

Owned by God Forever

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Bible Text: Ephesians 1:13-14
Preached on: Sunday, August 31, 2014

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Well, the theme of praise that we have just been singing about could not be more fitting for this closing message on the opening paragraph of Ephesians chapter 1 which is where we're turning. I'd invite you to turn in your Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1 for our text this morning. Ephesians 1:13, 14. If you're visiting or somewhat new with us, we're culminating almost a dozen messages on the first 14 verses of Ephesians with this particular message here today and I say without any fear of you disagreeing with me, those of you that are Christians, that the more that you study the reality of salvation in Scripture, the more you are humbled by what God has done for us. It is magnificent. It is glorious. It is unspeakably wondrous that he has been so good to us, those of us who were sinners, in bringing us to himself and securing for us an eternity of blessedness, those of us are specks of dust on a small rock in a corner of the universe, here God has chosen us and brought us into his family. He chose us before the foundation of the world. Christ redeemed us at the cross and purchased us for his own possession and now we're going to see in verses 13 and 14 what God has done in his own person to secure this and to make it certain forever. And those of you that perhaps have struggled with assurance of salvation, you are most blessed to be before the word of God this morning because what we're going to see is that God has not left the outcome of our salvation in doubt. He has not left it up to you to finish it up with your imperfect obedience or your desire to persevere. No, God did not do that. If he had left it up to us at all, we would all certainly have failed and we would ultimately be lost. But God has put it upon himself to secure our salvation forever and he has done something magnificent with his own person in our own lives to make it evident that his intentions for us can never fail and that he will never back away from his purpose of bestowing blessing on you who are Christians throughout all of eternity.

This is one magnificent passage. The more you study salvation in Scripture, the more you're humbled by what God has done for us and I would say this as well, you're also increasingly impressed and awed by the unsearchable wisdom in God's plan that he works out over the ages. Those of us who are Christians, are part of the flow of a plan that God established before time began and that he will be carrying out after time ends. And every time that we come together, it seems more and more, and some of you have even expressed this, it just seems like we're kind of swept up in the eternal grandeur of salvation in such a way that the things of the world just seem to grow strangely dim and it

just becomes so magnificent to just drink from the well of the salvation that God has given to us.

We've been singing the praise of God this morning and our passage today will simply add to that adoration that we've already begun with the songs that we sang here this morning. Look at verses 13 and 14 with me. It's kind of sad, it's bittersweet I should say, to come to the end of this great passage with this message this morning. And verse 13 the Apostle Paul said

13 In Him [that is, in Christ], 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, 14 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.

Now for a sentence, verses 3 to 14, that stretches out for 202 words in the original Greek language of it and that sounds like such a long sentence and complex and it is, and yet we see that there is such an economy of words, there is so much expressed in such a short manner of time and with such a brevity of words that it's just magnificent. What we're going to see as we look at the last half of the verse 13 and in verse 14 today, we're going to see three more aspects of God's work in your salvation and the three marks of his work through the ministry of the Holy Spirit which are absolutely intended to bring you to a divine certainty and assurance of your salvation. Those of you, and I know there are many of you, where you've wrestled with this issue and you've had doubts about your salvation, understand that God brought you here this morning to hear just this. And those of you that perhaps can superficially say, "Once saved always saved," I want you to understand that there's so much that underlies the certainty of our salvation that I don't want you to miss this either. I don't want you to think, "Oh, this a message about assurance and therefore I already know that. I don't struggle with that issue and so I can kind of float on the top of this." No, no, no, no, we need to gather around the feast table here this morning. We need to take in the banquet of God's word that he has prepared for us that we would realize and that somehow by the power of God working through the word this morning and working in the inner recesses of your heart, that we would find anchored in the reality of salvation that which gives us an absolute confidence as we move forward in life, as we one day will face the coming day of death and departure from this world, that we would be so anchored in the truth of what God has done for us and understand the fullness of how he has guaranteed us the outcome of our salvation, that we would be rocks. That we would be granite: firm, solid standing with a complete assurance that is grounded in the work and promises of God that our confidence in what he has done for us would be utterly unassailable. That's what this passage does for us here this morning.

