

The Holy Spirit's Sealing and Securing Grace (Eph. 1:13-14)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on January 2, 2011

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This morning we continue the 2nd part of a study on the blessed assurance in Ephesians 1 that we who are in Christ have before the throne of God above: our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, graven on His hands, written on His heart. He knows us like the back of His hand and holds us in His hand with a love that will not let us go and that no one can snatch us from (John 10). To those who trust Christ as Lord, He says "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Heb. 13:5, with no fine print: "unless you sin and mess it up really bad this time!"). We saw in Romans 8 last week there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus by grace through faith, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (no principality, no power, no peril, no persecution, no past, present, or future sin, period)!

Since there is nothing *in us that brought about God's love* in the first place, there's also nothing *in us that can break God's love* to God's children, as we saw last time our Father's love is everlasting love. We still sin, but that doesn't make us un-adopted or erase our name from the book of life or make us spiritually unborn, needing to be born again again and again. His grace is greater than our sin.

When Satan tempts me to despair And tells me of the guilt within
Upward I look and see Him there Who made an end of all my sin

When we look within or focus on feelings, despair tempts us, but if upward we look to a sinless Savior who died to count free *and set free* our sinful souls, satisfying God's justice and wrath, we can be filled with gladness rather than guilty despair. When we look in the mirror we still see a sinner, but when God the Father looks at His adopted children, He doesn't see us as sinners. He sees Christ, as we just sang, the Father looks on Him and pardons me! The Father looks on Christ *as my perfect spotless righteousness*. I'm nothing great on my own, I'm changeable and inconsistent, but Christ is ...

The great unchangeable I Am, The King of Glory and of grace
One with Himself I cannot die [eternally] My soul is purchased by His blood
My life is hid with Christ on high With Christ my Savior and my God

Christ, the God-man, only Mediator between God and Man, ever lives and pleads for His own before the throne. While in heaven He stands, no one can bid us to depart. The invincible and irreversible grace of God the Father and God the Son (Eph. 1:3-6) gives a strong and perfect plea and to strengthen it even further, v. 13-14 adds the Holy Spirit's sealing and securing grace.

¹³*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, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.* (NKJV)

Paul brings this most assuring and glorious sentence (v. 3-14) to a most blessedly assuring conclusion and culmination with the Holy Spirit's sealing and securing grace that makes sure that all God the Father and God the Son has done cannot be undone because God the Holy Spirit personally guarantees and ensures it with Himself.

Just to review the complete context of v. 3-14: the complete Trinity is completely involved in the complete process of saving sinners and securing them and God does it completely, from start to finish, from before there was time (v. 4) till the end of time (v. 10, 14). In v. 6 we're to praise the Father for the glory of His grace, v. 7-12 end with the praise of the Son's glory (v. 12b), and v. 14 ends with the praise of the HS's glory, like the doxology we'll end w/ today. The flow:

1. v. 4-6 Past tense – the Father – planned redemption
2. v. 7-12 Present benefit – Son – purchases redemption
3. v. 13-14 Future glory – Spirit – preserves redemption

The Holy Spirit provides the power and preserving grace needed for the perseverance of the saints, so they will persevere to the end and be saved and won't ultimately or finally fall away from grace. Some of our spiritual forefathers from past centuries in England said it this way:

'True believers, by reason of the unchangeable love of God, and His decree and covenant to give them perseverance, their inseparable union with Christ, His continual intercession for them, and the Spirit and seed of God abiding in them, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.'¹

It's not in man's power to persevere; it's God's power to preserve and keep those who are truly saved, always saved. That's why and how true believers persevere. We must persevere to the end, but in the end, our works don't gain or maintain salvation, it's the work of God that saves us and God's work within us demonstrates we are saved. Biblical assurance doesn't come from what we did or said or prayed or felt years ago, it's based on what the HS has done *to us* and what He *is doing in us*. The words of a sinner's prayer on someone's lips are never the biblical assurance of salvation; it's the *work of the Spirit in that someone's life* that is the way God gives assurance. If anyone is in Christ, he's a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), as we saw last week. If you haven't experienced Spirit-produced changes in your life, old things passing away, new things that have come ... I can't give you any biblical assurance you're in Christ. But "how can I know," you ask? Well, let's look at our text, v. 13:

