

The Holy Spirit in the Epistle to the Ephesians

by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

Arno Clemens Gaebelein preaches on the Epistle to the Ephesians, highlighting it as the highest revelation of God concerning Himself and the church of Jesus Christ. The epistle reveals the work of the Godhead in the redemption of sinners, emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the believers' lives. It discusses the sealing, wisdom, unity, and filling of believers by the Spirit, as well as the importance of not grieving Him and using the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit in spiritual warfare.

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Transcript

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should pray in the Spirit, not for the Spirit." quotes: - "The sealing with the Spirit is not an inward experience at all, which must be sought after conversion." - "The filling with the Spirit does not produce such actions but He reproduces Christ in His meekness and lowliness in the believer's life." - "Only as we search the Word and let the Word search us, as we feed on the Word, yield to the Word, hide it in our hearts and obey it, can the Holy Spirit work in us." applicationPoints: - "We should recognize that the Holy Spirit seals every true believer and marks them as belonging to God." - "We should seek to be filled with the Spirit by obeying the Word of God and walking in the Spirit." - "We should use the Word of God as the sword of the Spirit to strike and pierce the enemy in our conflict with Satan." keywords: - "Holy Spirit" - "Ephesians" - "Church" - "Redemption" - "Sealing" - "Earnest" - "Wisdom" - "Knowledge" - "Unity" - "Fellowship" - "Conflict" - "Warfare" - "Sword of the Spirit" - "Prayer" - "Intercession" ---

THIS epistle contains the highest revelation which God has given to His people concerning Himself as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as to themselves, redeemed by the blood of His Son, and destined to be like Him and to be with Him. In our exposition of the first three chapters we have called the revelation contained in them "the Masterpiece of God,"⁶ for the redemption of sinners planned before the foundation of the world is the masterwork of God. The church of Jesus Christ as the glory of Christ, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all, is nowhere else in the New Testament revealed as it is in this epistle. All the relationships of that body, formed on the day of Pentecost, by the Holy Spirit, are made known in this document. She is both the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ. We must then expect in this high water mark of the revelation of God concerning the church the highest revelation as to the Holy Spirit and His work in the members of the body of Christ. We are not disappointed in this expectation for this epistle contains more about the work of the Spirit of God than any other epistle.

In the first chapter the work of the Godhead in the production of this Masterpiece is wonderfully made known. First we read how God the Father planned it all before the foundation of the world- then the fact is brought out that the Son has redeemed us and finally we read of the part the Spirit of God takes in this work.

Ephesians 1:13, 14

Chapter 1:13, 14. We give this text in a correct rendering. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom, having believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory."

We have here three operations of the Spirit of God. The first is that the Holy Spirit operates through the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Faith cometh by hearing and hearing cometh by the Word of God. Hearing the Word of God is the means used by the Spirit of God to produce faith in the heart of the sinner. When the Word is heard and believed, then the Spirit of God acts and quickens the believing sinner, so that he, trusting in Christ, receives life (John 3:5). All who have heard the Word of truth, the gospel, and believed are at once sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise. In the very act of believing ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Some claim that between believing in Christ and the sealing with the Spirit years may intervene, and that the sealing can only be had if sought for in a definite experience. We have known poor misguided Christians who said they knew their sins were forgiven, but they were still seeking the sealing with the Spirit and had not yet received that. All this has no foundation in the Word of God. The sealing with the Spirit is not an inward experience at all, which must be sought after conversion. Nowhere is there a command in the New Testament that we should be sealed by the Spirit. Sealing is a

figurative expression. It denotes ownership. As soon as sinner hears and believes the gospel, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in his heart. In, this way God seals those who believe in His Son, by giving to them His Spirit. Every true believer receives by the hearing of faith, in the act of believing (Gal. 3:2), the Holy Spirit, and is thus marked as belonging to God. The seal is therefore the Person of the Holy Spirit; His presence in the child of God denotes both ownership and security. Nowhere are we told "to feel" the sealing of the Spirit; we know it because the Word of God tells us it is so. In the 14th verse we read that the indwelling Spirit is "the earnest of our inheritance." This is the same as "the First fruits of the Spirit"(Rom. 8:23). His presence in us, the blessed things He does in us and makes possible, so that we can have joy and peace, and receive more and more, through His gracious ministrations out of the fulness of Christ is the pledge that better things are yet to come. The gift of the Holy Spirit in us is so to speak the first installment of the inheritance which we shall have when the Lord Jesus comes to redeem us by power and give us the redemption of our body.

