

Ephesians 1 v 11 - 14

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[0 : 00] We're going to be looking at some of the verses in Ephesians 1, which we read a little while ago, and particularly picking up from verse 11.

So I'm going to read those verses again, verse 11 through to 14. In him, that's Christ, we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

A little bit of a quiz or a riddle to begin with. Can you tell me what these things have in common? A jar of jam, a DVD case, a sandwich bought in a shop, and a ballot box.

[1 : 13] They all have a seal on them. A jam jar has a vacuum seal to preserve the contents. A sandwich has a plastic seal to keep the bread fresh.

DVD case has an anti-piracy seal. And a ballot box, an anti-tamper seal. And there's many other things we could add to that list of products and things that we buy that have one seal or another. A seal to keep them either, as we've seen, fresh or safe or protected and so on. And so sealing is universally accepted as something that's important and necessary to be sealed.

Now the work of the Holy Spirit of God in the life of a person is essential for them to become a Christian. We sang that just in that hymn there this morning.

No man can truly say that Jesus is the Lord. Unless God does something. We can't become a Christian by any other way apart from the Holy Spirit. From the very beginning of the Christian life all the way through to the very end, we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit, upon His power, upon His influence in every area of our faith and our living.

[2 : 26] One of those ministries, one of the aspects of the life of the Holy Spirit in a Christian is this aspect, this work of sealing, which we read there in verse 13 and 14.

Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. And Paul is writing to encourage these Christians and to assure them of their faith in the Lord Jesus and to tell them that they've been marked with this seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

He mentions the seal of the Holy Spirit later on in this letter in chapter 4 and verse 30. He speaks about, And in writing one of his other letters in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, he also mentions the Holy Spirit as a seal.

He says, So I want us to think about this matter of what it means as Christians that we have been sealed with the Spirit and what it means to us and what encouragement and assurance it is to us. But before we come to that, I want us to think about when we were sealed. Because we may think, well, when did this happen? When did this take place? When we were sealed with the Holy Spirit?

[3 : 48] Was it something that happened when we were baptized with water? Was it something that happens at a particular time in a Christian's life? A special experience? A spiritual feeling?

Does it mean that some Christians have been sealed and some Christians have yet to be sealed? That it's something that's separate? But it's very clear from what Paul says here as he writes to these Christians that a person receives the seal of the Holy Spirit at the moment that they put their faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

At that time when they, as we might say, are converted. For he says here, doesn't he? Having believed, you were marked with a seal. And it's clear that he's talking about their salvation.

We see something happening like that in the lives of Cornelius back in Acts 10. Cornelius, as you may be aware, was a Roman centurion.

And God sent the apostle Peter to him with the gospel message. And as he was preaching and teaching them about this, something marvelous happened. Here's Acts 10, verse 44.

[4 : 54] While Peter was still speaking these words about Christ and faith in him and forgiveness, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. Now the Jewish believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the non-Jews, the Gentiles.

For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. So as Peter is preaching the gospel, something happens. God sends his Holy Spirit upon those who are listening and they are converted and they receive the Spirit and it's clear for everybody around about as they begin to praise God and worship him as they do.

And perhaps when you became a Christian, it wasn't quite as dramatic. Perhaps when you became a Christian, you didn't suddenly burst out in song or make a great noise.

Perhaps it was very quiet. Perhaps it was something that really happened just by yourself when you're on your own. Perhaps it was something that you just knew had taken place and was very real.

But whatever happened to us when we came to faith in Christ, something happened wonderfully was that we were sealed with the Holy Spirit. We received him and he sealed us.

[6 : 07] In fact, the reality is, as we've seen already, we cannot be a Christian unless we've received the Holy Spirit. We can't be a real Christian. We can call ourselves Christian. We can think that we're a Christian, but it is impossible according to the Bible and according to the reality of life that you can be a Christian unless God's Holy Spirit has come with power into our lives.

And Paul writes another one of his letters to the Christians in Rome. He reminds them of this wonderful truth. He says, The Holy Spirit is given all sorts of different names here just in this simple passage.

He's the Spirit of Christ. He's the Spirit of God. He's the Holy Spirit. And he's just the Spirit. But it's one and the same person, just as each one of us gets called different names according to who's speaking to us.

So, Ange and most of you will call me Peter. Some of you will call me your Lordship. I think Phil's got a great idea there about the pastor being killed.

I think that's super. I think we should import that. No, no, not at all, not at all. Mel and Jono will call me Dad. My mum and dad will call me Son. So, I'm not a multiple personality as far as I know, but they call me different names.

