Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

Someone said to me recently that we don’t really spend enough time thinking about the Holy Spirit. And I have thought about that since our conversation and I kind of agree and disagree. If you are talking straight percentages, in terms of how often we mention the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, I agree; we do devote way more time and attention to the Father and the Son. But then again, so does the New Testament. And our chapter is a typical example of this – the apostolic introduction in verse 1 mentions Christ Jesus and God, and the greeting of verse 2 only mentions God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And verse 3 again mentions the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and then there are many more mentions of God and Christ throughout chapter 1. It is only in verse 22 that we get the first and only reference to the Spirit in this chapter. And this is quite typical of the New Testament. So if the New Testament refers to Jesus Christ and God the Father way more than it does the Holy Spirit, then it is not surprising that we would do the same.

And another point that is relevant is that when Jesus was telling the disciples that He and the Father would send them the Holy Spirit, He said, “*He will glorify me*.” So you may have heard the Holy Spirit described before as a **spotlight** shining on Christ; He wants us to focus not on Himself but on the Lord Jesus. And so, as one commentator has put it, “Wherever we are drawn to Christ as Saviour, led to worship Christ as Lord, made to behold Christ as glorious, [it is because of the work of] the Holy Spirit [within us.” So when we focus on Christ, we are not in anyway neglecting the Holy Spirit.

Now, having said all that, we ought to know the Holy Spirit and think about His person and work. Our God is a Triune God; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Earlier in the service we confessed that the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, “is worshipped and glorified.” So it is right and beneficial for us to focus especially on the person and work of the Holy Spirit, as we are doing today.

Well, the context of these verses is the **Apostle Paul defending his apostleship**. There were some in the church in Corinth who were accusing Paul of not keeping his word about a second visit to Corinth. And the assertion behind that accusation was that if we cannot trust Paul’s everyday promises, then can we really trust what he has told us about salvation? So Paul is defending himself against these claims in verses 12-2:4. And he starts, in verses 15-16, with an explanation of his itinerary. But then Paul lifts the whole matter from an argument about an itinerary to an appeal to the gospel. And his gospel appeal has two parts:

* First, in verses 18-20, he points to Christ as the ‘Amen’ to all God’s promises. His point is that if Jesus had not come then we might have reason to doubt God’s promises. But He did come. So Jesus Himself is the guarantee that all God’s salvation promises are true.
* And our text is his second point. And here the focus is the Holy Spirit and how He makes us share in Christ and all His blessings. And Paul’s point here is that **believers may be confident about the gospel because of the Holy Spirit’s work within them**.

And this is what we want to focus on today. We want to take note of the role of the Holy Spirit in the four aspects of salvation that Paul identifies in these verses. And they are our being **established**, **anointed**, **sealed**, and **guaranteed**. For as we see what these things mean and that that the Spirit has done them in us, then we too will have every reason to be confident in the gospel.

1. So let’s take these one at a time: “*And it is God who has* ***established*** *us with you in Christ*.” So what does this mean?
   1. Well, this is the doctrine known as the believer’s **union** with Christ.
      1. The moment a person responds to the preaching of the gospel by repenting of their sins and believing in Christ as Saviour and Lord, he or she is united with Christ.
      2. And it is an unbreakable union. That is why Paul uses the word established. The Greek word translated as established means to make firm, to make steadfast. The image is of something set in stone or concrete – it is absolutely rock solid.
      3. We sometimes speak about an established business or established procedures or an established artist. And we use that word to contrast that business or those procedures or that artist with new and uncertain and changeable versions.
      4. So if God has established us with Christ, if we have experienced fellowship with Christ, if we have found that even when we stumble in our sins, Christ picks us up and restores our fellowship journey, we have great reason for confidence.
   2. But notice that this is not just an establishment or union with Christ; it is also **with every other believer**. Paul says, “*God … has established us* [meaning the Apostles] *with you* [meaning the Corinthian believers and every other believer] *in Christ*.” So we are not only united vertically, with the Lord Jesus, we are also united horizontally, with each other.
      1. And again, if we have experienced this fellowship, if we have been lifted up by the prayers of our brothers and sisters, if we have been refreshed by their hospital visits, if we have joined our hearts and voices with them in congregational singing, we have great reason for confidence.
   3. And this being established in Christ and with every other believer is **a work of the Holy Spirit**. It is not stated explicitly here, but before discussing union with Christ and every other salvation blessing in Ephesians 1, Paul says, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing*.”
      1. In **John 3** we read about Jesus’ conversation with Nicodemus. And Jesus’ message to Nicodemus was that the only way to enter the kingdom of God was to be born again by the Holy Spirit. So it is the Holy Spirit who begins us in the Christian life.And then He continues to work every salvation blessing that Christ has secured for us in us, our whole life long.

