

The assured inheritance

Ephesians

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:12-14
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Ephesians 1, from verse 9,

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: 11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: 12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, 14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Amen. And our theme from verse 12 to 14 is "The assured inheritance." The assured inheritance. We have thus far followed the apostle, tracing the church's existence to the eternal purpose of God, in electing and predestinating those who in time, by being brought to faith in Christ effectually, would become its members, and also the spiritual blessings in Christ bestowed on time, the fruit of Christ's redeeming work in forgiveness of sins and in abounding toward us in bestowing wisdom and prudence in verse 8. And the aim of God's overall plan is given in verse 10, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him. That's the overall plan, that Christ should be Lord over all, which he is, and that he should as mediator king bring all things to its appointed goal in the glorification of the people of God and in the subduing of all his and our enemies. And verse 11 gives our part in that overall plan, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, so that the overall plan is that Christ should be mediator king and reign until all his enemies are put under his feet and within that overall plan, that the people of God should have an inheritance. And the cause of all this is the eternal plan of God. He has predestinated the people of God to glory and that's part of his working all things after the

counsel of his own will. So there is an eternal plan which embraces everything that happens, within that he has predestinated a people to obtain an inheritance, and now in verse 12 he continues this theme and comes to the great blessing of assurance of the future inheritance. So verses 12 to 14 are taking up this thought of the assurance that the people of God can have of that inheritance appointed to them.

First of all let us consider trusting Christ according to truth. Trusting Christ according to truth. Verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation." Now the phrase "to the praise of his glory" occurs in verse 12 and also at the end of verse 14, and it's taking up what we have in verse 6, that the great end of God's plan of salvation is the display of his own glory. So verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace," and now here and in verse 12 and in verse 14, "to the praise of his glory," that is, the display of God's glory, especially the attribute of his grace is the great end and design of the plan of salvation, that God's grace should be displayed in its glory. And here this phrase, that we should be to the praise of his glory, evidently reaches back to the phrase in verse 11, being predestinated. "Being predestinated, according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, that we should be to the praise of his glory." So we are predestinated that we should be to the praise of his glory, that is, God's predestination of the elect to be the heirs of salvation has as its ultimate goal not only their blessedness, but the glory of God in the manifestation of his grace toward them.

Now, verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted." Some see this as a contrast. "We," Paul and his fellow Jewish believers, past and present, in contrast to "ye" in verse 13, Gentiles, and eminent expositors have taken that view. The problem with this is that whilst it's true that later on in the letter the apostle does deal with the unifying of Jew and Gentile in Christ, "we" and "us" thus far in this letter have been used inclusively of the apostle and his readers. So in verse 3, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. Verse 4, according as he has chosen us that we should be holy and without blame. Verse 5, having predestinated us, and he has made us accepted in the beloved. Verse 6, in whom we have redemption. So that there is no reason to make "we" in verse 12 any narrower than in the verses that have gone before. Rather, we should think of "we" as including the apostle and the Ephesian Christians, and when he says "you also," he means this "we" includes you. So it is we, and yes, including you.

And when he says in verse 12, "who first trusted in Christ," that word "first," it means beforehand. It's actually all one word, who before trusted, or before hoped in Christ, and the idea is that they trusted in Christ, they hoped, they trusted or hoped. They hoped in Christ before the bestowment of the full inheritance. It's saying that in advance of the inheritance, we hope in Christ for that inheritance. So we before trusted, in advance we hoped in Christ for this inheritance yet to be bestowed.

And so "we" is the inclusive of the "ye" of verse 13, but in verse 13 you see "in whom ye also trusted," and the word "trusted" is in italics to give the sense, and isn't actually part of the text. Our translators have taken the phrase "in whom ye also" to be linked with the

word "trusted" in the previous verse but it may refer right back to verse 11, "obtained an inheritance. Ye also obtained an inheritance after that ye heard the word of truth." That may be the sense.

But then how have they obtained an inheritance? First of all, they heard the word of truth, "In whom ye also trusted, or in whom ye also obtained an inheritance, after that ye heard the word of truth." They heard the word of truth. People must hear the word of truth to be saved. "How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed, and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" So they must hear the truth. People cannot be saved without hearing the truth. That's why the people of God are to bear testimony. That's why churches are to support those who go to other lands to preach the gospel where Christ is not named because sinners cannot be saved without hearing the truth and that truth is called the gospel of your salvation. The gospel is the truth. It is not merely a perspective or an insight or an aspect of truth, or a valid point of view. It is, in the absolute sense, the truth. It is the gospel of their salvation because by God's blessing it was the power of God unto salvation to them.

