

Ephesians 1F

- Today we finally finish Paul's 270 word sentence in Ephesians 1
 - From vs.3-14 Paul has been explaining the ways in which the believer is spiritually blessed as a result of God's grace
 - This section is merely Paul's introduction to the topic of grace
 - Yet he pours it on in this passage, running from point to point as if carried away by his amazement of all God is doing for us
 - We've been studying this passage according to the outline Paul provides
 - Paul begins by explaining the role of the Father in bestowing grace upon the believer
 - Then Paul moves to the role of the Second Person of the Godhead, Jesus Christ
 - And then finally, Paul ends explaining the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing us God's grace
 - So far, we've studied the grace found in the Father and the grace given us through the Son
 - So today we move to work of the third Person, the Spirit of God, Who plays a distinct role in bringing us God's unmerited favor
 - Last week I touched on the Spirit's work as I explained the work of Christ summing up all things
 - I said Christ sums up (or brings together) the work of God among the Jewish people with His work within the Gentile Church
 - And the Spirit of God plays a part in that reconciliation
 - Let's go back into this passage, beginning in v.13, which starts Paul's explanation of the Spirit's work

Eph. 1:13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, **Eph. 1:14** who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

- In v.13 Paul describes a process of sorts
 - He is explaining how by God's grace we moved out of unbelief and into the family of God
 - As I look at my English Bible, I see three steps in the process preceding in a certain order
 - The final step in this process is the sealing of the Holy Spirit, which is Paul's main emphasis in this verse
 - But as we read v.13, we may find our English translation of the original Greek is misrepresenting what Paul is saying
 - I say that because the list of steps in v.13 is not sequential but rather simultaneous
 - These steps do not happen one at a time
 - They happen exactly at the same time
 - Notice how this verse begins: with the phrase "In Him"
 - Remember, we learned what this phrase meant in an earlier week
 - We said the phrase "In Him" means someone who is in Christ, that is someone who is already saved
 - So every step in v.13 refers to someone who is "in Christ"
- Keeping that in mind, we then understand that the three steps described in v. 13 are collectively one moment happening instantaneously
 - We simply cannot separate them, spiritually speaking
 - While we experience in a linear fashion (i.e., one event followed by another)
 - Scripture says all three of the steps in v.13 happened to us because we were "in Christ"
 - So the process of salvation is not one but three steps all happening together in the same moment to place us in Christ
 - The first step is "after listening to the message of the truth"
 - The word "after" doesn't appear in the original Greek language

- And the Greek word for listen is *akouo*, which means to heed, to give attention to
- And the word message is the Greek word *logos*, which means word
 - Notice Paul clarifies what word he's talking about
 - He says this word of truth is the Gospel of our salvation
 - So clearly, Paul is referring to the testimony that Jesus is our Messiah
 - The Gospel message is a two-part truth
 - First, it declares that Jesus died on a cross as a payment for our sin to save us from God's wrath
 - Secondly, it testifies that He rose from the dead to prove He is God and He has the power to grant us eternal life
 - That in a nutshell is the Gospel message that brings salvation
- So this phrase would be better translated "having heeded the word of truth"
 - Our transformation from death to life, from unsaved to saved, requires we heed the the Gospel message found in the word of Christ
 - The Gospel message commands all people to repent of the sin of unbelief and turn to Christ in faith
 - Many people hear this message, in the sense that they encounter it
 - But not all give their attention to it, to heed it
 - We might ask ourselves, how many times did you hear the Gospel before you seriously gave attention to it?
 - Ironically, you probably have no idea how often you heard it, because you weren't paying attention
 - You weren't heeding it, so you were completely uninterested in what the word was saying
 - I can remember the day I first gave my attention to the Gospel message as I was sitting in a Bible-teaching church in my late 20s

- I had spent hundreds if not thousands of hours in churches of one kind of another over the earlier years of my life
- Had I ever been exposed to the Gospel message during that time?
- I don't remember hearing it, but perhaps I heard it yet simply wasn't heeding it
- I'm sure you have been on the other side of this situation as a Christian witnessing to an unbeliever, perhaps in your family or workplace or school
 - You patiently explain the Gospel or perhaps just make mention of Christ hoping to see a response
 - And it's as if the person is asleep or suddenly is deaf
 - I remember times I've begun to explain the Gospel when almost immediately something interrupts the moment
 - The person gets a phone call or another person joins our conversation and changes the topic
 - When that happens, the person has failed to heed the message
 - This reminds us of Jesus' teaching in Luke 8 in the parable of the seeds

Luke 8:11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

Luke 8:12 "Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

- Jesus says that the enemy is working behind the scenes at all times to prevent the unbeliever from heeding the word
 - Notice Jesus says they have heard the word merely in the sense that the sound of the words hit their ears
 - Or the light from a page of text went into their eyeballs
 - Physically, the message was delivered but the enemy prevented those words from making an impact
 - So the person could not heed it
- But for the person who is in Christ, the Gospel message will always be heeded

