

Stablished in Christ

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians 1, verses 21 and 22. Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us is God, who hath also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our house.

Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ and hath anointed us is God. These words are part of a recitation that Paul thought it necessary to make of a slander that his critics in Corinth had sent into circulation regarding him.

It all originated in this, it would seem, that Paul had planned and had promised that he would at a certain time pay a second visit to Corinth and something happened that prevented his carrying out that plan and his critics were saying, well, that is the kind of man he is.

He's unreliable, he's shifty, he's not to be depended upon. And they were arguing from the man to the message. They were saying his message must have the same defect as himself.

It's not a reliable message. And one way or another, they were disparaging Paul in Corinth. Now that would not have a great deal to Paul if the disparagement were of himself only.

[1 : 32] But he had identified himself with his message. And the message had been given him by Christ so that any disparagement of the servant must in the end be a disparagement of the master also.

And that is how Paul links up this disparagement that his enemies were making with the gospel that he was proclaiming.

He wants to refute it. He feels that it needs to be refuted. Not for his own personal gratification but for the good of the church which he was serving.

So he goes on to say Do you regard me as a sickle person who would likely change my plans in the gospel of my master Jesus Christ?

Do you think that I run my life on plans that are devised solely by human reasoning and that I have no divine guidance in this matter? If that were so then you might very well speak of me as one whose yea was not yea and whose nay was not nay.

[2 : 45] But who sometimes said yea and didn't act upon what he said and sometimes said nay and again didn't act in accordance with what he had said. But the idea of being vacillating and changeable like this was so utterly abhorrent to him that he comes away with this solemn affirmation in verse 18 that as God is true our word towards you was not yea and nay for the Son of God Jesus Christ who was preached among you by us even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus was not yea and nay but in him was yea for all the promises of God in him are yea and in him amen and for the glory of God by us.

So we come to the theme of the words that I have proposed for our text this morning and the theme obviously is steadfastness. Steadfastness.

Steadfastness that becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ. Steadfastness that becomes the gospel of Jesus Christ. And these verses I want to suggest to you bring before us four elements of Christian experience which makes a Christian the man that he is.

And the four elements are these consolidation to begin with then consecration then conservation and then lastly and then lastly and then lastly confirmation first of all then consolidation now he which establisheth us with you in Christ and has anointed us as God he has established us with you in Christ and to be established in that way to be consolidated in that way is a tremendously important thing in a Christian life and it's a quality that is still all too rare amongst us.

One wouldn't say that these changeable people are not Christians but one is bound to say that they are not Christians of the exemplary type.

[5 : 02] I think there's Spurgeon who once said that they were rather like the weathercocks. They weren't blown off this people but they were blown about on this people and it's quite a good symbol.

It's a tremendously important thing to be as Paul put it rooted and grounded in the faith. the two figures that he takes there are deeply significant.

If the rooting of the tree is faulty then obviously its growth is going to be adversely effective. If the grounding of the building is imperfect then the whole structure will be in peril.

But you may say it's all very well it's all very well for Paul and the other apostles to talk about being established in the faith. It was easier for them to be established in the faith than it is for us today.

After all you say they lived in the first age of Christianity which was very largely an age of miracles during the apostolic period. They saw things that we have never seen.

[6 : 14] They saw for instance the dead restored to life. They saw the sick man healed by a touch. they saw the maimed man made normal. And when these men went to prayer there were times when as we read in the Acts of the Apostle the very place where they were assembled together were shaken as by an earthquake as if to remind them of the power of him to whom their prayer was addressed.

Prison doors were opened as men prayed and sang together. Oh it was easy you say to be established in the faith then. The proof that the faith was indeed the faith and the final faith were abundant and convincing.

But we do see things like that today. Now to reason like that is to proceed on false assumptions.

and particularly in this false assumption that the establishment in the faith comes through unusual things through sensational things through dramatic and miraculous things which bear down all the objections that men could possibly make to the Christian faith.

don't forget that Jesus said this to some of those who had beheld the greatest of his wonders ye have seen and yet have not believed.