Three marks of the work of the ministry of the only Holy Spirit and how God has certified our salvation to us. We're going to start with this: there's a past, present and future aspect to these things. We're going to start first of all, with the past promise of God. The past promise of God. Look at verse 13 with me. We're going to jump to the end

of the verse just for the sake of clarity in the message. Paul says there at the end of verse 13, "That you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." Your salvation was certified, as it were, by the Holy Spirit and the phrase there "the Holy Spirit of promise," here is what I want to deal with and just kind of taking this chronologically this morning: how is it that he is the Holy Spirit of promise or the promised Holy Spirit? What is that referring to and what does it have to do with the perspective with which we view our salvation here today? We tend to be, because we've been conditioned over time, we tend to think of our Christian experience more in the here and now. We are tempted to think about how can Christianity help me today? How can it help me with this and that relationship or with my struggles in life? And when we think about being a Christian from that perspective, we greatly impoverish our spiritual experience. We greatly impoverish, we greatly cheapen what it means to be a Christian and I want to help stretch out your perspective a little bit with what we're owing to consider here today. Scripture tells us and we'll look at this in a bit, Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer, every true believer in Christ. We all have the Spirit of God dwelling in us if we are true Christians. Now look, that's a wonderful reality. We're going to talk about it more in a minute but what I want you to see about it is this: that spiritual reality that we are enjoying as Christians right now is connected to promises that Jesus made while he was here on earth 2,000 years ago. The present spiritual reality that we enjoy of the indwelling Holy Spirit, his power and influence in our lives, is connected to promises that Christ made and that Christ has now kept for us.

I want you to see this in some familiar passages perhaps. Go back to the gospel of John chapter 14. John chapter 14 is where we're going to start with this and we'll see how many of these we look at. John 14 beginning in verse 16. This is on the eve of the crucifixion of Christ. Jesus is speaking in the upper room to his disciples and he's making promises to them. You think about this and realize that Jesus knows that he's on the verge of crucifixion. He knows that he's about to bear the sins of his people on his shoulders and yet here he is graciously providing for the needs of his disciples, making promises to them and we who through that chain of faithful ministry throughout the ages, those of us that have benefited from the apostolic message, here we are now 2,000 years later and we are on the receiving end of these very promises that we are about to see. It's just stunning the work of God over the ages and how Christ has provided for us with so much greatness and faithfulness. Look at John 14:16. Jesus is about to depart. He's physically leaving the disciples in a matter of just a few weeks and he's assuring them, he's helping them not to be thrown off, not to be discouraged or despair by the absence of his physical presence because he's going to do something that will help them in his physical absence. John 14: 16, he says, "I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you." Jesus is promising them that he will send the Holy Spirit when he ascends to heaven and the Spirit will dwell within them and he will be with them to comfort them, to help them, as they live for Christ in this hostile world.

Look over at John 15:26. He repeats it and expands on the promise. He's promising them that the third person of the Trinity will come to be with them. John 15: 26, he says,

"When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify about Me, and you will testify also, because you have been with Me from the beginning." He says the Spirit is going to come and help you. The Spirit will bring to mind the things that I have said during my ministry and he will minister to you and strengthen you and enable you to continue on. In chapter 16: 13, he says, "When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth." This is really a promise for the immediate 11 disciples, guiding them into the revelation of Scripture. "He will guide you into all the truth for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. All things that the Father has are Mine; therefore I said that He takes of Mine and will disclose it to you." What I want you to notice about these passages and there's one more that we're going to see in just a moment, the future tense of what Jesus says. He says, "I will do this. The Spirit will come and this is what the Spirit will do." He's speaking in the future tense as he's talking with his disciples there at the Last Supper. And so he's looking into the future and he's saying, "I will do this in order to help you. The Holy Spirit will come and will sustain you and he will have a ministry in your life that will continue on the work that I have begun in my earthly ministry," and so Jesus is promising them something magnificent that is still to come.

