

Saved, Sealed and Showing
Ephesians 1:11-14
December 6, 2009
FBC Waynesboro

One of the most precious principles to emerge out of the Protestant Reformation is the principle of the eternal security of the believer. That is how most of us would know it as Baptists or in its more common form of “once saved, always saved.” The principle as it is proclaimed in Scripture was more accurately captured by the Reformers in this wording: the perseverance of the saints. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century was that time when by the sovereign grace of God the church of the Lord Jesus Christ was reclaimed from the stranglehold of Roman Catholicism under the leadership of men like Martin Luther and John Calvin. What they brought to light that had been held in darkness was the basic biblical teaching about God’s sovereignty in all things including the salvation of sinners. So they taught what the Bible teaches that our salvation is by the grace of God and our sanctification is by the grace of God. We are brought into a right relationship with God through His grace and we are kept in a right relationship with God by that same grace. And this text in Ephesians teaches us about that grace of God that keeps us when in fact we have been truly saved by the grace of God.

I want us to come to this text this morning, however; in the context of three aberrations or perversions of this precious teaching about the perseverance of the saints or the eternal security of the believer. One of these false understandings is held by the Roman Catholic Church, one by many Pentecostals and Methodists and one by a large majority of Southern Baptists. The first that is held by Roman Catholics is that salvation comes through the church so that our salvation is only as secure as the active investment of our lives in the works that the church calls us to do including attendance at the Mass and the giving of alms. The church teaches that just as God is our Father so the church is our mother in whose arms we must remain cradled if we are to be sure of being saved. The second false teaching is rooted in the understanding that our salvation is totally up to us. We choose. We choose on the basis either of what we know or what we feel and we choose at a time determined by us. The other side of this is that we can choose not to be saved after having been saved. Now one of the most radical perversions of this teaching that runs rampant in our day is the teaching

that getting saved is our choice but staying saved is by God's grace. Many Southern Baptists teach this and the third perversion in which we confuse the meaning of grace with the means of grace and reduce salvation to an external ritual about which we say that since we have done whatever it is that we say that a person must do to be saved that they are always saved or eternally secure because they have done whatever it is that they did. And there are people in this church and in this community who believe that to be true. So, we need to listen to what the Bible teaches about sealing, securing, and how that shows. Let's turn then together to Ephesians one.

Paul begins this most important letter to the church at large by giving praise to God for what He has given us in Jesus Christ. Paul is speaking here of the grace of God that comes to us in Christ which transforms us by the power of the Holy Spirit bringing us into the body of Christ in which we grow in grace and through which we dispense the grace of the Gospel to the world. Paul sets before us prior to these verses that we are looking at this morning four precious realities that believers in the body of Christ enjoy as the blessing of God because of the grace of God in Jesus. First, we who belong to God through Jesus were chosen by God or elected from before the foundation of the world, 4. Second, we were predestined by God for adoption through Jesus to be the children of God, 5. Third, We have been given by the grace of God forgiveness for our sins because of the shedding of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, 7. Fourth, we have an eternal inheritance that is ours in accordance with the predestined purpose of God that He is working out for the praise of His glory in accordance with His most perfect will, 11. And the goal of all that God is doing is the praise of His great name, 11 and 14; which is seen in His saving, securing, and showing His great grace in and through the lives of sinners like you and like me.

When God truly saves a sinner by His grace, He seals that sinner through the presence and by the power of His Holy Spirit and then He begins to do His great work of grace in and through that saved sinner and it shows. And where it does not show, we can conclude that there has been no real work of grace. Now for the remainder of this sermon I want you to focus with me on two words in this text: sealed in verse 13 and guarantee in verse 14. I want us to see what these words mean and I want us to understand how they function in this context and in the larger context of Holy Scripture.

The word for seal is used fifteen times in its verb form and eighteen times in its noun form. It is used here specifically of the person of the Holy Spirit in His work in the life of the believer. The text makes this plain. Those who are sealed are those who have heard the word of truth which is the gospel of our salvation and having heard the gospel we believed or surrendered our lives to its Truth which resulted immediately in our being sealed by and with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the agent of God who brings us eternal security and He is the ambassador of God who works in us and through us what He promises. We are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit of promise or the Holy Spirit who will do in us and through us what Jesus promises that He will do. He will come to live inside us to bring us into a deeper and deeper understanding of the Truth of the Word of God and then enable and empower us as witnesses in the world to the glorious Gospel of Jesus.

