

“You Are Sealed by the Spirit, Therefore...” (Series #6, final sermon)

By Pastor Rand Lankheet for New Horizon URC. Second service, March 26, 2017.

Catechism: Q. 115-116. Bible references: Ephesians 1:11-14; 4:25-32; 5:15-21.

Before reading: Note this is the last in a series of 6 sermons on the Holy Spirit. “I believe in the Holy Spirit.” This afternoon we explore what Paul says about the Holy Spirit in the book of Ephesians. There are eleven direct references to the HS in this short letter. Eleven! We are focusing on just **THREE** of those references. [Start Q. 115-116. [Then Ephesians 1:11-14.

1. *“The Indicative.”* One highly-respected pastor uses this illustration about one important work of the Holy Spirit. He says the Spirit is like an engagement ring. A ring which a man gives to a woman, when he asks her to marry him. He places that ring on her finger. That ring is a sign of their love and commitment to each other. That ring is also pointing forward to the day when they will then become, officially, husband and wife.

You see, that engagement ring is both about the *present*, and about the *future*.

In the *present* moment, that ring is a sign of that couples’ love for each other.

That ring also points forward to the *future*--to their future wedding ceremony.

So it is with the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. We’ve noted in this series, that the Holy Spirit is always the Spirit *of Jesus*. By the Spirit, we are united to Jesus.

Look again at Ephesians [chapter 1:13. Re-read. Seals in ancient days were visible marks.

Kings in those days wore special signet rings. On those rings there was raised mark of some kind, the official imprint. The king would press his ring onto soft wax placed on a paper or a parchment. Now that letter carried the “seal” of the king. That seal indicated the letter was genuine. Everyone could see that the letter was “official business.” The power and authority of the king stood behind that letter.

So it is with our “being sealed” by the Spirit. As we put our trust in Jesus as our Saviour, the Spirit is Jesus’ “seal” upon us. The power and authority of King Jesus is on all of his promises to us. And all of His work for us. So, among other things, we can know we truly belong to Jesus. [Read vs. 14. And we know that all of God’s promises, Jesus’ promises, are guaranteed to us. Vs. 14—“the guarantee.” Among other things, the Spirit guarantees that our sins are completely forgiven, and that we are credited with Jesus’ perfect righteousness.

Sacraments, we say in our theology, are both signs and seals. The “seal” is the guarantee. The sacraments guarantee to us that God truly has forgiven our sin because of Jesus’ shed blood. When we eat the bread and drink the wine we know, officially and fully, that our sins are forgiven. It’s “sealed” by God. His promise is guaranteed.

So it is with the Holy Spirit. He guarantees our salvation in Jesus. He makes it official.

The full authority of God, promising us salvation in Christ, can be counted on.

-Look at the next verse. [Read vs. 14—only in NIV: the Spirit is also “a *deposit*.” Today we call it a “down payment” on some purchase. You might make a “down payment” to buy a car, or a house. The person selling you the car or the house asks, “How do I know you will really buy it? That I am not wasting my time with you?” So the buyer gives the seller a down payment. A percentage of the total price. That deposit guarantees that the buyer will return. That full payment will be made later. That deposit reassures the seller.

As a believer, I hope you know and believe that all your sins are forgiven you as you have trusted in Jesus. Now, you might be assured that your sins of the past are forgiven. The sins you committed when you were younger. Or the sins you committed before you became a Christian. But, maybe you wonder about your sins of last week.

Are those sins forgiven by God? Really? Even some very bad sin?

-Or you might wonder about some future sin: what if in the future you stumble in some serious way, in your Chr. life? Will God give up on you? Might you lose your salvation?

So Jesus gives us the “seal” of his Holy Spirit. The Spirit (vs. 14) is “the *guarantee* of our inheritance.” Ah, we have part of it now, in the present. The promises of God to us, in Jesus. / But like the engagement ring, the seal of the Spirit also points to the future. That is, when we die, and stand before Jesus. Or, if Jesus comes back before we die. He then will welcome us into His glory. Our future salvation is secure. It is sealed.

