



Spirit

Ephesians 1:13-14 NIV

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, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Do You Give Much Thought to the Spirit?

Pastor Jud Wilhite tells of a young woman who was a stripper in Las Vegas. She came to his church and at first sat way in the back in the balcony. Gradually, Sunday after Sunday she moved closer and closer until she was in the front row of the worship services. She used to dance all night and then show up at the early service. "Sadie", he said, "soaked everything in" and started considering just what it would mean to her if she became a Christian. Finally, she came over to Pastor Jud when the service ended and told her she wanted Christ as her Savior. Pastor Jud asked her if she did that, what would it cost her. Unabashedly, Sadie admitted that it would impact her career, her income and change her entire life. Pastor Jud replied, "So, what are you waiting for?" Immediately, Sadie responded with determination, "I'm ready." Sadie started praying and confessed her sins to God, asked for forgiveness and accepted Christ as her Savior. Opening her eyes, tears poured down her cheeks, mascara smeared her face and she cried, "Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you!" Pastor Jud in telling the account stated that Sadie felt the Holy Spirit working in her which led to her transformation. What do you think of that? Is the Holy Spirit personally involved in changing our lives?

Our verse today is a critical passage for you to consider. It has crucial information that must be pondered! **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, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.** (Ephesians 1: 13-14 NIV) Salvation is so simple, it almost feels too good to be true. Believe the Gospel of Salvation and have eternal life. That is it and it is not at all beyond that. Put your hope in Christ dying for your sins and you have eternal life. Because it feels intuitively like there must be more to it than that, God gives us proof of what we have gained. The Holy Spirit automatically becomes a part of you. The passage calls Him a seal, a proof of what you have coming. The Greek verb translated "marked in him with a seal" describes what happened at some point which in this case is when you believed in the salvation God offers you. It is like a soul tattoo; an indelible mark that shows you have salvation and you belong to God. What makes this such an exciting promise is the Holy Spirit is always a part of you, guaranteeing your inheritance in the salvation you gained in Christ.

Two important points to make here regarding our salvation. The first has to do with redemption. Redemption is a translation of a Greek term *apolutrosin*. *Apolutrosin*, can refer to redemption, the price paid for freedom, but it is mostly in the Bible talking about deliverance. Deliverance is one of the most important concepts found in Scripture, particularly in the Old Testament. We see deliverance again and again in Bible

accounts of the Lord's people. Whether it was the people of God being delivered from Egyptian captivity or Samson freeing the Israelites from Philistine oppression, deliverance is a perfect picture of what salvation is. Deliverance is Christ taking out of you all your sin and the oppression it brings as well as Him pulling you out of the sin all around you. It is strange to think of salvation as both finished and still on its way and yet that is what we have. We still feel the heaviness of sin; both in us and around us and we know something is missing; it is like going to Disneyland and finding Pirates of the Caribbean and Space Mountain aren't up. We still sin and sin continues to plague us by the minute, but the Bible promises us here that one day it will all be in place, our complete and irrevocable salvation.

The sign of salvation being on its way is the presence of the Holy Spirit in you if you have put your trust in Christ for that salvation. Our verse tells us He is the proof of eternal life for you. The problem you face is that it is hard for you to tell the Holy Spirit does live in you. How do you know He is there? What makes it difficult is that by definition the Holy Spirit is spirit and so you cannot and will not know Him in all the physical ways you are familiar with in knowing others. You see your friend, smell her perfume, touch his shoulder, hear his voice. That does not and should not happen with the Holy Spirit. A second difficulty is that you can and do "grieve the Holy Spirit". **And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.** (Ephesians 4:30 NIV) The Greek term translated "grieve" is *lupeo* and means to vex, frustrate, or cause distress. That of course seems strange when talking about God, but it is clearly possible and even probable. David, after he sinned, asked God to please not ever take the Holy Spirit away from him and that is how it feels, as if He is completely gone. He isn't, but that's how it feels.

We are told clearly what to avoid in the very next verses if we don't want it to seem like the Holy Spirit has disappeared. **Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.** (Ephesians 4:31-32 NIV) This is something you can do. God doesn't offer up an alternative solution. It is up to you to do this. The verb used here that is translated "get rid of" is perhaps better translated "destroy". The idea then is, "All these things are to be destroyed before they rise up out of you." "Make sure they are crushed immediately!" The most common reason why you don't sense the Holy Spirit within you is because of issues you have with other people. That is odd to consider because most writings about the Holy Spirit and His work in us deal with spiritual exercises intended to awaken our sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Prayer. Fasting, Meditation. Spiritual retreats. The Bible says that if you want to be aware of the Holy Spirit, do not ever be angry or bitter toward others. Forgive immediately any grievance you have if you want to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit. Be a kind person and act compassionately if you want to feel the Holy Spirit in you.

The value of maintaining a close internal relationship with the Holy Spirit is much more than the special knowledge He provides which we see many places in Scripture. It is how He stabilizes and maintains our inner world so that we have within us the personal qualities of Christ Himself. The kingdom of God is not just some global gathering of all God's people, it is more importantly your inner state that shows God rules within you. **For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.** (Romans 14:17-18 NIV) Peace and joy have been underrated for decades now; in our Covid-19, apocalyptic age, they become once more desperately needed. The other day there was a woman screaming at an older man checking for receipts at the door of a Wal-Mart. My wife has personally seen numerous people acting rudely at stores this past few months. As I was walking through a parking lot, I heard a man angrily mumbling to himself about what a terrible world it was because of all the smoke in the air from local wildfires. Now more than ever we need peace and joy.

I recently was reading again the last chapter of the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. Few have ever gone through the book from beginning to end, but it is a brutal account of how life really is and what we can have within to rise above it all. The ancient prophet was facing the prospect of an invasion of his country by the

terrifying Babylonian army. It was pretty bad without the Babylonians in Judah. The people in his homeland had grown mean-spirited and corrupt. It though would be much worse if the Babylonians took over the country. As he sat and thought about a pretty bleak future, he says his legs trembled and decay crept into his bones, his heart pounded, and his lips quivered. He was depressed about things and for good reason. And yet something came over him, the Holy Spirit took over his inner world and he said, **“I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign LORD is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to tread on the heights.”** (Habakkuk 3: 18-19 NIV) That is what it is like to have the Holy Spirit clearly operating openly in you. No matter how rough it gets, you can have supernatural peace and joy making you strong and full of life.