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Series: People In Step With The Spirit
Message: Signed, Sealed and Delivered

Transcribed Message
October 28, 2018
John 14:17/ Ephesians 1:1-14

I think I've mentioned it in the past that when I was in college as well as the year in between college and graduate school I worked at a cold storage warehouse. A cold storage warehouse, if you're not familiar, is just one big gigantic freezer. I worked every day anywhere from 0 to 40 below zero. The beauty of it was in the summer when the dock and the warehouse were 100° you could go into a 40 below freezer and just cool right off. In the winter it was good too because it was zero outside and you just walked into a freezer that was zero. So you didn't even notice any difference. We handled mainly meat products and we would get oodles of meat by rail and by a truck. A lot of that meat came in under the supervision of the United States Department of Agriculture. When those trucks and railcars came in, they were sealed with a government seal. The first thing you learned on the job was you never broke a government seal. If you did break the government seal you just needed to get your stuff because you're going to be going home. There was no recourse for that. The only person who could break that government seal was the United States meat inspector who worked at the plant and oversaw all of that operation. That physical truth and reality is very much a spiritual truth and reality. When those trucks and railcars were signed off on and then sealed and then delivered to us, it was only that one person who had the authority to undo that seal. Paul the apostle says in very much the same vein of thinking that you and I have undergone that same experience but only in the spiritual realm.

This morning we want to see that the Spirit's indwelling ministry is the foundation for everything else that the Spirit of God does in our life. It is the Holy Spirit who God has given to us and He has given Him to us as a forever gift. Let's begin this morning and I want to start off by having us look together at this matter of our journey to faith. We often talk about our Christian experience and even before we come to Christ we sometimes refer to it as a spiritual journey. The imagery is perfect because it's as if

we're walking on a path. As we walk on this path, God intercepts that path at various times in His providence and His grace and He brings people into our lives. He brings circumstances into our lives. He does those things to bring us to faith in Christ. We rightfully talk about this as a spiritual journey to faith.

Everybody that undergoes that experience begins at the same place. It all begins with the hearing of the Word. It all begins with the hearing of the Word. No one comes to faith in Christ apart from the hearing of the Word of God. Paul says in Romans 10 faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the Word of God. Paul says in Romans 1 I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Why not? Because it is the power of God unto salvation. The only way anybody comes to faith in Christ is vitally connected to the Word of God. It comes in a whole variety of ways, but it is always going to come through the Word of God.

Secondly, there is the convicting work of the Spirit. The convicting work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens our eyes to that Word, to that gospel. Apart from that and before that, those are just words on a page. That is just somebody saying something. There is no comprehension. There's no understanding. It is the Holy Spirit who, Jesus said in John 16, was going to bring conviction to our mind and our heart. He is the one who was going to convict of sin and righteousness and judgment. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us that understanding. So you see right at the beginning that the Word and the Spirit are vitally connected and vitally related in regards to this journey of faith.

The third thing of course is believing and trusting Christ as Savior. Believing and trusting Christ as Savior. That was our lesson last week. It was really on this matter of regeneration, of being made new. Jesus talked to Nicodemus we looked at in John 3. He said Nicodemus, you have to be born again. Nicodemus, you have to undergo a conversion. Nicodemus, you have to undergo a transference, a transformation. You have to go from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. You have to go from literally death to life. You have to go from unbelief to belief. So it is that vital part of our response to the Word of God. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17 if anyone, if any person is in Christ, they're a new creation, literally a new person. The old things have passed away. Behold everything is become new. What is he talking about? He is talking about

conversion. He's talking about being born again. He is talking about regeneration. He's talking about the fact that the Word has come into your life, the Holy Spirit has convicted you and given you understanding of the gospel, and you have trusted, you have believed. I would say that that is rightly understood as being a journey of faith because it's a process.