[7 : 37] And so, same with the Holy Spirit. So, when he's called the Spirit of Christ, he's still the Holy Spirit. He's the one who, unless we have the Spirit, we are not Christians. That's imperative that we understand that.

Sadly, something that's misunderstood by many others as well. So, the Holy Spirit, he comes upon the person when they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, when we come to faith in him.

This is what Jesus meant when he was talking to Nicodemus. That was the religious man who thought that he was a man who had a relationship with God. And Jesus said to him very clearly in John, he said, You must be born anew, born again.

And he made it clear, it means born of the Spirit. Something has to take place. A complete transformation, a change. That's why it is such a wonderful thing to be a Christian, isn't it?

Because something has happened to us. We haven't just decided that, Well, I think I'll become religious one day, or I think I need to sort my life out one day. We have met with an encounter with God.

[8 : 37] And by his Spirit, he has come into our lives, and he has done a work and begun a work of changing us and transforming us. And so, if you are a Christian this morning, not only have you received the Spirit, but you have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

It's not something that you need to look for later on in your Christian life. It's something that is yours. It's your present possession and reality. So that's where we are. What does it mean, though? What does it mean, though?

Now, there's three reasons why anything receives a seal, and they apply also here to us as Christians. The first is ownership. The second is authenticity. And the third is security.

Ownership, authenticity, security. And those are the things that the God, the Holy Spirit, has done for us and brought about in our lives in that same way when he sealed us.

And first of all, we have this sealing as a mark of ownership, of belonging. We bear the mark of Christ. We bear the mark of Jesus to show that we belong to him.

[9 : 40] That's what Paul wrote, didn't he, in 2 Corinthians 1. We read it before. He has anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his spirit in our hearts. By giving to us his Holy Spirit, God is saying, and Christ is saying, you belong to me, you're mine now.

And, of course, when we thought about that last week, we thought about that means that we are a child of God. It means we are brought into his family. It means that God accepts us and receives us. It says that he no longer rejects us.

And we no longer reject him. There's a lovely line in one of the hymns that we sing from time to time. The very last line goes, I am his, and he is mine forever and forever.

It's real, isn't it? It's a very real sense of knowing that we belong to God. That's what the Holy Spirit does. He sets his ownership upon us. And something like that happened a little bit when we think about the Lord Jesus when he was baptized with water.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we're told about Jesus' baptism, beginning of his ministry before he began to teach and to preach. He met with John the Baptist and he was baptized. A sign of his belonging to us, a sign of his standing with us, being one with us.

[10 : 55] Baptism is that picture of being washed of sins. And though Jesus had no sins to be washed off, he was baptized to say, I am come to be one with these people who are sinners and to rescue them.

And at that baptism, you're aware, I'm sure each of you, that something wonderful happened. And Matthew tells us here in verse 3, As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water.

At that moment, heaven was opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending upon him like a dove. And a voice from heaven saying, This is my Son, whom I love.

With him I'm well pleased. So in that sense, as the Holy Spirit comes upon the Lord Jesus and God says, This is my Son, there's that mark of ownership. There's that mark of God saying, This really is my unique Son, who I sent into this world.

And I'm proving that and showing that by sending my Spirit upon him. Now that's God fulfilling the promises he gave in the Old Testament. Again and again, the promise was that when God sends his Savior into the world, his anointed King, the one who would come to rescue people, his servant, he would have the Spirit come upon him.

[12 : 06] Here's just one example, Isaiah 42. Here's God speaking through Isaiah. Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight. I'll put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations.

So God is sending his Spirit upon Jesus to show that he owns him, he belongs to him, he's one with him. And so it is with us. When we receive the Holy Spirit, it's that mark that we belong to the Lord.

I don't know if the police still do it now, but there was a big move some years ago by the police to encourage people who had valuable possessions in their house to have them marked with their postcode, with an indelible sort of pen.

I don't know if you had anything like that done. We haven't got any valuable possessions in our house, so we didn't see the point of it. But for many of us may have some porcelain or some other things like that. And of course the fact was that this mark, you couldn't see it except under ultraviolet light.

And so the point was that if you were burgled and the burglars were nabbed, then you could have your loot, as it were, returned to you because it had your postcode on it and it could be found out.

[13 : 15] Now in one sense, the Holy Spirit sealing us and marking us is an invisible sign. When you become a Christian, you don't suddenly grow an extra head or suddenly you grow six inches taller.

There's no physical, is there, outward difference to the Christian immediately. We don't look differently. We don't appear differently. It's an invisible work of God.

But it's a real work of God. It's something that we know. It's something that we experience. It's something that the Christian has, which nobody else in the world has.

