

first century, it is also clear that it was expensive to have documents copied. Therefore it is likely that most of those in the Ephesian community were not reading Paul's epistle but had listened as it was read. Further, while some may have had written copies of parts of the Tanach Scriptures, once again the likelihood was that most had become familiar with God's written word through listening as it was read and discussed.

But the point that we should emphasize is that this coincides with Paul's statement in Romans where he writes:

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah. (Rom 10:17)

By God's gracious providence, many of those living in Ephesus had heard the message of the gospel as the message was taken and proclaimed, not only by the Apostles themselves, but also by those who had come to faith through their giving of the "good news."

This reminds us, once again, that it is both our duty and grand privilege to be sharing the "message of truth," for the gospel is the very power of God, through the work of the Spirit, to bring about the salvation of those He is drawing to Himself.

The second emphasis in the phrase is that the "message" is characterized by containing "the truth." All too often people, even well intentioned people, turn the Gospel into their own "product" and inject it with error, which thereby clouds the truth. The message we are to speak and to live out is the message that we find in the inspired word of God. We must know this truth for ourselves and then we must share it with others without diminishing it nor adding something to it. It is the truth that the Spirit uses to set free those who are enslaved in sin. Speaking of Paul's use of the word "truth" in this text, Hoehner writes:

...it is also used "of the content of Christianity as the absolute truth" and this is how it is used in the present context and in 6:14. Hence, it has the idea of reality in contrast to the falsehood of other religions.<sup>1</sup>

...*the gospel of your salvation* – This phrase highlights a third emphasis in our verse, namely, that "the message of truth" which was heard was not something manufactured by man but was in fact the divinely

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1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 236 (quoting *BDAG*, p. 402).

revealed “good news” regarding God’s plan to save sinners through the atoning work of His Messiah. It is the gospel that was proclaimed to Abraham, for the covenant promise given to him, that “in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed,” was the gospel, as Paul makes clear:

The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.” (Gal 3:8)

Our English word “gospel” translates the Greek word *εὐαγγέλιον* (*euangelion*), which is used in the Apostolic Scriptures exclusively to denote the “good news relating to God’s action in Yeshua the Messiah.”<sup>1</sup> Though the message of the Gospel is clearly announced in the Tanach, the noun *euangelion*, “good news” is found only once in the Lxx.

when one told me, saying, ‘Behold, Saul is dead,’ and thought he was bringing good news (*εὐαγγελιζόμενος*), I seized him and killed him in Ziklag, which was the reward I gave him for his “good news” (*εὐαγγέλια*). (2Sam 4:10)

However, the cognate verb *εὐαγγελίζω* (*euangelizō*), “to proclaim good news,” is found 23 times in the Lxx, nine of which are used in the sense of making God’s saving work known and praising Him for His salvation. Note these examples:

Sing to the LORD, bless His name; proclaim good news of His salvation from day to day. (Ps 96:2)

And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall the saved one be as the Lord has said, and they that have good news preached to them, whom the Lord has called. (Joel 2:32)

O you who bring good news to Zion, go up on the high mountain; lift up your voice with strength, you that bring glad tidings to Jerusalem; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, Behold your God! (Is 40:9)

1 BDAG, “εὐαγγέλιον,” p. 402.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to heal the broken in heart, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind... (Is 61:1, cf. Matt 11:5)<sup>1</sup>

Given the fact that the “gospel,” the good news of God’s salvation for sinners, has been revealed from the very beginning of time, it is clear that we must not modify the message of the gospel in order to create what we think would be more effective in persuading people to accept it. For to modify the clear teaching of the Scriptures regarding the content of the gospel is not only to dishonor God Who revealed His “good news,” but also to lead people astray who receive a modified message as though it is genuine. We must therefore proclaim the true biblical gospel, or as John calls it, “the message of truth,” trusting that God will use this message to bring to Himself those He has chosen, even as Paul testifies:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Rom 1:16)

... *having also believed* – As noted above, the verses under consideration (vv. 3–14) form one long sentence in the Greek. As a result, it is difficult to know exactly how to map the various phrases. In the Greek, “having also believed” is prefaced by “in Whom” so that the phrase literally is “in Whom having also believed” (ἐν ᾧ καὶ πιστεύσαντες). Some translations understand the “in Whom” (ἐν ᾧ) to be a repeat of the opening “in Whom” at the beginning of v. 13, and thus do not repeat it here (NASB, NIV) but rather take “in Whom” to go with the next phrase, i.e., “in Whom you were sealed....” From a theological standpoint, both are obviously true, namely, that Messiah is the very object of true saving faith, for we believe “in Him,” that is, in His saving work on our behalf: His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession (Rom 8:34). But we also know that our union with Messiah, i.e., to be “in Messiah” is secure and thus in this sense “in Him we are sealed” as forever His and thus possessing God’s promise that we will be eternally His.

