

# ***Signed, Sealed and Delivered***

## ***Ephesians 1:13-14***

All of us know today is September 11. It was ten years ago today that we all witnessed the tragedy of the terrorist attacks on our nation. Will you join me in prayer, as we remember this event?

Our Father in heaven, we thank You for this country, the United States of America; we thank You that this country which, for all its faults, has stood as a symbol of freedom in this world. Thank You for the healing and hope You brought to many after the terrible crisis we faced ten years ago. Thank You for those who died attempting to save others on that day and for the many who have sacrificed since then so that others might benefit. May we learn from them the meaning of offering ourselves as a sacrifice to You. We know the cause You give us, of being Your servants and spreading Your Gospel of truth, is yet greater and nobler -- and just as demanding of us -- as their causes. Strengthen us, Lord, help us to understand the need to be fully devoted to You, to be willing to sacrifice our own comforts and desires so that we might be Your faithful servants, willing to give our all for You. Amen.

In our studies in Ephesians, we have come to the end of this majestic sentence that praises God for the spiritual blessings he has given to us, to those who have faith. Paul tells us that we are chosen, predestined to adoption as sons, to being God's heirs; that we are redeemed, forgiven by God, bought by God. Furthermore, God has revealed to us the future direction of the universe: All will be summed up in Christ, and we will play a role in that summing up. We have discussed these blessings in the last several weeks.

At this point, there are two logical questions to ask: How do I know I am among those receiving these blessings? When do I receive these blessings?

Several years ago when Kathy and I had been married for about 15 years, we for a long time had wanted to stop paying rent and purchase our own home. Several times before we had tried to buy a house but it did not work out. We had looked at house after house. Finally, we found just what we were looking for. The location was close to the church. And by a miracle of God we qualified for home loan. We were excited! We would soon be homeowners! Everything was great. Then came time to sign the contract. Along with the contract, we had to sign a check. That check represented our earnest money, money we had worked hard to save. Signing that check meant we were serious. It meant that buying that house had moved from the subjective state to the objective state. It became real.

Many of you have had that same "sign on the dotted line" experience. At some point, the rubber must hit the road. Think of Ephesians 1 in the same way. In this chapter God has given believers so many promises. In v.1, He says we are "**saints.**" In v.3, He says we have "**every spiritual blessing.**" In v.4, He says we are "**chose[n] in Him before the foundation of the world.**" In v.5, He says He has "**predestined us to adoption.**" In v. 7, He says we

have "**redemption**" and "**forgiveness.**" In v.11 He says we have "**an inheritance.**" Along with these, the Bible describes hundreds of other promises

and blessings from God. How do we know they are true? It all seems so subjective. How do we know God is earnest?

The truth is, we need to know. If God really means all this, then there are astounding ramifications. We need to know for sure. We need more than just academic, intellectual understanding. We need experiential truth based in reality, not just something in our head, but something in our hearts as well.

We know that God's promises are true because He too has signed on the dotted line. We know His promises are true because He has given us His Holy Spirit as **"the guarantee of our inheritance."** In these two verses, let's examine the presence, the promise, the pledge, and the preview of the Holy Spirit.

### **I. We have the PRESENCE of the Holy Spirit (v.13a).**

#### **A. There is much misunderstanding about the Holy Spirit.**

In Acts 19:1-2, we read the account of one of Paul's visits to Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them **"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?"** They responded, **"We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."**

Their strange answer could be true for many who claim to be Christians today, **"We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."**

Many Christians live as though the Holy Spirit doesn't exist. Part of the reason this is true is ignorance. Many people have simply never been taught or have never learned about the ministry of the Spirit of God. As a result, they ignore His presence entirely.

All of this is so tragic. The Holy Spirit is vital to the life of every believer.

#### **B. There is much to know about the Holy Spirit. We don't have time to do a diligent study of His divine person and ministry, but here's a brief description.**

First, the Holy Spirit is a person, not an "it." He is God, not a ghost. He is the third person of the Godhead, the Trinity. There is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are one in essence and person. They are co-equals. The Holy Spirit is as much God as the Father or Son. An old preacher once said of the plan of salvation **"The Father thought it, the Son bought it and the Spirit wrought it."**

Second, the Holy Spirit has a vital ministry. The Bible teaches that He convicts us of sin, draws us to Jesus, baptizes us into Christ's body, indwells us, empowers us, gives us various spiritual gifts, fills us and conforms us to the image of Christ. Here we are told in our text that He seals us and guarantees our inheritance.

#### **C. The Holy Spirit is present in the life of every Believer.**

In v.13, we are told, **"in Him [Jesus] you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation."** The entire process of salvation is summed up in this verse.

Before you were saved, the Holy Spirit was at work convicting you of your sin and your need of Christ. He drew you to Jesus. Rom.3:11 says, **"There is none who seeks after God."** Apart from the work of the Spirit, we would have no desire to be saved. However Jesus said in John 6:44, **"No**

**one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day."**

Through the work of the Spirit, God drew each of us to faith in Jesus Christ. We "**heard the word of truth the gospel of your [our] salvation**" and then "**trusted**" or "**believed**."

