

## Sermon Series: *The Book of Ephesians*



# Sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit

### **(Ephesians 1:11-14 ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup> so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

### Introduction

Last week we focused on verse 11 and 12. In those verses Paul noted the fifth of six blessings that belong to believers because of they are **in Jesus**, that is, because they are united with

Christ. As you will recall, verses 3-14 is one long, glorious, God-honoring, Christ-exalting, faith-building, sentence in Greek of overflowing praise of God for all that he has done for those who believe in Jesus. In this opening sentence, Paul lists six specific blessings<sup>1</sup> which those who are in Christ already possess by virtue of being **in him**.

In verse 11, Paul names the fifth blessing, which is the fact of **"having obtained an inheritance."** We should also note that the "we" specifically refers to Jews, for they most certainly are those **"who were the first to hope in Christ."** However, Paul does not immediately explain what that inheritance is. Instead, he explains how that inheritance came to the Jews. The *how* of the inheritance is more important to explain first than is the *what* of the inheritance.

The answer to *how* that inheritance came to the Jews is not found in the Jews themselves, but in God. The ultimate reason for how the Jews obtained the inheritance is not because the Jews were more righteous or more intellectually advanced or more theologically astute than all other peoples.<sup>2</sup> No. The ultimate reason the Jews obtained the inheritance is because God **predestined** them to receive it. God's eternal plan, which he determined in advance, i.e. **"before the foundation of the world,"**<sup>3</sup> is the ultimate reason for how the Jews obtained their inheritance.

This plan to give an inheritance to the Jews first was based upon the purposes of God, not the purpose of the Jews. We know this because Paul tells us that this eternal plan unfolded **"according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will."** This, of course, is God. The purposes of God are always sovereign over the purposes of man.

Why has God unfolded his redemptive plan in this way? So that the Jews might **praise his glory** (v.12). God saves so that the Jews might praise. God saved the Jews the way he did so that they would praise his glorious power, and love, and kindness, and grace. God saves so that the Jews would praise him.

In verse 13, Paul turns his attention to the Gentiles. **"In him you also..."** The "you also" refers to the Gentiles. The Jews were the first to believe and receive the gospel of Jesus, then the gospel was believed and received by the Gentiles. And here Paul explains what the inheritance is.

An inheritance is a gift you receive after the death of another. So what do these verses indicate is received?

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<sup>1</sup> Chosen v. 4, predestined v. 5, redemption v. 7, mystery revealed v. 9, obtained inheritance v. 11, & sealed by Holy Spirit v. 13.

<sup>2</sup> Dt. 7:6-9.

<sup>3</sup> See Eph 1:4.

Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup>*In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,*

### The Inheritance is the Holy Spirit

Once again, we read 'in him,' which, of course, throws us back upon Jesus. So what has the death of Jesus given? The answer is the Holy Spirit of God. **The promised Holy Spirit is what believers have obtained from Jesus as their inheritance.** The "gift that is given after the death of another," in this case, is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was given after the death of Jesus and receiving the Holy Spirit is receiving the long promised inheritance. Paul states this even more explicitly in his letter to the Galatians.

(Galatians 3:14 ESV)

<sup>14</sup>*so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.*

It is only **through faith in Jesus**, that one can receive the inheritance, which is the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus confirmed this. On the night before he was crucified, Jesus told his disciples that after he died, was raised, and returned to the Father, that he would then send the Holy Spirit to "dwell within them."<sup>4</sup> Then again after his resurrection and just before his ascension he repeated the same promise.

(Acts 1:4-5 ESV)

<sup>4</sup>*And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; <sup>5</sup> for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.*

This is what happened ten days later on the day of Pentecost.<sup>5</sup> The Holy Spirit was poured out on the people of God in a way that he never had been since the creation of the world. Peter helped everyone understand what was happening.

