

# **Blueprint: God's Design for the Church**

## **Sealed with the Holy Spirit**

**Ephesians 1:13-14**

**Bro. Ricky Cunningham**

Now, I just want to let you in on what we are going to do this morning. I just enjoyed so much this week getting to study these two verses. It reminds me of when Celisa packs a picnic lunch for us. She's got this little basket and whenever she says, "Can I bring a picnic lunch to you today," I just get excited. I don't know how she does it, but it is almost like she gets the whole grocery store. It is almost like she packs everything I love the most in that basket. She packs it, but what I love most is us getting to unpack it. This morning, I feel like we are opening God's picnic basket—two little bitty tiny verses, and every word is a spiritual nugget in this basket, and we are going to unpack it. Now, when we unpack it don't look at it...don't decide if you are going to taste it or not. I want you to trust me. Everything in this spiritual basket from God has been designed with you in mind—to feed your spirit and feed your soul. God wants us to just feast on His Word this morning, and then He wants us to live this spiritual truth out, not just for the rest of this day but the rest of this week, and hopefully, for the rest of our lives. It is absolutely amazing what God is going to teach us about God's work for God's glory.

### **Scripture**

***"In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory."***

A couple of weeks ago as we began this next section of Ephesians, we reminded ourselves that in the Greek New Testament, beginning with verse 3, Paul begins to write about what God has done for us in salvation. When he begins to write, he breaks all of the rules of Greek grammar. He just goes on and on and on and on and on. He doesn't finish his thought that he started in verse 3 until he gets to verse 14. Now, our English Bibles have taken this one long Greek sentence and divided it up into several sentences because in our English culture we know that the best way for us to communicate truth is in short, simple sentences. But, when you read what Paul wrote under the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit, Paul did not just stick to the subject and the verbs. He put clause after clause after clause and modifier after modifier after modifier. He paints us a full picture of what God has done for us in salvation. This morning, we are going to try to unpack this 'basket,' if I can call it that, and just enjoy the riches of God's Word. I hope that later in the week you are still chewing on what God has served us this morning. So, the first thing I want to do is unpack the meat, and then we will get to the ketchup, the mustard, the onions, the pickles, the chips, the French fries, the chess pie, or coconut pie, or strawberry cake, whatever you like.

### **Gentiles Also Sealed**

What is Paul telling us in these two verses? Here it is simply—You, also, were sealed. Now he has already told us we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we have been predestined to be like Christ, and that this was to the praise of the glory of God's grace. Last week, Kory revealed to us that the work of the Father was that in Christ we have been redeemed, and wow what a redemption we have in Christ! Again, it is to the praise of the glory of His grace. This morning Paul wants us to also understand what the Holy Spirit of God has done in our salvation, and he wants each of you to know that you also were sealed. Notice in verse 12 that Paul says, "...we who were the first to hope in Christ." But in verse 13, he doesn't say we, he says "you." You, in this passage, is referring to the Gentile believers living in Ephesus who are now saints of God and are coming together to be the church of Jesus Christ. Paul understands that the gospel did not come to Gentiles first, the gospel

came to Jews first, and Paul was one of those Jews who first received Christ. Paul understands that the Jews who came to know Christ came to know Him so that their life would bring honor and glory to God, but now, he is writing to Gentiles. There has been this big, middle wall of division, this wall of hostility, between the Jews and Gentiles, and Paul is letting the Gentiles know that they also, just like the Jews, were sealed. The audience understood the metaphor that Paul is using here when he talks about the work of God's Holy Spirit sealing us.

## **A Biblical Seal**

There are three primary ways that a seal was used in the biblical world that I want us to remember so that we get an understanding of what God wants us to know about the work of the Holy Spirit in our salvation.

