

Our Salvation: The Holy Spirit Sealed It

Ephesians 1:13-14

In 2007, two investors paid \$300,000 for a run-down bungalow and one-car garage on Long Island, New York, thinking that they would renovate the property, sell it and make a profit. It's what they do. But when they went into the garage, they found thousands of paintings and drawings that had been abandoned when the previous owner died. It turns out that the previous owner was an Armenian-American abstract impressionist named Arthur Pinajian. When an expert was called in, the paintings and drawings were appraised at \$30 million!

Sometimes what we have is worth so much more than we realize. That is certainly the way it is with us as believers. We have so much more at our disposal, so much more power, so much more love and peace, than we realize, and certainly much more than we utilize. He's called The Holy Spirit.

As we go deeper into the Grand Canyon of Scripture, Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, we discover that there are many blessings that are ours simply because we are children of God. Remember that 1:3 reads, "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*" Then Paul begins to catalogue those blessings for us, listing, among others, being chosen by the Father, adoption into His eternal Family, His grace, redemption, forgiveness of sins, and so on. All of these are wrapped up as a part of our salvation that Christ has secured for us by His death on the cross.

We've summarized those blessings this way:

The Father has planned our salvation

The Son has paid for our salvation

Take your Bibles and look closely at something with me. All of these blessings are given to us by God for His glory. In verses 3-6 Paul says that God has chosen us—why? Look at the end of verse six: "*...to the praise of his glorious grace.*" Then in verses 7-12, we are told that Jesus has redeemed us, forgiven us and revealed His plan to us—why? Look at the end of verse 12: "*for the praise of his glory.*"

But now we come to the third aspect: *The Holy Spirit has sealed our salvation.* And—you guessed it—at the end of verse 14: "*to the praise of his glory.*"

What all that means is that you and I are saved in order to bring glory to God. Is your life currently bringing glory to God?

Well, it's a good thing you're here today, because God has something to say to you about your salvation and your relationship with Christ, things that will encourage you and deepen your walk with Him.

Before we go too much further, there are a couple of very important words in vv. 13-14 that deserve our attention. The first is the word "seal" in verse 13—*"having believed, you were marked with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."* Kings, or really anyone who needed to conduct a business transaction, would have a seal, or a signet ring, on which would be engraved a unique design. When conducting business, that seal or signet ring would be pressed down into clay or wax to leave an impression. So understand what a seal is.

The other important word we need to understand is in verse 14, where we learn that the Holy Spirit *"is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory."* Pick up that word "deposit." Some translations use the word "earnest." Consider that. A deposit is a sum of money you pay when you are making a large purchase, and you are unable to pay the full amount all at once.

So what we are going to see in these two verses will open up our understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in our salvation.

1 Our Salvation is Complete

When a document was prepared, it would be sealed so that it could be delivered without anyone tampering with it. The seal was used for various reasons, and meant various things. The first thing it meant was that that particular transaction was finished. It was complete. The seal wasn't even put on the document until all the terms had been agreed upon by the involved parties, and negotiations were over. In our day, when an important legal document is processed, it is then stamped with an official seal or stamp to indicate that the transaction has been completed. When you pay off a note at the bank, the bank sends you that original note, stamped "PAID." The agreement between you and the bank is satisfied. It is finished.

When the Bible says that the Holy Spirit is the seal of our salvation, it simply means that the transaction has been completed. There is nothing more to be done.

We see in God's Word that Jesus paid for our sin debt, and it has been forever paid. When I first come to Christ and express sorrow for my sins, I discover to my delight that the debt has been completely paid, and my sins can be forgiven. So I am free to go on my way, and experience the abundant life Jesus came to give me.

But what if I sin again? What about those new sins? Here is the good part: those sins are covered, too! There is nothing that I have to do, nothing I can do, to earn that forgiveness. So when we say that the Holy Spirit is the seal that God has placed on our salvation, we mean that the transaction has been finally, absolutely and ultimately completed.

2 Our Salvation is Genuine

A second way that a seal was used was to mark something as being authentic. Seeing the king's seal on a document meant that the king himself had authorized whatever was to be found in that document. Seals today have become much more high-tech. If you've ever bought a Microsoft product for your computer, you have seen the "Seal of Authenticity" on the package containing the software. It is a foil seal that cannot be removed without destroying the package. Hold it up to the light and it shimmers and changes colors. It would be very difficult to forge. When you see that seal on that box, you are assured that you are buying a genuine Microsoft product. Sometimes a seal will be placed on a computer to make sure that the consumer has not voided the warranty by opening the computer.

That's what we see when we look at this word in verse 13—the seal that has been put on our salvation is the Holy Spirit Himself, Who authenticates our salvation experience. When you come to know Christ and surrender your life to Him, His Holy Spirit comes to reside in you. Romans 8:9 tells us, *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ."* 1 Corinthians 3:16 confirms this: *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?"*

He is called *"the promised Holy Spirit"* because He had been promised even back in the Old Testament. But back up and read all of verse 13: *"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."* When we trust in Christ for our salvation, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit comes to live in us. When God puts His Holy Spirit in you as a result of your profession

of faith in Christ, He comes in to authenticate, to mark as genuine, the blessing of salvation that God has made available to us through Christ.