(Acts 2:32-33 ESV)

<sup>32</sup>*This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. <sup>33</sup> Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.*

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<sup>4</sup> Jn 14:16-17; 15:26.

<sup>5</sup> The Jewish feast to celebrate the harvest, which takes place 50 days after Passover/Easter.

This is amazing. This is breathtaking. Having the Spirit of God poured out in your heart. This is the greatest gift in all the world.<sup>6</sup> This is the undoing of the curse of sin upon humanity. Because of sin, humanity was forever separated from the presence of God, but because of Jesus, through the giving of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, we are never separated from the presence of God. If the Spirit of God is within you, then there is no place that you can go that his Holy Spirit is not with you. This is the inheritance believers have obtained through faith in Jesus—God himself. There is no greater inheritance than God himself. If you have the Spirit of God within you, then you have everything.

### Is There More Inheritance Beyond the Holy Spirit?

And yet, we don't quite have everything—yet. Do we?

We have not yet fully entered into God's glorious kingdom. This world has not yet been fully put right. Our bodies have not yet been fully set free from the corruption of sin.

So, receiving the Holy Spirit now might be nice and might be a wonderful inheritance, but how can we be certain that we will receive all of God's glorious goodness that we have not yet experienced. How can we be sure that we will enter into heaven? How can we be certain that ALL of God's promises will be given to us? Look at the last phrase in verse 13 and verse 14.

#### Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)

<sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Being in Jesus not only means that the Spirit of Jesus is in you, but it also means that you are **sealed by the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it**. So the Holy Spirit is our inheritance, but he is not *all* of our inheritance. There is more inheritance to receive.

Verse 14 says that the Holy Spirit is the **guarantee** of our inheritance.

The Greek word translated "guarantee" in this passage (ἄρραβών, G775) is a legal and commercial term that means "first installment, deposit, down payment, pledge" and represents "a payment which obligates the contracting party to make further payments."<sup>5</sup> When God gave us the Holy Spirit within, he committed himself to give all the further blessings of eternal life and a great reward in heaven with him.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See Lk 11:13.

<sup>7</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 791.

The full experience of salvation is guaranteed to all persons who receive the Holy Spirit. This means that those to whom God gives his Holy Spirit will indeed receive all of his promises, not because of what *they* will do, but because of what God will do. Even the strongest of human effort is so weak that it cannot guarantee all of God's promises. God knew that if all of his promises were to be fulfilled, it would depend decisively upon him and not upon us.

## God Himself Guarantees His Praise

Remember, as we saw last week, that God's aim in this world is that all things would find their fulfillment in Christ so that his glory and his grace might be praised. If God left the fulfillment of that goal in our hands, he would never receive any praise because we would never make it to heaven. So in order to ensure that his goal in creating this world would be fulfilled, he poured out his own Holy Spirit within our hearts to *guarantee* that his chosen people received the full inheritance that he promised, thus giving them cause to praise the glory of his grace. The only way anyone is guaranteed to get into heaven is through the active work of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. Paul emphasizes this in his letter to the Corinthians.

(2 Corinthians 1:20-22 ESV)

*<sup>20</sup> For all the promises of God find their Yes in him. That is why it is through him that we utter our Amen to God for his glory. <sup>21</sup> And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, <sup>22</sup> and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

All of God's promises are "yes" in Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of every single promise that God has ever spoken. If you can find any promise in the Bible, it is "yes" in Jesus. That is why we pray through his name. Because Jesus earned the right to an affirmative answer to all of God's promises. And the sweetest promise is that God dwells within the hearts his people through his Spirit who serves as a **seal** to guarantee of eternal life and eternal happiness with God.

There's word again, seal. We saw it in Eph. 1:13.

Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

*<sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit,*

*In him, when you heard the gospel and believed, you were **sealed** with the promised Holy Spirit.* What does this mean? What does it mean that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit? To answer this question we only need to ask what it meant to seal something in antiquity. A seal was used for four purposes.

