

2 Corinthians 1:12-22

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[0 : 00] 2 Corinthians chapter 1, our text this morning will be verses 12 through 22. 2 Corinthians chapter 1, starting in verse 12 and going through verse 22. So if you're physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask you to join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God with one another, found in 2 Corinthians chapter 1, starting in verse 12.

Now I'm going to finish the chapter, we're going to come down to verse 22. For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world and especially toward you.

For we write nothing else to you than what you read and understand, and I hope you will understand until the end, just as you also partially did understand us, that we are your reason to be proud as you also are ours in the day of our Lord Jesus.

In this confidence, I intended at first to come to you so that you might twice receive a blessing, that is to pass your way into Macedonia and again from Macedonia to come to you and by you to be helped on my journey to Judea.

Therefore, I was not vacillating. When I intended to do this, was I or what I purpose? Do I purpose according to the flesh so that with me there will be yes, yes, and no, no at the same time?

[1 : 13] But as God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us, by me, Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no, but is yes in him.

For as many as are the promises of God and him, they are yes. Therefore, also through him is our amen to the glory of God through us. Now, he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we thank you for the opportunity we have together, together to worship. Lord, we pray that our whole focus, our attention, and all of our desire will now be to hear a word from you.

Lord, we pray that you would speak to our hearts and minds, and Lord, that the truths which we understand and the things that we know, Lord, would they be lived out for your glory and honor in the world you've placed and put us. And we ask it all in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Last week, we began making our way through the book of 2 Corinthians. Some of you were here. Many of you may not have been here. But if you remember, 2 Corinthians, Paul is writing back to the church at Corinth, the same church that he wrote the book of 1 Corinthians to.

[2 : 22] But he is not doing what he did in 1 Corinthians. That is, he's not addressing a problem. The problems have already been addressed in the book of 1 Corinthians. He is writing 2 Corinthians as a follow-up.

This is what many Bible scholars tell you, the third letter that he writes. We have the middle letter that is missing. He alluded to it in 2 Corinthians when we get a little bit further into it. So I think that part of that letter is actually included in 2 Corinthians, but we're getting ahead of ourselves.

But what we know is that Paul is not writing to the church to rebuke the church or to correct the church for any malpractice. He's already done that. He's writing to encourage the church. He's writing to admonish the church.

He's writing to really call the church to what all of Scripture does. And if you remember, we put the grand theme over 2 Corinthians called living authentically. He wants them to live an authentic faith in the world that Christ has put them in.

Now, for the church at Corinth, that was a grand opportunity. But it also posed grand danger because they had the opportunity to live out their faith among varying people. Because God had so ordained that this city was a central trade hub and people were in and out of it.

[3 : 29] There were all kinds of activities around. But because of that, because of so many people coming together, it was a melting pot. It should sound a whole lot like the United States of America, by the way, to you. In which everybody else's ideas also came into that city.

And eventually they became into the church. And as they got into the church, they began to lose their witness. We see that in 1 Corinthians. As we were making our way to the book of 1 Corinthians, we saw how the church was really being just a thermometer.

They were responding to what the world was doing rather than a thermostat that is dictating what the world should be. Just a minute ago, I went and checked a thermometer and it said it was hotter in here than it should have been. So I changed the thermostat so that it would change the circumstances.

Big deal, right? Because thermometers tell you what's going on. A thermostat changes what's going on. And the church is supposed to be in the world making a change, not just reflecting what is already happening.

And that's what was happening at the church at Corinth. So he corrects that with the first letter. Now he writes this second letter to encourage them to live accordingly. He wants them to live in authentic faith.

[4 : 29] You're not going to live make-believe faith. You're not going to live in somebody else's faith. He wants them to live out their faith. Now part of that responds to how they deal with him. We get to this point here in verses 12 through 22 where we really see what Paul is, it's kind of in self-defense.

I'll get it to you in just a moment. But really we see the testimony that he's given us and it is the testimony of a clear conscience. How to live with a testimony or the power of living with a testimony of a clear conscience.

Because see, Paul has already alluded to the fact that he's went through so much trials and troubles. He tells us in just a few verses prior to this that life isn't easy for him.

