

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:13-14 - A taste now, fullness later

In **verse 13**, Paul tells us we're "included in Christ," meaning, **verse 9**, that we're included in what the Father "purposed in Christ." So, whatever he planned in Christ before our world existed, he included us playing a part in it in our lifetimes now.

And how do we know we're included? Well, to begin with, we know what the Father's purpose in Christ is. It's "bringing all things in heaven and on earth together under Christ (verse 10)." The time is coming, therefore, when there'll be no separation between heaven and what's happening here, because everything done will be perfectly in tune with the heart and mind of God. That's the goal the Father is working towards in his Son, and he chose us to be a part of it now. So we can look at ourselves in the mirror and know that the face staring back belongs to a signed up member of Christ's team.

And we know we've been signed up on his team, because something remarkable happened to us "when we heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation" in **verse 13**. That's when it all sprang to life for us personally, when God opened our eyes to see his plan for us humans, how it's being worked out in Christ, and that it was all figured out and set in motion before we and this planet even existed. And not only could we see it, he opened our hearts to believe it too. It all rang so true that we wondered why on earth others couldn't see and believe it too.

But that was just the first two steps, because after the Father had opened our eyes and hearts to his plan and we'd jumped on board, he then went to the next remarkable step of officially stamping us as his. And this he wanted us to know too, so that not only do we realize "we know what we know" because the Father personally chose us to know, we also realize that the reason we see him, and see ourselves, and see the world and other people so differently, is because he stamped us with his very own identifying mark so that **who we are now is a reflection of him**.

And he had a remarkable way of making that obvious too, because instead of using the typical Roman method of a metal stamp or signet ring pressed into hot wax or bitumen as his way of identifying us as his, he "marked us in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit."

But why the Holy Spirit? Because as Paul explained earlier, the Father's plan being worked out in his Son is **eventually** ("when the times will have reached their fulfillment," verse 10) to "bring all things in heaven and on earth together." This is yet to happen in its fulfillment, but **for now** he's bringing heaven and earth together in those he's chosen. So that in the ones he's chosen there is clear evidence of heaven in them too.

Paul described this very thing in **verse 4**, that the Father "chose us in Christ before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight." It was in the Father's plan, then, to have people who, in his eyes, could easily be identified as his, **because they reflect him so well.**

In other words, by the Father stamping us with his mark he's developing and nurturing his heavenly likeness in us, which is how he's bringing heaven and earth together in this age now. In all those who are included in Christ the likeness of **both** heaven and earth can be seen.

That's why Paul could shower praises on the Father in **verse 3** for "blessing us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." Because in those the Father stamps as his own, he flings open the doors to heaven's storehouse of spiritual blessings to make it possible for us to reflect his spiritual likeness. So in ordinary physical, earthly humans like ourselves, with no prior knowledge or experience of what the heavenly is like, the Father has provided a way of bringing heaven and earth together in us.

So the Father has now done three things for us. First of all, he gives us the eyes to see his plan and the heart to believe it. Then he stamps us as his own so that we can be clearly identified as his. And then he opens up the heavenly realms and their wealth of spiritual blessings to us so we can reflect the very qualities of holiness and blamelessness that he has.

Paul then goes on to explain in **verse 13** how, or by what means, the Father opens up his heavenly treasure house to us. "Having believed," he writes - thanks to the Father opening our eyes and hearts - "we were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit." Ah, so it's through the Father giving us the Holy Spirit that his spiritual qualities or blessings are given to us. But how does that work exactly?

Fortunately, Paul explains that too, because in **verse 14** he describes "the promised Holy Spirit" (verse 13) as "**a deposit.**" The Greek word Paul uses for "deposit" here is *arrhabōn* (ar-ra-bone), which was typically used in ancient Greek trading terms for securing a contract.

To secure a contract a deposit was paid down, which in trading terms was a pledge, or promise, or guarantee, that the full amount would be paid. So if you wanted to buy a boat for shipping grain, for instance, but couldn't afford to pay the full price right off the bat, you could secure the contract and make the boat yours by putting down a deposit - much like today when buying a car, that putting down a deposit secures it as yours.

