

## Blessing # Sealed with the Spirit

Ephesians 1:13-14

by Jeremy Cagle

Open your Bibles with me to the book of Ephesians. Jesus said: “Blessed are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.” If you want to be blessed, if you want God’s favour on you in that way, we want to open the Scriptures and obey them, and we’re going to do that in the book of Ephesians.

This is a book that we’ve been studying for some time now. We started in the fall but we took a break for the holidays, and now we’re back in it this week in a series we’re calling the ‘All of God’ series because that’s what the book of Ephesians is about. It tells us that our salvation is all of God and, if you remember for our Christmas message, we talked about how the book says this several different ways.

For one thing, it tells about our blessings from several different angles; for one thing it says that God has placed you into the church. That’s one way He has blessed you. He has given you in chapters three-through-four a spiritual family, a family in Christ, a family with deacons to serve you. That’s one way He’s blessed you.

He also, in chapter five of Ephesians, this is another blessing He’s given you, He’s put you into an earthly family as well. He’s given you a husband and wife. He’s given you parents and children. Because they are God’s blessing to you. I think so many times we take our kids for granted, we don’t appreciate them like we should because they’re fussy, and loud, and they can smell at times. But they are God’s favour on you, to have kids. Amen? They’re God’s blessing.

And then another blessing He gives in the book, is the Armour of God in chapter six, which is the way you can protect all of that. The book ends with the armour of God because you put that on to protect your blessings.

But before you get to all of that, before you get to all of those things, Paul talks about another blessing in chapter one. He talks about another gift God gives you that supersedes all of that, and that is the gift of Salvation. That is what Ephesians chapter one is all about. Before you get to all of those other things the Lord gives you, in Ephesians 1, He talks about the gift of salvation.

If you look in chapter-one-verse-three, it says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” That phrase ‘spiritual blessing’ is a reference to salvation. It is a reference to what happens to you when you are born again. At that moment in time, God blesses your spirit. At that moment when you’re saved, God blesses your soul. He changes you on the inside—which is why this is the greatest blessing of all.

I think we all understand that Christianity is a soul religion, isn’t it? It’s mostly interested in your souls. In the inner man. It’s not a religion of works, it’s a religion of faith. It’s not a religion of doing things, it’s a religion of belief, and therefore this is where the greatest blessings occur: in the soul, where you believe. They occur in the inner man.

In fact, you can see this in the way the book of Ephesians is layed out, the way it's divided up. There's six chapters in the book. The first two of them, the way Paul kicks the whole thing off, is by talking about your soul. That's where he begins. Because this is the greatest blessing of all.

This is important, because I think we'd all say the church today is missing this. It's important because the church in the 21st century is getting things backwards. We don't focus on the soul as much as we should in the church. We don't put our attention on the inner man enough. We put it on the outside, on the things that you can see.

I mean, just to show you what I mean, if you think about it, if we were writing a book like this today, we would start with the family first, right? If we were writing this, we would skip over the first few chapters, not even talk about that stuff, and we would go straight into our children, in our home. Because that's what matters the most to us. That's what we're interested in. Paul doesn't do that. God doesn't do that. He starts off talking about your soul.

Or, if we're single and we don't have a family yet, we would go straight into the stuff in chapter six about being a good worker. Because that's what matters the most to us. Paul says, "Look, if you take care of your soul, you'll take care of your works." If you take care of your heart, it will take care of your family. Matter of fact, the best thing you can give to your kids, is a good soul. Best thing you could give your husband or wife, is a change on the inside first.

I think that's one of the things that's so messed up about our churches; we're so focussed on the outside stuff that we don't pay any attention on the inside, and we just blow it in all these areas. Our families are a mess because we're in sin on the inside.

Let me say it this way, because this is important as well, let's put it like this: you need to go to church for more than just some excitement and some encouragement. You need to go to church for more than just a 'pick me up.' Whatever 'pick me up' it may be; a 'pick me up' in your home, a 'pick me up' in your marriage, a 'pick me up' in your job, you need to go to church for more than that. You need to go to church to change on the inside. You need to go to church to be different and hear.