So they heard the word of truth, that is the gospel, and they believed. "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed." They believed, or they trusted, or hoped in Christ. It's noticeable that the apostle uses the word "believed" in verse 13, and the word "trusted" in verse 12, and the margin gives "hoped." They believed then, not merely in the sense of recognizing the truth, but in a way of personal dependence upon Christ. They believed the truth, but not in a mere theoretical sense. When it says, "ye believed," it's the same thing as in verse 11 or verse 12, "ye who first trusted or hoped in Christ." So this believing is not a mere recognition that the gospel is true, that even devils can have, it is a hoping in Christ, and a casting of all confidence upon Christ as the one who is able to save guilty sinners.

But then secondly, the work of the Holy Spirit after believing. The work of the Holy Spirit after believing. You see the second half of verse 13, "in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." Sometimes Christians are confused by this and other passages which refer to the blessings of the Spirit which follow faith. For example in Acts 2:38, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." So there is a promise of the gift of the Holy Ghost following faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

And sometimes Christians can be confused by this. After all, doesn't scripture teach us that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ? How then does it speak of believing, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost? Well, faith is the result of the Spirit of God working effectually in the heart. That's why in chapter 2, verse 4, we read, "But God who is rich in mercy for his great love, wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace ye are saved." Verse 8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is quite clear that the quickening power of the Spirit of Christ causes a sinner to believe. When our Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," he then goes on to show that this is something that is not brought about by

Nicodemus' decision, but by the sovereign good pleasure of God. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, so is everyone that is born of the Spirit."

And in Titus 3:5, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." Now it's quite clear there that the work of the Spirit in regeneration is a sovereign work, and that justification by faith follows, and the hope of eternal life follows that work of the Spirit.

Or again in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, a verse we've looked at several times, but for one particular point this evening, "But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." And there the work of the Spirit precedes the belief of the truth.

Or in 1 Peter 1:2, "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." Eternal election, then in time, the sanctification of the Spirit resulting in obedience to the gospel and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ in justification. So yes, the Spirit of God works and causes faith.

So how then are we to understand this "after that ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise"? Or the verse in Acts we mentioned, "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." How are we to understand this? Well, as we've said before, but it will bear further repetition I think, there are a number of words which can be used of the blessings of God which causes faith and which can be used of the blessings of God which follow faith. The word "salvation" itself is one such term. "According to his own mercy and grace he saved us through the washing of regeneration. By grace are ye saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." These instances show that the work of the Spirit in renewing the heart and making us willing to believe is a saving grace of God, but on the other hand we have verses which say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved," and these verses, there are a number of verses which talk about believing unto salvation but there is no contradiction. It simply means that the word "salvation" is sometimes used of God's saving benefits which precede faith and sometimes of his saving benefits that follow faith, and sometimes of all that he does in saving his people.

So God saves us by regenerating us and causing us to believe on Christ, and when we believe on Christ he bestows other blessings of salvation in justification, adoption, and he will bestow more saving benefits at the last day. We look for him and he shall come a second time without sin unto salvation or receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. So that the word "salvation" is used of the divine initiative and the work of the Spirit in causing faith. It's also used of the blessings that follow faith and it simply means that the term "salvation" is used of any and all the benefits that Christ has purchased for his people to deliver them from the bondage and the guilt and the consequences of sin.

The same is true of the word "life" in Ephesians 2, which we read, referred to just now, we are said to be quickened, enlivened, that's what quickening means, given life and being raised to life by the grace of God so that we believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We are quickened. "By grace are you saved through faith but it's the gift of God," his quickening that causes us to believe. On the other hand we are told, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life." So the term "life" can be used of that life that the Spirit of God puts into the soul whereby we are made willing to believe, and it can also be used of that conscious enjoyment of peace and fellowship with God that follows believing.

Well now, what is true of these terms is also true of the references to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit renews the heart, the renewing of the Holy Ghost, but it can also be used of the conscious enjoyment of the blessings of the Holy Spirit that result from believing. So the Spirit of God causes a sinner to believe, working beneath his consciousness but renewing his will so that he does believe on Christ, and then he enters into the joys of the Holy Ghost which follow believing. And here what we have is not Arminianism, it isn't that faith causes the new birth because the work of the Spirit in view is not the work of regeneration which causes faith, it is the conscious enjoyment of the blessings of the Spirit which follow faith.

