

**“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 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.” Ephesians 1:13, 14, NAS95.**

In verse 3, Paul says that if you are in Christ God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. He shows that we have been chosen by the Father (1:46); redeemed by the Son, who revealed to us His eternal purpose (1:7-12); and, now, sealed by the Holy Spirit (1:13-14); all, to the praise of His glory (1:6, 12, 14).

The truth that believers have been sealed with the Holy Spirit, who is also called the pledge of our inheritance, is critical in having a truly Christian mindset and how we view our relationship with Christ. God gives us these pictures of the Holy Spirit to reveal that we are secure in Christ. Many Christians struggle with a lack of assurance of their salvation. The enemy knows that if he can stir up doubts about your salvation, you will not glorify God as you should.

God never gives us any reason to doubt that security, unless we are not living according to the way of the new heart. When the evidence is lacking as a way of life we do not sense that security and if we do it is because it is based on several unwarranted assumptions of bad theology or simply self-deceit.

Even so, the Father wants all of His children to know they are secure in His steadfast love. After all, before we even existed, He chose us in Christ and determined that we would be adopted into His family (1:4-5). When He did that, He knew everything about us and yet He still chose us, based on His grace, not on anything in us. To assure us, He gives us the Holy Spirit as the seal and pledge of our future inheritance, guaranteeing that He will complete what He has begun. So, Paul here says, that we should praise God because when we believed, He secured us in Christ with the seal and pledge of the Holy Spirit.

Sadly, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is one of the most controversial and divisive

subjects among Christians today. Many churches have split over differences regarding the gifts of the Spirit, especially prophetic utterances, speaking in tongues, miracles, and healing. Some argue that all such miraculous gifts ceased with the apostolic era, while others argue that they should be experienced on a normative basis by the church today. My opinion is that we cannot prove biblically that such gifts have ceased. Yet, at the same time, most of what goes under that banner today is not genuine. The enemy is the great counterfeiter. Thus, we need biblical discernment in these matters (1 John 4:1).

Our goal is not to engage in a study about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit but to understand that part of what the Holy Spirit's role is in the context of our text and what it says about being secure in Christ.

And remember the Ephesians already knew these things however they are being reiterated by Paul in this letter after the church has been established as He is addressing some issues in the church. When we experience difficulties among us as a body it is always a good thing to go back and remind ourselves of our core doctrinal and beliefs and our core values as a body. This can solve many problems.

I want to ask and answer five questions that stem from our text regarding the Holy Spirit and His ministry of making us secure in Christ.

1. Where does the Holy Spirit come from? He comes from God sent by Christ. We receive the Holy Spirit by hearing the gospel and believing in Jesus Christ. And in order for this to occur, we must be regenerated – born from above by the work of the Holy Spirit, so we can repent and believe.

Some teach that not all believers have the Holy Spirit, but we must seek God to give us the Spirit. They usually teach that the sign of receiving the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. They also call this experience “being baptized in (or by) the Spirit.” They base this on some texts in Acts, as well as Luke 11:13, where Jesus tells the disciples that the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him.

In seeking to understand these matters, it is crucial to understand that on the Day of

Pentecost, God did a new thing with regard to the Holy Spirit. Before Pentecost, only some believers were indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and even at that it was not necessarily permanent. Thus David, after his sin with Bathsheba, prayed (Ps. 51:11), "... do not take Your Holy Spirit from me." While believers today may grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30) or quench the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19), they cannot lose the indwelling Spirit. It is part of God's gift of salvation after Pentecost.

In the Upper Room, Jesus promised the disciples (John 14:16-17) that after He left them, the Father would send

"another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you."

Later, when Jesus appeared to the disciples after His resurrection, He knew their need for the Spirit's presence until they permanently received Him seven weeks later at Pentecost. Thus (John 20:22), "He breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Just before He ascended, Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for what the Father had promised, namely, the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5).

On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came powerfully upon the believers, thus fulfilling God's promise. The Book of Acts must be interpreted as a transitional book to the age (or dispensation) of the Spirit. We see the Spirit coming first on believers in Jerusalem, then in Samaria, then on the Gentiles, and then to those in the "remotest part of the earth" (see Acts 1:8; 2:1-21; 8:14-17; 10:1-48; 19:1-7). After the transitional time, all believers in Christ receive the Holy Spirit.

Other Scriptures affirm this interpretation. In Acts 15, during the debate at the Jerusalem Council, Peter refers back to his experience of preaching to the Gentiles (Acts 10). He says (15:7-8) that they heard the word of the gospel and believed, and that God gave them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to the Jews at Pentecost. In Galatians, Paul argues that they received the Spirit at the beginning of their Christian experience by hearing [the gospel] with faith, not by works of the Law (3:2, 3, 5). And, in Romans 8:9, Paul writes, "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if

indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.” Every believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him.