There's far too much excitement and far too little change going on in the church today, amen? There are far too many lights, and gimmicks, and games. Listen, I get excited about eating potato chips but that doesn't make me a potato chip. And you can get excited about God but that doesn't make you godly. That doesn't make you a Christian. It takes more than that. You need to have a work of God in your soul.

John MacArthur writes this, he says that, "If you don't think the world has affected the church, then here is what you need to do: cut out the music, turn off the lights of the show, and put a man up front who teaches the Bible, and that's it. Put a man upfront who preaches God's Word to you and see if that draws people in. If it draws people in, the world has not affected the church. If they come back week after week after week for that, then they come for the right reasons."

And I think he's right, and I think that's why Paul gives us the book of Ephesians. That's why he starts the letter this way: to get our mind off of the world and put it back on the things of God. We're so caught up in how we look and how we appear and how other people think of us when we need to be paying attention of how God thinks of us. That's what this book is about.

I remember talking to someone from another church several years ago, and asking them about what they were learning, and what they were doing, and all they could talk about was how excited they were. They kept saying that. “I’m so excited, I’m so excited.” And I remember wondering, “Well, what do you do when you’re not excited anymore? Do you just not go? What do you do if the feelings aren’t there? Do you leave?”

Paul starts this book off this way to remind you you shouldn’t leave when the excitement is gone. You should focus on more than that. And he starts the book off this way, if you want to read in chapter one. I want to read verses one to fourteen with you, because this is all one thought in the mind of Paul. But he writes in chapter one verse one, he says:

*“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 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.”*

I read all of that to you, that long portion, because, as I’ve told you before, that’s all one, long sentence from the Apostle Paul. It’s from verse three all the way down to verse fourteen. It’s one big thought in His mind, and the thought is that of blessing. Verse three is the verse that starts it all off, and the word ‘blessing’ is repeated three times in that verse, because that’s what this is about. This is how God has changed you on the inside. And to explain this Paul says, “You are adopted” in verse five, and “You are redeemed” in verse seven. Those are the first two blessings in the list. The first two ways He changes you: He adopts you, and then He redeems you.

Verse nine, “He makes known the mystery of His will to you.” And you get an inheritance in verse eleven. Those are the next two. And then the final one is in verse thirteen. This is the last one we’re going to look at, and that is the blessing of being sealed with the Spirit.

If you look in verse thirteen it says, “In 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.” That’s another way of saying, “God has closed the deal with you. He has sealed you up.”

When you put your food into a container, you seal it, right? That's the idea of this word. You close it up. Which means your salvation is a done deal with him, it's not hanging around waiting to occur. That's why this comes at the end of this passage. All these other things talk about how salvation began, this talks about how it's closed up.

When the ancient people sent a letter, they would often put a seal on it for protection. They would put hot wax on the outside of an envelope, put their family emblem, their seal into it, and when the wax cooled, you would have a permanent reminder of who sent the letter. And it would also tell you that nobody messed with it on the way. If the letter got to you with the seal intact and it wasn't broken, that meant the document was safe.

Paul says God has done that with you. The Holy Spirit has done that at the moment of your salvation. He has put His seal on you to make you safe. Nobody can get in there, inside your soul, and mess with you. That's what God has done. That's why all that stuff on the outside doesn't matter, because the inside is safe in the arms of God.

I talk to a lot of Christians today who, I don't think they get this. They don't know they're saved because they believe but they can't tell if it's real. They trust in Christ, but in the conversations I have they say, "I don't know if I trust enough." They're afraid something is going to mess with them on the inside. This passage says it won't.

If you trust in Christ, you're saved. Period. That's past tense. If you trust in Him, you're sealed. Past tense. It's already occurred. It's a finished thing in the mind of God. God has closed the deal with you. He has sealed you up, and now you're safe. Which means that the world outside goes crazy, you're fine on the inside. The world outside goes nuts, you're okay, because the Spirit lives inside of you.

This whole week, I don't think I left my house, amen? Anybody else know what I'm talking about? But I was safe, right? Because I didn't want go out there. It was cold! Who knew it's cold in Canada? You guys told me it didn't snow here. That's what this is all about here, you're safe because the Spirit rests inside of you.

The story of told of the time Nicholas Ridley, the English Reformer, was about to be burned at the stake for his faith in Christ. And a chaplain was sent to him, in his cell, to keep him company. A fellow pastor was going to help make sure he was okay the night before he died, but Ridley sent him saying, "I don't need you." He sent the chaplain away. "Because," he said. "I'm going to sleep like a baby because my soul is at peace with God."

