

Ephesian Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

by J. Sidlow Baxter

The Holy Spirit plays a vital role in the believer's life, sealing, illuminating, and unifying them, making them a spiritual organism and a family united by the Holy Spirit.

Duration: 41:00

Scripture: Ephesians 1:13-14, Ephesians 2:13-14, Ephesians 3:6, Ephesians 3:19

Topics: "Holy Spirit"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses five important aspects of the Christian faith. Firstly, all believers are citizens of the heavenly city. Secondly, they are members of the redeemed family. Thirdly, they are securely founded on an imperishable foundation. Fourthly, they are living stones in a glorious spiritual building. Lastly, they are indwelt and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. The speaker also mentions the need for the Holy Spirit to give believers new eyes to see and understand the truth. The sermon is based on Paul's writings, particularly in Ephesians chapter 2, where he emphasizes the privileges and blessings of being in Christ.

Transcript

Well, my dear friends, here we are once again, and at the outset let me tell you I have a good deal of humanitarian sympathy with the students. You have been coming through exceedingly busy and exacting days, and here we are in this conference which has a fuller program than the normal weeks here, and if some of you are a little bit sleepy, don't think that our Lord is angry. One of the greatest blessings that ever came to me was when I learned that I was dealing with a sympathetic Jesus.

So if you find your eyelids a little bit heavy and you just close them for a few minutes, and if I happen to catch you, I won't be angry either. I'll just politely throw a hymn book at you. Well now, let me give you a pleasant shock.

It is my happy ambition this morning to take you, if I can, right through one of Paul's epistles. If I don't finish this morning, don't worry. I shan't.

We'll finish off tomorrow, if you're still here. Now, the epistle is not Paul's longest, but by general consent, in its breadths and lengths and depths and heights of spiritual and theological grasp, it is perhaps the profoundest thing that Paul ever wrote. You're quite right, it's his epistle to the Ephesians.

Will you kindly turn to Ephesians? And as you are doing so, let me put your minds at rest. When I talk about going right through this epistle from start to finish, I do not mean to attempt the ludicrously impossible task of going through it verse by verse from beginning to end. If we were to tackle that, we would still be on with it through the Great Tribulation and still on into the millennium.

Nevertheless, I do want to go right through this epistle, and I'll tell you how and why. First of all, this Ephesian document is a very methodical product. In our English presentation of it, it runs in six chapters.

Those six chapters quite obviously divide into two main parts consisting of three chapters each. That is, part one consists of chapters one and two and three, and part two consists of chapters four and five and six. Now, part one, the first three chapters, is emphatically doctrinal, and part two, chapters four, five, and six, is equally conspicuously practical.

By doctrinal, of course, we mean truth stated. By practical, we mean truth related or applied. The subject of the doctrinal first half, beyond any puradventure, is the believer's wealth in Christ.

And the subject of part two, the practical half, is the believer's walk in Christ. My dear Christian brother, sister, if you want to know what a spiritual millionaire you are, if you want to know your spiritual wealth in Christ, familiarize yourself with Ephesians part one. If you want to know how to use that wealth in your daily walk, familiarize yourself with Ephesians part two.

Now, I mustn't expatiate on that. That's all I need to say about about the basic structure of this methodical Pauline letter. But this Ephesian document is marked not only by obvious systematic thought and presentation.

Ephesians and the first epistle of John, more than any other writings in the New Testament, are remarkable for what we call chain themes, c-h-a-i-n, chain theme. Link by link, certain great truths are expounded and expanded until, by the time you come to the last of the links, you have a wonderfully complete presentation of some aspect or another of evangelical truth. Well now, I want to go through Ephesians on one of those link or chain studies.

If I were giving a title to my address this morning and tomorrow morning, if we have to overlap until then, it would have to be the Ephesian doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Have you ever gone right through this Pauline letter, picking out and underscoring and reflecting upon its references to the Holy Spirit? Well, that is what I want us to do this morning. Now preliminarily, let me tell you, the Holy Spirit is mentioned in Ephesians just twelve times.

Six times in part one, the doctrinal half, and six times in part two, the practical half. Indeed, I can be more precise than that. The Holy Spirit is mentioned just twice in each of these chapters.

