

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Grace Unleashed

PART

4

TITLE

We Are Assured

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:11-14



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It's great to see you, Providence. I hope that you are well and have had a great week. For those of you who are guests with us, welcome. We're really, really glad that you've joined us. Those who call Providence their home, whether you're in this room or all the other venues, perhaps even home or perhaps even watching from all over the world. We have a lot of missionaries who have left Providence and they still watch us. For all of us who call Providence home, this is a neat day. This is our 39th anniversary as a church family. We celebrate this the first Sunday every October, which happens to be today. When you think, Providence, about how God has been kind and gracious, it is so fitting for us just to pause and acknowledge God's relentless grace in his church family.

You think about how he has protected us as a people for 39 years, how he has provided for our needs, how many sins he has forgiven in order to keep us together and keep us his own, to keep us as a church family. It is an amazing thing. You think about the unity that we have enjoyed as a church family. Even those times where the method we didn't necessarily always agree, we always have agreed at Providence on what we're supposed to be doing in terms of the mission. It's about Jesus. We have enjoyed remarkable longevity, of unity, of things like the authority of the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ and the gospel, the amazing gospel, that we can be forgiven of our sins.

You think about how many prayers he has answered in our midst. You think about the number of people who have heard the gospel through the mouths of people who call Providence their home and have turned from sin and believed in Jesus Christ and were forgiven and saved and eventually even baptized. You think about all the friendships, all the relationships over the years. Thousands of people, thousands upon thousands of people who have been here for a time or maybe been here the whole time. There's a handful from the very first day. They're still here. You see all the different people and all the friendships that have been built, established, and protected over the years. It's an amazing thing. Then you think about his faithfulness to us, as a body of believers, to still love the Bible.

You know, there's a lot of places in the world today, in fact, time plus fallenness usually equals leaning away from scripture. It's an amazing thing that happens. Whether it's churches, whether it's people, is bodies of people who come together. This is why there's so many confusing things that take place in the world and the church where you have churches and they say, "We're a church but we don't even believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ." What takes place is that our hearts, if we're not leaning to scripture, we always lean away. What's so sad is you see all around the world people leaning away from the Bible. You think about 39 years. Granted, in comparison to the eternal God and like church history, 39 years isn't super long. Yet, 39 years to where you, as a people, still today expect that when we gather together, we're going to read this book, we're going to sit under it, not over it. You expect me to teach it. You expect me to read this to you today. You expected David Horner, for all those years, to read this book to us. It's an amazing thing and he has done this.

We love the Bible here. If you have one with you, I want to ask you to turn with me to Ephesians chapter one. We're going to celebrate today our 39th anniversary by doing what we do every Sunday. We're going to open the Bible. We're going to read it. We're going to seek to apply it to our life. Then, this Sunday, first Sunday of the month is when we normally do the Lord's Supper, is to celebrate what he's done in our life, his grace to us. We love the Bible here. Absolutely love the Bible. God's word even says of itself, it says that it's able, it has power to revive our soul. When we get discouraged, when the flame of our faith is dim, there's nothing like the Bible. You open it up and God's word, it's like fanning that flame. All of a sudden, it can grow and get hot again. God's word revives us. We're in the book of Ephesians. In October, I even want to encourage you to memorize two verses. This is what they are. This is Ephesians chapter two verses eight and nine. Some of us already know this, but if not, I would encourage you to memorize it. What we want to do right now is practice it.

If you would, join me. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so no one may boast." I'm going to talk more about some of the items of this verse, that's found in this verse, but why encourage you to memorize it? Because God's word tells us that when we plant God's word in our heart, not only does it help us resist sin, but it also helps us to resist being blown around by all kinds of teachings that are so familiar. The thing about our land, the thing about the world, the primary teaching in every religion outside of Christianity is simply this. It's God telling us, "Impress me by your works. Work harder. Try harder. Come more." What the gospel says is we're not relying on ourself. We're actually relying on someone else's works. That's Jesus Christ. Because we love what he's done in our life, it propels us to do certain things, but our relationship was established and our relationship with him continues, not because of our works, but because of grace. It's afforded to us because God gives us the gift of faith. These things are amazing and so I would just encourage and memorize that passage. If you would, I always love to pray even before we read so join me.

Father in heaven, thank you for your word. As we read Ephesians one, at least part of it, we pray that you would give us understanding and wisdom. We look back on all of the graciousness that you have poured out to us as a church family for all these years. For those who have been here the whole time or perhaps those this is their very first time at Providence, just give you thanks, give you thanks for each individual. Thank you for working in each individual's life, all the faithfulness, the protection, provision, peace, and unity, all the grace that you've given to us, the good that you've given to us through the people of Providence. Thank you. I pray now that you would help us to love Ephesians one and to cherish these verses together. We love you and we pray this in Christ's name, amen.

Well, years ago, like 12 or 13 years ago, we have three sons and they were really, really little. In fact, I'm not certain that all of them were born yet because the first one and I, we were at the beach, our family. We're out there and he was not familiar with the waves at all and sort of how they work. It was a new experience for them, but he was certain that he was independent enough that he didn't need to hold my hand. Tabitha's back in the chair and we're out on the beach. I'm close and I'm just watching. I said, "Now, look, son, there's a big wave coming so hold on." I guess he held on as well as he could hold on, but he went under. I know. It was sad. He went under. I mean, it literally took me like two seconds to rescue him.