This morning, friends, we're going to talk about how your soul can be at peace with God. This morning, we're going to talk about this passage and see how you can have assurance of your salvation.

It is a blessed, blessed thing, to have assurance of salvation. And it's a terrible thing not to have it. But this passage this morning says, you can have assurance and you know that you have been sealed. And we're going to talk about that with two ways to look at being sealed with the Spirit, so if you're taking notes with Ephesians one, verses thirteen-through-fourteen, this is our outline for today, this is what we're going to talk about: two ways to look at being sealed with the Spirit. And I'm gonna go ahead and give them to you, so you can follow along with the passage, but they are: the manward side and the Godward side of this.

Those are the two ways to look at being sealed with the Spirit, just following this passage here. Paul says you can see this from the manward side and the Godward side. You can see what this looks like from the perspective of man, from the perspective of the earth, and you can see what this looks like from the perspective of heaven. Paul gives you both views here.

Because even though God took care of everything in this, even though our salvation and our sealing is all of Him, God still calls us to respond to this. He still calls us to do something in response.

To say that in another way, you can't just 'let go and let God' and this will happen. You can't just sit idly by and let the blessing fall from the sky. You have to reach out and grab it, and we're going to talk about that with two ways to look at being sealed with the Spirit.

The first one is the manward side of things, and Paul explains this by giving us three responses we're to have in this passage. Three responses to being sealed with the Spirit.

The first one is to listen to the truth. We're just following this passage here, but the first one we should have to this, to receive this blessing, is to listen to the truth. Which means you need to what the Bible says and take it in.

If you look in verse thirteen, this is how Paul starts off. He says, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth." I'm going to go through each of these responses quickly, because they're all connected. But just so say a few words about this, as I just mentioned, this comes at the end of a long sentence that starts from verse three down to verse fourteen. Which means that this is the culmination of this, this is the climax of the chapter.

And if you notice verse eleven, right above this, says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance." Which means this is about our inheritance, this is about how we get to heaven. And in verse thirteen it says, "In him, you also, after listening to the message of truth..." So you see a contrast there. There's two groups of people here Paul's talking about. We, the Jews, in verse eleven, and you, the gentiles. And the point he's making is, we're all saved the same way. We, the Jews, get our inheritance through faith, through listening to the Word of God. You, the gentiles, get it the same way. Which would've been shocking for a Jew to say. This would've been a horrific thing to hear, because the Jews did not think the Gentiles went to heaven the same way. They thought Gentiles were dirty and unclean people. One ancient Rabbi said Abraham sits outside the gates of hell to keep every Gentile in and every Jew out. Gentiles can't be saved. Not the same way.

Paul says the opposite here. He says something totally different. He says Gentiles are saved. You Ephesians, he says, were saved by listening to the message of truth. You weren't saved by getting circumcised like a Jew. You weren't saved by keeping the Ten Commandments first. You weren't saved by going to synagogues and learning the Hebrew Scriptures and all that stuff first. You had to listen to the truth, he said. Which is another way of saying the Bible.

The words 'message of truth' here is another way of saying the Scriptures. Because, if you notice, this is not 'a' message, this is 'the' message. This is not referring to one truth among many. This is the only truth, the only Word of God. You have to listen to that to be saved. That's what you have to do if you want to experience this blessing. Which is important. This is a

significant thing to say because it's one thing to hear the truth, and it's another to listen to it, right?

We all know people who have come to church week in and week out, they read their Bibles, and they just go away and forget what it says. The Scriptures kind of bounce off of them like a wall. I used to, when I was playing tennis, I used to hit a tennis ball against the wall, and it would bounce back. Some people are like that with Scripture. You give Scripture to them and it just bounces back. Paul says you're not saved that way. You have to listen.

It's a supernatural thing. You can't get an inheritance with God without listening to God. What did Jesus say, over and over again? "He who has—" What? "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." So that's the first response we have to have here, to receive this blessing.

