

Ephesians 1:13-14 "Sealed for the Day of Redemption"

Ephesians 1:13-14 ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.

Up to this point Paul has been praising God for the spiritual blessings we have in Christ as we place our faith in His atoning work. Some of those blessings include God choosing us before the foundations of the world and predestining us unto adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ.

We saw in verse 7 how these spiritual blessings include our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us...

He's revealed the mystery of His will to us in Christ, and that mystery is that He desires an eternal relationship with us in Christ. This relationship is part of an inheritance, as we saw in verse 11, whereby we are heirs with Christ because He has earned the favor of the Father through His perfect obedience and He has placed that righteousness to our account as we trust Him for this gift of eternal life.

Paul says in ROM 8:15-17 "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. (Or adoption) And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs -heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."

When we talk about receiving an inheritance, for example, from uncle Charlie, who's independently wealthy, we might get excited about the prospects of having his estate and all his money. But how do you compare temporal wealth with the eternal inheritance we have in Christ who owns everything and has all authority in heaven and earth?

This eternal inheritance in Christ is something we share in today. But much of it has been put in a trust for us. Like small children who are the beneficiaries of an estate, they may not actually receive the full inheritance until they reach the age of 21. It

belongs to them, let's say, at age 5, but they will not reap the full benefits of it until a later date. They receive portions of it, but they always have the hope that they will receive it in full one day.

This is similar to our inheritance in Christ. We have it all put to our account, but much of it is future oriented. Our hope starts today, but the full benefits of that inheritance are future oriented. We receive a down-payment of it today with the promise we will receive it all one day.

What is the promise of that down-payment? How do we know, as we place our faith in Christ, that we have this promise of an eternal inheritance and fellowship with our God forever?

Eph.1:13-14 "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory."

Verse 13 tells us that we are in Christ if we've placed our faith in Him. All that the Son receives as an inheritance from the Father we share in. But notice how verse 13 begins. The NIV puts it, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,"

This makes it sound a bit like you were included when you simply heard the word and then after you believed you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. The Greek structure of this sentence puts both sentences into one thought.

A more literal translation would be, "in whom also you, hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."

The idea here is that hearing and believing must go hand in hand. Lots of people hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, but that doesn't make them a Christian. In fact, in this country, people hear the gospel so often they seem to become immune to its message. It's like someone who works around machines all day. You can actually tune them out.

Someone else may come into the shop where you work and ask how you can function with all that noise. And your response, what noise?

Others may listen to the Gospel and see the beauty of how God sent His Son into this world to die for sinners, but they don't think they need it right now. Or they may even go through the motions of coming out to listen to the word but the cares of this world choke it out because of self-interests.

The prophet Ezekiel had to contend with this attitude when he was sent by God to Israel.

EZE 33:31-32 "My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. 32 Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice."

The way we listen to the truth is as important as the truth itself. Jesus said in MAR 4:23 "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." 24 "Consider carefully what you hear," ...

This is why Paul says in our text that, "in whom also you, hearing the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also believing, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." (verse 13)

If hearing is not coupled with faith, there is no salvation. But the hearing comes from ears touched by the Holy Spirit who not only opens the ears but unstops the ears so that we hear Jesus.

MAT 11:28-30 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

When Jesus says, "follow Me", He expects us to follow. Simply hearing the exhortation does not solve the problem of going in your own direction which leads to death. We must trust Jesus at His word that He not only knows where He is going but that He is a rewarder of those who follow Him by faith.

The Gospel message by itself doesn't save anyone. It must be embraced by faith and then we will see how the power of God will make us into new creatures in Christ. This is what Paul said to the Romans.

ROM 1:16-17 "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

It is when we believe, according to Eph.1:13, that are sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise.

An amazing miracle takes place at conversion. This miracle from God literally gives the sinner a new nature. It is the nature of God Himself. His nature is eternal and this is why we can speak of receiving eternal life in Christ, because we are receiving His life.

In receiving His life by faith we receive the hope that this is a sure hope, not some pie-in-the-sky and it will most certainly come to pass because God is faithful in His promises.

But it's not as though God just throws us a promise without also "sealing the deal". When you or I sell a house we enter into a contract with the buyer. They sign the contract and they put down earnest money to seal that deal and show their good faith in buying that house.

