

# “Sealed and Assured: Ephesians 1:13-14”

Ninth Sunday after Trinity – August 9, 2020

Sermon Notes – Tom Mount – Holy Trinity Chico

## Brief review of the overall passage

- This extended blessing or *berekah* in Eph 1:3-14 makes it clear that our salvation is a shared Trinitarian work. Our salvation comes **from the Father, in the Son and through (or by) the Spirit**.
  - **From the Father.** Verses 3-6. The Father initiates our salvation through his choosing and adopting of us in Christ in eternity past, before creation.
  - **In the Son.** Verses 7-12. The Son executes or accomplishes our salvation through his life, death and resurrection which made possible God’s redeeming and forgiving of us.
  - **Through the Spirit.** Verses 13-14. The Spirit applies our salvation to us (actualizes it for us) through his work of sealing and assuring: sealing us until the redemption of our bodies (whole selves), and guaranteeing our final inheritance in the life to come with the result that our hearts are assured that we will in the end be saved.
- These two actions by the Spirit: sealing us in Christ, and serving as the first installment of God’s entire payment for our complete salvation and spiritual inheritance; these two things are the focus of vv. 13-14.

## Exposition of 1:13-14

**“In Him you also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom having also believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the initial installment of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.”**

- **“In Him”** (“in whom”) – a common thread, salvation is in the person of Christ
- **“in Him you also”**; **“you”** - Notice the switch from the first person plural “we” in v.11-12 to the second person plural “you/you all” in v.13.

**“having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”**

- **“having heard”** – *akouw*; often means more than hearing (perceiving with ones ears); it can mean listening. That is clearly the intent here.
- **“the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation”**. These are arranged appositionally: side-by-side, referring to the same message about Christ. Paul situates the message about Jesus within the largest possible philosophical or worldview context: it is the word of truth, and he also frames it in richly relational terms: it is the good news of how the Lord has delivered you from sin and dissolution.

**“Having believed, you also were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise”**

- Note the process: They listened/believed/were sealed.

**“Holy Spirit of promise”**

- **Acts 1:4-5**: **“On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. <sup>5</sup>For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’.”**
- When, precisely, did the Father promise the Holy Spirit?

**Ezek 36:26-27**

**“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”**

- Other well known OT prophecies promising the Spirit include Joel 2:28, Isa 32:15, Ezk 39:29, and Zech 12:10.
- God also promised the Holy Spirit through Jesus in places like John 14:26; John 15:26 and John 16:7-17.

#### **Jn 14:16-17**

**<sup>6</sup>“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper to be with you forever— <sup>17</sup>the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”**

- In this text, two things really stand out. First, note the duration of the Spirit’s companionship forever. Second, note the connection: He is now with you, but after Pentecost, he will be in believers.

#### **“Sealed”**

- *Sphragizo*, from *sphragis*, which means a seal created in wax, clay and even flesh.

- In biblical times (middle bronze age through the Roman empire: ANE and Greco-Roman world), seals were used for three main purposes, each of which helps us understand Paul’s use of the term in the present context.

1. **Security.** (Cargo, scrolls, tombs). The Holy Spirit seals us in Christ to prevent our falling out of Christ or from being tampered with by Satan (John 10:27-29)
2. **Authenticity.** (Important documents). The Holy Spirit in us vouches for our authenticity as God’s genuine children.
3. **Ownership.** (Cattle, slaves). The Holy Spirit stamps us with God’s imprint to make it clear we belong to Him.

- Bottom line: we are protected, safe, secure, certified as 100% authentically God’s dearly loved, legally adopted, and genetically altered children.

- It's important we not confuse the Spirit's ministry of sealing with His many other ministries.

1. **Baptism.** Immediately when a sinner puts his/her relational trust in Jesus, the Holy Spirit baptizes that person into Jesus and into Jesus' spiritual body. It is a one-time event that occurs at our conversion. Every believer in Jesus is baptized by the Spirit into Jesus. Gal 3:27: "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." 1 Cor 12:13: "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." All of the "in Christ" language that we have seen in Eph and find throughout the NT is emphasizing the result of this initial baptizing/immersing ministry of the Spirit.

2. **Indwelling.** Not only does the Holy Spirit place us into Jesus; He places Himself over us through the action of sealing and places himself in us through the action of indwelling.

- Baptizing, indwelling, sealing all occur simultaneously at conversion. They are once and for all events. Every believer is baptized, indwelt and sealed by the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:9 is a good guide: "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ."

- There are two others ministries of the Spirit that are closely related but are not one-time events. They take place on multiple occasions subsequent to our initial conversion.