Authentic faith does not mean easy faith, right? Authentic faith at times means difficult faith, difficult walks. And Christ said that they persecuted me, they'll also persecute you. That if I went through difficult seasons, you'll also go through difficult seasons.

So it does not necessarily mean it's all going to be easy. It doesn't necessarily mean that it's all going to be comfortable. Authentic faith just means it has to be lived out in the midst of, unfortunately sometimes, the ugliness of life.

[5 : 37] And Paul is writing to them here saying that even in the midst of that, there is power of living with a clear conscience. Now we need to know why we got here. And what you need to understand is that Paul is responding to what the church at Corinth is saying.

And that is, the church at Corinth was questioning Paul. And we'll flesh it out in a little bit more in just a moment. Because Paul never showed up after his first letter. So you need to know that in a very kind of, put it in proper context.

And I'll show it to you in just a second. That Paul had said he was coming, but he didn't go. So they began to question Paul's reality and his authenticity. And they began to question if Paul really was who he says he was.

Even though the church at Corinth, Paul had spent longer there than any other place of ministry. He had spent more time there as their pastor. He not only was the founding pastor, he was there longer than any other place.

He had lived among them. He says the only thing he didn't expect from them was for them to provide for him. He provided for them. He had other people that were with him. Silvanus is probably Silas, who was imprisoned with him.

[6 : 46] Remember Silas and Paul in the jail cell? Philippian jailer is converted at that time because they're singing about the midnight hour in a jail cell. That's Silvanus. So Paul and Silas and Timothy are there.

And Silas and Timothy more than likely working and providing for Paul as well. And so Paul says, I've spent more time there, but yet they're doubting his character. And they're doubting the authenticity of his faith.

And he says the one thing that gives him comfort in this is the power of a clear conscience. Because, see, the conscience is that which really matters more than the opinions of others.

That is, the testimony that God brings from within us will testify louder and greater than the testimony of others about us. Friend, we don't have to go very far before we find people who do not like us or agree with us or do not like our stance or question us or doubt us.

And there will be people who talk about us until we're called to glory. That's okay. But what we need to know is the power of living with a clear conscience. Paul gives us four things I want you to say.

[7 : 48] See here, four things I want you to understand. The first thing that you notice is that this clear conscience is discerned in times of great trouble. Where do you find this out? It's not in the mountaintops.

Usually it's in the valley. Right? Paul says in verse 12, for our proud confidence is this. Some translations say, but our boast is this. The one thing that I will discuss.

The one thing that I will brag about. Now, just a couple of verses prior to this, Paul has already displayed and dictated to us that God brought him to the point where he despaired even of life itself.

That is, he thought he had the sentence of death upon him. He was being so persecuted for the faith. Paul suffers greatly for the faith. He's living it out, and he's living it out among the enemies of God.

He's shipwrecked. He's beaten. He's tortured. He's cast into the animals. All these things that happened to him. And he says, I've come to the point where I'm despairing even of my life. And we've seen, last week we looked at that, that God removed all self-confidence there.

[8 : 48] So that his hope, he says, would be found in God who raises the dead. This is a good thing when God removes self-confidence. That is, when we no longer trust in ourselves, but we realize we can trust in one greater than ourselves.

We're trusting in the God who raises the dead. So Paul says, I've already told you that I've come to this point where I couldn't trust in myself. My own ability, my own doing. But it was in that difficult season that God told him there was something that would bring him comfort.

And that is, during that season, because he couldn't trust himself, he came to a place of self-evaluation. Paul would write later in another book, he says, to examine yourselves to see whether or not you're in the faith.

You know, you don't examine yourselves when everything's going right. You don't examine yourselves when everything seems to be falling into place. Self-examination usually occurs when everything's falling apart and everything's difficult.

And Paul was graciously put into a point, into a place of self-examination where he despaired even of his life. So we have to think of it this way. Paul comes under such persecution that he begins to look, not externally, to see what's going on, but to look internally to make sure that he's in a right standing with the Lord his God.

[10 : 00] He knows at any moment, according to his own feelings, at any moment I will stand before my maker. And he comes to this place of self-examination.