The moment you asked Christ to come into your life, the Holy Spirit switched gears and began a new role. He came into your life. We call this "the indwelling of the Holy Spirit." He was "**sealed**" within you. Now He is your guide, your teacher, and your comforter. 1 Cor.6:19 says, "**Your body is the temple [a house of God] of the Holy Spirit who is in you.**"

## **II. We have the PROMISE of the Holy Spirit (v.13b).**

### **A. We have the Seal of the Spirit.**

V.13 also says that at the time we were saved, we were "**sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**" The Holy Spirit has come to live within us.

Rom.8:9 says, "**But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.**"

1 Cor.6:19 says, "**Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God...?"**

Rom.8:16 says, "**The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.**"

In ancient times, a seal was a symbol of authority. It was a stamp of a person of great authority. Sometimes the seal was on a signet ring. To seal a scroll, wax would be melted and the seal pressed into the wax.

In much the same way, when you were saved. God put His seal on you and in you. His seal is the Holy Spirit. The seals of the ancient world were external. God's seal on the life of every believer is internal and eternal!

### **B. Four Implications of being Sealed by the Spirit of God.**

#### *1. First, the seal is a sign of security.*

When Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, King Darius, along with his nobles, placed their seals on the stone placed over the entrance to the den, "that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel" (Daniel 6:17). Any person but the king who broke or disturbed that seal would likely have lost his life.

In a similar way the tomb where Jesus was buried was sealed. Fearing that Jesus' disciples might steal His body and falsely claim His resurrection, the Jewish leaders obtained Pilate's permission to place a seal on the stone and to guard it with soldiers (Matthew 27:62-66).

In an infinitely greater way, the Holy Spirit secures each believer, marking him with His own unbreakable seal.

#### *2. Second, the seal is a sign of ownership.*

When you pay off a home mortgage or a car, you receive a document with a seal that says you owe no more. The seal of the Spirit reminds us that our sin debt is paid in full, we owe no more!

In Jeremiah 32, the Lord told Jeremiah to buy a piece of land. The contract was agreed on, and the stipulated payment was made in the court of the palace guard before the required number of witnesses. In the presence of the witnesses the deed was signed and sealed, establishing Jeremiah as the new legal owner of the property (Jeremiah 32:10).

When the Holy Spirit seals believers, He marks them as God's divine possessions, who from that moment on entirely and eternally belong to Him. The Spirit's seal declares the transaction of salvation as divinely official and final.

On cattle ranches, the cows are branded as a mark of ownership. The indwelling presence of the Spirit is God's brand on us that proves we belong to God. Rom.8 says, **"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His."**

*3. Third, the seal is a sign of a promise fulfilled.*

In v.13, He is called **"the Holy Spirit of promise."** Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come (**John 14:16-17**). This promise is fulfilled. We have the Holy Spirit today. This proves the credibility of promises yet to come to pass!

*4. Fourth, the seal is a sign of commitment.*

God gives us the Spirit to point toward our future. Eph.4:30 says we are **"sealed for the day of redemption."** This gives a sense of security! He won't leave!

### **III. We have the PLEDGE of the Holy Spirit (v.14a).**

A. The Holy Spirit is our **"Guarantee"** or Pledge of our Inheritance.

V.14 says He is the **"guarantee of our inheritance."** The word **"guarantee,"** "earnest" or "pledge" comes from a Greek word that refers to a deposit, down payment or first installment.

A few moments ago, I spoke of putting earnest money down on my first home. Many years ago, I determined whom I wanted for a wife. I dated Kathy for a year. When the time came to propose marriage, I went shopping and bought her an engagement ring. I bought as much as I could afford and then some. I bought a ring that I knew she would like. When I offered her that ring, I was saying in effect, **"I offer you this valuable diamond ring as a symbol of my love for you. It is a guarantee, a tangible pledge of the life I want to offer you as my wife for the rest of our lives. If you accept it, you are receiving a down payment on my love for you from now on."**

In much the same way, when I was saved, God sent His Holy Spirit to live in my heart. The Spirit is the Father's way of saying to me, **"I give My Spirit to you as a sign of My promises. I would not send Him to you if I did not love you."**

An engagement ring symbolizes a promise of marriage. It does not symbolize marriage. The wedding ring does that. The engagement ring is a promise of a wedding ring to come. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in my life is not all God will give to me. His indwelling in me is a tangible pledge of the "**inheritance**" that will be mine someday.

The Holy Spirit is not my "**inheritance**." However, because I am sure of His presence in my life, I am assured of the "**inheritance**" to come!

