

THE HOLY SPIRIT Chapter 24 The Spirit Sealing

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Transcript

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Chapter 24

The Spirit Sealing

Closely connected with the Spirit's work of witnessing with the Christian's spirit that he is a child of God, is His operation in sealing. This appears clearly from 2 Corinthians 1:19-22 and Ephesians 1:13. The riches of the Christian are found in the promises of God, and these are all "Yea and Amen" in Christ: unless, then, our faith be built upon them, it is worthless. It is not sufficient that the promises be sure, we must be "established" upon them. No matter how firm the foundation (be it solid rock), unless the house be connected therewith, actually built thereon, it is insecure. There must be a double "Amen": one in the promises, and one in us. There must be an echo in the Christian's own heart: God says these things, so they must be true; faith appropriates them and says they are for me. In order to have assurance and peace it is indispensable that we be established in and on the Divine promises. The Christian's riches lie in the promises of God: his strength and comfort in his faith being built upon them. Now the same Divine power which delivered the Christian from the kingdom of Satan and brought him into a state of grace, must also deliver him from the attacks of the enemy upon his faith and confirm him in a state of grace. Only God can produce stability: only He can preserve that spark of faith amid the winds and waves of unbelief, and this He is pleased to do—"He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it" (Phil. 1:6). Therefore are we told "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ. . . is God." Observe carefully it is not "hath stablished," but "stablisheth" — it is a continuous process throughout the Christian's life on earth. In what follows the apostle shows us what this "stablishing" consists of, or how it is accomplished: "and hath anointed us ... who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our heart" (2 Cor. 1:22). Each of these figures refers to the same thing, and has to do with the "stablishing" or assuring of our hearts. Under the Old Testament economy prophets, priests, and kings were authorized and confirmed in their office by "anointing" (Lev. 8:11; 2 Sam. 5:3; 1 Kings 19:16). Again; contracts and deeds of settlement were ratified by "sealing" (Esther 8:8; Jer. 32:8-10). And a "pledge" or "earnest" secured an agreement or bargain (Gen. 38:17, 18; Deut. 24:10). Thus the sure estate of the Christian is first expressed under the general word "stablisheth," and then it is amplified under these three figurative terms "anointed, sealed, earnest." It is with the second of them we are now concerned. It may be asked, But what need has the Christian of attestation or confirmation of his state in Christ—is not faith itself sufficient proof? Ah, often