Now with that in mind, look at one final passage in Acts 1:4. Multiple, multiple times, Jesus said, "I will send the Spirit, I will send the Spirit," and now here in the book of Acts chapter 1, he is on the brink of returning to heaven and he says to them in chapter 1:4, "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me.'" The Father promised this, I repeated it to you. I told you all about this. Wait for it. Wait here in Jerusalem. Verse 5, "for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." So he had promised it before his crucifixion. After his crucifixion, he repeats the promise and he says, "The Holy Spirit is coming." And in Acts chapter 2 on the day of Pentecost, the Spirit came with great power and we don't have time to go into all of that. One day we will. But Jesus promised the Spirit and the Spirit in fulfillment of that promise came and now here we are generations upon generations upon generations, centuries and even millennia later, here we are, you and I, individual believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have this Holy Spirit dwelling within us. The past promise of God. The past promise of Christ, he has kept. He's given his Holy Spirit to us just like he said that he would.

We look back in the pages of Scripture, as it were, we look out over the past ages of time and we see that Christ kept his promise and those of us that have the Holy Spirit in our souls, we have the life of the Spirit in our souls. the Spirit of God has awakened you to the truth of Scripture, the Spirit of God has awakened you to the glory of Christ and now you love him. The Spirit of God has produced spiritual fruit in your life and changed you and is increasingly conforming you to the image of Christ. Here's what I want you to see right at this point of the message: that life of the Holy Spirit in your soul is a reminder that Christ planned out your salvation long ago and you're simply living in the stream and swimming in the flow of what Christ had all ready ordained to come to pass. He had

promised his disciples the Holy Spirit. Here we are now in the year 2014 and we have the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Spirit in our lives causes us to look back and say, "What he promised 2,000 years ago he has kept even to me."

The past promise of God certain, strong, infallible and now fulfilled in you. It reminds us that Christ planned our salvation. It reminds us that he cares for us and he loves us so much that he gave us that which we never could have requested, that which we never could have compelled. He promised powerful help for the Christian life to us and he has given it to us. We could not have reached into heaven and pulled the Spirit of God down to come and help us. Christ promised it, the Spirit came and now here we are on the receiving end of all of these immense spiritual blessings, the person of God himself dwelling within us. What can we say but praise the Lord for that. And when we enjoy together the ordinance of baptism, believer's baptism, which we'll doing in three weeks, September 21, our baptism testimonies are designed to speak to this kind of reality. When we talk about our conversion we say, "I was convicted of sin and I turned to Christ who died and rose again for my salvation and I believed in him and I trusted in him and my life changed and now I have a desire for the word of God and I understand the word of God. My attitudes have changed. I love holy things in a way that I never did before. I see the fruit of the Spirit coming out in my life. Oh, imperfectly for sure, but the whole orientation of my life has changed." That's what we talk about in baptism testimonies.

Well, here's what I want you to see those things of which we testify, which so many of you have testified or soon will testify in baptism, what I want you to see is this: that testimony of the work of the Spirit of God in your life is no minor thing. It is no small consequence. That is testifying. Those changes in your life, those spiritual desires, those affections, that persevering faith that you now have is a testimony, it is a witness to a greater reality, an invisible spiritual reality that speaks to the fact that the Spirit is at work in your life and that tells you that Christ has kept his promise to those who believe in him. And it reminds us that God has been working out this great plan of salvation and in your humble, quiet, unnoticed life, when you are manifesting that kind of spiritual fruit, that is no small thing. I understand the world doesn't care about it. I understand that the world mocks us and tries to distract us with other things but what your humble life is doing is it is reflecting and illustrating a spiritual reality that traces its reality back to the promises of Christ. Your life which reflects the mark of the Holy Spirit, is indicating that Christ 2,000 years ago made a promise and he's still keeping it today and he kept it to me. Glory be, praise be to God.

You see, there's nothing superficial about the Christian life. There's nothing incidental about it. Everything about our life, I like to say this, "The most noble thing in the world is to be a Christian." There is nothing more glorious. There's nothing more noble, grand, and and that which most fulfills the purpose for which man was created than to be a Christian and to be a living, walking, breathing illustration of the fact that God has the power to save. That Christ truly redeemed his people. The Spirit is alive and well and what Christ promises he always keeps. Your humble Christian life testifies to all of those great spiritual realities and we corporately get to be a corporate witness to that. Isn't that cool? Isn't that just like really wonderful? That we have a purpose for life that transcends

what we can get out of it before we die? That the very things that are going on in our hearts are speaking to spiritual realities. And Christian, what I want you to do today, what I want you to do right now, is to be astonished at how your simple, faithful life testifies to the faithfulness of Christ to deliver on his promise. We have, Scripture says, turn back to Ephesians chapter 1 with all of those thoughts in mind. Ephesians, chapter 1, verse 13. It says that you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise. You who have believed, you show the mark of the promised Holy Spirit and you are manifesting the fact that salvation is real and that Christ keeps his promises. Praise be to God. Glory be to our God.