3 Our Salvation is Secure

Seals were used not only on documents, but also on buildings and shipping crates. Once the seal had been put in place, it would be very easy to tell if someone had tampered with it. We see one very good example of this in the hours following the crucifixion of Christ. After He had been buried, the chief priests and Pharisees went to Pilate and requested the tomb of Jesus be made secure until the third day, because they were afraid that His disciples would steal the body and claim that He was alive. Matthew 27:66 reads, *“So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.”*

Placing that seal on the tomb meant that if it had been tampered with before the three days was up, they would know. The seal secured that tomb with the body of Christ inside.

When we apply this to this word, and with what we see in the rest of Scripture, we see that God has given His Holy Spirit to us to secure our salvation. That means that once we have come to know Jesus as our Lord, and we are born into His family, that relationship is eternal. Take a look at Ephesians 4:30—*“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”* What I see there in that verse is that even when I grieve God’s Holy Spirit by my sinful rebellion, I am still sealed in that relationship with Him. I have been born into God’s eternal family, and I cannot become “unborn.” We should definitely strive to live holy lives, as the Scripture commands us. But we do not have to worry that we’re going to commit one little sin and lose our salvation. That teaching is not found in the Bible. Our salvation is secure, and God has given us His Holy Spirit as proof.

4 Our Salvation is Guaranteed

Here is where the word “deposit” or “earnest” in verse 14 comes in. The use of a deposit or earnest is pretty much the same today as it was then. A deposit is the first payment of a debt. It serves as the promise that the full payment will be forthcoming. I pay a little bit now, but I am promising, I am guaranteeing, that I am in fact going to pay everything that is owed.

Suppose I make an offer to buy a house; I will pay a certain sum of money, called “earnest money.” The purpose is to say to the seller that I am “in earnest”—that I

am really serious—about buying that house. I am promising to buy that house, and the earnest money, or deposit, guarantees that promise. I am saying, “Here is a small sum of money to declare my intentions, but there is more on the way.”

It also effectively takes that house off the market, making it off limits to any other potential buyers. Legally, I own the right to buy that house. No one else can step in and try to buy the house. If my offer is accepted, the realtor will attach a small sign which reads, “Sale Pending,” across the front of the “For Sale” sign. An offer has been made to purchase the house, and earnest money has been paid, because I am serious about buying that particular house. My intention is to follow through with the purchase.

When the Scripture says that the Holy Spirit is a deposit, or earnest, it means that God is going to deliver on all His promises He has ever made. It also effectively means that we have been taken “off the market” since it seals us as belonging to God now. It prevents Satan from stepping in and taking us for himself.

Here is something very interesting. You go to a jewelry store in Greece today and you will find that the same word translated “deposit” or “earnest” in Biblical Greek is in modern Greek the word for “engagement ring.” And that makes sense. A man gives a woman an engagement ring as a way to say, “This is a guarantee that we are going to get married. There’s more on the way.” So it is completely accurate to say that the Holy Spirit is God’s engagement ring which He has given us as His Bride, the Church, which says, “That love and peace and joy you have right now is only a foretaste, a mere glimpse, of what I have in store for you when you finally reach Heaven!”

If the Spirit is an earnest, or deposit, of what is to come, that means that the love we have from God today is only a small portion of what will be. The understanding we have today is only a small portion of what we will know. The devotion we have today toward Christ is only a foretaste of that utter and complete holiness we shall experience once we get to heaven. Any happiness we experience here is only a preview of the undiluted joy we’ll have on the other side. Any longing we have on this side of eternity for beauty and wonder will only be amplified and fulfilled once we get to Heaven.

The Holy Spirit Who comes to live in us when we believe in Christ is God’s first installment which guarantees that He will in fact finish the work He began in Christ.

Doesn't that sound like something you would like for your own life? Long before the foundation of the world, the Father planned for your salvation. With His own blood, the Son paid for your salvation. And because God wanted to make sure we could know we are saved, the Holy Spirit sealed it. Because of that, our salvation is

Complete
Genuine
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Guaranteed

I want to ask three questions. **First**, “How do you get this sealing?” The answer is in verse 13. “*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*” Do you see it? It's not complicated! You must first **hear** the Word of Truth, really hear it in such a way that it gets down into your heart and saturates who you are. Then you must **believe** it so deeply that everything else pales in comparison to the wonderful truth that He loves you so much that He died on the cross, shedding His blood for your sins.

The **second** question is “How do you know you have this seal?” Well, God said so, right here in His Word. God's Holy Spirit gives us assurance that we belong to Him. 1 John 4:13 assures us, “*We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.*” Here's what we read in Romans 8:16—“*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.*” Galatians 4:6 tells us that “*Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’*”

But we also know it by the way He works in our hearts. We know it by the way we are convicted when we sin. We know it by the peace and assurance He gives us. We know it by the hope and love that is in us, by the hunger we have for spiritual things, by our love for Scripture and our desire to worship with others—and a host of other ways.

And now the **third** question is this: “Are you ready to receive it today?” Perhaps today you heard this truth for the first time in such a way that it made a difference in your life. Something in your own spirit is calling out for the Holy Spirit to give you that assurance of eternal life. The good news today is that you can have it!