Did you happen to have noticed that? If not, let me eagerly point it out now. Well, that's that. And now for our exploration, and especially in part one, we are going to pass through some of the most magnificent scenery in the epistolary area of our New Testament.

Ephesians 1 and 2 and 3, the Holy Spirit mentioned six times, twice in each chapter. Now let me look at you. Are you really wide awake enough? Are you? Are you ready then? All right.

Oh, wait a minute. Have you brought your New Testament or your Bible? If you've come without, let me quickly glower at you. Never let it happen again.

Right, after that kindly word, we'll start. The first reference to the Holy Spirit in this letter is chapter 1, verse 13, or verses 13 and 14. In whom, that is in Christ, ye also trusted, do you notice the word trusted is italicized? That is because it does not come in the original Greek, in which there is a grammatical ellipsis, and you are to supply the word by the force of the context.

Now I'm not being hypercritical, but I doubt whether that word trusted is the one that should be there. I won't argue it, but I think he should probably read, in whom ye also obtained inheritance. I won't press that.

After that ye heard the word of truth, the glad news of your salvation, in whom Christ also, after ye believed, ye were, here it is, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest. Now the Greek word translated here as earnest means an inward experiential foretaste. No doubt about that.

Which is the inward guarantee, the earnest, of our inheritance, oh I told you inheritance was the burden of the context, which is the inner pledge of our inheritance until the actual redemption of the already purchased possession unto the praise of his glory. So then, according to this Ephesian letter, the first operation of the Holy Spirit in born-again Christian believers is to seal them. Now there are not a few quite engrossing ideas wrapped up in that metaphor of the seal, but always the two predominating ideas in the seal are a. Ownership and b. Security.

Now dear fellow sister Christian, you and I are here this morning supernaturally sealed with that invisible divine seal, the Holy Spirit. And the first meaning of that is that you and I are not our own. We belong to one who bought us by his precious blood, and that inward sealing from heaven is the mark of our Lord's ownership.

He is our Lord and Master and Owner. I don't know whether you sing it over here in Canada, but in dear old England we sing a hymn, Jesus is our shepherd, we to him are dear. Folded in his bosom, what have we to fear? Only let us follow whither he doth lead, through the thirsty desert or the dewy mead.

And verse three says this, Jesus is our shepherd, for the sheep he bled. Every lamb is sprinkled with the blood he shed, then on each he setteth his own secret sign. These that have my spirit, these saith he are mine.

It's not only beautiful poetry, it is magnificent reality. Now of course the world does not perceive this seal upon us, and we needn't be surprised at that. The very maker of the universe once walked the streets of this earth, and this world in its blind wisdom didn't even recognize its creator.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. So you needn't be surprised if this invisible spiritual seal is not recognizable by this spiritually blind and dead world in which we live. But God sees that seal and loves it, and our Lord sees that seal and prizes it.

You and I are members of the aristocracy of heaven. That seal means that we belong to the king. Now even though you are a bit sleepy, just pause for a minute as you sit there, and say to yourself, oh how wonderful.

I'm sealed. It means that he will never let me go, and never let me down, and never give me up. That's what it means.

We are his. And then of course as I was saying, there is that further meaning of the seal, namely security. From times almost immemorial, kings and potentates and rich men have affixed their seals to their purchased properties as a mark of preservation, security.

Is there a doubting Thomas here this morning, or a doubting Thomasina? You are a Christian believer. You are trusting Jesus as your savior. You would never dream of trusting anyone or anything else other than Jesus.

But you don't have what our forefathers used to call the assurance of faith. You sit in the ribs of the ark, and you hear the tumultuous waters bashing against the ark, and you wonder whether the ark will last, or whether your salvation will really hold out. Dear, poor, naughty, doubting Thomas.

And so because you don't have assurance, there's something missing from your Christian experience. You're up and down, on and off, sometimes trusting, sometimes doubting, and therefore sometimes singing, and sometimes sighing, sometimes leaping, sometimes limping, sometimes rejoicing, other times refining, sometimes exulting, sometimes almost expiring. The Lord never meant that up and down, on and off, never quite sure experience.

