



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 1:11-14

"Sealed with the Spirit"

Ephesians

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Our text this morning is in the book of Ephesians. We're continuing our study in chapter 1, and this morning we will look at verses 11 through 14. This is the conclusion of this serious doxology that Paul began with verse 3 and concludes with verse 14, a doxology in which he gives praise to each Person in the God head for His part in our redemption. And he has praised God the Father for His eternal election of His people. He has then praised the Son for the work of redemption in saving them or bringing them to Himself. And then in this last section of the doxology, he will praise the Spirit as the seal upon our hearts, the guarantee that we will be saved. And we begin with verse 11 where Paul writes:

"Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. 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, 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, you'll notice in the end of verse 14, he refers to God's people as "God's own possession." If you go back up to verse 11 – I just want to make a brief comment here which we'll expand upon in the lesson itself. It begins, "Also we have obtained an inheritance."

That a possible translation of it, but I think a better translation – and by the way, I'm reading from the New American Standard Bible.

So if you're reading from that version, you'll notice in the margin there is the possible rendering, "were made a heritage." So we could translate this, "We also were made a heritage," or "were made an inheritance." I think that is probably the better way to take this. We'll develop it to some extent in our lesson. But he speaks of us as God's inheritance, and at the end as "God's own possession."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study together. Let's bow now in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privilege you have given to us to come together this morning and open the Scriptures and study your Word. The Word of truth, the message of truth, the gospel, as Paul describes it in our text. And we do thank you so much for it. We thank you for the good news and for all of the results of the good news of the sacrifice of your Son on behalf of sinners, in the place of sinners, for the truth that you have given us, the unfolding of that great blessing of grace. And, Father, as we study your Word this morning, as we study the Word of truth and we consider your grace, your sovereign grace, may we be impressed by it.

May it have its proper effect upon us. May we be moved to rejoice in what we have in Christ because of your eternal sovereign grace, and your constant care and your absolute possession of us. And, Father, open our eyes to see these great truths, guide us through them. And may they have their proper effect upon us which should move us to praise and joy and an earnest desire to serve you and represent well your Son in the midst of this world. And that's what we are, Father. We are your ambassadors.

We have a mission, and that mission, to put it simply, involves representing your Son and being a reflection of His glory. May that be seen in our lives, and may you use our time together of study and of singing your hymns to that end. We look to you for these things,

Father. We cannot change ourselves in and of ourselves. It is your work that you do within us through the work of the Spirit, through the teaching of the Word.

We pray that these would come together to change us and make us more like Him. We are a needy people, spiritually, though, as Paul tells us, "we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." We pray that those would become increasingly our experience. They are our possession, but may we enter into the experience of them increasingly. We pray for your blessing to that end, and we pray that you would bless us in other areas in which we have needs, in the material and the physical aspects of this life.

We pray for the men in their employment and the ladies who are working. We pray that you would bless with energy and diligence, and that you would reward the effort that is put into the labors that we must engage in to support ourselves and to live in this world. Thank you for the opportunities to work. And we pray that you would bless the men who would provide for their families and whose lives are taxed so heavily with the demands on their time. Bless them with energy and bless them with wisdom and the use of time that they might spend it well with their families also.

I pray for the sick, that you would give healing, pray for those who are grieving due to loss of family members. Give them encouragement. Bless us, Father, in the many ways in which we look to you for blessing. And bless us this evening as we come back to worship our Lord at the Lord's table as we reflect upon His death on our behalf. We find ourselves so often, Father, growing spiritually cold and indifferent.

The great remedy to that is to come to the cross, is to reflect upon what your Son has done for us. And so we pray, Father, that as we come again this evening to the Lord's table and we think about the gift of life that we have in Him and the great sacrifice that was made on our behalf, the infinite love that sent Him into this world, the infinite love that moved Him to offer Himself up on that cross. May

we be moved by that to love and adore Him, and be moved to live lives of great service. Bless our time this evening. And bless our time throughout the week that we would be good servants of yours.