The contract is binding and we trust that we will in fact receive the full price for the house. However, there is always a way to get out of a contract; maybe not without penalty, but there's always a way around it.

And this is where men and God are eternally different. When God enters into a contract, or covenant with you and me, He never goes back on His word or has a loophole to back out of this relationship. His seal is eternally binding as we place our faith in Christ.

This is an awesome truth and is such a comfort to us when we realize that He wants us to spend eternity with Him, and that He desired this relationship so much that He came into this world as a man to die in our place so that we could share in His eternal life in fellowship with Him forever.

But this relationship starts with accepting this Gospel, this good news, by faith. A saving faith that doesn't look back. But what does it mean to be sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise when we believe?

First of all it's interesting to note that the Holy Spirit is a person, not a thing, or an impersonal force. He is God, just as the Father is

God and just as Jesus Christ is God. All three persons have existed for eternity and all three persons are equal in power and glory. And the reason for that is there is only one God.

We talked about this last Thursday at our bible study in Genesis when the verse came up in GEN 1:26 * Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, ... Here the plural form of God in the Hebrew is the word Elohim. And what we know to be true is that God has revealed Himself in more than one person and yet we know He is only one God.

In fact in the next verse in Genesis we see this clearly.

GEN 1:27 So God created man in his own image, ... We see this intimated again in Gen.2:5 when God is referred to as Yehovah (the) Self-Existent or Eternal One.

The prophet Malachi asks a rhetorical question regarding the creation of the universe.

MAL 2:10 "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?"

Isaiah and Moses also drive home the point as they write respectively in the following verses.

ISA 45:5 "I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me,..."

DEU 4:35 "You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other."

The Hebrew in Deut. 4:5 shows us both the One God and yet the plurality in the Godhead. The phrase "The Lord is God", essentially says, Jehovah is Elohim.

Therefore we must conclude that though we may not understand how all of this works itself out, when God says that He seals us with the Holy Spirit, He does not mean to infer that we are sealed and filled with an inferior part of the Godhead. The Holy Spirit is God Himself. How can any aspect of God be inferior to the other persons of the Godhead?

God is One and yet three persons. And so the Holy Spirit of God is vital to our relationship with our heavenly Father through Jesus

Christ. He seals us unto eternal life. That word "seal" means to mark out for a purpose.

In ancient days when the King sent a message to anyone he would take a seal, which usually had his royal emblem on it, and then he would close the letter, melt some wax and then drip it on the envelope. While the wax was hot he would press that seal into the wax and it would receive the image of the seal.

No one could open this letter for fear of death, except the recipient. It had the Kings mark on it. But seals were also used to designate ownership. When cargo was put on a ship it contained the seal of the owner.

In a similar way God places His seal of ownership on us. Satan no longer has any claim on us. Outside of Christ we belonged to the father of lies, but in Christ we have a new Father, the Creator and Lord of the universe. We belong to God and you'd better believe that God will fight for you and be there for you as any father would be there for his child.

This sealing of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer is to assure us that as we journey through this life that one day we will be delivered to the owner of this vessel. When we come to port our heavenly Father is waiting for us with open arms because His Son purchased us with His blood.

But unlike a temporary stamp placed on our foreheads, the seal we have is a person who indwells us. It is a personal seal that gives us new life and hope and direction found only in Christ.

This is what Paul tells us in 2CO 1:21-22 "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

But the Holy Spirit, given to His children in Christ, is the person promised to us by Jesus Christ Himself, and in fact, was promised from ages past. Part of the promise of the Holy Spirit was the way in which He would work in the lives of those who placed their faith in Christ.

This promise was given to the prophet Joel.

JOEL 2:28-29 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. 29 Even on my

servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."

We see a similar promise given to Israel in ISA 44:3 "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants."

But prior to Jesus Christ coming into this world and being raised from the dead for our sins, no one was permanently sealed with the Holy Spirit. The O.T. saints did not have this privilege.

JOH 7:38-39 "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." 39 By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified."

This was part of the promise of the Holy Spirit; to be indwelt with the living God and to be sealed with Him for the day of redemption. But this sealing was never meant for only select Christians. This sealing was not some second blessing. Every believer has been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

JOH 14:16-17 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever - 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you."

At that point Jesus had not gone to the cross and been raised from the dead. But He was saying that when He went to be with the Father He would send the Holy Spirit to seal us. In fact, we know how that happened for the first time after the resurrection when Jesus appeared to His disciples.