[7 : 54] Faith and consolidation in the faith doesn't necessarily come that way. Unbelief has always varied with an explanation of its own. You remember how they debated over the man whose vision was restored when he acted upon Christ's bidding to go and wash in the pool of Siloam?

They were reluctant to begin with to believe that the man had really been blind but when that fact was confirmed on indisputable evidence they found another explanation other explanations indeed and eventually they said well yes a miracle has taken place but it's got nothing to do with this man that was just a coincidence give God the glory it was God that did it for some reason or other this man had nothing whatever to do with it and again when he healed the man with the withered hand in the synagogue of Nazareth although it was difficult to refute that argument or the validity of Christ's claims they did something else they certainly didn't believe they certainly weren't consolidated in the faith because they didn't have a faith to be consolidated in they took up stones and would have stoned him to death for that manifestation of his power and you'd have thought that when

Lazarus at his call came back from the dead that would have been the end of the opposition Jerusalem would have received this man who had called Lazarus back from the dead as indeed the promised Messiah what could Messiah do that would be more amazing and more powerful than what they had just witnessed but you remember the effect that it had the priest began to talk about expediency he must be put to death it was expedient that it should be so rather than that the nation should perish and it took counsel to drive Lazarus back to the sepulchre from which he had been raised and Christ with him let them both be slain let this evidence of the power of God be removed from amongst them and on the other of Pentecost that marvelous day in the history of the church when the church was endued with power from on high there were multitudes present there in Jerusalem and they saw and heard amazing things they heard a mighty rushing wind they saw tongues they saw tongues of fire descending upon the assembled

Christians present in Jerusalem they heard the gospel being spoken in all manner of tongues to the people from all nations round about so that all might know what was going on and you remember the explanation of what a poor one it was these men are full of new wine no faith and consolidation in the faith doesn't come in that way and it isn't true you know that we haven't seen as wonderful things as the people of the first generation of Christianity saw it really isn't true it is true of course that we've never seen a person brought back from physical death to life we've never seen a leper cleansed by just a word or a blind man given his sight by just a touch we haven't seen miracles of that kind but we've seen if we may compare miracles with miracles we've seen even greater wonders from the evil we've seen the spiritually dead walk back into newness of life we've seen them living as new creatures in Christ

Jesus surely a tremendous miracle we have seen moral lepers cleansed and leading pure lives we have seen not water change into wine but the sorrow of conviction changed into joy the joy of pardon but it isn't because we have seen these things that we believe unconverted people are seeing this kind of thing if they had only just an understanding of what was going on they see this kind of thing going on wherever a life has been changed by the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ but they don't accept it it's a miracle and they don't recognize it and we haven't come into the faith because we saw things like that whatever strengthening a faith we derive from such wonders it wasn't in that way that that personal experience of the power of Jesus Christ entered into our lives and the reasons that we give for believing are not reasons that would impress the world and that is as Paul explains it because the carnal man receiveth not the things of the spirit of God you have foolishness unto him neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned and he hasn't got that spiritual discernment if we now believe in Jesus Christ it is because the Holy Spirit has wrought within us and God has given us half reasons for believing reasons far more satisfying than anything that could come to us through our physical senses however much the testimony of our physical senses may help he has established us he has established us we are consolidated in this way by the action of his own spirit that's one element in the experience of a Christian the next is this consecration he has anointed us he has established us and he has anointed us the same God did both things to us now as you know anointing was practiced from early time in symbol of the setting apart to a sacred office for instance the high priest was anointed we have an account in Leviticus of the elaborate ritual of the setting apart of the high priest especially to his sacred office we sang about it also in

[15:17] Psalm 133 and kings also were anointed for as surely as the priest was God's servant and was anointed as such so too was the king their power and their authority in each case were derived from God and both priest and king were answerable to God for the exercise of the power that was given to them you remember how in the doxology with which the book of the revelation opened these two high offices these offices that required anointing are brought together and to him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and have made us us whom he loved and washed from our sins with his own blood it's something that is in the experience of every believer he hath made us kings and priests unto God we are anointed in that devil sense as kings and priests unto God so that believers have both the crown and the mitre they wield both the scepter and the censer now you might think that this is rather an exaggerated estimate of the