Ephesians 1:17

Chapter 1:17. In the first prayer in this epistle, addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, request is made for the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. The Holy Spirit produces in the spirit of the child of God wisdom and, through the Word of God, revelation in the knowledge of the Son of God.

Ephesians 2:18

Chapter 2:18. "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." In the context we read that Gentiles, once without Christ (the promises of Christ) aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world, are now in Christ Jesus made nigh by the blood of Christ. The middle wall of partition, between Jew and Gentile is broken down. In Christ they are both constituted one body, the work accomplished by the baptism of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:13). Both have now access by one Spirit, the Holy Spirit, unto the Father. Both are in the family of God; both cry Abba, Father.

Ephesians 2:22

Chapter 2:22. "In whom ye are also builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This habitation is the church. The Holy Spirit dwells in each member of the body of Christ, and this makes the body of Christ the habitation of God by the Spirit. As He dwelt as the Holy One in the tabernacle, so He dwells now in the church, through the Holy Spirit. God has His habitation there.

Ephesians 3:5

Chapter 3:5. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." The church of Jesus Christ, as His body, was a mystery unrevealed in the Old Testament. No prophet ever knew that Gentiles, those outside, should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel. The Holy Spirit has revealed it. The prophets mentioned in this verse are not the Old Testament prophets, but the prophets of the New Testament.

Ephesians 3:16

Chapter 3:16. "That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man." The indwelling Spirit strengthens the believer with might in the inner man. For this great purpose He is in us, not for outward demonstrations but for inward strengthening.

Ephesians 4:3

Chapter 4:3. "Giving all diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." There is a unity of the Spirit. It exists and we are not asked as believers to produce a unity, but to keep, or guard it. What is this unity? The preceding chapters give the answer. The Holy Spirit as the seal is dwelling in every believer. All are members of the one body, the church, whether Jew or Gentile, bond or free. The oneness which is the result of the indwelling of the same Spirit in each member united to Christ, constitutes the unity of the Spirit. God Himself has made this unity by His Spirit and revealed it in His Word. Our Lord prayed for it in His great prayer in John 17, when He asked that His own may all be one. This is the unity which we are to own and keep in the bond of peace. It can never be destroyed for it is the workmanship of God. But it may be denied and the expression of it lost. The denial of this unity is sectarianism. We keep the unity of the Spirit when we recognize in every child of God a member of the same body, when we look upon each redeemed one as being indwelt by the same Spirit. Blessed are we in these days of confusion if we act according to this divine truth. The "one Spirit" of verse 4 is also the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 4:11

In Chapter 4:11 the gifts of the Lord for His body are given. These are communicated through the Holy Spirit. The gifts here are the permanent, the abiding gifts needed for the edification and completion of the body of Christ. It will be seen that the sign gifts are not here. There is nothing said of gifts of healing, prophecy, miracles or tongues. From this we concluded that these gifts are no longer essential.

Ephesians 4:30

Chapter 4:30. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." He is the Holy Spirit and all which is unholy must be avoided so as not to displease the guest who dwells in the heart. Every sin is a sin against Him, who is in us. Especially is He grieved when the Lord Jesus Christ is not honor--d and given the pre-eminent place. Confession and self-judgment will end the grieving of the Spirit. He Himself leads to this through the Word of God. But let us notice that it does not say, as Christians sometimes say, the Spirit has been grieved away. He cannot be grieved away for He has come to abide with the believer for ever. By Him we are sealed, not as long as we are faithful, or as long as we do right, but we are sealed unto the day of redemption. This is therefore one of the evidences of the eternal security of the child of God. The day of redemption is the blessed day when the saints of God will receive their glorified bodies, the day when the Lord Jesus Christ comes for His own.

