

Sealed

Ephesians 1:11-14

- 1) Introduction
 - a) Bek and I celebrated our 21st Wedding anniversary yesterday
 - i) Needless to say, I was a little distracted as I was preparing for today
 - b) My mind kept wandering back to the day we were married
 - i) Good memories
 - ii) Friends who were at our wedding
 - iii) It was a blisteringly hot day, but boy did we have fun
 - c) I then got thinking about the proposal
 - i) Overlooking Sydney Harbour
 - ii) Beautiful sunny winter's day
 - d) And then came the exciting part for me
 - i) Telling people
 - (1) It wasn't like we could just put some cryptic message on social media and wait for the LIKES to flood in...
 - (2) We had to do it in person!
 - ii) I remember it was a Sunday night at church,
 - (1) we'd kept the news secret (mostly), and
 - (2) the minister announced the good news to a packed house of young people
 - iii) And of course there were cheers and congratulations, and an atmosphere of celebration afterwards
 - e) We love good news don't we?
 - i) Recently, we all waited eagerly to hear the good news that Pippa Harbor was born
 - ii) News like this lifts our soul doesn't it?
- 2) Recap
 - a) If you haven't been with us over the past 4 weeks, or like me, you just need a refresher, we have heard some very, very good news:
 - i) In summary; Ephesians 1:3
 - ii) *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*
 - iii) This news should get us excited...
 - (1) As believers, it should lift our soul in the same way as the news of a newborn or engagement
 - b) We've unpacked what that verse means, and discovered in Week 1
 - i) That we have been chosen to be holy and blameless (verse 4)
 - ii) (Michael Calder share with us that) You, me, we have been chosen
 - (1) To be God's treasured possessions
 - (2) His holy people
 - (3) Set apart for him
 - c) And in Week 2 we learned that we have been adopted (verse 5)
 - i) (Ruth Craven shared that) we are now
 - (1) Part of God's family
 - (2) And in the privileged position of being able to call God, Father
 - (3) We've entered into a binding and permanent union with God, through Jesus Christ
 - (4) Which makes us heirs of the kingdom

- d) Moving onto Week 3 of our series (Michael Calder again shared)
 - i) We discovered that we have been redeemed
 - (1) In the same way as slaves in ancient times could be set free by someone paying a price for their release
 - (2) God has paid a price for those he has chosen and adopted
 - (a) That price...
 - (i) the blood of Jesus Christ
 - (ii) the death of his Son on a Roman cross
 - (3) And so by God's grace, we are now set free from sin and can look forward to eternal life
 - e) And finally, Last Week, (Chris Ivey reminded us how) we are informed
 - i) Knowing the end changes everything
 - ii) As informed believers, those who know and accept the gospel message, we can live our lives with a sense of perspective
 - (1) Even when we face trials in our own lives
 - (2) Or see our world in turmoil
 - iii) We can still have deep trust that
 - (1) Everything happens according to God's plan
 - (2) God will come good on his promises
 - iv) And by knowing this, our hope can grow stronger
 - f) And so there we have a summary of what's led us to the final focus word in series:
- 3) SEALED
 - a) Ephesians 1:13-14 (listen to this word in context)
 - ¹³ *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,* ¹⁴ *who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession...*
 - b) Our hope of eternal life with God is not some sort of "cross your fingers" type wish for the best that God will come good on his promise
 - c) Here we have a guarantee
 - i) Not Paul's guarantee, but God's guarantee
 - ii) That we have been sealed securely for a relationship with him
 - d) That word "seal" or "sealed" is mentioned 58 times in the Bible, and as we look at it, 3 key ideas become apparent
 - e) First, there is the idea of a seal indicating security / permanence.
 - i) The Persian king told Queen Esther: "write another decree in the King's name ... and seal it with the King's signet ring - for no document written in the King's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked" (Esther 8:8).
 - (1) Here we see the idea of a permanent, binding contract
 - (2) The king's word, with his seal, cannot be revoked
 - ii) Another example... in Babylon, when Daniel was fed to the lions, we read in Daniel 6:17; "a stone was brought and placed over the mouth of the den, and the King sealed it with his own signet ring and with the rings of his nobles so that Daniel's situation might not be changed"
 - (1) Again, this idea of a seal indicates a permanent, secure, unmovable state
 - f) The second key idea being expressed by term seal, is one of approval, or genuineness.
 - i) And we see this in reference to Jesus in John 6:27 when the crowds were literally chasing after him, and to prove his authenticity, Jesus said;
"On Him [Jesus] God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