Christian life people used to smile at Billy Bray the Cornish miner when he used to speak of himself as the king son he smiled indulgently it was a notion that cheered the good man in his poverty and enabled him to endure Billy didn't see it that way and Billy knew what he was talking about he knew that he had the anointing of the Holy Spirit as a believer in Jesus Christ and he knew that that anointing of the Holy Spirit was given him as one who belonged to the king's family he was royal himself he was a son of the king he had anointed us anointed us as kings and priests under God and the truth is of course that the believer is already and in this life exercising the authority and power that come to him through this anointing he's already enjoying the privileges that come with the anointing the priest for example had the privilege of access to God which others didn't have all believers of that the veil has been rent and the believer can come by a living a new way to God and come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need and he's exercising kingly prerogatives too he already reigns exercises rule in the kingdom of his own life by the spirit taking control of himself ruling those lusts that used to rule him and living as a new creature in Christ

Jesus but of course the full dignity which attaches to this anointing can never be seen in this world of sin where even the saints are sinners although thank God God has made his own people who were sinners to be saints although they're not yet perfect still the glory to which they have been called and which is already in part there will never be fully displayed until they are taken out of this world and as overcomers sit with Christ on his throne in accordance with his promise now all this implies consecration the consecration of the believer even in this life the king the priest by his very anointing was set aside set apart for special duties exalted duties given to him by God and so the believer however humble he may be in circumstances in talent in everything the believer is set apart for the service of Jesus Christ and this anointing this consecration should have the profoundest influence upon the believer's life and determine the kind of man that he ought to be and that is the explanation of many of those experiences that believers have in this life experiences of divine discipline and correction they are being as far puts it being made meat for the inheritance of the saints in life being prepared for this full honor and glory of kingship and priesthood that will be theirs when they leave this world of sin and when they leave sin itself behind them and because

Paul knows this he glories in tribulation our light affliction he says which is but for a moment he ought to throw us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory all things work together for good unto them that love God who are called according to his purpose and Peter touching upon these things says if these things be true well then what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness he has established us and he has anointed us we are not your own says Paul to these Corinthians he has bought with a price he has to glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's and the next element in Christian experience that is touched upon in these words is conservation he has he says also sealed us sealed us established us anointed us sealed us now this sealing to which

Paul refers was a common custom in the mercantile life of current and that is why Paul uses this figure the figures that he uses are always appropriate to the places and to the people where he preaches and among whom he preaches sometimes seals were affixed to the articles that were purchased in the marketplace they weren't immediately removed it was impossible that they should be arrangement had to be made for the removal but lest they should be misappropriated either willfully or in ignorance the seal of the purchaser was in one way or another placed upon the merchandise so that everybody would know to whom these things belong our policies are the significance of that in the Christian life he has sealed us he has bought us purchased us with his own blood he deemed us from the bondage of sin and he hasn't taken us away immediately to heaven with him for his own purposes he leaves us for a while in this world that we may be his witnesses epistles of Christ to be known and read of all men that he has left something with his people which serves as a seal proclaiming to the world whose they are and whom they serve remember how Paul brings this out in his reference to the seal in writing to the

[24 : 33] Ephesians foundation of God standeth sure he says which of this seal the Lord knows them that are his and let all them that love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity let them depart from iniquity let them be in the world but not of the world let them live on a higher plane and thereby show forth the praises of him who has called them out of darkness into his marvelous light let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity

I remember being told many years ago now of an incident when a young woman was before the church session of her congregation being interviewed as a candidate for admission to the Lord's table the minister did his work wisely and well didn't try with hard questions would just appeal to her own experience she said something like this to her do you confess that you were a sinner in the past oh yes she said and do you confess that you're a sinner still oh yes she said I'm a sinner still then he said what difference does Christ made to you you were a sinner and you are a sinner what difference did he make to you she said he made this difference to me that whereas in the past I was running after sin since I got to know him