And we pray for our time now. Bless our hymn as we sing it. May it be good preparation for our time of study. And may we enter into the understanding of Paul's teaching this morning, We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] One of the great assurances that we have as Christians is that God keeps His Word. He's not faithless like men. We sometimes make promises and make them with the best intentions, and for various reasons fail to keep them. It may be that circumstances are too great for us and we can't overcome the circumstances, or perhaps, due to weakness, we simply fail to honor our word. But God never does that.

God makes great promises, makes the greatest that can be made, and He always keeps them. We may fail Him, but He never fails us. In 2 Timothy, chapter 2 in verse 13, the apostle writes, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself." What that means is the believer in Jesus Christ is secure in Christ. The New Testament is filled with such assurances.

We have, for example, John chapter 10, where the Lord makes that statement, "No one shall snatch them out of My hand." And Ephesians 1, verses 11 through 14, is another such passage. It's the conclusion of Paul's doxology in which he praises each member of the Godhead for His part in the plan of salvation. That plan, Paul has said in verse 10, is to bring all things together in Christ, to restore everything in Christ. And in these last verses, Paul describes the place in that restoration of all things that we will occupy and the blessings that are ours in that position that we occupy, and the security that we have in it.

The place that we occupy is one of amazing privilege. We are God's inheritance. God has chose us for Himself, both Jew and gentile alike, to be His possession, to be His inheritance. That's how Paul

begins this final section of praise in verse 11. Now, that's not the idea expressed by the New American Standard Bible, as I pointed out in reading, which begins, "We have obtained an inheritance."

In other words, we *have* an inheritance, not we *are* an inheritance. Now, that's true of course. We have an inheritance in Christ, we have a glorious and an eternal inheritance. That's what Paul teaches in verse 14. But here in verse 11, it's probably better to say, "We have been chosen as God's inheritance."

Paul expresses this thought with a word that is found only here in the New Testament, and a word that means to cast lots or to assign by lot. And it has the idea of an inheritance that is obtained by casting lots, as with the inheritance that the various tribes of Israel obtained that were the areas of land that were allotted to them when they entered into Canaan. That was their inheritance. And so this can be rendered either "We were allotted a portion." That is "We were given an inheritance in Christ."

Or it can mean "We were allotted to God." We were picked to be His inheritance or we were made His heritage. And I think that that second meaning is the better meaning because it has good support from the Old Testament. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel is called God's possession. Israel is called God's inheritance. Israel inherited Canaan, but Israel was God's inheritance.

For example, in Deuteronomy 32 in verse 9, Moses says, "For the Lord's portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His inheritance." And by applying that here, Paul is saying that everyone who is in Christ, every believer in Jesus Christ is God's inheritance. I think he confirms that interpretation in verse 14, where Paul first speaks of our inheritance in Christ. And then he describes us as "God's own possession," as God's inheritance. Now, that's an amazing thought.

It is amazing to think that we have an inheritance, that we, as Paul says in Romans 8, "are heirs of God, fellow heirs with Christ"; that as Peter says, "We have an inheritance which is imperishable and

undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven"; that we who rebelled against God could be so blessed. But it is equally, if not more amazing that God would make us His inheritance. We are, as Paul describes us in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, "the base things of this world."

It's not a flattering description that he gives of God's people. We are the despised of this world; we are the foolish and the weak of this world, and yet we are that which God has chosen for His inheritance. Of all that God could choose in this universe, He chose the base things, the weak things, the despised things as His inheritance. It's not much of an inheritance you would think. But that's what He chose and that is what He purchased with the blood of His Son.

Now, that's the grace of God. That's the love of God that would choose such as us. And He doesn't leave us in that condition. He doesn't leave us in the condition in which He chose us. He doesn't leave us base; he doesn't leave us weak.

And His inheritance will be glorious. It will be, as Paul says throughout this doxology, to the praise of His glory. And so He is presently changing us and He will continue to change us and transform us until He completes that work and makes it perfect. In fact, He now sees us in that way. When He looks upon us, He doesn't see us as the weak and the despised.

He sees us as we will someday be, not as we presently are, as we will be when we are changed. And in 1 Corinthians 15, verses 51 through 53, Paul describes what that change will be like. He describes what we shall be when he says that "we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And then he says, we "must put on immortality." In other words, these mortal bodies with all of their frailties will be transformed into immortal bodies, bodies that are glorious.

