

# BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

(Ephesians 1:13-14)

By Paul T. Butler — OBC Chapel, 10-23-73

## INTRODUCTION

### I. CONTEXTUALLY

- A. These two verses combine to form one of the great "spiritual blessings" God has blessed us with in Christ.
  - 1. Paul lays two huge sentences on the Ephesian church in chapter one.
  - 2. The first sentence 1:3-14 is a catalog of all the ways in which God has blessed Christians in Christ.
  - 3. The second sentence 1:15-23 is Paul's prayer that these Christians may know (understand and experience) those blessings.
- B. Paul did not place all this "breathhtaking" stress upon spiritual blessings without reason.
  - 1. Spiritual blessings are not contingent upon favorable physical circumstances and are available to all believers alike.
  - 2. Spiritual blessings thus have to do with the abiding realities, not the temporary trappings of the flesh.
  - 3. Spiritual blessings supply man's most desperate need—to be remade into the person God intended him to be—this will be the thrust of these two verses.

### II. EXEGETICALLY

- A. Reading these two verses in the Greek text is an interesting experience.
  - 1. Literally it would read something like this:  
"In Him also, you, the ones having heard the word, that one of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in Him also, you, the ones having believed, were sealed (passive) with Spirit, the promised one, the holy one, who is the down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption which will give complete possession unto the praise of His glory."
  - 2. The Berkeley Version is also interesting here:  
"In Him you also, after listening to the message of the truth, the Gospel of our salvation, have as believers in Him been stamp marked with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge-deposit of our legacy for the releasing of our deed of purchase, and all to the praise of His glory."

### III. ETYMOLOGICALLY

- A. Seal - literal sense: "A device bearing a design, a name or some other words so made that it can impart an impression in relief upon a soft substance like clay or wax. When the clay or wax hardens, it permanently bears the impression of the seal."

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1. Archaeologists find them being used 4000 B.C.
2. Originally they took the form of a cylinder, gradually superseded by the scarab (beetle-shaped)
3. Some carried on cords around neck like necklace; some cone-shaped in boxes; most in form of finger-rings

### B. Seal - uses:

1. As an authentication
2. As a mark of ratification of a covenant
3. As a means of protecting documents to seal against tampering
4. As a deputation of authority
5. As an official mark of ownership

### IV. APPLICABILITY - Three areas of blessing for the Christian in having been sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

- A. He Etches the Image of God and His Son Upon our Being
- B. He Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
- C. He Empowers Us As Emissaries of our Great God

## DISCUSSION

### I. ETCHES THE IMAGE OF GOD UPON OUR BEING

#### A. Authenticates our genuineness as belonging to Him

1. "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God. . . ." (Rom. 8:16).
2. Does not say that the Holy Spirit bears witness *to* our spirit but *with* our spirit—*summarturei*; the Holy Spirit bears witness—and our own spirit bears witness.
3. If my spirit says I am a child of God, and the testimony of the Holy Spirit shows that I am not a child of God, then I am not a child no matter what my spirit says. The two witnesses must agree. My spirit must agree with the testimony of the Holy Spirit.
4. This co-witness of the Spirit of God with our spirit, whereby we are assured that we are children of God, is a very important and blessed reality. BUT IT HAS BEEN SO OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETED.
5. How does the Spirit bear witness with our spirit? A still small voice? A feeling? emotion? impulse? The Bible nowhere affirms such leadings! All people and religious denominations who claim such subjective witness of the Holy Spirit not only contradict one another—they contradict the Bible. The Bible claims to be the witness of the Spirit. The Spirit of God does not contradict Himself.

