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God's Great Guarantee that Once Saved, Always Saved

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GOD'S GREAT GUARANTEE THAT ONCE SAVED, ALWAYS SAVED

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS
NUMBER 7
EPHESIANS 1:13-14

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EPHESIANS 1:13-14 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

We have been studying the plan of God as it was designed for us in eternity past. He knew every problem we would ever encounter and he made provision for our every need. Here is the plan of God and also the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and how we are related to these things.

This passage is so applicable to our lives. We face national problems and we face personal problems and God has made provision for them all. These days in which we are living are days of national and personal confusion, and there never was a time in history when people needed to rely more on Bible doctrine than now. Apart from the Lord Jesus Christ we have no hope. We are on the way down as a nation and we desperately need to be true to Bible doctrine. We need to know about the special provision God has made for us in times like these. Bible doctrine presents the person and work of Christ and makes it possible for us to know his mind and his will and purpose in the world. The emphasis in this passage has been on the unique person in the universe, namely, Jesus Christ. He was elected to be our Saviour in eternity past, and he has made magnificent provision for our redemption, our adoption, our inheritance, and our every need. Here in this passage before us, we move to the third person of the Trinity, The Holy Spirit.

EPHESIANS 1:13 "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," "In whom" refers to Jesus Christ. "Trusted" is not in the original and it is not needed for a clear meaning here. Neither are the words "after that" in the original. This was a very poor way to translate this passage. It actually says, "Having heard" and "Having believed." Then after hearing and after believing the result is that "we are sealed." "Ye were sealed" is the main verb in the sentence and the action of the two aorist participles precede the action of the main verb. So "having heard" and "having believed" always comes before "ye were sealed." "Ye also" is plural and it refers to all believers. Every provision has been made for your every need. All of this provision is working up to a tremendous climax in Ephesians 2:8 where Paul declares "For by grace are ye saved through faith." We enter the plan by grace. You are in the plan of God, once you have believed, even though you have failed him many times. Maybe you have failed often and often you have been discouraged, but once you are a believer you can never be lost again. "Having heard" is an aorist, active, participle of "Akouo" and it means to listen and to obey, to listen and respond. When one goes on positive volition at the point of God-consciousness and responds at the hearing of the Gospel, then that person is saved. Then the Holy Spirit goes to work and the work he does is expressed in the words "Ye were sealed." But hearing and believing always precedes the sealing done for us by the Holy Spirit.

There are five ministries the Holy Spirit performs for you at the point of salvation--

1. God is the author of the plan and once we believe in the plan the Holy Spirit takes us and places us in the family of God.
2. The Holy Spirit is the agent of the New Birth.
3. The Holy Spirit indwells every believer.
4. The Holy Spirit seals every believer.
5. The Holy Spirit places every believer in union with Christ.

The Holy Spirit also surveys our possibilities and decides which spiritual gift we will have. In the power of that gift we then do our work for God. God the Father did something for us, for he is the author of the plan of salvation. God the Son did something for us for he provided the way by which we might enter that plan. That way is the cross. But the Holy Spirit has a part in the plan of salvation also. He makes the gospel real. It is God the Holy Spirit who uses the gospel message to clarify the issue in our minds. He doubles for our deactivated human spirit, which is not restored until after we are saved.

Here in this verse the gospel is called "The word of truth." Then he says, "the good news of your salvation." The gospel never emphasizes sin. The gospel is not the sin question but the Son question. The sin question was settled at the cross. Now it is true that we are all sinners and it is true that the wages of sin is death, but that is not good news, that is bad news. Now we have to have bad news before we can have good news. The good news is the gospel, that Christ paid for our sins, past, present and future. All our sins have already been judged. So when we look at the cross the issue is not our sins, for they have all been judged on that cross. The issue with us is that on that cross Christ became our Saviour and when we believe in him we are saved. Any preacher who majors on the sins of the people and then appeals for them to come forward so they will feel better, is not really preaching the gospel. That is not the good news at all. The good news is the Son, not sin. Now we need to keep in mind always that the worst sins of all are mental attitude sins. In the list of the seven worst sins, six of them are mental attitude sins. So let us keep the issue clear. The issue is not our sins, but the issue is what Christ did about our sins on the cross. The issue is Jesus Christ. The issue is grace. The issue is "What think ye of Christ?" Let us never substitute doing things like signing a card, or raising our hand, or walking down an aisle or being baptized for the real thing. The real thing is faith in Christ. That will always be the real issue. Good news is not human activity that shows we have overcome some psychological barrier, but rather faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

