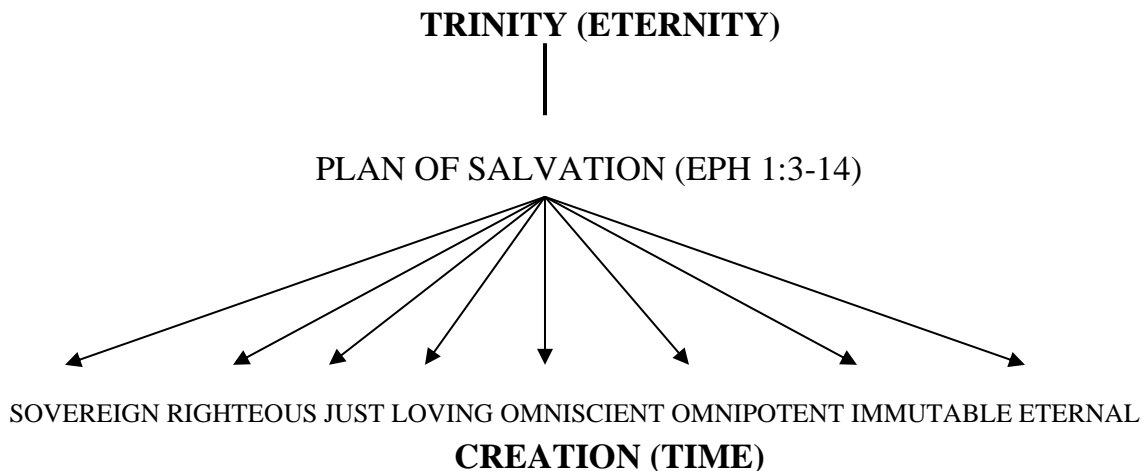


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C0426 -- July 7, 2004 -- Ephesians 1:13-14 -- Sealing Ministry of the Holy Spirit

Last week we looked at the “Glory of God”. We said that in Ephesians 1:12 Paul tells us that *we were made a heritage... in order that we might be to the praise of his glory*. Paul is not saying that *we have obtained an inheritance* like the NASB says but that *we were made a heritage*. We are God’s heritage or inheritance. Because of all the spiritual blessings that He has given us we become His inheritance. Not only do we possess all these blessings but we are possessed by God Himself. See, everything is about God. That is why we keep finding that the goal of the Triune God’s plan of redemption and all the details this plan involves is *to the praise of his glory*. As long as you keep this thought central in your mind you will be able to accept and understand such hard truths as predestination and election. That first and foremost the plan of salvation is a revelatory device that God is using to reveal Himself to mankind. When God reveals His character through the plan of salvation men reflect His glory back on Him. And God’s ultimate purpose is to glorify Himself. Remember that the plan of salvation is like a prism.



God is light and it is in His nature to reveal Himself to His creatures. Our God is not hiding, He is a revelatory God. He reveals Himself in many ways; through creation, the human conscience, and also the plan of salvation. So, God is light and He disperses that light through the prism of salvation so that we as humans are able to comprehend some things

about God's character; namely that He is sovereign, righteous, just, loving, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, immutable, and eternal. The plan of salvation is first of all about revealing God. It is only secondly about saving men. It certainly does save men but if you think of say God's election in terms only of God saving men then you are missing the main point. Election is for God first and foremost. That's why the word for election in v. 4 is in the middle voice. Literally translated it says, *He chose us for Himself*. The purpose of election is given right there in v. 4. It says *He chose us...to be holy and blameless in His presence in love*. This is eschatological (eternity future).

What is the glory of God? Paul says that all this is *to the praise of His glory*. But what is the glory of God? The glory of God is the sum of all of God's attributes or perfections. It's the essence of God. OK, if the glory of God is the sum of all of God's perfections then how can God who already has infinite glory gain more glory?

When we glorify God, are we just piling glory on glory? Are we adding anything to God? Not according to who and what God is. If we are adding something to God then God is in process...He's not complete yet. No, that's not the God of Scripture. He's dynamic in that He interacts with history but His character is not dynamic, it's immutable. So, if we're not adding anything to God when we glorify Him then what is happening when we glorify God? Well, first there's God's glory as it pertains to His character. Second, we glorify God by acknowledging God's character and reflecting it back upon Him. For example, when we produce fruit that is compatible with God's character, we are glorifying God. We are recognizing and reflecting back to Him by exclaiming what He already is. We're not adding anything to God's glory. It's the reflection of that glory extolling from the creature back to the Creator. We are acknowledging what He already is by nature. Remember, this doesn't just happen when we sing songs. This happens in every area of life. I hope you're not trying to sing praises to God all the time because you'll lose your voice. There are more ways to glorify God than with your voice. What do you do day by day and how do you do it? That's where you are glorifying God.