## 1) Seal: To Authenticate Against Forgery

First, a seal was used to authenticate that something was genuine and not a forgery. In the book of Esther when king Ahasuerus gave Mordecai permission to write a letter in the name of the king giving the Jews throughout the realm the right to defend themselves, he sealed with the king's own signet ring in order to authenticate the letter as having truly come from the king.

**(Esther 8:10 ESV)**

*<sup>10</sup> And he wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed it with the king's signet ring.*

His signet ring would have been similar to a signet ring from the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaten that was discovered and dates back to ca. 1353-1323 B.C.



So the first meaning of the term seal is to authenticate that something is genuine and not a fake or a forgery.

## 2) Seal: To Protect & Secure

A second meaning of the word seal is to protect and make secure. We see this from two similar instances in Scripture. When Daniel was thrown into the lion's den, he sealed the stone over the den to make sure no one else went in or out. The king did not want Daniel to be harmed. He knew there were others in his cabinet who wanted Daniel dead and he didn't want any of them tampering with Daniel or this situation so he sealed the stone.

**(Daniel 6:17 ESV)**

*<sup>17</sup> And a stone was brought and laid on the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet and with the signet of his lords, that nothing might be changed concerning Daniel.*

We find a similar instance at the tomb of Jesus. When the Pharisees wanted to prevent Jesus' body from being stolen, Pilate had them secure the tomb by sealing it.

**(Matthew 27:62-66 ESV)**

*<sup>62</sup> The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup> and said, "Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, 'After three days I will rise.' <sup>64</sup> Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, 'He has risen from the dead,' and the last fraud will be worse than the first." <sup>65</sup> Pilate said to them, "You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can." <sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.*



The sealing was probably something like the seal that was found on king Toutankhamen's tomb, which was clay pressed into the seam of the stone slabs with the seal then pressed into the clay. This kind of seal protects and secures what is inside and prevents anyone from the outside from getting in and what is inside from getting out.

### 3) Seal: A Mark of Ownership & Authority

The third usage of the word seal was as a mark of ownership and authority. We see this in the branding of animals. Each cattle owner would brand his animals to prove that they belonged to him and had authority over them.

A biblical example of this comes from Jesus himself. In John 6, verse 27, Jesus claimed that he had authority to give eternal life because **"on him the Father had set his seal,"** and by this he was referring to the miracles he was doing because everyone knew that only someone sent by God could do such things.<sup>8</sup> God's seal upon Jesus in granting him never-before-seen-power was a mark that he belonged to God and possessed all his authority.

Another biblical example was when Pharaoh took off his signet ring and put it on Joseph's hand which signified that Joseph carried the same authority as the Pharaoh himself (Gn 41:39-44). Pharaoh even said,

**Genesis 41:44 (ESV)**

*"No one in all of Egypt shall lift hand or foot without your consent. Only in regards to the throne will I be greater than you."*

So the third meaning of seal is a mark of authority and ownership.

### 4) Seal: Completed, Unchangeable Transaction

The fourth meaning of the word seal means a completed transaction which is unchangeable and irrevocable. When business transactions were made, such as land being bought and sold, the deed was sealed so that it could not be changed.

**(Jeremiah 32:9-14 ESV)**

<sup>9</sup> *"And I bought the field at Anathoth from Hanamel my cousin, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. <sup>10</sup> I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. <sup>11</sup> Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the*



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<sup>8</sup> See the words of Nicodemus in John 3:2, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher sent from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

terms and conditions... <sup>12</sup> And I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah... <sup>13</sup> I charged Baruch... saying, <sup>14</sup> ...Take ... this sealed deed of purchase... and put it in an earthenware vessel, that they may last for a long time.

So the fourth meaning the word seal refers to a completed transaction that is unchangeable.

### Which Meaning Explains the Sealing of the Holy Spirit?

Which of these four meaning describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer? They all do.