Not because, again, they are better and more deserving. Quite the opposite. Because they know that they are sinners. And because they've put their faith and trust in Jesus who died for them.

And Jesus made it clear to his disciples that the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, who he was sending upon the church, was not going to be given to everybody, but just to them. So we are saved.

[14:13] When the Holy Spirit comes into your heart and life, it is God saying, I have purchased you at a great price. My Son has paid for your sins to redeem and rescue you so that you can be brought into relationship with me.

It's the evidence that we belong to him. Do you know anything of that? Do you know that that change has taken place in your life where God's Spirit is living within you?

Do you know that you have put your faith and trust in him? Because that's the work of the Spirit too. Knowing that Jesus is my Savior. Knowing that I've trusted in him. Though I fail and fall, I get it wrong.

Though I muck up at times, yet I know that I belong to him and he belongs to me. The second thing as well, which I mentioned, which is closely linked, is that a seal authenticates the validity of an object.

So if you go into a shop now and you want to buy a DVD, you want to buy a game for your Xbox, or something like that, it will have a seal on it. It's an anti-piracy seal, which shows that it's not just a copy.

[15:21] I remember when, a little while ago, myself and the family were in London, and we'd gone into a, it's a family, we'd gone into, to use the loo, I think in a McDonald's or KFC or something.

And as I came out of the loo, there was a gentleman there blocking our way, and he says, do you want to buy a DVD? I says, no thank you. And he said, just two pound. I said, no thanks. It was clearly just a copy. It was clearly, you know, it was in one of these very thin cases.

It was a copy, a pirate copy, of a DVD. And of course, you know, you know it's not genuine. You know it's not the real thing. You know it's not, only not illegal, but it's probably very poor quality as well.

And so, when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, he proves that there is a real work of God. You see, unfortunately, pirates and copy, and fakers are getting better, aren't they, at their job?

They're able to be much more clever in the way that they forge things. But you can't forge the work of the Holy Spirit. You can't make it happen. You can't have something which is like it, but not it.

[16:24] Some people, unfortunately, think that becoming a Christian is just about feeling happy. If you just feel happy, or have an emotional feeling, that means you're a Christian. Or even an emotional response to the gospel.

But it is a work of the Spirit. And when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, he is guaranteeing and saying, this is really God's work. You really are saved. Assures us that we are his, as we've already seen, but authenticates.

So Paul writes to the Christians in Rome, and again, he writes to them, and he says this, in verse 16 of chapter 8, he says, the Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The Holy Spirit within us tells us, speaks to our own hearts, and says, yes, you are God's child. Yes, he does love you. Yes, you are accepted. Yes, you are received. And that's so very important, because as Christians, there are times when we do have doubts, don't we?

Times when we struggle. We may fall into sin, and we think, how can I possibly have let God down in this way? I surely couldn't be. God can't accept me or love me. Or, of course, we have an enemy.

[17:38] Satan himself is an enemy who seeks to sow doubts in our minds, to bring condemnation, to say, well, there's no real God. What are you doing believing in God?

You can't trust in him. And he sows doubts in our minds. Now, one of the things that we can look to, one of the things that we can be, that can assure us that we are truly saved, and that God is real, is, of course, that work of the Spirit of God in our hearts and lives, that seal that authenticates.

God has done something, and it's something which we could never do for ourselves. Look at yourselves, dear friends, as Christians. Look at how the Holy Spirit has changed you from the person you were when you first trusted in him.

Nobody could do that for themselves. Nobody could believe the things that you've believed. Nobody could have the faith that you have had in the challenges and the difficulties of life that you have.

It's not possible. It's because God has set his seal upon you and the Holy Spirit has kept you. And that leads us to the third and last thing here, that a seal is given for security.

[18:43] See the link here between each one of them. But security, in other words, to keep something safe. And this is really the greatest comfort for us in knowing that we've been sealed with

the Holy Spirit, that we are safe and secure.

A seal is set upon a package or perhaps a letter, something like that, something which is valuable to prevent it being opened before it reaches its destination.

Seals, of course, perhaps were something which maybe in bygone days were more popular. They were sort of a wax seal that the king would put upon the letter to know that nobody could look into the secret plans or whatever.

But it's there, the seal is there to ensure that it is safe, that it will get to its rightful owner without being tampered with or opened. Now, of course, a human seal can be broken.

It can deter thieves from stealing the article and it can provide evidence if it's been broken into. But it can't really ultimately keep it safe. But the seal that you and I have received of the Holy Spirit is an unbreakable seal.

[19 : 46] It's a seal by which the Holy Spirit secures us until the proper time when we are handed over to our rightful owner until we are brought into that place of safety, brought into that place to which we are meant to be, our home, if I can put it that way.

