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**Signed, Sealed and Delivered**  
**Ephesians 1:13-14**

Turn in your Bibles to the first chapter of Ephesians. This morning we come to the end of our study of Paul's opening sentence that was a very long run on sentence stretching from Ephesians 1:3 to v.14. This baby is packed with truth. Packed with doctrine but its not just stale religious words that only seminary students debate. The writer of the book of Ephesians wanted to tell the believers in Ephesus how God is at work and who He and what He was presently doing in their lives. This tells us what to believe about how God operates...and this is really important because what we believe about who God is, not just what we "say" we believe, but what we actually believe about what He has done will have a profound affect on the way we live. True belief demands that we act on that belief.

Paul is very clear here in Ephesians 1 that God is working and it is not the laws of man that govern society, it is the laws of God so that makes it important for us to find out what God is involved with doing today. He begins by telling us that we have been given everything we for life. Every good things has been made available to us in Christ and we ought to praise such a God. Paul goes on to describe how God the father has chosen us, before the first particle of dirt was formed on this earth He had your name in His mind, for those of us who have come to know Jesus Christ as our Lord. He has adopted us into His family. Then in v.7-12 we have seen how Jesus the son has brought about our forgiveness of sins. He has made freedom possible. Because we have been forgiven so much, we are able to forgive others and forgive ourselves. All things in heaven and in earth are working together to add up to Jesus who is the head of all things and is the answer for the world today to break down

the hurt and pain and barriers of resentment and anger and fear. God the Father has laid out His plan, the Son has worked to carry out those plans and now in verses 13, and 14 we see the Holy Spirit empowering and sealing. God has given us all these great promises but what assurance do we have that we will receive all these promised blessings?

Read with me Ephesians 1:13-14 (READ) Did you notice that message of truth or in some translations read “word of truth” is coupled with the Spirit? These two Word and the Spirit as often found together in scripture. Zec 4:6 So he said to me, "This is the **word** of the LORD to Zerubbabel: `Not by might nor by power, but by my **Spirit**,' says the LORD Almighty. Ac 4:31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy **Spirit** and spoke the **word** of God boldly. Ac 16:6 Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy **Spirit** from preaching the **word** in the province of Asia. Eph 6:17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the **Spirit**, which is the **word** of God.

Both the Spirit and the word are essential to the Christian. There is no salvation without both of these for these are the tools that God uses to perform His work. It is a mistake to exclude or emphasize one over the other. There are some groups today who have little to do with the word. “We don’t need the Word, all we need is the Sprit within to guide us, God who is Spirit inside us will lead us. The problem is that thinking often leads them to a confusion with everyone going their own way when the Word is set aside and you try to only follow the Spirit. On the other hand there are those who follow the Word alone. This results in churches that may have their truth and doctrine right on the money, but their services are dull and lifeless with none of the freshness and vitality that the Spirit brings. They are not reaching out and are sterile, there is no joy and walking into the service its easy to see the people are “doing their duty”

but its dry as toast without jam. No warmth, no hunger, no heart, no emotion.

In the Bible it often puts together the Word and Spirit. The Word is empowered and interpreted by the Spirit and the Spirit makes the Word fresh and vital and causes Jesus to leap out of the pages of the text and stand in our presence in living flesh. It is the Spirit that causes us to hear and feel the heartbeat of Jesus. We ought never to approach the Word of God without asking the Spirit of God to take these words and make them come alive and burn in our hearts. On the road to Emmaus, Jesus was walking with two of His disciples and Jesus began teaching from the Scriptures. Later the disciples talked about the experience and recalled, "did not our hearts burn within us?" That burning of the Word of God in our hearts in the work of the Spirit to make it come alive. How then do we know if the Spirit we hear prompting us is from God? There are a lot of voices telling us which way to go. There are many ideas and much information shot at us from all sides. How do we know which is the right way to follow? The enemy can be very clever in disguising himself. The Bible tells us He will come at times appearing like an angel of light. Its only by the word that we can identify that it is the Holy Spirit. All things are tested by the Word.

All Word and no spirit you dry up. All spirit and no word you blow up. Spirit together with the word, you grow up. I like that balance and I believe it is biblical.

In verses 13 and 14 we see three things that are a normal part of life for a Christian. Every believer has experienced these three things. One, v.13 In Him...you listened to the message of truth. Second, you believed (that also was belief in Him". Third, You were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.