"Having believed" is an aorist, active, participle. "Having heard" the information of the Gospel is also an aorist, active, participle. One is the point of time when you hear the gospel, and the other is the point of time when you believe the gospel. When you believe God picks up that point of time and he perpetuates it into eternity. So the first aorist tense is the point of time when you hear the gospel and the second aorist is the point of time when you believe the gospel

and the reality of this experience is perpetuated forever. This is one of the things we receive at salvation, and that is eternal life. Nothing can cancel it out or take it from us. Which is greater, some sin you commit after salvation, or the plan of God which saved you? No sin of yours is as great as the act Christ performed for you on the cross. So it is once saved, always saved. So after you become wayward and neglect the Bible and the Church, then someone comes and tells you you need to be saved again. Don't fall for that line. You need to repent and get back in fellowship and start learning doctrine. After you are saved, your growth in the Christian life depends on doctrine, and if you receive Bible doctrine, then you will have the formula by which you can live the Christian life. The plan of God doesn't depend on human works, human opinions, human achievement. It never has and it never will. Sometimes when you commit a sin, you may think it is too big for the plan of God, but it isn't. (I have had people tell me that it is dangerous to tell young people things like this. It isn't so, but many people say that. It is right to tell young people the truth, for they will respond to the truth. Young people know that God is also a God of discipline, and when we sin we are spanked for it. And God knows how to discipline us just right.) Believing the doctrine of once saved, always saved isn't a license to sin, rather it is a license to serve. Salvation is a one-shot deal. You crossed the line and you can never go back again. And God is not an Indian-giver. That's kid stuff. Illustration God is not like kids in their first courtship. He gives her his gold football and she gives him her pin or picture. Then in a few weeks they fall out and they have to go through all that giving back stuff. But remember, God isn't like that.

When God gives you salvation it is forever. You may be the world's best Christian or the world's worst Christian, or somewhere in between, but please remember, if you were once saved, you are saved forever. God will not change his plan to accommodate your failure. He has no intention for doing so. Just because you may try to renounce God, he doesn't change his plan. He doesn't build his plan on what you may think. He builds his plan around Jesus Christ and Bible doctrine, for the Bible is the mind of Christ. Bible doctrine is greater than we are.

A million years from now you will still have the 34 things you received at the point of salvation. And a million years from now those things will not be improved or diminished. You can't lose them and you can't improve them.

Now the human body decays and time causes us to deteriorate. But we also know as we deteriorate physically, we improve in certain areas. So, humanly speaking, we both improve and deteriorate. But God's work and plan is not that way. It is constant and abiding. What God provides for you at salvation never improves and never deteriorates. It is perfect, has always been and always will be.

Now these two aorist, active participles are different, and the reason they are different is that "having believed" is immediately followed by "Ye were sealed" and this is the work of the Holy Spirit. You have salvation in your physical body and you will have it in your resurrection body. What you have can't be taken from you. You can't do anything to lose your salvation. The angels can't take it away from you, and Satan can't take it away from you. No one can take it from you because God

is greater than our mistakes and failures. Our security is the basis of our service. Security includes love and understanding. So in this passage we learn that the Holy Spirit provides for us security. We were sealed once and it is forever. On this security we build. We have "love security" and we have "eternal security." The reason for that is that that is the kind of character God has. Since he is perfect his love never changes. Our love can grow and change and become stronger, but his love never changes. He is perfect and you can't improve on perfection. The whole Christian life is built on security and not on "Behave yourself or else..."

"Ye were sealed" is an aorist, passive, indicative. The two aorist, active, participles that precede "ye were sealed" denote sequence. We heard, then we believed, and at that moment he sealed us. The passive voice means that he did the sealing, not us. We listened, we believed, but God the Holy Spirit sealed us. This aorist tense means we are sealed forever. The day we committed the greatest sin we were sealed, the day of our greatest triumph we were sealed. Then when we get to heaven we are still sealed and a million years later we will still be sealed.

Now what does being sealed mean? This word had five connotations in the ancient world.

1. The first use of a seal was the guarantee of a transaction. So to guarantee our salvation at the moment of our salvation, God the Holy Spirit sealed us. The transaction was completed and you have salvation forever.
2. The second meaning of sealing is identification of ownership. Now you no longer belong to yourself, you belong to God. The greatest believer doesn't belong to God one whit more than the weak believer.
3. The third concept is the authentication of invoices, contracts, laws, and orders. "This plan was designed in eternity past and it is yours for time and eternity. So he says when you believe "I authenticate this contract now" God has signed the contract, and that is propitiation. Man has signed the contract, and that is reconciliation.
4. Sealing was also used for the preservation of tombs and libraries.
5. Sealing was also used for the ratification of a treaty. There is now peace between man and God. Ephesians 2:14-17.

So being sealed means all of this and it means eternal security.

This is done by means of the Holy Spirit.

He is called here "The Spirit of Promise." Every promise connected with the Christian life is connected with the Holy Spirit. You have security before you learn doctrine. Right now you are basking in the security of your salvation.

EPHESIANS 1:14 "Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." Here is a little amplification.

"Which" refers to the Holy Spirit. The word for Spirit is "Pneuma" and it is neuter gender. That is why the relative pronoun "which" is used. So this really should read, "Who keeps on being the earnest of our inheritance." The word "earnest" means the down payment, the guarantee. This is an inheritance which can't decay and can't be taken from you. You will always have this inheritance.

"Until" should be "because of." The redemption is from "apo lutrosis" and it means a complete abiding redemption. It would be a reflection on God if even one saved person could ever be lost after being saved. We are his "purchased possession." He bought us and he will have us forever.

"Unto the praise of his glory" and this refers to the ten essence points of his character. Our security reflects his glory. So God the Holy Spirit, in our salvation, throws a beautiful searchlight on the glory of God. So what we have and are in our salvation depends on who and what God is.

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