

## Life in the Spirit: The Indwelling of the Spirit, Ephesians 1:13-14, 7/28/24

A few years ago I was visiting a man on hospice, he had days to live, the family asked if I could talk to him, as he seemed unsettled and anxious. As we sat and talked, it was clear to me that this man understood the gospel of Jesus, and he could even point to a time when he was in college that he prayed to receive Jesus as his Savior, he was involved in church- loved God and saw real change in his life. When I asked him what he thought was making him unsettled and fearful, he said that he had doubts- not about whether there is a heaven, or eternity, or God or Jesus...but whether God would really accept him into heaven. Whether he would actually make it there- because he was looking back on a number of mistakes and regrets, times when he lacked faith, how he could have spent his time better, been more generous. And my heart was heavy for this man, racked with guilt, anxiety, doubting where he will happen when he takes his last breath.

Put yourself in his shoes. **If you were facing the end of your life, would you have assurance of where you are going?** Now, some of us have never had a run-in with death, we still feel like that's a long way away and we don't have to think about that, so you might be tempted to tune out. But none of us knows the number of days we have on this earth- only God does. And how you answer that question also has a massive impact on how you live now. And so that's what we want to talk about today: **Can we really have assurance of our salvation? And what difference should that make in our lives?** The answer to that question comes to us from another vital ministry of the Holy Spirit: **His Indwelling [Title Slide]** in the life of the Christian.

**Ephesians 1<sup>13</sup>** *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit,*

<sup>14</sup> *who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.* You know I do most of my prinking (praying and thinking) while I'm walking my dog in my neighborhood. And I talk to God out loud. And sometimes one of my neighbors will see me and they say, "Who are you talking to?" "God! Because he lives inside of me." That's what Paul says here. How amazing is that, the God in the person of the Holy Spirit takes up permanent residence in the life of the Christian. But He's not just indwelling us so that I can prink around my neighborhood. Paul gives us two vivid word pictures to describe the Holy Spirit's ministry of assurance. The first is word is Seal- **You were marked in him with a seal.** This word literally means we were branded by God. You remember the old westerns where they take that hot poker and they stick it in the fire and get it red hot, and then they take that poor animal and lay him down and they stick that hot poker on him. Remember that and burn a mark, a seal, a brand into that animal that told everybody that ever saw that animal who it belonged to, so when a horse thief or cattle thief came around and tried to pass off the animal as his own, everyone knew who it belonged to. A seal marks ownership. Well, the Bible says God does the same thing to us when we become followers of Christ. Now, thank God it's not a physical seal...although some of you have some cool Jesus tattoos, it's a spiritual seal. And what is that seal? The promised Holy Spirit! God puts the Holy Spirit inside of us to permanently

brand us as his own possession. And what that means is that every spiritual being in the universe knows whom you belong to. And guess what, when the thieves, the devil, tries to steal you away, or condemn you- you can say, “Nope! I know whom I belong to- I am branded with the Holy Spirit- I belong to God!” Do you know that?

But listen that’s not all, look what else the Holy Spirit does- <sup>14</sup> *who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*... When Paul said this, the listeners in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman world would have known exactly what he was talking about, because the “The *arrabon*”, deposit- was a regular feature of the business world. The *arrabon* was a part of the purchase price of anything paid in advance as a guarantee that the rest will be paid. 15 months before my wife and I got married, I gave her an engagement ring. And I wanted that on her finger because I wanted to send a message to all those other guys on campus too, she’s spoken for! What is an engagement ring? It’s an *arrabon*. It’s a security deposit, it’s a way of saying I’m really serious...I’m not spending thousands of dollars I barely have as a college student unless I’m absolutely sure I want to marry you! The indwelling Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that that we are spoken for, and that much more is coming- God's going to raise you up to live forever with him, just like He raised Jesus up to live forever. Now, it’s possible for you and me to break our *arrabon* because we are imperfect and sometimes fickle and we break our promises sometimes. But let me tell you something- God doesn’t “*arraback*” out of his *arrabon*. *Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind.* He's serious that everything he promised you about eternal life, you're going to get. He's coming back to finish the deal and he left the Holy Spirit as a deposit- to the praise of his glory!

