

From The Spirit
Ephesians 1:13-14
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Follow with me as I read Ephesians 1:13-14. Paul says, “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”

Have you ever run to the store to buy something only to come home and find that you already had that item the whole time? I have a pretty good library of books I use for sermon preparation, and it never fails that when I go shopping, I always buy a book I already have. I would go shopping with other pastors, and they like to go with me, because they know that I would buy duplicate books and I would give the duplicates to them.

A story is told of William Randolph Hearst, the one who built Hearst Castle in San Simeon. He was an art collector. He wanted a certain piece of art, so he had one of his employees travel the world to find that piece of art. After a whole year and a lot of expense in looking around the world for this piece of art, the employee returned. Mr. Hearst asked him, “Well, did you find the piece of art I was looking for?” The employee said, “Yes, it’s already in your art collection in the warehouse. You already own it.”

A lot of Christians are like that; they spend their whole Christian life looking for and seeking something that is already theirs in Christ.

Let’s look at Ephesians 1:3; it’s the key to understanding this series. As a matter of fact, verses 3-14 is one, long sentence in the Greek; Paul doesn’t even stop for a breath of air. Paul says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” You can take this to the bank; the moment you were born again and became a child of God, all the blessings of the Spirit became yours in Christ. The salvation that Jesus Christ purchased on the Cross includes all these spiritual blessings for all of God’s people.

As we are going through these blessings that are ours from the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I can’t help but continue to emphasize that all these blessings are true for all Christians. There are no degrees here; there are no haves and have-nots. All God’s children are blessed. All God’s children have all the same blessings; there are not some who are blessed and some who are not.

The blessings come as planned by the Father in eternity past—election, purchased by the Son in history—redemption, and presented by the Spirit—application. So we have plan, by the Father; purchase, by the Son; and presentation, by the Spirit. Thus, in eternity past, in history and in the present. These important doctrines we have covered of election and redemption, and today we see the application of our election: salvation.

What is the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ? It is the Holy Spirit who links us up to salvation. God the Father drew up salvation's plan, and God the Son brought it down to man. But it is the Holy Spirit who links us up to and brings us in Christ and brings us our eternal salvation.

The first question I want to ask is, "Who is the Holy Spirit?" The Holy Spirit is undoubtedly the least understood Person of the Trinity. The Bible teaches that there is one God; the Bible teaches monotheism—one God. Not three Gods but one God. But the one God is Triune, or one God in three Persons—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

You ask, "Well, isn't that three Gods?" No; they are one God in essence, but they are three, separate Persons. You say, "Well, Pastor John, I don't understand that." Yeah, but it's awesome! I don't understand it either. But when my TV or my phone or computer breaks and I don't understand how to fix them, I still think they are wonderful things. God is transcended; He's bigger than us and broader and greater than us. It's no big deal to me if God is someone who I can't fully fathom. What we know of and believe about God is what He has revealed about Himself in His Word. God is not just what we surmise or think. So we have one God in three Persons; God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Godhead. And we need to know that He is a person. In John 14:16, Jesus says, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper..."—or "Comforter"—"...that He..."—that is, "the Holy Spirit"; Jesus used a personal pronoun for the Holy Spirit, "He"—"...may abide with you forever." This verse has a lot of good information about the Person of the Holy Spirit. In this verse, God the Son asks God the Father to send God the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus used the word "another," that word means "other of the same kind or essence." So just as the Father is God and the Son is God, the Spirit is also God and has the same, divine attributes. The Holy Spirit is a divine Person. He is also called the "Comforter." The Greek word is "Paraklétos." It literally means "one who comes alongside to comfort, to strengthen and to encourage."

We get our idea of an advocate or lawyer from this concept. If you are going into a courtroom to defend yourself, you want a good defense lawyer. You want him right by your side, and you want him to encourage you and speak for you. So the Holy Spirit is our Advocate. He's our Paraklétos or Comforter.

That means that you're never alone. Isn't that great?! He's always with you. When you walk through the valley of deepest darkness, "You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." So you're never alone.

I gave a big hug to a dear sister in our church who lost her husband of 45 years just recently. Every time I see her, my heart goes out to her, but she knows that she's not alone. She knows that the Lord is with her. She knows where her husband is, and she knows where she is going

to be with him someday. But right now, she has the Comforter.

I'm so glad that when I go through life, I'm never alone. He gives me strength, He guides me and leads me and He teaches me and helps me. So He's my Comforter.

So the Holy Spirit is a person, a divine person and has all the same attributes possessed by the Father and the Son. He is also a promised person. John 14:16 says, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper." The Holy Spirit is the promised of the Father. In our text, in verse 13, He is called "the Holy Spirit of promise." It was promised by Jesus that the Father would send the Holy Spirit. He came in His fullness on the day of Pentecost. We live in the age of the Spirit; the church was formed and born at Pentecost.