When will that happen? Well, Paul writes about it, doesn't he, here in Ephesians 4. With the Holy Spirit of God with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

What's the day of redemption mean? The day of redemption is the day when all of God's plans and purposes, all the work that he's been doing, all of history reaches its conclusion when Jesus Christ comes at end.

For the Christian, that's the day of redemption. It's the day when we are brought up into all the blessings of heavenly life and eternal life. It's called other things as well that day, day of judgment. It's called the day of Christ Jesus. It's the day when every single person who's ever lived, men, women and children will stand before a holy God and will be called to give an account for how he lived.

[20 : 55] And there God will pass that perfect, that righteous, just judgment upon us. For those who have trusted in Christ and have received with his spirit, it will be the bringing into the home.

It will be the gathering in of all those into that place of eternal and everlasting joy and peace. for those who have rejected Christ, those who have not trusted in him, it will be the most miserable and sad and terrible day when they realize just how foolish they've been that they have rejected him who loved them and died for them.

Oh dear friends, please, please, be sure that you are ready for that day. Be sure that you have put your faith in Christ for that day. Be sure that you've been sealed by the Holy Spirit to the day.

This is the wonderful thing for the Christian, not by your own strength or power, but because of what God has done in your life, you dear Christian will be safe on that day. You will be gathered in to the wonderful homecoming, as it were, of all God's people.

And even though now you get it wrong and I get it wrong, even though now we fall and we doubt and we sin, that cannot break the seal of the Holy Spirit upon you that makes you secure and that will bring you all through this life, all through the trials, all through the troubles, all through the sadnesses, all through the grief and bring you through to that day safe and secure in Christ.

[22 : 22] You see, what did Paul say here in Ephesians 1? The Holy Spirit who is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. The deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession.

that Holy Spirit is the down payment, the assurance that everything that God has promised he will give. The down payment that says, look, as you've received the Spirit so you know for sure that you shall receive eternal life and heavenly life and eternal life.

Nothing can change the promise of God. We are Christ's purchased possession. He paid for us with his own blood. He redeemed us so that he might take us home to be with him and he set his Holy Spirit upon us to keep us safe until that day.

And nothing in heaven, nothing in hell and nothing on this earth can break that seal or remove you, dear Christian, from the salvation that Christ has brought you into. Here's what Jesus promised his disciples and it's the promise to us as well.

It's wonderful. John chapter 10 and verse 28. He says to his people this. He says, I know my sheep, they hear my voice. I give them eternal life and they shall never perish.

[23 : 38] And listen to this. No one can snatch them out of my hand. That's the wonderful thing that the Holy Spirit has placed us in the very hands of Christ. The safest hands in the world.

I was watching cricket yesterday. England hasn't got the safest pair of hands in the world, that's for sure. We dropped about four catches. But God's hands are safe and secure and you, dear friend, are sealed in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ and he has promised to you as you've put your faith and trust in me, as you've come into the relationship with me, so nothing now can take you out. And you may look at yourself and you may say, but Peter, you don't know me. You don't know how I struggle. You don't know how my faith is so weak. You don't know how I sin and get it wrong time and time and again.

No, I don't. But God does. God does. And what you are and what I am does not change God, does not change his promises, does not change his power, does not change the work of his Spirit in our lives.

Everything that we need we have been given when we have been given the Holy Spirit who will secure us and keep us going on until we get to glory. We've received that seal, dear friends.

[24 : 53] Don't let doubts rule over your heart. Don't let fears have their place in your mind. Boldly live for Christ. Boldly follow his commandments.

Boldly press on to that day when you shall receive and enter into the full redemption, knowing that you are safe. And whatever the world throws at you, whatever the devil throws at you, whatever you get wrong, the seal of God's Holy Spirit means that you belong to him, that he has done a work in you which is genuine and that he will bring you safely into that life everlasting.

Here's the closing words of Jude as he speaks to the Christians in his letter. He says, to God, to him, who is able to keep you from falling, in other words, falling away and losing this salvation, and to present you before his presence in glory, without fault, with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power and authority through Jesus Christ our Lord, today and forevermore.

Amen. Well, let's sing together. It's not a hymn that we know very well, but we'll know the tune, I hope, and we'll be able to sing it together. Three, three, four, Father of Everlasting Peace, three hundred, and thirty-four.

Thy goodness and thy truth we praise, thy goodness and thy truth we prove, thou hast in honour of thy Son, the gift unspeakable sent down, the spirit of life and power and love.

[26 : 29] Let's stand as we sing. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.