OK, well that’s great, but how do we get this assurance of salvation, this seal, this *arrabon*? Notice, Paul does NOT say- you were marked with a seal when you finally were consistent enough in your quiet time. It doesn’t say that. He doesn’t say we get the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of salvation when we finally gave up that bad habit, or became a member of the church, or take the sacraments. No, when does Paul say we get this assurance of salvation? **1** <sup>13</sup> *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you BELIEVED*...Past tense action. The moment that the gospel of Jesus became real to you and you understood that you were a sinner, that no amount of good works could save you, that Jesus, the Son of God, took all your sin that separates you from a holy God, and he paid for it all through his sacrifice on the cross, that he rose again to display his power over sin and death. And the moment you trusted his sacrifice for the eternal forgiveness of your sin. It that very moment. Whether that was when you were 5 or 25 or 55 or 85...at that moment the Holy Spirit broke into your heart, took up permanent residence there- and made you spiritually alive, eternally sealed, and forever assured of heaven with God. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee all who have trusted in Jesus that *he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.* *Philippians 1:6.* So let me just ask. Have you had that moment? If you aren’t sure- today is the day. You can invite the Holy Spirit to indwell you, make you spiritually alive, signed, sealed, delivered, guaranteed by trusting Jesus Christ.

Wow. “OK- this is great, Pastor Nate. Very encouraging to hear this today. But I still have some doubts. **WHAT IF**...What if I really make a mess of my life? What if I deal with doubt? What if

God the Holy Spirit leaves me? Well let's talk about that. Ephesians 1 is not the only verse in the Bible that makes our assurance of salvation clear. Let me just overwhelm you with what the Bible says about this for 5 minutes OK?

Let me show you what Jesus himself says. John 10 <sup>27</sup> *My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.* <sup>28</sup> *I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.* Every person who believes in the gospel- becomes part of the flock of Jesus your shepherd...So we can all sing- beep, beep I'm I sheep...once you are a sheep, you are always my sheep...and just to make the strength of this so overwhelming...<sup>29</sup> *My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand.* Every beeping sheep of Jesus is un snatchably saved for the rest of time and eternity- in the hand of Jesus and the hand of the Father.

But **WHAT IF?** I keep sinning and God has enough of it? Micah 7:19 God says to all those that are under the new covenant of salvation through Jesus, *he will bury our sin in the depths of the sea.* What a beautiful image of permanent forgiveness!

Hebrews 8:12 *For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.* God has amnesia when it comes to our sin in the sense that he never holds it over. It's done.

**WHAT IF?** there is something that could cause God to stop loving me? Romans 8:35, 38-39 <sup>35</sup> *Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?* <sup>38</sup> *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,*

<sup>39</sup> *neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* That covers everything, even you!

Galatians 4 tells that when we trust in Jesus we are permanently adopted by God. <sup>6</sup> *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."* And he is a father that never abandons his children.

Revelation 21:27 tells us that all those who have trusted the gospel of Jesus have their names recorded in heaven *written in the Lamb's book of life.* And there's no time in heaven, God sees from beginning to end.

**WHAT IF?** I still struggle with assurance because I think back to things I've done in my past and struggle to forgive myself? Romans 8:1-2 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation [No exposure to God's judgment] for those who are in Christ Jesus, <sup>2</sup> because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.* And with God- No means no, never, nada...so if God isn't condemning you, what are you condemning you?