- "*In Him*"=in Christ; this is where it starts...who's *in Him*?
- "*when you heard the word of truth*" – hearing = responded favorably to it, followed it (not the "hearer only" in James).
- "*the gospel of your salvation*" (the good news, cf. 2:8-9)
- "*having believed, you were sealed with the promised HS*"

We saw last week that the HS is at work before, during, and after our conversion. HS gives life where there's not spiritual life (Jn 6:63). 1 Cor. 12:3 "*no one can say Jesus is Lord except by the HS.*" Titus 3:5 says when God saves us it's not because of anything we have done, it's by the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. That's the divine side behind or before the end of v. 13 in salvation "*...having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit...*" Today's outline:

1. *Who* is sealed by the Spirit? (v. 13)
2. *What* does it mean to be sealed by the HS? (v. 13)
3. *Where* is HS promised to be demonstrated in believers?
4. *When* is the inheritance guaranteed? (v. 14a)
5. *Why* does the Holy Spirit do all this? (v. 14b)
6. *How* should this impact me?

1. **Who is sealed by the Spirit? (v. 13)**

“... *having believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit*”

Those who have believed “the gospel,” trust/hope in Christ (v. 12), the grammar indicates when they believed, the HS sealed them.² Strong’s Greek Dictionary (#4100 and 4102) says this root word in Greek *pistis* is not mere mental or intellectual assent or agreement, the word for “belief/faith” in the NT includes “moral *conviction* ... especially *reliance* upon Christ for salvation ... *constancy* in such profession ... faith, fidelity.” The verb form *pisteuo* used here, Strong’s defines as including “to *entrust* (especially one’s spiritual well-being to Christ):- believe(-r), commit ...” The very word includes or implies trust and entrusting oneself, relying on Christ alone for salvation, a conviction that is constant/continual rather than just temporary; fidelity, faithfulness. So who is sealed? *Those who believe in biblical sense of the word.*

2. **What does it mean to be sealed by the HS?**

v. 13b “... *you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit* ...”

In the Greek language and Bible times, a seal signified at least 3 things:

Ownership Security Authenticity / Identity

OWNERSHIP

Vessels in your house, jars of clay, etc., could be marked with a seal (some translations of v. 13 have “marked with a seal”). It was some sort of imprint or engraving unique to the owner. Paul says our owner God does this with us little jars of clay, earthen vessels, so it’s clear the power is not from us, but from God (2 Cor. 4:7). In everyday life for thousands of years, seals have been used to mark who owns an object. Archaeology has found over 1,200 seals from OT times.

[*SEE SLIDES ONLINE*](#)

2 Tim. 2:19 “*God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription ‘The Lord knows those who are His...’*” (NIV, this context urges us to be a vessel useful to our Master, v. 20-22)

Remember, Paul is writing to believers in Ephesus (v. 1), which was a commercial center, and the logging business would literally flow through there with trees that had been cut down. Some trees once bought and paid for in full were stamped or marked with the seal of the purchaser, the new owner and then floated downstream. At the port in Ephesus, the markings would identify the logs, and the seal would ensure they get to where the owner is. Paul is saying to these believers in Ephesus (and us), there’s a mark on us as well, indicating we’re owned by the Lord who purchase us, we belong to Him. We have His seal, which ensures we will get to where He is.

The Temple of Diana in Ephesus had her outward markings or seal for her “dwelling.” Paul tells believers of our inward mark and seal

1 Cor. 6:19 “*do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.*”

Slaves could be marked with the seal of their master. We are bond-slaves of the Lord and we have His seal now; sin is not our master.

Revelation 7:2 *And I saw another angel ... having the seal of the living God; and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,³ saying, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have **sealed the bond-servants [lit. slaves] of our God** on their foreheads.”⁴ And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel ...*

Those who are marked as God’s own He protects from His wrath (also in Ezekiel 9). In some of the religions of ancient times men would receive some outward seal or mark indicating they belonged to their god. NT uses this language of an inward seal, the Holy Spirit given within us, which also is a mark that we belong to our God, the true God.

‘It was at Ephesus that crates were sealed with the imprint of merchants’ rings before being shipped across the [sea] ... The picture is perfect. When you were saved, the Lord put the seal of His Holy Spirit on you, signifying that He would see you through ... your voyage across the storm-tossed ocean of life to bring you safely to His side...³ The HS stays with us all the way, within us!