- **Denotes Ownership**

The first way a seal was used in the biblical world, was to denote ownership. Farmers used seals. Potters used seals. When you think about a farmer using a seal, you think about what we have all seen in the western movies before they had fences—they used to brand their cattle. When you saw that brand, you knew who that cow belonged to. You knew it belonged to a certain owner of a certain ranch. Potters also used seals. After they created their special work of clay, they would turn that earthen vessel upside down and put a seal on the bottom of it, and then they would put the vessel in the oven and bake it. During the baking process when it got really, really hot, the true color of the vessel would be revealed. Once it was finished, they would take it out and let it cool. Then, on market day, they would go down to the market and place their vessel, or vase, whatever they had made, in an open-air market. When someone came by to purchase one of these wares, they wanted to make sure who made the pot because some potters had better reputations than others. So they would pick up the pot, turn it upside down, and look to see whose seal was on it.

In the same way, you also, Gentiles here at Hardin, if you are in Christ, you have been sealed. Do you know why you have been sealed? Because God wants the world to know you are His. So do you know what God does? As

He begins to do this work of salvation in our life, He actually ordains us to get put in places where people can put their grubby little arms and legs on us, and it feels like they just turn our world upside. Have you ever been there? Do you know why God allows that to happen to you? So that when your life gets turned upside down, they see whose you really are. It is not on a Sunday morning when we are praising God in the assembly of the saints that the world is going to know that we are His. It is when we are out in the world and life gets turned upside down—that is when the seal of God lets the world know those that are His and those who are not His. Wow!

- **Guarantees Destination**

A seal also was used in the farm world and in the world of commerce to guarantee destination. When a farmer or a business prepared a product to be shipped somewhere, before they would actually put it on the boat to ship it, they put a seal on it, and that seal would guarantee its destination. So, when it arrived in a port that worker would look on that product, see that seal, and that seal would say Damascus or that seal would say Corinth. That seal guaranteed it wouldn't stay in the port in Ephesus but it would find its way, ultimately, to the port in wherever it was intended to go.

Are you Gentiles listening? God sealed you. You know why he sealed you? He sealed you to guarantee that one day you will arrive where He promised you will arrive, and that's in His very presence in glory. On that day, God will not be looking at your works or your life to see whether or not you will spend eternity with Him, He will be looking for the presence of His seal in you.

- **Tamperproof**

A seal denoted ownership, it guaranteed its destination, but it was also used by kings and people in authority to guarantee that whatever they did wasn't tampered with. You didn't tamper with what a king sealed. Do you remember in Daniel chapter 6 when Darius is going to have Daniel thrown in a lion's den? Once they get the lions in the den, and once they get Daniel in the den, they rolled that stone in front of it and the king sealed

with his signet. No man messed with that stone during the night because it had the king's seal on it.

God, the king, has sealed you. Do you know why? So that what he has done for you in Christ cannot ever be tampered with. I don't know if you are old enough to remember a few years ago when you couldn't go to a store and buy Tylenol because it was pulled from all of our shelves. The reason is because someone had put something that was not good for a person in some capsules. If you took one of the capsules that had been tainted it would kill you. Instead of curing your headache it would just kill you. When they finally put Tylenol back on the shelf, it didn't come in a bottle anymore; it came in a little box. Now they warn us not to trust a box if the seal has been broken. When you buy that little box, you have to first tear open the sealed flaps on the box. Then when you open the box, you don't have the Tylenol, you now have a bottle. You have to take the bottle out of the box, and tear off that tight plastic seal around the lid and bottle. Then you have to turn that little tab to line up the arrows, and then you have to flip the top off. When you flip that top off, you still can't get the Tylenol because now there is a seal underneath the cap and you have to break that seal. When you break the seal, you are confident now to take the Tylenol. But when you turn it upside down, you still can't get the pill out because they now put cotton on top of the pills. By the time you get it open, you've got a migraine headache and don't even want any Tylenol—so if you are going to use Tylenol you better start the moment you feel a headache coming on! Why did they do all this? They did this to guarantee that their product will never be tampered with again. They are guaranteeing you a tamperproof product. Do you get it?

