

Introduction



His Person



His Works



His Indwelling



His Baptizing



His Sealing

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His Filling



His Gifting



His Helping



The Holy Spirit—Our Helper

Bethany Bible Church, Adult Sunday School Class, October 30, 2011

Marked By the Spirit as His Forever

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love; here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts above.”¹

Today, we take up today the Spirit’s ministry of ‘sealing’ the believer. It (like the Spirit’s ministry of “baptizing” the believer into permanent spiritual union with Jesus Christ and with the church that He has redeemed) is a non-experiential ministry. It’s something that is true of all believers; and is true whether the individual believer feels it or not. The doctrine of the Spirit’s sealing should be seen as in close association with the doctrine of His baptizing; because by it, the Holy Spirit forever preserves us in that into which He has also baptized us.

In our sixth lesson on the Holy Spirit (“The Spirit’s Ministry in ‘Typology’”, II. E.), we considered how the Holy Spirit was biblically pictured to us in the symbolic representation of “a seal”. We noted some of the ways that the Scriptures used the idea of a seal: “In the Old Testament, a written transaction was completed --and the thing deeded was secured for future redemption--by a seal (see Jeremiah 32:9-10). The presence of an official seal had the effect of completely settling the matter (see 1 Kings 21:8; Esther 8:7-8). It was used as a figure of speech for the possessiveness of love in Song of Solomon 8:6--’set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm . . .’”

In three key New Testament passages, we see the Spirit’s ‘sealing’ ministry upon us as God’s redeemed people . . .

I. AS A GUARANTEE OF OUR FUTURE GLORIFICATION.

A. In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers about his ministry; and said, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”² Of what is the Holy Spirit a guarantee? In the previous verses, Paul talked about the suffering he and his co-workers endured for the gospel--a suffering so great that they took upon themselves the sentence of death and even despaired of life. But in verses 10-11, he said, “Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us.” Paul drew confidence in his hope for a full deliverance--even a deliverance from death--from the fact of that he, his co-workers, and the Corinthian believers all bore the seal of the Holy Spirit. The confidence this gave him was great; because, as he said, “all the promises of God in Him [that is, in Jesus Christ] are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us” (v. 20).

B. Two important Greek words are used in this passage. The first is *arrabon*--here translated “seal”. The other is *bebaiosis*--translated “guarantee”. In the context of this passage, these are ideas taken from the everyday world of the marketplace. As one commentator notes, “In Greek classical times a *bebaiosis* was a seller’s guarantee to a buyer that as money had been paid the goods would be forthcoming, and the *arrabon*, a deposit promising that full payment would be made. In this imagery, as adapted by Paul, God is the ‘guarantor,’ and God also pays the ‘deposit’ (the Spirit).”³ As Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:4-5, “For we who are in this tent [that is, this body] groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but

further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee [*arrabon*]" Because of the Holy Spirit's ministry of sealing us as God's divine "deposit", how can we fail to be glorified in Christ?

II. AS THE IDENTIFYING MARK THAT WE ARE GOD'S POSSESSION.

- A. Not only do we have something to look forward to in God; but God Himself has something to look forward to in us. In the first chapter of Ephesians, Paul marvelously describes the ministry of all three members of the Trinity in our salvation. And in Ephesians 1:13-14, we read, "In Him [that is, in Christ] 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." Here, as in 2 Corinthians 1:22, the word *arrabon* is used; except in this case, it is translated by the word "guarantee". The word that is translated "sealed" is *sphragizo*--which means "to set apart or secure by a mark or an imprint".
- B. Here, rather than the marketplace, the imagery of notarization is used. The Holy Spirit serves as an official mark on a document--such as a letter, a contract, or a deed. In ancient times, such a contract was closed and sealed by a wax seal that bore the imprint of an official. The document, thus officially sealed, became a "guarantee"--set apart or secured by the seal--that secures what was deeded to the owner. Here, the Holy Spirit is both God's official seal upon us, and the official guarantee to us that we are truly God's--keeping us set apart for Him "until the redemption of the purchased possession". To be sure, we receive an inheritance with Christ; and the Spirit serves as a guarantee of this as well (see 1 Peter 1:3-5). But it was not *we* who purchased *ourselves* for this. Rather, it was the Father who purchased us through the blood of His Son, and who put His seal upon us as His purchased possession. Christ Himself has an inheritance in us! In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prays that--among other things--we may know "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." Our presence with our Lord Jesus forever is "the joy that was set before Him" that moved Him to endure the cross (Hebrews 12:2). It is the prospect for which He prayed to the Father with great desire (John 17:24). We are sure to receive a share in Christ's inheritance forever, because we ourselves are the inheritance which He is sure to receive. We are "sealed" by God for this through the Holy Spirit. And praise Him!--a seal of God is something that no creature can ever break! We are marked out as His on this earth--and will stay His until the day He claims us.

III. AS OUR MOTIVATION TO 'PUT OFF' THE SINS OF THE PAST.

- A. Finally, in Ephesians 4:29-30--in a very practical portion of his letter--Paul wrote, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The word that Paul uses here for "seal" is the one we were introduced to in Ephesians 1:13--*sphragizo*. The 'day of redemption' that is a reference to the glorification of our bodies. As Paul wrote that "we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body" (Romans 8:23).
- B. In this case, rather than that of the marketplace or of the notary public's office, the image of betrothal is used. So, in Ephesians 4:29-30, that which

sets us apart is the Holy Spirit--a divine Person who can be made to grieve --who serves as God's identifying 'engagement ring' upon us that sets us apart as the betrothed bride of His Son. Paul was very jealous for his brothers and sisters in Christ; because, as he said with regard to his gospel ministry to them, "I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2). And so, Paul urged his fellow believers to make sure that their conduct and manner of speech, as those who are destined to be presented to Christ as His glorious bride, was not a grief to the Holy Spirit by whom they were set apart as God's property for that great day. We're to behave now in these bodies like what the seal of the Holy Spirit upon us guarantees that we will one day be. As 1 John 3:1-3 says, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

¹From "*Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*", by Robert Robinson (1735-1790). *Public Domain*.

²All Scripture readings are taken from *the Holy Bible, New King James Version*; copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to The Corinthians, NICNT* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), p. 110, n. 43.