

# Ephesians

## Ephesians 1:13 - The amazing Holy Spirit

In **verse 13**, Paul explains how we Gentiles were “included in Christ,” or as Acts 26:18 phrases it, how we’ve already received our “inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus.” It all got started for us when we “heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation.” And when the truth of that gospel was “set before us plainly” (2 Corinthians 4:2) the lights went on in our heads, and extraordinary though it was - like nothing we’d ever heard before - we found ourselves believing it.

But why did we believe it, when thousands don’t? There’s a clue in **Acts 16:14** and the story of Lydia the purple cloth dealer from Thyatira, because when she heard the gospel for the first time, “The Lord **opened her heart** to respond to Paul’s message.”

But why did God do that when she was already “a worshipper of God” (same verse)? She’d already based her life on what Scripture said. But knowing what Scripture said and believing it, and even basing her life on it, wasn’t enough for her to understand and grasp the enormity of what Paul was saying. For that she needed the Lord himself to open her heart. And only then did she grasp it.

The same thing happened to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in **Luke 24**. Like Lydia they knew their scriptures, and being good Jews they’d lived by them all their lives as well. But for all their head knowledge and dedicated observance of the scriptures, it hadn’t dawned on them that what had just happened to Jesus was exactly what their scriptures had predicted.

How could that be? How could they not see it when their scriptures had been written in such a way that when the events predicted happened, they’d be able to recognize them and explode with joy, that at last it was all happening exactly as they’d imagined?

No wonder Jesus called them “foolish and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” in **verse 25**. It sounds a bit harsh, but how could they have missed the very thing they’d set their deepest and most heartfelt hopes and dreams on (verse 21)? But no such joyous response in those two disciples; instead they were downcast and miserable (verse 17). Clearly, there was something lacking, but what?

Was it bad teaching perhaps, that no one had explained the scriptures well enough to them? Well, Jesus took care of that because, **verse 27**, “beginning with Moses and all the Prophets he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself,” **verse 27**. Or in Paul’s words here in Ephesians 1:13 they “heard the word of truth and the gospel of their salvation.” So they got that part thoroughly and plainly explained to them first. And they were impressed, their hearts even burning within them (verse 32) - BUT - there was still no recognition that Jesus was the one the scriptures were referring to.

That only happened when “their eyes were opened” in **verse 31**. It was like Lydia having her heart opened. Because that’s what it took for understanding to dawn. It needed supernatural help. Even hearing the scriptures explained by Jesus himself wasn’t enough, just as worshipping God all her life wasn’t enough for Lydia either, to grasp the enormity of what God had done through his Son.

A supernatural opening of heart and eyes was needed. Which explains why some grasp the enormity of what happened in Jesus, and thousands don’t. It’s all in the word “opened.” In Greek it’s *dianoigo* (dee-annoy-go), which means flinging the windows open **to reveal what is hidden**. In the case of the two disciples “they were kept from recognizing Jesus,” in **verse 16**. It was hidden from them, and it remained hidden until their eyes were supernaturally opened. Technically they could have understood who Jesus was, because it was plainly described in their scriptures, which is why Jesus called them stupid and slow, but it’s also made clear here that another step is needed, that God reserves for those he’s calling. It’s his **direct and very personal supernatural opening** of the eyes and heart. Which helps explain why some believe and thousands don’t.

And the word for “believe” in Greek shows what that supernatural help does. In Greek it’s *pisteuo* (peace-tee-wo), which means ‘having total confidence in’ and ‘being thoroughly persuaded by’ - which when attached to believing the gospel is amazing because it’s so extraordinarily different, and yet we have no trouble believing it. So, how else could that be, except that we too had our hearts opened supernaturally by the Lord himself?

Which takes us to the second part of **Ephesians 1:13** where Paul tells us we “were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit” - the “in him” bit referring back to being “included in Christ” at the beginning of the verse. So we now find out from Paul that the *dianoigo* belief we were given by the Lord himself - that thoroughly persuaded us and gave us total confidence in us being included in “the inheritance of those who are sanctified by faith in Jesus” in Acts 26:18 - has a **seal** attached to it too.

Paul explains what this seal is in **2 Corinthians 1:21-22**, when he tells us that God “anointed us, set his **seal of ownership** on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts.” Paul, as usual, chooses words and images that bring the gospel alive to the people of his day. To get the point across in their terms, then, that God had sealed them as his own, Paul used the word *sphragizo* (s-frarg-eezo), which they would readily recognize as **the stamp** that was placed on documents, or on jars and sacks of fruit and grain being shipped - and on animals and slaves too - to identify the owner and certify his ownership.