Can I just tell you this? There is a person called Satan who would love to tamper with what God has done for you. So, do you know what God did? He sealed you. And when He sealed you, He said to Satan—*Stay away from him who is mine! You cannot touch what I have done for him in Christ and no matter how you tempt him, no matter how he listens to you, you cannot prevent him from spending eternity with me forever and ever in heaven!* You and I have a tamper proof salvation.

## **Sealed at the Moment of Salvation**

Now, when did this start? When did we get sealed with the Holy Spirit? Here is what Paul says, "...when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him..." We were sealed with the Spirit the moment we heard and believed—not two weeks later, not two years later, not a second work of grace but instantly, at the same time. The Bible isn't even teaching here that you get sealed after you hear and believe, the Bible is teaching that you get sealed the moment you hear and believe! It is simultaneous. This is what Paul teaches in Romans, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." Your destination will never be guaranteed. You will never belong to God until you hear and believe.

This morning in the 7:50 am service, we baptized a young man named, Hunter Henson, who sat in this church his whole life and didn't get saved until two weeks ago at 25 years of age. He didn't make a false profession; he had never made a profession. And there are some of you here this morning who are probably just like him. You have heard and you have heard but you have never believed, therefore you don't have the seal. You are not in Christ. You are still in Adam and you will not be sealed until you hear and believe. What do you have to hear? You have to hear the word of truth. Paul wants you to understand what the word of truth is. It's the gospel of your salvation.

Now, we are calling this God's work for His glory, so you would think this is God's salvation not our salvation. But Paul, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, says that it is your salvation. The word, gospel, literally means the 'good news.' Do any of you remember when you heard the word of truth, the good news of your salvation? See, this word, salvation, is a word picture in the Greek language that literally means 'to be rescued or to be delivered.' It is the picture of a person who gets into a ship and begins to sail, and then his ship gets wrecked on some rocks. He is in need of being delivered; he is in need of being rescued. His life is a mess. And then someone in another vessel arrives. Now, the moment the guy gets out of the wrecked boat and into the other boat, he probably feels like he has been rescued. That is true, but he is not fully rescued until he gets off of

the water, out of that boat, and safely back on the shore. That is the picture here, God rescuing you from sin.

- **Tailor-Made for You**

God didn't provide a general salvation that saves all. This is not like when you go into a department store and they have a bunch of coats on the wall and you choose a coat. No. Your salvation was hand-tailored to you by God. He didn't just generally put sin on a cross and die for the sin of the world. In particular, He died for every sin you have ever committed or will ever commit. Your salvation was hand-tailored by God to get you out of that sin, and to be free from the sin that would bother you and follow you for the rest of your life. In other words, He has given you a custom-made suit of salvation that perfectly fits you. Is that glorious or is that glorious? The salvation suit God gives me is guaranteed to help me with whatever sin I face, but your salvation suit has you in mind.

The moment you heard what God did for you in Christ and you believed you were sealed. This word, belief, literally means 'to trust in, to rely upon, to adhere to, to commit to, to lean on, to rest in.' It is what Abram did when God revealed His plan for his life in Genesis 15:6. God showed Abram all the stars in the sky and told him that was how many kids he was going to have. See, he and his wife couldn't have kids—but Abram just said in the Hebrew, *aman*. That is the Hebrew word for believe. It literally means 'let it be so.' It is where we get our English word, amen. That's what happened when you were saved. When you were saved, God's Holy Spirit revealed to you that He had died for each and every sin you had committed and you could be forgiven because of what God did for you on a cross. In your little heart, you just simply said 'amen, I believe, let it be so.' You trusted God that what He said was true. The very moment you trusted God with what He said about you, you were sealed with a seal that guarantees the world will know you are His—with the seal that guarantees you will one day arrive at your intended destination—with a seal that guarantees you have a salvation that can never be tampered with and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ.