And as he's examining himself, God does a wonderful thing there. God gives him something that he says in verse 12 is a proud confidence that is the testimony of his conscience. God begins to testify from within him that he is in a right standing, that he has lived his life in a proper way, that he has lived his life in an accurate way, that he has lived his life, he says, in holiness and godly sincerity.

Friend, listen, that comes in difficult seasons, not easy seasons. And we realize that when we come to that point of desperation, that it's not so much what others are saying about us, but from what God is telling us, God says in the word of God in John chapter 15 and 16, Jesus is speaking quite often of the Holy Spirit.

In the 15th chapter, he talks about the Holy Spirit coming within the believer and making its abode and its dwelling in the believer and causing us to bear fruit. In the 16th chapter, he says that the Holy Spirit is going to come, and the world doesn't want the Holy Spirit to be there because the Holy Spirit comes to testify to righteousness and godliness and sincerity and all this faithfulness stuff, right?

That the Holy Spirit is there as a testimony against the world. But the same Spirit that convicts the world is the same Spirit that comforts the believer. And he does it during difficult seasons because it is there that the conscience begins to testify to the reality of where we are.

[11 : 30] If you're honest, in your most difficult days, you know more about yourself than you do at any other time. And the conscience alone gives an accurate assessment of how we have lived because we love to convince ourselves we're better than we are.

But it is the conscience that testifies in moments of desperation that tells us what we really are. And Paul says, God brought me through a season.

And during that season of great trouble, I have realized that the testimony of my conscience is that I've done it right. That I've lived in godliness and sincerity, and I've lived in the holiness that he's called me to.

Because, see, friend, listen to me. Everybody doesn't like Paul. And that's okay. Paul needs to know what the Lord, his God, says about him.

And he's speaking to him through his conscience. And he says, this is my boast or my confidence. You need to understand that the testimony of your conscience is heard greatest in the difficulties of seasons.

[12 : 37] We discern it there. Number two, a clear conscience is a defense against the character of others. It is a defense against the attacks of our character.

Paul was being questioned as to the power of his ability. If you were to turn back, I'm going to go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 5. That is right at the end of the letter.

Paul says, I'm coming to you. Now, Paul has just written this letter. He says, you need to cast this man out. I've handed him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh and the preservation of his soul. That's pretty big words, right?

Paul says that I rebuke him, that I correct him. Paul says, you need to change this, you need to change that, you need to change this. And he says, and I'm coming. I'm on my way to you. But Paul never came. If you look historically, and we'll pick it up when we pick up verses 23 into the second chapter because they all go together.

Paul tells us why he never came, but that's not our point here. We need to know that historically, Paul never went. He sent the letter by Timothy, and he got there, and he sent it from Ephesus.

[13 : 39] And then Paul says, I'm on my way. I'm going to come. I'm going to go out of the way, come to you, and then I'm going to go to my intended place, and then I'll come back to you again. Paul didn't do that. He took the normal route, and he avoided going.

So people inside of Corinth began to question the character of Paul and say, oh, well, Paul was just blowing smoke. Paul was never going to come. He was just trying to scare us into obedience.

Paul was really just facilitating, as he would say. He was just making things up. He was just bluffing us a little bit. And the character of Paul began to be doubted. Now, to Paul, that was a big deal.

And Paul could only defend it not based upon his apostolic authority, though he speaks of that later in this letter. Paul's defense was the testimony of his own conscience. It was not what other people said about him.

It was not what other people thought about him. It was what God was testifying to him through his inner man. Paul is saying here that this is the greatest defense I have, that I have acted in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God.

[14 : 42] We have conducted ourselves in the world. He says, I'm not doing things the way the world does them. I'm doing things the way the Lord God does them. And he says, and especially toward you. God showed him in that moment of suffering and God showed him in that moment of reality that the way he responded to them was accurate.

God began to testify. Now, we should pause right here and say, well, what if we're in a difficult season and our conscience doesn't testify to the authenticity of that? What if during that season our conscience tells us that we're wrong?

