



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dr. S. Lewis Johnson

Ephesians 1:13-14

“The Work of the Spirit” -- TRANSCRIPT

We’re turning again to Ephesians chapter 1, and we’re looking at verse 3 through verse 14 over the last several weeks of our study of this great epistle of the Apostle Paul.

We have been trying to point out something that almost all of the students of Ephesians note, and that is that verse 3 through verse 14 – which really makes up just one long sentence in the original text – that we have the work of the Father, the work of the Son, and the work of the Holy Spirit. We have the work of the Father in election, and I think we’ve spoken considerably about that. We have the work of the Son in redemption, in verse 7 through verse 13. And finally, in verse 13 and verse 14, we have the work of the Holy Spirit in the application of the redemption accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ, which has brought the election of us to its fruition.

Now we’ve laid a little bit of stress upon the fact that what we have seen in the preceding verses, verse 3 through verse 12 (and we could, in fact, include verses 1 and 2), is a great stress upon the sovereignty of God. We have, for example, in the first two verses the statement made that the Apostle is an apostle by the will of God. We noted that grace and peace came from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. They do not come from men. And then we noticed the fact that at the conclusion of each of these movements – the movement of the teaching that had to do with the Father, the Son, and

then the Holy Spirit – there is reference made to the praise of the glory of God’s grace. For example, in verse 6 we read, “to the praise of the glory of his grace, through which he has made us accepted in the beloved.” And then in verse 12 that we should be “to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.” And finally, now, in verse 13 and 14 we have a conclusion of “until the praise of his glory.” So, the work of the Father, the work of the Son, the work of the Holy Spirit – all of these works are designed to lead to the praise of the glory of God.

The reason for this is that this great work of redemption ultimately redounds to the praise of God. Now that in itself would stress the fact that redemption is the work of God. If, for example, that redemption were the work of God and man, then the work would not be to the praise of God but to the praise of God and man. But the fact that the Apostle says at the end of verse 6 “to the praise and glory of his grace,” verse 12, “to the praise of his glory,” verse 14, “unto the praise of his glory,” is additional confirmation of the fact that the things that God does for us, he does of himself.

We’ve also laid stress upon the fact that the will of God is the source of these great things, more specifically. For example, we pointed out and laid stress upon verse 11, “in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” So a great deal of stress has rested upon the fact that everything is to the praise of his glory, but that everything proceeds from the counsel of the will of God. In other words, our salvation is to be traced to God.

Now there are people, and I think we would look back in our history, we could probably say in our own lives, at one time, there are people who feel that if we lay too much stress upon the activity of God in our salvation – for example, if we say that we become his by the will of God, that our salvation is to be attributed to the will of God, that he is the one who accomplishes it all, he works all things according to the counsel of his own will – there are those who say, then, “Well then, evangelism, according to that

reading of the plan of salvation, would seem unnecessary. God is going to do his will, so why should we be concerned? He is going to do his will, we don’t even have to worry about evangelism, because God is going to do his will.”

Now that’s a rather strange kind of reaction to stress upon the will of God. It’s obviously a humanistic one, because it’s not in harmony with Scripture. Scripture never says that. Scripture says that God is the one who is the source of our salvation, but it calls upon us to evangelize. Scripture says that God is one who saves, and he saves alone, but Scripture calls upon us to pray. And Scripture lays a great deal of stress upon the fact, just as we have been trying to do, that salvation is of the Lord. But at the same time, Scripture lays a great deal of stress upon the fact that we are to be witnesses.

So somehow something is out of kilter, if we believe that if we stress the sovereignty of God then we must automatically deemphasize evangelism, then we’ve not read Paul right. Either our salvation is not by the will of God but is the product of both God and man, or else, we’re reasoning falsely from the fact that salvation is of Lord and is the product of his will.

Now I don’t find any difficulty myself, even if I didn’t understand; I read in the Bible that salvation is of the Lord, that he works all things according to the counsel of his will, that we’ve been elected in ages past. And at the same time, the Bible says that we are to witness, that we are to pray, that we are to give out the gospel, preach the gospel. So even if I didn’t understand, I see those two things plainly in the Bible and therefore, since this is the word of God, I must do it.