## **Sealed with the Holy Spirit**

Now, Paul answers the question of 'who.' In the biblical word, when you talked about a seal, that was a thing. But Paul wants you to know that you are not sealed with a 'thing,' you are sealed with a 'who'—the promised Holy Spirit. See, we cannot understand how the second person of the Triune God would leave Heaven, take upon humanity, and live in a human body and become a human. Agreed? It blows our minds. Let me tell you what blows my mind more than that—the third person of the Triune Godhead, God the Holy Spirit. The moment that I, Ricky Cunningham, put my faith in Christ, He who is everywhere, took up residence in me and sealed me. I am not sealed by the Holy Spirit I am sealed with the Holy Spirit. Do you get that? You have the Holy Spirit of God in you. The moment you heard and believed, God sealed you with Him, the promised Holy Spirit.

We can go all the way back to the book of Joel when Joel prophesied that in the last days God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and that came to fruition on the day of Pentecost. He baptized the church with the presence of the Holy Spirit. Jesus, in the gospel, on his last night on earth told the disciples—*Guys I am going away but don't be disappointed, don't cry, because the moment I get back to my Father's right-hand side I am going to send you another helper.* (That word 'another' means another just like Christ.) *The world is going to take me out tomorrow because they can put their grubby, little hands upon me, and it is God's will for me to die for you on a cross. But when He comes, He won't live with you as I have lived with you He is going to live in you. The world cannot touch Him because the world cannot see Him. When He comes, He will be your helper, He will be your teacher, He will be your witness, He will be your convicter, and He will be your guide.* That happened on the day of Pentecost to the church. It happens to every believer. At the moment of belief, we receive the seal of Holy Spirit of God.

- **Guarantor of Eternal Security**

When Genesis 1:2 says the earth was without form and without void, the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters and the deep. The same Spirit



who covered the entire earth is in you and He is in me. What does Paul say? He says He is the guarantee of our inheritance until we take possession of it. Paul wants to make sure you get this. If the Father selected you in Christ before the foundation of the world, and if the Son saved you from sin, the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life reveals you are secure eternally. Now can I say this respectfully and politely? Not all of us get that because not all of us were raised in a church that taught that you are secure in your salvation. As a matter of fact, as I look around, many of us were raised in a church that taught that you couldn't be secure in your salvation, and the reason is because that type of salvation depends not on Christ, but on you and what you do after you get saved. I am sorry you were lied to. That is not true. I am glad you are here now and I am glad you are hearing the truth. I am not being arrogant; I am just teaching the Word of God. Listen to me, God not only wanted you to know He chose you; God wanted you to know He saved you. God wants you to know that you are eternally secure because your security does not rest in what you do for Him, your security rests in what He has done and what He continues to do in you. He did not just take your sin away through His Son on a cross, He put His Holy Spirit within you as the seal who guarantees that one day you will reach your intended destination and you will take full possession for whatever God has for you.

Now, I think we were all raised to believe in a Bible that is the inspired, inherent Word of God. What we mean by that is that we don't just believe that God inspired the big theme of the Bible, the big picture of the Bible. We don't believe that God just inspired the thoughts of the Bible, the sense of the Bible, but we believe that God inspired every word of the Bible. In verse 14, the Bible says the seal of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee. The word, guarantee, came out of the commercial world of the Roman Empire from Greek society. The Greek word is *arrabon*, from which we get our English word, or English thought, of a down payment. In Roman society, in Greek society, this came from the Phoenicians. We got the alphabet from them. The Phoenicians were the world exporters and importers and they realized we needed to be able to communicate if we were going to trade well, so they invented the alphabet. They also invented the down payment. You could put some money down on what you were buying and it will be

yours, but the person will hold it until you bring the rest of the money. When you bring the rest of the money, you get what you purchased. We all know that a down payment is part of the purchase price. If I buy something for \$10,000 and put down a \$1,000 deposit, when I want to take possession of whatever I just bought, I bring \$9,000. That initial \$1,000 was part of the price, so when I bring them the \$9,000 I take possession of the item. That's how this works. God has given you a down payment on your salvation and the down payment is the Holy Spirit of God. He is part of the purchase price. He is part of the possession. He is a foretaste, right now, of what it is really going to be like when one day in glory we live with Him forever and ever and ever. In other words, He lives with us right now and He is your down payment.