- (1) Jesus was referring to himself as the real deal
 - (2) Not some plastic version or cardboard cut-out
 - g) Thirdly, sealing indicates ownership.
 - i) 2 Cor 1:21-22 Paul wrote “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit [pledge] guaranteeing what is to come”.
 - ii) The Holy Spirit is God’s mark upon us, God’s signature, saying we are his property!
 - h) So as we draw this together, the idea represented by the word SEAL is one that combines this idea of
 - i) security / permanence
 - ii) genuineness / approval, and
 - iii) ownership
 - iv) God has sealed believers secure in him
- 4) The Work of the Holy Spirit
- a) How is this achieved... How are we sealed?
 - b) Verse 13 “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”
 - c) We are only “in Christ”:
 - i) When we hear the message of truth; the gospel, the good news of Jesus
 - ii) When we believe and accept that message of truth for ourselves, and
 - iii) When we allow God’s Holy Spirit to live in us
 - iv) The Holy Spirit is the “seal”, the guarantee for our salvation
 - (1) He is God’s mark upon us
 - (2) He plugs us into Christ, and holds us secure in him
 - (3) He indwells in us as we live in the “here and now”, awaiting our eternal home, and
 - (4) He changes and moulds us to live more in Christ’s likeness
 - (5) He empowers us to live boldly
 - (6) He gifts us for ministry
 - v) The Holy Spirit is essential for believers
 - (1) Paul says in Romans 8:9 that it is impossible to be a Christian without God’s Holy Spirit...
 - (2) “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him”
- 5) For us?
- a) If you’re a believer here today, there are a number of responses you could possibly have when you ponder the fact that you have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, informed and sealed
 - b) I’m going to choose just three responses that I think are right and proper for Christians
 - c) Firstly, we ought to be thankful
 - i) We ought to be filled with gratitude at what God has done for us
 - ii) We ought to have that deep sense of appreciation that God is the one who has secured and holds firm our salvation
 - iii) I think we sometimes mix things up and convince ourselves that it’s all about us holding onto our salvation, when really, it’s not about what we do, how often we come to church or share communion or what rosters we’re on, but it’s all about what God has done
 - (1) He’s the one who sent his son to die in our place
 - (2) He’s the one who sent his Holy Spirit as a seal for our salvation
 - iv) I recall going Tree Surfing a number of years ago...
 - (1) Activity where you’re strapped into a harness, and you make your way through an obstacle course of ropes and planks and tyres high in the trees

- v) A number of our team were absolutely petrified that they were going to fall 20 metres and hit the ground with a thud
 - (1) Throughout the course their knuckles were white as snow as they gripped the ropes, yet the very worst they could do was slip maybe a foot or so
 - (2) They were very secure... their safety was doubly assured with clip upon clip fastened securely
 - (3) In fact, truth be known, even if they tried to worm their way out of their harness, they would have failed
- vi) As Christians, our eternity is guaranteed, rock solid, because of the Holy Spirit
- vii) That's why I say, we ought to be thankful
- d) Second, knowing that we have been sealed with the deposit of the Holy Spirit, we must be focussed
 - i) I think the Evil One is exceptionally good at discouraging us
 - ii) Over recent times Christians have been under fire with the SSM debate and passing of laws that many of us believe are against God's will
 - iii) Speaking about God in state schools has come under fire throughout our nation
 - iv) And there are many other things that distract us from what really matters
 - v) Yet we ought to remain focussed
 - (1) Focussed on the fact that God is really the one in control
 - (2) As human beings, we cannot see things the way God sees them
 - (3) He reigns, and his plan will come to fruition
- e) Thirdly, knowing that we have the Holy Spirit should spur us on to be fruitful
 - i) We ought to make the most of every opportunity to build God's kingdom
 - ii) Not because we're trying to shore up our salvation
 - (1) just in case God hasn't done quite enough
 - (2) as if we've got to do just a few more little things to be sure we're saved
 - (3) Not at all!
 - iii) Instead, as Christians we are called to live fruitful, godly lives in response to what God has done for us
 - (1) I guess the question for each one of us is; will you make your life count for God every day?
 - (2) Will you get about sharing the good news so that others can hear the message, believe and come into God's kingdom
 - (3) Will your life be one that serves others?
 - (4) Will you sacrificially use your gifts to build up God's church
- f) There are three things for Christians; BE...
 - i) Thankful / Focussed / Fruitful
- 6) Finally...
 - a) If you're sitting here today and you're not sure if you're a believer, sealed with the Holy Spirit, I want you to know that God loves you very much
 - i) That's why he sent his son, Jesus, to die on a cross, to bring you back to him
 - ii) If you'd like to explore that further... if you're not 100% sure, speak with me or Mark or one of the other leaders
 - iii) Don't let the opportunity pass you by, that you too might live a life "in Christ"...
- 7) Pray