Our whole person will be completely transformed into something that is glorious. It is a change that will be, as one of the old

commentators put it – Bishop Moule – "an inconceivable change beyond the reach of imagination." Well, that's probably about as good as we can do if we're going to describe the change that will take place and what God's inheritance in His people will be. It will be so great we can't imagine how great it is. Now, that's how great it is.

Now, that's our future as God's inheritance. It is a glorious one. But still, when you think of what we were when He chose us, ruined by the fall, two questions naturally suggest themselves: First, how did we become His people, and secondly, why did He choose us? Paul answers the question of how we were made God's inheritance here in verse 11. It was by His sovereign will. "Having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

You don't have to read many of Paul's epistles before you realize that there are two thoughts that greatly impress the apostle. The first is the absolute sovereignty of God, and the second is the complete dependence of man upon God for the blessings that we receive. We are greatly blessed. Paul has begun this whole section by reminding us of that, that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Now, God has blessed us with that.

We didn't earn that. All that we have, we have from God. We are totally dependent upon Him. We are the recipients of His grace. And Paul took every suitable occasion to make mention of these great themes, of these great sentiments that he saw in the Scripture and that he felt.

And this is a suitable occasion. As a believer in Jesus Christ, you occupy the privileged position of being His possession, of being His inheritance, because He purposed it, because He predestined it. It's not because of our efforts, it's not because of our merits; it is because of His purpose. It is according to His purpose.

Not according to our purpose; it is according to His purpose. That's the sovereign grace of God. And so that should evoke within us

great praise. Praise for His mercy, praise for His grace. But it should also produce in us a high – a great sign of relief.

Now, these doctrines of the sovereignty of God are very controversial. Not perhaps controversial among most in this audience, but, generally, they're very controversial. Now, we'll look at this in some depth in a moment. It's very clear from the Scriptures that these – this is the teaching of the Bible. This is the firm teaching of verses 3 through 14 of Ephesians 1.

But you can go to other places: Romans 8, Romans 9, John chapter 1, John chapter 6, John chapter 12. You go throughout the Bible and you find the sovereignty of God taught. But let's set the Scripture aside for just a moment and imagine what life would be like if that were not the case. Imagine what life would be like if your destiny was not set and established by God, if everything hung in the balance, if your life was determined by chance. And it will be determined by something.

But imagine that your destiny is determined by chance or it is determined by human whim, by the frailty of our nature which may be firm on one day but very weak on another – we may be faithful one day and very unfaithful the next – or if it depended upon some higher power than us other than God. Well, if our destinies depended on chance or depended upon us, then life would be terrifying. But it does not depend upon chance. And so, as I say, we can breath a great sign of relief because our destinies have not been left to chance, they have not been left to the whims of man, and God has not given us over to the control of Satan. God, who is all-good, all-wise, all-powerful is in complete control of the unfolding events of history, generally, and of your life, individually, personally.

That's what Paul says. "Who works all things –" notice that – "all things after the counsel of His will. Now, I could spend time developing that and seeking to demonstrate that. But, really, does anything more need to be said than what Paul says right in our text. "Who works all things after the counsel of His will."

God leaves nothing to chance. He is not going to jeopardize His inheritance. He is not going to put His inheritance at risk. And so He directs every process and orders every event for the fulfilling of His eternal purpose. All through this chapter we see that. Stress is laid on the sovereignty of God.

Verse 5: "He predestined us to adoption, according to the kind intention of His will." Not according to our will, "according to the kind intention of His will." Verse 9: "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention." This great predestination to glory and blessing, this predetermination is "according to the kind intention of His will." And here, it's "according to His purpose.

The whole plan of salvation from beginning to end begins with God and it ends with God. It is His work. Now, that doesn't mean that we are inactive. We're not. We are responsible to believe the gospel.

And in verse 13, Paul reminds the Ephesians of that when he states that after the gospel they believed. They exercised their wills and they believed in the gospel that they heard. The sovereignty of God in all of its various parts – divine election, predestination – the sovereignty of God does not eliminate evangelism. It does not make faith unnecessary. The fact is, election makes faith possible and evangelism successful.

