

I Am Not Who I Say I Am, But I Am Exactly Who God Says I Am (Part 2)

Ephesians 1:1-14 | September 28, 2025

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Building the Church: Understanding Our Identity

This is week two of our sermon series, *Building the Church*. Our focus during this series is to begin the work of expanding the Lord's Church—making room for more and new people to be discipled so that we can have greater impact here in SER.

Before we begin the work of expanding the church with more leaders, more ministries, more Bridge Groups, and more volunteers, we need to make sure that everyone understands both what the church is and how she is to function. We need to ensure that everyone identifies exactly with who God says we are—not who we say, but who God says we are.

What God Says About You

Last week we learned from Ephesians 1:1-10 that God says you are chosen and you are redeemed. The church is comprised of people who were chosen by God for salvation and ultimately redeemed by God through Jesus' sacrifice and belief in Him. From this we can say with all assurance that the church is made up of Christians—hand selected ambassadors that belong to God.

But there's a third truth we need to address, one that speaks to something I've witnessed countless times in ministry. I remember watching the same people come down front for the altar call week after week, devoting and re-devoting their lives to Jesus. I hear the same hesitation in counseling sessions more times than I can count.

People typically say, "Pastor, I know I'm saved, but..."

There's always a "but."

"But what if I backslide?"

"But what if I don't feel saved?"

"But what if God changes His mind about me?"

"But what if I mess up too bad?"

It's time to destroy every "but" with the most secure truth in Scripture: **God has secured and sealed you with Himself** (Ephesians 1:11-14).

God Has Sealed You

Ephesians 1:11-14 is where God settles the security question once and for all. In verse 13, Paul tells the Ephesian church that they have been "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Like them, we have been sealed by God.

1. God The Holy Spirit Sealed You

"In Him you also were sealed."

Not *being sealed*. Not *will be sealed*, but *were sealed*—past tense. God already did it.

Before we dig into the implications, we need to understand what it means to be sealed. The best way to explain this is through the ancient practice of using a signet ring and melted wax to secure a document.

Before we had certified mail and stamps, when a person wanted to send a document or letter, they would fold the paper in half, pour melted wax on the two halves, and then press their ring—typically the family crest or description of their rank and position—and then send the letter to the intended recipients.

This accomplished two things:

- It communicated that the content inside was official and untampered with.
- It represented the sender's presence and authority since they couldn't be there in person.

When Paul says you "were sealed," he's saying that God has placed everything inside of you necessary for redemption and to serve His good purposes. In other words—you don't need anything added to you.

In addition, being sealed means that nothing can touch you spiritually. It can bother you. Try to stop you, but it can't touch you. Nothing can possess you, taking control of you—specifically, demons, Satan, and evil people.

Being sealed by the Spirit is like having an impenetrable force field around you. Things and people may get close but they can't get inside. Not if you've been sealed by God.

Now, you can expose yourself to bad stuff that can negatively impact you, but that's typically the result of you going after it or lowering your inhibition through drugs, alcohol, sexual immorality, pornography, or the sins you tolerate. If you go looking for trouble, you will find it.

Lastly, being sealed means once saved, always saved. In other words, you cannot lose your salvation. God's seal is both a guarantee and a sign of our salvation. God would never have sealed you if those "who believed in His Gospel" weren't forever saved. That would be a travesty.

Think about it logically—what kind of seal would God use if it could be broken? What kind of guarantee would the Almighty give if it could fail? The very fact that Paul uses the word "sealed" implies permanence and security.

For God to seal someone and then allow that seal to be broken would not just be a travesty—it would be a contradiction of His perfect nature, opening the door to doubt, untold attacks of the enemy, and ultimately leaving countless souls stranded on the wrong side of the cross.

The bottom line is this: God has given and sealed you with everything necessary to traverse this thing called life for His glory. Therefore, stay inside the Spirit that's inside of you.

If you ever doubt whether God is done with you, remember this: His seal on your life is permanent. It cannot be broken. Rest in that. Take confidence in that.

The Same Spirit for All Saints

So we are sealed, but what exactly were we sealed with? Paul tells us that the "Promised Holy Spirit" sealed us, which raises an important question: Is this the same Spirit the apostles received, or did we get some lesser version?