3. **Filling.** Being filled by the Spirit or with the Spirit is a daily habit of allowing the Spirit to control us, bear his virtuous fruit in us, lead us and use us for his purposes. We must choose continually to let God's nature, not our flesh, guide our attitudes and behavior (Eph 5:18).

4. **Gifting/Empowering.** Paul makes it very clear in 1 Cor 12 and 14 that, although we are all given spiritual gifts, apparently concurrent with our conversion, we can acquire more gifts throughout the Christian life as the needs arise and we ask the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 14:1).

- To summarize Paul's reference to this first metaphor of sealing: the Holy Spirit seals each believer when he/she trusts Jesus initially. At the same time, the believer is placed or baptized into Christ and indwelt by the Spirit. It is then his/her responsibility to walk in the Spirit by being continually filled with the Spirit

and asking for the Spirit's various gifts to do ministry that benefits the body of Christ and brings honor to Jesus.

### **“who is the initial installment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession”**

- This is a complex sentence in the Greek, but its meaning is pretty straightforward.
- **“initial installment”** (“deposit” in some translations) is *arrabon*, a Semitic loan word, which refers to a large chunk of cash that a buyer would give to a merchant vouchsafing future payments, to be forfeited in the event the purchase is not completed.

#### **2 Cor 1:21-22**

**“Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, <sup>22</sup> set his seal on us, and given us his Spirit in our hearts as the first installment of our final purchase.”**

- Here's the idea: The Father bought us back, redeeming us from sin and death, with the blood of his own Son. We belong to him. But our bodies are not yet redeemed: we still have the same bodies we had before we met Christ, bodies that are subject to weakness, disease and the effects of sin. We have the same neural structures in our brains that have been encoded with sin, habituated to distorted patterns of behavior. And we will continue to live in these bodies until we die or until Christ comes again and we are given a new, resurrected and glorious body like his. Sometime after his second coming, the whole creation, which now groans in disorder, will be redeemed and made new. So, the Father gives us now His Holy Spirit to live in us as the first installment and guarantee that he will make good on his promise to one day redeem all of us, body included, and the whole of creation. Make sense?

### **“to the praise of His glory”**

- This is the third refrain in the passage (cf: v.6, v.12). Each one coordinates with the praise of the work of one member of the holy Trinity.

## Brief excursus on “Truth”

- Every age has its defining characteristic. In the German language, this is known as the *Zeitgeist* or “spirit of the age.” The *Zeitgeist* of our particular moment in history is that of epistemological agnosticism. Some prefer post-modernism; others post-constructivism. The defining characteristic is an acute skepticism as regards any kind of overarching truth or metanarrative.
- The notion of any kind of absolute truth is rejected outright as a non-starter. There may be your truth and my truth, but there is no “the Truth”. This is what has been taught in our universities beginning in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and is now the dominant paradigm in our primary and secondary schools, government, the media, entertainment, the arts, and other aspects of popular culture.
- An example is the issue of personal identity. One would think that knowing who and what one is pretty straightforward. For millenia, one’s identity was understood to be a composite of one’s tribal, clan and family affiliations and one’s biological sex, character and other individual factors. The result is a relatively stable identity that persists through one’s lifetime, grounded in one’s biology and social connections. Not only do you know who you are. Society at large is comprised of individuals who similarly have stable and empirically verifiable identities.
- Enter identity politics through door of post-modern constructivism. Because all truth is relative, there are no fixed categories grounded in science and agreed upon by all to help us define ourselves and others. Each of us can define ourselves however we like, as often as we like, and no one cries “foul!”
- A few contemporary examples.
- Do we think for a moment that it is a loving thing to allow a person with a skewed view of reality to persist in believing themselves to be something they clearly are not? Is this kind? Is this ultimately in their best interests? Or would their interests be better served by telling them the truth, even if the truth hurts their feelings for a time, so they can adjust themselves accordingly?
- In our day, we have been bullied into thinking we have no right to speak up when we observe absurdities. We’re afraid of being called narrow minded,

obscurantist, right wing extremists. We Christians bear an additional burden. We don't want to be known as intolerant fundamentalists. Meanwhile, our society continues its long slow slide into moral oblivion. Well, it's time to speak up. And not just about the truth of the Gospel, though that always must be primary. But about every issue that affects people's lives, every lie that enslaves their minds. We serve the Lord of Truth. If we don't speak up in love against the nonsense that is ruining their lives, who will?

· So that's my challenge for us. God is the truth, and we know that the truth sets people free. Speak the truth. Speak it in love with humility and compassion. But speak the truth and be lights in the darkness.