And like I said, I'm going to go through these quickly, because they're all tied together, but the second one is this. That's the first one. The second response Paul gives us, we must have to be sealed with the Spirit, is to listen to the Gospel as well. First you need to listen to the Bible, listen to the message of truth. Second, he goes on and he says, you need to listen to the Gospel, because that's what saves you at the end of the day.

If you look at verse thirteen, it says, "In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation..." As Paul is describing the faith of the Ephesians, of how they got saved, he's kind of walking you through this, step by step, and he says, they listened to the truth, they listened to the Bible, and particularly, they heard the Gospel.

The Gospel is *euāgγēliov* (*euaggelion*) in Greek. It means 'good news' or 'glad tidings.' The Ephesians heard the good news that Jesus has come to save sinners. He didn't come to give them a 'pick me up', He didn't come to get them excited, He came to save our souls from hell. And they listened to that.

I think a lot of people listen to the Bible in some form or fashion, but they don't listen to the Gospel. They don't believe what it says about sin. They don't believe what it says about the law. They don't believe what it says about how bad they are and as a result, they go away lost.

We've all known, um, another way to say it, you can't just come to church and read your Bible and then ignore what it says about sin. You can't go home and do your daily devotionals with your family, and walk away thinking you did your good deed for the day, you're a decent person. The Bible says you're not. You're not a decent person. You are a sinner. And until you listen to that, you can't be saved.

It's been said, that if you read the Bible and walk away feeling good about yourself, then you need to read it again, because you didn't get it the first time. The Ephesians didn't just read the Bible and say, "Oh that's a nice sounding book, a lot of moral stories." They walked away and they were broken over their sin. And they heard the Gospel that Jesus came to die for sinners. And they were saved.

Which leads to one more point in this passage, one more response that you have to have if you want to receive this blessing, and that is you need to believe all of this. The final response you have to have, it's almost too simple to say, but this is what the text says. If you want to be sealed with the Spirit, you have to believe all of this. Which means it has to go from your head down

into your heart. Verse thirteen says, “In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, having also believed...”

We might want to pause here and say a few words about this, because the word ‘believe’ has fallen on hard times today. It’s gotten really distorted. Because a lot of people think it means to choose your own reality. They think it means to make believe. You know, ‘I believe I want to make a million dollars when I grow up.’ ‘I believe I’m going to be the next all-star in the NBH, basketball association, even though I’m 5’8.’ Right, that’s not gonna happen. ‘Now, God I believe it, go do it for me. God, I believe it, go make it happen.’ A lot of people believe—that’s not the meaning of this word.

This word means to believe the truth, not create it. It means to believe reality, you don’t make it up. And Paul says, this is another part of salvation, this is another part of this blessing, you need to believe the truth. You need to believe you are a sinner and you need a Saviour. You need to believe you have broken the law and you can only go to heaven through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no other way.

Just as a personal illustration of this, as you guys know, we had a bad snowstorm this past week, and if you were wondering where everybody was during that snowstorm, I will tell you. They were on their way up to Promontory. The whole town, at the same time, on Sunday at five o’clock, went up Promontory Road. I don’t know why. My wife and I stopped at the Subway with the kids and just watched the cars go by. What in the world, you know? And like many of you guys, you know, we were caught out in it. I talked to several of you Sunday night and you were caught out in the middle of the storm and, we got stuck at the bottom of our hill. We live on a steep hill on Promontory and on the way home from caregroup, our car couldn’t make it all the way up the hill. So we took the kids out and carried them up. We didn’t drive in the middle of a blizzard. And, uh, my youngest son Jason didn’t have any shoes on, so I got him. And, um, it’s kind of amazing to me, because the entire time going up that hill, he was content as a peach. The entire time we’re walking up during that blizzard, he was as happy as he could be, because he believed in me. Because he trusted me, that I wouldn’t drop him.

This is what Paul says here, that’s how you need to respond to God. You believe in Him. You trust in Him with your life, like my son did. You don’t get out and walk yourself. You don’t get out and do all the work. He does all the work for you. You just rest in His arms.

You need to say, “Lord, I know you won’t drop me up the hill. Lord, I know you will take care of me in my trials. Lord, I know you will pay for my sin. You *have* paid for my sin.”