Now I want to look at the work of the Holy Spirit. This is kind of a systematic theology or teaching on the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about salvation. So God the Father chose us, God the Son redeemed us and God the Holy Spirit made it applicable or linked us up in our salvation.

I want to put His work under three headings. There are six blessings of the Holy Spirit under three headings. The three headings are in verse 13: you "heard," you "believed" and you "were sealed."

Let's break down what it means that you "heard." What is it that you heard? Verse 13 says, "the Word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation." The concept is that you never separate the Word of God from the Spirit of God. J. Vernon McGee said, "The Holy Spirit is like a train that runs on a track. That track is the Word of God." That's why we read God's Word: because the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring an unbeliever to the Son of God. So we want to preach the Word of God because "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" or hearing a word about Jesus or the Gospel preached about Jesus Christ.

You often see when you look at the armor of God and our standing against the wiles of the devil that we take "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The two are linked together, the Holy Spirit and God's Word.

What is it that we heard in our unregenerated, unsaved state? We "heard the Word of truth..."—God's Word is true—"...the Gospel of your salvation." When you became a Christian, someone told you about Jesus. Someone shared a Scripture verse with you. You heard a sermon or a radio program. Maybe you attended a crusade. I don't know exactly what you heard, but the Bible was preached, the Gospel was shared and the Spirit of God took the Word of God to you.

What did the Spirit of God do? Blessing number one is that He brought conviction. It is the convicting work of the Holy Spirit. It all starts with the Spirit coming to the unbeliever and convicting him. In John 16:8, Jesus said, "He..."—that is, "the Holy Spirit"—"...will convict..."—or "convince"—"...the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." It's not my job to convince people that they are sinners. I proclaim the message, but the Holy Spirit convicts the person of their sins.

That's the best thing that could ever happen to you; to realize that "I am a sinner. I am undone. I am poor, wretched, naked and blind before a holy God." For you to come to a true conversion, it must be with a sense of your sin and your need for a Savior. I think we don't do justice to the Gospel if we just preach, "Come to Jesus." Why should we come to Jesus? It's because you're a sinner, and you're going to hell. You need to turn from your sin, repent and believe and trust in Jesus, or you're not saved.

So salvation starts with a conviction of sin. I'll never forget that my sister left the book *Living Letters* by Kenneth Taylor on Philippians in my bedroom and I started to read it. The Spirit of God took even that modern paraphrase and convicted me and convinced me that I was a sinner and needed Jesus Christ. It was by reading those *Living Letters*, that became the *Living Bible*, that the Spirit of God convicted me. I began to cry and knew that I needed Christ. I knew that I needed to get right with God. That was all the work of the Holy Spirit. My parents talked to me, the preacher preached a sermon, but it wasn't until the Holy Spirit of God came to my heart—to your heart—and convinces us of our sin.

Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." In the Greek, it literally means "a sermon preached about Christ." It is a proclamation of the Word centered in the Person of Jesus Christ.

In John 6:44, Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him." So blessing number one, which counts as a work of the Holy Spirit, is that He brought conviction of my sin.

The second heading is that you "believed." You first heard the Gospel of salvation and secondly, you believed. Verse 13 says, "having believed." The idea of believing here means "to trust in Christ" or "to put your faith in Christ" or "to receive Jesus Christ." In John 1:12, The Scripture says, "As many as received Him..."—that is, "Jesus Christ"—"...to them He gave the right..."—or "power" or "authority"—"...to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." So you believed, trusted, had faith and received. Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." So faith is the hand that reaches out and receives what Jesus did for us on the Cross. It starts with conviction, and then you believe and trust in Jesus Christ.

There are three things that happened the moment you believed in Jesus Christ. There are many things that happened, but I want to limit them to three under this point. Blessing number two is that you were regenerated. First you heard the Gospel and were convicted, then you believed and received Christ and then you were regenerated. In Titus 3:5, Paul says that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." In Ephesians 2:4-5, Paul talked about the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

This is what Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:3: He said, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." The theological term is "regenerated." That word means "given new

life.” What is a Christian? A Christian is a person who has the life of God in their soul. It’s not just believing about God or just going to church or being baptized or going through the motions; it’s having the life of God in your soul.

Have you been born again? Have you been regenerated? That’s the work of the Holy Spirit. He’s the one who comes and brings you new life.

The third blessing, which is under this heading of believed, is indwelling. The Holy Spirit convicts you, regenerates you when you believe and He indwells you. 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul says, “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?” In Romans 8:9, he says, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His.”

Christians get confused sometimes, because they are told that they need to pray for the Holy Spirit. The truth is that you get the Holy Spirit the moment you are saved; you aren’t saved without the Holy Spirit. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit.