As the apostle Paul writes at the end of Romans chapter 8. **NOTHING** can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Nothing. Not the past, the present, or the future./

-Now, Paul follows a certain pattern in all of his longer letters in the NT. In the first chapters Paul explains who we are, in Jesus. As people saved and sanctified in Jesus.

Then, in the second section of his letters, Paul explains how we then should live.

Some of you who read deeper theology have heard this explained as the “*indicative*” and the “*imperative*.” [Repeat. English grammar.

In chapters 1, 2, 3 Ephesians, Paul uses the “indicative.” He’s reminding believers who they are in Jesus. Then, with chapters 4, 5, 6, he uses imperatives. Commands. How we must live, in Jesus. Often, the transition from the indicative to the imperative is signaled by the word “therefore,” or “then.” So, for example, in chapter 4, [see vs. 22. Read. Then, [vs. 25, “therefore.” Given who you are in Jesus, *therefore*, you must now live in Jesus in this way.... The indicative first, and the imperatives, the commands, follow.

2.(The Imperatives.) We’re looking at two imperatives in the second part of Ephesians.

In connection with the Holy Spirit.

2.A. [Read Eph. 4:25-32. Vs. 30: “Do not grieve the Holy Spirit.”

It’s a negative imperative, a negative command: Do **NOT** grieve the Holy Spirit.

Illus: Boys and girls...if I tell you: “do not grieve your mother,” what would that mean?

Or, if I would say, “Do not bring grief to your father,” what would that mean? Well, basically, it means that you should not say or do something that makes your mother or father sad. Your wrong words or actions will make your parents sad. If, for example, you hit your sister, your father and mother would become very sad. They might say: “I have taught you not to hit your brother. Why are you not listening to me? Why are you disobeying me?” If you really love your parents, you should obey them. When you don’t obey, that makes your parents sad.

So it is with the Spirit, who lives in us. We grieve the Spirit when He sees us disobey Jesus.

We make the Spirit sad, we cause him grief, when we ignore the teachings of Jesus.

Or, whenever we do anything against God’s laws or against Jesus teachings.

And, remember, grieving the Spirit means, that we are also grieving Jesus. /

-In context, notice particularly **WHEN** we grieve the Spirit. [Read vs. 29-30. It seems

Paul is saying we especially grieve the Spirit when “corrupt words” (“unwholesome talk”) comes out of our mouths. Because, Paul says, bad words are *not helpful* for building up other people. Just the opposite: negative, bad words, often pull other people down.

Our bad words can bring discouragement and bitterness to other people.

So, immediately following vs. 30, look at the other imperative. Paul tells us to get rid of all “bitterness, rage, anger...slander (evil speaking).” These are examples of “corrupt words” in v. 29.

That speaking which pulls people down, discouraging them.

-Practical examples, for me, from being a pastor.... I was talking to a pastor this week....+

-Apply it to yourself...how are you speaking to other people? As married couples? As families? Are you building them up with your words? Or are you pulling them down?

Do not be grieving the Holy Spirit by your wrong words.

2.B. There’s another imperative about the Spirit in chapter 5 of Ephesians.

[Read 5:1-2, See the “*therefore*.” Again, the indicative leads to the imperative.

Who we are in Jesus, affects how we then should live. Imperative: [Read vs. 15-21.

As followers of Jesus, we obviously follow his example...which, Paul says in vs. 2, is especially the way of agape love. In vs. 18, he says we must be "**filled with the Holy Spirit.**" Like a glass of water. Imagine you are at a restaurant, you have water glass in front of you. But it is almost empty. And you ask the waiter, "will you please fill it up?" And he does. He fills it to the top. And if you drink more, he fills it up more.

-So with the Spirit, we must be continually filled with Him, more and more.

-There is a wrong theology out there, common in many Pentecostal-type churches.