Not only that, but another way to say this is, my son didn’t trust just anybody to do that. My son didn’t trust a stranger to carry him up the hill. He didn’t trust in a deceitful person. That’s what this means as well. This is the responsibility you have. You have to believe the right thing. You have to believe in the right person. You can’t just trust anybody. You can’t just say, “I believe, so Lord, you make it happen.” You have to rest in the truth.

I think this is why so many Christians are confused today. I think this is why so many people are struggling and blowing it in their lives, because they believe in the wrong things. They’re trusting the wrong people to get them up the hill. That’s why we’re so caught up in excitement,

and gimmicks, and games, because we don't get this. We're showing such little discernment. You have to trust in the right thing. I, um... That's one way you know you're sealed.

You know, when I think of the greatest, uh, deceivers in history, one name that comes to the top of the list is the name of William Miller. Anyone ever heard the name 'William Miller' before? That name ring a bell? Uh, his teaching led to the creation of certain groups, like the Jehovah's Witnesses. But, uh, he was a self-educated farmer from the New York State that said the world was going to end on October 22nd, 1843. It didn't. We're still here.

But in anticipation of that, his followers, they believed in him, and they quit their jobs, sold their belongings, stopped getting married, and when the day came and went, and it didn't happen, William Miller said, "You know what, I was wrong, I miscalculated, it's next year." True story. "October 22nd, 1844. It's next year. One year from now." So they did it all over again, and when that day came and went, they were devastated. They were crushed. One man said he sat in a field for two days and wept over the deception.

Friends, this is what false teaching does. This is what lies do. They crush you, and they devastate you, and you have a responsibility. Paul says, the Ephesians had a responsibility to trust in the right things.

You know, many people today, we won't get into that stuff, we're not deceived by William Miller, but we get caught up in other things. Paul says you have to have discernment to trust in the truth. That's the only thing that will save you. Which leads to another way to look at being sealed by the Spirit. That leads to the next thing we need to consider this morning.

The first one is the manward side of things. Paul says that from the manward side, in order to receive this blessing, you need to listen to the truth, listen to the Gospel, open your ears, and then you open your heart to believe. That's how you receive this blessing. That's how you receive all these blessings in Ephesians chapter one.

There were a lot of false religions in Ephesus. There were a lot of things to believe in. Paul says these people believed in the right things, and therefore they received this. Which leads to the next point we need to consider this morning, another way to look at being sealed with the Spirit, and that is from the Godward side of things.

We've looked at this from the manward side of things, and now we need to look at this from the Godward side of things. This is what Ephesians 1 is all about, at the end of the day. That's what this chapter is all about, looking at salvation from God's side of things. One commentator said, this chapter is written as if you're in heaven looking down. So let's see this from the Godward side of things.

Paul says, God does three things to save us in this passage, three actions God takes. The first one is, He seals us. The first thing the Lord does is He seals us. If you notice, by the way, when you go from verse thirteen to verse fourteen, Paul doesn't give you a long theological explanation about the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. You notice that? Paul doesn't go into a long discussion about how those two things work. He just says they're both true, and he moves on. So that's what we're going to do.

We do have a responsibility in this, but our salvation is all of God. And the first thing God does for us here, is He seals us, which means He closes up our salvation. Verse thirteen says, "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."

Just to say a few words about that, but the way that this is worded, it's a little bit confusing, because the word 'after' is not in all of your translations. The NASB put it in there because the word 'listen' is in the past tense in Greek. But it doesn't mean that you listen and God responds to you. That's not the meaning of this word. You don't— God doesn't respond to you, you respond to Him, alright? Paul's point is just that all this occurs simultaneously.

For the Ephesians, all of this happened in the past. They listened and they were sealed instantly, simultaneously.

And this is interesting, because this is the first time the Spirit is mentioned in the book of Ephesians. This is the first time He appears, to remind you that all three members of the Trinity had a part to play in your salvation. All of them were involved in this. You see the Father up above this, in verses three to six, I believe. You see the Son mentioned as well in verse six on down. Now we get to the Spirit, to say every member of the Godhead did this. They all were part of your salvation. And here it says the Spirit sealed us. As the invisible member of the Trinity, He entered into our souls and He saved us there.

I gave you a little background about this, so I won't say too much about this here, but in the 1st Century, a seal was placed on something to give it security. It was a protective thing. To demonstrate that a letter was from you and no one else. It was put on letters. This was also put on objects such as pottery or wood as well. They put seals on those things.