Ephesians 5:9

Chapter 5:9. Here the fruit of the Spirit is mentioned. That fruit produced by Him is in all goodness, righteousness and truth.

Ephesians 5:18

Chapter 5:18. "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit." Here we have an exhortation to be filled with the Spirit. It is a divine command. But how can we be filled with the Spirit? Are we to sit down and say, I want to be filled with the Spirit, I believe I shall be filled with the Spirit and then

pray for it and reckon that we are now filled with the Spirit? This is the teaching of some, but it is not the teaching of the Word of God. We have seen from the Book of Acts that the apostles were repeatedly filled with the Spirit. They were filled on the day of Pentecost and filled at different times afterwards. The record shows that these different fillings occurred when they were walking and serving in obedience to the Word of God. As the believer obeys the Word of God, is yielded to the Lord, is occupied with Christ, walking in the Spirit, the Spirit of God fills his heart. If we sin and have been disobedient, the Spirit is still in us, but instead of filling us and leading us deeper into the things of Christ, He will direct our attention to our failures, so that we may judge ourselves and confess our sins to God our Father. If the believer walks in self-judgment before God, walking in the light as He is in the light, obedient to His Word, the Holy Spirit is well pleased and then fills him. A believer may begin the day filled with the Spirit, but at night the filling may no longer be enjoyed, because there was disobedience to the Word of God. The filling returns as we retrace our steps and bring our sin into the light. The Spirit of God is to control us. In order to be filled with Him and controlled by Him no "second blessing" experience is needed, but simple obedience to the Word.

Some of the sects which stress the work of the Spirit and are given to all kinds of false teachings claim that when one is really filled with the Spirit it should be manifested in an outward manner. They experience uncontrollable shakings of the body, twitching of the facial muscles, hysterical laughter, convulsions, and some power forces them to utter sounds which are unintelligible. All this is claimed as the work of the Spirit. We read in the Gospels of those who had convulsions and gnashed with their teeth and talk incoherently, but these symptoms were those of demon-possession. The filling with the Spirit does not produce such actions but He reproduces Christ in His meekness and lowliness in the believer's life.

Ephesians 6:17

Chapter 6:17. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God." In the context we read of the armour which God has supplied for the believer in his conflict with the wiles of the devil. The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God is the only article used for the offensive. We have seen all along how the Spirit of God is inseparably connected with the Word of God. So the Word of God is the sword of the Spirit through which He strikes and pierces. It is needed by God's people at all times. The more we are filled with the Word and use the Word in obedience, the more the Spirit will fill us and use us. Our blessed Lord used the sword of the Spirit when He defeated the devil with His majestic "It is written." One of the strangest hallucinations which we have ever met is the delusion that a believer may be filled to such a degree with the Holy Spirit that he needs no longer the Bible. This is the actual teaching of some of the Pentecostal sects.

Every true child of God knows that this is a satanic delusion. Only as we search the Word and let the Word search us, as we feed on the Word, yield to the Word, hide it in our hearts and obey it, can the Holy Spirit work in us.

Ephesians 6:18

Chapter 6:18. This is the last mention of the Spirit in this epistle. The supplication of the believer is not to be for the Spirit, but in the Spirit.

What are the teachings of Ephesians concerning the Spirit? He quickens, He seals, He is the earnest, He gives wisdom and knowledge, by Him we have access to the Father, He has formed the church and makes her the habitation of God. Furthermore, He has revealed the church as the mystery of God, strengthens the individual members, and has produced the unity, which believers are to keep. He has

sealed the believer unto the day of redemption, He is not to be grieved, He is to fill the believer, He is the sword, and prayer is to be in the Spirit. Nothing is said of "the baptism with the Spirit," nor the sign gifts, the healing gift, the tongue gift nor the miracle gift.

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