Well, that's when we know that we have a sin against a brother. Our brother has a sin against us and we repent and we go ask for forgiveness. Remember, Jesus spoke of that. Jesus says, if you're praying and you're asking God for blessing and there in the moment of prayer, you realize that you have sinned against a brother.

Our brother has anger towards you that you first must be go reconciled to your brother before you can come before the Lord your God. Right? That's when the conscience begins to bear witness. And all of a sudden you have something you need to handle.

There's something you must do. Those are not comfortable seasons, but they're accurate seasons. And there are things that we have to respond to because God tells us that what is not... You can be in that season, friend, listen to me.

[15 : 50] You can be in that season where everybody speaks well of you, but inside you, you know there's a problem. And no matter how much good everybody else says about you, when the conscience testifies to you, there's something you need to deal with.

You need to deal with it then. One of the dangers we've seen in the Old Testament, we're studying the Old Testament, we're making our way through the book of 1 Kings right now. And in 1 Kings, we've seen that Solomon has died and now Rehoboam, Solomon's son, is sitting upon the throne.

And Solomon's son had a grand decision he needed to make. He had all these men over here who told him one thing and he had all these people over here who told him another thing. The problem is he had a bunch of yes men over here that grew up with him.

And he had a bunch of older, wiser men over here. You know who he listened to? He listened to the yes men because we can always find people that tell us what we're doing is right. You know, you don't have to go far in this world before you can find somebody to tell you what you're doing, whatever it is, is right.

And if you surround yourself with a bunch of yes people, but the conscience is still testifying to the reality, it matters little what other people say about you. What matters is what God is telling you from within you. And it's the same thing.

[16 : 48] If everybody around you is telling you you're wrong, yet the conscience within you is testifying to your rightness, it matters little if they're telling you you're wrong. What matters is what God is telling you internally through the testimony of the conscience.

Because, see, people are going to attack our character. People are going to come against us. And it is not for us to shape our character to what everybody else thinks we should do.

Rather, it is up to us to look at our character and say, God, am I on the right path? I got a secret for you now. Some of you know it. Some of you don't. By nature, I'm a people pleaser.

People who know me only as pastor and preacher say, well, that's really bad because you'll stand up and you'll jump all over my toes and you'll make me mad and you're upset and you can care less about what I think. That's what some people who only hear me preach think about me, and that's okay.

That's absolutely further from the truth because, by nature, I'm a people pleaser. That is, it bothers me when people get upset at me. It bothers me when people don't like me. I want everybody to like me.

[17 : 45] It's really not a good quality, by the way. That's a bad quality. That's, by nature, who I am. Now, I know that about myself, but one thing I ask is that God casts aside that nature when I stand behind a pulpit because it matters little if everybody says I'm doing a good job.

If, when I step away from it, God says you've fallen woefully short. And anytime we're walking in faithfulness, we need to make sure that it is a testimony of the conscience that it is our greatest offense, not the appeal of our character.

We need to make sure it's not that we're making everybody happy. It's that we're living in truth. And the reason is the third thing. It's because the conscience really affirms for us that we are displaying the truthfulness and faithfulness of God.

Paul here defends himself. He says, I'm living in holiness and godly sincerity. And then he begins to say why. By the way, stay with me. I know all this stuff is kind of technical, but it really, I preached this whole sermon to get to the fourth one, okay?

So you've got to preach it to get to the end. Because there's a lot of verses before the last two, and the last two are powerful, so I just, I'm glad you're staying with me. Somebody asked Billy Graham one time, how many points does a good sermon have?

[18 : 49] And he said, at least one. So my one is at the end. These other ones are technical things that we need to know how we got there because we don't want to take it out of context. So stay with me. So anyway, we see here that this display of truthfulness and faithfulness of God is really what our conscience has testified to us.

Paul says that he has lived this way, not because he thought it was good. He has lived this way, and it says in verse 18, but as God is faithful. As God is faithful.

See, he had been called into a relationship with a holy God. And as God was faithful, Paul had tried to live faithfully. And as God had dealt with him, he wanted to deal with others.

This is why he says he does not operate according to the standard of the world. That is in wisdom. He does not, if you go back and you read 1 Corinthians 16, verse 5, where he says, I'm intended to come to you.