He meant us not only to be saved and to be safe, but to know it. Yes he did. Our salvation doesn't depend upon us, fragile fluctuating little creatures that we are.

He has sealed us, are you listening Thomas? He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit, that we may know that we are saved and saved forever. Now why doesn't somebody say hallelujah? It's a great truth you know that isn't it? Yeah, well that's that. The Holy Spirit seals believers.

But now reference number two in this Ephesian document is in that same first chapter, verses 17 and 18. Verse 17, Paul prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit, please give the capital S if you're using the King James Version, which is my own preference. That and the American Standard Version, I think, are the two finest versions ever put into English.

The Father of glory may give unto you the Spirit, capital S. Our King James Version was naughty there, putting the small s, for it says the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of himself. There's only one Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God, and that is the Holy Spirit. The third member, that mysterious, glorious being, the Holy Spirit, who is with the Father and the Son, God forever.

May give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of himself, the eyes of your understanding being illumined, that ye may know. Now in the Greek, it's the, uh, it's the Greek word, eidenei, that's the Greek form, and it means, more literally, to see, going with the word eyes. The eyes of your understanding being illumined, that ye may inwardly see what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints.

Fancy the infinite God condescending to have an inheritance in you and me. That's a subject I'd like to talk about sometime, but not this morning. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, and so on.

So first of all, the Holy Spirit seals believers, and now we find the Holy Spirit illumines believers. And what a wonderful ministry of illumination this indeed is. Uh, I don't want to refer to the Greek unnecessarily, because it can sometimes make those who read only in English think they are not getting the full truth.

It's only just when it can be of real use that I like to go back beyond the English to the Greek. And let me point out that the Greek word translated here as wisdom, the spirit of wisdom, is epinoia, and it really means insight. Insight.

May give unto you the spirit of insight, and of revelation. Now there the Greek word is apokalypsis, which means revelation. What a wonderful title for him.

The spirit of insight, and of unveiling. Unveiling. It means that the Holy Spirit gives to all the blood-bought, spirit-born members of the true ecclesia, the church of our Lord, he gives them a supernaturally in-wrought insight into spiritual truth.

He gives them a supernaturally in-wrought insight into spiritual truth. And you know, friends, every bit of spiritual truth that you and I have ever learned has come to us not by processes of logic or reasoning. Every bit of truth you and I know in Christ we owe to this dear, dear, patient, persevering, sympathetic Holy Spirit.

How we ought to love and revere the Holy Spirit. But besides being the spirit of insight who gives us new inward eyes with which to see, as I said, he's the spirit of unveiling, apokalypsis. You get the point, don't you? First of all, he gives us new eyes with which to see, and then he unveils the truth which our new eyes are meant to see.

But even that isn't all. We need something else. Suppose this meeting, instead of being a morning meeting, were at night, and in the middle of the meeting suddenly the electric circuit failed and all the lights went out, and not a glimmer came in from outside, and we were all in total darkness.

And suppose we all had perfect natural vision and didn't need to wear glasses. Even so, in that total darkness, could even the best pair of eyes see anything? I noticed a year or two ago in, I think it was in the Reader's Digest, someone had written into the editorial faculty, is it true that a cat can see in total darkness? And the editorial reply was, no, it is not true. No animal has ever been found which has eyes that can see in total darkness.

Ladies and gentlemen, if the Reader's Digest says it, that settles it. No, you see, we need three things. First, we need the new eyes with which to see, and then we need the truth unveiled that we are meant to see, and then we need, and this is what the Holy Spirit does, we need to have the truth flashlighted for us.

And that is just the threefold ministry of the Holy Spirit in illumining believers. He gives us new inward faculty of vision, then he unveils the truth that we are meant to apprehend, and then he floodlights it so that it becomes luminous to the mind and vivid in the heart. What a wonderful ministry that is, isn't it? Are you giving the Holy Spirit his full opportunity to effect within you this ministry of supernatural illumination? Well, that's the second thing.