Sometimes God does some things in my world that just solidifies spiritual truth. It is kind of like when Jesus taught in parables. Years ago, Celisa and I had not been married very long, she and I wanted to go to Alabama to see this Christian in Alabama who was raising the kind of cattle that we thought we wanted to raise and we wanted some of his seed stock. So we went to Alabama with a check from my dad and we are going to buy two heifers and one bull, with dad's permission. Celisa and I get there and we choose two heifers and a bull and we agree on a price. We weren't going to take them back to the farm yet. It was going to be several more months before we can actually brought them back to the farm. The guy says, "If you will just give me a down payment, I will hold them." I said, "That is fine. In Kentucky a down payment is 5% or 10% so how much do you want?" He said, "Well, I need about 33% of the purchase price." I said, "33%? We don't do that in Kentucky." He said, "Well we do in Alabama." He is supposed to be a believer, so I do the math and I just don't think I can do this with dad's money. He can tell I'm struggling, so he says, "I will tell you what, you write me a check for 1/3 of the purchase price, and I will put the check in my billfold and hold it until you bring the rest of the money and pick up your cattle." I'm from Kentucky—I thought, wow, I like this man because I'm going to give him a piece of paper that is 1/3 of the purchase price, but the money is never going to leave my dad's account until I go bring him the rest of the money and take possession of the heifers and the bulls. This meant if I never went back to Alabama, he

couldn't cash the check. He would just have to carry it around in his billfold. That is what he agreed to and he was a Christian, so I wrote the check, came home, and four or five months later he sent the animals. We got the animals home and I sent him the check. He cashed that first check when I sent him the second check, but until I sent the rest of the money, that first check, that down payment, stayed in my dad's account. Now about a year later, we were trying to get genetics from all over the nation. I went to Colorado and bought a bull because this man has a particular blood line that we wanted. We agreed on the price, and I got ready to write him a down payment and I said, "How much do you want?" He said, "10%." I said, "That is cool, that's what we do in Kentucky." I start writing the check and before I sign my name on the check, I say, "Now, you are going to hold this until I get the bull and send you the rest of the money, right?" He said, "No. This is a down payment. The moment you get on that airplane; I'm going to the bank and I'm cashing your check. That is what you are supposed to do." I didn't say a word. I wrote him the check and got on the plane. I was sitting on the plane coming home and I heard the Holy Spirit of God say to me *that is how too many Christians are*. He reminded me not of the man in Colorado, He reminded me of the man in Alabama who didn't understand what a down payment was. The man in Alabama had a down payment but he never used it. The guy in Colorado knew what a down payment was and he took possession of the down payment the moment we agreed on the price because that money was just a foretaste of what I was going to bring later when I would get full possession it.

Do you get where I am going? Many of you have the Holy Spirit of God in you and you carry Him around in your purse, or in your truck, or He is sitting on a shelf—and you are living the Christian life in the flesh. No! God did not just give you the Holy Spirit to keep you out of Hell, he gave you the Holy Spirit to get you through hell on this Earth so that you would have a foretaste of what life is going to be like with Him forever. When you learn to enjoy His presence, right now in every day of your life, cash the check!

## Do Not Grieve the Spirit

God has given you the Holy Spirit of Himself. Later in Ephesians chapter 4 verse 30, Paul is going to remind us that we have been sealed until the day of redemption, so do not grieve the Holy Spirit. Do not ever call Him an 'it.' Do not ever call Him a ghost. He is the Spirit of God and He is holy. As the seal of your salvation, so that you will know you are really sealed, there will be times when you get in certain situations, you are going to get ready to go somewhere, and He will say...*do not go there*. You are going to walk in a store and He will say...*do not walk into that store. Do not purchase that. Do not you pay good money and watch that. Do not, do not, do not!* Do you know what many of you will do? You will grieve Him—you do it anyway. If you get this picture that you are living your life and the Holy Spirit is in the car, but He just stays in the car while you walk in, well you have missed it. If you think you can go in a bedroom and Him not be there, you have missed it. If you think you can go into a movie theatre and Him not be there, you have missed it. He lives inside us! He wants to be our helper, our teacher, our witness, our convicter, our guide.