**BLANK SLIDE** So can we lose our salvation? Can we miss things up so badly, or can the devil steal it from us somehow? Well only if we think it's possible for somebody to sneak up into heaven and erase our name out of the Lamb's Book of Life. Or if we think somebody could cancel our adoption papers as children of God. Or if we think there is some unmentioned exception to the list of things that can't separate us from the love of God in Christ. Or if you think some smooth talker could talk God into remembering our sins once again. Or maybe if someone was able to scuba dive down to the Mariana trench where our sins are buried and dredge them all up and bring them to God. Or if we think someone is strong enough to pry Jesus' hands and the Father's hands off his grip of his sheep. Or if someone could convince God to rewrite Romans 8:1 so that it now read there is no condemnation to those who are in Jesus Christ except in the following circumstances. And if we think we can mess up enough to unbrand our heart with the seal of the Holy Spirit, and remove his guarantee and cast him out of us. Friends, the bottom line is when you and I give our lives to Jesus Christ, we are irreversibly saved, we are irrevocably saved, we are irretrievably saved for all of time and eternity. We're as saved as saved can be. We didn't do anything to get our salvation. We can't do anything to lose our salvation. It is the undeserved grace of God from start to finish. Amen and hallelujah! So if you came the church today unsettled about that, have that settled in your soul today!

So, what difference does this make in our lives? All the difference! The famous modern hymn "In Christ Alone" talks about the assurance of salvation when we are standing on the gospel of Jesus, and in the final stanza, **"No guilt in life, no fear in death, this is the power of Christ in me."** And that's really what the Holy Spirit's indwelling gives us.

**No Guilt in Life!** The kind of guilt they are talking about is the kind that whispers not that you DID something bad, but whispers you ARE bad. You ARE unworthy. You ARE unacceptable, you ARE unlovable. It's the devil's guilt, it's the thief's guilt that whispers. And the same devil whispers to some that because they are so unlovable they should run as far away from God as possible into a life of rebellion. And it's the same devil's whisper that puts you on an endless treadmill of anxious spiritual toil, work harder, try harder, perform better in order to ever possibly be acceptable.

But the Holy Spirit removes this guilt with his permanent presence in us. He whispers a better word to us- "You are beloved. Nothing you ever do can separate you from my love. You are my child and I am your father. I will never leave you or forsake you." This is true security that frees us from the devil's guilt. Just breathe because you are breathing eternally...We can take deep breaths, rejoice in the favor of the Lord, the freedom in Christ, and the deep rest that comes in being like a baby in the arms of their father.

Not only no guilt in life, **No Fear in Death!** Jack Kerouac- the 1950s author and poet once said, "I am young now and can look upon my body and soul with pride. But it will be mangled soon, and later it will begin to disintegrate, and then I shall die, and die conclusively. How can we face such a fact, and not live in fear?" He's absolutely right...unless you have Jesus. **Hebrews 2:14-15** *By his death, he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the*

*devil— and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.* We don't have to fear death. This is why the Apostle Paul said Philippians 1:21 *To live is Christ and to die is gain.* And he lived that way too. And it's why Dietrich Bonhoeffer was able to face his hanging at the hands of the Nazis and say, "This is the end for me, but it's just the beginning." Friends, this confidence and assurance and lack of fear is not just for special apostles and super Christians, it's for all of us who are sealed with the Spirit as our deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. That doesn't mean I am trying to hurry my death...and it doesn't mean that I don't have some apprehension facing death one day...but every time I visit someone facing death who has peace and assurance...it builds my faith. I know my eternal salvation is secure and there's not a thing in the world that you can do death to take it away from me. Your enemies can't take it away from you. The demons of hell can't take it away from you. Sickness can't take that away from you. You can't even take it away from you.

I told you about the man in his last days that was unsettled and fearful. Well friends, I told him just what I told you today. I walked him verse-by-verse through the Scriptures. And as we went along, I saw his countenance change, I saw his body settle, I saw his facial expression go from a grimace to a contented smile. What was happening? It was the Holy Spirit testifying to his human spirit that he is a child of God, saying Abba Father! The Spirit whom he had been silencing began to whisper a better word. "You are a child of God, I'm holding you right now in my arms and no one can snatch you away." He died shortly after that, ready to face death and the unending joy of the Lord. Do you have this assurance?