Ephesians 1:13-14

13 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, 14 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.

Closing this tremendous run-on sentence that started in 1:3 we find further key doctrines involving salvation, the Holy Spirit’s involvement with the believer, and yet another detail of being ‘in Christ.’ It’s also worth noting that in these two verses we find all three parts of the Godhead mentioned.

*What arguments have some proffered for the loss of salvation?*

One of the key ideas we’re going to run into throughout this passage is security of salvation. The doctrines associated with identification link us to Christ indelibly and we cannot lose our salvation as a consequence of any action (c.f. Romans 8:38-39). Furthermore, we’re going to see how not just our own actions matter, God has taken action to ensure we are His!

# In Him (Christ)

Being “in Christ” is a massive doctrinal truth that comes from such small words. Theologians for centuries have overlooked this detail. As a result of overlooking they have missed on security of salvation, understanding of identification in Christ’s death, burial, resurrection, ascension and seating.

*What does being ‘in Christ’ mean? How do we know we’re in Christ?*

Doctrines Paul links to being in Christ[[1]](#footnote-1):

* Sanctification (1 Corinthians 1:12)
* Knowing God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30)
* Being made spiritually alive (1 Corinthians 5:22)
* Being made a new creation in Christ’s image (2 Corinthians 5:17)
* Liberty (Galatians 2:4)
* Justification (Galatians 2:16)
* Salvation by Faith (Galatians 3:14)
* Faith producing love (Galatians 5:6)
* God’s kindness towards us (Ephesians 2:7)
* Good works created for us (Ephesians 2:10)
* Forgiven of all sin (Ephesians 4:32)
* Peace (Philippians 4:7)

As Paul teaches us about who we are in Christ we find that these are the truths that we grow in spiritually. Our understanding of these doctrines impacts our body, our soul, and our spirit! Our bodies will be replaced in Christ as new creations, our souls have been joined with Christ on the cross, and our spirits have been made alive in Christ. Our notion of time and space is impacted because we understand that all of time and space are within God’s hands, we are truly changed by this doctrine.

*Why can spiritual growth not be had in any other way than to understand these truths?*

## After Listening to the Message of Truth, the Gospel of Your Salvation

## Listening

It is worth noting that the gospel unheard maintains spiritual death and separation, but the gospel heard is the gospel which can be believed. Paul and many others preached the gospel so that those who heard it could believe and be joined to Christ. The message of truth is a valuable concept that presents for us a deep epistemological idea, an anchoring that holds us fast. Truth gets its definition and fulfillment in God.

*As believers who may not be evangelists, how do we approach the presentation of the gospel?*

## The Message of Truth

The message, or word, of truth here would have been received and understood by the gentile readers in a way that would have caught their attention. The Greeks loved the idea of truth and wisdom, but it was not anchored in spiritual insights, but rather worldly thinking. Paul’s admonishment to the Colossians [c.f. 2:8] to avoid the distraction of worldly philosophies would have been as a guard against this very thing.

*What is the message of truth, the gospel?*

## The Gospel of Your Salvation

The gospel was traditionally used outside of the New Testament to describe the reward for delivering the good news. Those in positions of power would often reward those who came with good news. In the New Testament context Paul and others appropriate the word to represent the message of the good news itself. This passage in Ephesians makes that link explicit.

*What is salvation?*

Salvation is being delivered from our state. Those who were in the state of impending consequences of sin have been delivered from that state and now given a new position in Christ in a new federal head, Christ.

## Believing

Faith or belief here means to have been persuaded that something is true. As believers we reckon or account or believe that Christ paid for our sins on the cross. It is impossible for us to fully have comprehended all of the doctrines associated with that work, but our growth comes through the result of that believing as we learn more deeply of these riches we have in Christ.

*What does it mean to believe? What is the difference between mental ascent and belief?*

# Sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of Promise

## Sealed with the Holy Spirit

*How were seals used historically? Do we have seals now?*

In modern culture a seal has sort of lost its colloquial usage because we don’t send letters through means that are linked to such uncertainty. In addition, seals were often used by royalty and in the United States that sort of thing just gets us riled up. A seal was a mark of genuine authenticity and it was usually tied to a personal piece of jewelry that was warn on the person of the sealer. A king wearing a ring that had their own mark on it would seal a letter with wax and then while the wax was warm they would push their seal into it and mark the letter’s veracity. The seal was not to be broken by anyone but the intended recipient.

This very concept of being sealed by the Holy Spirit denotes for us that idea that we are sealed not with wax, not with clay, not with earthly seals, but instead with the eternally bonded Godhead by the Holy Spirit.

*Who can break the seal of the Holy Spirit?*

Only God can break the seal here, and thus as our salvation is in Christ and sealed by the Spirit our salvation is secure, given without condition.

### Sealed in Christ

While we are sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit the opening of the seal is for God to do. We’re in Christ, sealed by the Spirit anticipating reception by the Father. All three parts of the Godhead involved with us, and we’ll see that theme continue throughout the entire epistle to the Ephesians.

*Why does it matter that we’re sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit?*

## The Promise Who is Given as a Pledge of our Inheritance

Building on top of the principle of the seal, the Holy Spirit is given as a pledge of our inheritance. The Holy Spirit as a promise is an important context, the promise is our guarantee for salvation. In Christ the Father is anticipating our eternal arrival and has given the Seal of the Spirit as a promise to fulfill all that is guaranteed in Christ.

*Who is promising what to whom?*

## Our Inheritance

*What is our inheritance?*

As mentioned earlier in verse 5 we are adopted and we get a position of inheritance that is locked in and guaranteed legally in Roman culture, so Paul continues that analogy that we may understand the certainty of our relationship with Christ. Paul mentions inheritance 4 times in Ephesians and the first 3 times are in chapter 1.

There is an inheritance for the church mentioned here and in verses 11 and 18. That inheritance is eternal, it is in relationship to God’s riches, and it appears to be linked to God’s grace extending into God’s expression of grace on into eternity according to chapter 2 verse 7. This means that rather than an earthly inheritance like Abraham’s descendants received, we have an eternal, heavenly inheritance that does not link us to a temporary, conditional blessing.

# A View to Redemption of God’s Own Possession

## Redemption

Redemption here is to pay a ransom for something. As believers we have been redeemed from the slave market of sin. God has paid out for our enslavement so that we may no longer be slaves, but that is then directly linked to God’s possession.

## Possession

Possession here is a form of the idea of *preservation of possession*. We are God’s possession that He is preserving for His own possession. Paul’s language here reinforces our understanding of security of salvation to the point that if you said you could lose your salvation you would be stating, “You can take God’s purchased, sealed, and preserved possessions from Him.” You would in essence be stating that God is not sovereign and unable to keep His own.

## To the Praise of His Glory

All of this, the work of Christ that redeemed us, the identification with Christ that made us new in Him, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, and the preservation for a time of reception are all leading to the praise of His glory. God’s glory, noted in 1:6 as being linked to His pouring out of grace, and also to the execution of God’s will, is also in this third place linked to the praise of His glory.

# Conclusion

A tremendous amount of identification truth is delivered in this larger passage that we have studied for the last month. There is more to come! When we recognize God’s sovereign plan for us, His provision for us on the earth, His provision for the eternal, we begin to be overwhelmed by the expression of His love as a blessing of our simply believing. “Faith alone,” as a doctrinal idea is a world changing truth. It is part of the power of the gospel. Its consequences are eternal.

*How can we encourage one another with these truths?*

1. This is an incomplete list, but the Unfathomable Riches class is covering a more robust list [↑](#footnote-ref-1)