

## SEALED WITH THE SPIRIT

(Ephesians 1:13)

It is hard to tell someone bad news that will greatly affect them. Every word seems too strong. Even with soft words, the reality will hit the hearer as they sense the pain you are trying to minimize. I have the opposite problem today. I'm here to tell you the very best news ... that if you are a Christian, you have *"every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."* But every word I use will be too weak to convey the enormous realities. But it is well worth the effort. Over the last weeks we have considered how God graciously achieves all this for his people ... the mercies listed in Ephesians chapter 1, being chosen, adopted, redeemed, informed, and sealed. Today we consider the 'sealing' ...

*"having believed, you were marked in him (Christ) with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit"* (1:13) and *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption"* (4:30). Let's give attention to (1) the meaning, and (2) the practical outcome of being 'sealed'.

### 1. The meaning of 'sealed'

From the 58 times the words "seal" and "sealed" occur in the Bible, three key ideas are apparent. First, **security - permanence**. 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). In Babylon, when Daniel was fed to the lions, *"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"* (Daniel 6:17). In both cases to 'seal' means to make secure or permanent.

Sealing also denotes **approval**, or **genuineness**. We see this in reference to Jesus: *"On Him God the Father has placed his seal of approval"* (John 6:27). There the 'seal' refers to the miraculous signs Jesus was doing. They indicated God's approval, just as Nicodemus said: *"Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him"* (John 3:2).

Thirdly, sealing indicates **ownership**. *"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"* (2 Cor 1:21-22). The Holy Spirit is God's mark upon us, God's signature, saying we are his property!

Putting all this together ... 'sealed' in Ephesians means that God has given his Holy Spirit to all true Christians. That is why they are *"in Christ"* - that is how they were brought to faith, and how they inherit *"every spiritual blessing"* in Christ. This 'sealing' indicates their security and their approval by God. It is impossible to be a Christian without it ... *"if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to him"* (Romans 8:9). So the "seal" of God **IS** the Holy Spirit himself! He is God's mark, God's impress, upon us. He plugs us into Christ (and keeps us there).

‘Sealing’ is not an experience you can remember - it is simply another dimension of being born again. It is an instantaneous act of God that happens beyond the level of consciousness. But it causes massive changes. Prior to that we were all dead in sin, but the Holy Spirit brings life. He opens blind eyes so they see Christ. He removes stony hearts so they love and believe Christ. He changes stubborn wills so they follow Christ. Saving sinners involves each person of the Godhead. God the Father *chose* them before time, God the Son *redeemed* them in time, and God the Holy Spirit *seals* that arrangement for all time.

When Ephesians 1:14 refers to the sealing Holy Spirit as “*guaranteeing our inheritance*” it is often assumed to mean what **we** inherit, so it is read like Romans 8:16-17 ... “*since we are children, we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ*”.

But the real emphasis here is even more amazing. It refers to what **God** inherits ... us! Literally the text says the Holy Spirit is - “*a pledge guaranteeing the inheritance of us until the redemption of those who are God’s possession*”. Paraphrased, ‘the Holy Spirit guarantees God’s inheritance of us until his entire possession is redeemed’. He secures (seals) each one of them until all are safely home! The good shepherd will not lose a single sheep. God has invested lavishly in them ... they are his inheritance.

This should not seem strange ... it is a basic to God’s covenant. For instance, “*The Lord took you out of Egypt to be the people of his inheritance as you are now*” ... “*For the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob is his allotted inheritance*” (Deut 4:20 & 32:9). The covenant always meant “*I will be your God and you will be my people*” (Lev 26:12) ... you will inherit me and I will inherit you. Being ‘sealed’ with the Spirit ensures all that!

## **2. The practical outcome of ‘sealed’**

How should the truth about *sealing* affect our daily lives? There are many answers ... let me give just two, a negative and a positive. **First**, I urge you to avoid any theology that says a Christian might not be ‘sealed’ by the Holy Spirit. It is just as foolish as saying a Christian might not be chosen by God, or redeemed, or adopted, or might not have every spiritual blessing in Christ. Sealing comes with true faith (“*having believed, you were sealed*”) and every Christian is warned not to grieve the Holy Spirit who sealed them for redemption (4:30). Remember ... “*You are complete in Christ*” (Col 2:10).

**Secondly**, have a proper attitude! We should be filled with gratitude and a thankfulness that is deep, sincere, and practical, helping us to see far beyond the fleeting problems of this age. Yes, there is much in this sinful world to grieve us. But never lose sight of the ultimate reality ... all Christians are sealed with every spiritual blessing.

Don’t allow Satan to distract you. *While he can’t rob you of your eternal treasure he can steal your pocket money ... your daily enjoyment of that treasure.* Satan cannot undo the fact of your being chosen by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sealed by the Spirit. But he can get you so preoccupied with the present world that you forget how temporary it is. He loves to get you bitter and twisted.

That's not difficult when you see things on the news like the outcome of the same-sex 'marriage' issue in the Australian Parliament. Tragically, the same people sworn into office clutching a Bible were now explicitly rejecting it so that the ethics of Sodom and Gomorrah were enshrined in our laws. My pocket money was gone that day ... until I remembered that all history is like that. Back in the Garden of Eden, another plebiscite (serpent, Adam, and Eve) voted against God accusing him of envy, lying, and fear-mongering ("*you will not die*"). But God still reigns and achieves his plan of salvation! He has installed Jesus as King of kings.

So let me encourage you to be utterly grateful. If so, I think I hear you singing with (Charles Wesley) ... "*O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise, the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace*". Ten tongues cannot sufficiently praise God for his blessings ... nor 100 ... give me 1000! I think I hear you singing with David ... *The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want* (for anything). I lack nothing, I have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. We should sing it even more meaningfully than David since we know far more than he could about being chosen, adopted, redeemed, informed, and sealed. He didn't have a New Testament ... not even an Old Testament (he was still helping to write it).

Like us, David was lost for words ... *my cup overflows!* Christian friends ... whatever griefs we must face in this life, surely our constant attitude is ... *Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me; and in God's house forevermore my dwelling-place shall be.*

But what if someone here today is not a Christian? What a sad thing to forfeit "*every spiritual blessing*". No matter how rich you are in the things of this world, you have nothing! What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul? But God is still rich in mercy. He still prefers sinners to seek him and find his grace. He is still willing to save ... so willing that he even commands all men to be saved.

*"Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other"* (Isaiah 45:22). Take him at his word! Don't waste another hour. Humble yourself before the Most High God. Whoever trusts in the Lord will never be disappointed!