- The Lord was already working in the person's heart to prepare them to heed the truth
 - He removes those barriers that earlier prevented them from heeding the message
 - For the person who is "in Christ" the enemy cannot steal away the see
 - For the one who is "in Christ" the conversation will not be interrupted, the phone will not ring, the heart will not be hard
- For that person, the Lord is already working to prepare eyes and ears and hearts to heed the word of the truth
 - For such a person, step 2 of v.13 will also happen
 - Paul says "having also believed"
 - The word for believe in Greek can also be translated "trusted"
 - So Paul says "we having also trusted in this message"
- If we read the first part of this verse together with the second part, it sounds like this:
 - "You, having heeded the word of truth...and having also believed in that word..."
 - Once again, Paul isn't describing a series of successive steps
 - He's describing all the things that happened in a single moment for the one who is in Christ
 - For believers, the moment we truly heeded or heard the Gospel was the same moment we trusted what we heard
- To help you understand what Paul is saying, imagine a 5-year old child, Tommy, playing at the park playground
 - He's surrounded by other children also playing in the park
 - Kids are riding the carousel, swinging from the monkey bars, playing in the sand, etc.
 - And around the edge of the playground sit all the mothers and fathers diligently watching over their children

- Periodically, a parent yells out a child's name, getting their attention to beckon them home or correct their behavior
 - Tommy's ears hear those names being called, but the call never registers in his mind
 - He never looks up nor stops playing
 - He never heeds it
 - It's as if he never heard it at all though he did hear it
- So it is for the unbeliever when the call of Gospel finds its way to the unbeliever's ears
 - Their ears hear, but they do not heed
 - It's as if they never heard it at all
 - The voice speaking can be very persuasive, even insistent
 - But like Tommy, the voice isn't familiar and so it makes no impression
- Then suddenly Tommy's father calls out his name
 - His father's voice isn't louder than the other parents, nor does he use fancy words
 - He simply says "Tommy, let's go"
 - But this time when the sound waves hit Tommy's ears, he heeds the voice
 - And more than heeding it, he trusts what it says
 - The two moments are inseparable for Tommy
 - And so it is for the one who is "in Christ"
 - When the Gospel comes calling, the person hears, heeds it and trusts in it – all in the same moment
 - The Lord prepares the heart to ensure that when His word comes it finds a receptive audience
 - Just as Jesus said, His sheep know His voice and follow

- Finally, Paul says the one who is in Christ will be sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise
 - Now we've come to the first mention of the Holy Spirit, yet He's been the One in view throughout this verse
 - The Spirit is the One bringing the word of God to the ears and hearts of those in Christ
 - He is the One giving us the ability to heed and trust in what we hear
 - He is the Servant working in the world to find a Bride for the Son and the word of God is His sword
 - Consider what Paul says in 1Corinthians

1Cor. 2:6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away;

1Cor. 2:7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory;

1Cor. 2:8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;

1Cor. 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God,

1Cor. 2:13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.

1Cor. 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1Cor. 2:15 But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one.

1Cor. 2:16 For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he will instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ.

- Paul explains that the Gospel Paul shared is a mystery that the world didn't embrace in its natural state
 - Why doesn't the whole world embrace the message of grace and salvation?
 - Because the message is a spiritual mystery which has been prepared for the glory of His chosen children

- We were predestined to receive it
- Which is why we were given the Spirit of God so that we might understand the message as it came to us
 - Paul says the Spirit alone understands the thoughts of God
 - So Paul says we received the indwelling of the Spirit of God so that we can understand spiritual truths
 - The Spirit in us works like a supernatural translator revealing the truths of the Gospel message so we can receive it
 - It's not that the Gospel message is so complicated
 - Paul says it's foolishness to the unsaved world
 - They can understand the words, in the same way that Tommy could understand what the other parents were saying
 - But he didn't heed those words nor trust in them because they were not familiar to him
 - That's why Paul says that without the Spirit of God, a natural man (i.e., an unbeliever) cannot understand nor accept the things of God
- So the God gives us His Spirit so that when He speaks to us with His message of salvation, we will find it familiar and compelling
 - Before that moment, the message was a mystery which we ignored even when we heard it
 - Now we heed it, believe it
 - All because the Spirit in us confirms the truth of what we're hearing, leading us to agree with it
 - Therefore, all the steps listed in Eph 1:13 must happen in one and the same moment, all done the working of the Spirit in us
 - Because the Father chose us, the Spirit came to dwell with us to give us understanding of the message

2Th. 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

- The Spirit delivered the word of salvation to our ears and gave our hearts the ability to heed it

Rom. 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

- And the Spirit lead us to confess our belief in what we heard

Gal. 4:6 Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “**Abba!** Father!”