The question is, “Does the Holy Spirit have you?” It’s not how much of the Holy Spirit I have; it’s how much the Holy Spirit has of me. That’s the important thing. That’s the doctrine of being filled with the Holy Spirit. But every Christian equally shares in this regenerating work, in this indwelling work. The Spirit of God dwells in every one of us Christians.

Now there is a fourth blessing under the heading of believing. The moment you believed, you were regenerated or born again, you were indwelt and you were baptized. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.” Paul is writing to the carnal Corinthians, but he affirms that every one of them, as believers—and every one of us as believers—have all been baptized by the Holy Spirit into Christ.

This is something that happens the moment you are saved. The Holy Spirit takes you out of Adam, and He places you in Christ. That’s why Ephesians is all about your position in Christ. In your unregenerated, unsaved state, you were in Adam under condemnation.

How do you get out of Adam and place yourself in Christ? You do it by being born again; the Spirit of God regenerates you, He indwells you, He takes you out of Adam and He places you in Christ. You might say, from Adam the first to Adam the last. In Adam the first you had sin, death and condemnation; in Adam the last, in Jesus Christ, you have His salvation and His forgiveness. Remember that earlier in Ephesians 1, we saw that Jesus is our Redeemer, and He forgives our sin. So we have been baptized, we’ve been identified in and with Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

So number one, you heard the word of truth, the Gospel; number two, you believed and were regenerated and indwelt and placed into Christ; and the third heading is that you were sealed. This is the heart of the passage in verse 13: “You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” Paul calls Him “the Holy Spirit of promise,” because Jesus said, “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever,” John 14:16. So once the

Spirit comes, He comes to stay. He indwells us permanently. You can quench Him and grieve Him, but you can't cause Him to go away. "He will never leave you nor forsake you." But it is important that we yield to His power and to His control.

Here's the point I want to make: All Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit, all Christians are regenerated, all Christians are indwelt, all Christians are baptized by the Spirit into the body of Christ the moment they are born again positionally in Christ and all Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit. You don't have to ask God to seal you. We don't approach Christians who have been born again and ask, "Have you been sealed with the Holy Spirit?" We don't do that because it happens automatically. The Bible doesn't tell us to ask to be sealed, to seek it or to pray for it, because it happens automatically. The Holy Spirit regenerates you, indwells you, baptizes you and seals you. This is one of the most glorious truths taught in Scripture. Billy Graham, in his book *The Holy Spirit* said, "One of the most thrilling thoughts that has ever crossed my mind is that the Holy Spirit has sealed me. What a blessing that is."

When were the believers sealed? At the moment of believing: "Having believed, you were sealed," verse 13. Now I believe that you can resist God and run from God, so you need to repent, you need to believe, you need to turn from your sin, you need to trust Jesus Christ. And the moment you do that, God gives you new life, and the Spirit comes to live inside you. Then He takes you out of Adam and places you in Christ and seals you with "the Holy Spirit of promise."

Why are we sealed with the Holy Spirit? Three things are conveyed in this doctrine of sealing: ownership, authenticity and security. Ownership means I am His and He is mine. Authenticity speaks of assurance. How do we know that we are really saved? "His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." So you have the Word of God the Father—you rest on His Word, you have the work of God the Son—the finished work on the Cross, and you have the inner witness of the Holy Spirit—His Spirit bears witness with mine that I am a child of God. Authenticity means that I really and truly belong to Him, and I am truly a Christian.

My favorite is security. This is something that Christians will argue and fight over, but I believe that once you are born again, once you have been regenerated, it's not that you have just believed in Jesus; something actually happened to you. You were given new life. You were adopted. You were redeemed. You were forgiven. You are now a son or daughter of God. The Holy Spirit comes to live inside you, and that is true of all Christians the moment they believe. Then you were indwelt. What a glorious truth that is. The Holy Spirit comes to stay. Jesus said that He would "be with you forever."

So the seal or the signet speaks not only of ownership and authenticity but also of security. Many times with a signet ring, a piece of hot wax would be put on a letter and then they would press or strike the wax into the letter with the signet ring. The symbol of the signet ring would be imprinted in the wax, showing that the letter belonged to that person. The letter would be sealed. Then the letter would be sent. The only ones who could break that seal would be the sender and the recipient. When you seal a letter and send it, no one can tamper with it or

break the seal.

When you become a Christian, God seals you with the Holy Spirit, and you are being sent. In God's case, He is both the sender and the recipient. He saves us and seals us by His Spirit, He sends us on our journey and then He receives us into glory. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also."