c. God's Seal with the Spirit (1:13-14)

(1) Activity: Sealed with the Spirit (1:13)

Greek Text: 1:13 VEn w-| kai. u`mei/j avkou,santej to.n lo,gon th/j avlhqei,aj(to. euvagge,lion th/j swthri,aj u`mw/n(evn w-| kai. pisteu,santej evsfragi,sqhte tw/| pneu,mati th/j evpaggeli,aj tw/| a`gi,w|(

Translation: 1:13 In whom you also having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom having also believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

VEN w-| kai. u`mei/j “*in whom you also*” is typically understood one of four ways. The first three of these options presupposes that when Paul shifts from “we” to “you” he is referring to Jews and Gentiles respectively. This is not necessary for Paul does not yet clearly introduce the Jew/Gentile distinction until 2:11. Though the idea is attractive it reads the distinction clearly made in 2:11 back into 1:12-14. It is better to understand the “we”/“you” shift as referring to a distinction between those who are with Paul and the believers at Ephesus. In this case the “*you also*” connects the believers at Ephesus with the central theme of being “in Christ” and relates their being “in Christ” to the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit. Also, this construction would be the best way Paul could stress the two things that happened simultaneously with their being sealed; namely “hearing the word of truth” and “believing the gospel”.

avkou,santej to.n lo,gon th/j avlhqei,aj(to. euvagge,lion th/j swthri,aj u`mw/n(“*having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,*”. The word *aletheia* “truth” is something that is contrary to a lie and is therefore, *reality*. Here it refers to “the content of Christianity as the absolute truth”. Christianity corresponds with reality in contrast to the falsehood of other religions. *truth* is a genitive of content meaning that the *word* has as its content *truth* (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15). The Christian claim is that the *word of truth* is the content of Christianity which defines reality and therefore inevitably corresponds to reality. No other religion defines or corresponds to all of reality. How then do other religions often stumble upon the truth and have biblical truth as a part of their system?

GOD CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

What happens is that since all men know God through creation (Rom. 1:20) and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15), even though they try to suppress this knowledge (Rom. 1:18) they cannot suppress it totally. God keeps showing up in various areas of unbeliever’s lives (Ps. 36:9b, *In Thy light, we see light*). If you want to see a really good analysis of this in the areas of Philosophy, Art, Music, and even Theology you might want to get a hold of Francis Schaeffer’s “The God Who is There” or his book “How Should We Then Live?”. In both of these books he traces the evidence of God-consciousness in unbelievers’ lives. Paul was making the same point as he spoke to the Areopagus at Mars Hill in Acts 17:26-29 when he said, “...*having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,* ²⁷ *that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find*

Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.' ²⁹ "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man." Notice how Paul uses unbelieving poets as an example of the fact that the God-consciousness of unbelievers keeps popping up in everyday life. It's like that stubborn grass that keeps growing up in the cracks of your sidewalk. You can't ever get rid of it once and for all. It always comes back next year. Such is God in the conscience of all men. As much as they try to suppress the **word of truth** it nevertheless keeps popping its head up, evidencing that your unbelieving friend really does know God, he knows Him very well. You need to capitalize on these situations with your unbelieving friends. When he recognizes truth, you need to challenge him to account for that truth. (e.g., Paxton and the reality check). See, Christianity corresponds to reality and all men know this intuitively. They spend most of their lives living in an imaginative world that their mind creates; but because they really live in reality; they keep slipping up when their worldview can't account for something in their life. When they can't account for something they always slip back on Christian principles. For example, take 9/11. Before 9/11 truth was relative, there were no moral absolutes, something may be right for you but wrong for me. However, what happened on 9/11 was absolutely wrong. Suddenly morals weren't relative anymore. Suddenly the concept that everything is relative didn't fit reality and 9/11 is just one example of the fact that people really do know there are absolutes. Further, if "everything is relative" then the statement "everything is relative" must also be relative since it is a part of everything. So, people want to live in these imaginative worlds they create but these imaginative concepts can never account for reality and so they always slip back into Christian principles, such as absolutes, as a way of explaining reality. They are therefore borrowing Christian capital. Don't let unbelievers do this. If they reject Christianity don't let them use Christian principles. Show them they are being inconsistent and that only you can use Christian principles consistently. Show him that when he uses Christian principles in argumentation, he is actually evidencing that he knows Christianity is true and he ought to repent.