That brings us, thirdly, to the sealing of the Holy Spirit. The sealing of the Holy Spirit. "After that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." Here let us consider, first of all, this is the work of the Holy Spirit in giving assurance, assurance of salvation, assurance of the inheritance to come. A seal testifies to genuineness, and the seal of the Holy Spirit is that work of the Holy Spirit in assuring us of our inheritance to come by giving us a foretaste of its joys in the present. And that's why this verse is used as a proof text in our Westminster Confession of Faith. In chapter 18, paragraph 2, we read, "This certainty," that is, of salvation, "is not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion grounded upon a fallible hope, but an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God, which Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption." And at the end of that paragraph, it gives this verse as one of the proof texts.

So the work of the Spirit in sealing is giving assurance of salvation and of the inheritance to come. Then, under this point, let us consider, secondly, this assurance does not involve extraordinary revelation. This sealing of the Holy Spirit does not involve extraordinary revelation. Some expositors speak of a direct witness of the Spirit to the effect of declaring to the individual that he or she is a child of God. That is, the Spirit of God directly, as it were, assuring them that they, by name as it were, are children of God. But this is charismaticism. This is a claim to revelation outside of scripture. But you may say, no, because it comes through a verse of scripture. But if a verse of scripture is made or employed and made to mean something beyond what properly understood it should mean to anyone who reads it, then this is an addition to divine revelation. In other words, if I take a verse, the words of a verse of scripture, and those words are made to mean, out of

their context, something to the effect that you, David Silversides, are a child of God, then I am making the verse mean something that in itself it did not mean when it was given. And though the words of scripture are used, it is still a claim to revelation outside of scripture by making scripture mean something that the verse itself never did mean, and doesn't mean to anybody who rightly reads it. So we must not add on extra-biblical revelation to the meaning of scripture itself and that's why our Confession of Faith in the next paragraph speaks of this assurance being possible without extraordinary revelation. Without extraordinary revelation. So it does not involve direct revelation outside of scripture or beyond the proper meaning of a particular part of scripture.

Then thirdly, we may say, it is not a special second blessing. It is not a special second blessing. Some labor long to prove that this is an experience that follows at some point after conversion. The eminent Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his exposition goes to great lengths spending more time on this verse than any of them that have gone before it to try to establish a doctrine of a sealing of the Spirit that is some particular experience at a point, at a distance from conversion to Christ. We submit that this is wrong. If conversion means believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, are we not to have joy and peace in believing and abounding hope through the power of the Holy Ghost? Joy and peace in believing. That is, believing should bring joy and peace. Not believing plus. That's Romans 15:13 or in 1 Peter 1:8, "Whom having not seen ye love, in whom, for now ye see him not, yet believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Believing ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory, so that this joy unspeakable is the fruit of believing, so that this is not some additional thing over and above the joy and peace that faith in Christ can and ought to bring. And that is important for us to understand because the highest expressions to describe Christian joy which must imply assurance, such as joy unspeakable and full of glory, are attached in scripture to believing. Not believing and then something over and above.

And this sealing of the Holy Spirit is not equivalent to what the scriptures call the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The baptism of the Holy Spirit in scripture was never a merely individual experience. In Acts 2:1 we read, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place, and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Now leaving aside for the moment the question of the extraordinary gifts which we believe have ceased, the point is that this was the baptism of the Spirit in fulfillment of specific promise. So in Acts 1:5 the risen Savior says, "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." And this baptism, this outpouring of the Spirit was then extended beyond the Jewish church here to the Samaritans who believed in Acts 8:17, "Then laid they their hands on them," that's the apostles, laid their hands on the Samaritan believers, "and they received the Holy Ghost." There was no prolonged preparatory procedure. The apostles, not Philip, but the apostles laid their hands upon them and they received the Holy Ghost. And then to the full-blown Gentiles in Acts 10:44, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision

which believed were astonished as many as came with Peter, because upon the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost."

So this was not the result of some individualist-seeking process. It was on all members of these sections of the church. Pentecost, on the Jewish nucleus of the continuing church of God, all of them, and then the sequels, the Samaritans and the Gentiles. It was not something that some received and not others. In each case the Spirit of God came upon them all through apostolic instrumentality, either in the laying on of hands or under apostolic ministry and subsequently all believers are said to be baptized by one Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12:13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."