But I don’t really have any problem with that. Do you know why? Because if I were called upon to do evangelism, apart from the assurance that God does the work of saving souls, I would be most discouraged. In fact, if I felt that the salvation of individuals rested upon me and my labors and my work ultimately, I would be extremely discouraged.

In fact, it is just the other way around. The assurance that God does work by his sovereign will, and that he works through the Gospel, and through prayer, and through witnessing, leads me to have some hope of success in the preaching of the Gospel, in prayer, in witnessing. So rather than being an objection to evangelism, it is the greatest encouragement for evangelism, for prayer, for witnessing, to realize that God sovereignly works to accomplish his purpose. But he has decreed that his purpose be accomplished through the means of prayer and through the means of preaching, through the means of witnessing. So, instead of being discouraged, instead of thinking that there is something wrong, I find in this the greatest encouragement. When I preach the gospel and people do not respond – if I really thought that really depended on me, the fact that they didn’t respond – I would be most discouraged. In fact, I would feel so discouraged that I should go home and pull out a knife and plunge it into my heart I was such a failure.

But ultimately, the salvation of souls depends upon the Lord God, and he has graciously given us the opportunity of being instruments in the accomplishment of his work. No higher calling could any individual ever have than being a co-worker with the Lord. And that’s not just for someone who teaches and preaches the word often as I do, but that’s for every single believer – every single one of you in this audience. You may be a co-worker with the Lord, as you witness, as you pray, as you give out the word of life. And you have the encouragement of knowing that he does save people. He saved you, didn’t he? He can save others.

So, the only hope of evangelism is the sovereign working of an almighty God. So I get a great deal of comfort out of this. If I were a person like Billy Graham, and I did not have a doctrine like this, I would be discouraged. Evangelism only succeeds because of this: the sovereign working of God.

Now in the last two verses of Ephesians chapter 1, the Apostle turns to the application of this work of redemption and talks about the Holy Spirit. Now I did not finish verse 12 last time, and someone came up and asked me a question about verse 12,

for I had forgotten to conclude with a reference to that particular verse. Verse 12 ends with, “that we should be to the praise of his Glory who first trusted in Christ.”

What does Paul mean when he says, “that *we* should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ.”? Who is the “we” who first trusted in Christ? Well now the Apostle might think of the Christian church in the present age as the those who had first trusted in Christ – I’m speaking of the church to which the Apostle was speaking – he might have thought of them as the first who trusted in Christ in this church age. But it’s unlikely that that is what he’s speaking about. It’s possible that he was simply saying, “I am a Jewish man, and we Jews in Old Testament times were believers, we looked forward to the coming redeemer and thus, we were the first trusters in Christ.” What he probably means – I don’t think he means that – but what he probably means is: we are Jewish individuals and in the church of Jesus Christ the first believers were Jewish.

On the Day of Pentecost, for example, when the church had its inception, that group that were bound together in one body through the baptism of the Holy Spirit were Jewish in nature. It’s only as the program of God develops through the present age that the Gospel has gone out to the Gentiles and vast number of Gentiles have come in. In fact, we’re still waiting for more Gentiles to come in (the Apostle speaks of that in Romans 11 when he talks about, “until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in”). So I think that when he says that we should be to the praise of his glory “who first trusted in Christ,” is a reference to the Jewish beginnings of the church of Jesus Christ. They are the ones who first trusted in Christ.

So, he works “all things to the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory who first trusted in Christ,” and then in verse 13 he says, “in whom all ye also trusted.” Now this is the reference to the Gentiles, who have, with the Jews, trusted in Christ. So in verse 13, when he begins his discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit, he makes reference to the Gentiles who now join with the Jews in the body of

Christ. These Gentiles, by the grace of God, have become participants in the grace of blessing.

Now this is a rather interesting statement, I think, because there are those people who fail to reflect upon the fact that the Christian church is a church that has come into existence as a fulfillment of Old Testament promises. On the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came and baptized the body, who were already believers, and then began the work of enlarging the church through the years by the conversion both of Jews and Gentiles, that body was essentially a Jewish body to whom the promises of the Old Testament were fulfilled. It was a remnant, and there still is a remnant, of Jewish people in the church. But nevertheless God fulfilled his promises to those Jewish believers.