There's this little tagline at the end that some people forget to read. As the Lord wills. And the reason that's important is because he understood the reality wasn't his, he didn't have the final say so as to what he was going to do.

[19 : 57] The book of James says that we cannot say today and tomorrow we're going to do this and that. It says we can't do that because we don't control today and tomorrow. What we say is if the Lord wills, we will do this and that.

And if the Lord allows us to have another day, we'll do that. Right? And this is exactly what Paul is saying. But Paul says, as God is faithful, so too have I tried to live faithfully. And then he begins to speak of the truthfulness of God.

Because he says, our word to you is yes and no. People say, well, he's saying yes over here and no over there. He's just kind of going back and forth and he's really not giving it a firm word. He says, our word to you is not yes and no.

Now look at this. He says, for the son of God, Christ Jesus, who is preached among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not yes and no, but is yes in him. And I love the next verse, verse 24.

As many as are the promises of God, him they are yes. That is, every promise that God has extended to all mankind finds its ultimate answer in Jesus Christ. Every promise that God extends is found in the truth of that promise.

[20 : 56] And Jesus says, I am the truth, right? With a capital T. He is the truthfulness of what God has declared to us. And what Paul is saying here is that his conscience has testified to the reality that while it may not make sense to the world, he has tried to live according to the faithfulness of God and the truthfulness of God found in Jesus Christ.

And he's trying to live by that standard, not the standard of mankind. He's not making plans the way the world makes plans. Because our lives, friends, should be a display of the faithfulness and truthfulness of God.

That is, God does not fail. His promise is God does not fail to keep his word. And our lives should be a display of that. He says, every promise of God's answer is yes in Jesus Christ.

Now, we've got all the introduction out of the way. Let's get to the sermon. Fourth and finally, we see that these matters are derived from the powerful work of God.

That is, how do you get a clear conscience? How do we have the testimony of a clear conscience? We see the benefits of it. The benefits of it is that in that moment of great trouble, it speaks to our hearts and calms our soul.

[22 : 09] The benefit of it is that when people oppose us and attack our character, we have a defense that is internally God testifies to the reality. The benefit is that we begin to display God's faithfulness towards us and the truthfulness of God found in Jesus Christ.

Those are all benefits. But the question is, but how do we have it? And the way we have it is found in the last two verses. I'm not going to give you a whole other sermon here, but I'm going to hope to bring it together.

Because you don't get it on your own. Paul says that in that moment of trial, he despaired of his life and he had no self-confidence. You don't get a clear conscience by being good and by trying harder and by crossing all your T's and dotting all your I's and your own abilities.

Because the natural conscience of man testifies to the reality that we are in desperate need of redemption. Paul says it this way in the book of Romans. That all of us know that we're sinful.

That we fall woefully short of the glory of God. You don't have to really tell man that he's bad. You may have to convince him he's not good. But you don't have to tell him he's bad.

[23 : 18] We know it because of the natural testimony of our own conscience. The book of Ecclesiastes says that God has set eternity in the heart of all men. There is something longing within, and I want to say men, I mean men and women, that God has set something in the heart of every individual that knows there's something greater than themselves.

And naturally, we try to meet that need through varying consequences. One of my favorite preachers of all times, you know him, S.M. Lockridge. I've told you about S.M. Lockridge, and I know some of you have listened to S.M. Lockridge, and you've listened to That's My King by him.

Well, That's My King is an eight-minute clip of an hour and 45-minute sermon. I don't know if it's quite that long, but it's pretty long. S.M. Lockridge, the greatest sermon ever preached.

You need to go listen to it, and I love the way he introduces that sermon. He says, the world is forever chasing the bubbles, and the chasing of those bubbles is just trying to meet the testimony of our conscience.

We chase the bubbles of fame, of entertainment, of trying to, he says, we try to smoke it away, drink it away, or drug it away. But we're forever chasing bubbles.

[24 : 32] And the reality is that man knows he has a desperate need. And in that greatest struggle where he is most vulnerable, and in that moment where he is exposed to not what others think of him, but what he knows of himself, that's why man doesn't like to be alone.