1Cor. 12:3 Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

- So the Spirit’s role in the grace of God is not insignificant
 - When we think of God’s grace toward us, may usually think of the Father and the Son first
 - But the Spirit is the One who brought these saving truths to our hearts
- We could compare the Father to a factory making grace available to us
 - And the Son is like our credit card, purchasing that grace for us
 - Then the Spirit is like the UPS man delivering that grace to our hearts
 - You’ll never look at your UPS man the same way again
- What’s more, Paul says we were sealed by the Spirit of promise
 - The term “sealed” refers to the way legal contracts or agreements were secured shut by wax seals
 - Sealing protected the documents from alteration
 - It also signified that the document would be enforced by the magistrate
 - And what is God’s agreement with us, His promise to us in Christ?
 - That as Christ lived again, so shall we
 - That death will not be the end of us, that He will raise us into a new body never to die again

- How can you be sure you will be raised? How can you be sure that the Lord will keep His promise?
 - Because He has placed His Spirit in you and me Paul says
 - If we have been sealed by the Spirit, it means God's promise to us is unalterable and will be carried out by God's power
 - We could say that the Spirit of promise has sealed the deal
- Most importantly, this assurance comes from God, who never changes His mind and cannot lie, scripture says
 - This is the surest promise that ever exist
 - God never goes back on His word, and this is true no matter what may happen to us or even what we may do or say
 - As Paul says

2Tim. 2:13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.

- God cannot deny Himself in the sense that He cannot turn His back on His own Spirit
- President Kennedy once told a story about an Irishman on a journey through the countryside when at he came upon a high wall blocking his way
 - The wall seemed too high to climb and the man thought of turning back
 - But instead, the man took off his cap and tossed it over the wall
 - And he thought to himself, now that my cap is on the other side, I have no choice but to find a way to follow after it
- In a sense, that's how I think of the Spirit as a pledge from the Lord
 - The Lord has thrown His cap over the wall, so to speak
 - He has committed His own Spirit to going the distance with us
 - We may have bad days, days that call us even to question whether the Lord still loves us or even if we still love Him
 - But there is no turning back, not for Him and not for us

- But the grace of the Spirit goes even further, as Paul explains in v.14
 - The Spirit is a pledge toward our inheritance he says
 - We've already looked at our inheritance in an earlier lesson
 - We learned then that our inheritance in the Kingdom will be a portion of Christ's inheritance which He grants to each of God's children
 - Our inheritance is a glorious thing awaiting each of us simply because we are fellow heirs
 - And the Spirit living in us is God's pledge to us toward that future inheritance
 - The word pledge could be translated payment, as in a down payment
 - The Lord wants us looking forward to our inheritance with anticipation
 - He doesn't want us distracted seeking the wealth that perishes
 - To give us a taste of how good things will be in the Kingdom, the Lord gives us a downpayment on that coming inheritance
- Therefore, the Spirit of God come into our life to bring us to faith, and then the Spirit remains even after as a guarantee toward our inheritance
 - Now for some of us, the Spirit of God living in us may not seem like a downpayment on heavenly riches
 - Speaking as a guy, "If you can't drive it, eat it, shoot it or date it, what good is it?"
 - But is that's how you see the gift the Holy Spirit, then you haven't scratched the surface of what God has given you
 - And maybe that's why you're not very excited about what God has in the store for you in the Kingdom
 - The gift of Spirit working in us is nothing short of miraculous
 - He causes us to think, act and live in completely new and better ways

- He equips us to serve others with strength and insight beyond anything we could do on our own
 - He gives us the power to pray with another, and see God respond
 - To share words of wisdom with someone hurting, and see them healed
 - To speak the truth of the Gospel and watch a new life enter into eternal life
- Paul says that these little miracles the Spirit does in us from day-to-day are merely a downpayment of what God has in store for us in the Kingdom
 - Consider what Paul says in 1Corinthians

1Cor. 2:9 but just as it is written,

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard,
And which have not entered the heart of man,
All that God has prepared for those who love Him."

- If God's own Spirit living in us is just the beginning of what we will know in the Kingdom, can you imagine what more is coming?
- Actually, Paul says in 1Cor 2 that no you can't imagine
 - The life God has planned for us in the Kingdom is so beyond our experience here, that we literally can't imagine it
 - So that even the marvels done by the Spirit can't fully prepare us for what marvels await us in the Kingdom
- Friends, that's grace
 - God created humanity and placed Adam and Woman in a perfect Garden
 - But then Adam repudiated the Lord's good work
 - He refused to trust in God's word and he plunged God's perfect Creation into ruin
 - God could have left it there...leaving humanity in its sins and judging us all rightly for that sin

- But by grace He elected to save us and bring us into a new life with Him
- By grace He sent His Son Who lived life without sin yet willingly took the penalty for our sin
 - And yet His grace just keeps on going
 - He reconciles all things, giving us a new body, a new Creation and a new world someday
 - Meanwhile, in His grace He gives us His word so we can know Him and follow Him ways
 - By His grace He has pledged us future riches in a promised Kingdom
 - And all these things He delivers to us by His Spirit Who stays with us until all these things have been completed
 - When you hear of God's grace, I hope you'll think back to Ephesians 1 remembering all the ways the Lord has blessed us with His grace