GOD CONSCIOUSNESS OF OTHER RELIGIONS

Now, all false religions have some truth. The degree of truth that they teach is a measure of the degree to which they reveal and recognize the true God. Some are closer to the truth and others are much further away, but none have no truth because no one can totally suppress what they know about God. To put it shortly, all men and all man-made religions have borrowed Christian principles whenever they stumble upon truth. The **word of truth** is therefore the absolute and total content of Christianity in contrast to all other religions.

The phrase *the gospel of your salvation* merely explains further the *word of truth*. It means the message of the gospel is one of truth. It is this gospel message which corresponds to the true state of affairs, to reality. Therefore, it is the only message which, when believed, actually does save. The word for *gospel* is *euangelion* and refers to the message of the “good news”. This is a genitive of content meaning that the gospel has as its content *salvation*. The word for *salvation* is *soteria* and means “deliverance in either a physical or spiritual sense” depending on the context (cf. Acts 13:26; Eph. 1:13; Heb. 2:10). In this context it refers to the spiritual deliverance of the sinner who is dead in sin (Eph. 2:1-2). This salvation or deliverance is by grace (Eph. 2:5). The truth of the gospel is the good news of deliverance of people who are in bondage to sin. As you well know there are many messages that go forth from other religions. They too proclaim a way of deliverance. However, these messages only bring greater bondage to sin because they all teach a works salvation in contrast to a grace salvation. Man cannot save himself...that is why Christ came to save us...this is why it is good news that actually results in deliverance/salvation. If we had to save ourselves how is that really good news since it carries with it no security or assurance, only doubt and fear.

avkou,santej...evn w-| kai. pisteu,santej “*having heard...in whom having also believed*”. Now is the time to deal with the two aorist participles *akousantes* (having heard) and *pisteusantes* (having believed). Do the hearing and believing take place in a sequence or simultaneously? The Authorized Version translating this “after that ye believed, ye were sealed” led many to conclude that there is a sequence; that one believes and then at some later time they are sealed. This has no support in Scripture. *First* of all, the translation is poor, it should read “in whom having also believed, you were sealed”. *Second*, the sealing takes place at the same time as hearing and believing (cf. Acts 19:2). This negates the idea that they heard the gospel over a period of time and then finally believed it. There are two types of hearing in Scripture; *external* hearing and *internal* hearing (both types of hearing are illustrated in John 6:60). Many people externally hear the gospel and never believe (John 6:64-65). This is superficial hearing that never results in believing; only when one internally hears does he believe the gospel (John 6:44-45). In fact, the moment someone *internally hears* the *gospel* they *believe* the *gospel* (Eph. 1:13). This is why you don’t have to pray to receive salvation. Paul never says “pray and you will be saved”. What Paul says is “believe and be saved”. If we have to pray to receive salvation then the hearing would be taking place while we were talking to God and faith comes by hearing the word of God, not talking to God. Most people can’t hear anything while they are talking. Those who don’t believe are those who never hear the word *internally* (John 6:60). Many people *externally hear* the gospel many times but at one point in time they *internally heard* the gospel and it is at that time that they believed. The gospel is the power of God to salvation

to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16). For those who don't believe it is not the power of God to salvation.

evsfragi,sqhete “*you were sealed*”. *esphragisthete* is a Greek word occurring 15 times in the NT (Matt. 27:66; Jn. 3:33; 6:27; Rom. 15:28; **2 Co. 1:22; Eph. 1:13; 4:30**; Rev. 7:3ff, 8; 10:4; 20:3; 22:10). The word means “to seal up, to secure”. It implies *security, safety, ownership, and authority*. In this verse it is a passive participle. Since it is passive it means that this is not a work of man. It is not something that believers are to seek after salvation; it is a work of God at the moment of salvation and is not experiential. The one who is sealed is passive, not active. The moment you believe, God put you “in Christ” and God sealed you with the Holy Spirit.

4 POINTS TO THE DOCTRINE OF SEALING

First, the “Holy Spirit is the Seal”. Every passage indicates that the sealing is accomplished entirely by God. And 2 Cor. 1:22 indicates that the seal is none other than the Holy Spirit Himself, “*who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.*” The Holy Spirit is given as the “token of what will be brought to its conclusion at the day of redemption.”¹