That's why man does not like to live in isolation. That's why man likes to surround himself with joys and pleasures and entertainments. Because when the world is still, and the only voice he has to listen to is the testimony of his own conscience, he knows that there is something missing.

There was a day and time in this world where we didn't have all the entertainment. There was a day and time in this world where things were a lot slower, before the invention of electricity and all those other things. And what I have found is people read their Bibles more then than they do now.

Now, John Knox would read Genesis and Revelations every 30 days in the 1600s by candlelight.

Because, as it is said, man had time to consider their soul. One of Satan's greatest tools is the busyness of our world, so that we can silence the testimony of our own conscience.

[25 : 41] But what we find in the last two verses is that where this is derived from, it tells us here in verse 21, Now he who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.

You have a three-fold ministry of God at the moment of salvation. It is a three-fold ministry that really fulfills the purpose that God has for you.

It says that he establishes you, he anoints you, and then he comes and then he seals you. You are established, anointed, and sealed.

Now, that's a good word. Because it is at that moment of surrender, when you say, I desperately need a Savior, and you give your life to Jesus Christ, the Bible says you are established.

I love the word established. That means you're settled. That means it's taken care of. That means that God has established you with others in Christ Jesus. Now, that's a wonderful word because we have understood this, that when you come to Christ, you're not left in isolation.

[26 : 46] Peter says that we are all spiritual stones being connected to one another. We are built up to one another. That we are established with others. That is, he puts us around other people to help hold us up. And he puts us there so that we can be connected to them and they can be connected to us.

And we are established in Christ. You're not established on your own works. You're not established in your own abilities. You're not established in your own worthiness. You're established in Christ. And that's a good word because I don't want to be established in who I am.

I don't want to be established in what I can do. I want to be established of what he has already done. And it says that he who establishes us is God. And he says in the moment you are established, you are also anointed.

Now, I know we're in a Baptist church. And I know anointing scares us in the Baptist church. There's a lot that scares us in these passages in the Baptist church. It is the anointing and the Holy Spirit. And we get scared to death about that because we don't understand.

I got some friends of mine pastor non-Baptist churches. And I kind of wish some of the Spirit would fall upon us. And he said, you know, I got some old ladies that will take super soakers and fill them with anointing oil and go squirt the houses of some of our members to get rid of some of them problems.

[27 : 52] I said, that ain't a bad word. I said, can they come to our church every now and then just squirt us as we walk in, right? I get us in trouble. Pastor, somebody squirt me with some oil out there. Well, you've been anointed. That's okay. Somebody is not going to have a meeting this afternoon.

I know. But look at what the Word says. The Word says that the moment that he establishes you in Christ, you are also anointed. Now, in the Old Testament, there were only three people that were anointed.

Prophet, priest, and king. There's the only three that were ever anointed in the Old Testament. Prophet, priest, and king. Now, I want you to notice that those that were anointed, they were anointed because God had a call upon their life.

They were anointed because God was commissioning them to do something for him in the world in which they lived. They were either to prophets, to be prophesying to the people, declaring, thus saith the Lord.

They were to be priests, that is to be serving the people of God for the glory of God. Or they were to be king and they were to be sitting upon the throne of God reigning the people of God. Prophet, priest, and king. The only three people that were anointed in the Old Testament.

[28 : 55] And they were anointed because of the calling of God upon their life. And the calling of God was putting them to a place and position of usefulness. They were no longer who they used to be. The anointing changes everything.

It changes them from being the shepherd out in the field keeping the sheep to being the king of Israel, even though nobody acted like he was king yet. Go look at David, all right? Go back to 1 Samuel. He was anointed and he was the king of the Lord.

Saul was still king there, but Samuel anointed David and now he's king because the anointing changes everything. The Bible says that the moment that God establishes you in Christ, he anoints you for usefulness for the sake of the kingdom.

So you have been anointed and set apart to be used for the kingdom of God in the world in which he's put you in. So now you are established in Christ. You are anointed and then you are sealed.

The Bible says that there has been a seal placed upon you. If you go back in the pastor's office back here in the back, you will go in and you'll see my desk and all of its mess sitting there.