The Holy Spirit came. They were bound together in one body. They became the recipients of the Messianic promises. The Abrahamic promises were fulfilled to them – not fully, for the time of the possession of the Land is in the future – but the coming of the Holy Spirit itself was part of the Abrahamic blessing. Just turn back a few pages to Galatians chapter 3, where the Apostle says, in verse 13 of Galatians 3, “Christ hath redeemed us, from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, for it is written: ‘cursed is every man that hangeth on a tree.’” That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit, though faith.

So, promised in the Abrahamic blessing, given to Abraham hundreds of years ago, was ultimately the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. And those believing Jews received the blessing of Abraham then. Not the fullness – the fullness still awaits the future – but, nevertheless, there they received to that extent the Messianic blessing.

Now Gentiles, as they are born again, also, are grafted into the olive tree of Israel and become partakers of the root of the fatness of the olive tree, to use Paul’s metaphor in Romans 11. Let’s turn over to Romans 11 for a moment, because I think that Paul is

talking about the same thing here in Ephesians, and we will understand Ephesians better if we look at Romans chapter 11 for a moment. Romans chapter 11 in verse 11 the Apostle says:

“I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid. But rather through their fall salvation has come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them to jealousy.”

Now he’s just said above in verse 5 there’s a remnant of Jewish people according to the election of grace, so he’s not denying that there’s Jewish people who’ve partaken of the blessings. But verse 12:

“Now if the fall of them, that is Israel, be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?”

There he talks about the future when all Israel shall be saved.

“For when I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the Apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify mine office. If by any means I might provoke to jealousy them who are mine flesh and might save some of them. For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead. For if the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy so are the branches.”

He refers there to two figures of the Abrahamic promises made to Abraham and those that flow from them. Now the idea of a root and a tree is much more suitable for growth and development, and so he uses the second figure in the figure of the olive tree that follows.

But now notice the natural branches are Israel, the unnatural branches are the Gentiles. And notice how the Gentiles are grafted in and partake of the blessings of the natural branches. Verse 17:

“And if some of the branches were broken off, and thou being a wild olive tree were grafted in among them, and will them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root but the root, thee.”

In other words, you don’t hold the Abrahamic promises in your hand; the Abrahamic promises are responsible for your blessing.

“Thou wilt say then, ‘The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in.’”

A lot of people say this, you know, that Israel was rejected in order that we Gentiles might be saved. Well, there’s a sense in which that’s true, but you can say that in the wrong way, and so Paul says, verse 20:

“Well, because of unbelief they were broken off and thou standest by faith, be not high-minded but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. For behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God, on them that feel severity but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness. Otherwise, thou also shall be cut off.”

Gentile salvation will come to an end, too. He warns them here. Of course, we know from Scripture that in the last days, that is exactly what happens. Verse 23:

“And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in. For God is able to graft them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more shall these (Israel) who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree.”

Now you see, the figure is very simple. He’s talking about an olive tree. He’s talking about natural branches being cut off, unnatural branches being grafted in. That’s contrary to horticulture, isn’t it? Some commentators say Paul didn’t understand horticulture very well. But he says, in his illustration, this is contrary to nature. He knew horticulture, but he was using an illustration.

Now he says they’ve been grafted in, these unnatural branches, of Gentiles into the promises God gave to Israel, and they partake of the rootness of the fatness of the olive tree. In other words, they partake of the blessings of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob.

And when he concludes his illustration, saying, “If you can take wild branches and graft them into a cultivated olive, how much more natural will it be to take the natural branches and graft them in again,” and then he says, as climactic, “into their own olive tree?” See where you Gentiles stand? You’re blessed, because Israel has rejected the promises, for a time. And we have been grafted in to partake of those blessings in grace.

Now, I think that’s what Paul’s talking about there in Ephesians when he says, in verse 12, “Those who first trusted in Christ, in whom ye also trusted after ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.” So he’s saying here were Jewish people who first trusted in Christ – we were of them, Paul says – but you, too, have trusted in him. And you have experienced the Messianic blessing.