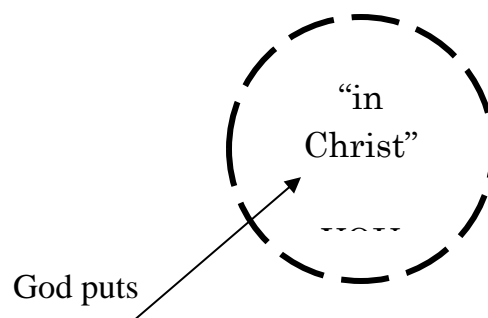
Second, the “Sealing of the Holy Spirit is for All Christians”. The seal of the Holy Spirit has often been taught as something that believers were to seek as a demonstration of their true salvation. Nevertheless, even the wild Corinthians were said to have been sealed (2 Cor. 1:22). There is no further sealing to be sought by believers. All believers are sealed at the moment they believe. Ephesians 4:30 is good evidence that all believers are sealed and not just spiritual Christians. The text there says, “*Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.*” If believers who grieve the Holy Spirit are sealed until the day of redemption then certainly all believers are sealed and not just spiritual Christians.

Third, the “Sealing of the Holy Spirit is Not Experiential”. There is no experience or sensation that one undergoes that confirms that he has been sealed with the Holy Spirit. It occurs once and for all for all who believe unto the day of redemption of the purchased possession.

Fourth, the “Significance of the Sealing of the Holy Spirit is Eternal Security”. It is clear in every passage that the seal of the Holy Spirit is given to the Believer in order to keep him safe until the day of redemption—the time of deliverance from the presence of sin. If

we are safe until the day of redemption then it follows that we cannot lose our salvation, we are eternally secure. Our eternal security is not based on anything we do, we didn't seal ourselves therefore we don't secure our salvation. It is wholly a work of God and therefore our security is based on God's power. The location of our sealing also conveys the idea of eternal security. Ephesians 1:13 says ***“having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise”***. The location where one is sealed and secured is “in Christ”. Just as we were put “in Christ” when we believed we were also sealed “in Christ” so that we could never lose our salvation. Being sealed “in Christ” is like being imprisoned in the Ultimate Alcatraz. There is no escape. The only difference is that being “in Christ” is a good place to be rather than a bad one. True freedom is “in Christ”, true bondage “outside of Christ”.

In the eternal counsels (*boule*) of God the Father was the planner, the Son was the Executer of the Father's Plan, and the Holy Spirit was the Sealer of the Father's Plan. The Spirit sealed the plan with an impenetrable barrier. The Sealing of the Holy Spirit corresponds to the Seal of Conception. Let's explain this Seal of Conception. As a biologist you can study the physiology of conception. Conception is the moment when the sperm and egg unite. This moment constitutes what we call physical life. So, physical life begins at the moment of conception. Interestingly, the moment the sperm penetrates through the outer layer of the egg a chemical reaction occurs that forms an impenetrable barrier that keeps all other sperm from entering the egg. That is, the egg is sealed, secure from any outside agents. You believe, God puts you “in Christ” and God seals you filling in the gaps with the Holy Spirit.



You believe

Sperm + Egg = Sealed Physical Conception until Birth (~40 weeks)

Belief + God = Sealed Spiritual Conception until Redemption (the rest of your life)

Now, this physical conception and sealing corresponds nicely with the moment you believe, are put in Christ, and are sealed. The moment you believe you are put in Christ

and God puts an impenetrable barrier between you and everything else in creation. Those “in Christ” become safe and secure from all else. This is why Paul could say in **Romans 8:35-39** “*Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*” ³⁶ *Just as it is written, "FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG; WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."* ³⁷ *But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.* ³⁸ *For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,* ³⁹ *nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* See, there’s a barrier, the seal of the Holy Spirit, who forms an invincible eternal security for those “in Christ”.

tw/| pneu,mati th/j evpaggeli,aj tw/| a`gi,w|(“*with the Holy Spirit of promise,*” refers to the seal itself. God is the one who seals, Christ is the location where we are sealed, now the Holy Spirit is signified to be the seal itself. The Holy Spirit was *promised* by Jesus Christ himself. God seals the believer by giving him or her the indwelling Holy Spirit who keeps the Christian “in Christ”. The Lord Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would permanently indwell believers (Luke 24:49; John 14:16; 15:26; 16:13; Acts 1:5). This is why Paul refers to Him as *the Holy Spirit of promise*.