JOH 20:19-22 "On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

At that point they were indwelt and sealed with the Holy Spirit. Interestingly, after Jesus breathed on His disciples and they were

indwelt with the Holy Spirit He later said to them in ACT 1:4-5
On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this
command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father
promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John
baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with
the Holy Spirit."

We know what that baptism of the Holy Spirit is because a few
verses later in Acts the risen Christ explains how this baptism of
the Spirit would affect their ministries.

We read in ACT 1:8 "But you will receive power when the Holy
Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem,
and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Unfortunately, many Christians take this to mean that we will be
baptized with the Spirit simply to manifest some gift or power.
And though it is the Holy Spirit who gifts us and empowers us it is
always meant to bring glory to God as we love and serve Him.
"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and
Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

It's an empowering for the work of the Kingdom, not to puff
ourselves up. It is this Holy Spirit of promise whom Paul wants us
to glory in, knowing that Christ has not left us without fellowship
after He ascended to the Father.

This is what Jesus meant when he said in JOH 14:18 "I will not
leave you as orphans; I will come to you."

He has come to us through His Holy Spirit, referred to as the Spirit
of Christ in Romans 8:9.

We have constant fellowship with Jesus through His Spirit, the
Holy Spirit of God, who is God Himself. It is this Spirit of God
who has been given to us to seal us for the day of redemption.

We have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, but there will
be a day when that redemption will be called in. Years ago, they
may still do it at some grocery stores, they used to give stamps
with your groceries.

When I was a kid I used to go to the store with my mom and as the
sales slip was being spit out of the register so did a line of green
stamps. And I remember taking those stamps home and licking
them and putting them in a book for my mom. Well, there was a

store in town called the Redemption store where you took those books of stamps and redeemed them for merchandise.

In a way, this is what the Holy Spirit will do for us. We've got the stamp or seal in Him, and one day, as we stand before our God, our redemption will be complete. In that day we won't get merchandise, we will receive the eternal life promised to us, that which we had hoped for, as we placed our faith in Christ's redemptive work at the cross.

This promise of eternal life is as secure as the One who holds us and seals us for that day of redemption. I like the way Paul explains it in our text in EPH 1:14 "who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of his glory."

This word deposit in the NIV can also be translated down-payment. But it's a down-payment which is intended to one day be paid in full, which is why it's referred to as guaranteeing our inheritance.

Paul gives us the same teaching in 2CO 1:21-22 "Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, 22 set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

He continues in that same letter in 2CO 5:4-7 "For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. 6 Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. 7 We live by faith, not by sight."

That's what makes this relationship with Christ so tough at times because we are still clothed with this flesh, living in a world which is not our home. And yet we're told that we must still be to praise of His glory and the only way we can do that effectively is to live by faith each day, depending on the Spirit's power to see us through to the end. And He will. He promises as He guarantees to bring us home.

This relationship is a sweet one for the child of God even on this side of heaven as Paul points out the Galatians.

GAL 4:6-7 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

For the unbeliever who walks according to the pattern of this world, he does not have this hope. This world is essentially his home, ultimately to be delivered to destruction. And yet we know this world is destined to perish and that will be the fate of all who reject Christ. No hope, no future with the Creator and no turning back the clock as they are eternally separated from their God.

May we praise God for the life we've been given in Christ and the hope we have in Him. This hope and His love has been shed abroad in our hearts and it's a hope which is sure.

ROM 5:5 "And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

We have a life of freedom in Christ; not a freedom to do what we want in the flesh, but a freedom to love and serve our Lord. We don't live according to a set of rules and regulations. We live according to the life we have and the Spirit who sets us free in Christ to truly love our Lord and serve Him all our days.

ROM 7:4-6 "So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. 5 For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death. 6 But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."

It is the Spirit of God who resides in us and constrains us to walk according to truth and in a way that brings glory to God. We belong to Christ. Let's show the world that truth as we are daily depending on the Spirit who is conforming us into the image of Christ who is bearing the fruit in us that He desires; "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." (GAL 5:22-23)

Let me close with an exhortation from Paul in ROM 15:13 "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,

so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

Let your hope rest secure in God who gives hope and guarantees us life eternal with Him in Christ, who has given us His Spirit as the down-payment of our inheritance. Let's not grieve Him but please Him in all things.