Lets take a look at the first thing that happened to you who are believers. First you heard the word of truth. There are a whole lot of wild, false and twisted ideas floating around this world. There are views

of how this world works or ought to work that simply are not true. Most of the messed up ones are man centered and lead people away from God and reality of how things really do work on this earth. The gospel message is the word of truth and it begins with the uncomfortable premise that man is not by nature a pretty good person. The Gospel of truth begins with statement that man is not inherently good, but in fact the opposite. That ought to make us squirm in our seats because every humanist philosophy and all the moral outcomes from that revolve around that thinking. The Bible says that "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." It is mans nature to sin. Humans tend to minimize our problems. Have you noticed how easy it is think about yourself as though that problem you are having is not really all that terribly seriously wrong? We are a pretty good person, all we need is to clear up a couple of bad habits or areas and be a little more stronger in our faith or morality and we will be pretty good. We can work out that marriage relationship problem on our own...its not as bad as my wife thinks it is. I'm not that addicted to that pornography, or alcohol or sexual sin or gambling or drugs or cursing. I know a lot of people who are a lot worst then I am. I can stop when I want. Most people think that way that we don't have a serious problem, that we are deep down pretty good people. The truth of the gospel say that we may not be as bad as we could be but we certainly are as bad off as we could be and given the right motive, and put under incredible stress and under the proper condition we could all be murderers at heart.

Winston Churchill, Britain's leader during World war 11 who had some wise things to say, once said "Certain it is that, while men are gathering knowledge and power with ever increasing speed, their virtues and their wisdom have not shown any notable improvement as the centuries have rolled. Under sufficient stress starvation terror, war...like passion or even cold intellectual frenzy, the modern man we know so well

will do the most terrible deeds, and his modern woman will back him up!”

This is such an incredibly deep problem that we cannot save ourselves. It also explains why we can never make things go right for we are experiencing in part what the Bible calls the “wrath of God” that wrath means the removal of restraint. God has taken off the bounds of human evil and has allowed it to run its course, to give way and so we experience failure and bondage. We may want to do right on our own but we can’t and the truth of the gospel tells us why.

The gospel word of truth also tells us of God’s love for us. The truth of the word says that God has not forgotten us but is currently working for us. During this Christmas season we remember that God has sent His son into our pain and hurt and yet in the dark streets of our world their shines and marvelous light. We need Jesus. We need the forgiveness and healing He alone can bring and it is this word of truth that draws us beyond our logic and reasoning to the see the God reality that freedom can be ours in Christ. In Him there is life and that life was the light of man.”

So we then move to the next reality experienced by every believer that “we have believed in Him.” V.13. This may be somewhat obvious but too many people miss it, so I want to say it clearly this morning. Not only must we hear the message of truth, we must believe it, must act on it in so proving that we really do believe it and not just say that we believe. To accept a truth in belief means we must act according to that truth, otherwise if our actions do not reflect what we say we belief to us then it must be reduced to just a good idea and not belief. I think for far too many people who come to church and hear the word of truth it is simply just a good idea and not belief for they do not act in accordance to belief.

For example, If you believe that I will give a one dollar bill to the first person who will come up here and hold out their hand and get it, and I am saying that. Some of you might think, yes I believe he would

give out that dollar but hesitate. It might help some if you actually saw the dollar that was being given out. But not everybody rushed up here to get take it. Perhaps you didn't think it was all that much or worth your trouble. You don't need it. Perhaps you thought there were strings attached that I might embarrass you when you came up. Perhaps you saw there was only one dollar and you didn't have a chance to be the first, other people needed it more. But the one who did come first came because they trusted me that I would follow through on what I said I would do. I am not in a habit of lying, so you acted in belief based on your trust of me. In belief, the ones that came forward to receive the dollar did something about their belief. Many this morning may have said they believed I would give the dollar, but didn't make a move.

The point is this. If you say that hold something to be true and yet go on living exactly in the same way as you did before, then you haven't really believed, you simply have massaged in your brain another good idea. You are simply kidding yourself. For belief results in change as you act in accordance with what you know to be reality.

Did you notice that our belief is "in Him". 15 times in the first 14 verses, Pauls Jesus. He is driving home the point that apart from a personal relationship with Jesus there is not way we can experience the blessing that God has for us. It all comes through Christ and in Him.

The third thing that Paul mentions is of great assurance for the believer. He write that after listening to the message of truth, believing in Him we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, looking forward to redemption of God own possession, to the praise of His glory. Sealed with the Spirit. What does that mean for the believer? Paul was probably using a word picture of sealing a document or letter. In Bible times, they would seal a letter or even a shipment of goods with a wax seal. While the wax was still warm, the sender of the letter or one in authority would take his signet ring and

press it into the soft wax making an impression to identify the one who sent, or ownership of the goods.