To hear, then, that God also had a stamp which he placed on people as a distinguishing mark of his ownership, must have stirred a thought as to what his mark was. Which is where the first mention of the Holy Spirit in **Ephesians 1** comes in, because the stamp God chose in **verse 13** to identify someone as his own was “the promised Holy Spirit.” Or as **2 Corinthians 1:22** phrases it, God stamped his “seal of ownership” on us by “putting his Spirit in our hearts.” That’s his proof and certification that we belong to him. And in **Romans 8:9**, “if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” - so anyone belonging to Christ bears the same distinguishing mark too.

But why did both Father and Son choose the Holy Spirit to identify us as belonging to them? Because the Holy Spirit is the *dianoigo*, the one who supernaturally opens eyes and hearts, flinging the windows open to reveal what’s hidden. As Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 2:9-10**, “No one’s ever seen or heard anything like this, never so much as imagined anything quite like it, what God has arranged for those who love him. But you’ve seen and heard it because **God by his Spirit has brought it all out into the open before you.**”

The Spirit is the one, therefore, who helps us “understand (the enormity of) what God has freely given us,” **verse 12**. But how does the Spirit do it? Well, according to Paul in **Romans 8:16**, “the Spirit himself **testifies** with our spirit that we are God’s children.” The Greek word Paul uses for “testify” here is *summartureo* (soo-mar-too-reh-o), meaning “to show to be true” or “to provide credible evidence in support of,” which ties in nicely with God’s seal of ownership being proof and certification that we belong to him and we truly are his adopted children.

And that would really mean something back then, because in the Roman world when a family adopted a child it had to be formalized in an official ceremony in the presence of seven witnesses, any one of whom could testify, or provide credible evidence, at any time in the future that the adoption was valid. The adopted child, then, would always have the assurance that he totally belonged to the family that adopted him.

So right there, in the culture of the day, Paul had a great example of what God gave us the Spirit for. We have this picture of an adoption ceremony attended by witnesses, whose job it is “to show to be true” and “provide credible evidence in support of” a child truly being a member of the family that adopted him. Because that’s exactly the witness our Father provided for us in the person of the Holy Spirit, whose job it is to personally “provide credible evidence” at all times that we truly belong to God’s family too.

And it’s only by the Spirit that we’d come to see that “because,” **Romans 8:14**, “it’s those led by the Spirit of God who are sons of God.” It needs the Spirit opening eyes and hearts to help us grasp that God is our Father and we truly belong in his family. The Spirit, therefore, is always being “the Spirit of sonship” in us (verse 15), the constant proof of which is our understanding of the Father and our relationship to him, where we have no trouble referring to him as “Father” and knowing we’re just as much his children as Jesus is.

And, what’s more, **verse 16**, it’s the “Spirit HIMSELF” who does this for us. He truly is a **personal** witness we can utterly rely on to provide the evidence we need that we’re always loved.

So why did our Father and Jesus set it up this way? Because they knew we’d have trouble in this world knowing what love is, and experiencing it. Most of our waking hours are spent in a world where pretty well everything flashed at us on TV and social media is our inhumanity to each other. How much love is being broadcast and exemplified to us in movies, TV series and even sports? Even close friends and family can ditch us, or turn on us, as happened to so many heartbroken people during the pandemic.

So where’s our proof that we’re loved? Or to what and to whom do we depend on for love? The government? The medical profession? The community we grew up in? They all fall short, and sometimes horribly, as their true motives come to light. Agatha Christie made millions on how vicious even village life can be. And looking back over our lives, how many people truly loved us and made sure we knew it - always?

In this world, then, we’re running on close to empty when it comes to love. So it leaves us weak and needy, with all sorts of debilitating mental and emotional problems we have no idea how to deal with, or even know that we’ve got. But our Father clearly knew it, because Paul writes in **Romans 8:26** that “the Spirit **helps us in our weakness.**” And it’s “the Spirit HIMSELF” who does it too, so that always, whenever God “searches our hearts,” **verse 27**, he sees “the mind of the Spirit” in us, constantly showing us it’s true that we’re loved and nothing will ever “separate us from the love of God,” **verse 39**.