





is damaged or distorted. The imagery implies the world is out of kilter, disharmonious, because of sin and in Christ God is putting things back together harmoniously.

We often think that the Gospel is essentially a message for individuals. God wants individual people, one by one, to personally believe in Christ, and salvation is ultimately about the individual believer being saved out of this world. Yes, each of us must respond to Christ as an individual but here Paul says God has a much bigger plan that involves the whole creation, both earth and heaven.

*Q. 8. How could Paul's big picture of salvation/restoration reshape our thinking if we took it seriously?*

Verses 13-14: As Paul comes to conclude his long recital of the blessings we have in Christ he speaks of the Holy Spirit. He says those who believe in Christ are marked by the 'seal of the promised Holy Spirit'. In the ancient world a seal signified ownership. In English we mean much the same when we say 'branded'. Christians are marked or branded by the Holy Spirit. What marks us out as Christians is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life. Paul then calls the Spirit 'a pledge of our inheritance'. The Greek could be translated a 'down payment' of our inheritance. It is something we have here and now but when we come into our inheritance at the end there will be more waiting for us. Remember the comment above about our blessings in the heavenlies. Paul always thought what awaits believers in heaven is known and experienced in part now

*Q. 9. On the basis of this Pauline teaching, the Spirit has been called a 'foretaste of the blessings of heaven.' What do you think of this way of speaking of the Spirit*

*Q. 10. How can we better understand the work of the Spirit in our Christian life and church?*

*Q. 11. In writing to the Thessalonian church Pauls says to them, 'Do not quench the Spirit' (1 Thess. 5:19). How do we metaphorically pour cold water on the work of the Spirit? What modern day examples are there of believers quenching the work of the Spirit?*

*Q. 12. What have you learned from this passage? A number of people in the group should be given the opportunity to respond to this question.*

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