If election is not true, then no one will come to faith. Turn over to chapter 2, and Paul makes that very clear when he describes us in our natural condition as being dead in our transgressions in sin. Men naturally have no ability to believe. I sat on an airplane earlier this past week. And a gentleman sat down across from me, a very friendly man, very gregarious and he struck up a conversation with me.

And throughout the flight, we had a very pleasant conversation. And in the midst of that conversation I sought to bring the gospel into the conversation and began to speak about grace and explain that salvation is not of works. And he was a very animated individual, but

I noticed that as I began to talk about these things, a kind of glazed look came over his face and he just – he looked lost. The conversation kind of ended. Now, apart from the grace of God, apart from divine election, that would be the response every time to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But the grace of God changes that. Because of election, God has His people as in a field. And we go out and we reap through the preaching of the gospel. Because that is the means of bringing men and women to faith. The God who appoints men to salvation has also appointed the preaching of the gospel as the means by which He brings them to salvation.

We don't know who they are. They are there, we know that. And He commands us to go out into the field and to reap with the gospel. And we will have success, not because of any great strength or ability of persuasion that we might have but because of His grace. His people are there; His inheritance is out there and He wants us to bring it in and to reap with the gospel.

We come to Him and we realize our election through faith in the gospel. But still, while we are responsible to believe and while we may not fully understand the connection between sovereignty and human responsibility, between evangelism and faith, we must say, since God "works all things after the counsel of His will," that includes our will. That includes our response; that includes our faith. As Donald Grey Barnhouse said in an expression that I assume he coined, and one that I know many of you are familiar with, "He jiggled our willers.

He did it; we responded. We believed because He moved upon us. Now, why He did that, why He chose you for faith, why He brought you to faith, why He jiggled your willer – well, that's another question. And the **question** that Paul gives here, it was because it fit His kind intention. It was because he was pleased to do it, and because it fit His purpose. And His purpose is a gracious purpose, a purpose to exercise and display His great love for us, and the

assurance that you have that His gracious purpose toward you will be carried out.

And it cannot fail. It is His predestination and His providence. It is because He is in control, in complete control of every event, that we can rest in such promises as Romans 8:28. "He causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." There we have it again – "according to His purpose." That's the assurance that we are secure.

No wonder Jonathan Edwards said, "Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God." Everyone should. It shouldn't be a threat to us. It shouldn't bother us. It shouldn't trouble us that God is God, that He's absolutely sovereign.

It's the guarantee that in a very insecure world, with a very unfaithful nature that each of us have, that we are nevertheless very secure. And so because God leaves nothing to chance but directs every process and orders every event for the fulfilling of His eternal purpose, we have every reason for joy and confidence. We are absolutely secure as His possession and His inheritance. And so the question of how we became God's people is answered in His sovereign will. He destined us to be His possession.

But why He did that, why He chose us, why He would make us His people, that's the next question. And Paul gives the answer to that in verse 12. It's the same reason he gave for election back in verse 6. "That we be to the praise of His glory, that we be the means for bringing praise to God from all of His creation. Praise for His power that could save lost men and women, that could restore His image in creatures that were wrecked and ruined by sin and make them glorious beyond imagination, power that could bring life out of death.

Praise for His love, love that is greater than all our sin, infinite love for a rebellious people. Not for a lovely people, not for a people that longed for Him but for people that were rebelling against Him, full of sin towards Him. Love so great that He would sacrifice His only begotten Son, His Beloved for His enemies. Now, that's worthy

praise. And when we are seen in that light, presented to God as perfect, without spot or wrinkle, we will bring the greatest glory to the only one who deserves glory, our Triune God.

It was for that end that we were destined to be God's children. That's what Paul says in our passage. To the end that we should be "to the praise of His glory." And yet, to this point, the pronoun, "we," in verses 11 and 12, has reference only to Jewish Christians. And Paul makes that clear in verse 12, where he says, "We who were the first to hope in Christ."

Jewish believers were the first to do that. Large numbers of them came to faith on the Day of Pentecost and throughout the 1st century. They were the beginning of the church, the first to believe. Paul says in Romans 1:16 that the gospel was "to the Jew first." And that shouldn't surprise us that Paul would speak of Jewish believers as God's inheritance.

