

SEALED BY THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 1:11-14 (No. 4)

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INTRODUCTION

Open your Bible to Ephesians 1. We've come to the final section of Paul's praise to God that opens this letter to the church in Ephesus. So far, we've only covered one sentence—because verse 3-14 are one 202-word sentence in the Greek—and he has been gushing about the blessings believers have in salvation. So let's begin reading at v. 3, read through v. 14, focusing on vv. 11-14.

So far, we've seen four blessings in salvation that God has given believers.

- Election (choosing us and giving us a destiny)
- Adoption (bringing us into his family)
- Redemption (freeing us from slavery of sin)
- Revealing his will that all will be brought under the Lordship of Christ

This has been a Trinitarian blessing.

- The focus of vv. 3-6 on the Father
- Focus of vv. 7-12 on the Son
- We'll see the focus of vv. 13-14 on the Spirit.

Proposition: As we come to verses 11-14 today, we learn of two final blessings God has given believers.

I. THE BLESSING OF AN INHERITANCE

v.11-12: "In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."

"Him" refers to Jesus. Every time Paul writes "in him" in this section, he means "in Christ." So: in Jesus, we have obtained an inheritance. "we have obtained an inheritance" – one word in Greek. ἐκληρώθημεν – as a verb, only time used in the NT. But the idea of believers receiving an inheritance is found throughout the NT.

Col 1:11-12: "May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light."

1 Pet 1:3-4: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ

from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.”

Rom 8:16-17: “The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

As believers, we have an expectation that we will receive an inheritance from God. We *receive* it from God. Meaning: this is different than a reward. We didn’t earn this; our inheritance was graciously bequeathed to us.

A. WHAT IS THE INHERITANCE THAT WE RECEIVE?

Notice, first, that in one sense we have it already:

v.11: “In him we have obtained an inheritance”

But in another sense, we don’t yet have it:

v. 14: “who [the Holy Spirit] is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.”

So we have it, but don’t yet have it. We have obtained it, but don’t yet have it in our possession. So, think with me. . . what is that we have but don’t yet have? What do we have completely in one sense, but don’t yet have fully in other sense? You might answer: the blessings of heaven.

- That would be true.
- Support your answer with: v.3: “[God] has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. . .”
- Lots of blessings of heaven that have been secured for us, but right now we only have a taste of:
 - Peace with God now; but without the presence of sin, we’ll enjoy a peace we haven’t yet known.
 - Received spiritual healing; in heaven we will enjoy physical healing too.
 - As Christians, we experience a joy that is deeper than what the world offers; but in heaven our joy will be incomparable.
 - And so on.

All that is true and is part of the inheritance that we will receive. But, I think there’s something more specific that Paul has in mind here that fits the context—which is why he doesn’t bother to describe our inheritance. Yes, our inheritance are every spiritual blessing given by the Father, but in context what massive, overarching blessing has he been writing about? Paul is writing a praise to God for blessings that are ours in salvation.

- The blessing of election
- Predestination
- Adoption
- Redemption
- Revelation of his will

All these are blessings in the long arc of salvation. Paul is praising God for salvation. That's what he's been writing about. And salvation fits because, on the one hand, if you are in Christ, you have it, but, on the other hand, you don't have it fully.

For example:

Paul speaks of salvation for the believer as having already been accomplished:

Eph 2:8-9: "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."

Yet, he also speaks of salvation as still awaiting:

Rom 5:9-10: "Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."

There's no contradiction here. There are aspects of salvation that have been completed. And there are aspects of salvation yet to be fulfilled. You can see it in Rom 5—"we have now been justified"—that is, declared innocent—that's been done. But we haven't yet been glorified.

Here's another way to get at it. . . {follow me here and write these verses down} Romans 8:29 says that the God's elect are predestined to become like Jesus:

"For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Once you trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and God, through the Holy Spirit, begins making you more like Jesus:

2 Cor 3:18: "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."

We are being more Christ-like. (That's called sanctification). When we get to heaven, we'll be just like Jesus and we will be fully conformed to the image of Jesus—just as we were predestined to do.

1 John 3:2: "Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is."

So our inheritance is the completion of our salvation in becoming fully like Jesus.

B. WHY DO WE RECEIVE AN INHERITANCE?

3 reasons we receive the full benefit of salvation in becoming like Jesus:

1. Because we've been adopted as his sons/daughters

v.5: "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will"

By virtue of being sons/daughters of Christ, we receive it. God didn't just make us sons/daughters in his family, he worked so that you would receive an inheritance. Not just a privilege of relationship, but all the privileges of being part of his family. Not one merely adopted; but a coheir with Christ.

Gal 4:7: "So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God."

2. Because he has been working to accomplish this

v.11: "having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will"

Remember: predestination refers to God's plan. We receive an inheritance because God has made it our destiny. The words of predetermined planning pile up on one another (predestined, purpose, counsel, will). As I emphasized when we studied verse 5, your salvation through and through has been thoughtfully planned.