If you remember, uh, Pontius Pilate put a seal on Jesus' tomb to keep the disciple out of it. He sealed the tomb to make sure that no one went in and stole the body. And in a similar way the Spirit does that with us. He seals us up to make sure that no one comes in and steals us.

You have a responsibility to show discernment, but at the same time, the good news is, the Spirit has sealed you to protect you from strangers. To make sure that you will make it all the way up to heaven.

I'll say a few words about that in a moment as well, but let's go on to another thing that God does for us in this passage. I'll bring these together here in a second, but another thing the Spirit does when He saves us, is He gives us a pledge. So, first the Spirit seals us, and second thing He does when He saves us, is to give us a pledge.

If you read on in verse thirteen, it says, "You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of Promise, who were given as a pledge of our inheritance." That's another word from the ancient world, it's a word picture that the Ephesians would've been familiar with, but this is the word *ἀρραβών* (*arrabōn*) in Greek, which meant 'pledge' or 'earnest money.' When you would buy something you couldn't necessarily afford back then, you would give them a percentage of the money now, with the understanding you would give the rest later. We do that when we buy a home, right? You give some money down now, you pay the rest later.

I like this word because it can also translate ‘engagement ring’ and that’s a good way to translate this. And the idea is that when you get engaged, it’s a promise of something better. When you get engaged with someone, it’s a promise that the best is yet to come. I tell couples who are dating all the time that, “Look, it gets better than this. Marriage is so much better than dating.” And the engagement ring is a promise of that.

I remember when I bought Katie’s engagement ring. Several buddies of mine, we all got engaged at the same time, and they all looked at what I was going to get her, and they said, “Cagle. That is too small. Got to get it bigger.” Why? Because it’s a promise of something better.

Paul says this Holy Spirit is that. The Holy Spirit is given to remind us of that the best is yet to come. This is just the beginning. Your relationship with God is just starting. The peace, and assurance, and hope, and joy, and even the conviction of sin that you have that comes from the Holy Spirit, is a reminder that you are on your way to heaven.

I talk to brothers and sisters who are so convicted over their sin, and they’re saying, “I don’t know if I am saved.” And I have to remind them: the fact that you are convicted over your sin is a reminder that you are saved. What, do you think the devil convicts you of sin? You think the devil draws you to Christ? That’s the Spirit in your life. And Paul says, that’s a pledge, and a promise, that you’re on your way to glory. That’s an engagement ring.

If you notice, the Spirit is also called the Holy Spirit of Promise here, because Jesus promised to send Him. John 16:7, “The Lord said, ‘But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send the Spirit to you.’” That was the promise. That is what Jesus said He would do. And the idea here is, that if Jesus kept that promise, then He’ll keep this one. If He sent the Spirit like He said He would the first time, then He will bring you into heaven. You can guarantee it. He is a pledge of your inheritance. He is a reminder that you have waiting for you on the other side, in glory.

That leads to one more thing the Spirit does in this passage, one more thing He does when He saves us, and that is to make us His own possession. This is how Paul sums it up here. This is how he closes the passage. He says the Spirit will make us His own possession.

If you look at verse thirteen, it says, “In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in Him, in the Holy Spirit of Promise, who was given as a pledge of our inheritance, with the view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.”

That phrase, ‘the redemption of God’s own possession’ means the salvation of it, or the recovery of it. And the way it’s worded here, it refers to us. We are God’s possession, and through Jesus’ redeeming work on the cross, He is bringing us back to Himself. He made us, which means He owns us. We belong to Him. But through sin, the relationship was broken, and now God is bringing us back. And the Spirit was given with a view to that day. He was given with a view to the day we will go to heaven.

The English Standard Version, some of you have that, it says that the Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance. And so we acquire a possession of it, which may be a little confusing, because there the possession is something else. There we are not the possession, something else is. But the idea is the same: the Spirit is given for us to look forward to our final redemption.

There is a redemption that we have now in our salvation, but there is also a day of redemption. This is the day of redemption, when we will see God face to face.