After all, the promises were given to Abraham and his seed. But Paul is not principally writing to Jews. He is writing to gentiles. He is writing to a people who were born into paganism. A people who were called out of darkness, people who must have frequented, at least many of them, the great temple of Artemis of the Ephesians or been involved in many of the mystery cults and the pagan cults of that day.

And so what is surprising, what is particularly amazing and glorious is that in verses 13 and 14, he goes on to say that gentiles, believing gentiles also occupy that position of blessing as God's inheritance and share equally with the believing Jew all of the blessings in Christ. Paul will develop this theme more completely in chapter 2. But here, he introduces it by saying to the Ephesians, "In him, – " and it's "In Christ, – "you also were sealed with the Holy Spirit with a view to the redemption of God's own possession." We, too, are God's possession.

We, too, are His inheritance, and we have the Holy Spirit. We have been "sealed with the Holy Spirit," Paul says. And so with verses 13 and 14, Paul's doxology comes to the third Person of the Trinity,

the Holy Spirit. He moves from praising the Father in eternity past to praising the Son in time past, to now praising the Spirit for His ministry in the present time. And he does this by describing the Holy Spirit in three ways: as a promise, as a seal and as a pledge.

He writes that upon believing "the message of truth, the gospel, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise." That word, "sealed," is an interesting expression and a very significant one. In the ancient world a seal was a mark of ownership. Cattle were branded, much as they are today, to show ownership. Slaves were sometimes branded to show who owned them.

Sealing was particularly important in an age when many people couldn't read. And so a man of prominence might use an instrument that was engraved with a unique mark or a signet ring that left a distinctive impression when it was pressed into clay or wax that was on a – on an object. And that impression, that mark was his seal. And so by fixing his seal to something, the man marked it out as his possession. And in so doing, he also protected it from mistakenly being taken by someone or by – or from theft.

So sealing was not only a way of showing ownership, but it was also a way of securing property. And Paul says that's what God has done to us with the Holy Spirit. He has marked us as His possessions, not externally but internally, in our hearts, by giving the Holy Spirit to every believer. We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit until we are secure. That's what Paul says later in chapter 4 in verse 30, that "We have been sealed," he says, "with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption."

God's mark of ownership is the guarantee that we will be claimed by Him in the last day. We won't be lost; we are His. He knows we are His, and we have been sealed. We have been marked as His for the day of redemption. And so we're secure.

We are owned by the Lord. He has stamped us with His seal, with the Holy Spirit. And that occurred at the moment of faith when we heard and believed the gospel. Now, that is generally the way the

sealing of the Holy Spirit is understood. But there are some who have explained it differently.

And following the King James version, which reads, "After you believed, you were sealed." They have explained this sealing of the Holy Spirit as a special experience of assurance that God gives to some following salvation. Now, it's not necessary to draw that meaning from the King James' rendering of the verse. But those who do often cite such examples as John Wesley and his famous experience on Aldersgate Street in London, when he writes: "I felt my heart strangely warmed."

He was there at a house, that had a – in the midst of a Bible study. I believe they were reading Luther's preface to his commentary on Romans when Wesley had this experience of his heart being "strangely warmed." That happened two months after his conversion. But that was when he writes that he was given the assurance that Christ had taken away his sins and saved him. And sealing is sometimes explained as that kind of experience.

It's not what saves us. It's what gives us the assurance of salvation. It occurs subsequent to salvation. It's a kind of second blessing, a very personal, life changing experience that gives assurance or perhaps equips a person for great service, as it did with Wesley and others. It's the experience of only some believers.

Not everyone has this. And those who advocate this position don't say that it is the experience of all, but they recognize that it is not. But it is an experience that everyone needs to seek. Now, it's possible to translate this verse, as the King James version does, "After you believed, you were sealed." But as Charles Hodge states, "This is more than a translation. It is an exposition of the original."

In other words, it's an interpretation of the Greek. It's much better to translate this as the New International Version does: "When you believed, you were marked with a seal," and understand sealing as contemporaneous with believing, as happening at the same moment. If I can be just a little bit technical here to make my point perhaps a

little firmer, both words, "believed" and "sealed," are in the *aorist* tense, which is simply a form of the past tense in Greek.

