

Marked in Christ (Eph 1:11-14)

Last time we studied "The glorious plan in Christ." By grace, we have received forgiveness. And we are made alive in God's glorious plan. And today we will study the following section, v.11-14. The title of today's message is "Marked in Christ."

1. Children of God

11-12

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And v.5 also says: "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself (v.5, NAS)." Before we were lost but now we are found. We used to be slaves to sin, ruled by Satan and sinful desire. But now we are made heirs to the kingdom, children of God. It is the redemption of Christ that made it possible.

"To redeem" is "to pay the ransom", to buy back someone from the state of slavery or to release someone from the state of captivity. By paying the cost, the ransom, the action is made valid.¹

Jesus gave his life as a ransom for us (Matt 20:28). That is the cross. This ransom was paid to God, who is the judge. Jesus fulfilled God's righteousness.² (cf. Rom 3:25)

God established the law and its curse. He himself took the curse on our behalf and paid the cost to redeem us. That is God's plan. And that plan satisfied God's righteousness and keep God's law, and at the same time also redeemed us totally from the curse of the law.³

¹ Jerry Bridges, "The Gospel for Real Life" (Japanese Translation), Word of Life Press Ministries, 2006, p.86

² Ibid., p.96

³ Ibid., p.95

His plan doesn't end here. After redeeming us and releasing us, He will never leave us saying, "Ok, now you do the work by yourself. Hope you can finish the race. Good luck!" No. He says "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt 28:20)"

Here says the same thing.

Gal 4:4-5

⁴ But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.

What is said here is like this. We will be given all the privileges as children of God, and will be welcomed into family of God.⁴

It is already given now, and will be completed. By Jesus' redemption, through faith, we are already accepted into God's family as his children. And on the day when Jesus comes again, His kingdom will be completed and we will be welcomed into the kingdom.

And then, we will be there before Him, as one who is holy, blameless and perfect. God of glory himself will wipe every tear from our eyes. We will be healed of all physical illnesses and emotional pains. There will be no more death, mourning, crying or suffering (Rev 21:4).

Probably at that time, we will no longer care about all the questions and complaints we used to have on the earth. We are meeting God face to face in his glory and majesty. As we are in His perfect love, and know that this love will keep growing infinitely, we will realize everything was the process to reach here. We will realize that God's faithfulness and love has supported us and led us to this day. Tears will be changed into praise. We who put our hope in Christ will give the praise to this God of the glory.

"Having been predestined." This does not mean our lives have been programmed in details. But we were chosen as heirs of His kingdom. We have been predestined to inherit God's kingdom by Jesus' redemption. The Bible doesn't say, "Even if you believe in Jesus, after all you don't know the end result until the time comes." It doesn't say that. By Jesus' redemption, we are made heirs to God's kingdom. This hope will never fail.

The amazing thing is this. We can foretaste it now on the earth. There is

⁴ Ibid., p.96

difficulty and hardships, so we look up to God. And we realize how small we are and how great God is. And it makes us praise God even more. There are battles, confusions, indecision and anxieties. But in the midst of all these, we can experience His redeeming love. He is our God, we are his people. He is our shelter, our refuge, our way and our life. We praise God.

2. A seal of the Holy Spirit

13-14

¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession -- to the praise of his glory.

Up to here, Paul used the word “we.” He used the word “we” which includes himself and also Christians in Ephesus who would receive his letter. However, from here, he started to use the word “you (plural).”

So here he says that not just I, Paul himself but you, readers of his letter are also sealed by the promised Holy Spirit.

What kind of city was Ephesus? Ephesus was the capital and leading business center of the Roman province of Asia. It was at the place where Macedonia and Asia interact with each other, and was a hub of sea and land transportation. It was one of the great cities on the Mediterranean Sea. It was a cosmopolitan city where different cultures, goods were brought in and out by different people. It's like Yangon, right?

Ephesus was a center for black magic and other occult practices. The people cooked up magical formulas to give them wealth, happiness, and success in marriage. Many Ephesians were engaged in exorcism and occult practices for profit.⁵

In that kind of environment, people heard the gospel. The church in Ephesus was a group of people who were saved from that kind of back ground.

Paul says, “It is not only I, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God that is sealed by the Holy Spirit. But you are also sealed by the promised Holy

⁵ Application Study Bible, Tyndale House Publishers, 1996, pp..1742-3

Spirit. It is not just I who was circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, a Hebrew of Hebrews, who studied the law professionally (Phi 3:5). But you are also sealed by the promised Holy Spirit."

When Paul visited Ephesus, he met about a dozen believers and asked them "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" "No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit" (Acts 19:2). The church in Ephesus was formed of such people. Paul says "It is not just I." "You also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit. (v.13)"

First, we must hear the gospel. To "hear" the gospel is not just somehow hear about it, but to listen to it attentively. To be attentive to the Gospel. Attentiveness describes the concentration we apply to each of the five senses – sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing, or my whole self. It shows the worth of it by giving my undivided concentration.⁶

And we must not just hear the gospel, but must believe it, receive it, apply it to ourselves and live it out. His word must be our way of life.