Now, the third thing. First of all, the Holy Spirit seals believers, then the Holy Spirit illumines believers, and now in chapter 2, verse 18, the Holy Spirit unifies believers. This is what it says, for through him, Christ, we both, that is, both Jew and Gentile, have our access by one spirit, the Greek preposition is in one spirit, we both have our access in the one spirit unto the Father.

Now, here we find the Holy Spirit fusing all Christian believers into one wonderful spiritual whole. He unifies believers. I wonder if we get the tremendous implication there.

I needn't say to an audience of this caliber that the true Christian church is not merely an organization. It is a spiritual organism. But there's more than that.

Are you listening? We Christian believers are a family. We all have the same life within us from the same divine progenitor or parent, the Holy Spirit. And we are all in the one spirit because, blessed be his wonderful name, that one and the same spirit is in all of us.

And therefore we have family affinity. We are drawn to each other. You know, modern psychology has told us many wonderful things about family affinity, even in the natural family.

You know what I mean. All the members of one family have the same cast of feature, the same contour of eyebrows, the same shape of nose, the same kind of legs, and very often the same sort of walk. And sometimes they have the same way mentally of looking at things.

Family affinity. But however wonderful it is in the natural family, it is measurelessly more wonderful in the spiritual family of God in Christ. We are brothers, sisters, members of the same family.

Friends, I beg your pardon, brothers and sisters, how we ought to love each other, how we should be careful before we gossip about each other, how anxious we should be to help each other. The world doesn't love us. It doesn't understand us.

The followers of the Lamb will never be popular with the seed of the serpent. The world didn't love our Master and it doesn't really love you and me. And because we have the same life, all of us, the same life in us from the same Holy Spirit, how we should love each other, shouldn't we? Say yes, or out you go.

By the way, friends, I can't help pointing out, you know, this is a wonderful climax in a grand bit of Pauline context. You see, in the first half of chapter 2, Paul has been lamenting our pitiful plight when we were still alienated from God and were outside of Christ. But beginning with that divisive but at verse 13, he begins to exult in our wonderful privileges and blessings now that we are in Christ.

Let me just read quickly. Verse 13. But now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

So first of all, by his calvary death, our Lord has destroyed distance. The far off are made nigh. He has destroyed distance.

Read on. Verse 14. For he, Christ, is our Jew and Gentile peace.

So he has not only destroyed distance, he has destroyed dissension. He is our peace. Read on.

Who hath made both Jew and Gentile one. So he has also destroyed disunion. Read on.

And hath broken down the middle wall of partition, the law of commandments contained in ordinances. He has destroyed division. And finally, for to make in himself of the twain of the two, that is Jew and Gentile, one new man.

He has destroyed all distinction. Now, friends, those are the five negative aspects of our Lord's calvary work. He has destroyed one, distance, two, dissension, three, division, four, disunion, and five, all distinction.

And having pointed out those five negative aspects of our Lord's calvary work, Paul crowns them with three wonderful positives. Read on again in verse 16. And that he might reconcile both, that's both Jew and Gentile, unto God in one body by the cross.

So first, he reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God. Emphasis on the preposition to God. Now verse 17.

And he came and proclaimed peace to you which were afar off, that's the Gentiles, and to them that were nigh, that's the Jews. So first he reconciles both Jew and Gentile to God. Then he comes and preaches peace to Jew and Gentile from God.

And now finally, for through him, Christ, we both, Jew and Gentile, have our access in one spirit unto God. No, not just to God, but to the Father. It's a family.

Have you got it? Let me see if you're excited enough. Yes. What's the time? Oh, we're doing not too badly.

We'll not finish this morning, but somehow I didn't think we would. But all right, first the Holy Spirit seals believers, then the Holy Spirit illumines believers, and then the Holy Spirit unifies believers. And now reference number four, chapter two, verse 22.

In whom Christ, ye also are builded together, now isn't this wonderful, for a habitation of God. You think how big this universe is. If you can, but you can't.

And then think of the unimaginable, infinite, magnitudinous greatness of God. And you and I are builded together with other saints for a habitation of God through the Spirit. Here the Holy Spirit occupies and sanctifies believers, making them nothing less than a habitation of God through the Spirit.