But here's the thing. at some point on that journey of faith, at some point in that process, there's a moment of time and it is that moment of time, of belief and trust that the transformation that we been speaking about takes place. I want to say to you this morning, the moment that you believed, the moment you put your faith and trust in Christ, something amazing happened. In fact I want to say to you that some 36 divine transactions took place the moment you believed. I've listed all 36 of them there in your outline. We'll just spend three minutes on each one of them. All you guys are good at math. I think it was Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer that first listed and published many, many years ago 33 things that happen to us when we come to faith in Christ. Someone else came along and said he found some more so this is 36. Somebody else has come along and said that there's 40. Somebody else has come along and said there's 50. I am pretty sure you can take and break these down and make them in a nuanced statement about any number of them and link them to the list. 36 is a pretty significant number of things that happened. 36 things happened to you at the moment you put your faith and trust in Christ. 36 divine acts of grace in your life that changed you and changed the trajectory of your life and your destiny forever.

We're going to look at two of them but before we do that I want you to notice secondly that these blessings are largely non-experiential. They're largely non-experiential and you say what do you mean largely non-experiential. I mean simply this. They are objective truth rather than some subjective feeling. These things are objective truth. You likely didn't feel any of them when they happened. You may not even have been conscious of these 36 things taking place when you put your trust in Christ. For some, for many that come to faith in Christ, if they're not disciplined, if they're not given any follow-up they have no idea what has happened to them other than like the blind man said when Jesus healed him, I don't know. Before I couldn't see, but now I can. They know something happened but they don't know the specifics of what has

happened until they get into the Word and they're disciplined and trained and they grow and they may begin to have their eyes opened to the amazing things that God has done. So these things are largely non-experiential. They're true whether you know them to be true this morning or not because they're revealed to us in Scripture as being true.

The second thing I want you to notice is most of them are a one-time event. There's a couple of them in there. I'll let you read through that list on your own and figure out which of those couple of things are repeated experiences. There's a couple of them that I think would not be not just a one-time event but be repeated.

They're irreversible. They're irreversible. They can't be undone. They took place in the past and they can't be undone. I'm going to assume that a lot of you have undergone water baptism having put your faith in Christ. Can you go back and undo your water baptism? Can you rewind your life and go back and get out of the water and not be wet and not have gone through that experience? Of course not. That was in the past. You've undergone it. It's happened. It can't be undone. We have a saying: you can't unring the bell. God in His grace in these 36 non-experiential divine transactions has done things in our life that are irreversible. I want you to see why that is so.

Look thirdly at the authenticating work of the Spirit. The authenticating work of the Spirit. I want to point out two things under this category this morning and the first one is this matter of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit. I want to come back and underscore what I said at the very beginning with regard to the big idea. This is the foundational work and foundational truth for everything else that the Holy Spirit does in our life. Everything flows out of the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit so that even as we have already looked at the matter of the baptizing work of the Spirit so that Christ baptized us into the Spirit, that flows out of the indwelling ministry. We looked this morning at this matter of being sealed. That's a part of the ministry of the Spirit in His indwelling us. He fills us. He leads us. He teaches us. He sanctifies us. He intercedes for us. He gives us gifts of all the things that we have looked at and some of those which we will look at in the future. These things all flow out of the reality and truth that at the moment of belief the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence within us. Because of that, the apostle Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 6 to these most carnal of Christians in Corinth. What? Don't you even know that the Holy Spirit of God is living within you?

They were acting and conducting themselves in ways that Paul said even the unbelievers weren't doing. Paul writes to them as those who have believed. Remember, Paul starts off Corinthians and says to the saints, to those who have been set apart. He's talking about their position in Christ. He is talking about the very realities that we have just looked at.

The first thing that I want you to see about this indwelling is that this is in fact New Covenant truth. This is New Covenant truth. The truth of the Holy Spirit taking up permanent residence in the lives of God's people is what we call New Covenant truth. This truth was not true in the Old Testament. Was the Holy Spirit active and involved among God's people? Of course He was. We've already looked at that, but the Holy Spirit was not involved in the way that He is described for us in the Gospel of John.

Let's go first of all to John 7. You might remember this from a previous look, but in John 7 we read in verse 37: "On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" What a description. "Now this He had said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." So the Holy Spirit is going to take up this transformative residency within our lives. This is literally a mind-boggling truth. The Holy Spirit of God comes to live inside of us. We literally are the temple the dwelling place of God. That is incredible. At the moment of belief and faith the Holy Spirit, unlike in the Old Testament where the Spirit came on people for a measure of time and selectively and for a limited period, but here Jesus says you can look forward to something that's going to happen at the point in which you believe.

