

Ephesians 1:11-14¹

***Scripture divisions used in our series and various commentaries differ from each other.*

This is the reason for the occasional discrepancy between the verse range listed above and the notes given below.

c. God's seal with the Spirit ([1:13-14](#))

¹³And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. ¹⁴The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Notes**[1:13](#)**

he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit.—This refers to the sealing of the Spirit, which identifies believers as God's own and gives them the security that they belong to him (cf. [4:30](#); [2 Cor 1:22](#)).

[1:14](#)

The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised.—The seal of the Holy Spirit is an initial installment that will continue until he redeems or sets free his possession that he purchased on the Cross. This alludes to the time when Christ will return and set the believers free from the presence of sin. Furthermore, this is an installment of our inheritance (*klēronomia* [^{TG} <[G2817](#)>, ^{ZG} 3100]). Whereas in [verse 8](#) believers are identified as God's inheritance, the present verse reverses it and speaks of God's Spirit as the believers' inheritance. A better translation might be “who is the initial installment of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession.”

Commentary

Believers have been enriched with every spiritual benefit ([1:3](#)), as seen in their selection by God the Father, who has adopted them into his family, redeemed them, and revealed to them his eternal purpose. He has also given them the Holy Spirit of promise, with whom they are sealed until he sets his purchased possession free ([1:13-14](#)).

Paul mentioned that the believers had heard the Good News that God saved them in Christ when they believed. At the time of salvation, they were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. This seal denotes identification of ownership (cf. [4:30](#); [2 Cor 1:22](#); [Rev 7:3-8](#); BDAG 980; L&N 33.484). A present-day example would be a rancher who brands his cattle to indicate his ownership. So the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit identifies those who trust in God's provision of salvation and are now owned by God. This fits well with the previous verses because believers are God's inheritance ([1:11](#)). The seal of the Holy Spirit was “promised long ago.” The prophets promised that the Spirit would appear when the new covenant was initiated ([Ezek 36:26-27](#); [37:14](#); cf. also [Joel 2:28-29](#)). Christ also told his disciples that he

1. Philip W. Comfort, ed., *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary – Volume 16: Ephesians-2 Thessalonians, Philemon*, (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 37-39.

would send the Spirit ([Luke 24:49](#); [John 14:16-17](#); [15:26](#); [Acts 2:33](#); [Gal 3:14](#); cf. also [John 16:13](#); [Acts 1:5](#); [10:47](#)). Thus, God seals believers in Christ with the promised Holy Spirit when they have not only heard but also believe the gospel of salvation.

The sealing with the Spirit must not be confused with the other ministries of the Spirit. The Spirit resides in every believer ([Rom 8:9](#); [1 John 2:27](#)). The baptizing ministry of the Spirit places believers into the body of Christ ([1 Cor 12:13](#)). The filling by the Spirit indicates the Spirit's control over believers' lives ([5:18](#)). Finally, the sealing ministry of the Spirit identifies believers as God's own and thus gives them the security that they belong to him ([1:13](#); [4:30](#); [2 Cor 1:22](#)). Furthermore, it should be noted that the indwelling, baptizing, and sealing ministries of the Spirit are bestowed on every believer at the moment of conversion. There are no injunctions regarding them because they are an integral part of the gift of salvation. This is not to be confused with the exhortation to believers to be continually filled by the Spirit—from the moment of their conversion to the end of their lives here on earth.

This seal of the Holy Spirit also serves as a deposit or down payment, providing a guarantee of more to come. It is the initial installment of the believers' future inheritance. As ones adopted into God's family with all the accompanying privileges, we have an inheritance from God that qualifies us to live eternally in his presence in heaven. The initial installment of the Holy Spirit is a little bit of heaven in the believers' lives—with a guarantee of much more yet to come. This initial deposit continues literally "until the redemption of the purchased possession." God is going to set free what he had already purchased. The purchased possession refers to Christ's redemption, accomplished on the cross to set believers free from sin and its obligation. There is going to be a second phase of redemption in the future, when Christ comes for believers, who will then be set free from the presence of sin. This is analogous to [Romans 8:23](#), where it says that believers who have been adopted into God's family ([1:5](#); [Rom 8:15](#)) have the firstfruits of the Spirit and are now eagerly awaiting Christ's return to fully realize their adoption, the redemption of their bodies. In the meantime, we have the initial installment, the Holy Spirit, as our portion.

