

Ephesians 1 Work of the Spirit

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Overview

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.

What has the Spirit done for us?

Two roles of the Spirit are set forth here. They correspond to the two aspects of “inheritance” that we discussed before: the inheritance that we *receive from* God, and the inheritance that we *are for* God. Note both of these in v.14:

- “our inheritance,” that which we receive;
- “the purchased possession,” our place as God’s chosen and redeemed property.

Our Inheritance

With respect to *our inheritance*, the HS is “the earnest,” the down-payment. One day we shall receive our “inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,” 1 Pet 1:5. Until then, we have God’s personal presence in our lives as the assurance that the inheritance is real and there.

God’s Inheritance

With respect to *God’s inheritance*, we are sealed in Christ until the day of redemption.

“**day of redemption**”.—Cf. Rom. 8:18-25. Now we occupy fallen bodies in a fallen world; one day the promise of our redemption will be fulfilled, and we will be free from the very presence of sin. NB: salvation in the Bible is not just spiritual, but embodies physical restoration as well.

“**In him**”.—Don’t miss “in him,” the condition in which we are sealed. Throughout this introductory prayer of thanksgiving, our position in him is in the foreground; in him we are elect, redeemed, and sealed. What matters is our identification with the LJC.

“**Sealed**”.—Biblical examples:

- The attempt of the Roman authorities to seal Christ in his tomb, claiming authority over him and preventing anyone from taking the body; this seal was powerless.
- Cf. the 144K in Rev 7:3, cf. 14:1, marked with the Father’s name to show that they belong to him and to protect them from harm; this seal is effective.

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- Cf. 2 Tim. 2:19.
- The point here is that we belong to the Lord and he will guarantee our security through the trials of this age, until the time of redemption comes.

“HS of Promise”.—A semitism for “the promised HS.” Reminds the readers that this Spirit had been promised down through the ages as the evidence of the new covenant:

- Joel 2:28 “I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh;”
- Ezek 36:27, “ I will put my spirit within you”
- Isa 59:21, “As for me, this [is] my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that [is] upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.”
- Ezek 37:13,14, “ And ye shall know that I [am] the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, 14 And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live.”
- Mark 1:8, “he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.”
- Acts 1:1-8, the Lord’s final promise.

The logic goes something like this: God had promised the HS as evidence of the kingdom age. Now part of that promise has been fulfilled—the giving of the Spirit—and Paul encourages his readers to take that as evidence that the other part will be fulfilled as well, in God’s time.

When were we sealed?

After two things happened. Much in this chapter so far has emphasized God’s sovereign plan. This paragraph shows that this plan includes certain actions on our part.

We heard.—This presumes that someone gave it to us. Satan would discredit the Word of God, to make us ashamed to proclaim it and discourage others from listening to it. To resist him, note the two titles that Paul gives to it here: it is

- “The word of truth.” The message is not deceptive, but true. It conforms with reality, because it is the word of God, who is the author of reality. Cf. John 17:17, “thy word is [not just true, but] truth,” the very standard by which every question of veracity is to be decided.
- “The gospel of your salvation.” The message is not weak, but effective. It can deliver men from sin and make them citizens of heaven.

This message came to us. We heard it. This is God’s ordained means for accomplishing salvation:

- “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God,” Rom 10:17
- “born again ... by the Word of God,” 1 Pet 1:23

We must carry the message if others are to have any hope.

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We believed.—Unbelievers must respond in faith to this message. We make the offer to them, and they either accept or reject. There are deep mysteries in why some accept and others reject, but the fact is that unbelievers face a choice, and must make it.

Application.—So far from rendering us careless in the work of the Lord, the knowledge of his sovereign plan should encourage us that we are part of the winning team, and should motivate us to labor more diligently to advance his objectives.

Why has the Spirit sealed us?

“Unto the praise of his glory.” The work of the Spirit has the same motive as the work of the Father and the work of the Son; to show forth the glory of our great God. An unfinished project detracts from the reputation of the one who began it; cf.

- Moses’ intercession for the people in Num 14:13-16
- Luke 14:28-32

God will not leave his work unfinished. Having chosen us (vv.4-6) and redeemed us (7-12), he will one day deliver us complete. Thus this entire prayer is an amplification of Phil 1:6, “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Application.—Our response to these things can only be the same as Paul’s in v.3, “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all Spiritual blessings in heavenly places.”