If you look at the word for “sealing” in the New Testament you will discover first of all that it is used to declare significance. Look at John 3:31-36. To respond so as to receive Jesus is to recognize His significance as the One who has come from God to bring life to the world. Look at Romans 15:28 where the word for “sealed” is translated by “delivered” but the meaning is clear: this offering from the Gentiles to the Jews seals the significance of the unity of the body of Christ where there is neither Jew nor Gentile. So, the Holy Spirit seals us at the moment of our salvation to set us apart from the world and to separate us from the flesh for our significance is found in our faithfulness to Jesus as Lord which the Holy Spirit will ensure. Second, this term is used to demonstrate ownership. Whoever does the sealing owns what is sealed and can do with it and through it from that moment forward whatever He wills to do. He is the sole sovereign over what is sealed. Look at John 6:27 where Jesus makes it clear that He belongs to God to do exclusively the will of God. Paul calls us not to grieve the Holy Spirit in whom we are sealed. He owns us and when we do what we desire then we are living in defiance of the One who owns us. Listen to what Paul says about his life and ministry in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22. When the Holy Spirit seals you at your salvation your mantra from that moment forward is, “I am not my own person, I have been bought with a price so that I no longer seek my desires; I am devoted daily and exclusively to Jesus.” Thirdly, sealing means authority. The word that is used here is used of the stone that was rolled across the grave of Jesus and on the third day even with guards standing watch God showed who had real authority. Humans only think that we can seal and secure anything; only God can do that.

And His authority is manifest fully in Jesus who has all the authority of God and gives it to us in the anointing power of His Holy Spirit to bring us into the Truth of God and to send us into the world to proclaim that truth to the world. I want to be very bold in saying this but not really because it is such basic biblical truth: if we are listening to the Holy Spirit as those who belong to Him, why do we keep spending so much money and investing so much energy in gospel witness in our culture where most have heard the Truth of God multiple times; If we really want to be involved in Spirit driven work, we will give extravagantly to groups like the IMB who are focused on reaching with the Gospel those people groups who have never heard. The authority that the Holy Spirit gives us in sealing is not for us nor is it about us; it is the authority to stand in the Name of Jesus and proclaim in power the good news of the Gospel in the world.

Are you sealed by the Holy Spirit? If you are then you know that your significance is no longer found in you and what you want, but in God and what He wills. You know that you do not own your life; He does and you exist to do His bidding and you know that His authority is given you in full measure so that you can accomplish His plan for your life. And it will show. Paul says that the Holy Spirit is the down payment or the “arrabon” of our inheritance. Peter addresses this issue of the inheritance in his first letter to the exiles in Asia Minor who have lost everything for the sake of the Gospel. They are living on the run. But Peter says that they are blessed because they have a sure and certain inheritance. So, the Holy Spirit as a down payment must be understood in the biblical context and not in our context. It does not mean that we get the Holy Spirit in fits and starts, in bits and pieces. It does not mean that we are earning our way, possessing our inheritance a little at a time. It means that the Holy Spirit works in and through our lives to show others that we really are saved. That we do not belong to this world because we are not dominated by its ways or its works. The Holy Spirit demonstrates in and through us that we are different, dramatically different.

Let me show you some ways that the Bible says that the Holy Spirit does this. First, He works in us and through us to produce the fruit of the Spirit: character traits that are not ours by nature: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That is the display case of the character qualities that re resent in the life of a believer in whom the Holy Spirit is at work. Second, the Holy Spirit give us both a desire and direction to put to death the desires and deeds of the flesh. We don't think like other people

think. I think that a believer ought to be able to hang around non-believers and walk away shaking your head and saying, "I don't think like those people." We don't talk like other people talk and we surely do not do what other people do. Not because we are better but because we have been baptized in the Holy Spirit and are walking in that Spirit. Thirdly, we have this deep sense of belonging to God and we want to be with others as much as possible who have this sense. We want to worship God with the people of God. We want to grow in the grace of God through the study of the Word of God. We want to be good witnesses of the Gospel, even we aren't the Holy Spirit gives us that desire to be that kind of person. And fourthly, we have this increasing awareness that we want our lives day by day to be an offering of praise to God. All of this and so much more is what the Holy Spirit does in us and through us when He has truly sealed us. And if this is missing in your life then you are either a believer who is quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit and right now you are about as miserable as a person can get. But if these realities are not in evidence in your life and your are not in deep and dreadful despair, it is because you have never been saved. But there is good news: you can be. You can be today. Because the grace of God that seals us and secures us is the grace of God that saves us. It is this grace of God that saved me and it is this grace of God that can save you.