2nd reality of “seal” in Bible times = SECURITY

The word “seal” communicated security and preservation as well. Many of the dictionaries mention security as a 2nd definition. When Jesus died, Pharisees came to Pilate to secure tomb:

Matthew 27:63 *“Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’⁶⁴ So give the order for the tomb **to be made secure** until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised ... [in v. 65] Pilate answered. “Go, **make the tomb as secure as you know how.**”⁶⁶ So they went and made the tomb secure **by putting a seal on the stone ...***

This was the most secure way they knew. Of course a human seal and security guard team might be able to keep others out of the tomb, but they couldn’t keep *Jesus from coming out of the tomb!* But when it comes to what God seals, no one can tamper with it or take out or get out. The same word is used when Jesus comes back and Satan is bound, locked in the abyss with a door shut, *sealed*. When a ruler set a seal on something, no one could break it. King Darius did this in Daniel 6 when Daniel was cast to the lion’s den:

¹⁷ *A stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the **king sealed it with his own signet ring** and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that **nothing would be changed** in regard to Daniel.*

God sealed the mouths of the lions and preserved Daniel that night. The Jews were also sealed, secured, and preserved in Esther’s day when in Esther 8:2 it says: *The king took off **his signet ring** which he had taken away from Haman, **and gave it to Mordecai** ...⁷ So King Ahasuerus said to *Queen Esther and to Mordecai the Jew, “Behold, I have given the house of Haman to Esther, and him they have hanged on the gallows because he had stretched out his hands against the Jews.**

⁸ “Now you write to the Jews as you see fit, **in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s signet ring; for a decree which is written in the name of the king and sealed with the king’s signet ring may not be revoked.**” ... ¹⁰ He wrote in the name of King Ahasuerus, and sealed it with the king’s signet ring

What a king signs and seals with his insignia may not be revoked. When the King of Kings seals something, it’s unbreakable. A seal was royal or legal protection, guarantee, safeguard, security bond. If you made a will in some ancient cultures, witnesses and testator would seal it, and in Roman law all six witnesses must break their own seals to open the will. What the Lord seals, only He can open.

Revelation 5 (NKJV) ¹ And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, **sealed with seven seals.** ² Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “**Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?**”
³ **And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it.** [God had sealed it shut]

What the Lord shuts and seals nothing and no one else in the universe can open, which is good news for us who are in Christ. If we are sealed by His Spirit, we can’t be loosed, lost, or let out. No Satan, no sin, can hinder the sovereign sealing power of God. What the King writes in His name and with His seal cannot be revoked, and that includes all He has written about our salvation in Eph. 1. God has written the contract in blood and sealed it with Himself, stamped it “Paid in Full” (v. 7) and secured it with His own Son as our collateral and with His own glory as our guarantee (v. 14).

3rd aspect of “seal” = AUTHENTICITY / IDENTITY

Ex: Judah Ben-Hur proving his new identity as son of the consul. Those of us who are adopted as a Son of the King have His seal upon us to attest to the authenticity of our sonship, a genuine child. We’re really His children (1 Jn 3:1), really brothers with His only begotten Son (Heb. 2). Our identity is now in Christ, not in Adam (Rom. 5). Charles Wesley says in “Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!”

Adam’s likeness now efface, **stamp Thine image** in its place
 Second Adam from above [Christ] reinstate us in thy love
 Hark the herald angels sing, glory to the newborn King

Where the first Adam failed and forfeited paradise for all related to him who are “in Adam,” man’s covenant head or representative, Christ comes as a second Adam, to represent and redeem a new humanity to join Him in a new heavens and new earth, reinstating and restoring what was lost in Eden but even better the 2nd time. And in the meantime, all in Christ experience a new creation here. The Holy Spirit’s regeneration of a sinner who trusts in Christ as covenant head and representative gives a little bit of paradise now.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine
 Heir of salvation, purchased of God, Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood

‘Puritan Thomas Brooks observed the same reality [how *born of the Spirit* = a foretaste of glory] and entitled his book on assurance *Heaven on Earth*. To possess genuine assurance is to experience a bit of divine bliss this side of heaven. The greater our sense of assurance, the more we can savor that glory in this earthly life.’⁴

God makes us sons and marks us sons of the King, and His sealing signifies and certifies our identity; we're as much His son as Jesus, who spoke in John 6:27 of "*eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.*"

And amazingly God the Father places His seal also on all who trust in Christ, we're placed in Christ with this same stamp of approval and authenticity as truly beloved sons who truly belong to Him!!