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6. Since there are no inspired men living today—and those who claim to be such contradict the word of God in what is His witness about who are the children of God—the only witness which we have of the Spirit to us is found in His written Word. *No one knows the Spirit's will on any subject unless he has learned it from the written Word.* Anything that claims to be the Holy Spirit's teaching must not contradict this!
  7. The Spirit of God lays down the terms by which we become a child of God, and when we believe and obey these terms then both the Holy Spirit and our own spirits testify that we are the sons of God.
  8. WHAT A BLESSING TO HAVE SUCH A SEAL PUT UPON OUR MINDS AND HEARTS. . . . WE DON'T HAVE TO DEPEND UPON FICKLE AND VACILLATING EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS . . . NOR UPON THE WHIMS AND OPINIONS OF MEN. OUR SALVATION IS AUTHENTICATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT HIMSELF IN HIS UNCHANGING, ONCE-FOR-ALL WORD . . . NO GUESSING, NO ANXIETY.
  9. "These things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (I Jn. 5:13). THIS IS THE EMPHATIC WORD OF JOHN'S WRITINGS. . . . "THAT YE MAY KNOW. . . ."
- B. Glorifies (The Holy Spirit transfers some of the glory of God to our nature.)
1. "But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit" (II Cor. 3:18).
  2. Alexander Campbell said it this way in his *Christian System*, "The word of redemption is a system of works, or deeds, on the part of God, which constitutes the most splendid series of moral facts men or angel ever saw. . . . When these facts are understood or brought into immediate contact with the mind of man, as a moral seal, they delineate the image of God upon the human soul. All the means of grace are, therefore, only the means of impressing this seal upon the heart, of bringing these moral facts to make their full impression on the soul of man. The testimony of the Holy Spirit through the apostles and the faith of those who believe and obey this testimony are the channel through which these facts, or the hand of God, draws the image on the heart and character of man." He went on to say . . . "all the moral facts which can form moral character after the divine model, or which can effect a moral or religious change in man, are found in the testimony of God."

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3. What is this image of God . . . this glory of God which is impressed or sealed upon our being? The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness and self-control.
  4. I submit these as characteristics of God which we can enjoy as blessings if we will allow the Holy Spirit to impress them upon our natures: honesty; goodness; creativeness; humor; appreciativeness; enjoyment; giving-ness.
  5. Carol King has a phrase in her song, *Way Over Yonder*, "And the sweet-tasting good life is so easily found . . . way over yonder, that's where I'm bound." Let's appropriate that here. THE SWEET-TASTING GOOD LIFE OF GOD IS SO EASILY FOUND. . . . IF WE JUST LET THE SPIRIT ETCH IT UPON OUR BEING BY KNOWING AND DOING WHERE THE SPIRIT LEADS IN THE SPIRIT'S WORD.
  6. You see, this is the work of the Spirit. God the Father is the creative source of blessing; the Son is the revealer of the possibility of such blessedness and obtainer of it in the flesh; the Holy Spirit is the agent by which this blessing may be impressed or sealed upon the nature of man!  
HOW MIND STAGGERING! GOD CREATES THE BLESSING, THE SON WINS IT FOR US, THE HOLY SPIRIT TRANSFERS AND SEALS IT UPON THOSE WHO WILL ACCEPT IT BY FAITH!
- C. Secures and protects us against being defrauded by the thief of souls.
1. When we are sealed by the Holy Spirit we can live confidently that there is no power in this world or the other capable of robbing us of our souls, our life, our being.
  2. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (Jn. 10:27-28).
  3. "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" (Jn. 5:24).
  4. "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:2-3).
  5. "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome them; for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (I Jn. 4:4).
  6. "We know that any one born of God does not sin, but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him" (I Jn. 5:18).

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7. The book of Revelation pictorializes a great host which no man can number sealed by God—protected from the dragon and the beasts not able to be overcome by the great spiritual battle that rages between God and His enemies.
8. WHAT A TREMENDOUS BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE HAD THE SEAL OF GOD PUT UPON US. NO MATTER THE WORLD WANTS TO ERADICATE US. . . . NO MATTER THAT IT MAY APPEAR AS IF THE FORCES OF UNGODLINESS WILL WIN THE STRUGGLE . . . GOD KNOWS WHO HIS ARE, HE HAS THEM MARKED AND SEALED, AND THEY ARE SECURE!

## II. HE GIVES US AN EARNEST OF OUR INHERITANCE

### A. Holiness

1. What is the legacy left us by that Son of man who came to earth, born in a stable, who had not where to lay his head?
2. He brought us word from our Father that holiness is our legacy. The most needful, most enjoyable treasure God could will to us is holiness.
3. What is the deepest longing of the human soul? To be clean, to be good, to be pure, to be true, to be a beautiful-person.
4. This is what I want when I get to God. Bags full or banks full of gold and diamonds are not what my soul cries out for. Ivory palaces and mansions are not what I want for my eternal inheritance. I WANT, I NEED, I MUST HAVE HOLINESS!
5. "I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. . . . Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 7:18—8:1).
6. Now God has taken care of my problem. He has provided me a cleansing, a goodness, a purity, a freedom from guilt, a holiness by the death of His Son. And when He comes for us this is what our great inheritance shall be—we shall be like Him.
7. But when we are sealed by the Holy Spirit—when His spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are a child of God, we have a down payment on this holiness already. WE CAN NOW ENJOY GOODNESS, FREEDOM FROM GUILT, PURITY, HOLINESS—A TASTE OF WHAT THE FULL INHERITANCE WILL BE!

