

A Church Alive III: Seals, Marks and Displays

*In whom 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**, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. – Ephesians 1:13-14*

Recap of Last Lesson

In the last lesson, we began to discuss the purpose for the coming of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' farewell address to the disciples before he died, he told them of all the things that they would encounter because of their association with him. Up until that time they could always rely on Jesus to "fix" whatever situation they found themselves in, but with him leaving, they were in need of something to rely on. Jesus said that this would be the Holy Spirit. In fact, Jesus told them it was to their advantage for him to go away so he could send the Spirit.

One of the roles of the Holy Spirit was to guide the disciples, and us, into "all truth". Not just into each fact, but into the whole realm of truth. We can get caught up in the "truth of the facts" and make our judgment from them, but, like with the man born blind, Jesus revealed a deeper truth that the disciples had not considered – a truth that came from God and was not dependent upon the existence or non existence of sin. For the man born blind, this was an opportunity for God to move.

This fact of truth being more than just the facts was also seen in the creation of the feasts of Israel. For the Jews, keeping the feasts was a requirement and a benchmark for their standard of righteousness. God however, had a deeper truth that he wanted to reveal – His plan of salvation and the outpouring of His spirit on the earth. For this reason it was necessary for the disciples to wait for the "Promise of the Father" – not so they could work for it, but so that God would be glorified as he revealed the deeper meaning to his plan.

Another Purpose of the Holy Spirit: A Seal

Paul in his letter to the Ephesians begins by recounting the solid position we have in God through Jesus:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. – Ephesians 1:3-4

With all of the specifics he mentions about our positioning in Him, he throws in another aspect of the Holy Spirit that we need to take note of: the Holy Spirit is

labeled as the guarantee of our inheritance. This would be like walking around with your parents' will that gave you everything they own. Regardless of your current circumstance, you could look at that will and know that there is a more to and for you than your circumstances would dictate. In fact, you would begin to look at yourself, not from the standpoint of your circumstances, but from the standpoint of your will. Your conversation, your planning, your outlook, all of that would be based on what you see in the will, as opposed to what "life" was handing you that day. Regarding eternal life, Paul was emphasizing that we should never have to question our salvation or our position – we could look at the presence of the Holy Spirit as proof of God's intention toward us.

The Holy Spirit as a Seal

God didn't just stop with making the Holy Spirit our guarantee. We can have that knowledge and understanding and it can be the best-kept secret in the land. God wanted to do more than to just give security to those who had already committed themselves to Him. Reading through the letter to the Ephesians, while the first part is all about positioning, the second is about **practicing in relationship with others**:

*But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ, from whom the whole body, **joined and knit together by what every joint supplies**, according to the effective working by which **every part does its share**, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. – Ephesians 4:15-16*

Purpose of a Seal

In the days of kings, seals were used to show that a message from a king had authenticity and authority. The king would sign the message, then press his ring into the melted wax on the message. The seal would have the inscription of the king so people would know that it was a valid message or order from the king himself.

Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal [inscription]: "The Lord knows those who are his", and "Let every one who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity". – I Timothy 2:19

God put his seal, his Holy Spirit upon us, so that **when others see the message or order upon us**, they will now that the message is directly from God.

The Place of the Seal

When we look at our lives, sometimes our message or order do not match what should be in God's seal. The rich young ruler lived a life according The Law, and by anyone's standards would have been worthy for eternal life. When he came to Jesus, he came honestly, because even though he kept the Law religiously, he did not have that assurance that came from being sealed:

Now behold, one came to him and said, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" – Matthew 19:16

This man was looking for something – an indicator of his life in the kingdom. He was looking to create his own seal – something he could do to show to himself and to others that he was accepted. For God however, his seal is not put upon us based on acts that we do. Rather, we do our acts based on the seal he has placed upon us.

*Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, **which the Son of Man will give you, because the Father has set His seal on him.**" – John 6:26-27*

Jesus did what he did – giving the food that led to eternal life – not to gain the Father's stamp of approval (his seal), but because he was already sealed. Jesus walked in the authority of the inscription upon his life, and not only the authority, but also the authenticity and the validity of that inscription. What God said about Jesus, he demonstrated because it was what was placed upon him. Similarly for us, God has also sealed us with His Holy Spirit, and with that seal is an inscription.