Now we're just getting started in the glory of what this passage says about our salvation because there's another aspect of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Spirit in your life proves that Christ keeps his promises. It's a reminder that Christ promised this thousands of years ago and now we enjoy it and so we're reminded of the past, we're reminded of our Lord by the work of the Spirit in our lives but now there's something else that is testified to and that is this point, number 2, we said point number 1: the Spirit reminds us of the past promise of God and now point number 2: he reminds us that we are the present property of God. The present property of God. This is wonderful. Of course any time you open up one of the 66 books of the Bible, that should be your reaction, "This is wonderful! Obadiah verse 3, man, this is great!" Because all Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching. Point number 2: the present property of God. And here's what Paul is saying: at the very instant that you believed in Christ, Scripture says that God sealed you with the Holy Spirit. Look at verse 13 again. We'll go back to the beginning of the verse to help set the context. Remember here in verse 13, Paul is turning to the spiritual experience of his readers here and he's reminding them of the realities of their own salvation. Those of us who have believed here in the 21st century, this is true of us as well. The salvation that was real in the first century is the same salvation that is real in the 21st century and so in verse 13, Paul 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." You were sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Now, I want to unpack this for you a little bit. First of all, notice the past tense of it. "You were sealed." This describes a completed past act. It's not something that is ongoing. It's not that you're being sealed as if there's a process going on. In a one time past act, at the moment you believed, God sealed you with the Holy Spirit in Christ. He irreversibly did this when you believed. I want to just stop and step back for a moment and just address those of you directly that struggle with the assurance of your salvation. You see the marks of true salvation and that you've been taught in the past that you can lose it. You wonder if you're been faithful enough and you're just living on that edge of, "It's good to be a Christian but, oh, if I lose it," and it's just really tense and tight and you can never really relax in the spiritual reality of salvation. It's time to put that to rest. It's time to slay that and bury it so that it never comes back again. We are not meant to walk through life doubting the reality of our salvation when it is clear that we have the Holy Spirit within us. This is the point of this passage. God did an irreversible act when he saved you and the sealing which is in the past tense, a completed act, speaks to that

completed reality. God sealed you with the Holy Spirit and here's what that means: he sealed you in the sense that he marked you out as his own. He stamped you, as it were, with the Holy Spirit to show that you belong to him forever. Ancient documents were often sealed with a waxy substance that would close them up and protect the contents and authenticate the document as having come from the owner of the seal and so there would be a seal in which that wax would be impressed with that showed the mark of its owner and when you got a letter that was sealed like that, you would recognize the seal and say, "Oh, this letter is the real thing. It comes from the owner of the seal and therefore I know that it's genuine." The owner's distinct seal guaranteed the document was real. In a different realm, in a way that we can still relate to at least in the realm of farming, the owners of cattle or the owners of slaves would brand them, put a mark in them, to show that they belonged to their owner and they were sealed in that way. They were marked in that way. What Paul is doing is he takes those concepts and uses them to illustrate a spiritual reality about what happened in your salvation. God marked out every true believer at the moment of their conversion by imparting the Holy Spirit to them.

Look over Romans chapter 8, verse 9. You need to see that this is the universal experience of every true Christian. Contrary to some, there is no such thing as a true Christian who does not have the Holy Spirit. You were sealed at the moment you believed every one of you and the absence of the Spirit is a mark that you have not been born again, not that you need a second experience. Romans 8:9, notice what Paul says. He says, "You are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, 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." You see, that word "belonging," that word of possession, that word of ownership that is there. Paul says, "There are two classes of people. There are those that have the Spirit and those that don't. Those that don't, do not belong to God. Those that do, have been marked as belonging to him." The Spirit marks us as the property of God.

