

SEALED BY THE SPIRIT (Ephesians 1:11-14)

Ephesians 1:11-14

¹¹*In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹²in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.*

1/In him (11)

- Note once again that everything is 'in Christ'
- All blessings are found in Christ
- When we have Christ we have everything we need

2/According to his plan (11)

Four things God does—

- Chooses us—as God's possession
- Predestines us—sets boundaries for us
- Works out (accomplishes) everything
- Has a plan/purpose/will for us

Question: If God works out everything, where does faith come in?

- This is the mystery of the gospel (3:4). God's divine purpose is not explicable in human terms
- God has a purpose for our lives which is realised in Christ. We respond by faith and become the children of God
- This is the good news! This is how we are saved.

3/The praise of his glory (12,14)

- Hope = confidence toward the future
- Praise of his glory = living so that the honour goes to God, not us
- Question: why to the praise of his *glory*? Why not to God himself?
- Glory = synonym for God. *God and his glory are one*
- Jesus is called the Lord of Glory (1 Cor 2:8; James 2:1)
- See Ex 24:16; 33:18; Isaiah 42:8; 48:11; 58:8; 60:1; Ezek 3:12,23; 10:18; Zech 2:5; Matt 25:31; Lk 9:26,32; John 2:11; Rom 3:23; 6:4; 1 Cor 2:8; Titus 2:13; James 2:1; 2 Pet 1:17
- 'Glory' = over 300 times in Scripture

4/Sealed by the Spirit (13)

In ancient times a seal was usually made of melted wax on which a signature or sign of authority was stamped. It meant—

- *Authenticity*: it established the integrity and genuineness of a document or object
- *Mark of ownership*: it established who owned an item
- *Authority*: it established who had the right to handle the object

When the Scripture says that we are sealed with the Spirit, then it means all these things, although the idea of a contract is especially stressed, a contract guaranteeing our future inheritance (Ephesians 1:14).

While the sealing could take place at the same time as the packing/writing etc, it was not the same thing. A seal was always additional, authenticating the item concerned. With believers, the sealing of the Spirit does not make us any more saved but it does confirm our salvation. Gospel (good news) of salvation: good news because it is God's gift, not our reward. Note the order of events:

- Hear
- Believe
- Sealed

Ideally, these three happen as part of one great salvation experience. See Acts 10:44-48. All blessings are ours in Christ (Eph 1:3). In practice, there is often a sequence. For various reasons, some new believers do not claim all that is rightfully theirs. At both Samaria and Damascus (Saul), new believers were not sealed with the Spirit until after days after they believed. See Acts 8:10-6; 19:1-6

Many scholars argue that the use of the aorist tense indicates a sequence. Eg '*Pisteusantes* (having believed) here expresses something prior to the fact conveyed by the definite verb, not contemporaneous with it... The sealing was in Christ and it followed on their *pistis* [faith]...' (S. Salmond W.R. Nicholl (ed), *Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol.3, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967:268.)

There may be a reminder here of the foundation of the church at Ephesus where the believers were empowered by the Spirit after they believed and were baptised (Acts 19:6).

5/ 'The Holy Spirit of promise'

This term is similar to that used by Jesus prior to Pentecost (Act 1:4). Being sealed with the Spirit is like having a 'personal Pentecost.' eg story of Rosie who felt rejected by God until sealed with the Spirit. People told her she was accepted but after the Spirit came she knew she was.

- The coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives is like a deposit or pledge or down payment of our hope in heaven.
- So the Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God (Romans 8:16,17; Heb 6:5; 1 John 3:24; 4:13)
- The word can mean 'engagement ring.' See Moulton and Milligan, 1985:617f
- We are already redeemed by his blood (1:7) but our redemption will be complete at the day of the Lord
- To the praise of his glory (14). Ultimately, everything is to the praise of the glory of God
- We know the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 4:6)

CHALLENGE

- Have we heard the word of truth?
- Have we believed the good news?

- Have we been sealed with the Spirit?
- Then let's live to the praise of the glory of God!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Read: Ephesians 1:11-14

1. In verse 11, some translations (eg NIV) read 'chosen' and others (NKJV, NRSV, ESV) read 'obtained an inheritance.' Either is an acceptable translation. Which one is more meaningful to you and why?
2. Some people object to the word 'predestine' but if we think about the positives, it can be very comforting. Why? Try to think of specific examples here.
3. What does the second half of verse 11 mean for you? (See also Romans 8:28)
4. What does the word 'hope' mean for Christians? In what ways does it differ from ordinary hope? (These verses might help here: Romans 5:2-5; 12:12; 15:13; Colossians 1:5,23; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 4:13; 1 Timothy 1:11; Titus 2:13; 3:7; Hebrews 6:19; 10:23; 1 Peter 1:3.)
5. What do you think it means 'to be for the praise of his glory?' (12)
6. The words 'in him' (12B) are applied either to believing in Christ (NRSV, ESV) or to being sealed with the Spirit (NIV). Either could be correct. Which seems to you to be more meaningful and why?
7. In what ways do you think the Holy Spirit is a guarantee of our inheritance? You could share your own experiences here.
8. If you have not experienced what it means to be 'sealed with the Spirit', spend time in prayer asking the Lord to confirm his presence in your life.

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