In conclusion, “God seals the believers in Christ with the promised Holy Spirit when they have not only heard but also believed the gospel of salvation...The sealing ministry of the Spirit is to identify believers as God’s own and thus give them the security that they belong to him (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2 Cor. 1:22). The very fact that the Spirit indwells believers is a seal of God’s ownership of them.”ⁱⁱ

(2) Duration: Sealed Until Redemption (1:14a)

Greek Text: 1:14 o[evstin avrrabw.n th/j klhronomi,aj h`mw/n(eivj avpolu,trwsin th/j peripoih,sewj(eivj e;painon th/j do,xhj auvtou/Å

Translation: 1:14 **who is the down payment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.**

o[evstin avrrabw.n th/j klhronomi,aj h`mw/n(“*who is the earnest of our inheritance*”. The *who* is the masculine Greek pronoun *os*, obviously referring to the Holy Spirit at the end of verse 13. The Holy Spirit is the *arrabon*, the *earnest* or *token* of something to come. The word *arrabon* is a legal term used of “earnest” money. Earnest money is money that

is put down to secure the transaction. It is a good faith deposit that secures a contract. It is called “earnest money” because it indicates that the buyer is serious about purchasing the item. The *earnest* money can only be forfeited if the purchase is not completed. Earnest money also protects the lender’s investment. When you buy a home, you may be asked to put down earnest money. This money goes toward the purchase price but if you are unable to pay the purchase price then the earnest money you put down is lost. The word is used three times in the NT (**2 Co. 1:22**; 5:5; Eph. 1:14). In 2 Cor. 1:22 it is used in connection with the sealing of the Spirit just like here in Eph. 1:14. The best word signifying what *arrabon* means is *earnest* because *earnest money* is a good-faith deposit signifying that more money is coming. When a contract goes through on the date of purchase the earnest money becomes a part of the down payment. The Holy Spirit is the *earnest* guaranteeing the believer’s much greater future inheritance. The word for *inheritance* is *kleronomia* which is a compound word. *kleros* meaning “allotted portion” and *nemo* meaning “to dispense, distribute”. The word therefore means “to dispense an allotted portion”, therefore it is translated as *inheritance* or *possession*. In this context it refers to *our inheritance*, something possessed by the Christian. What is our inheritance? Our inheritance is heaven, the believer’s inheritance of heaven because of the Father’s election, the Son’s redemption, and the Spirit’s sealing. We have a little bit of the New Heaven’s and New Earth in us in the Holy Spirit’s presence, and His presence is a guarantee of much more to come in the future.

eivj avpolu, trwsin th/j peripoih, sewj(“*until the redemption of the purchased possession,*”. The word *redemption* is *apolutrosis*, and is the same word we looked at back in v. 7. The word means “to release or set free on the basis of a ransom paid to God by Christ’s death. Back in v. 7 it referred to “our being set free or released from our sins”. Paul said, *in whom we have the redemption* indicating that the redemption was a present possession. However, here in v. 14 redemption is something yet future. To put it simply there are two phases of redemption. Phase 1 refers to *past redemption* where we were set free from the penalty and power of sin over our lives. Phase 2 refers to our *future redemption* when we will be set free from the presence of sin. We presently are free from the penalty and power of sin but we still have an old sin nature and external temptation to sin. However, at our *future redemption* (i.e., physical death) the old sin nature and all external temptation will be done away with. “In the meantime, we have the initial installment, the ministry of the Holy Spirit as our portion.”ⁱⁱⁱ Eventually all believers will be set free from the presence of sin.

TWO PHASES OF REDEMPTION



We are therefore *sealed...until the redemption*. This corresponds well with Ephesians 4:30 where Paul says, *by whom you were sealed until the day of redemption*. During our earthly lives as believers, we are kept secure all the way until our *future redemption*. We are totally secure; we cannot lose our salvation.

The word *possession* is *peripoieo* is a rare word. It means “to acquire, to gain possession of”. Here it should be taken in the passive sense meaning not that the believers will acquire an inheritance so much as the redemption of believers by God as His possession. Redeemed people are God’s possession. He has ownership of them. So, our future redemption is one of being set free as God’s possession. This will all take place at the time we receive our future resurrection bodies (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:5).

(3) Goal: Praise of His Glory (1:14b)

This phrase is being used for the third time now in this sentence. First, it was used of ultimate goal of the Father in v. 6. The Father’s goal is praised for His ‘before time’ plan of predestination to adoption and election. Second, it was used of the Son’s ultimate goal in v. 12. The Son’s goal is to be praised for His ‘in time’ execution of the Father’s plan through redemption, forgiveness of sin, revelation of the mystery, and making us God’s heritage. Third, it is used of the Spirit’s goal in v. 14. The Spirit’s goal is to be praised for His ‘in time’ and ‘beyond time’ sealing of the one who has believed the gospel. His glory is in the genitive again and therefore refers to the ‘reflecting back’ on God His essential being. God’s ultimate goal is to be praised for who and what He is as revealed through the Triune plan, execution, and securing of salvation.

ⁱ Walvoord, John F. *The Holy Spirit*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1991), 157.

ⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 240.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 245.

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