In our text (Eph. 1:13), Paul gives the same order. “You also” refers to the Gentiles (contrasted with the Jews, 1:12). First, they listened to the message of truth, the gospel of their salvation. Then, they believed that message and they were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise. The gospel is the good news, that God forgives all our sins and gives us eternal life as His free gift through faith in Christ, apart from our good deeds (Eph. 2:8-9). The moment you believe that message and put your trust in Christ, God seals you with the Holy Spirit and gives Him to you as His pledge that you will inherit all the blessings of heaven for all eternity.

2. Who receives the Holy Spirit and when? All believers receive the Holy Spirit the instant they believe in Christ.

I’ve already said this, but need to address it further because many teach that there is a time lapse between believing in Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit and that only some experience the sealing of the Spirit. This view was fostered by the old King James translation, which stated, “in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.” The word after implies a time lapse. But that undermines Paul’s entire point here, which is to assure all believers that God has sealed them with the Spirit at the moment of faith in Christ.

While the Greek grammar of Ephesians 1:13 allows for the translation, “after you believed,” it also may be translated, “when you believed.” We must go to the context and to other Scriptures to determine which is correct. In the context here, Paul is enumerating all of the blessings that we received in Christ.

And, as we’ve seen, other Scriptures (Gal. 3:2-5; Rom. 8:9; and the Book of Acts, properly interpreted) show that we receive the Spirit at the moment of salvation. But there are more. In 2 Corinthians 1:22, Paul writes that God “sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.” He repeats in 2 Corinthians 5:5, “Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.” He

does not say that this only applied to those in Corinth who were spiritually mature or who had sought this blessing, but he writes it to the entire church. To the same church (1 Cor. 12:13), he wrote, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." In Ephesians 4:30, he commands, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." Again, he does not imply that only some had been sealed. It was the blessing of all in the church of Ephesus who had believed in Christ.

Also, it is significant that believers are never commanded to be baptized with the Spirit or to be sealed with the Spirit. If these were experiences that we need, surely there would be commands to this effect. We are commanded that we should be filled with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).

So while every true believer in Christ has the Holy Spirit indwelling him from the moment of salvation, we do not experience the fullness of the Holy Spirit, consistently in daily life. We should pray for that and grow into it as we mature and understand what it means to have a life that is characterized by being full of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 11:24) and that is a topic for another day.

3. How do we know if we have the Holy Spirit? Many evidences reveal the Spirit's presence in our lives.

Our Pentecostal brethren argue that speaking in tongues is the normative sign or evidence of having the Holy Spirit. But, even if you allow that the gift of tongues is valid for today, Paul is clear (1 Cor. 12:30), "All do not speak with tongues, do they?" In the context, he is arguing that we all have differing gifts. What are some evidences of the Holy Spirit in our lives? We could list many more, but here are five:

(1) We heard the gospel of salvation and recognized it to be the truth.

In Ephesians 1:13, Paul recounts what had happened to these Gentile believers. First, they heard the good news about salvation and they recognized it to be the truth. For that to happen, the Holy Spirit had to open their blind eyes. In Ephesians 4:18, Paul

writes that unbelievers are “darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart.” In 1 Corinthians 2:14, he states, “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.” So, for anyone to understand the truth of the gospel, the Holy Spirit must open his blind eyes (see John 8:43; 9:39).

(2) We believed the gospel and were saved.

While no one is able to believe of his own so called “free will” (because the will is enslaved to sin and not free), at the same time no one can be saved apart from believing in Jesus Christ. So how does a person come to believe in Christ? Answer: the Holy Spirit must open spiritually blind eyes to see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ so that the person can believe in Him (2 Cor. 4:4-6). So if you have believed the gospel and God has saved you by His grace through faith in Christ, it is an evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence in your life.

(3) The Holy Spirit replaced our despair with hope in God’s promises.

In Ephesians 2:12, Paul describes unbelievers as “strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” But when God saves us, His Holy Spirit makes us heirs of God’s promises and gives us hope (Rom. 15:13). He is “the Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13) and that should cause us to know we are secure in Him.

(4) We began to enjoy the riches of our inheritance in Christ.

Although we will not experience the fullness of the riches of God’s grace even throughout eternity, the instant that we trust in Christ we begin to discover and enjoy all that God has prepared for those who love Him. Paul says that God reveals these things to us through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-10).

(5) The Holy Spirit began to produce His fruit in us.

Paul writes (Gal. 5:22-23), “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” Again, fruit takes time to grow, but if the Spirit of God dwells in us, the process of character transformation continues until we are with Christ.. Over time as we mature, we will see these qualities developing in more mature ways. We never become holier but grow in the holiness that is part of who and what we are by God’s grace. These are just some of the evidences that God’s Spirit is at work in your life. But, Paul’s main emphasis in our text is the security that we now enjoy because of the seal and pledge of the Spirit.

