

Ephesians Series

3. Sealed by the Spirit [Sermon Notes]

We've frequently travelled abroad in the car and from country to country. If you take a day trip across the channel, you can easily get into Belgium along the A16 motorway. You know when you get to Belgium because there is a large sign that says Belgium and all the road markings change so you know you are on the A18 Belgian Motorway. You know where the border is because it's clearly marked. You move from France to Belgium.

One year we went to the French Pyrenees. I was intrigued to find what looked like a piece of Spain - a town called Livia, about 5km into France, surrounded by French territory. It's what is known as an enclave. On the way back to our campsite I went to find Livia. I couldn't find any signposts to it but saw a road that was coming into France from Spain with lots of cars on it. But how did I get on to it? I eventually found an unmarked track which went on to it. Signs were still in French but all the cars were Spanish. Suddenly we arrived in Livia - a typical Spanish town. Where was the border? I don't know and the French didn't want me to know. All I know is that one moment I was in France but now I was in Spain.

Conversion can be like that too. For many of us, we can point to a day when we accepted Christ, but for others, all they can say they were heading in that direction and knew one day that they arrived, rather like my trip to Livia.

Most people take some time to accept Christ. It is a process rather than a conversion. Often they don't know at which point they have become a Christian. Why? Adults in particular take some time to square in their minds what the issues are - to think things through. Often they pray a prayer of faith a number of times.

So how do you know that you are a Christian?

This passage in Ephesians helps us. Ephesians is a very Trinitarian book. It tells us much about the nature of God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- v we have a heavenly Father who has chosen us. We are special to Him. He has made us His children. He pours out His blessings on us.
- v through the Son we have been redeemed. We have been bought. Hebrew tradition was to stop property being lost when someone died by other members of the family redeeming the land - by retaining it in the family whatever it cost. And that's the picture of Jesus. God wanted to redeem the human race whatever the cost.

But we need to come into the good of all this by faith. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. (verse 13)

We know we are His because he has given us the promised Holy Spirit - *13 Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit*. How do I know I am a Christian - the Holy Spirit is present in my life.

What makes the Christian faith distinctive from all other religions? It isn't that you believe something, it isn't in anything you do. But it is in the fact that the Holy Spirit becomes part of you. And as a result, you start to take on the character of the One that now indwells you.

Fact - Faith - Feelings - the train. Being the Minister of this Church. I know I am the Minister because I have evidence of that appointment. As a result I believe I am the Minister and act accordingly. What does it feel like to be a Minister? Sometimes I may not feel like being a Minister at all. But I can look back on the facts. Never base your Christian commitment solely on feelings. But feelings are important when you want to build your faith and for understanding where you're at now.

Fact - there they are - the promises of God - Romans 10:9. Whatever else happens, you can't escape from the facts.

Faith - it's what you believe - describe belief - you know who you have believed *2 Tim 1: 2 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.*

Faith is the Greek word *pisteuo* {pist-yoo' -o}

1) to think to be true, to be persuaded of, to credit, place confidence in 2) to entrust a thing to one, i.e. his fidelity

Feelings - we experience the reality of facts through our emotions. There is nothing wrong with emotions. Some people express emotion differently to others. Contrast the African-Caribbean way of expressing emotion to the English one. There's nothing wrong with either. But feelings can affect your appreciation of the fact and therefore your faith. You may not feel you are a Christian - so you don't take account of the fact. We don't base our own belief on what other people say or do. We base it on the word of God.

That's where the Holy Spirit comes into our lives. How can we know and understand we are Christians? Because we know we have the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1. **The Holy Spirit is a mark of Christ's ownership (13)**

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.

The nature of a seal - marked ownership. The seal is a visible sign of ownership. We know people become Christians - changed life. Different. Sometimes it is spectacular, sometimes it is less spectacular. Your desires change, your attitudes change. You want to spend time with other believers, you want to spend time with God. Maybe you show some of the fruit of the Spirit Gal 5:22

2. **The Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (AV the earnest of our inheritance).**

He is the down payment of what is to come. We know that God's promises are true, because as we see the Holy Spirit at work in our lives or in the lives of others (don't forget to tell them for their encouragement), then we know all the rest is true. Why is He a deposit. In the NT what happened to us as God's people often span over past present and future.

Salvation - I was saved, I am being saved, I will be saved

Redemption - I was redeemed, I am being redeemed - I will be redeemed.

The Holy Spirit is here to tell me that I am His and He is mine - and when I depart this life, that will be the reality.

3. **The Holy Spirit imparts wisdom (verse 17)**

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

This is a difficult verse to translate - does it mean a spirit or the Spirit? The Greek favours the first - a spirit of wisdom and revelation, but what we do know from John 16 which we looked at a couple of months ago, that it is the Spirit that imparts wisdom and revelation - He allows us to understand the truth. If you understand anything of the truths of God this morning, then it is because the Holy Spirit has revealed it to you.

So you are able to testify this with Paul this morning I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

So are you a Christian this morning?

1. Yes, I accepted Jesus on such and such a date! Good for you.
2. Mmm ... I'm not sure. I can't point to a day when I believed. Romans 10:9. What do you actually believe? Do you understand that He is Lord? Do you understand that He is risen and exalted today so therefore he died for you? Do you trust Him for the forgiveness of your sins, is it your desire to follow Him? But not sure you are a Christian because you never had the same experience as me? You believe it but are confused because people like me push for a commitment but you basically believe. So where are you this morning. You haven't gone through the frontier post but perhaps you have slipped across the frontier because you've noticed that the scenery has changed and that your life has changed.

I want you to be sure you are a Christian. Not that you feel that you may be a Christian. But you know the facts, that you understand the facts and are basing your life on them. Maybe the Spirit is prompting you. You know you are a Christian, but you don't have the same experience as anyone else. My advice is get baptised! People who slipped across the border often find this useful.

In all these things, God wants you to know that you are a Christian. If you are then the Spirit is within you. let Him minister in your life to give you that assurance that you are God's child.

If you are unsure then know this, God wants you to be His child, part of His family - and this can be yours today.

*© Mark Reid 2002
Preached at Swaffham Baptist Church 13th October 2002*