

The Spirit's Promise
Ephesians 1:12-14 (09/17/17)
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One of the marvels of the 21st century is the lightning speed at which Amazon ships your purchase. Once you hit the buy button, a really fast system takes over retrieving your product from a shelf, putting your address on the box, getting it into the delivery system of airplanes and UPS trucks to your town, and almost magically dropping it off at your door step in two or three days. In some cities it's even 2-3 hours. My parents had no idea about such a system. You can shop in your PJs. Of course, you have to have the right address on the order. If your address isn't accurate, you won't get that book or cool burger flipper for a while. But they know how to get it to you, fast. In the future, drones may be bringing it to your house even more quickly.

What does this have to do with Ephesians? Ephesians 1:3-14 says God has blessed you with every spiritual blessing. It started in eternity past when the Father planned for your salvation. He chose you and predestined you to be his adopted son or daughter in His Son, Jesus. Then in time, 2000 years ago, God the Son came to earth to purchase for the Father all those He had chosen. He was virgin born, lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death on the cross to pay for the sins of all those whom God chose, providing full, free forgiveness.

But how does the blessing of redemption and forgiveness come to your address, to your heart? That's the role of the Spirit of God. He knows whom the Father chose, for whom the Son died, and now the Spirit applies all these blessings to our lives personally. He knows exactly where we live and delivers the salvation package on God's schedule into your heart. That's what Paul is talking about this morning as we end this long twelve-verse sentence from 1:3-14.

Ephesians 1:12-14 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 13 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, 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's make two quick but important observations from this passage first. Did you notice the trinity in verses 3-14? The Father planned, the Son purchased, and the Spirit applies the great work of salvation. The trinity is foundational to Christianity. To deny the Trinity is heretical and cultic. Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, United Pentecostals and others deny the Trinity, and yet the Scripture clearly teaches it.

Second, this passage clearly teaches that the Spirit came as promised (verse 13). God promised the Spirit in the Old Testament as part of the New Covenant. Jesus promised the disciples in the upper room that He would send a Helper who would convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment to come. He told the disciples to wait for the Spirit before they began to preach the gospel. And at Pentecost in Acts 2, sure enough, He sent the Spirit to empower the church. The entire gospel enterprise depends on the Spirit. He is invisible, unfelt, and behind the scenes, applying the plan of the Father and the purchase of the Son to those God chose.

Everything God does in the life of a believer He does by the power of the Holy Spirit. If there were no Spirit, there would be no Christians, no church, no effective evangelism, no growing in Christ, no counseling, and no true discipleship. Even the gospel without the Spirit will not save anyone. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit that makes alive; the flesh profits nothing." We pray that the Spirit would open hearts and would humble us and make us learners. So your spiritual life is 100% dependent on the work of the Spirit in your life! And that's what Paul is going to explain to us this morning. We're looking at six works of the Spirit in your life that bring you to Christ. This is a crash course on pneumatology (the study of the Holy Spirit).

CALLING -- First, you have to hear a message, but the Spirit opens your ears to hear. *“After listening to the message.”* The church’s responsibility to this world is to proclaim the gospel, individually or corporately. As the message goes out, it is the Spirit who enables some to actually hear with their hearts. When Paul took the gospel to those ladies at prayer by the river in Philippi, God opened Lydia’s heart to receive what Paul was telling them. Acts 16:14, “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.” This is the Spirit’s effectual calling.

The message we must hear isn’t just any message. It’s not a message about five steps to a happier you, or how to face the giants in your world, or how to pump up your esteem, or stories about how to be a nicer, better you. No, this is a specific message that the Spirit empowers. It’s a message of truth. It’s not a man or woman’s opinion. It’s not a message about feelings or experiences, like how God saved me from the tornado or helped me through my surgery, as wonderful as those kinds of messages are. It’s not a message of religious requirements or sacraments, like baptism or going to a priest to confess your sins. Luther did that over and over, sometimes for six hours, and never found any peace with God.

