



Sermon Notes

Term – Spring Term

Series – Wholeness

Gathering & Date – 20th January 2019

Title – Signed Sealed Delivered (part 1 of 2)

Preacher –Neil Shepherd

Reading: Ephesians 1:1-14

Main message of this talk in one sentence: Our identity has been signed off by the Father from the foundation of the world, sealed by the work of Christ in the cross and delivered to us by the Holy Spirit.

Main points –

Introduction to the book of Ephesians – read Ephesians 1:1-2

1. Written by Paul, an apostle by the will of God

AUTHORSHIP

Paul was born in Tarsus into Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28) and later educated under the illustrious rabbi, Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). Zealous for the Law, Paul became the chief persecutor of the early church until his conversion when Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Immediately, Paul began to proclaim Jesus as Savior, eventually focusing several missionary journeys to the Gentiles throughout Asia Minor. During his journeys, he traveled to Ephesus and ministered there for almost three years (Acts 20:31). After Paul departed from Ephesus, he left Timothy behind to combat false teaching (1 Timothy 1:3). At some later point, Paul wrote this letter while in prison either in Caesarea or Rome as one of his many “Prison Epistles” in A.D. 60-62. Despite recent debate that the book was written by someone who did not use his own name but instead claimed to be Paul, there is no strong reason to reject Pauline authorship of the book.

- 1. Written to the church in Ephesus** although scholars think that it was a letter written to all the churches in the region. Therefore, this letter addresses general issues that apply to all Churches and their members and it means that it is easier to apply to our lives as we do not need to understand any issues that Paul is trying to address.

RECIPIENTS

Ephesus was a leading city on the west coast of Asia Minor. It essentially linked the western and eastern portions of the Roman Empire on the main highway and even possessed the most favourable seaport in the province of Asia. Due to its location within the Empire, Ephesus exerted great influence culturally, economically, and religiously. With a population over 300,000 people, Ephesus contained a theatre that seated an estimated 25,000 people. It became the centre for worship of the goddess Artemis (Diana in Roman mythology), which often included temple prostitution. Her temple ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World and became not just a centre for worship but also the primary banking institution for all of Asia Minor. As a result, Paul’s apostolic ministry that turned people to Christ and away from Artemis represented a significant financial threat to temple-related businesses like that of the silversmith, Demetrius (Acts 19:23-41). Ephesus also became a centre of occult practice as many used magic, witchcraft, and sorcery to manipulate hostile spiritual powers to their advantage (Acts 19:11-20).

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

Listen to the song by Stevie Wonder – ‘Signed, Sealed, Delivered. I’m Yours

Over the next two Sundays we will look at this passage using a framework that divides the passage into three sections with each section ending with ‘to the praise of His glorious grace’.

The three sections are:

SIGNED by the Father – verses 3-6

SEALED by the work of Jesus on the cross – verse 7-12

DELIVERED by the Holy Spirit – verses 13-14

This week we looked at the first section – signed by the Father – and specifically through three words

Word 1 – Chosen

We are a people chosen by God, chosen before the foundation on the world. This word – chosen – is the same word as God the Father speaks over Jesus in the transfiguration. We are chosen just like Jesus was chosen by the Father. We are chosen for a purpose and that purpose is to be holy (set apart) and blameless. We are a people who are full of blame, yet God has chosen us to be blameless.

Word 2 – predestined

We are a people who are predestined by God. This word can be a stumbling block for some as it can suggest that we don't have a choice – if God has predestined it then it is not our choice, yet the NLT translate this word as 'unchanging plan'. God has an unchanging plan for our lives which is available to us if we say yes. It is a plan that brings life and freedom because we are part of His family

Word 3 – adoption

The unchanging plan for us is that we are adopted into God's family. Adoption was a significant, and common, occurrence in Roman life. It was a way of bringing a male child into a family so that the family has an heir. Adoption give the male high status and enabled them to inherit the family wealth and, more importantly, the family name. When Paul is writing that we are adopted into God's family, this is the image he has in mind. We are adopted into God's family, through Christ, so that he gains the same rights of name and inheritance as a firstborn son would receive in Roman times.

The Father has chosen us, His people, to enter His unchanging plan of adoption into His family. This promise has been SIGNED off by God and we will see that, through Christ, we can receive this in full.

For further thought and prayer –

1. Read through Chapter 1:3-14 and spend some time reflecting on the Spiritual blessings mentioned in the verses.
2. According to 1:4-6; 11-12; and Romans 8:23-30 ...
 - What does it mean to be "chosen" or "predestined" by God?
 - When did God predestine us?
 - Why did God predestine us? In other words, what is the purpose of His choice?
 - Why does any of this really matter? Is predestination just a big theological debate, or does it have a practical application to our lives?
3. How does the truth of 'adoption' affect your life?
4. What is the most significant truth or principle you learned from this first section of the passage?
5. How does this truth impact the four relational spheres of your life...
 - a. How does it effect my relationship with God?
 - b. How des this impact the way I engage with my family and friends?
 - c. How can I integrate this truth into my workplace or daily life?
 - d. How does it enable me to engage with the world around?
6. Spend some time praying for each other, allow the Holy Spirit, to enable us to live in the truths of these blessings