### B. Rest

1. Another aspect of the legacy left to us is rest. Jesus came and said, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Mt. 11:28).

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2. What makes work into labor? The frustration of seeing the fruits of one's work dissipated—the agony of knowing that one has spent himself laboring in something whose fruits are only temporary and ultimately useless. **THIS IS WHAT MAKES WORK INTO TIRING, FRUSTRATING, DEADENING LABOR!**
3. If the results of our work could find completion or perfection—if we could have confirmed to us that our work was eternally useful and abiding, that it wouldn't just disappear with time—we could find perfect rest. **REST IS NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF WORK!**
4. God has laid up for us an inheritance of rest. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them" (Rev. 14:13).
5. But those sealed by the Holy Spirit may now have a down-payment, a taste of that rest. Paul wrote the Hebrew Christians and said, "For we who are believing, are entering that rest . . ." (Heb. 4:3).
6. Jesus said, "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal" (Jn. 6:27).
7. Paul wrote the Corinthians, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (I Cor. 15:58).
8. Friend, if you're sealed by the Holy Spirit, you'll never get weary. Bone-tired and muscle-weak; yes—but soul-tired and spirit-weary, never!

### C. Dominion

1. Man was made to have dominion. "Then God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).
2. God has promised that one day His saints shall reign with His Christ forever and ever (Rev. 22:5, etc.).
3. But the blessing of being sealed by the Holy Spirit is that we may now enjoy a taste of that dominion.
4. The exciting second chapter of Hebrews asks, "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" and answers by showing that while man was created to have dominion, because of sin he does not now have it, but Christ came in flesh and blood and

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won back man's dominion for him. HE DEFEATED THE INVADER, SATAN!

5. Christ, if we believe and trust Him, has set us free from being dominated by circumstances, by earthly things, by ego, by fears, by falsehoods, by others, by even Satan. IN FACT, IN CHRIST, WE HAVE DOMINION OVER CIRCUMSTANCES, OVER THINGS, OVER EVERYTHING AND MAY ENJOY AND USE EVERYTHING TO GLORIFY GOD! Mind you, I did not say we can selfishly take anything we want and use it in a way to bring shame upon God.
6. Whatever circumstances God sees fit to give us here, whatever talents, whatever worldly things, whatever associations, WE ARE RULERS-OVER TO GLORIFY GOD AND REJOICE IN. . . .
7. "For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future, all are yours; and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's" (I Cor. 3:21-22).
8. ". . . in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom. 8:37).

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS—MORE THAN CONQUERORS! What blessedness—what happiness—what glory. Friend, if you've been sealed with the imprint of God's Holy Spirit, you have been certified and authorized to be a joint heir with His Son, and to have dominion with Him.

### III. EMPOWERS US AS EMISSARIES OF OUR GREAT GOD

#### A. Certifies us as authentic representatives of Almighty God

1. When the Spirit of the Holy God is etched upon our hearts . . . when we are sealed with the Spirit of Christ . . . it is an announcement to the world that we are on business for the King.
2. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (Jn. 13:34-35).
3. J. B. Phillips on II Cor. 3:3 "You are an open letter (epistle) about Christ which we ourselves have written, not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women."
4. Many false prophets have gone out into the world (I Jn. 4:1-6). The world desperately needs some authenticating mark upon the true prophets. That mark is the seal of the Holy Spirit, one who preaches the true apostolic message and one who lives the true apostolic message.