The story of the Book of Acts is the history of the unfolding of the Gentile participation in Jewish blessing. That’s something to remember for us Gentiles. We stand by faith on the human side. We stand by faith. These promises are promises that God

made in viably to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And by the grace of God, through his electing purpose, we have participated in them. Isn’t that an amazing thing? Isn’t that something to give thanks and gratitude to God for?

I stand in the line of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Gideon, and Samson – yes, even Samson – and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and Micah, and John the Baptist, and the Apostles; what better company could you have than that?

So, “in whom you also trusted.” Now notice, he says, “After you have heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation.” Now that says plainly that the Gospel is the means of our salvation, doesn’t it? It means that if one is going to be saved, they are saved through the word, they are saved through the Gospel. That’s why it’s so important to give the Gospel.

Harold Hughes is a former senator who has written a rather recent book. He is now employed in “the Lord’s work.” He has made a great profession of faith – I do hope he is a Christian man – but you’ll read through his book and you’ll have a hard time finding the Gospel in it at all. A man who’s left his position as Senator, a high position, in order to serve the Lord, but writes a whole book of his testimony and his work, and you cannot find the Gospel. It’s only natural for true Christians to wonder, because men are saved only through the Gospel of Christ.

That is why it is so fundamental and important for us, when we are speaking to anyone concerning Christian things to be sure and give the Gospel. That’s one reason why the elders like to have the Gospel preached in Believer’s Chapel, when the message is preached, because it’s through the Gospel that people are saved. So Paul says,

“In whom ye trusted after ye heard the word of truth (the true word), the Gospel that led to your salvation, in whom also after ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

Notice the order of three things. He says, in verse 13, in whom ye also trusted after you *heard*, in whom also after that ye *believed*, you were *sealed*. So, hearing, believing, sealing. There’s no sealing apart from hearing and believing. And there’s no believing apart from hearing – one must hear.

So the three steps are very plain and clear: hearing, believing, sealing. By the way, when the Apostle states in verse 13, “in whom also ye trusted after ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation in whom also after ye believed, you were sealed,” the Apostle is not suggesting there is a lengthy period of time between believing and receiving the Holy Spirit. In fact, this could be translated – many contend it’s the only way it could be translated – “in whom *in believing* you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” In other words, the believing precedes the sealing only logically, not chronologically. When a person believes, at that moment, he is sealed: logically, the believing preceding the sealing (but only logically, not chronologically). They happen at the same time. So, when a person hears the Gospel, believes the Gospel, he’s sealed with the Holy Spirit.

The reason I stress that is because there are some people who teach that we may hear the Gospel, we may believe the Gospel and still not have the Holy Spirit until we have, at some meeting in which we seek the Holy Spirit and seek to speak in tongues, we get down upon our knees and pray that we may speak in tongues. And then after a considerable period of time – sometimes it’s years – suddenly the Holy Spirit falls upon us and we begin to speak in tongues.

No, no. When a person believes, he receives the Holy Spirit. If he’s a believer, he has received the Holy Spirit. He may not have felt anything. It’s possible to even doubt it. But nevertheless, it’s true.

Turn back to John chapter 7. John chapter 7 in verse 37 through 39 is one of the important passages that bears on this topic. We read that in the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood out and cried, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

If he believeth on me (as the Scriptures said), out of his heart shall flow streams of living water.” Now John adds the little theological word (I’m so glad the Apostles were straight in their theology, and one thing you can be sure of if you follow the Apostles, you’ll be straight too), now John says, “But this spoke he of the Spirit that they that believed on him should receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”

Now notice the clause “whom they that believe on him should receive.” So the condition for the reception of the Holy Spirit is faith in Christ. It’s not attending a tarrying meeting. It’s not getting by your beside, after you have already been saved, and praying that God would give you the Holy Spirit as a second work of grace, so that you may speak in tongues. But every believer has received the Holy Spirit.

Paul says this in other places. In Galatians chapter 4, he says:

“When the fullness of time was come God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons, and because ye are sons God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts crying, “Abba, Father.”
Galatians 4:6.