Now listen, listen this is really, really wonderful. I've just run out of adjectives to talk about this. You try to diversify your adjectives and to spread them out so that you get something of the multicolored splendor of salvation. There aren't enough adjectives to spread this around. It's wonderful. It's marvelous. It's glorious. It's incalculable. Here's what it means, keeping the idea of the seal in mind: the Holy Spirit in your life is - watch this - the signature indication that God owns you. You belong to God. You can distinguish Christians from non-Christians not by a physical mark, not by a brand in their skin, you recognize a true Christian by the spiritual mark of the Holy Spirit and so God puts the Spirit within us. The Spirit becomes the sealing mark. Those changes in your life, those of you that were converted a little bit later in life and there's a black and white difference between your old man and your new man, here's what I want you to understand: those changes are the mark of God and it's more than the fact that your life has changed, it's the fact that God has intervened and claimed ownership of you and put his mark on you in an irreversible way that distinguishes you from the world and says, "That one belongs to me."

And so, Paul can say in 1 Corinthians 6: 19 that you've been bought with a price, therefore glorify God with your body. We talk about salvation in the language of

redemption, that we've been purchased. Well, when you buy something at the store or in the car lot or you buy a piece of property, you own it. When Christ died for you, he was not simply making a means for your sins to be forgiven and then you would drift along through life. No, he bought you so that God would own you. We've been chosen to belong to God. We've been redeemed. We've been purchased by the price of blood. We've been adopted into the family. We're just rehearsing right now terms that we've seen here in Ephesians chapter 1 and now he's saying, "You've been sealed. God owns you." What you should be seeing in the multiplicity of these metaphors is that God has delivered a people, he has bought them and redeemed them so that they would belong to him. There is an element of ownership that we gladly say, "We belong to God and the mark of that ownership is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives."

Turn over to the book of Galatians, chapter 5. How do you recognize this mark of the Spirit? Well, there's a contrast. There's that which you separate yourself from and that which bubbles out of your inner man because of the reality of the Spirit in your life. Verse 19, speaking of the unsaved, Paul says, "The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these," all of those marks of the flesh. Notice it's not all external behaviors. It's not just immorality and drunkenness but there's the inner reality of envying and anger and outbursts of that kind of anger that as a pattern of life show that someone does not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. That's the mark that the world owns that one. That kind of life is a mark that that person is still in the realm of the world because Paul says there in verse 21, "I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." But by contrast, this mark of the Spirit, verse 22, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." Those inner attitudes are the mark of the Spirit. That's indicating the presence of the Spirit in your life. In the things that we studied in 1 John, we saw that desires for the word of God, a belief, a conviction of truth, not error, is the mark of a true Christian. That obedience; a spirit of obedience; a pattern of obedience to God's word is the mark of a true Christian.

And loving other believers is a mark of a true Christian. That's why it's so impossible for someone to claim to be a Christian and totally remove themselves from the people of God. They say, "I'll just be a Christian on my own, thank you." Well, no, not really. Not really because one of the marks of the Spirit dwelling within you is that you have an affinity and an affection for the people of God and you're drawn to them like magnets. You want to be around the people of God because you find even without thinking about it, that you have a shared heart with them. That's why it's so easy for you to stay and talk with each other an hour after the service is over. There is just so much in common it's hard to stop talking.

Here's what I want you to see from all of that: those different spiritual attitudes, those attributes, those marks of life, those things that mark out a Christian, those are the spiritual attributes that flow from the presence of the Spirit of God in your life. And what that means is, you see, this is all connected, the real point here is this: that is the mark of

God's seal, a completed past action. God has claimed you as his own and now you belong to him. The impress of the Spirit shows that you are a Christian. God has authority over you. God will protect you. You belong to him, not to yourself. You are the present property of God as a Christian. Present possession. The belonging of the Creator, of the Redeemer, of the Savior. 1 Corinthians 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," watch this, verse 19 of 1 Corinthians 6, "and that you are not your own? " Why is it that we're not our own? It's because we belong to someone else. Verse 20, "For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." To say that you are a Christian is to say, "I don't own my own life." It's to say, "I belong to the God who purchased me through the salvation that is exclusively found in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Now, how does that tie in with the idea of assurance? Look, God bought us to own us. To keep us. State it this way, I'm glad this thought came to my mind: God did not save you in order to rent you and then turn you back later on when he found out that you weren't as good as he thought you were going to turn out to be. You're not a short term rental. You are the owned possession of God. You are his property. You belong to him. There is no going back. And as we go through the Christian life, the Spirit of God controls and directs us, disciplines us when we stray, but never lets us fall completely away. He will always bring us back. God has identified us as being his. That work of the Spirit in your life is the impress that shows that. What I want you to see is that at the very moment that you believed, Scripture says, that is when God did it. God put his ownership stamp upon you from the very beginning.