*you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise* – The idea of “sealing” comes from the ancient world in which documents were sealed with wax into which a signet ring or other object was pressed. Likewise, objects for sale were sometimes marked with a seal to identify

1 Cf. also, Is 52:7; 60:9; Nah 1:15; Ps 68:11; 95:2.

the maker and thus guarantee authenticity. Thus a “seal” in the ancient world was affixed to maintain security, to substantiate authenticity, to certify genuineness, and to denote identification, especially the identification of ownership.

In our verse, it is clear that God is the one Who seals and the believer is the one who is sealed, and Messiah is the very location or sphere in which the sealing is accomplished. But now Paul adds that the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, is the means by which the seal is applied to each believer. The Greek phrase could equally be translated as “sealed *with* the Holy Spirit” or “sealed *by* the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> And in fact, both are true. Indeed, the very presence of the Ruach dwelling within the life of the believer is Himself the seal that authenticates the believer as belonging to God and thus kept by Him, and His indwelling presence is the means by which the seal is applied. It is thus the “fruit of the Spirit” as a characteristic of the believer’s life that manifests the “seal” and identifies the believer as purchased by God and guaranteed the final redemption, when mortal puts on immortality (1Cor 15:53).

Paul identifies the Spirit of God as the “the Spirit of promise.” The Greek phrase has this word order: “the Spirit of the promise the Holy [One]” (τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ). This could be understood to mean “the Holy Spirit, the One *Who was* promised” or “the Holy Spirit *Who establishes* the promise.” If the first option is taken, the meaning would be either that the Ruach is the very One promised by Yeshua Whom He would send to aid the Apostles and the believers to bring the “message of truth,” the Gospel, to the nations. The second option would emphasize that the Spirit is the One Who brings to life those whom God would save so that the promise made to Abraham, that all the nations would be blessed, would be fulfilled.

In light of the fact that one of the main themes in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians is the unity of Jewish and Gentile believers in the body of the Messiah, it seems warranted to understand the phrase “the Holy Spirit of the promise” to be referring to the ingathering of the elect from the nations into the covenant people of God, the *ekklesia*. Having referenced Gal 3:14, in which Paul emphasizes that the redeemed from the nations receive “the promise of the Spirit,” Kaiser notes:

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1 The dative τῷ πνεύματι τῆς ἐπαγγελίας τῷ ἁγίῳ can be taken as either dative of manner or dative of means. Cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics* (Zondervan, 1996), p. 338; Robertson, *Greek Grammar* (Broadman, 1934), p. 533; G. B. Winer, *A Treatise on the Grammar of New Testament Greek* (T & T Clark, 1882), p. 271.

The promise just mentioned [*in Gal 3:14*] is similar to another that is also connected with our sealing with the Holy Spirit, as Paul declared in Ephesians 1:13 (“you were marked in him with a seal, *the promised Holy Spirit*”), which is amazing, for we Gentiles “were separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenant of promise” (Eph 2:11–12). Surprisingly, we Gentiles are “heirs with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise of Christ Jesus (Eph 3:6).<sup>1</sup>

It was the evident dwelling of the Spirit with and in the Gentile believers that proved beyond doubt to the Apostles that the ingathering of the elect from the nations meant that the Gentile believers were fully accepted into God’s family and covenant people and were therefore equal citizens in the kingdom of God with the Jewish believers. This was Peter’s testimony at the Jerusalem council.

And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:8–9)

Here, once again, as Paul addresses the Ephesian messianic community, he emphasizes that all who have come to faith in the Messiah Yeshua and who are therefore born from above, have received the indwelling Ruach HaKodesh by Whom they are united with Messiah and are enabled to grow in sanctification, sharing and living out the “message of truth” so that others would likewise be drawn to faith in Yeshua.