So, the evidence of sonship is the possession of the Holy Spirit. So if we have become a son of God, then we have received the Holy Spirit. If we have believed, we have received the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit.

If I were to say to you, “How many of you in this audience have believed in Jesus Christ, would you raise your hands?” And let’s say, 60 people raised their hands. If I should say, “How many of you have received the Holy Spirit?” You 60 should keep your hands raised in the air. I guess I should have tricked you. I should have asked you “How many of you have received the Holy Spirit?” and seen how many of you put your

hand in your pocket. It is possible, of course, for you not to know those things, but if you’re a Christian, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within.

Now this Apostle says this matter of salvation takes place by hearing, by believing, and then when we have believed we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Now that’s a new word: sealed. What does that mean?

Well, it’s possible to give different meanings to this figure. It is a figure of speech. And the commentators have suggested – a number [of commentators] – for example, they have suggested that the idea of sealing suggests validity. The person who has been sealed is really a *valid* member of the Body of Christ, or validly related to Jesus Christ. Or genuineness: the person who has believed, and has been sealed, is a *genuine* article who has believed in Christ. He’s a genuine, genuinely related to Christ.

Probably, and this is only one of the possibilities, but in my mind it’s more likely to be true, probably he’s referring to ownership. He’s suggesting that the plan of salvation involves hearing the Gospel, believing the Gospel, and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked out as belonging to the Lord by the possession of the Holy Spirit. So I rather think of this as speaking of ownership. It’s God’s undeniable mark of a Christian.

Now that’s very important, because some people think that the undeniable mark of being a Christian it that they made a decision some time in the past. Sad to say, I often speak to mothers and fathers who make this mistake. They will have young children. They will attend an evangelical church – many of them, many cases like this in the City of Dallas. And because their children at age eight or age six, at thirteen or fourteen, said to their parents that they had believed in Jesus Christ, but then thereafter their lives turn aside from any profession of faith, and they live lives that are very contrary to the teaching of the Bible, very much of a concern to their parents – often get into serious difficulties – do not ever show any manifestation for the word of God, love for the people of God, love for the church of God, love for the things set forth in the Bible as marks of

disciples of Jesus Christ, the parents cling to this decision that they thought the children made ten, twelve, fourteen years ago. That’s a mistake, in my opinion.

Now of course it is possible, but not very likely, the chances are that decision was not a real decision. Because when a person believes in Jesus Christ, there is an undeniable mark of God set upon him and in him, and that is the presence of the Holy Spirit. “Because ye are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

I don’t want to discourage any you who may have children who’ve discouraged you. But, the undeniable mark of belonging to God is the presence of the Holy Spirit. He that hath not the Spirit of Christ, Paul says, is none of his. And I think that as a parent, you should not – if you have a child who’s very wayward – you should not say to that child, “You are a Christian, you are a Christian, you are a Christian.”

[Long pause] If their lives show no evidence whatsoever of the presence of God in them, I think you should say to them, “Well, it’s possible that such a decision was made in the past, but the Scriptures give you no reason for thinking, in the light of your life, that you belong to Jesus Christ.” You see the mark, the undeniable mark of a son of God is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Now, the things that we apply to children we can apply to adults, too. It’s possible for a person to attend an evangelical church, a church like Believer’s Chapel, come in Sunday morning after Sunday morning, hear the Gospel, sleep through most of it – some of them do. Most are not found here on Wednesday night, but on Sunday morning I see some sleep every Sunday. I have some friends who wonder, you know, how is it possible to do that? Well, it’s possible.

I see two or three illustrations I could give you right now: A, B, C.

I look out on the audience, I can pretty much tell what’s going to happen. Some of them sleep before the message begins. And that’s an encouragement to me because it makes me realize I’m not the total cause of this. [Laughter]

That’s right. One of em says – and he’s not like a friend who used to say, “I hear the first few words that my preacher (it was not I) says and just to be sure he’s still straight, and then I go on to sleep” – but I have one who says, Sunday morning, he “rests his eyes” while I’m speaking. Well, the undeniable mark of being a believer is the possession of the Holy Spirit. I think we have a right to expect that of adults. We have a right to expect it of children who claim to be Christians. And most of all, God has a right to see some manifestation that we belong to him in our lives, too.