Jesus said it is actually to our advantage that we have the Holy Spirit instead of Jesus because if Jesus were here, He would be limited to a body. If Jesus was hanging out with me today, He couldn't hang out with all of you. I'm convinced He would hang out with me a lot and you all would be in big trouble! I am teasing! ☺ So that no one has a monopoly on God, God has put His Spirit in you and He is also still in me, so God can hang out with all of us at the same time. When we all hang out with God, the last thing we want to do is grieve Him. The word, grieve, means 'to hurt.' Why would you want to hurt God? He loved you so much that He put His Son on a cross for you and He died for every sin you are ever going to commit. Once you have been forgiven, He doesn't want you to keep on sinning because the whole purpose of your salvation was to rescue you from sin. He is actually going to warn you, He is going to try and keep you out of sin, but you do it anyway.

## **Do Not Quench the Spirit**

Paul is going to write to the church at Thessalonica and tell them not to quench the Spirit. See, there are some times that the Holy Spirit is going to be so excited. You are going to be right here, but He wants you to be right there. He nudges you to go over there, but you will not go. Sometimes, the Holy Spirit nudges...*HEY! Yeah him, just talk to him, start up a conversation*, and you refuse. Do you remember when the Lord led you to be a part of a mission trip but you said no? The Holy Spirit has been nudging some of you to choose some of those children, like He chose you as He adopted you, so why don't you adopt one of those children in Nicaragua? He wants to use you. You hear the gospel and you walk out of here every week and just go straight to your car. You quench Him. You are not dealing with an impersonal 'it,' you are not dealing with a force, you are dealing with the third person of the triune God.

So, why would He seal you? Why would He guarantee that one day you will make it to Heaven? It is to the praise of His glory. Now, I know some of you are struggling and you doubt this thing called security, the eternal security of a believer. I want to close with this thought. God cannot lie, right? So God has given me a down payment until He takes possession of me. He bought me, He has given me the Holy Spirit, and one day He is going to take possession of me at the second coming of Christ. Does everyone agree with that? Now, if He gave me Himself, in third person of the Holy Spirit, as my down payment, then let's think about this—if one day God changes His mind and doesn't want to finish what he started in me, and decides one of you is better than me, and He decides to choose one of you instead and backs out on me, can He ever take the Holy Spirit from me? No, not if He gave me the Holy Spirit as a down payment. If God ever takes the Holy Spirit away from me as a believer, then God is a liar, and if He is a liar, I am out of here. He is not a liar. Are you with me? Let's think this through. If God has given me the Holy Spirit, He has given me Himself, but now He backs out of the transaction and I don't make it to Heaven, He sends me to Hell. I am cool in Hell. I really am. Do you know why I am cool in Hell? It is because I have God with me in Hell. I have got the third person of the triune God with me in Hell, and can I say this, with

God, I can survive Hell! You are all are saying...*Hold up, Brother Ricky, God would not send His Holy Spirit to Hell.* YOU GOT IT. The reason God is not going to send me to Hell is not about me. The reason He will not send me to Hell is because this is about Him. For God to send me to Hell as a believer He would have to send the Holy Spirit to Hell, and He isn't going to do that. Therefore, I am eternally secure, and because I am secure, guess what? I am going to listen to the One who has secured me. Therefore, I am not going to grieve Him. Therefore, I am not going to quench Him. Therefore, I am going to leave here this morning and I am going to live the rest of my life for His glory because that is what my salvation is all about anyway—His honor and His glory. How many of you are with me on this? Let's live our life for the glory of God because that's why we have been saved.