So with just a deposit you get the joy of experiencing your car or your boat straight away - and you've got the security of full ownership along with it too. And to Paul this was a great way of explaining how the Father has made it possible for us to experience the spiritual blessings we need to reflect him, and in so doing bring heaven and earth together in us personally.

It's by the Holy Spirit himself being our deposit. He is the payment needed to get the spiritual blessings started so we can experience and enjoy them right away. He's also the guarantee that full payment will be made, so that one day we'll get to experience and enjoy "every spiritual blessing" in the heavenly realms too. Or as Paul phrases it in **2 Corinthians 5:5**, God "has given us the Spirit as a deposit guaranteeing what is to come." We can confidently say, therefore, that if we're already experiencing spiritual blessings that clearly and obviously reflect the qualities of our Father, then that's our Holy Spirit pledge and guarantee that full payment of every spiritual blessing will be ours in the future as well.

In the Father sealing us as his own through the Holy Spirit, then, it's not only an unbreakable contract securing "what is to come" for us, it's also opened the door to us experiencing "what is to come" in our lifetimes now as well. Which adds a little extra when describing the Holy Spirit as a deposit, because it's not just a one time down payment, it is also a constantly repeating payment we can experience daily. And it has to be that way, because what other proof have we got that the Father has truly chosen us to bring heaven and earth together in us now? We need the Holy Spirit giving us constant evidence and reminders through the spiritual blessings we're receiving now.

One analogy that helped me on this point goes like this: A wealthy man called his faithful assistant into his office and told him, "I've put you in my will to receive \$100,000 after I die. In the meantime, however, I will deposit that 100,000 in a bank account gaining interest, and whatever interest it gains is yours to enjoy while I'm still alive. And that way you'll have a constant reminder and a jolly nice taste of what one day will be fully yours. And to assure you that this is how things will be from now on, here is a cheque for \$6,000 as a starter."

And isn't that what the Holy Spirit did, and does, for us? He gives us that initial burst of understanding into what God's got in mind for us humans, which is thrilling, but disheartening too because it's so far off in the future. But, as Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 1:22**, the Father "set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come."

And what the Spirit in our hearts does is give us a constant "taste" of what we've got coming to us. First of all we're "enlightened" by the Holy Spirit, **Hebrews 6:4** - we're given that first shot of understanding - and then by the Spirit we're given a "taste of the heavenly gift" and a "taste of the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age," **verse 5**. So the Holy Spirit deposit is a constant taster too, of the power that's coming to us later. And it's in our hearts too, in the depths of our being, so we know from real personal experience that it's true.

The Spirit deposit, therefore, "guarantees our inheritance," **Ephesians 1:14**, and we know it's guaranteed by the taste of the heavenly that the Spirit gives us now. But one last point, **verse 14** - we have to wait for full payment "until the redemption of those who are God's possession."

"God's possession" means those redeemed by the blood of Christ (**verse 7**) through the centuries that the Father puts his stamp on to identify as his chosen ones in this age now. They're the first in line, "the first fruits of the Spirit," **Romans 8:23**. And being the first fruits, who are already experiencing a taste of the heavenly, teasing us as to what God's got coming for us in the future, it's tough having to wait. And Paul knew what that was like, because he included himself when saying we "groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons," **verse 23**.

But worth the wait, because that's when we get to experience the one part of redemption we don't experience in this life. It comes later for those our Father has adopted as his children in this age. It's the one thing we humans all wish for, the one remaining left over from the Garden of Eden that hasn't yet been resolved, and that is "the redemption of our bodies," **verse 23**. At last, a body that does not die. Which we'll need too, because how can we enjoy all that our Father has planned for us without a body to enjoy it in?

And we know all this because, **Romans 8:28**, we are the ones "who have been called according to God's purpose" in this time now, to experience a taste of that purpose now as the Holy Spirit "conforms us to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers," **verse 29**. And that's our daily proof that one day we'll know what that's like in its fullness too.