Now, Pentecostal believers are our brothers and sisters in the Lord. But this one teaching is very wrong. And causes all kinds of problems. It is this: That at some later point, after you are converted, they say that each Christian must experience a special filling of the Spirit. Sometimes they call it "being baptized by the Spirit." Some call it a "second blessing." They say, this Spirit baptism puts the Christian on a new level of being able to follow Jesus. They say that on the lowest level Jesus is only Saviour to you. But, filled with the Spirit, you then will have Jesus as your Lord. /Two-levels of Christianity. Two kinds of Christians in the church. No. That's wrong.

But, having said that, we must say this. The Bible does teach about believers being "filled" with the Spirit. Not just one filling, but repeated fillings.

Why is that important? Because living Christian living takes a lot of energy. To grow in sanctification requires power and strength. To discover and use the gifts of the Spirit, requires effort. Everything we have learned in this series, about the Spirit, requires some exertion on our part. So we need, therefore, repeated fillings of the Holy Spirit. Like filling up your gas tank in your car with more gas, more fuel. So you have more power.

Remember, that the Spirit is also the Spirit *of power*. "You will receive 'power' when the Holy Spirit is come upon you, Jesus told his disciples. And they did receive power, extra strength and courage and conviction./

How do you and I become more filled with the Spirit? How do we become energized to live for Jesus? [Turn to Luke 11:11-13. **So pray, ask the Father.** Pray to God the Father to give you more of His Spirit. And if you ask, sincerely, says Jesus, you will receive.

And, with that, remember **to use the "official" means of grace:** hear good, biblical preaching. Apply that preaching to yourself. Meditate through the week on the sermons you hear. And, partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That's a second, official means of God's increasing grace to you. You need ordinary food to gain strength in your body. You need spiritual food...the bread and the wine, Jesus' body and blood, for greater spiritual strength.

There are **other ways** God gives you more of his Spirit—by personally reading your Bible, daily. /And praying. /And singing. / Making sure you are attending worship each week. / "Christianity 101"+ These are other ways to become more "filled with the Spirit."/

-And let's go back to the first sermon in this series. We must remember that we are first given the Spirit as the special gift of God. Not by our own effort. But as a gift. The gift of the Spirit. So the Spirit regenerates us, causing us to be born again. By the Spirit, the benefits of Jesus flow to us, in our justification and conversion. But then we are expected to put forth effort, once we are saved. We learned that also in this series about the Spirit. We must "kill off" the sins of our old nature. And we work hard to bring more of the life that we have in Jesus. We must "take care of our garden." Pulling out the weeds of sin. And watering and fertilizing the new life we have in Jesus.

As we learned, caring for the garden of our soul, produces more fruit of the Spirit.

Jesus wants us to become more and more fruitful. Yes, in him. But then our working to "abide in Him." To remain connected to him. The fruit of the Spirit starts with agape love. Then the other fruit of the Holy Spirit emerge, more and more: joy, peace, patience...all the rest.

In sanctification we also learn how to be more useful in the church, the congregation. To discover our spiritual gifts. Gifts we must put to use in the church. For the common good. -Sixteen continuing spiritual gifts. Each of us having at least one gift.

Must work at that... as part of our sanctification.

All of that requires effort—it takes energy. Here in Ephesians chapter 5, we learn that we need “fillings” of the Spirit. Like filling up a gas tank...so the car has more power.

So we need the power of the Spirit to do what God tells us in His Word. Today, we learned, that we need power to not to grieve the Holy Spirit. To not speak words which pull other people down. But words to build them up. What power that takes!

But Jesus promises to supply that power, that strength, in us. By giving us more and more of His Spirit. Won't you, then, be filled by His Spirit? ***LET US PRAY FOR THAT.***

William Shishko, “The Sealing and Witnessing Work of the Holy Spirit,” pp. 165-183, in The Beauty and Glory of the Holy Spirit, ed. Joel R. Beeke and Joseph A Pipa, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2012), p. 182.