

Sealed

Ephesians 1:11-14

"In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹²so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

The Jewish believers often struggled with adding their heritage or performance to the work of Christ. They were drawn toward a "Jesus +" that gave them some credit for their standing before God. We all do similar things. To protect us, Paul emphasizes God's sovereign plan, work, and end goal in salvation.

- 1) What is so compelling about "Jesus +" theology that draws us in? What specific things *in you* do you find yourself looking to for your comfort or validation?**
- 2) How do we as a church help each other to give up trying to be the hero who gets the glory, and to be satisfied and rest in simply receiving our freedom as the gift that it is?**

The gentile Ephesian believers had a different sort of struggle. Their background was filled with paganism, immorality, and idolatry. They certainly may have struggled with their own identity as children of God, especially if they compared themselves to their Jewish brothers and sisters. We struggle with what we see in our own lives, especially when we compare it to our perception of those around us. In v. 13 Paul turns our eyes off ourselves completely and instead focuses us on the one thing that matters – trusting the Gospel.

- 3) In what ways do you find yourself comparing your life to that of others? How does this affect you and your relationships? Why do you think you do it?**
- 4) How God's law (we are all sinners) and gospel (salvation is ours through Jesus' work alone) level us all out? How this shift our relationships versus the comparison we talk about in the last question?**
- 5) As a church, how do we help each other in this?**

Lastly, Paul points us to the work of the Holy Spirit in us. The Holy Spirit seals us – marking us as truly God's own and protecting us from being tampered with in any way. He is also our deposit – he secures us our spot in the age to come and is our first taste of the glory to come.

- 6) Do you ever find yourself slipping into relay race Christianity – Jesus got you started but now it is on you to finish? What is that like?**
- 7) Understanding this work of the Spirit has big implications for how we understand sanctification. What are some of those implications? How does this understanding of the Christian life change the way that we encourage each other and do life together?**

Some things you can be praying about:

- What can we praise God for?
- What sin do you need to confess?
- What cares or burdens we can help carry?