

## Sealed – Ephesians 1:13-14

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*<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. – Eph. 1:13-14, ESV*

In a previous church we were a part of when we got married, a young lady came before the elders to join the church as a communing member. The elders asked her if she had any questions and she said, “I don’t really understand about the Holy Spirit.” An elder answered her, “Well, that’s not really important” and that was the end of that question.

Is the Holy Spirit unimportant? Many Christians are confused and don’t really understand about the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is not an after-thought, not a unnecessary extra side-dish in the Christian life. All true Christians receive the Holy Spirit. His coming and working in us is, in fact, inseparable from being a true believer.

### I. **Hearing with Faith**

Paul says that when you heard the word of truth and believed in Him, you were sealed in Him with the promised Holy Spirit. Paul seems to indicate here that the Spirit works through the Word and that to be a true Christian, there is no believing without hearing the word and that hearing without believing is empty, too.

In Romans 10:17, Paul writes, “*So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*”

#### **A. The Word of Truth**

What do we need to hear? We need to hear the word of truth. Many people in our culture claim to be the voice of truth and many others scoff at the idea of truth altogether. Personally, I understand and respect those who doubt truth claims since so many who claim to speak truth in our culture are obviously spinning and distorting the facts to advance an agenda that serves their own interests. In a culture of talking heads and political pundits, it’s easy to get cynical about truth.

God’s word of truth is so fundamentally different from the world’s pretense to truth. The world’s truth peddlers manipulate information to serve themselves and get what they need or what they want: ratings, clicks, attention, political power, whatever. God is truth and holds the very power and source of True Truth in Himself. He doesn’t need anything from us; we can’t give Him anything that would make Him better off. So, His revelation of truth truly benefits us.

Also, because God is perfectly holy and is the source of all truth and is Truth in Himself, what He speaks is pure, reliable and undiluted by sinful human agendas and political spin.

In Psalm 18:30, we read, *“This God—his way is perfect; the word of the LORD proves true; he is a shield for all those who take refuge in him.”* (ESV)

Psalm 12:6 says, *“The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.”* (ESV)

So, when we hear Scripture, we need to hear it for what it is, the Word of Truth.

## **B. The Gospel of Your Salvation**

“The word of truth” describes the nature or character of Scripture, while “the Gospel of your salvation” describes the message or content of Scripture. What God speaks to us in His word is the revelation of who He is and what He has done and is doing in the world.

The Gospel of our salvation focuses on Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All Scripture testifies to Him and leads to Him. In 2 Corinthians 1:20, Paul writes, “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.” Think about it: Every promise of God finds its answer, its fulfillment, its “Yes!” in Jesus.

In Genesis 3:15, God makes His first promise, that the Seed of the Woman would crush the head of the serpent, even as His heel would be crushed. Jesus fulfilled this promise on the cross, where He was bruised, bloodied and broken for us, but where He crushed the devil and silenced his accusations against God’s people by securing our forgiveness and redemption, as we learned last week.

To Noah, God gave rescue and a promise. God delivered Noah and his family through an ark of refuge, which sheltered and protected them from judgment. The ark itself is a promise and a picture of Jesus, who is the shelter of protection for all who trust in Him.

To the Israelites in bondage in Egypt, God brought rescue and deliverance through Moses. On their final night in Egypt, God sent severe judgment against Egypt for Pharaoh’s stubborn refusal to let God’s people go, as the firstborn of every man and beast in the land died. But those who were covered by the blood of the Passover Lamb were protected and God covered over their houses so that the judgment would pass over them. The blood of the Passover Lambs was a picture and a promise also of the blood of God’s Passover Lamb, Jesus Christ, who provides the covering that allows the wrath of God to pass over us.

As the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, God fed them with manna from heaven and gave them pure water to drink, which flowed from a rock, a rock which apparently followed them, providing water continually to assuage their thirst and give them life.

In John 6:32-35, Jesus said to the gathered multitude, *“Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.”*

*<sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.” (ESV)*

And then in I Corinthians 10, Paul explains the meaning of the exodus in these words: *“For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (I Cor. 10:1-5, ESV)*

So, if we understand what Paul is saying, the Israelites had the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them daily in manna and water, but they did not receive this Gospel with faith. They did not believe and so God was not pleased.

And I could continue through the Bible and show that every event, every promise, every story, every unfolding stage in the development of God’s story echoes Jesus, prepares for Jesus, points to Jesus. It’s all about Him.

He is the true, eternal king who is truly “a man after God’s own heart,” in a way that King David was just a shadow and a type.

He is the atonement for our sins pictured for the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur.

He is the Light of the World pictured in the lampstand in the Tabernacle and Temple.

He is the Bread of Life, pictured not only in the manna from heaven but also in the showbread continually laid out inside the Tabernacle and Temple.

He is the Great High Priest who represents God’s people before the throne of God, pictured by the High Priest under the Law of Moses, who would enter the Holy of holies once a year on the Day of Atonement wearing the breastplate with the 12 precious stones representing the 12 tribes of Israel.

So, the Gospel of our Salvation is the Good News, the Good Message from God of how God keeps all of His promises and brings us fullness of life, forgiveness, redemption, spiritual nourishment, protection, blessing, provision, guidance and hope through Jesus Christ.

### C. Believed in Him

And so when you hear the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, your response should be to believe in Him. To believe in Him is to trust in Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's promises, as the substance and essence of the word of truth, as the One to whom God's good news points us.

Romans 10:17 says, "*faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ,*" but we can understand better what Paul means by that by reading the full context of these words.

Romans 10:9-17:

*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."*

*<sup>14</sup> How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? <sup>15</sup> And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" <sup>16</sup> But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" <sup>17</sup> So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

So, let me ask you: Have you heard the word of truth? Have you heard the Gospel?