So, “in whom believing ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” That means the promised Holy Spirit: the one that was promised in the promises given to Abraham, the promises that our Lord gave, and the one who finally came on the Day of Pentecost.

Now, I’ve said that sealing was a mark of ownership. Eugene Niater has been associated with the International Bible Society for many years in translation of the Bible into many different languages, and in one of his books, which is entitled *God’s Word, Man’s Language*, he gives some illustration of various types of things that illustrate the Bible but at the same time illustrate the difficulties of Bible translation.

He spoke about a tribe in this book called the N’gat Dingas, and he said in the N’gat Dingas they do not employ seals to indicate ownership, nor to they confirm an agreement by using sealing wax and a signet ring, as some do. But they mark ownership of their cattle by branding them. And in this particular translation, since branding, here – that’s what they used as the figure of this – and since this is something in the heart, Ephesians 1:13 reads, in their language: “In whom also ye trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation in whom believing, you were *branded in the heart* by the Holy Spirit who was promised.” And so they’ve caught the force of it: that the presence of the Holy Spirit marks out believers as ones who are owned by the Lord. And that ownership is marked in the heart by the presence of the Holy Spirit there. So, the seal.

Genuineness. Ownership. Validity. Many of you from time to time have legal documents that you have to have notarized. And when you have them notarized, it’s important that the notary public use his seal, because that is what will mark the genuineness of that particular document, that it’s been properly attested. So the Holy Spirit is God’s attestation that we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Paul says not only that. He goes on in the thirteenth verse and says, “who is the earnest of our inheritance.” That’s a word that means something like “pledge.” It was a Phoenician traders’ word. And it was used in the Greek at the time of the New Testament for a down payment, *ara bon*. If we were living in those days every one of us would know about *ara bon*. You who go to the installment purchase department or that pay installments on purchases, you would know what *ara bon* was. It’s the pledge, the installment payment.

In fact, also, in early times, this word not only had the sense of a pledge, but it spoke of the earnest money that was put down for the purchase of property. And did you know this is the word that is used in modern Greek? And when a young man falls in love with a young woman today in modern Greece, and he wants to give her an engagement ring, he gives her an *ara bon*. It’s the word for an engagement ring in modern Greek.

So, the Holy Spirit is the pledge. He’s the engagement ring given to us that the fullness of the married life will be ours in the future. The marriage supper is sure to take place. The arrangement has already been consummated. We have received our engagement rings, and we look forward to the consummation at the marriage supper of the lamb.

Now Paul concludes the verse by saying, “Who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” – that’s in the future – “unto the praise of his glory.” John Stott has written a book on Ephesians, relatively recently, and I’ve enjoyed reading some parts of it, as I’ve thought about these messages, and he says, “This

is a clause – ‘unto the praise of his glory’ – this is a clause that needs unpacking.” Well, it does. It’s the climax of the work of the Father, the work of the Son, the work of the Holy Spirit: the Father in election, the Son in redemption, the Holy Spirit in the indwelling of the believer who has been purchased by the blood of Christ.

Our man-centered world certainly needs this, because our man-centered world likes to think of things from the standpoint of man. And that has also affected our evangelical Christian world, too. And in our Christian doctrine, what we have today is a great deal of stress on the man-centered side of things rather than upon the divine side. Paul says that the work of the Father in election, the work of the Son in redemption, the work of the Holy Spirit in permanent indwelling of the saints of God is to the praise of his glory. O may God always obtain the glory from the work of salvation that he accomplishes. And further, may there be some glory that is given to him by the virtue of the life that we live who are the recipients of this magnificent grace. Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these wonderful statements of the Apostle Paul. This has truly been a magnificent study: the Father electing, the Son redeeming, the Spirit indwelling the saints of God. And we say again, Lord, how blessed we are.

And O may that undeniable mark of ownership, the presence of the Holy Spirit, be seen in our lives, in the most practical of ways, in the relationship to our wives, to our husbands, to our friends, and to our employers and employees, to our neighbors and to our acquaintances.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.