The message that must be heard is the message of God’s truth. You have to hear what God says about how to be saved. There’s an irreducible minimum of truth that anyone has to hear to be saved. The Spirit doesn’t empower false teaching. What is this truth? It’s a message of good news, a promise about how God saves His people. It’s the book of Romans! Paul said in Romans 1:16, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel, it’s the power of God (there’s the Spirit) to save everyone who believes.” Then he goes on to explain the gospel, talking about sin in Romans 1-3 and how Christ saves us in Romans 4-5. **READ ROMANS.**

What is that irreducible minimum? You have to know there’s a God to whom you will give an account. That’s what Paul told the philosophers on Mars Hill, “You’ve got an altar to the unknown god out there. I’m here to tell you who He is!” You have to know you have offended this God; you have sinned and fallen short of His perfection. You are guilty and need someone to take away your guilt. You have to know that Jesus Christ was the Son of God who came as a man to live a perfect life in your place and then die on a Roman cross, suffering God’s wrath in your place. And you have to know that after they buried Him, He arose from the dead. He is alive. Romans 10:13, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus is your Lord, and believe God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved!”

That’s the message you must hear and the message the Spirit uses to call you to Himself. It may be uncomfortable. You may feel miserable for a time (I did!), but the Spirit has your address and He won’t let you go. You’ll want to hear more. You become concerned in your heart – maybe no one else knows, but you are in a soul struggle with your God. This is the effectual call of the Spirit. You may hear this good news in different ways – through a sermon, or a family member concerned about your soul, or someone gives you a book or sits down and explains all this to you. It may be an unusual verse. God used Ecclesiastes 11:3 to call R. C. Sproul to himself. “If the tree falls to the south or to the north, when the tree falls, there it lies!” R. C. was convicted that he was that rotten, fallen tree and God used that verse to send him to the gospel. But you have to hear the message of truth, and if you hear it in your inner being, that’s the Spirit’s call.

REGENERATION – Second, you have to believe this message, but you won’t believe it without the Spirit giving you a new heart to believe it. *“Having also believed.”* There you are, you’ve listened, and someone has urged you to put your faith in Christ. Then God opens your heart like He did for Lydia and you submit to Christ as your Lord and Savior. Or like that Philippian jailor you ask, “What must I do to be saved?” The fact is that Christ has done everything for you. Your responsibility is to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!” (Acts 16:31).

When you turn from your sins, going your own way, and trust in Jesus, you can be assured that the Spirit of God has regenerated you, given you a new heart and a new capacity. Jesus told Nicodemus, “Unless you are born of the Spirit, you will never enter the Kingdom of God!” So the question is, have you believed in Jesus? John 1:12-13 promises, “As many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the children of God, to those who believe on His name, who are born, not of human will, or

human effort, but are born of God.” This is the second great work of the Spirit and no one ever comes to Christ and receives eternal life without this amazing inner work of the Spirit!

When you hear and believe – which may happen the first time you hear the message of Christ or it may happen after hearing it for years -- at that moment a lot happens in your spirit that you are not aware of and really don't feel. You don't feel the Spirit, but you do experience the effects of the Spirit in your life. Jonathan Edwards uses the word “sense.” You “sense” something completely new and different is going on. You suddenly have this interest in hearing the Bible. You have a new sense of Christ's excellency. You cry out to Him with your heart to save you. That's the effect of the gospel message empowered by the Holy Spirit bringing new life into your heart. You are looking at life through new eyes. Suddenly you want to come to church. You sense a growing bond with other people who believe in Christ.

There are two other works of the Spirit I want to bring to your attention that are not in our text.

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST –The moment you believe in Christ, the Spirit baptizes you into Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Romans 6:3 says we were all baptized into Christ Jesus! This isn't water baptism. Your infant or adult baptism did nothing to put you into Christ. This baptism is the Spirit's work. It places you into a new position and identity. You used to be in Adam; now you are in Christ and the one who places you into Christ is the Spirit of God. Galatians 3:27 says the same thing – your ethnicity and gender is not the important thing. Whether you are Jew or Greek, male or female, you are now clothed with Christ by your baptism into Christ. You are all one in Christ through this baptism by the Spirit.

INDWELLING –The Spirit takes residence in your life the moment you trusted Christ.

The difference between you and lost people is that you have the Spirit living in you; they don't. That's why you're convicted of sins and they aren't. And that's why you should not marry an unbeliever; you would be unequally yoked. However, if you are married to an unbeliever, love and honor and serve him or her.

Romans 8:9 says if you don't have the Spirit living in your life, you do not belong to Christ. Romans 8:13 says if you have the Spirit indwelling you, He will lead you, motivate you, and empower you to put off sinful habits and put on godly ones. Your growing in Christ is progressive sanctification and is the work of the Spirit as you walk in the Spirit. The Spirit shines His light of conviction into your life and exposes areas you need to change, changes as simple as smoking or telling little lies to immorality, pride, greed, and much, much more. The Spirit in you wars against your human, self-gratifying desires and enables you to please God. Everything about your spiritual life is the fruit and working of the Spirit! Christ said, “Without Me you can do nothing!”