By the way, Mr. Chairman and friends, I simply can't help it. I am a preacher, you know, and of a sort. And when I come across verses like this, I can't help looking at them in their context.

And you know, once again here, we have a wonderful climax to a wonderful context. Have you ever studied the Apostle Paul's therefores and wherefores? I love Paul's syllogistic form of reasoning. There's something mentally satisfying as well as spiritually edifying about it.

Now, the climax of this chapter begins at verse 19, with the final paragraph. Just look at it. Verse 19.

Now therefore. Ah, here's one of his therefores. There's something big coming.

Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. What does that mean, fellow citizens with the saints? Do I need even to start explaining to a company of students and friends at PBI? Why, just about as far B.C. as we are now living A.D., Patriarch Abraham looked for a city whose builder and maker is God. And the Hebrews epistle tells us that for all the saints of the Old Testament days, God hath prepared for them all a city.

Isaiah caught wonderful flashes of that apocalyptic city, and Ezekiel in advance saw some of its flashing glories, so did Zechariah, so did others of the prophets. And when you turn to the New Testament, you find recurrent references to it, until at last you come across this. Here we Christians have no continuing city, but we seek one which is to come.

And then you turn on to the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse, and in the last two chapters, you have in full photography the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God and adorned as a bride for

her husband. Friends, we are fellow citizens in that city. We are anticipatedly enfranchised in that never-ending new Jerusalem, not the old Jerusalem which is to be built up in the millennium, but the new Jerusalem amid the new heaven and the new earth.

There's coming a time when you and I, hell-deserving sinners though we are, having been washed in the wonderful blood of God's Lamb and born again by the heavenly Spirit and sanctified and glorified and presented perfect before the throne of the heavenly majesty, we are going to sit down in that city with Abel and Enoch and Noah and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the prophets and the patriarchs and the martyrs and the saints and believers of all the ages. Oh, it's a big thing to be saved, you know. But friends, what's that compared with the next thing? Now, therefore, you're no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God.

I mustn't dilate on this. Every one of these clauses and phrases is just packed full of meaning, but you see, our enfranchisement in that city speaks of our dignity and privilege. But when I read that I'm a member of the family and that God is my father and that Christ is my elder brother as well as my savior, that speaks of affectionate intimacy, sacred familiarity, communion heart to heart with God.

What that's going to mean, it will take all the ages of eternity to unfold to us. Read on. Now the third thing, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, that's the New Testament prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone, that's the great solid block which is both the base and the bond of the whole building.

So we are all citizens of the one city, all members of the one heavenly family, and all securely founded on the one immovable foundation, Jesus Christ. And now the fourth thing, in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth, isn't this beautiful, unto an holy temple in the Lord. We are all living members of that one indestructible spiritual building, the ecclesia, the church.

And finally, in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. You get the five things there. One, all citizens of the one heavenly city.

Two, all members of the one redeemed family. Three, all securely founded on the one imperishable foundation. And four, all living stones in the one glorious spiritual building.

And five, all indwelt and sanctified by the one heavenly Holy Spirit. Friends, I don't know whether it's good news or not, my time is up. Hmm.

Have I tired you? No. Well, I didn't think I had, but I thought I'd better ask. Don't you think we ought to continue this tomorrow morning? And I'll make a promise, shall I? Yes, I'll make a promise.

I will finish tomorrow. And do you know, friends, I think after a little interview I had with one of the students last night, I think we'll continue all this week on different aspects of the Holy Spirit's deeper ministry in the Christian. Don't you think that would be good for us? Now, it's due to that student that I'm taking this line.

I had come here this week with a great ponderous series of highly concatenated theological disquisitions. But after my little talk with her ladyship last evening, I thought, oh, some of them are so tired. I can't expect them to concentrate on something that needs a lot of focused attention.

I think it will do us good to come here prayerfully, but just come resting in our Savior's sympathy. And let these morning sessions be a time of inward relaxation. Enjoy the Word.

Enjoy the Word. It'll do you good. And you know, friends, we have a dear, dear Savior, don't we? Yes, we do.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/3/SID3030.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/j-sidlow-baxter/ephesian-doctrine-of-the-holy-spirit/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net