If someone hears the gospel and believes, the person will be marked in Christ with a seal of the Holy Spirit. This seal is not something only given to special people. If someone hears the gospel and believes, the person will be marked in Christ with a seal of the Holy Spirit. He is not required to do anything special (Gal 3:2). It doesn't matter your past, your religious background, your race, your culture. Only the matter is that you believe in Jesus. That is the plan in Christ.

What is the meaning of the "seal"? The seal shows the ownership. The seal of the Holy Spirit shows that you are redeemed by God and you truly belong to Him. You are His possession.

1 Cor 6:19-20

¹⁹ Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

When I believed in Jesus, when I accepted Jesus as my Savior and Lord, I agreed that I am redeemed by the blood of Jesus, I belong to God. I am not my

⁶ Attentiveness, Character Training Institute, 1997

own anymore. I'm His possession.

When we think about "church" it makes more sense. Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus. "Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)"

"The church of God, which he bought with his own blood." It's very clear that the church belongs to God. The owner of the church is God. And we, each Christian is a part of it (1 Peter 2:5). So we belong to God. And He marks us with the seal, the Holy Spirit to show He is the owner.

Perhaps this may make some of you feel very uncomfortable. "It's about me. It's my body, my life. I must be in charge of it. It should be under my control." But this truth "that we belong to God" gives us a great sense of security, assurance and confidence.

When we feel our prayers are not answered, we may wonder "Does God really know me?" Have you had that kind of moment? Yes, I have. When we face hardships, we may wonder "Does God actually care for me?" Have you had that kind of moment? Yes, I have. When we feel down because of mistakes we made, we may wonder, "Does God still love me, and accept me?" In that kind of moment, God reminds me that I have the seal. The seal of the Holy Spirit shows that you are redeemed by God and you truly belong to Him.

The seal is the proof of the "genuine item", "the real thing". The seal of the Holy Spirit proves you are the real child of God. By the Holy Spirit who lives in us, we don't doubt that we are God's child (Rom 8:15). And others also can see it clearly.

The seal is also used for protecting an important document, letter, valuables or money. For example, we put some money in the envelope. We seal it up and sign our name there. The person who received the envelope will know that the content was kept unchanged, when he sees the seal. God protects us by the seal of the Holy Spirit because we are so precious to Him. By the Holy Spirit, God protects us so that we will not lose grace given to us, and other strange things won't enter instead. He doesn't want to lose us again as we are so precious to Him.

Here Paul is pointing the seal and saying "Look, you have the seal!" He reminds his readers, "Remember, in Christ you were chosen? In Christ you were redeemed? Can't you see you have the seal?"

David Watson in his book "Called & Committed" says this: "The Christian church today suffers because so many of its members feel that they have 'made a decision for Christ,' or that they have chosen to join a certain church. It is only when we see ourselves as chosen, called, and commissioned by Christ that we will want to present our bodies to him 'as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.' "⁷

The seal of the Holy Spirit reminds us that we are chosen, called, and commissioned by Christ. This seal gives us a great sense of security: I truly belong to Him, a sense of assurance: I am the real child of God, and a sense of confidence: I am precious to Him. So then, we choose to trust Him, we happily surrender ourselves to Him as we belong to Him. That's the life of worship.

The Holy Spirit is the seal, and "the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. (v.14)" A deposit is the money paid in advance that guarantees the full payment.

By the Holy Spirit, we receive grace, bear the fruit, experience God's presence and close fellowship with Him. They are like samples, and foretaste of the blessings of God's kingdom we will experience in the future.

In Jesus, we became heirs of God's kingdom. It doesn't mean we will not experience anything until Jesus comes again, way ahead in the future. Right now, as we live in this body, on this earth, we are already living in the blessings of the kingdom of God. God gave us the deposit.

God is faithful. His promise should be enough, right? But He not only gave us his promise, but he also gave us the guarantee. We are saved by His grace. And this salvation is guaranteed. We are made heirs of His kingdom, God's children. God's presence is always with us. God will share his thoughts with us. He gave us the guarantee. Now trust is our choice.

When we believe in Jesus, and become a Christian and a child of God, it doesn't automatically solve all our problems, nor make our life all fantastic "la vie en rose." It is not like that. There may be a time when we feel as if we were washed away by backflow and fall down. We may experience hardship as if we went through fire where we are attacked no matter what we do, and we break down. But even though we know God led us there and allowed those things to happen, we can still trust God, and keep advancing, listening to His voice, and

⁷ David Watson, "Called & Committed," Harold Shaw Publishers, 1982, p.7

seeking His face.

We can do this, because we have the guarantee by the Holy Spirit, because we have the seal of the Holy Spirit. And this attitude of ours will testify the greatness and sovereignty of God, which transcend all our human understanding. God's glory will be praised through us.

For LifeNet groups and personal reflection

1) Do you have an experience where you felt God had forsaken you? What was the situation? Why did you think God had forsaken you? Did God not care for you?

2) The Holy Spirit was given not only to Apostle Paul but also to Christians in Ephesus. What does God speak to you through this fact? How will you respond to him?

3) In order to make the presence of the Holy Spirit more vivid or make the work of the Spirit more active in your life, what is your part to do? What will you do as the first step, within this week?