

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1

Review of the Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to enlighten the saints in Ephesus of the plan of God, to have them understand the blessing of God to believers (1:3) so that they would not be isolated from Jewish believers, and even though they used to be far from Christ, they have now been brought near (2:11-15) so that they would understand their purpose on earth in being the new administrators during this time under the title “ekklesia” (3:9-10). Furthermore, they must not conclude that this “ekklesia,” is an afterthought and that Jews were more complete or better in some way. This new administration is in accordance with His eternal purpose even though it was not revealed previously (3:4-5,11).

Ephesians 1:3-14 – This passage makes a clear statement concerning the spiritual blessing or literally, the proclamation of a spiritual nature (εὐλογία πνευματικῆ). Remember that this proclamation can be something that is received by means of a royal decree or it can be a truth about the person that is revealed by royal decree.

Paul lists five proclamations of a spiritual nature that are spoken to the saints (1:3–14).

It is clear that he wants his readers to understand and rejoice in all that God has done for believers through Jesus Christ. Each section could be translated with “praise”:

1. “praise God for predestining us” (1:4–6)
2. “praise God for redeeming us” (1:7-8a)
3. “praise God for the mystery of His will” (1:8b-10)
4. “praise God for His inheritance” (1:11-12)
5. “praise God for the sealing of the Holy Spirit” (1:13-14)

Ephesians 1:13-14

NASB:

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.

Literal translation:

In Whom also you, having heard the word of truth, the good news of your salvation, in Whom also (you), having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, Who is (the) pledge of our inheritance, unto redemption of the possession, unto the praise of His glory.

English Sentence Order:

You also, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, having heard and having believed the word of truth the good news of your salvation. (The Holy Spirit) is the pledge of our inheritance, unto redemption of the possession. PRAISE BE TO HIS GLORY!

Opening remarks:

It has been a long road getting through this text. Today, we will finish an analysis of the text of this opening doxology from Paul. Remember that this entire passage is one long thought, one long sentence. In our current culture as we read the text, we have trouble keeping everything in order, so the translators normally break it up into various sentences based upon the translation you are using. This sentence goes all the way back to verse 3 with the main idea from verse 4 “He selected us in Him.”

Next week, we will discuss the variety of theological issues that come from this passage. For now, we will leave it right here.

This being one long sentence does not mean that Paul does not hit a variety of points. Verse 13 is in reflection of verses 11-12, where we discovered last week that those two verses were not about the church at Ephesus (and consequently, not about the church in general), but it was about those who were the first to hope in Christ.

The Jews were also the first to believe in Jesus.

It was the Jewish believer that gloried in God and shined a light of the truth of God into the Gentile nations.

Paul is a Jew, of the tribe of Benjamin, and it was through him that God revealed the mystery of God’s plan for this age.

We do have an inheritance, but Israel is God’s chosen allotment. At the end of this age, all of Israel will be restored, Jesus will reign from Jerusalem with the Apostles, and the kings of the earth will bring tribute to Israel.

Paul is not pointing this out to have the first of the believers be special, but so they are recognized for their effort. But now in verse 13, Paul turns his attention to “You also.”

Analysis:

The main idea of this subordinate clause (13-14) is “you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise.” Everything else supports or expounds that idea.

In the Greek text, the phrase *you were sealed* is one word: σφραγίζω sphragizō. This is a well-attested word in both the biblical text and in secular Greek writings. In the secular world, the seal is either the instrument by which a seal is made or the imprint made. Placing a seal upon something had different effects.

1. It can denote ownership
2. It can authenticate (verify)
3. It can identify (signature)
4. It can indicate a status (borrowed authority)
5. It can work as a guarantee, a promise (pledge) to be fulfilled later

In the LXX, this Greek word was used 27 times and with all of these potentially in play (1 Kings 21:8; 2 Kings 22:4; Nehemiah 9:38; Isaiah 29:11; Jeremiah 32:10-11).

The Greek New Testament also has a variety of uses (Matthew 27:66; John 3:33; John 6:27; Romans 15:28; 2 Timothy 2:19; the seven seals and the 144,000 who were sealed in Revelation).

What is the common thought? What is provided by all these uses of “seal?” The good news is that we have a few verses that help us clarify this statement so that we do not have to make our best guess.

2 Corinthians 1:18-22 – Paul is defending his integrity and that he did not waiver in message our purpose. The reason is that in Jesus Christ there is no variation. The promise is set; it is guaranteed; He is our amen; He establishes us, anoints us, and seals us. The point that is being made is that God’s promise is assured and there cannot be any other truth. His promise is sure. One of the proofs of this promise is our sealing with the Spirit as a pledge.

Romans 8:9-11, 15-17 – Having the Spirit of God means that, though the flesh is dying and will die, the Spirit makes us alive and will make our mortal bodies immortal. Furthermore, the Spirit also brings us to adoption (Ephesians 1:5) and testifies by the Word of God that we are children of God, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. Since we identify with His suffering, we will also be glorified with Him.

Ephesians 4:30 – Paul implores the believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by Whom you were sealed unto the day of redemption.

The sealing in Ephesians 1:13 is about the promise, guarantee, and absolute certainty of our inheritance, of our future glory. This is one of the main passages that is used to explain eternal security.

Who is our pledge – Pledge is built upon the idea of to seal. “ἀρράβων arrhabōn” is borrowed from Hebrew and translated into Greek. The Hebrew word is “עֲרָבוֹן ērābōn.”

“Here, it indicates a guaranteed amount which a buyer pays on a contract to deem it unalterable. For the purchaser, an arrhabōn secured legal rights to an article which had not been paid for in full and which had not been received. To the seller, this initial down payment guaranteed that he, at the specified time, would receive the remaining amount of the purchase price.”

Now the seal and the pledge are only as important as the one sealing and pledging. Who is the one who seals? Who is the one that pledges? What does God use to seal and to pledge? The Holy Spirit, which is in each believer and guarantees the inheritance. To question if that seal, that pledge, can be lost is not to question the one to whom it is guaranteed, it is to question the guarantor. If I had no other passage in Scripture that speaks to the security of the believer, this would be enough. But thanks be to God that the guarantee is taught consistently in Scripture, a doctrine we will explore soon in our doctrinal hour.

The grammatical structure of *seal* is 2nd Person Plural Aorist Indicative Passive. Passive indicates that it was performed to the “you all” by God, the action was not performed or helped in any way by the ones who are sealed. Aorist Indicative means that it is a fact that has a one-time aspect.

How does one get sealed, obtain the pledge, obtain the guarantee of the inheritance? That is answered clearly in verse 13. “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,” – NASB.

You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, having heard and having believed the word of truth the good news of your salvation. – My Translation