon a person
 - a. such activity found in both Old and New Testaments
 - b. we find that this working of the Spirit is intermittent and temporary in nature, and, frequently, if not indeed always, accompanied by sensible evidence that it is God at work
 - c. in this activity, the Holy Spirit is presented in Scripture 'as the source of all supernatural power and activities which are direct to the foundation, preservation and development of the kingdom of God in the midst of the wicked world.' —^{3}.
2. in the Old Testament we can name such examples as
 - a. Bezaleel, for the constructing of the tabernacle, being filled with the Spirit of God and so 'with ability, intelligence, knowledge and craftsmanship' (Exodus 31:3 RSV)
 - b. the 70 elders, including even Eldad and Medad who were absent, so that they prophesied (Numbers 11:16-30)
 - c. Joshua by the laying on of Moses' hands (Numbers 27:18, Deuteronomy 34:9)
 - d. the various judges to deliver Israel from their oppressors
 - e. in the Spirit carrying Ezekiel in his vision to the temple
 - f. in His moving prophets to speak the word of the Lord: "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." (2 Peter 1:21)
3. in the New Testament, given Jesus words of John 14:16-17
 - a. we do not at all wrest the truth of Scripture when we say that the 12 and later the 70 (Luke 9, 10) went out and worked miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit
 - b. in the Apostolic age, starting at Pentecost, some examples:
 - (A) the Spirit's transporting Philip away from the Ethiopian eunuch into the town of Azotus
 - (B) Agabus' prophecy respecting the coming famine
 - (C) activities, called charismata or gifts, manifesting God's redemption activities by the Holy Spirit as summed up in Mark 16:20, "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked

with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.”

4. yet such activity of the Holy Spirit was transient as well
 - a. so, in 1 Samuel 16:13-14, we have the Holy Spirit coming upon David in his anointing to be king, and in the next verse, His departing from king Saul
 - b. the Spirit departed from Sampson, after Delilah’s barber job (Judges 13:25, 15:14, 16:20)
 - c. Paul tells us that Pentecostal charismata would cease: “⁸ Love never fails; but if *there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away.* ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part; ¹⁰ but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.” (1 Corinthians 13:8-10)
 - d. nor was the conscious gift of miraculous healing to go on, but rather the norm as described by James (5:14–15): “*Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.*” – God still heals but now through prayer in faith
5. from this activity of the Holy Spirit let us now turn to ...

C. The Holy Spirit’s Dwelling within a Person

1. This is ‘with the Holy Spirit of promise,’ as made in the O. T.
 - a. for example, in Ezekiel’s vision of the valley of dry bones, God’s foretells that this would take place in spiritual Israel – “*I will put My Spirit within you and you will come to life, and I will place you on your own land. Then you will know that I, the LORD, have spoken and done it, declares the LORD.* – (37:14) – God’s words demonstrate that the indwelling Spirit and the regenerating Spirit are one and the same
 - b. so in John 3, Jesus could speak to Nicodemus in this way: “³ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God... ⁵ Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God... ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit...¹⁰ Are you the teacher of Israel and do not understand these things?’ – from Ezekiel, Nicodemus should have already understood the need for a new, spiritual birth

2. Jesus taught His disciples of the indwelling Spirit's nature
 - a. as lasting, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; *that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*" – John 14: 16-17
 - b. as coming through faith, John 7:38-39, "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'
 - c. as following the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ, "But 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 16:7
 - d. so resurrection morning came; Mary went to the tomb; she finds herself addressed by Jesus, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, 'I ascend {present tense!} to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'" – John 20:17
 - e. Jesus, after having ascended and making atonement before the Father – He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Hebrews 9:12), He came a few hours later to His disciples assembled on that Resurrection Sunday, and says "21b ... 'Peace be with you; as the Father has sent Me, I also send you. 22 And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" (John 20:21-22)
 - f. Jesus' words echo those of Genesis 2:7, "Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." – thus, I agree with J. Vernon McGee who writes that here 'Jesus Christ breathed into these men eternal life by giving them the Spirit of God –{43}'. – don't worry about Thomas; like Eldad and Medad absent from the 70 elders, he wasn't missed and next Sunday he was present
 - g. imperceptibly, as Jesus told Nicodemus, the regenerating Holy Spirit enters them; 7 weeks later, He will come in perceptible form to empower them for their ministry
3. we have made a wide but necessary excursion to talk about the nature of the Holy Spirit of God; let us return to our text, 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge

of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory. — in these words we find

- a. three prerequisites of the sealing of the Holy Spirit
- b. three results of the sealing of the Holy Spirit