First, the Holy Spirit is given by God as a seal to authenticate that faith is genuine and not a forgery. If "faith" is fake, then a person will not receive the Holy Spirit. If the faith is genuine, then God seals the believer with his own Holy Spirit.

Second, the Holy Spirit is given by God as a seal to protect and secure the believer. The Holy Spirit seals in true saving faith and keeps that faith from leaking out. He also protects the believer from Satan getting in to tamper, in a spiritually fatal way, with the soul and faith of the believer.

Third, the Holy Spirit is the seal that marks a person out as belonging to God. The believer's life is owned by God because he or she was purchased by the blood of Jesus.

Fourthly, the Holy Spirit seals the redemptive deal so that the saving transaction is complete and unchangeable. There's no going back. When God gives his Holy Spirit to someone, he never goes back on the deal. He never changes his mind. He never disowns his child. And so Jesus boldly says,

**John 6:37 (ESV)**

<sup>37</sup> "All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out."

### When Does This Sealing Take Place?

When does this sealing happen? Look at verse 13 again.

**Ephesians 1:13-14 (ESV)**

<sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup> who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

The sealing happens *when you hear the word of truth, the gospel of Jesus, and you believe in him*, then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. When you hear the gospel and you believe in Jesus, then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. When you hear what Jesus has died and risen



from the dead and you *truly* believe you will not get into heaven unless Jesus gets you in, then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Have you experienced this? Are you certain that you belong to the Lord? Do you unquestioningly know that God's Holy Spirit dwells within you?

I'm convinced there is someone listening to my voice who thinks he is a Christian, but he's never been sealed by the Holy Spirit. I believe there is someone hearing me now who thinks she is a believer, but she's never received the promised Holy Spirit.

Do you know Jesus, I mean truly, know him? Do you know the Spirit of God is dwelling within you? Do you see visible evidence in your life of the Holy Spirit authenticating to you that your faith is genuine? Are you aware of the Holy Spirit being present in your life protecting you and securing your relationship with Jesus? Is the mark of ownership of God on your life? When people watch your conduct is it evident that you are a child of God? Do you know that your salvation is complete and unchangeable?

**(Romans 10:9-13 ESV)**

*<sup>9</sup> if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." <sup>12</sup> For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. <sup>13</sup> For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

This believing that Paul is talking about is not merely agreeing with the facts of Jesus' life. It is a confident trust in his ability to safely deliver your soul into the presence of God. Saving belief in Jesus doesn't just mean you believe that he died, but that he died **for you**.

Saving faith in Jesus is a desperate life or death cry of the heart that finds its way out of the lips in an blood-earnest plea for salvation. Have you done this? Have you both believed in your heart and called out with your mouth for him to come and save you and give you his Holy Spirit? If you genuinely ask him to give you his Holy Spirit, then he will.

**(Luke 11:13 ESV)**

*<sup>13</sup> If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Even bad parents know how to give good things to their kids. How much more then will God be willing to give his Holy Spirit, the best gift that could ever be given, to those who ask him? Ask him right now to give you his Holy Spirit.

Do you know you are sealed by his Holy Spirit? If you do not, then ask him right now. If you would like someone to pray with you, then come now and cry out to God. His Holy Spirit is the

down payment of the wonderful inheritance God intends for his children. Come cry out to God for him to seal you. Cry out to him to save you. Cry out to him to free you. Cry out to him to pour out his Spirit upon you.

When the crowds of convicted sinners asked Peter what they should do, Peter said,

**Acts 2:38 (ESV)**

*<sup>38</sup> And Peter answered them and said, "Repent of your sins and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself."*

Repent of your sins. Come tell us you need to be baptized. Receive forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and for your children. And for everyone far off who hears the voice of the Lord calling you.

Do you hear him calling you? Do you hear him calling you to be baptized? Do you hear him calling you to come to him for forgiveness of your sins? Do you want to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? You and your children?

Then come today.

Come now and pray.