So then here in our text the Holy Spirit is called the Holy Spirit of promise because he was promised at Pentecost as another comforter, that the whole church in its New Testament age should receive a greater abundance of the Spirit of God than was ordinarily known under the Old Testament, and this was marked out after the exaltation of Christ by Pentecost and its Samaritan and Gentile sequels. But this is not to teach that each individual must seek a post-conversion repetition of Pentecost. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones, the late Dr. Lloyd-Jones, eminent though he was, nonetheless is mistaken and he quotes various experiences of eminent godly men of the past in order to try to establish this doctrine, but some of those whose experience he refers to did not agree with him and did not interpret their own experiences in the way that he does for them. He mentions John Flavel, he mentions Jonathan Edwards, and their experiences of gaining great assurance at a given particular time in their Christian experience, but neither of these men actually understood their experience the way that Dr. Lloyd-Jones interprets it. For example, Jonathan Edwards in one of his sermons explicitly states that at conversion we are baptized of the Holy Ghost.

Then we can see of this sealing of the Spirit, fourthly, in some measure this sealing is common to all believers. Here the apostle says you were sealed, after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. He's not talking about something that is true of some of the Ephesian Christians and not others. It is self-evident that he is addressing all the saints at Ephesus. After you believed you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. This is confirmed in chapter 4, verse 30, where he tells them all, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And again in 2 Corinthians 1 which we read earlier on, and verse 21 and 2, he says, "Now he which establish us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who hath also sealed us and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." He tells this to the members of this very imperfect church in Corinth, and he doesn't say, "Some of you this is true of, but not others."

So the work of the Holy Spirit in assurance is known in some measure by all the people of God, but it does vary in degree. That's why our Confession of Faith tells us, "This infallible assurance does not so belong to the essence of faith that a true believer may wait long and conflict with many difficulties before he be partaker of it. Yet being enabled by the Spirit to know the things which are freely given him of God, he may

without extraordinary revelation in the right use of ordinary means attain thereunto." Then later on it says, "True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished and intermitted, as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit, by some sudden or vehement temptation, by God's withdrawing the light of his countenance and suffering, even such as fear him to walk in darkness and to have no light, yet are they never utterly destitute of that seed of God and life of faith, that love of Christ and the brethren, that sincerity of heart and conscience of duty, out of which by the operation of the Spirit this assurance may in due time be revived, and by the which in the meantime they are supported from utter despair."

Now that's telling us that there is such a thing as complete assurance of salvation but that true believers may not always have that full assurance that they may struggle and therefore that there are varying measures of assurance among the people of God, yet all have some element of assurance because they are preserved from utter despair. And it is certainly true that some believers find their assurance quite suddenly increased and someone like John Flavel and some of the other men that Dr. Lloyd-Jones refers to, yes, they perhaps had a relatively weak assurance and they knew a sudden and rapid increase in that assurance at some point in their Christian lives, but they were sealed by the Spirit from the time of their conversion, but they knew more of that assurance at a certain time than they had formerly done, that we should not label that particular time of spiritual blessing and enrichment the baptism of the Spirit, we should not put any special label upon it, it's simply God in his goodness granting a great increase of that sealing of the Spirit which begins at conversion.

Well then, how does the Holy Spirit assure us of salvation? We can take what's in the Westminster Confession as a good starting point. He assures us of the divine truth of the promises. That's fundamental. There is no assurance of salvation independently of the promises of the word of God. Then he enables us also to see the inward evidences of the work of grace within us. He creates those evidences, they were brought to faith and he affects the fruit of that faith, and he enables us to see those evidences, to see what the Bible says a Christian is, and to see that we match as in a mirror the biblical evidences of what a Christian is.

So the Holy Spirit enables us to embrace the promises and to see ourselves clearly in the biblical description of a Christian and therefore assuring us that what is promised to believers is actually our possession, that we are believers. If joy and peace in believing is at a low ebb, then what should we do? If our assurance is weak, what ought we to do? Well the Confession of Faith says we should make use of the ordinary means for the strengthening of faith but above all we should think much upon Christ and upon his ability and suitability as a Savior and the promises of mercy in him. But you say, "That's not where my problem is. You see, the problem is that I can see so little evidence of the work of God's grace in me, so little of the fruit of the Spirit, so little of those things which faith in Christ should cause in me, that I find it hard to be assured that I am a Christian." So that you say, "You're on the wrong track. The problem is in the feebleness of my evidences of being a Christian." But if that is so, how are those evidences going to be increased? Not by looking at them or looking for them, but by looking upon Christ as the

object of faith and the more we see Christ in his ability to save and his sufficiency as a Savior, the more our faith is strengthened and the evidences will increase and become more visible to us. You cannot increase the evidences of faith by looking at the evidences of faith. It is by looking at Christ that faith is strengthened and the evidences become more visible and more discernible, and that's why deliberate sin and grieving of the Spirit, ignoring our consciences, overriding our consciences and grieving the Spirit of God, must diminish assurance because the Holy Spirit withdraws much of his comforting work through the promises and also the evidences are rendered difficult to see in the light of the conscience wound which we have inflicted.