Rom 8:8 "*...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 ...*"¹¹ *But 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 ...*¹⁴ *For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.*¹⁵ *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"*¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,*¹⁷ *and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ ...*

Q#3:Where is the HS promised to be demonstrated in believers?

This could be its own other sermon: how does the Spirit testify in our spirit that we are children of God (v. 16) and heirs (v. 17)? If the HS is the defining mark of who belongs to the Lord (v. 8) how do we know if we're (as v. 14 says) His sons led by His Spirit? If you compare your life to v. 14, has the HS led you? Does He? Has God made an impression (another word for seal or imprint) on your life? Maybe not as much as you'd like, but He has been at work within you, changing you? Do you want His leading in your life? Have you experienced His working in you? Not a charismatic ecstatic experience, but some fruit of HS (love, joy, peace, etc.)? Do you, like the end of v. 15, cry out to your *Abba Father*, talking to Him as a son in prayer? That verse says that's what His adopted sons do. Do you not only speak *to Him*, but is there a relationship where you want to hear Him *speak to you thru His Word* (v. 16)?

In Ephesians, when Paul speaks of adoption and the HS sealing us, He's called "*the promised HS*"—what things were promised of HS? OT? Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NIV)²⁶ *I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you ...*²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.*

Do you have this new heart and new spirit within you? God says when He puts His Spirit within someone, His Spirit moves/causes them to seek to follow what God has said by His power/HS within. NT promises?

- Convicts of sin (John 16:7-8)
 - o Do you experience the conviction within over your sin? Even unbelievers can be convicted over sin but a believer has godly contrition unto life (2 Cor 7:10)
- Regenerates (John 6:63, 1 Cor. 12:3, Titus 3:5)
 - o The Spirit gives life ... do you have spiritual life? In other words, are spiritual things a part of your life? Is there any living for spiritual things? 1 Cor. 12:3 says HS makes us say Jesus is Lord ... is He your Lord? Titus says the HS regenerates and renews ... has there been renewing of your life, some changes?

- Illuminates (John 16:13-15)
 - o Has the HS opened your eyes to spiritual truth as you read or hear His Word? In John 16:14 the HS is glorifying Jesus...do you have that desire w/in you?
- Brings comfort (John 14:16-18)
 - o “I will send a Comforter ... He is with you and will be in you. I will not leave you comfortless” (KJV)
- Sanctifies (1 Peter 1:2, Romans 15:16)
 - o Peter “sanctifying work of the HS, to obey Jesus ...”

When there's spiritual new life, when someone has been born of the Spirit, those things have begun in some measure (C.R.I.B.S.). The HS grants assurance. He's the Spirit of promise, and if He has fulfilled promises in this life, you can be sure He will in the next. He's in us if we're in Christ who promised not to leave us orphans.

4. When is the inheritance guaranteed? (v. 14a)

For spiritual orphans made sons of the King, there's more to come:

- NASB: “Holy Spirit, who is a *pledge* of our inheritance...” (future)
- NKJV: HS “is the *guarantee* of our inheritance ...” KJV “*earnest*”
- NIV: Holy Spirit “is a *deposit guaranteeing* our inheritance ...”
- Wuest: “who is *the token payment of our inheritance guaranteeing the full payment of all*” (present reality, v. 11 -> future glory, v. 14)
- NET: “He is *the down payment of our inheritance ...*”
 NET f.n.: ‘Or “first installment,”...the first payment or first installment of money or goods which serves as a guarantee or pledge for the completion of the transaction ... the *down payment* of the blessings promised by God (...also in 2 Cor 1:22 and 5:5). In the “already - not yet” scheme of the NT the possession of the Spirit now by believers (“already”) can be viewed as a guarantee that God will give them the balance of the promised blessings in the future (“not yet”)⁵

2 Corinthians 1:22 (NET) says God “*sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment*” [or guarantee of the rest].

5:5 (NET) ⁵*Now the one who prepared us for this very purpose is God who gave us the Spirit as a down payment [deposit/guarantee]*

One paraphrase of Ephesians 1:14 says the Holy Spirit's “presence within us is God's guarantee that he really will give us all that he promised; and the Spirit's seal upon us means that God has already purchased us and that he guarantees to bring us to himself.”