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5. "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (Jn. 8:31). IF YOU ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT THROUGH HIS WORD, THEN YOU ARE A CERTIFIED DISCIPLE OF HIS, AND THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW. . . . YOU WILL BE HAPPY AND BLESSED AND SO WILL OTHERS!
- B. Certifies the authority of our message
1. When the image of God is stamped upon us by the Holy Spirit, we will proclaim and live the truth and the power of His truth preached and lived will be vindicated in the world.
  2. The work of the Holy Spirit is to convince the world of sin, righteousness and the judgment. The only agency by which the Spirit works in doing this is the written, preached and lived Word of God.
  3. But in the midst of all the failures and inadequacies of men's philosophical, political and ethical systems, THOSE SEALED BY THE SPIRIT ARE CONDUCTORS OF THE GREATEST POWER IN THE UNIVERSE.
  4. The power to convert men and change their eternal destinies is more awesome than the power to create this universe!
  5. "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, that through these you may escape from the corruption that is in the world because of passion, and become partakers of the divine nature" (II Pet. 1:3-4).
  6. "For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. . . ." (II Cor. 10:3-5).  
WHAT A BLESSING TO KNOW THAT WE ARE SEALED BY HIS SPIRIT TO BECOME CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH THE AWESOME POWER OF HIS WORD WORKS. . . . AND IT SHALL NEVER RETURN UNTO HIM VOID!
- C. Certifies the power of His divine providence on our behalf
1. When the nature of God is etched upon our minds through the Holy Spirit's agent, the Word of God, we know God as our beneficent, loving, acting, Father who is ready to use all His creation on our behalf.
  2. "We know that God works everything for good for those who love him, and are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).
  3. "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us . . ." (Eph. 3:20).



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4. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory . . ." (II Cor. 4:17).
5. Even angels "are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).
6. The Old Testament gives us a vivid account of God's providential power being used for those with His mark upon them. Ezekiel chapter 9 pictures God's faithful ones being marked with His seal upon them. Then the book of Daniel shows God using kings, kingdoms, circumstances and creation to provide exactly and abundantly what those marked by Him must have to fulfill His purpose in their lives.
7. He is the same God today to those with His seal upon them. THE BOOK OF REVELATION IS HIS MESSAGE THAT HE IS EVEN NOW USING KINGS AND KINGDOMS, CIRCUMSTANCES AND CREATION TO SERVE HIS SEALED ONES! WHAT POWER AND WHAT POWERS ARE OURS!

## CONCLUSION

### I. SO THE BLESSING OF BEING SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

- A. Etches the Image of God Upon Our Being
- B. Gives Us the Earnest-Payment of Our Inheritance
- C. Empowers Us as Emissaries of our Great God

### II. A WARNING

- A. You are either sealed by the Holy Spirit or marked with the mark of the beast.
  1. The great division of mankind in the book of Revelation is between only two kinds of humanity . . . those with the mark of God upon their foreheads, and those with the mark of the beast.
  2. Satan puts his mark upon all those not sealed by the Holy Spirit.
  3. Jesus told the Jews in John 8 who wanted to kill Him because He told them the truth, "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires."
  4. The seal or mark of Satan is the "mark of the beast" in Revelation and is given to those who worship the beast, political and military power; those who worship the false prophet, false religion and doctrine; those who worship the harlot, worldliness, carnal-mindedness.

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### B. Satan can even counterfeit the seal of the Holy Spirit

1. The beast and the false prophet are able to work signs (false signs) that will deceive men and women if they do not know what the true sealing of the Holy Spirit is.
2. Satan is able to change himself into an angel of light to deceive the ignorant.
3. He will try to deceive us into thinking that the immature, temporary miracles of the Holy Spirit are the seal of God.
4. He will try to deceive us into thinking that Pharisaic attitudes toward works and self-righteousness are the seal of God.

### III. BUT WHAT IS THE SEAL?

- A. How do we know we are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- B. How do we know others are sealed by the Holy Spirit?
- C. As we said at the beginning, When the Holy Spirit bears witness *with* our spirits
- D. But *what* does the Holy Spirit witness?
- E. Very simply, He bears witness in His Word that those Believing, Repenting and Obeying God are sealed by God as His B.R.O.

### IV. NOW WILL YOU JOIN ME IN THIS SONG AS A PRAYER TO GOD FOR HIS SEALING

“O to be like Thee! blessed Redeemer:  
This is my constant longing and prayer;  
Gladly I'll forfeit all of earth's treasures,  
Jesus, Thy perfect likeness to wear.  
O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee!  
Blessed Redeemer, pure as Thou art;  
Come in Thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness;  
Stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.