Sealing in the Bible was used to denote ownership or authentication or authority. Remember also that the tomb of our Lord Jesus was sealed by the Roman authorities to make sure it was not disturbed or the contents stolen. A seal could carry with it the idea of protection and security. We also see this same idea in Revelation 7 where the saints are sealed on their foreheads protected from the evil forces. I believe the Holy Spirit in each believe does all of these things. It is the Spirit within that proves we are children of God and owned by Him. When the Holy spirit was sent into your life, it was the mark that you were no longer your own, but are now God's possession. I Cor 6 19 "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you and you are not your own for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body." It is the very presence of the Spirit within us that gives witness that we belong to God. Romans 8 "the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." And we also see that it is the fruit of the Spirit that comes growing out of our lives that show we are of God. The love, joy, peace patience, kindness, gentleness self-control. All of these are a witness to the fact that the Spirit is within us and doing something. The demonstrations of the fruit is a witness to the world around us that something is different and we belong to God.

The Holy Spirit is given not only as a mark of ownership and authenticity but also of preservation and security. Here the idea is that the Spirit is given into our lives as an assurance, a security for us that what God has said he will do will be completed. That the promised blessings will be completed and fully given for us. The Spirit is given as a seal, a pledge v.14 of our inheritance that more is yet to come. That word pledge is the Greek word Arabon, not aragon, but arabon and it simply means down payment. It is the first installment of money which

guarantees the completion of the transaction will occur. When you put a down payment on a house that you are purchasing, the bank manager is smiling because that is your guarantee that you will continue to make payments until it is fully paid. This same Greek word arabon is used by modern Greeks for an engagement ring. When a young man gives his love an arabon, a ring, he is guaranteeing that one day she will become his bride.

God has given us an arabon, an engagement ring. That is the holy Spirit, and with that promise that He will never leave us nor forsake us. That even death will not separate us from His love. The Spirit inside us identifies the believer as being his and that he will perform all the blessings he has promised until they are fully realized when we stand before him in His presence in heaven one day. What God has begun He will accomplish. He who has begun a good work in you will move it forward toward perfection until that day in heaven. The guarantee is the presence of the Spirit in your life and mine.

Isn't that amazing that the Spirit is just the down payment. The Spirit is just an appetizer to the full realization of all that God wants to bless us with? Just imagine all the incredible experiences of the Holy Spirit you have had and then realize that this is just the tip of the iceberg, just a foretaste of glory divine of what is to come. Maybe you remember when first came to Christ and just savored what it was to know that you were forgiven, freedom was yours. Maybe you remember a time when you were stunned by the power of God during a time of worship. Maybe you remember a time when the Holy Spirit gave you some very clear direction...you followed the spirits leading and were used in some very significant ways. Perhaps you remember a time when you were reading the word of God and it just began to burn like fire in your heart and you couldn't get enough of the truth of God as the Spirit was making it come alive. Maybe you remember a time when you realized that you acted in patience in a situation where you know if that had

happened in years earlier it would have enraged you with fury. And you see the fruit of the Spirit of kindness, goodness, patience, joy and love start to spring up out of your life. Think back of all the very best times where the Spirit has moved in your life with unmistakable presence and then sit down to realize...its only a down payment. Certainly the Spirit is the real thing, but its just a taste of what's to come. Multiply all the best of the Spirit by say a million. What will it be like after 10 minutes in the presence of God in heaven? What will it be like when we fully realize the inheritance god has for us 10 years after being with God. Or when we've been there 10 thousand years, bright shining as the sun. We've no less days to sing God's praise then when we've first begun. Did you catch the repeated phrase at the end of v.14 "to the praise of the His glory." I Corinthians 2:9-10 "No eye has seen, no ear heard...all that God has prepared for those who love Him. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit."

So what difference ought this truth make in our life? How might we begin to act on what we know to be true? How can these help us walk through the difficulties and stress and problem that life continues to throw at us? Perhaps it would be good for all of us to start our day and say to ourselves, " I am a child of God for He has handpicked me not because of what I look like, or what I can do for him, but because of His great love I am accepted into His family. I am forgiven of my sins. I have been twice bought, created by him and purchased out of the slave market of sin. He has lavished his grace on me, spiritual blessing, I don't deserve but in Christ I know are mine. This world seems pretty messed up, but I know there is a purpose and under the leadership of Jesus it is headed somewhere. God has put His spirit within me to release me to live the full life that Jesus desires. That power within me gives me everything I need to handle whatever comes my way today and I can take whatever life throws my way because I have the Spirit within me and I am in Christ. May we live to the praise of His glory.