D. Three Prerequisites of the Sealing of the Holy Spirit 1:13

- 1. verse 13, 'in Him {ie., in Christ}, you also ...' – you Gentiles,
 - a. completes the contrast introduced in verse 12: '... we who were the first to hope in {the} Christ' – we Jews
 - b. for the union with Christ, which is salvation – "Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*" (2 Corinthians 5:17) – is now true of the Gentiles as it is of the Jews. How did this come to be?
- 2. the first prerequisite: 'after listening to the message of truth'
 - a. this is the first necessity because it is the preliminary to faith, through which we realize God's grace in salvation
 - b. this Paul teaches starting in Romans 10:9, "that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved"
 - c. then Paul gives five reasons, linking each to what precedes by the same important little word 'for', to show that this way of salvation applies to both Jew and Gentile
 - d. and works his way back through the links of the chain to come to this first essential: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)
 - e. hearing or listening is not the ear merely receiving sound
 - (A) it means paying attention to what is said
 - (B) it means considering what is said
 - (C) it means applying what is said to oneself
 - (D) it means a degree of understanding what is said
 - f. that last item is the Holy Spirit's activity, that the truth of the message will be understood: "But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

3. the second prerequisite: 'the gospel of your salvation'
 - a. this clarifies that 'the word of Christ' of Romans 10:17 is specifically the gospel, the good news, of salvation
 - b. and, not simply of salvation as a general concept, BUT
 - (A) specific salvation; individual salvation; your salvation
 - (B) the gospel of salvation is not gospel (good news) until it becomes the gospel of YOUR salvation
 - (C) by Your response to it; and that response is

4. the third prerequisite: 'having also believed'
 - a. 'listening to the message of truth' may leave me indifferent
 - b. that it is the good news of salvation, I can ignore
 - c. for, if I do not respond in faith, committing myself to God's mercy, trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation
 - d. then all of the preaching and teaching is in vain; but
 - e. if I do, which is a work of the Holy Spirit, then I will receive the Spirit through the hearing of faith (Galatians 3:2)
 - f. then I am regenerated, sealed by the indwelling Holy Spirit

5. let us now look at

E. Three Results of the Sealing of the Holy Spirit 1:14

1. in Paul's time they used a signet ring and wax to seal a thing; now we still use wax, but other ways are an embossing stamp and imprinted metal bands; then as now, sealing is used
 - a. to identify the owner
 - b. to protect the contents of a container
 - c. to authenticate a document

2. all three are involved in being sealed by the Holy Spirit
 - a. moreover, all Three Persons of the Trinity are involved

- (A) Father God seals us (2 Corinthians 1:22)
 - (B) we are sealed in Christ, God the Son
 - (C) we are sealed by God the Holy Spirit
 - b. in verses 12 and 13 Paul has differentiated between 'we' and 'you', between Jew and Gentile, but now being sealed there is no further distinction and Paul reverts to 'our' and we consider the results of being sealed for all believers
3. first result: 'as a pledge of our inheritance'
- a. the Holy Spirit is an evidence of the unity of Jew and Gentile in the church of Jesus Christ
 - (A) for He is given to each and every believer
 - (B) as such, He is a pledge, a guarantee, an 'arrabon'
 - (C) this Semitic word entered the Greek language long before the Old Testament was translated into Greek, by the Phoenicians trading around the Mediterranean Sea and it is still used in modern Greek to mean the pledge of an engagement; an engagement ring
 - (D) but, as it is used here, it was not merely a pledge, but an amount that would be included in the final sum paid
 - b. by this pledge, 'the believer possesses already in reality, though but in part, the life of the future; the inheritance of the present and the inheritance of the future differing not in kind but only in degree, so that even now we have the life and blessedness of the future in the way of foretaste' ^{-(5)}}.
4. second result: 'the redemption of God's own possession'
- a. being sealed by the Holy Spirit means that we are shown to belong to God, to be His own possession
 - b. that possession was purchased at the cross of Christ, not by silver or gold but by the precious blood of Christ
 - c. to be carried through to its consummation – "because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel" (Colossians 1:5)
 - d. this means that our eternal security
 - (A) (or lack thereof) does not depend upon the semantics of some preacher playing trickery with words
 - (B) or, upon cornering God in some sort of logical box
 - (C) or, upon achieving some contractual conditions

(D) but on the fact that He has made us his own special possession and given evidence by the indwelling Spirit

e. 'God has set His royal seal on us. It is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. And when the devil comes to wreak havoc on our lives, he is stopped cold by that seal of ownership. He sees an imprint on us that says, "Property of Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God," because we are under the protection of God.' —{6}.

5. third result: 'to the praise of His glory'

a. we spoke long, but hurriedly, on this last week

b. that the natural and ultimate response of love by those who are God's redeemed is that of eternal praise to the glory of God and His grace in saving them

F. Conclusion

1. the Holy Spirit, is given to indwell believers

a. this is an integral part of regeneration in salvation

b. that He may

(A) mark us as being God's own possession

(B) place us in Christ for our protection

(C) authenticate us as believers

2. yet we also understand from Scripture that

a. believers can grieve and quench the Holy Spirit

b. unbelievers can resist the Holy Spirit

c. let neither be true of you; let His voice speak to you today

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Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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2. Quoted in ‘Sealed with a Kiss’ by Dr Alan J. Meanan , Kerux sermons #1655
3. Page 138, ‘Biblical and Theological Studies’ by B. B. Warfield, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1952
4. Page 172, ‘Thru the Bible Commentary Series – John Chapters 11-21’ by J. Vernon McGee, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1981
5. Expositor's Greek Testament, *in loc*
6. Greg Laurie, ‘God's Seal of Ownership’ – Kerux illustration as yet unpublished