John MacArthur writes,

As believers, we have the Holy Spirit as the divine pledge of our inheritance, God's first installment of His guarantee that the fullness of the promised spiritual blessings "in the heavenly places in Christ" will one day be completely fulfilled. They are assured and guaranteed with an absolute certainty that only God could provide. The Holy Spirit is the church's irrevocable pledge, her divine engagement ring, as it were, that, as Christ's bride, she will never be neglected or forsaken (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians, 36).

#### B. The Holy Spirit is our "Guarantee" or Pledge of our Security.

I have two evidences that prove to me that I am saved. First, I have the Word of God. The Bible says, "**whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved.**" When I was 14-years-old, I called on the name of the Lord. Second, I have the Spirit of God. I feel His presence, I hear His voice, I sense His leading, and I relax in His comfort. The Bible speaks to my mind, but the Spirit speaks to my heart.

The Holy Spirit not only is the "**guarantee of our inheritance**" but He is also the guarantee, the security of my salvation. I know I am saved because He lives within me.

Unfortunately, there are many believers who believe that they can lose their salvation. They believe they are saved, then lost, then saved, then lost then saved again! If that were true, it would mean that the Holy Spirit would go in their lives then come out, in and out, in and out, in and out. I don't read anything in Scripture that remotely teaches anything like that.

On the contrary. We are "**sealed with the Holy Spirit.**" He is the "**guarantee**" or down payment of God in our lives. All that speaks of permanence. He will be with us "**until the day of redemption.**" Until we live in the full presence of the glory of God.

There is a story about a man named Fredrick Nolan, a believer who lived in North Africa. Enemies chased him during a time of great persecution. Running through the countryside, he fell exhausted into a small cave. Sitting there waiting for death, he noticed a spider weaving a web. Within minutes, the insect had woven a pattern across the mouth of the cave. When the enemies arrived, they saw the web and assumed that he could not be in there. They left and Nolan was saved. Later, he wrote of his experience, "**Where God is, a spider's web is like a wall, where God is not, a wall is like a spider's web.**" When the Holy Spirit takes up residence within a person, He may seem soft and quiet, but He is the

power of God. The Father has placed Him over the doorway of our lives and we are secure (Anders p.44).

The Holy Spirit is our SEAL who guarantees that WE WILL BE KEPT SAFELY FOR THE INHERITANCE.

The Holy Spirit is our EARNEST who guarantees that THE INHERITANCE WILL BE KEPT SECURELY FOR US.

#### IV. We have the **PREVIEW** of the Holy Spirit (v.14b).

A. The Holy Spirit gives us a Foretaste of God's Glory.

V.14 says that our "**guarantee**" is until when? "**...until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory.**"

Our pledge or "**guarantee**" is a down payment of the complete transaction of the "**purchased possession.**" For now, even though we have the Holy Spirit, even though we have already been chosen, adopted, redeemed and forgiven we still live in sinful flesh. We still struggle with the desires of the flesh. We still give in to the temptation. Get this: it won't always be this way! God is going to redeem every part of us soon.

Therefore, what we have with the Holy Spirit here and now is a preview, a foretaste, an anticipation, a forward glimpse of "**the praise of His glory.**"

Think of the experiences you've had with God's Spirit, the relief of salvation knowing your sins were forgiven, the emotions that overwhelmed you as you sang to the Lord in worship, the unexplainable comfort He gave you through a trial, the exhilaration of following his lead and in turn leading someone to Christ. All these experiences and many more are but a foretaste of the glory to come!

Fanny Crosby said it well in this old hymn, "**Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, oh what a foretaste of glory divine!**"

If you don't long to be moved, used and led by the Spirit, you won't like heaven, for the Spirit previews glory for us!

B. Because the Spirit Previews God's Glory we should yield to Him Today.

Ps.34:8 says, "**Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!**" A taste of His ministry makes us want more.

I want to challenge you to be acutely aware of the Holy Spirit's role in your life. Listen for that still small voice as you worship, study the Word, and pray. As you meet people, listen for him to urge to witness.

In Ephesians 5:18, we are commanded "**be filled with the Spirit.**" This means to be yielded or controlled by the Spirit. It means paying attention to Him. God seals us with the Spirit, but we are to be filled with Him. Not just once but going back to Him again and again. That's what Gal.5:16 means when it says, "**Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.**" V.25 adds, "**If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.**"

D.L. Moody, the great evangelist of days gone by once asked a crowd, "How can I get air out of a glass?" Someone replied, "Suck the air out with a pump." Moody countered, "If I sucked all the air out there would be such

a vacuum that the glass would shatter." After several other impossible suggestions, Moody smiled and picked up a glass and a pitcher of water. As he finished pouring water into the glass, he said, "There. All the air is removed. Victory in the Holy Spirit is not by taking out as much sin as possible, but by being filled with the Spirit."

CONCLUSION: I have one word of application for you: YIELD. Yield to the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. Listen to His still, small voice. Obey His urgings. Release yourself to His control and He will fill you up with the tangible presence of the living God.

If you don't know Christ, you don't have His Spirit in your life. You can receive the Son and the Spirit today, but you must invite Him into your life.