What is the condition for the indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit? It is the same condition as there is for salvation. It is to believe and trust in Christ. The moment you believe and trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit takes up residence. In John 14 this becomes even more clear. Jesus in John 7 says this is coming. It is yet future. In John 14 and beginning at verse 16: "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him for He dwells with you and will be in

you.” there you have a very clear explanation of the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. This is New Covenant truth that the Holy Spirit is going to take up permanent residence in the lives of God's people. Jesus clarified that. He says he has been right now with you. Old Covenant. He will be in you. New Covenant.

Now drop down and look at verse 20. This is in some respects even more amazing. “In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” You in Me and I in you. Dr. Chafer used to say that is the most significant sentence in the whole Upper Room Discourse. I think you could argue that those seven words are maybe the most significant words in all the New Testament. There is so much truth packed into those seven words. There is so much truth that flows out of those seven words. You, He says, are in Me and I am in you.

This is the heart of Pauline theology. Paul is the one who more than anybody else is always talking about the fact that we are in Christ. We're in Christ. And you know what? The Spirit of Christ is in us is what he is telling us. Christ in you the hope of glory. How is Christ in you? Christ is in you by His Spirit. The Spirit of Christ is within us. What would happen if you and I lived every day mindful of the fact and thinking about the fact that the Holy Spirit of God is living inside of us? That's a peek ahead at the next week's lesson but that is the question that we need to engage. What would our lives look like if we consciously went through the day mindful that we are the temple of the living God? Do you think it would change in any way what we do with this body? Do you think it would change anything about what we look at, or where we go, or what we say to each other, or what we think about? I can't imagine that it would not have an incredible impact if we ever would come to the point that all through the day we're consciously mindful of the fact that the very Spirit of God is living within us.

Then I want you to see this is a forever truth. This is not only New Covenant truth. This is forever truth. When you look at verse 16 Jesus makes it abundantly clear. He said He is going to give us this other Helper to be with you until you really messed up bad and then He is going to have to leave unfortunately. No! He is going to be with you forever. Forever either means it's forever or it doesn't, right? He is going to be with you, He says, and He's going to be with you forever.

Now look at verse 18. In verse 18 He said something very similar to that. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." I will not leave you. The imagery here is that of an orphan who is fatherless. How is it that Jesus can say to them, I'm not going to leave you? He is going to leave them 10 days before Pentecost, right? 10 days before Pentecost He is going to ascend. 10 days before Pentecost He is going to ascend into heaven. So He said I'm not going to leave you. The only way He can say that is because He has promised them the Spirit of Christ. He would come and indwell them. So not only do you have the doctrine of the Spirit indwelling ministry, you have that link to the doctrine of adoption, that you have been brought into God's family forever. The moment you trust in Christ the Holy Spirit comes to live within you. Out of that indwelling ministry of the Holy Spirit flows everything else.

Let's look at this next thing. If that were not enough there's more because the next thing that we see is this matter of the sealing ministry of the Spirit. The sealing ministry of the Spirit is given to us in that passage that we read in Ephesians. We go back to Ephesians 1 and let me read again verse 13: "In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory." Then over to chapter 4 and verse 30: "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

I want us to look first of all at the very basis of our inheritance. He says that the Spirit is our inheritance. What is the basis of that inheritance? Again, for those of you that were here last Sunday this is kind of a miniature lesson again of what we looked at last week. What Paul does is two things. He tells us the basis of our inheritance first of all and he pictures it from the divine side. Those verses I read in Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 through 14. That is one long sentence in the Greek. There is no stopping Paul. Once Paul gets going, once he's excited about something, you just cannot hold this guy back. So he starts off in verse 3 and he does not pause his pen until he gets to verse 14. So you have the longest sentence in the New Testament unbroken and you probably have what could again be argued as the greatest single sentence in all of the New Testament because it encompasses so much truth. In that sentence he really gives

to us the divine side of the basis of our inheritance and it's all about what God has done in saving us. You read those verses and you can't help but walk away and think salvation is of the Lord. Salvation begins with God. All of the credit and all of the praise and all of the glory goes to Him. Look again at verse 4. Look at verse 5. Look at verse 9. Look at verse 11. All of these verses point to God as the one who is deserving of the praise and adoration and the glory for what He has done in our salvation. God plans it and God does it. Paul says in Philippians 1:6 He who has begun a good work in you is the one who is going to complete it. He is the one who's going to finish it. He's going to make sure that you and I get to the day of redemption. He is going to make sure that you and I are sealed by the Spirit. So he gives us this look from the divine side.