Some of you can remember after your conversion, I know that I can. There were things that you sinfully enjoyed prior to your conversion and in that initial period of time after your conversion, you would go back to those sins but all of a sudden, the pleasure that you once found in them was no longer the same. It was different. You didn't enjoy it anymore. It started to make you feel convicted. What you used to enjoy now becomes an element of, "I don't even like that anymore." I see you nodding your head. You recognize it and do you know why you're nodding your head? It's because at that instant or that era in your early Christian life was the mark of God on your life. You no longer belong to sin in that way anymore and so your inner response to it was not of, "Oh, I like this!" It was, "I don't like this!" What I want you to see as you look back on your spiritual experience is that when that happened, when you couldn't go back to sin with gusto, when you couldn't go back to your false religion, when you just found yourself being pulled and separated away from your former friends who were your partners in crime, that separation from sin was an aspect of the mark of God, the ownership seal of God. "You belong to me now and you won't be enjoying that like you once did."

So those early things that you didn't even understand at the start, "Why is this so different now?" Now we look back and we understand that was the mark of God. It was different because you were under new ownership and you're there forever. That's the seal of the Spirit. You know, we could stop right here and just go back to those hymns of praise that we sung and just rejoice and praise and sing the same hymns that we sung 15 minutes ago, 45 minutes ago, who is counting. All that, you could go back and you could sin

those songs of praise with a renewed vigor and joy, wouldn't you? To realize that your life is a testimony to promises that Christian made 2,000 years ago and now he's kept because the Holy Spirit, the sweet, promised Holy Spirit, belongs to you and his presence in your life reminds you of the faithfulness of Christ who has promised us. Then you realize that, "I'm in a privileged status now. The Spirit shows that I have the privileged status. I belong to God," and you can just look back and say, "This is just so wonderful. Let's sing those hymns again," and we'd be joyful more than we were at the start. That would be great. That would be great! That's what we should do.

Yet, there's more. The Holy Spirit in our lives is now an indication about what is yet to come. What is yet to come? Point 3: the future presence of God. I love this. I love this. You know, there is such a perfection thinking about Christ promising the Spirit and delivering on his promise. That's precious. I mean, that's perfect. That he is so much Lord over creation, Lord over the physical and the spiritual, Lord over the visible and invisible, that he can make a promise and keep delivering on it 2,000 years later with no threat that he's going to slow down or be diminished in his capacity to keep what he's promised. That's perfect! It's wonderful! Praise be to Christ that he is like that!

Then to realize here in the realm of the present, having believed and having been sealed with the Spirit, that we're walking through life marked out as the possession of God. That we're not our own. That there is a purpose and there is a meaning and there is a significance of eternal consequence to our life as we walk through day-by-day that is testified by the abiding fruit of the Spirit in our lives that shows that we've been sealed in the Spirit and we belong to God. Man, that's perfect. "I was born to humble parents in a farm town and now you're telling me that I belong to the eternal Creator? He set his affections on me before time began and he's carried it out and he owns me and I belong to him? Man, that is perfect. That was perfect and now this is perfect."

Could it be that there's something that's even more wonderful than that? I'll give you an indication of how you can tell if you're understanding what Scripture is saying here or not. You're understanding this if you feel a sense coming upon you of just being utterly humbled by the goodness of God. That we are on the receiving end of so many wonderful things that we did not initiate and that we could not earn. Your simple Christian life is tied to the promises of Christ and even beyond that to the choice of God before time began. That's awesome. You are you're sitting in those comfortable chairs here in Legacy Hall in 2014 where the men of renown of this world, most of you have no idea what your name is and couldn't even care less what your name is and yet here you are sitting in this place in northern Kentucky at this time as the possession of God. Wow. "God, it couldn't be about me because there wasn't anything about me that would make you want to own me like that. I mean, you own the universe. You own the cattle on a thousand hills. You own everything and yet you took me, a stranger and a sinner, and brought me in so that you could own me?" you say in your mind, "O God, who am I that you would do that? Why would you do that?" If something of that is echoing in your mind, you're getting it. A true Christian is not indifferent to these things, it just drives him to praise and to worship in humility.