But what if we sin, even in a way that very seriously grieves God? Does that cancel out sealing, forgiveness, status as loved children?

Ephesians 4:30 (NAS) *Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.* ³¹*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.* ³²*Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.* ^{5:1}*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children*

Believers are sealed, and are forgiven, and are dearly beloved children, therefore we can and must deal with sin, forgive others, and seek forgiveness from our Father or others we sin against. I don't want to grieve my God because of my relationship with Him and all He's done for me, not for fear I'll lose it but ... I love Him.

Philip G. Ryken, in *Assured by God: Living in the Fullness of God's Grace*, explains Ephesians 1:14 better than I can attempt to:

'If we know Jesus Christ in a saving way, then God is working in us to secure our salvation. This work is too important to entrust to anyone else, so God comes and does it himself [by His] indwelling Holy Spirit ... our ongoing salvation does not depend on us; rather it depends on God's work in us. This is important because feelings tend to fluctuate. Sometimes we feel more spiritual, but sometimes we do not feel very spiritual at all. In fact, sometimes we wonder whether we even belong to Christ. If our salvation depended on us, then we would be about as stable as the stock market [Ryken wrote those words before the market took its biggest drop since 1929]. But our salvation depends on God's Spirit, who is the seal ...

... when God sends us his Spirit, he is making a down payment on eternity. The Holy Spirit is God's way of promising us that more is on the way. One day he will give us the rest of what we have coming to us ... God will raise us from the dead. He will take us to heaven and give us the full joy of being with him forever. The Spirit's present work in our lives is a sign [and seal] of our full and future salvation ... not just promising to pay later [God is] starting to pay right away ... paying part of the purchase price in advance, thereby offering a security for the full payment ... the Holy Spirit is actually a part of our inheritance, the first installment of eternal life. Usually an heir has to wait until somebody dies to get his inheritance, but as Christians, we enjoy ours right away. The greatest blessing is to know God and the Holy Spirit is making that happen right now: he is giving us a personal relationship with God! It is as if he brings heaven right inside us. Heaven is where God is, and if we have the Holy Spirit, then God is with us ...

As the seal of salvation, the Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance, backing it with the full faith and credit of Almighty God. He also proves to us that we belong to God. This idea comes near the end of Ephesians 1:14 where Paul talks about the redemption of those who are "God's own possession" (NASB)...

When Paul calls us [this] he is alluding to the Old Testament, where this phrase often occurs. Moses said to the children of Israel: "*The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession*" (Deuteronomy 7:6 NIV; see also Exodus 19:5; Malachi 3:17). So here is an amazing truth: we are God's treasured inheritance. It is not just that he is our treasure; it is also that we are his treasure! And it is not just that he is our inheritance; it is also that we are his inheritance! What a remarkable statement of God's love and grace!

The Holy Spirit is the seal of our authenticity, the unmistakable sign that we belong to God. If the Holy Spirit is at work in our lives, if he is convicting us of sin, if he is giving us faith in Jesus Christ [1 Cor. 12:9], if he is persuading us that the Bible is God's Word, if he is enabling us to call God Father ... helping us grow... ...if the Spirit is doing any of these things at all – then no matter how much we are struggling in the Christian life, we have God's seal of our eternal salvation. The Holy Spirit assures us that the salvation God began in [v. 4] will be ours to the very end [v. 14].⁶

5. Why does the Holy Spirit do all this? (v. 14b "to the praise of His glory")

6. *How should this impact me? (v. 15 and following for next week)*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow (Paul's point in v. 3 for this whole section). Praise Father Son and Holy Ghost. This should impact everything, how we pray, think, live ... but for now, let's start by praising Him.

¹ Westminster Larger Catechism, Question 79. Scripture proofs: Jer 31:3; 2 Tim 2:19; Heb 13:20-21; 2 Sam 23:5; 1 Cor 1:8-9, Heb 7:25; Luke 22:32; 1 John 3:9, 2:27; Jer 32:40, John 10:28

² Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*.

³ Jon Courson, *Jon Courson's Application Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 1230.

⁴ John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to the Apostles : The Role of Works in the Life of Faith* (Nashville, TN: Word Pub.), 2000.

⁵ *The NET Bible First Edition*; Biblical Studies Press, note on Eph. 1:14.

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, "Assured from Beginning to End," in *Assured by God* (P&R, 2007, edited by Burk Parsons), p. 47-50.