our faith and the knowledge we have of our believing in Christ is severely shaken; the activities of indwelling sin stir up a thick cloud of doubt, and Satan avails himself of this to tell us our profession is an empty one. But in His tender grace, God has given us the Holy Spirit, and from time to time He "seals" or confirms our faith by His quickening and comforting operations. He draws out our hearts anew unto God and enables us to cry "Abba, Father." He takes of the things of Christ, shows them to us, and brings us to realize that we have a personal interest in the Same. The same blessed truth is found again in Ephesians 1:13. It is important to note the order of the three things there predicated of saints: they "heard," they "believed," they were "sealed": thus the sealing is quite distinct from and follows the believing, as the believing does the hearing. There are two things, and two only, upon which the Spirit puts His seal, namely, two mighty and efficacious works: first, the finished work of Christ, whereby He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; and second, upon His own work in the hearts of those who believe. In legal documents the writing always precedes the witnessing and sealing: so here, the Spirit writes God's laws on the heart (Heb. 8:10), and then He seals the truth and reality of His own work to the consciousness of the recipient. The main intent of "sealing" is to assure, to certify and ratify. First, the Holy Spirit conveys an assurance of the truth of God's promises, whereby a man's understanding is spiritually convinced that the promises are from God. Neither the light of reason nor the persuasive power of a fellow-mortal can bring any one to rest his heart upon the Divine promises: in order to do that, there must be the direct working of the Holy Spirit—"Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" (1 Thess. 1:5): the "much assurance comes last! Second, He gives the believer an assurance of his own personal interest in those promises: and this again is something which none but the Spirit can impart. We do not say that this sealing excludes all doubting, but it is such an assurance as prevails over doubts. There are many uses of a "seal" such as proprietorship, identification, confirmation, secrecy, security; but in Ephesians 1:13 the immediate thing stated is the sealing of an inheritance: we have obtained an inheritance by faith, and having believed we are "sealed." What is the specific use of a "seal" in connection with an inheritance? It may either be the making of the inheritance sure to a man in itself, or making the man know that it is his—assuring him of the fact. Now it cannot be the former, for nothing is needed to make Heaven sure once a sinner truly believes—the moment he lays hold of Christ, the inheritance is certain. So it must be the latter: to make us sure, to persuade our hearts the inheritance is ours. It is this the Spirit accomplishes in His "seal." The Holy Spirit is never called a "Seal" as He is an "Earnest" (2 Cor. 5:5): it is only in relation to an act of sealing that this figure is associated with Him; thus it is a distinct operation of His "in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22). It is not the stamping of God's image upon the soul (as many of the Puritans supposed) that is referred to in Ephesians 1:13, for that is done before believing, and not after. The order of truth in that verse is very simple and decisive: in the gospel salvation is offered—it may be mine; faith accepts that offer so as to make salvation mine; the Spirit seals or confirms my heart that salvation is mine. Thus in "sealing" the Spirit authenticates, certifies, ratifies. Observe that He does this in His special character as "the Spirit of promise." He is so designated because, first, the Spirit was the great and grand promise of the New Testament (John 14:26; 15:26, etc.) as Christ was of the Old Testament. Second, because He works by means of the promises. Third, because in His whole work He acts according to the everlasting covenant, which, as it respects the elect, is a Covenant of Promise (Eph. 2:12). When He seals home a sense of the love of God and gives the soul a view of its interest in Christ, it is done by means of the Word of Promise. It was so when He "sealed" Christ (John 6:27) and consecrated Him to the work of redemption. The Father said by an audible voice from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased": this was repeating what had been pronounced in the purpose of Jehovah the Father concerning the Mediator (Isa. 42:1); this the Holy Spirit brought home in power or "sealed" upon the mind of Jesus at that time. The "sealing" or assuring operations of the Spirit

are known to the believer in two ways. First, inferentially: by enabling him to perceive His work in the soul and from it conclude his regeneration. When I see smoke I must infer a fire, and when I discern spiritual graces (however feeble) I reason back to the Producer of them. When I feel a power within combating my corruptions, and often thwarting my intentions to indulge the lusts of the flesh, I conclude it is the Spirit resisting the flesh (Gal. 5:17). Second, intuitively: by a Divine light in the heart, by a Divine authority felt, by the love of God shed abroad therein. If I have any hope wrought in me, either by looking to Christ's blood or perceiving grace in me, it is by the power of the Spirit (Rom. 15:13). The Spirit brings to the mind of the Christian the sacred promises. He shows us the good contained in them, the grace expressed in them, the perfection and freeness of Christ's salvation declared by them; and thereby He seals them on our mind and enables us to rest thereon. He shows us the veracity and faithfulness of God in the promises, the immutability of the everlasting covenant, the eternity of God's love, and that He hath by two immutable things (His word and His oath), in which it is impossible for Him to lie, given a firm foundation for strong consolation to us who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us in the gospel (Heb. 6:18). It is in this way that "the God of all grace" doth, by the Spirit, "stablish, strengthen, settle us" (1 Pet. 5:10). It is by the Spirit's operations that the Christian's fears are quietened, his doubts subdued, and his heart assured that a "good work" (Phil. 1:6) has been Divinely begun in him. The Spirit indwelling us is Christ's seal (mark of identification) that we are His sheep; the Spirit authenticating His own blessed work in our souls, by revealing to us our "title" to Heaven, is His sealing us.

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