[29 : 56] But if you turn around and you look at the wall that the couch is sitting on, you'll see a couple of things. You'll see a sticky man hanging upside down above my door. Don't touch it. My kids and I are doing a scientific experiment.

That thing's been hanging up there seven and a half years. We want to know how long it'll stick, okay? I know some of you are curious and I've seen people reach out and don't touch it. It's a very scientific experiment we're doing.

Beside the sheetrock could come down with it. But if you look to the right of that, you'll see this picture frame. And inside this picture frame is a piece of paper. And that piece of paper is the deed to the church property.

It's where we're sitting today. Now that piece of paper would be just something regular but some handwriting on it. As a matter of fact, it's got a mistake on it and they just scribbled it out with their ink pen. And wrote it there too.

I was like, I don't know all official life. But the thing that sets the paper apart is the seal from the state of Tennessee that's imposed upon it. The seal signifies the reality that that is indeed the deed for the property in which we sit upon.

[30 : 55] Without the seal, it's just a normal piece of paper. But the seal shows the authenticity of the piece of paper, right? There are other pieces of paper that may be that old. They may be laying around the church.

We don't know. But it is the seal that's on that paper that makes that paper so different. So the moment you come to Christ, you are now established. You are anointed to be used.

And then you are sealed to show that you are authentic. And you are sealed not only to show that you are truly a believer in Jesus Christ. You are sealed until the day of redemption, the Bible says.

That is, it is set upon you to show the authenticity, to show the final payment, to show that it was finished. They put the seal upon the paper when the deed was already signed. You had to sign it.

Now, I am of benefit to know that I know several notaries of the public. People that have to put their seal on a piece of paper that I have to sign. And thankfully, because your pastor forgets sometimes, when I have to fill out those pieces of paper, I know enough notaries that will let me go ahead and sign it when I'm not in their presence.

[31 : 57] Now, this may get them in trouble. If you're here, don't say you've done it for me. But I'll sign it and send it through the hand of my wife, and they'll seal it for me. You're supposed to sign it in their presence. I know. I don't want to get anybody in trouble, but, you know, I forget.

And I'll go ahead and have it signed. But the sealing comes after the signing. That is, it shows that it really was my signature. These people have seen my signature enough. They know what it looks like.

It'd be hard to copy mine anyway. They don't have to see my ID. They know who I am. So they seal it. Somebody's going to come up to me later and say, Pastor, you're going to get them in trouble. And I know, I apologize in advance for that.

But anyway, we know that what that seal does is it shows that these things are real. So here it is. The more you come to Christ, you are established with other believers.

You are anointed to be used. And you are sealed to show that the work is through, that you are authentic. And just in case you forget it, he gives you a pledge in your heart.

[32 : 56] And it is the Holy Spirit testifying within us. And it says that that pledge in your heart, that's a down payment. That's what it is. Or a dowry. It is the down payment to the reality that the full payment is coming.

When you have the Holy Spirit up in your heart, it says, It is there to testify that you ain't what you're supposed to be yet. You're not what you're going to be yet. You're not who you should be yet.

But who does this? God in Christ. And he gives you the down payment to show you that he will not fail to make the full payment.

That there will be a day where you will be what you should be. Paul says, I'm not yet what I should be, but I press on. Towards the goal of the call of Christ Jesus.

Knowing that one day I will be as he is and I will see him face to face. See, Paul's testimony was not, the conscience didn't tell him he was perfect. The conscience told him he had been established, he had been anointed, and he had been sealed.

[34 : 01] And the Holy Spirit within him was a reality that God was not through, but God was calling him back to himself. My question to you, and I'm wrapping up this, what does your conscience testify to you? How does it proclaim to you in that difficult season?

And of what benefit is it to you during those times? Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. I thank you for your goodness and your faithfulness towards us. Lord, I thank you for all that you have done. We thank you for the word of God.

Lord, as it speaks to our hearts and our minds and our every situation. Lord, we pray now that we would take it and we would apply it and live it out for your glory. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[36 : 23] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[38 : 53] Thank you.

Thank you.