The fact that the Ruach is regularly referred to in the Scriptures as the “Ruach HaKodesh,” i.e., “the Holy Spirit,” emphasizes that one of the primary works of God’s Spirit is to enable His people to live holy and righteous lives. He is the “Spirit of holiness,” meaning the work He accomplishes is to bring the believer into conformity to Yeshua.

#### **14 Who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.**

The Ruach HaKodesh is “given as a pledge of our inheritance.” The word “pledge” does not properly convey the meaning of the Greek and should rather be translated as “earnest” or “down payment.” In fact, the word itself is a Semitic word (Hebrew עֶרְבוּן, *airavōn*) and is transliter-

1 Walter Kaiser, *The Promise Plan of God* (Zondervan, 2008), p. 24.

ated into Greek as ἀρραβῶν (*arrabōn*) meaning “down payment” or “earnest money.” This was a down payment or earnest money which would be forfeited if the purchase was not completed. We find the Hebrew word עֲרֻבֹן (*airavōn*) only three times in the Tanach (Gen 38:17, 18, 20), each time with ἀρραβῶν (*arrabōn*) in the Lxx. This is the story of Judah and Tamar, in which Judah gives to her his seal, his cord, and his staff as “earnest” or “down payment” (*airavōn*) to secure his promise that he would send a goat from his flock for her “services.”

The point is this: earnest money or a down payment is given to prove the purchaser’s full intention of completing the transaction at a future, predetermined time. If the purchaser fails to complete the transaction as promised, the earnest money or down payment is retained by the owner of the object being purchased. Thus, the earnest money represents a guarantee that the transaction will be completed.

Here we see the magnificent truth that Paul is teaching us, for the Spirit of God is Himself the “seal,” identifying the believer as belonging to God and as therefore God’s inheritance. But the Ruach is Himself the *arrabōn*, the earnest money or down payment guaranteeing the full completion of the purchase. The conclusion is obvious: what God has begun, He will finish. This is Paul’s confidence as he writes to those believers in Philippi.

And I am sure of this, that He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Yeshua the Messiah. (Phil 1:6)

And note Paul’s opening words in his first epistle to the Corinthians:

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Messiah Yeshua, that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Messiah was confirmed among you—so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Yeshua Messiah. (1Cor 1:4–8)

Paul uses *arrabōn* in two other texts to teach this same truth, i.e., that the Spirit is Himself the earnest payment that guarantees the believer’s final redemption.

Now He who establishes us with you in Messiah and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. (1Cor 1:21-22)

For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge. (2Cor 5:4–5)

Indeed, all who have been truly born from above by the sovereign grace of God, and who are therefore indwelt the Spirit of God, have God the Holy Spirit as the very down payment of eternity with Him.

But another significant and wonderful fact is that the payment made in earnest, while guaranteeing the full reality of God's redemption, is not merely a small token but the "down payment" consists of the very person of God Himself. Believers are therefore fully assured that in the day of judgment, we will be fully received by God as His treasured people without any fear of judgment.

What is more, the presence of the Spirit in our lives means that we experience even now a true foretaste of the kingdom of God, a small but real token of the unfathomable riches of eternity.

The ἀρραβών metaphor, therefore, is the positive counterpart to the sealing metaphor. The Spirit's sealing function assures believers that they will be redeemed rather than destroyed on the day of God's wrath. The Spirit's function as a "down payment" assures them of redemption in the future and of the greatness of that redemption in comparison to the present.<sup>1</sup>

... with a view to the redemption of God's own possession – Having been brought into the family of God through the work of the Spirit opening our eyes to God's salvation in Messiah Yeshua, and being given the gift of faith to lay hold of God's unspeakable gift, we are here reminded that our salvation has as its ultimate purpose to bring glory and honor to God as the just, righteous, all powerful and all gracious sovereign of the universe. And here is a most remarkable reality. All of the redeemed, from every nation, constitute God's own possession. Why would He, the sovereign God of the universe, pay such a price to have those who were rebels to His goodness be His own possession? There is only one answer to this question—it is that He, in His own sovereign being, chose to love us and thus to bring us to Himself. Surely the love of God goes beyond our finite ability to explain, but we need not fully explain it in order to glory in Him for His greatness.

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1 Thielmann, *Ephesians*, p. 82.