So then, the work of the Spirit in sealing the people of God is by enabling them to be assured of the promises of God and to be assured of their own part in those promises as those who believe on Christ and in whose hearts the accompaniments of faith are manifest, and it takes the work of the Spirit to give this assurance even when that assurance is drawn from the evidences of faith because we cannot see clearly, we cannot see clearly that what the Scriptures teach a Christian is that that is true of us, except by the enabling of the Spirit, enabling us to apply the word to our hearts and to see ourselves truly in its light.

And then fourthly, the earnest of our inheritance, which is verse 14, "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." The earnest is the first installment, the deposit, which guarantees the rest. You know that even on big purchases now we use the idea of a deposit and that's a guarantee that the rest of the payment is coming and that's the idea here. And this sealing of the Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance. That's why it belongs to all the people of God. All who have the inheritance to come must surely have the earnest in some measure. Can someone have a place, a title in heaven and not have something, however feeble, of the blessings of heaven in their hearts? Surely not. And that's why Dr. Lloyd-Jones' view is wrong, because all who have a title to the inheritance have God as their portion even in this world, and know something of the foretaste of the inheritance. And so this earnest consists of the Spirit of God giving us an assurance that the future inheritance is ours on account of our enjoyment of the foretaste now.

We have the foretaste and the rest will follow. We have joy and peace in believing, in some measure, however feeble, and we shall have joy and peace forevermore in the presence of Christ in the world to come. Thus we see that no Christian is without something of the earnest. You see how the second blessing idea leaves us with the idea of some who have a place in the inheritance, but none of the foretaste, and of course it's unthinkable. No. True believers have a sure title to the inheritance and they have some measure of the earnest, the down payment, the guarantee, and the foretaste. It must be so. And they have this seal, this earnest, this guarantee of the full inheritance until they have the guarantee of it, the foretaste of it, until the redemption of the purchased possession, that is, until God completes the redemption of his purchased people.

Now redemption was accomplished by Christ, but the term is used sometimes of the application of it, and especially of the final stage of its application in the resurrection of the body. So "of him are ye in Christ Jesus who is of God made unto us wisdom and

righteousness and sanctification and redemption." There redemption is talking about the final stage of the application of redemption, the resurrection of the body. Or in Romans 8:23, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body," the firstfruits of the Spirit, and the completion of God's redemption of his people at the resurrection of the body when we are finally delivered from all that sin has entailed. And so we are sealed, we have the foretaste and the guarantee, until God's redemption of his purchased possession, that is his people, is completed in its application. We are his inheritance and he is ours.

And then fifthly, our blessedness and God's glory coincide. Our blessedness and God's glory coincide. You see at the very end of verse 14, we have this phrase again, "unto the praise of his glory." Unto the praise of his glory. There is no contradiction between God blessing us forever and the manifestation of his own glory. What a wonderful assuring thought that is, that for God to bless us with everlasting glory with Christ is entirely compatible with the display of his glory, that God will glorify his name in blessing us forever. And so we need not be afraid. God will be glorified in bringing us to heaven. God is glorified in the everlasting blessedness of his people. And we can be assured, assurance is possible. Roman Catholicism and groups like so-called Jehovah's Witnesses, they say it's not. They say it's not possible. You can't be sure. It's presumption. But it isn't because it's God who seals and gives the foretaste and the guarantee. And of course Arminianism is ruinous to this doctrine, because Arminianism in its full-blown form says that someone can have the earnest of the inheritance and yet not enter the inheritance. What sort of an earnest is it? What sort of a first-installment guaranteeing foretaste is it if we can have it and then not have the inheritance itself? If we can have the foretaste of heaven and then not go to heaven? The whole idea is outrageous but that is where the doctrine of an independent free will leads because if it's our free will that brings us to faith in Christ in the first place, then our free will can take us out of faith in Christ at any time and the whole of salvation then rests on man and not God, and assurance is impossible. But this is teaching us something very different. It's God who saves from beginning to end, and those whom he has called and brought to faith in Christ, he gives them the seal of his Spirit, he gives them some measure of the joys of heaven while they are on earth.

We can be sure, "For I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." This assurance is a great spiritual blessing in Christ. It's one of these spiritual blessings that God has blessed us with, all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, and included in those spiritual blessings in Christ is the seal of the Spirit in the present, and the full inheritance in the world to come. Amen.