Then in verse 13 he gives us the look from the human side. We looked at this last week from the standpoint of salvation is of the Lord. You and I are called upon to do what? To believe. He says in verse 13 that it is simply this matter of hearing the Word. In Him you also when you heard the Word of truth. Hearing the Word is just a synonym for believing the Word here. You heard the Word. You believed the Word. The Holy Spirit is the one who applies that Word to your life. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives you understanding, who brings you conviction, who gives you the gift of faith to believe.

What do you have to believe in order to be saved? You have to believe and understand that you're a sinner and that sin has separated you from God. You have to understand and believe that there's nothing that you can do to earn God's merit. That seems very foreign to the natural mind because we're trained to think that God, like every other relationship, wants us to do something for Him. The Gospel says no, not at all. You don't have to do anything for God. You have to believe that you're a sinner who has fallen short of the glory of God. You have to believe that there's nothing that you can do. You simply have to believe that Jesus is who He claimed to be – the Son of God – and that He died on that cross for our sin. When He said it is finished, He meant it. There was nothing more that could be done. The Bible simply says believe. At that moment of trust and faith, you say God, I've got nothing. You've got it all. You've given me everything that I need. God says at that moment of belief you agree with God that Jesus paid it all, you have an inheritance. The basis of that inheritance is grace.

Now look at the certainty of this inheritance. I'm going to say it again. When you believe, amazing things happen. Amazing things happen. Tremendous things happen at the moment of belief. You are made a part of God's family. You are adopted into the family of God. You're placed in the body of Christ because Christ baptizes you into the Holy Spirit. Now we see that you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit and 33 other things that are listed out there. One of those 33 is we are said to be sealed by the Spirit.

Let's look at that. What does it mean to be sealed by the Spirit? "In Him you also when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Then he says over in Ephesians 4 – don't grieve the Spirit by whom you are sealed. What is this sealing work of the Spirit? What is involved here? A seal, as Paul uses this phrase, and this word meant a number of things. First of all, it meant that the transaction was finished. The transaction that was being undertaken is finished. Our salvation is complete. Jesus did say it is finished and He meant it.

The sign of ownership. Secondly, it is a sign of ownership. Like a rancher takes the brand and brands his cattle. What does that brand mean? That's mine. That belongs to me. That's mine. If you get a car you have to go get a title, don't you? That title is like a seal. It says that is yours. The transaction is completed. It is finished. It's a sign of ownership. But you know what else it is? It's a sign of security. It is a sign of protection. The moment you believed, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit said you are Mine. You belong to Me.

Listen to this. That verb "to seal", to be sealed with the Spirit, the Holy Spirit Himself is the seal. In baptism, Christ baptizes us into the Spirit which places us in the body of Christ. This seal that Paul speaks of here, the Holy Spirit Himself is the seal in our life. But get this. This verb to seal is aorist and it's passive. That's important for this. Remember aorist means something happened at a point in time. It's not speaking of something progressive at that point. It is not speaking of something indefinite. It is speaking of a point in time. In the past something happened. What do you suppose that was? You believed. It's passive in its voice which means what? It is called the voice of grace. It means God did something to you. you realize we're never told to go get the seal of the Holy Spirit. Just like we're never told to go get the baptism. We're never

commanded to go and be sealed with the Spirit. Why not? Because it's a sign of God's grace in your life. He's doing it to you. he's putting you by means of the Holy Spirit into His family forever. So it's a sign of protection. It's a sign of security.