2. You Are Sealed With the Same Spirit That All Saints Receive

The word "promise" is a reference to when Jesus promised to send His Spirit to His disciples back in Acts 1 and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Paul wants the Ephesian believers to know they have the same Spirit as on the day of Pentecost. They have God the Holy Spirit in them.

Have you ever been in a spiritual conversation where everyone else seems to know exactly what they're talking about and you're nodding along hoping you'll catch up? Like when people start sharing about their "breakthrough moments" or their "Spirit-filled experiences" and you're sitting there thinking, "Am I missing something here? Did I miss the meeting where they explained how to get the real Holy Spirit?"

That's exactly how some Christians feel: "The apostles got the real Holy Spirit. These other believers got the premium version. I must be running some basic spiritual software while everyone else has the advanced features."

Paul is telling you: Stop it.

You have the exact same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Same power. Same presence. Same guarantee.

This means you're not a second-class believer. You have access to the same divine power as the original apostles. You possess the same spiritual resources as the Jerusalem church. You are an equal member in the universal body of Christ.

Stop scrolling through Instagram looking at other Christians thinking "They must be more spiritual than me." You have the same Spirit they do. Start acting like it.

But like with all gifts, if we're not careful we can take them for granted—kind of like a rich kid who squanders their inheritance because they did nothing to earn it and they think it's owed to them simply because they're son or daughter.

Yes, we all inherit the same Holy Spirit, but each of us is responsible to show Him the dignity and honor He deserves. The Spirit gifted Himself to us, just like with Jesus. Neither can we make Him perform like He's a trained seal or puppy.

This happens when people:

- Expect the Spirit to confirm our predetermined choices rather than seeking His will.
- Create formulas or rituals designed to "activate" or "release" the Spirit's power on our terms.
- Demand divine guidance for trivial decisions while ignoring clear biblical principles for major life choices.

Like when a person ignores God's clear command not to get emotionally or romantically involved with unbelievers, but because she looks good, or because he makes you feel some kind of way, you roll the dice and ask the Spirit to bless your disobedience.

That's not how God works—He doesn't work against Himself. Yes, God is there to equip and serve us, but He's not our personal valet. We are His servants, not the other way around.

When Were You Sealed?

So we have the exact same Spirit that all saints possess. But when exactly did this happen? Did it happen when you got baptized? When you spoke in tongues? When you had some dramatic experience?

Paul settles this question.

3. You Were Sealed When You First Believed (v. 13)

That's what Paul says: "...when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and when you believed."

At that time, the Holy Spirit miraculously indwelt you. He took up residence inside of you. You are now His dwelling place. Everywhere you go, He is with you. Every thought you think, He sees. Every emotion you feel, He feels with you. Every decision you have to make, He is there to guide you in wisdom.

There's no need to ask Him to show up because He's right there with you. He is sealed inside of you, never to depart. You are His temple.

Yet, despite this text and numerous others all communicating the same truth, that hasn't stopped some from twisting Scripture to make it say what they want it to say regarding the reception and impartation of the Holy Spirit.

The False Doctrine of "Second Blessing"

They push a false doctrine called "Baptism in the Holy Spirit"—a flawed teaching that claims there's a "second blessing," a separate experience from salvation that believers must actively pursue.

This doctrine was primarily promoted through the Pentecostal and Charismatic movements, which is one of the reasons why those denominations push speaking in tongues as a sign that you have been "fire baptized" with the Spirit.

This false teaching has led to devastating consequences: church splits, the formation of new denominations, widespread confusion, and worst of all—spiritual segregation. Believers who don't demonstrate certain gifts have been made to feel spiritually inadequate and have been labeled as second-class Christians, which creates a hierarchy where you have an elite group of "Spirit-baptized" saints and a B-squad of regular believers. None of which is Biblical or edifying.

Notice the order of events in verse 13: When did the Ephesians get "sealed with the Spirit"? After they believed—as in past tense, it already happened. This is not a future event. You have all that you need.