The word, "believed," is a participle; the word, "sealed," is a verb. And while that may not mean much to you, that grammatical construction often describes simultaneous action, events or experiences that occur at the same moment. Let me give you one example, and it's a rather common example. But we find in Matthew chapter 19 in verse 27, the words, "then Peter answered and said." That means when Peter answered, he said.

And the same is true here, the same construction. Having believed you were sealed means when you believed, you were sealed. That fits the context. That fits with what Paul is doing here, what he's saying in this doxology. He's not describing an experience that only some Christians had.

He implies that all the believers to whom he has writing have been sealed. He's not urging us to seek the blessing. He's not describing a blessing that some may have and some may not have, and that we should all look for and all seek, but a blessing that we may not come to experience. He is praising each member of the Godhead for the blessings that they have given to everyone who is in Christ. He is describing what we do have in Christ, and praising God for that.

And the blessing of the Holy Spirit is sealing. From the moment of faith, we have been marked as God's possession, marked as His inheritance. Now, that's great reason for praise. That's a great blessing. Every believer belongs to God and is His possession from the moment of faith.

Satan can't confuse us as his possession. We have been marked out as God's possession. We can never be reclaimed by Satan and brought back into the domain of darkness from which God has delivered us through His Son. We are God's; He has marked us as His own; He has made us secure with His seal, with the Holy Spirit, who Paul calls "the Holy Spirit of promise."

Now, that word, "promise," further underscores the greatness of the blessings that we enjoy as believers in Jesus Christ. Because the possession of the Holy Spirit, the sealing of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of an ancient promise. We find the promise of the giving of the Holy Spirit throughout the prophets: Isaiah, Ezekiel; through the prophet Joel, God promised to pour out His Spirit on all mankind. In the upper-room discourse in John 14, the Lord promised to send to the disciples "the Spirit of truth," the comforter, after He ascended to heaven. And he says to them in John 14, verse 17, "He abides with you, He will be in you."

In other words, the Spirit of God has been among you all these years. He's always been among the people of God. But He will be in you, and that is a change. It is something that had not, at that time, happened. On the Day of Pentecost, the promise was fulfilled when the Spirit was given and the church was formed and lives were transformed.

Men, like Peter, who had been a coward becomes a man bold in his faith and his profession of the truth. He's transformed and becomes a supernatural individual, through the power of God within him, through the Holy Spirit. The sealing of the Holy Spirit is the sign that we are in that age, that promised age, that new age, that new covenant age with all of its rich blessings that we enjoy as we walk by the Spirit. He lives within us. He's made our bodies His temple, and He's now changing us, He's now transforming us.

He's now enabling us and He's making us like Christ. He is changing us and transforming us, as Paul says, "from glory to glory." That's His work, and that's what He's actually doing within the hearts of all who have believed in Jesus Christ. Now, that is reason for the greatest comfort and the greatest encouragement. God has so set His love upon every believer that He has actually put the Holy Spirit within our hearts, the third Person of the Trinity.

The **infinite** and eternal God actually lives within your body, within your heart. The thought of that should cause our hearts to be

strangely warmed. That God would do that for us should move us to devotion to Him. And if it does not, perhaps we need to fall down on our knees in our homes and ask God, "Why is it that my heart is not strangely warmed by the thought of what you have done for me, of all people?"

Now, that's not all. The Holy Spirit is not only God's seal of ownership but also a foretaste of future blessing. In verse 14, Paul describes Him as a pledge, "a pledge of our inheritance." He is God's guarantee that He will bring us safely into our inheritance in the future. Literally, he is an *arrabón*. That's the Greek word.

And in modern Greek, *arrabón* – or *arrabona*, as it's pronounced – is an engagement ring. Now, I know that because I've read it in various books that I study. But I also did some very original research, scholarly research. I went down to a shoe repair store down the street, where a Greek merchant works, owns a store. And I wrote this down in perfect Greek script, showed it to him – said, "Do you recognize this word?"