In His commentary on Ephesians, H. A. Ironside says that there are only two books in the Bible that talk about all of this aspect of the Spirit's ministry. There are only two books that talk about being sealed by the Spirit. One is the book of Second Corinthians, and the other is the book of Ephesians, and the reason he brings that up, is because in the first century, both of those cities had a thriving lumber industry. Both of them had a thriving lumber trade. And the way it worked, is that the people of Corinth and Ephesus would cut down the trees, they would cut down all the lumber and send it all up the river at the same time, to be picked up at the other end. They would send everybody's trees at once, and the only way you could tell them apart when they arrived, was their seal. The only way you could tell whose tree was whose, was the engraving that was placed on it.

And concerning that, H.A. Ironside says this, he says, "Though you and I are tossed about on the waters of this world, we have been sealed by the Holy Spirit. We have been marked by Him, so that when the appointed day comes, the Lord will save us." When all the logs are taken out of the river, when all the lumber is brought out, when we die and stand before God, the Lord will know who is His. It will be the day of His purchased possession.

I say that because I want to encourage you. Some of you may be the folks I've been talking about this morning. You may be wrestling with assurance of salvation. Putting yourself into this picture, you may think, "You know what? I am worried that when I get to the end of the river, God won't recognise me. I'm worried that when I stand before God on judgement day, I'm going to look like all the other people. I'm afraid God won't know who I am."

Paul says, if you're listening to the Gospel, if you're believing it, that won't happen. Because you have been sealed. That can't happen, because you belong to Him and God doesn't lose His possessions. He will save you. He will keep you on the other side.

Say it another way, this is not about you at the end of the day. This is about God. That won't happen because this isn't about whether you've been a good log or not. This is about His power.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were involved in this. The Father sent the Son who sent the Spirit, so that everything would be taken care of, and you would be saved. You just need to rest in that. You know, if you can't stand on grace, you need to fall on it this morning, and God will take care of you. Salvation is all of Him. You do nothing.

And the question you have to answer is, do you believe that? Will you listen to what the Scripture says here? What the Gospel says, and respond? Nevermind all this stuff about God's sovereignty and man's will that we can't explain. Nevermind all this stuff that we don't know about the Spirit. Don't worry about that. Focus on what you do know: do you believe what this passage says?

To put this in a positive way, to encourage you this morning, if you're wondering 'am I saved? Have I been sealed by the Spirit?' Well, let me just ask you this: have you been listening to this sermon? I mean, for the past forty-five minutes, have you been paying attention? That is a sign of God's grace.

Millions of people, billions of people, are probably sitting in church right now, and they're not listening. But the fact that you're listening and working through these things is a sign that the Spirit is working in you. Are you thinking about your soul? Are you thinking about your spirit? Are you thinking about your inner man? And how the Gospel effects that?

If you have, that is a good sign and should give you assurance. Listen, the Devil won't do that. The Devil won't help you listen. That has to come from the power of God. From His mercy. Listen, friends, we don't have to make this any harder than it is. We don't need to make this any more complicated. Let's just make it real simple. A listening heart is a Spirit-filled heart. A humble mind is a godly mind. And if you have that, then you're saved. And if you don't, let me encourage you this morning to pray for that, and God will give it to you. Ask Him and He will hear your prayer. He will seal you.

Let me pray for you know, that you will do that.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for the promise of your Spirit. We thank you, Lord, for the assurances we have in your Word. And Lord, as I was going through this passage this week, I was thinking of so many conversations I've had with folks who just grieve over this. They stay up at night because they're not sure of their eternal soul. They're up early in the morning. They're distracted. Father, you never meant that for Your children. That's not what You want for us. You want us to have peace and assurance. And Lord, I just pray that this passage this morning will give that to those brothers and sisters this morning who are saved. And Lord, I pray that the fact that we are here together this morning will encourage them that the Spirit is working among us. Help us, Lord, to do what we talked about today. Help us to take our minds off of the things of this world and put them on the eternal things. And Lord, for those who aren't saved today, for those who are reading this and are saying, 'that's not me.' Lord, I pray that they would know that there is a wide open door to heaven, if they would walk through it, with Christ, through the Spirit's power. Lord, would You save some this morning, through what You've done? We thank you for the depths of our Salvation, for the glories of it. Help us to go this morning and believe. Help us to rest in Christ, rest in the arms of the One who is taking us to heaven. We thank you for all He has done, and we pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.