And the Biblical evidence is overwhelming:

- **1 Corinthians 12:13** declares "we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body"—past tense, universal application.
- **Ephesians 1:13** shows the sealing happens "when you heard" and "when you believed"—simultaneous with faith.
- The New Testament consistently describes Spirit baptism as what happens TO believers at conversion, not what they seek AFTER salvation.

Despite clear scriptural evidence, people continue upholding this two-tier doctrine for these primary reasons:

Powerful personal experiences can feel more real than theological accuracy. When someone has a dramatic spiritual encounter, they naturally want to validate and categorize it, even if their interpretation contradicts Scripture.

Tradition and community pressure make abandoning family or church heritage feel like betrayal. Questioning the doctrine can cost relationships and community standing.

Selective interpretation is where people cherry-pick verses out of context. And when you take a verse out of context you can make it say whatever you want it to say.

Like using Philippians 4:13 that says, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." People use this verse for personal empowerment, to endure hardship, overcome temptation, win a game, pass a test, or ask the cute girl out. But in context, Paul is talking about being content with whatever financial status he finds himself in—lots, little, or just enough. Selective interpretation is a dangerous device.

Understanding Spiritual Experiences

I think the way forward is to distinguish between the initial sealing of the Holy Spirit and subsequent spiritual experiences where you have:

Moments of Spiritual Breakthrough — Sudden clarity or freedom from struggles you've wrestled with for years.

Growth in Spiritual Maturity — Developing deeper sensitivity to sin and stronger fruit of the Spirit in daily life, including heightened times when you have a tangible aversion to sin, being repulsed by anything that is not of God.

Ministry Empowerment — Discovering boldness or gifts you never knew you had for serving others.

Seasons of Spiritual Renewal — Times when Scripture comes alive and God's presence feels especially real, like when you discover your spiritual gift and start using it to serve the church and you are elated.

Crisis Moments of Divine Intervention — Supernatural peace or provision during tragedy that defies natural explanation, like comforting a loved one through the loss of their spouse, despite being overwhelmed with grief yourself.

The key distinction is that these are all manifestations or deeper experiences of the Spirit we already possess, not evidence of receiving the Spirit for the first time or the Spirit 2.0, which is more powerful. They represent growth, maturity, and varying degrees of the Spirit's work rather than a "second baptism."

To those of you who hold a different view or were taught to pursue a second baptism, please heed what I have said.

The Truth That Sets You Free

You were sealed when you first believed.

You have the same Spirit as every saint in history.

You cannot lose what God has sealed.

Which means it's time to stop begging and start believing. Stop seeking the Spirit you already have and start living like you've been sealed by Him.

Quit begging God for something He already gave you. Instead of saying "God, fill me with Your Spirit," start saying "Holy Spirit, help me stop ignoring You."

If you've "heard the Gospel of salvation, and believed in Jesus," you have the Holy Spirit, the third person of the trinity—you have God inside of you. It's time to stop living like a spiritual beggar, waiting for more, asking for more, and start living like the Spirit-filled believer that you already are.

Instead of asking God to "fill you with His Spirit or baptize you with power, or rain His fire down giving you a personal Pentecost," how about you thank Him and praise Him for His Spirit that you already possess? How about you ask Him to help you walk in accordance with His will and for you to recognize those times when God is actively at work?

And if you still wrestle with believing you are sealed, that could only mean one of two things:

1. You have not put your full faith in Jesus and surrendered to Him. You're not redeemed.
2. You're actively engaged in sin. Until you repent and get back in line with God you're going to have doubt and feelings of abandonment. God does not bless disobedience.

You don't need a second blessing—you already have all that you need.

The Real Question

The question isn't "Do I have enough of the Holy Spirit?" but "Does the Holy Spirit have enough of me?"

Ask yourself: What have you been holding back from Him? Your time? Your relationships? Your fears? Your dreams?

The Spirit who sealed you wants all of you, not just Sunday mornings.

Some of you have been living like spiritual beggars when you're actually spiritual royalty. Some of you have been asking God for more when He's asking you for surrender.

Today is the day to stop seeking what you already possess and start surrendering to the One who already possesses you.

You are chosen.

You are redeemed.

You are sealed.

Now live like it.

What are you holding back from the Holy Spirit? This is your moment to get right with the God who has already sealed you as His own.