I'm running away from it you see the difference departing from iniquity that's the disposition of the new life and the believer not running after sin but departing from it and because the believer is his and his master says anointed established anointed sealed he is secure as Peter puts it if I may refer to him again kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation in the last element that I want to refer to and that seems to me comes out of these words an element in Christian experience is this confirmation but he goes on to say who also have sealed us and have given us the earnest of the spirit in our heart the earnest of the spirit the earnest was pointing out that there's a difference between a pledge and what Paul refers to here as the urge the earnest can indeed be a pledge but it's more than a mere pledge when a man gives a pledge he might as his pledge give a valuable article of jewelry a house a field he might even give a human hostage that was his pledge that he would keep his word but when the earnest has also got that characteristic that it is a pledge that the man will keep his word it's got something more than that the earnest was peculiar in this respect that for instance if a man bought a forest he was given a piece of wood from the forest the earnest the token that all was going to be made over to him as a result of his transaction if he purchased an estate then the custom was that a sod was cut from the ground of that estate and solemnly presented to him it was the earnest he didn't have the full estate yet he just had that little portion of it but it was the earnest that the whole estate was his and was to be made over to him now that does not bring a new idea into this giving of the pledge this giving of the earnest but Paul is saying here is he has given us the earnest of the spirit that is to say we have the beginnings of the heavenly inheritance even while we are here on earth we have the beginnings of the heavenly nature whilst we are here on earth the spirit who indwells our heart is the earnest of that abundant and glorious spiritual life that awaits us in the world to come

God has taken possession of us he says by his spirit by the indwelling of that spirit he has taken possession of us for heaven even as he has taken possession of heaven for us and what a comforting thought this is that those very longings after holiness of which the true believer is conscious those very longings to be more Christ like those very promptings that send him to the throne of grace in order to be in communion with God these are all part of the earnest of the inheritance they tell him that although he is in this world he is no longer of it his citizenship is in heaven and he has got the earnest of the heavenly life in the new nature which the Holy Spirit has put into his heart he has given us the earnest of his spirit in our hearts where the devil can never get at us and where he can never rob us of what God has given us he has given it in our hearts and we are kept by the power of God through faith and to salvation so you see how

Paul raised this you might say relatively an important thing in his own life and experience and made it a message for the church for all time they were saying that he was fickle that he changed his mind for a very little reason that he couldn't depend on and Paul didn't like it not only because he didn't want to be described in such terms but especially because they were saying that like servant like master and he wouldn't have it no he said all the promises of God are yea and amen he is without variableness without shadow of turn and he argues from that for the complete security of all who have committed themselves to Jesus Christ established anointed sealed even the earnest of the spirit in their heart and my dear friends if we are

[32 : 57] Christians what fields of happiness ought to pass through our hearts as we meditate upon these things a good man once said that he would rather find in his heart a love to the Lord Jesus Christ than a longing after holiness than that an angel should stand beside him and tell him that he had seen his name in the Lamb's book of life and let him stand so you turn it over in your mind and I think you'll see the reason for his preference here was something impersonal experience something living something that was with him every day that was influencing him every moment of the day love to Christ yearning for holiness he would rather that rather find that in his heart and that an angel should tell him that he made name in the Lamb's book of life it's the earnest of the inheritance this longing this desire for prayer this desire for communion with God and without holiness no man shall see the Lord and if we do not have these longings then of course we don't have the earnest of the inheritance we cannot claim that we have but let us come to

Christ for this experience the experience that made a new man of Christ a man who was in the past a blasphemer and persecutor and injurious and who now labored to proclaim the gospel which he previously sought to distort and you will find in your own experience my friend if you come to Christ just what he did as a result of his kind now if any man be in Christ Jesus he's a new creature a new creation all things are passed away behold all things are become new may he have his nothing let us pray we come to you Lord with thanksgiving that thou hast so worked upon the hearts of men and promising material of these hearts as to bring men to thyself thou hast given them the earnest of the spirit in their hearts in the longing after holiness that new longing of which they are now sensible we pray

Lord that we may indeed love thee and long after holiness to be like thee for this is the great end to which thou hast the destiny to thy people to be conformed to the image of God's son that he might be the firstborn among many creatures walk over us we pray thee accept our worship for his sake and enable us to sing thy praise as we conclude this service continue with us for Jesus this is the Amen inaudible