SEALING – The Spirit is God's seal securing you in Christ. “*You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.*” (vs. 13b) This does not happen later in your Christian life when you speak in tongues or have some kind of ecstatic experience. You are sealed in Him immediately when you are born again. Look at verse 13 carefully, “Having heard, having believed, you were sealed!” The sealing happens the moment you believed.

What is a seal? Kings used seals to authenticate a message. Pilate gave the soldiers authority to make the stone on Jesus' grave secure with a seal. The pope issued a “bull of excommunication” against Martin Luther. The Latin word “bulla” means seal; the pope put his seal on the document. Notary Public's use their seal to authenticate official papers.

When you trust Christ, the Spirit is God's authentic seal on your life. You are sealed in Christ and no one can remove this seal. You are secure in Christ: loss, escape, or failure is impossible. This seal means you are protected until delivery. The seal indicates ownership; you are God's property. Paul said the same thing in 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.”

PLEDGE OR DOWN PAYMENT – God gave the Spirit as a pledge of our future inheritance. “*The Holy Spirit of promise Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.*” Pledge, (Greek – *arrabon*), means

earnest money or, in Modern Greek, engagement ring. The Spirit in your life is God's down payment or engagement ring that you're going to eventually get the whole thing. God doesn't put His money down on you and then change His mind and dump you. That's why Fanny Crosby wrote, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. O what a foretaste of glory divine. Heir of salvation, purchased of God, born of His Spirit, washed in His blood!"

You've got a guaranteed future inheritance. The Spirit in your life now is God's assurance and God's guarantee that you'll receive the whole thing when He finally redeems you, "with a view to the redemption of God's own possession." But wait! I thought we were already redeemed. Are we or aren't we? Yes! Turn to Romans 8:22-23 and see that your spirit is redeemed immediately when you are saved, but your body must wait until a future time.

*Romans 8:22-23, For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, **waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.***

You've got the first fruits of the Spirit, which is the same as the down payment of the Spirit. But we're not in heaven yet. We're groaning, just like creation is groaning. Your body hurts. You're back aches, you've got cancer, your joints are sore, your bones break, your heart skips beats, your prostate is causing trouble, and your vision is getting worse. The fact is, unless Jesus comes back, we're all going to die. Why? Your body isn't redeemed yet. Your spirit is redeemed and adopted, but your body is waiting, eagerly waiting, for that future consummation when Christ returns and redeems and adopts your body! Then death is defeated and you'll have no more aches and pains.

That is final redemption and the Spirit makes sure you'll get there! No one will be left behind. None slip through the cracks. All the Father chose and the Son redeemed will finally get those new, redeemed bodies.

Philippians 3:20-21, For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; 21 who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

The ministry of the Spirit is to bring God's salvation package right to your door, to your heart, and then guarantee safe delivery right into your future inheritance in Christ's presence!

So how do you know if you have been sealed by the Spirit and have the down payment? Listen carefully. You know you've truly been born of God if you have a new awareness of sin, that your sin is against God, and that your only hope is in Christ alone. You'll be plagued by small sins you never even thought about before. Second, you'll have a true love for God and Christ and want to know more about Him and want to please Him in your life. If you don't have a heart and desire for Christ, you need to check yourself. The last thing we want to do is give a false hope to anyone. Third, you'll have a new hunger for the Bible. As a newborn baby, you'll desire the sincere milk of the Word. Fourth, you'll have a new love and appreciation for God's people. As one well-known pastor said, believers even love those who hate them.

"TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY!"

Notice how Paul ends this great passage – "to the praise of His glory!" When Amazon gets that package to you, whose name is in large letters on that box? Not yours. Your salvation package is not first about you. It's about the praise of His glory! One practical application from this passage is to learn to give God all the glory and praise for your salvation.

- Praise Him because He poured out every spiritual blessing from heaven into your life.
- Praise Him because He chose you to be in His Son.
- Praise Him because He predestined to adopt you as His son or daughter.
- Praise Him because He redeemed and forgave you through Jesus' blood.
- Praise Him because He made you an heir with Christ.

- Praise Him because He secured your eternity by sealing you with His Spirit.
- Praise Him because He gave you the down payment of the Spirit, assuring your future final redemption.