



## Satisfaction Guaranteed Ephesians 1:13-23

This morning we saw how when we trusted Jesus and decided to follow Him, that God gave us a gift, a seal, a down-payment guaranteeing all the things He has promised us through Jesus. We get the gift once we've done the trusting. It's the complete reverse of the world's logic.



The way the world does things is that we look for the proof first and want the guarantees first before we entrust ourselves to something. But with Jesus it's rather like the man whose picture I showed you last week who jumps off the cliff and trusts that Jesus is there to catch him! And he does it with a smile!!

And that's the Jesus we have trusted – and it's when we trust and when we land in His hand that we start to realise that He's everything that is written in God's Word. But how do we know that. What has made the difference of understanding from when we didn't believe? The answer is the Holy Spirit. These are the words we had this morning: *13 And you also became God's people when you heard the true message, the Good News that brought you salvation. You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit he had promised. 14 The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory!* God has given us something – or more correctly, He has given us Someone: His Holy Spirit.

A closer examination of the person and work of the Holy Spirit is for some other time, but this evening I want us to look at just how we get to have spiritual insight that people who don't know Jesus haven't got and will never have.

The reason is the Holy Spirit. He's more than just the guarantee card that God gives to ensure that we get eternal life, but it's because of His work in us that we are what we are as God's people. What I'm going to look at this evening is perhaps the most basic work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, but actually is the one most critical as far as our own assurance of salvation is concerned. So what are we told here about the way the Holy Spirit works in our lives as we start to trust Jesus?

★ He brings the assurance that we are God's people

*14 The Spirit is the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people, and this assures us that God will give complete freedom to those who are his. Let us praise his glory!*

*I have not stopped giving thanks to God for you. I remember you in my prayers 17 and ask the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, to give you the Spirit, who will make you wise and reveal God to you, so that you will know him.*

Paul's prayer for the Ephesians was that the Spirit will make them wise, reveal God's will so that they would know Him. The Spirit brings us that sense of the presence of God. He makes God personal to us. He helps us understand just who God is, but it's more than just knowing about Him, it's knowing Him.

It's a wonderful sight isn't it when someone comes to Christ and we see how they wrestle with faith and then suddenly the lights go on and they understand what it's all about and we see the excitement and thirst for God. Maybe that was your experience of believing. It's also something we often frequently experience again and again in our lives when we sense the presence of God in our lives and we light up. How does that happen. It's the Holy Spirit. One of the problems we often find in our Christian walk is that

we can become very dry in our faith. As I said this morning, we feel we've lost direction and God isn't close. It can be different, it should be different.

Pray what Paul prayed for the Ephesians – in fact if you know someone in that position, pray for them. This is a powerful prayer – but it's a basic one too. God wants us to know the joy and the pleasure of knowing Him. Allow the Spirit to bring that all back to you. Let Him refresh you and charge you up again.

★ He enlightens us to the things of God

*18 I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, 19 and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.*

This kind of follows on. How do we understand the things of God? How do we understand His word? How do we understand His ways? It's the Holy Spirit. He opens our minds to see His light. The fact that Paul prays that their minds be opened by the Spirit suggests that our minds can be closed. We're not told how here but we know from other scriptures that we can close our minds and quench the Spirit due to sin and disobedience.

Down the years I've known people who have been great students of scripture and have a massive grasp of the facts of scripture but their lives never reflected Jesus. Being a Christian is about the Holy Spirit opening our minds to see His light. It's a question of will not of human effort. Again we pray for it in others. And what does this opening of our eyes do in spiritual terms? There are three things:

◆ We understand hope

*18 I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, 19 and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.*

As our minds are opened to God's light, then we see things clearly – things which give us that understanding and assurance. The first is hope. Hope in the NT is never the hope of luck (like I hope I win the lottery) but the hope of expectancy (I hope in an eternal future promised to me). It's a very empowering part of the Christian faith and underrated by us because we live in a society that almost has a denial of death and a desire to prolong life at whatever cost. Yet the hope that we have should give us the ability to say boldly with Paul: *2 Cor 5:6 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. 9 So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (ESV)*

Are we that bold about life and death – or do we worry? When we are really sick, have a brush with death or lose a loved one, that is the time when the worries and doubts set in and maybe we can't speak boldly as Paul does – we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord! The Spirit opens our minds to God's light so that we have this certainty. Is the light dim at the moment. Now is the time to pray again as Paul has done that our minds be opened to His light. Or like Paul, pray for one another that our minds be opened to His light.