He kinda squinted at it and "What's this letter here and what's --?" Had to retrace all my perfectly drawn letters for him, and suddenly his eyes brightened. "Oh, yeah, arrabona, arrabona." He starts pointing to his finger. "It's a ah, it's a ah –" "It's an engagement ring." "Yes."

So it's a modern word for an engagement ring. **He said**, "It's all over Greece, arrabona." Well, an engagement ring is a pledge. It's a pledge that the wedding is going to take place, that the marriage will take place. And it would be tempting to say the Holy Spirit is like the engagement ring that God has given to His church, the guarantee that we will enter into that great wedding feast that will come, the wedding feast of the Lamb at the end of the book of Revelation, chapter 19.

But that's not the meaning of the word with the ancient Greeks. The meaning for them was a technical term referring to a down payment, a part of the purchase price that's paid in advance, a payment that secured a legal claim on an item that was being purchased. It was

the first installment, perhaps something like earnest money that realtors put out when they're purchasing some land. And so here, the pledge of the Holy Spirit is the deposit or it's the first installment of the full amount of our inheritance, and it's the guarantee that we will receive all of our inheritance in full in the future.

Donald Grey Barnhouse is a master of illustrations, and he had a very good illustration for this very point. He says, "Suppose you are sitting at home when the doorbell rings. You answer it, and there stands a man who says, 'I'm an attorney with such and such a firm, and we're trying to find a relative of a missing person. Is your name so and so?' And you answered, 'Yes.' 'Did your mother come to this country 50 years ago from Scotland?

" 'Yes,' you say. 'In fact, I have the family Bible in here in the home.' And you get it. **And he says,** 'It's got all the records right here. My mother had a brother who went to Australia and we never heard of him since.

" 'Well, the lawyer says, 'you're the man that I'm looking for. Your uncle went to Australia. He had a son to whom he left his fortune. But the son died and left no heir. And since you are the next of kin, that makes you the heir of a large inheritance.

Dr. Barnhouse says, "You begin to say to yourself, 'I can get that new Chevy that I've been looking for.' The lawyer says, 'It's a very large inheritance,' and you begin to think, 'Well, maybe a Cadillac.' He says, 'Your uncle had coal mines.' And you think, 'Well, maybe I'll get a Mercedes or a Lexus.' "

He didn't use those cars because he was doing this illustration some time ago. But to make it modern, a Mercedes or a Lexus or something like that.

"Then the lawyer says, 'Now, of course, it's in the courts and you can't get anything very soon except a down payment. Your uncle owned hundreds of thousands of acres of sheep ranches. Oil and gold have been found there. It's going to be three to four years before you

can get all of it, but there is a little down payment.' And you begin to think, 'Well, maybe I need to go back to the Chevy.

" 'Well,' you say, 'what is this little down payment?' The lawyer says, 'The little down payment,' and he pulls out a check, 'is \$50 million.' Now, if that's the little down payment, what's the whole thing going to be?" And Barnhouse adds, "Not all the certified public accountants in the world could ever add up the glories of the inheritance reserved for us. We cannot begin to imagine the glory of it, the richness of it."

But we have a foretaste of that which is to come, and it's the spiritual life that the Holy Spirit gives to us. Through Him we experience what Paul calls, the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness and a whole list of virtues. The very thing that men labor throughout their lives to accumulate, money and free time in order to find, and yet never do through all of those things. We have it in Christ: love, joy, peace. He gives us the assurance of our salvation. In Romans 8, verse 16, Paul writes: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

There is an inaudible voice of conviction and confirmation within us that we belong to God. And throughout our lives, every day of your life, the Holy Spirit is leading and guiding you. And while you may not sense it, there will be those times in your life when you see how, in the midst of a difficult situation, a time that brings you almost to the point of despair, you see God intervene. And you see how He works it out, and you see how He provides because He is constantly providing for us, caring for us, guiding and leading us. As we walk by the Spirit and seek to know Christ and grow in our relationship with Him through prayer and study and fellowship with the saints, as we seek to live by faith and obey His Word and mortify the flesh and bring it under submission, we increasingly enjoy the joy of our salvation.