With all of that, we haven't even gotten to the best part yet. That's what we're coming to now. Point 3: the future presence of God. These things just get progressively more wonderful. They are perfect and yet they get better. How could that be? Here's what we're going to see: the Spirit of God now in your life is given to you; God gave the Spirit to you – watch this – simply as a part of a greater whole that he intends to deliver on for you. Look at verse 14, Ephesians 1:14. "The Holy Spirit of promise," at the end of verse 13, "who is," so this relative clause is now going to expand on the significance of the Holy Spirit in your life. You were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise who is, now he's expanding on what this means, the significance of the Spirit, verse 14, "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." Let me state this simply in summary form and then we'll unpack it just a little bit. God gave you the Holy Spirit and one aspect of that great incalculable gift is that he's telling you, "I've given you the Spirit now but understand this, there is more to come. I have more to give you than simply your present Christian experience." The Spirit is the indication that God is going to give us more than he already has.

Now, you should be saying, "Wait! Time out! He's already given us so much and you're saying there's more to come?" That's exactly what we're saying. The Holy Spirit in your life is a guarantee from God that he will give you still more in the future, things that none of us here in this life right now have yet begun to enter into. The Holy Spirit then places us in a realm of certain anticipation that greater blessings are yet to come to us. This word "pledge" is a language sort of like a down payment in the sense that when you purchase a car or you purchase a piece of land, you put down a down payment which is a part that guarantees that you're going to give the rest of it. Now, don't get caught up in the fact that sometimes here on earth people default on their promises. That's not the point. God doesn't default on his promises. When we make a down payment, we're saying, "Here's a part and the greater whole is still to come." It's an indication of promise and it's a promise that says what's to come will be a greater, further extension of what you have already received. So you put 20% down on a house and the other 80% comes at closing. You get a portion of that money and then you get the fullness of it later.

Well, that's the kind of language that's being described here about the Holy Spirit. God, when he sealed you with the Spirit, when he put the Spirit in you to dwell in you, he was, as it were, making a down payment on your soul. Now, it's going to be real easy for you to get sideways on this if you don't keep the metaphor of Scripture limited to where it was. Christ has already paid the full price for our salvation. We belong to God. We're talking about a different aspect here of God's work and we're simply saying that the Spirit is given as a part of a greater whole. The present experience of love, joy, peace, the praise that we experience now in our earthly Christian life is simply a small foretaste. It's a tiny little appetizer of the fact that there are much greater things still ahead for us as believers. There is more to come.

Look at Ephesians 4:30 where Paul says, "Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed," okay, I've seen this before. Sealed for what? "Sealed for the day of redemption." Sealed for that future day still to come when God brings us into his

presence, glorifies us, perfects us and we are with him for the remainder of all of eternity. With sin banished. With Satan destroyed in the lake of fire. With no more temptation. With no more sorrow. But simply enraptured with the greatness of the glory of the presence of the Shekinah glory of God on full splendid display. And you and I there, belonging there, owned by God, redeemed for that great multi-faceted experience of glory throughout all of eternity. The Spirit of God in your life now is God's promise, it's God's guarantee that he will give you the rest of it also. There is no way that a true Christian could lose their salvation in light of this language. There is no way. God makes the initial payment in the person of the Holy Spirit and says, "This is the guarantee that I will follow through." For a true Christian to lose his salvation would be to say that God broke his promise, God broke his guarantee. Not going to happen. Let's not impugn the grace and character and integrity of God with such foolishness.

God will deliver the fullness of what he has promised. The Spirit in your life now is the pledge that he will give you the rest. What does that look like? Turn to John 14. We could have gone to a number of different places. Beloved, I really believe that the more that we study these things and the more that we understand them, the more this is what's precious in our lives. This is what really becomes special to us and as the hymn writer said, "The things of earth grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace." This is just too magnificent to go back to the corn husks and chew on the corn husks of the world over. John 14, Jesus says in verse 2, "In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you," our gracious, sweet, loving Lord says, "I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also." The Holy Spirit in your life is an indication that you're a personal recipient of this promise. Christ says, "I will come again. I will receive you to myself and I have the intention of taking you so that you can be where I am and be with me forever."