Psalm 139:16: "Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."

Christian, consider the bigness of what God is doing in completing your salvation. Consider all that God has orchestrated to get you to saving faith and will do to bring you home:

- Consider your birth—all the generations before you.
- The events of the day of your salvation.
- The preservation of the Bible throughout history.
- The salvation of the one who evangelized you—his/her training.
- An infinite number of events had to occur for you to be saved.
- There was no chance in it.
- All planned.

He "works all things according to the counsel of his will." "Works": is from the word ἐνεργεω. You hear our word "energy." God is energizing all of history to bring about what he wants. He knows not only what he wants to do, but has the power to do it. God is sovereign and no one, no thing, is master over him.

- The devil is not his master.
- World powers are not his master.
- Your rebel heart is not his master.
- Time is not his master.
- Rampant cultural sin is not his master.

Every molecule, every blade of grass, every planet, every spirit, every President, every person ultimately does according to the counsel of his will—and no one ever has thwarted his plans.

3. Because it gives him praise.

v. 12: "so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory."

You get blessed with gain so that he gains the glory. You get benefits, he gets glory. In the kindness of God to save you—though you don't deserve it—the Holy Spirit opens your eyes to see that his kindness to you didn't exhaust his kindness—it came from an inexhaustible well of kindness that continues to this present day, and will be there for you tomorrow when you need it, and will never cease—it will be unending in time, unending in richness. And you can't help but to give him praise.

A final blessing we experience in Paul's symphony of praise.

II. THE BLESSING OF BEING SEALED

v.13-14: "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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

Paul now turns his praise and makes it personal to the believers in Ephesus. They "heard the word of truth", that is, the gospel of salvation and believed in him (Christ). They heard and believed. That's the testimony of every true believer. You heard the good news of salvation—you responded by believing in Christ. When that happened, something else happened. Another blessing happens at the same time as true belief:

"you also were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit."

A. THE MEANING OF SEALED

A seal in those days could do three things:

1. Authenticate (demonstrate the genuineness, the trueness of something).
e.g., king's signet ring pressed into wax and stamped on a document
2. Mark as your property (this is my possession). Under the old covenant, priests wore a plate of pure gold and engraved on it, "like the engraving of a signet," was the phrase, "Holy to the Lord" (Ex 28:36). They were set apart to God—God's possession. (e.g., nameplate on a book; brand cattle).
3. Secure (prevent tampering) (e.g., will or seal put on Jesus' tomb – Matt 27:66)

All of those are wonderful pictures of what the Holy Spirit does for us:

1. He authenticates the genuineness of our salvation. If you have him, you're saved; if you don't, you aren't.

Rom 8:16: "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"

2. His presence in us, marks us as God's own—we are his.

Roman 8:8-9: "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him."

3. His dwelling in us, secures us eternally in salvation.

Eph 4:30: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

All of those aspects of the Holy Spirit’s sealing may be in Paul’s thoughts here. But what leads me to believe he mainly is thinking of the work of the Holy Spirit to secure us is the context. Paul is saying that what God started (v. 5) before the foundation of the world in choosing us, he will finish by securing our redemption until we take hold of our salvation fully. The Holy Spirit, then, is our guarantee that He who began a good work in us, will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6).

The word “guarantee” means down payment. Just like today: when you buy or rent a home, you make a deposit as a guarantee that you’ll pay the rest. In those days: same thing. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would come in John 14:

vv. 16-17: And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.”

And God has taken steps to secure your salvation—the salvation that he began. God values you so much that he put a deposit—his Spirit—in you to dwell so that you are assured that you will see him in heaven. The point of the Holy Spirit as our guarantee is that we would feel secure in our salvation in Christ. There’s so much in our world that would cause us to doubt our security in salvation:

- Particularly at this time of year around Easter, the world blasts us in the media with supposed reasons to doubt who Jesus is or what he did.
- Then, there’s the trials that we go through that bring up doubts.
- But most all, the weight of our sin can cause us to doubt whether we’ll really be welcomed into heaven.

But God’s answer to the concern of security in salvation is to put our hope in God.

Piper: “God threatens our security in everything but God.”

- If you find security in keeping a clean moral record, the Bible will be a threat to you.
- If you find security in your intelligence, the Bible will be a threat to you.
- If you find security in your bank account, the Bible will be a threat to you.

As you read the Bible, you will feel threatened because you will realize that there is no security but in God. God would not have it any other way. He will not allow you to feel secure apart from him. The Holy Spirit in you is that security. Your subjective feeling of security in salvation occurs both by knowing what God has done—rehearsing the gospel to yourself and all the benefits of it—but also by then walking in the way of the righteous.

Romans 8:9-11: “You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if

Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.”

CONCLUSION

So do as 2 Cor 13:5 says: “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!”

And if you are presently trusting Christ, then know, that all the blessings that Paul gives—and more!—are yours in Christ. A glad Father in heaven gives all the benefits of salvation to you with a glad heart so that your joy in him would increase.