4. What does it mean to me to have the Holy Spirit? I have the security of knowing that I belong to Christ forever.

He wants you to know the security of His unchanging love. Paul uses two metaphors to drive home this point:

(1) You can know you are secure in Christ because the Holy Spirit is the seal of God’s promises to you. This is not a feeling but a fact. And as you acknowledge and believe any promise of Christ that is a part of your salvation experience, you must do the same with this one.

The seal in biblical times was usually made of hot wax, impressed with a signet ring or other official insignia. It represented at least three things:

- Security

The seal made something secure. The Roman guards sealed the tomb of Jesus so that no one could steal His body (Matt. 27:66). They probably put a rope across the stone that blocked the entrance and secured both ends with wax, stamped with the official Roman seal. Also, a letter or legal document was sealed with wax and stamped with a special seal so that the recipient could be sure that it had not been tampered with. When you trusted in Christ, God sealed you with His Holy Spirit, making your salvation secure. No one can break God’s seal.

- Identification of ownership

The seal marked out property or documents as belonging to the one who put his seal

upon it. Much like a brand on cattle, the seal showed who officially owned something (Jer. 32:10). Even so, God's Spirit is the seal on the believer, showing that you are no longer your own. He bought you with the blood of Christ and you now belong to Him. No one can take you from Him.

- Authentication

A seal makes something official or authentic. If it has the official seal on it, you know that it's genuine. If you've ever had to get an official transcript from a school or an official copy of your birth certificate, it had to have the official seal on it to be valid. Or, a notary public will authenticate your signature on an important document by stamping it with his seal. Even so, God's Holy Spirit assures us that we are His genuine children. False believers do not have the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 8:16, Paul says, "The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God." I believe that He does that mostly by an inner assurance brought by the Holy Spirit that God's promises in His Word are true. In other words, when you read the Scripture and find yourself exclaiming, "Praise God, this is God's promise for me in Christ, it is the Holy Spirit giving you authentication that you are God's child. You belong to Him. So, the Holy Spirit is God's seal, testifying to us that we are His for time and eternity. But, also ...

(2) You can know that you are secure in Christ because the Holy Spirit is the pledge of your inheritance in Christ.

The word pledge might better be translated as down payment or earnest money. A pledge is something valuable that you give as temporary collateral until you complete the agreement. But a down payment or earnest money is the first installment, with more of the same to follow. If you are selling a house, the other party gives you earnest money to show that he is serious and he plans to complete the deal. In modern Greek, the word used here for pledge means an engagement ring. It is a token of a promise that says, "Take this for now, but there is more to follow."

God gives us the Holy Spirit as the down payment or earnest of the full blessing of



our future redemption. In one sense, we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ (1:7). But, in another sense, our redemption is not complete until we get to heaven. Right now we can begin to enjoy the inheritance that is ours in Christ. But it's just a foretaste of future glory. We don't get the complete inheritance until we go to heaven.

Scholars are divided over whether "the redemption of the possession" ("God's own" has been added by translators) refers to our receiving the fullness of the redemption that we now partially possess; or, does it refer to God's redeeming His people as His possession? While both ideas are true biblically, most understand it to mean that God has put down the earnest of His Holy Spirit to show that He will take full possession of what is rightfully His (1 Pet. 2:9). The Holy Spirit's indwelling us shows us that God will complete the deal. God uses these two metaphors, the seal and the pledge, so that if you have believed in Christ as your Savior, you will feel secure in His promise of eternal life.

5. How should we respond to having the security of God's seal and pledge? We should praise and glorify Him.

Paul especially wants his Gentile readers to know that they now enjoy equal standing in Christ before God with Jewish believers. F. F. Bruce puts it (The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians [Eerdmans], p. 267), "That such language should now be applied to Gentile believers is a token of the security of their new standing within the community of God's own people, fully sharing present blessing and future hope with their fellow-believers of Jewish stock." He goes on to point out that Paul is here echoing the words of Isaiah 43:20-21, where God says, "My chosen people, the people whom I formed for Myself will declare My praise."

For 2,000 years, the Gentiles were for the most part excluded from God's promises to Israel. But now, as Paul goes on to argue (chapters 2 & 3), "the Gentiles are fellow-heirs and fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (3:8). This should cause us to praise His glory (1:14).

Conclusion

If you have trusted in Christ as Savior, God gave you His Holy Spirit as the seal and pledge of your inheritance so that you will praise and glorify Him. Did you hear what I said, you will praise and glorify Him. You will not praise and glorify God properly unless you know you are secure in His eternal love that saved you from your sin and sealed you for His own possession. Since the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, you need to know that you are secure in the salvation that He has given you so that you fulfill that purpose. And if you are a member of the New Covenant this will occur because:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”” Jeremiah 31:31-34, NAS95.

The inscription of God is the Spirit of Christ and where He has been written proves that one has been sealed by that Spirit and that New Covenant person will be looking to the future inheritance that we have in Christ.

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