Remember that He is the Spirit of promise, and Jesus always keeps His promises. Can you imagine if Jesus said, "Oh, I forgot to prepare your place! I'm not sure what I'm going to do with you!" No; Jesus has a plan. His promises are sure. You're in transit right now. But don't be afraid, because you're sealed with the Holy Spirit. And no one can break that seal.

James Montgomery Boice said, "Sealing with the Holy Spirit answers to all our needs. It assures us of God's favor. It shows us that we belong to Him. It renders our salvation certain." I love that.

You ask, "Well, how long does the sealing last? How long will I be sealed with the Holy Spirit as a Christian?" Paul says in Ephesians, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God..."—indicating that He is a Person, subject to personal treatment—"...by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." When is the day of redemption? It's when you go to heaven. Remember that salvation has three tenses: past, present and future—I've been saved, I'm being saved and I will be saved. I've been justified, I'm being sanctified and I will be glorified. That's the day of redemption. The sealing lasts until the day of redemption, when you're going to go to heaven. And once you're in heaven, you're with the Lord. What a glorious truth that is!

That's why Jonathan Edwards said, "What begins with grace ends in glory." God saves you by His grace. In this passage, we go from eternity past, where the Father chose you; then we go to history, where Jesus died for you; and then we go to eternity future, where you're sealed until the day of redemption. That's pretty cool! Your salvation past, present and future is secure, because you've been sealed by the Holy Spirit until "the day of redemption." God sealed us, so someone stronger than Him would have to break the seal. And only two persons could break the seal: the sender and the recipient.

The sixth and last blessing is the guaranteeing or the pledge, verse 14. Paul ends verse 13 referencing "the Holy Spirit of promise," then he opens verse 14 with "who is the guarantee of our inheritance." It's the down payment of our inheritance. Until when? Here's another time word: "until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." So this is a down payment or guarantee that the final purchase of some commodity will be completed.

Very few people can pay cash for a home today. So you scrape up all the money you can and put a down payment on the home. That's the same word. What is a down payment? It's earnest money. If you really want to buy a home or car, you put money down on the purchase price. You show them you are earnest by putting money down. That down payment is a

foretaste of more money to follow. In the case of a house, it would be a lot of money to follow for a long time. So it's a down payment.

The Holy Spirit is God's down payment. And there is more to come. God is going to finish the transaction. One of my favorite ideas about the seal of the Holy Spirit as a down payment is that it is a foretaste of what is to come.

When the Thanksgiving meal is cooking in the kitchen, I cannot resist tasting before dinner. Especially the mashed potatoes. Praise Jehovah for mashed potatoes! The minute they hit my lips, I start praising God. I go around saying, "The mashed potatoes are so good! You wait until dinner; those mashed potatoes are going to be so good!"

They ask, "How do you know?"

"Because I've tasted them already."

So we Christians say that heaven's going to be so good.

"How do you know?"

"Because I've tasted it already!" The Holy Spirit is the taste of that which is yet to come. When we sing, praise and worship, we get a little slice of heaven.

Remember when the 12 spies went into the Promised Land to check it out? It was the land of promise. Joshua and Caleb brought back a cluster of grapes so big that they had to carry it on a pole. They tasted the grapes and knew that the grapes were good from the Promised Land. They said, "It's good; let's go in! We can conquer the Promised Land!" They said that because they tasted of the Promised Land. So the Holy Spirit is a little taste of what it's going to be like when we get to heaven. How glorious is that!

We have been redeemed, forgiven, regenerated, indwelt, baptized and then sealed by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of promise. What a glorious truth that is!

How long will this sealing last? Verse 14, "until the redemption of the purchased possession." This is one of the strongest affirmations in the Bible, along with Ephesians 4, where it talks about sealed until the day of redemption. No one and nothing can break that seal. In Romans 8, there is "now no condemnation" and no separation. If you are a true Christian, you are secure in the hands of God.

I like the New Living Translation of 2 Corinthians 1:22, where Paul says that He has "identified us as His own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts as the first installment that guarantees everything He has promised us." So God has given us His Holy Spirit as a guarantee of everything He has promised.

When Paul came to the end of verse 14, he realized all the blessings that come from God the

Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Notice how he closes: “to the praise of His glory.” Notice that in verse 6, the blessings from God the Father end with “to the praise of the glory of His grace.” Then in verse 12, the blessings from God the Son end with “to the praise of His glory.” And now in verse 14, the blessings from God the Holy Spirit end with “to the praise of His glory.” So Paul ends each section with a doxology: “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” That’s what Paul is saying here.

I’ve been chosen by the Father, verse 4; I’ve been redeemed by the Son, verse 7; and I’ve been sealed by the Spirit “until the redemption.” Is it any wonder in verse 18 that Paul prays that “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”? God inherits us.

So we are blessed; we have been chosen, we have been redeemed and we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit, which is the pledge of our inheritance.

Let’s pray.