It's as simple as John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, so that whoever believes in Him will not be condemned but will have everlasting life."

Have you heard that Jesus is Lord . . .

- that He lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to God?
- that He died on the cross for your sins, that He rose again from the dead on the third day, conquering sin and death forever?
- that He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God on high, where He ever lives to make intercession for all who trust in Him?
- that He is coming again to judge the living and the dead and to usher in a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness and peace will flourish forever?
- and that His kingdom will have no end?

If you have heard, then let me ask you this: Do you believe? Do you believe in Him? Do you trust Him? Is He your Lord and Savior? Have you received Him and are you resting in Him? Have you placed all of your hopes in Him, knowing for certain that He will not disappoint you? Do you believe in Him?

## II. Sealing with Promise

If you have heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, and have believed in Him, then God says that you are sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit. What does it mean to be sealed?

A seal in the ancient world was a way of marking ownership and securing something. Documents were most commonly sealed, closed with wax and impressed with the mark of ownership of the person who wrote the document or the person who owned it. Wills, decrees, official correspondence, etc, would all be sealed in this way. But other things could be sealed.

In Matthew 27:66, we're told that Pilate and the Jewish leaders secured Christ's tomb by setting a guard and sealing the stone. This type of sealing was a way of securing something against a break-in, and it's the same term used here, too.

We see references to God's people being sealed in three other places in the New Testament. Two of these references refer to the Holy Spirit as our seal:

In 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, right after Paul writes that all of the promises of God find their Yes in Christ, he then says, "*And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*" So, the God who keeps all of His promises in Christ is the One who has established us together in Christ and has put His seal on us, giving us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Here Paul is using the same two key terms for the Holy Spirit that he uses in Ephesians 1:13-14, seal and guarantee.

In Ephesians 4:30, Paul says, "*do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*" So here again, the Holy Spirit is a seal, in this case a seal for the day of redemption.

The other place where we see a seal for the people of God in Revelation 7, where the people of God are sealed on their foreheads, thus marked out as belonging to God.

The sealing of God in the Holy Spirit thus marks us as God's own people and secures us for the day of redemption, providing us a guarantee that we will be fully and finally redeemed when Jesus comes again.

Internally, the Holy Spirit seals us by convincing us of the truth of the Gospel and reassuring us of God's love for us. He reassures us in our hearts that God loves us and that He is our Heavenly Father, that we belong to Him and are secure in Christ.

#### A. **Promised**

The Holy Spirit is here called "the Promised Holy Spirit" because He is the One God has promised to give to His people. Just as Jesus was promised in the Old Testament, so God also promised to pour out His Spirit and that His Spirit would abide with His people. God keeps His promises. We see this reality not only in the coming of Christ but also in the sending of the Holy Spirit to be in us and to abide with us forever.

#### B. **Holy Spirit**

Not only is He promised, but He is the Holy Spirit. Holiness marks the character of the Spirit of God, and He is the One who works in us to mark our lives with the character of holiness, too.

If we believe in Jesus and we have been sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit, we are called to live holy lives, as Paul writes in I Corinthians 6:18-20 –

*Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. (ESV)*

This holiness of life is the external seal of the Holy Spirit. He progressively makes us look like Jesus and thus makes us appear to the world as the children of God, His own possession.

This internal and external seal of God can be found in 2 Timothy 2:19: "But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." The Holy Spirit reassures us that we are His and leads us to depart from iniquity. Thus, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we stand secure and are sealed in Christ.

### III. **Securing with a Guarantee**

Paul not only says we are sealed with the Promised Holy Spirit, but He also says that the Holy Spirit *“is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”*

A more literal rendering of this verse can be found in the New American Standard, which reads: *“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.”*

### **A. Deposit of Our Inheritance**

The word “guarantee” or “pledge” of our inheritance in this verse is a word used for earnest money, or a down-payment. It is part of the purchase price given ahead of time to secure the purchase.

The Holy Spirit thus secures or guarantees our inheritance, our full redemption.

### **B. Until the Redemption of Possession**

God will fully redeem His possession.

I don’t know if any of you will know what I mean by layaway or will remember ever having bought something on layaway, But I remember K-Mart layaway from my childhood days. My parents were not wealthy when we were growing up and when I was little I remember going to K-Mart or to the Base Exchange on the Air Force Base and picking out clothes or toys which my mom would then put on layaway. Each layaway payment was part of the purchase price and brought the day of possession of the purchase closer.

When we bought our house, we put some earnest money down when we made our offer. The earnest money was applied to the purchase of the home, but we would have lost it if we hadn’t followed through with the purchase.

God has already paid the redemption price for us when He gave His Son for us on the cross. But as long as we live in these bodies, struggling with sin in a fallen world, we are not yet fully redeemed. God has claimed us as His own, He has sealed us with His Holy Spirit, marking us with His ownership and security. But still we are waiting for that day, and so is God.

One day, we will be fully and forever God’s own possession, without stain or spot, without sin or sorrow, without any obstacle or remaining hindrance. One day, the day of redemption will come. Jesus will descend from heaven with a shout, with the cry of command, with the sounding of the trumpet of God. On this day, the Day of the Lord, we will be fully redeemed.

Until that day, we have the Holy Spirit. He lives in all true believers, reassuring us that we belong to God, teaching us the Scriptures and helping us understand God's will, leading us in paths of righteousness for His name's sake, applying the benefits of the Gospel to our souls and securing us as God's own possession until that day. And until that day, it is the Holy Spirit who leads our hearts to cry out in faith, "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!" Amen!