1. And what we have just said about how the Holy Spirit begins us in the Christian life is what the second work of the Holy Spirit that Paul identifies is all about. It is that God “*has* ***anointed*** *us*.”
   1. And there is a very deliberate wordplay in the Greek of verse 21 that goes like this: “*It is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has Christed us*.” The Greek word translated as “anointed” is basically Christ. The word Christ means the Anointed One. So Jesus is the Anointed One and we have been made anointed ones.
   2. In Old Testament times, all those called to serve as prophets, priests, or kings were go through an anointing ceremony, whereby the priest or the prophet would anoint them with oil, symbolizing the equipping of the Holy Spirit.
      1. Well, right at the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our perfect prophet, priest, and king. We read about this in **Matthew 3:16**: “*After [Jesus was] baptized, [He] came up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him*.” And when Jesus spoke about this, He said, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to proclaim good news*.” And later on Peter said, “*God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power*.” So Jesus is the Christ – the Anointed One.
      2. But before He ascended to heaven, Jesus told His disciples that He would send His Holy Spirit to live in each believer. And in **1 John 2:20**, the gift of the Holy Spirit is described like this: “*But you have been anointed by the Holy One … [and] the anointing that you received from Him abides in you*.” So as believers, we have received the same anointing as the Lord Jesus – the Holy Spirit.
   3. And I trust that **you will recall times when you have been able to do something, which you know was only by the anointing power of the Holy Spirit**. You resisted temptation (“*do not grieve the Holy Spirit*” – Eph. 4:30), or you told someone else about the Lord Jesus, or you took a bold stand on some moral issue when that stand is very unpopular, or you refused to give in to anxiety and instead trusted in your Father in heaven, or you gave away some possession to someone in more need than you. These sorts of things are all evidences of your anointing by God with the Holy Spirit. And if you can see these sorts of things in your life, you have another reason to be confident in the gospel!
2. But wait! There’s more! For the third work of the Spirit that Paul identifies as reason for confidence in the gospel is that we have been **sealed**: “*and* *who has also put His seal on us*.”
   1. Back in the day, to prove that a letter or document was genuine, and to prevent tampering or forgery, you would put a big gob of wax on it and press your seal into the wax. And the person receiving the letter would recognize your seal and see that it was intact and know that this was a genuine and secure letter from you.
   2. Well, God has put His seal on us. We have within us the sign that we belong to Him; that we are genuinely His; that we are authentic children of God; that we are secure for all eternity. And what is the seal of God? It is the Holy Spirit Himself.
      1. **Ephesians 1:13** says of believers, “You *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit*.”
      2. And this is the fulfilment of the prophecy in Ezekiel that we read earlier, where the Lord spoke of the time when Messiah would come, saying “*I will put my Spirit within you* … *And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you*.”
   3. So turn over the page, for a moment, to **2 Corinthians 3:2-3**, where Paul paints a picture of what this means. There, he wrote this of the Corinthian Christians, “*You yourselves are our letter of recommendation, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all. And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts*.”
      1. Do you see what he was saying? To prove that the Apostles were genuine apostles, you only had to look at the Corinthians! They were like letters that had the seal of God on them – the Holy Spirit, living in their hearts. Anyone who knew the Corinthian believers could see that their lives had been changed by the Apostles’ preaching. They had begun to put off evil deeds and put on works of righteousness.
      2. And if you can see this in yourself; that by the power of the Spirit you too are working to put off evil deeds and to put on righteous works, then you can be confident that you are a child of God. And note what I said there: you can be confident that you ARE a child of God, not that you will become a child of God. We put off evil deeds and we put on righteous works because we have salvation in Christ, not to earn our salvation.
      3. Now, there will be an **ebb and flow** in this process of becoming more and more holy. Some of us might be sitting here today with fresh and serious sin weighing very heavily in our hearts. But the very fact that our sin troubles us is evidence of the Holy Spirit within us. So we confess ours sins and we resolve to not sin. But hopefully, when we take a step back and survey the big picture, we can see that the Spirit has been at work to change us and make us more like Christ.
3. And that brings us to the fourth and last spiritual gift that gives us confidence in the gospel, which is the **guarantee** of the Spirit: “*And given us His Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee*.”
   1. And other words we could use instead of ‘guarantee’ are ‘deposit’ or ‘first-instalment’ or ‘down-payment’ or ‘pledge.’
      1. Not that long ago some of you boys and girls did a walk/run for the cadets and GEMS. And you had to get sponsors. So you came to many of us and you asked us to write down how much money we would pledge to give you if you walked or ran the course. And the way that pledges work, once someone pledges $2 or $10, and signs their name, that you will get the money is guaranteed. You don’t have to try and convince the person to give you the full amount all over again because you have their pledge. And it is the same when we pay a deposit for a house or a car or an appliance; the deposit is the guarantee or the first instalment that the full amount will eventually be paid.
   2. Well, in heaven, you will enjoy the perfection and fullness of Christ and all His blessings. And your guarantee of that reality ii the Holy Spirit; He is God’s pledge or the first-instalment of what will one day be yours in full.
      1. **Ephesians 1:13-14** puts it like this: You “*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*.”
      2. And **1 Peter 1** describes it like this: God “*has caused us to be born again [by the Holy Spirit] to a living hope … to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you*.”
   3. Dear believer, have you wondered what the role of the Holy Spirit will be in heaven? I must confess that I have struggled at times to see what He will do. I totally understand that down here He causes us to be born again, and He comforts us, and, as Jesus said, that “*He teach [us] all things and brings to [our] remembrance all that [Jesus] said*,” and that He works through the word to sanctify us; to make us more holy; to make us more and more like Jesus. But when we are in heaven, what will He do? We won’t need to be comforted; we won’t need to have our conscience pricked so that we confess ours sins; we won’t need to become more holy. So, what will the Holy Spirit do in heaven? Well, I really like this explanation of Kevin DeYoung, “In heaven, the Spirit will continue to teach us more about the inexhaustible riches of Christ. He will continue to be the personal bond that unites believers in [our heavenly] fellowship. And He will continue to minister to us the [very] presence of God the Father and … the Son, who together with the Holy Spirit are triune God, blessed forever.”

So, believers can have confidence in the gospel because of the person and work of the Holy Spirit within them. By Him, the Father **establishes** believers in Christ, **anoints** them, puts His **seal** on them, and **guarantees** their heavenly inheritance. So the question is: Do you have this confidence? As you read these words and having heard them explained, can you look at yourself and say, Yes, I see the evidence of the Spirit’s presence in my life? I pray that you can. Amen.