As praise marked the end of the first strophe with regard to God the Father ([1:4-6](#)) and the end of the second strophe with regard to God the Son ([1:7-12](#)), so praise ends this strophe with regard to God the Spirit ([1:13-14](#)). The knowledge that we are sealed with the Holy Spirit until Christ's coming to free us from sin causes us to praise God.

The Complete Biblical Commentary

Ephesians 1:10-14²

1:10. The language used continues to express the purpose which God had in mind, that in this day in which we are privileged to live, all those people "in Christ" would be part of the same Body, with no distinctions. The scope of this verse, however, cannot be limited just to the present age. The work of subjecting this universe totally to Christ will continue in the Millennium. The word translated "dispensation" (*oikonomian*) comes from two Greek words placed together, one meaning "law" (*nomos*) and the other meaning "house" (*oikos*). It literally becomes "house-law" and often is translated "stewardship." Because the word can be used in different ways, the Bible student must look at it within the context where it is used. Here it obviously relates to the overall purpose of God to subject everything to Christ in an ultimate sense.

2.Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Complete Biblical Library – Galatians-Philemon*, (Springfield, IL: World Library Press, Inc., 1995), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 101-105.

1:11. It is almost beyond the human mind to fathom that God allows us to share the glory that belongs to Christ, the One to whom this total universe will be subjected ultimately. His will not only includes the exaltation of Christ, it also includes our participation in His blessings because we are part of those who are "in Christ." This verse reminds us again that all this happens because of God's design. In fact, in this verse Paul used three words that have the idea of "will" expressed in them. *Prothesin* normally contains the idea of "purpose." *Boulēn* sometimes expresses the idea of "counsel," but usually relates to "purpose" or "will." The third term or last noun in the verse (*thelēmatos*) is a general Greek term for "will." This approach is very typical of Paul's epistles when he multiplied synonyms to amplify an idea.

1:12. The phrase "praise of his glory" occurs in relation to each member of the Trinity: of God ([verse 6](#)), of Christ ([verse 12](#)), and the Holy Spirit ([verse 14](#)).

1:13. The finishing touches on this beautiful portrait show the work of the Holy Spirit in redemption. [Verse 12](#) says "we" (Jews) and [verse 13](#), "ye" (Gentiles). The Holy Spirit is the One who, after we hear and believe the truth of the gospel, actually places a seal of ownership upon us. Seals were in common use in those days. A person often stamped his letters with a seal or a sign to prove they were sent by him. Pagan cults often stamped their devotees with seals in the form of tattoos. A seal indicated a document was genuine and authentic. We do much the same thing today when we brand steers, sheep, etc., or when we use the corporate seal of an organization to certify some statement or authenticate a document.

A person who is "in Christ" has been sealed as God's property. This does not happen until a person hears and believes the gospel message. This does not mean that God does the sealing first, and then the person hears the gospel message. "After that ye believed" actually comes from a Greek aorist participle (*pisteusantes*) which is used in an adverbial sense here and normally would be translated "after believing."

The original term for "heard" (*akousantes*) is also an aorist active participle and means "after hearing." According to the order used in the verse, "after hearing" comes first, followed by "after believing," and the whole process culminates with an aorist passive verb (*esphragisthēte*) meaning "you were sealed." This verb indicates that God performed the act of sealing, as well as indicating that it was a decisive act. To understand what is being said, it is absolutely crucial to look at this passage in its entirety from [verse 3](#) through [verse 14](#).

1:14. This becomes even more obvious when one realizes the "in Christ" person has been given an *arrhabōn* ("earnest, down payment, deposit") as a pledge that the full payment will be given when Jesus returns to this earth. The down payment we have received is the Holy Spirit himself ([Romans 8:9, 16](#)). His indwelling presence is a guarantee that God will consummate all His promises to us when the proper time arrives.

The noun "redemption" (*apolutrōsin*) refers to the culmination of the process which will become a reality when Jesus returns to this earth and believers are resurrected.

All these promises should make us burst into praise as they did the apostle Paul. Now we can see a little more clearly why it is a mistake to take only a few statements out of this complete sentence from [verse 3](#) through [verse 14](#). God does not give us only part of the total picture and leave us confused. He has informed us clearly about the function of each member of the Trinity in the work of redemption. The Father planned, the Son provided, and the Holy Spirit protects the ones who accept God's provision!