But the greatest joy we could have in this life, if all of us had the experience of a Wesley or a Moody or Jonathan Edwards or many

other men who had these great experiences with God, if we could have that it would just be a slight foretaste of what is to come. The Holy Spirit and the life that He imparts, Paul says in Romans 8:23, is just "the first fruits." It is the *arrabón*, the down payment, the guarantee of what is to come with the resurrection of the body, with the unspeakable joy that will be ours when God shall wipe away every tear from our eyes. These are the promises that are given to us. We will someday enter into our inheritance.

God is faithful to His promises, and He has given us further assurances – beyond His Word itself – further assurances with the sealing and the pledge of the Holy Spirit that He will bring it all to pass. But the enjoyment of our full inheritance is not the ultimate end of all things. It's part of God's plan, but it's not the end and the great goal of God's plan. Our joy, our well-being is only part of that and not the greater part. The end of all things is never found in man.

It's always found in God. And so Paul says the pledge of the Holy Spirit was given "with a view to the redemption of God's own possession." We have been redeemed, and we are redeemed in Jesus Christ. But the emancipation from sin and its effects upon this body and upon our soul is still future with the resurrection. That's when God will have us in perfection.

That's when this redemption will be in its complete form, and we will be His possession, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing. And all, Paul concludes, "to the praise of His glory. That's the great goal of redemption. We are not our own. We have been bought with a price.

And so in the present, as Paul tells the Corinthians, they are to, we are to, all of God's people are "to glorify God in our bodies." We're to live for Him. I don't care what your age is, what the temptations of this world are – and there are many. Your purpose in this life is not to be a happy person. Your purpose in this life is not to enjoy good health and wealth.

Your purpose in this life is to bring glory to God in whatever place in this life you are, whatever position you are in, whether it be one of poor health or poor financial standing. But – and I think I can say this with the authority of Scripture – as you live faithfully to Him in the worst of circumstances, God will bless you immeasurably with joy. The point is not to be happy. The point is not to have that joy. The point is to serve Him and to glorify Him with your bodies in this life.

And we will do that throughout all eternity. We will reflect His glory, the glory of His saving grace, the glory of His transforming grace, His unconditional, never-ending grace that chose from – chose us from all eternity, sent His Son to redeem us, and has given us His Spirit as the seal on our hearts to show His possession of us and to keep us secure. Can you praise God for that? Can you say, "I know that I'm His, that He bought me and has marked me as His possession; I'm sealed with His Spirit?"

You can say that and you can sing praise to God for that if you've believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior. Because all of this, all of these blessings are in Christ. And we enter into Christ through faith in Him. If you recognize that you are a sinner and you have believed in Jesus Christ as God's final and complete sacrifice for sin, for your sin, as the one who died in your place, then you can rejoice and you can have that confidence.

If you've trusted in Him, then you are redeemed and you have been delivered. You have been freed from the penalty of sin and the power of sin, and you have eternal life and you have a great inheritance. But if you are here this morning and you have not believed in Christ, then turn to Him, trust in Him. That's all you do. You don't make some great act of service on His behalf.

You don't pledge some great sum of money. You don't come to the front. You don't get baptized or whatever. That's not how one comes to faith and enters into salvation. It's simply through faith and

faith alone in Jesus Christ, recognizing that you're a sinner and that He is the Savior, and trusting in Him and in Him alone.

If you've never done that, I pray that God will give you the ability to do that, to turn to Him, look to Him. And in so doing, enter into the forgiveness of sins, be sealed with the Spirit of God, and empowered to live a life of joy and praise to God. May God help you to do that. And may God help each of us to come into a deeper realization of the blessings that we have in Him, and live in light of them. Shall we stand now for the benediction.

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the great privileges that are ours. You have put us in an amazing position to be your inheritance. That you would choose such as us to be your inheritance is truly amazing. And what a joy it is to know that, as your inheritance, you are presently and certainly transforming us to be conformed to that, to become like the Son, and throughout all eternity, reflect your glory and be the cause of your whole creation giving praise to you.

Thank you for this wonderful privilege. We pray that you would use it to move within our hearts, to change us and give us the desire to serve you and serve you effectively. Thank you for Christ. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the life that He gives us, what He produces within us. Thank you for your grace. In Christ's name. Amen.