In other words, God plans to give us much more than we presently have here on earth as a Christian. It's so great and noble and wonderful and joyful to be a Christian right now. We enjoy so many blessings, don't we? In Christ we share them together corporately. We know them in our own hearts and somehow God is going to take that spiritual gift and expand it to us in greater ways than we can possibly ask or think or imagine. You know, when you're walking with Christ and you love Christ in this world, you're just caught up in him and you love him so much. "O Lord, you saved my soul at the cost of your own blood! I love you for that! I worship you for that!" That fills your heart until it bursts, doesn't it? Well, understand that that's a microcosm of a much greater reality that we're going to have in the future still to come. The privilege of being a Christian now will be swallowed up in the greater privilege of being a Christian around the throne of Christ and seeing him face-to-face.

To trace it all back to the argument that Paul is making, the presence of the Holy Spirit described in the Scripture, manifested in your daily life, is the guarantee that God will certainly give you the rest as well. Beloved, it grieves me when people buck against the great truths that are found in Ephesians 1 because they're cutting off their own spiritual lifeline. They're forfeiting the riches of the blessings that we're talking about here.

Realize that God chose you before the foundation of the world. That Christ redeemed you and God has adopted you into his family simply because it pleased him to do so. Nothing of you. Nothing of your merit. You would not have willed this. You could not have willed this. You did not will this. He saved you. He's working in you. One day he will bring you into his eternal presence where you will know the fullness of joy forever. This just sweeps through all of eternity. And the gift of the Holy Spirit in your life, the presence of the indwelling Spirit in your life who has made it possible for you to understand God's word and to love Christ and for your life to change, listen, here's the point of this whole passage: the gift of the Holy Spirit in your life demonstrates the utter, complete, pure sincerity of God and his full intention to bring the rest of it to pass. You have been sealed, not just for today, you've been sealed for the day of redemption. God says, "I own you. I have intentions to bless you far more than you know right now and the Spirit is your indication, it's what I give you so that you can know for certain that the promises that lie ahead will become yours in experience in just a little while longer."

God has sealed us for the future day when he completes it. The past promise of Christ, present property of God, the future presence of God, all belong to us as a gift from a holy God who is not only holy but who is loving and merciful and gracious and has been kind to you by degrees that cannot be measured. It's overwhelmingly wonderful, isn't it? What a great God! What a great Savior! What a great Spirit! What a great salvation! All of his grace and it's all of his grace poured out on unworthy men and women like you and me.

What can we say to these things? Look at the end of verse 14. As a holy hush comes upon our soul realizing how much we have received and yet there is so much more yet to come, what's the effect? It's "to the praise of His glory." What do we say to these things? We praise God. We honor him. We thank him. Now and forever. O God. You know, sometimes you feel like the trials of life are going to make your knees buckle. Forget that at least for right now in this room, forget that. What I want you to be having impressed upon your heart is this: our knees are buckling now under the weight of divine blessing. He has been so good to us. Past promises. Present possession. Future presence. "O God! I stagger under the massive weight of your goodness upon my life. Lord, to the praise of your glory. To the wonder and the glory and the magnification of your holy name, O God, to you be the glory. To you be the thanks for all that you have done. I gladly turn my throat, my tongue and my lips into an instrument of your praise."

We have received the gift. God receives the glory and him alone.

Let's bow together in prayer.

I have to ask you whether these things belong to you or not? The greatness of this salvation, Christ freely offers to you as a gift. If you're not a Christian, won't you please turn from your sin and receive him as your Lord and Savior? My precious friend, don't miss this. Don't turn away this gift. Christ said, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." He will keep that promise to you too. Come to Christ, my friend, because God will make you his own even today. He'll forgive all your sins,

bring you into his family, seal you with the Spirit and set you on a course that leads to eternal blessing in heaven forever. Why would you miss that? Why would you turn away from such a loving gracious offer from a loving gracious God?

Father, for the rest of us, you have chosen us. You have adopted us into your family. You've redeemed us at the price of the blood of Christ. You have marked us out. You own us forever. We thank you and acknowledge that these things come not from ourselves but from you and therefore are to the praise of your glory. In Christ's name we so gladly pray. Amen.

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