◆ We realise the blessings

*18 I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, 19 and how very great is his power at work in us who believe.*

The next really positive thing about having our minds opened to His light is that we know how rich are the blessings He promises His people. This is another of these know in your head but feel in your heart things. We might know the promises of God as we look through Scripture, but God

wants them to be planted in us. We have a God who wants to pour out His blessings on us. Sometimes we find ourselves in a place where we find it difficult to see the blessings of God. Of course we know what is waiting for us in heaven – but now. Some Christians confuse blessings with wealth or even health. Yes, those things can be a blessing, but there is no better blessing than to walk close to God and hear His voice. I know from my own experience that sometimes we can go through difficult times as believers, but what I've almost always found is that God is faithful and at the end I see the Spirit has opened my mind to see the wonderful blessings that He has brought. Not feeling blessed – you know the answer.

◆ We appreciate His power

*18 I ask that your minds may be opened to see his light, so that you will know what is the hope to which he has called you, how rich are the wonderful blessings he promises his people, 19 and how very great is his power at work in us who believe. This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength 20 which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world. 21 Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. 22 God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. 23 The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.*

And finally through the Spirit opening our minds we see how great His power is at work within us. A lot of people automatically think of this in terms of power manifestations. Power manifestations aren't mentioned here. It's not about them. That's for another place and another time. There's something bigger about this statement than just that. The presence of the Spirit in our lives represents the ultimate power of God. What is the ultimate power of God?

Look at verse 19 and we'll see that is: *This power working in us is the same as the mighty strength 20 which he used when he raised Christ from death and seated him at his right side in the heavenly world.* Only God can bring back life from death. By that I mean He can bring back people who are well dead – Lazarus, Jesus. And there's this – *Matt 27: 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.*

The power at work within us brings life out of death and only a Creator God can do that because He has ultimate power over life and death. And that is true spiritually too. We were dead, but now we are alive – in fact Paul goes on at the beginning of chapter 2 to say that because that's what he's talking about here. By the grace and mercy of God, we are transformed from death to life. The Holy Spirit can take our bodies of death and inspire us with life. He can change us from what we were to what God wants us to be. Amazing isn't it?

But look further and you'll see that the power of Christ over death has meant that He has been given authority over creation. *21 Christ rules there above all heavenly rulers, authorities, powers, and lords; he has a title superior to all titles of authority in this world and in the next. 22 God put all things under Christ's feet and gave him to the church as supreme Lord over all things. 23 The church is Christ's body, the completion of him who himself completes all things everywhere.* He has authority over everything because He has been brought back from death to life and then look at verse 23 and we find that the church – also brought from death to life by the Spirit is there with Him, under His lordship. Verse 23 is quite cryptic and can be taken a couple of ways

*CEV Eph 1:22 God has put all things under the power of Christ, and for the good of the church he has made him the head of everything. 23 The church is Christ's body and is filled with Christ who completely fills everything.*

or

*The Message Eph 1:22 He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. 23 The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.*

You pays your money and you takes your choice. What this does show is that by the power of the Spirit, Christ has been raised from death to life and we likewise have been given an exalted place by being made part of His body. And that's an amazing thing!

End challenge: Trust leads to God giving us a down-payment – His won presence in our lives – and we change. The biggest change of all is that he brings us to life and makes us part of a people that serves His purpose. We've seen how the Spirit brings us wisdom and reveals God to us. How opens our minds to see his light – we understand the things of God, His hope becomes part of us giving us assurance, we realise His blessings and appreciate His enormous power that brings us to life and is a vehicle from bringing others to life.

Do we feel we are like this? We can grow cold, get disobedient, become tired, lose the plot or whatever. Let's pray that God will fill us afresh with the Spirit, so that He affirms again the wonder of His salvation to us. And let's pray for one another like Paul prayed for the Ephesians, that we will see the Spirit moving in our lives and in our church in a new way.

*Preached by Mark Reid  
MRBC Felixstowe 2/3/08*

© Mark Reid

Scripture Quotes TEV unless otherwise stated.