That should be enough but it's not. There's more. Look at verse 14 and see yet another description. The Holy Spirit, who is this seal, is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of His glory. He is just looking to the coming of Christ or your death or my death. When it's all done, that's how long this guarantee is. Who is the guarantee of our inheritance? It's the word *arrabon*. You have you have been pledged. The Spirit is our guarantee. He is our earnest. It is the Holy Spirit who has sealed and pledged us. Have you ever bought a home or a piece of property? Very often, in a part of that process, the buyer wants to know how serious you are and we put down what we call earnest money. *Arrabon*. That says I am deadly serious about this. I want this and to show you how serious I am about it, here's a bunch of money I'm putting down. I won't get that back unless I back out. That's the picture that Paul gives us here. It is an indication of God's commitment to us that there's more to follow. God says to us I'm going to give you all of My promises. We read that. Ephesians 1. We have every spiritual blessing, and in going to carry through on this, I'm giving you a down payment. The down payment is the Holy Spirit. So we are indwelt. We are sealed. We are given a down payment.

The other way this word is used – it's a beautiful picture. It's used of an engagement ring. When you give your fiancé that engagement ring, you were giving her an *arrabon*. That *arrabon* said a number of things to her. It said that you wanted her forever. It said I want you and I to be together. It said we're going to enter into a relationship and this is just the beginning. There's more to follow. And little did we know how much more there was to follow. What could be more appropriate than to give a ring in light of the fact that Christ is the Bridegroom? We as the church are the bride and we look forward to this great marriage supper. We have a ring and that ring is the Holy Spirit who is a symbol of God's commitment. So what do you have? The basis of our inheritance is grace. The certainty of our inheritance is the pledge of the Holy Spirit.

Look at this last thing. The aim of our inheritance. Why do you suppose that God has done this? Why do you suppose He has chosen us? Why do you suppose He has

redeemed us? Why do you suppose He has laid claim to us as being His permanent possession? He tells us of the end of verse 14: that it might be to the praise of His glory. That it might be to the praise of His glory. Listen. God calls people to Himself so that we will be eternal worshipers of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We are a redeemed people designed with the end that we would be a worshiping people. In the Old Testament God gave His people an entire book called the Psalter which is really a book of worship. The psalmist, if he said anything, said let the redeemed of the Lord say so. Let the redeemed of the Lord worship this great and awesome God. What is it that worshipers do? Worshipers in the plan of God are people who give praise. God's plan not only results in my salvation, but it results in my giving praise to God. Go back again in the Ephesians 1 passage verse 3, verse 6, verse 12, verse 14. To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory. That's what this is all about. It all comes about because of God's grace. It all comes about through Christ. It all is sealed by the indwelling Holy Spirit who is our guarantee. He is our down payment. He is our security and pledge that what God has begun He will finish.

What do we take away? It would have been enough if God in His grace had given to us the Holy Spirit as our Helper in this life, but it is far more than that, my friends. The Spirit of God is a sign and promise that the best is yet to come. The best life that we could ever imagine and can't even imagine is yet to come. What do we do? We get to rest in that truth. We get to praise God for all of time and for all of eternity for the reality of that truth. I say to you again this morning that you and I who have put our faith in Christ are signed, sealed and as good as delivered because of the grace of God at work in our life. We come back again to the glory and wonder of how this is possible. It is only possible by means of the gospel of God's grace.

I may be speaking to somebody here this morning who has been in church a good part of their life. Maybe it is as if you have been on some treadmill trying to perform for God in a way that He never intended for you to do. You are tired and you're weary and you're worn-out. I say to you the gospel of grace is designed just for you, just as it is designed for each one of us. When Jesus said it's finished, it truly was and He truly meant it. We rest in that truth. So what do we do now? The only thing we need to do, the only thing we can do, we've got to pray and then we've got to sing.

Let's pray. Father God, we are incredibly thankful. Lord, we are unable to express because of the wonder of Your grace in our lives our gratitude and Thanksgiving. Father, we confess that very often we can go for long stretches not even mindful of the fact that You by Your Spirit live within us. We confess that and acknowledge that as sin. We pray, Father, that You would stir us by Your Spirit to live in light of His presence in our life every moment of every day. Lord, we do so because of Your grace. We do so because of Your mercy. We do so because of Your kindness. We do so because of the gospel. For that we are forever thankful. In Jesus's name, Amen.