What was fascinating was even though it was 12 or 13 years ago, there's very specific things that I remember about that moment. I remember the fear in his eyes and I remember the regret that I felt at that very moment. I also remember thinking, "I hope Tabitha isn't watching this right now." She wasn't. When I went toward him and our eyes met through the saltwater, when he was laying on the ocean floor unable to figure out at that point and time how do I leverage my body to get up when the current and the waves keep pushing me in the opposite direction, it was a sad reality when I started thinking about that. I probably shouldn't have given him that much independence. I wanted him to feel secure. The fact is, for that very moment, there was terror in his eyes.

As parents, we all know this. We want our kids to feel secure. That's why in a storm we don't rebuke them when they're little and they come into our room. We comfort them. That's why when they're young and it's bedtime, we don't just say, "Hey, go get in bed." "Well, it's dark. I'm scared." "Well, too bad. Figure it out." We don't say that to them. No, we take them in and we tuck them in and we spend time with them during that time. We want our kids to feel secure. What I want you to see in this text is that God wants his kids to feel secure. He wants you and me, those of us who are in Christ, to feel secure in his love and in his strength. The reality is some of us today, we do not feel secure in our life. Some of us, whether it's a marriage or a relationship or a friendship or a job or our personal health, some kind of emotional crisis, whether it's depression, whether it's anxiety, whatever it is, life doesn't feel secure at all. In fact, for some of us today, it may even feel like you're trapped on a really tall ledge outside with an unpredictable wind. Every time you try to grab a brick in order to stabilize yourself, that brick pulls out of its mortar. That's what life feels like sometimes.

What I want you to know and what Paul wants, he's the writer of Ephesians, what God wants you to know is that God has not forgotten you. He knows where you're at. He knows where your marriage is at. He knows where your kids are at. He knows. He loves you and he cares for you right where you're at. Here, at the end of Paul's marvelous tour through the vault of God's blessings, which is what Ephesians chapter one verses three through 14 is. It's one sentence in the Greek, which is the first language, 202 words that he strings together without a period until the very end. What he does is he's like Paul the tour guide. He's like, "Hey, let's come. I want to show you the vault, all the amazing things that God's grace has given to us." He starts going through and he's like, "See, he's blessed us. See, he's chosen us. He's predestined us. He's adopted us. He's forgiven us and he's redeemed us." Every stop, he's like, "Now look at this treasure. Isn't this amazing?" This is what we've done. We've gone through verse 10.

What he does here at the very end of this tour is he wants us to see the treasure of his eternal assurances for those who are in Jesus Christ. He wants us to feel secure. Let's read it together starting in verse three. We're going to read the whole sentence even though we're only going to focus on verse 11 through 14. He says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who's blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love, he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved."

"In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things to him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him, who works all things according to the council of his will, so that we who are the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In 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, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory."

Now, before we jump in, I want to show you two things from this text. Before we jump in, I just want to remind you that when you and I confessed Christ as Lord, we signed up to follow him no matter how difficult the path. Some people read these words and in our passage, we read the word blessing, guarantee, sealed, inheritance, and then if you look on a TV on Sunday morning, you can find people that start preaching about inheritance and blessing in ways that would maybe even convince some people that to follow Jesus is to experience an easy life. I want you to know that that's simply not the case. In fact, if you came to faith in Jesus or if someone right now is trying to compel you to believe in Jesus and their little speech to you was, "Man, if you do this, life will get really easy for you," they're not trying to lie to you, but they're misinformed. This is not the reality. Life is hard. Satan hates Jesus. He also hates everyone who loves Jesus. When you trust Jesus, not only do you receive, as we're told here in verse 11, an inheritance in heaven, but you also inherit an enemy on earth.

Jesus says, "You come and follow me and I'm going to give you a mission. It's my mission. You're going to partner with me. You're going to walk with me. You're going to follow me, but it's going to be difficult." We know it's difficult because the writer, who's even writing about all of this inheritance, his name is Paul. Paul writes Ephesians from prison. He's chained, literally, to another soldier. His crime is that he has preached that Jesus Christ alone can forgive sins. It's the gospel. It's interesting that you keep reading what Paul wrote in the New Testament, his different books, you get to a passage in 2 Corinthians 11 and there he gives his autobiography, a brief one, where it says this is what it's meant for me to follow Jesus. This is what the path has brought to me simply because I love Christ.

He says, “Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people,” that would be the Jews, “danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.” You don’t hear those preached very much on TV, but that’s the reality of the author of the majority of the letters in the New Testament. This is my experience as an inheritance-receiver.

Now, we don’t all experience the same thing that Paul did, but the reality is God has not promised us an easy life. The question that I want to answer in verse 11 through 14 is this. How is it possible for a man like Paul who’s so familiar with suffering and danger to be so stable in his soul so as to write letters that we still read and study today? How is it possible for a real man to go through these kinds of things on earth and still be so stable in his soul and convinced in Jesus Christ that, even as an old man, he dreamed and plead with God to help him get to a country that had never been reached with the gospel? You keep reading the Bible and you keep reading saying, “I’ve got to get to Spain. I’ve got to get to Spain. They’ve never heard. No one’s ever gone. These people are being born, they’re living their whole life, and they’re dying without knowing that Jesus Christ has forgiven them or can forgive them, that he’s died for them.” How is it possible for a man who’s experienced that lot in life, that journey, to be so stable that we would want to read his chapter today? His answer, I believe is twofold. These are the two points in the sermon.

The first is this. God has given us an inheritance in Christ. Paul knew that God had given him an inheritance and he had given us an inheritance in Christ. Notice what it says, verse 11, it says that God has predestined the people according to his good purpose, his purpose that’s according to his will. We looked at the word predestined back in verse four and five, this idea of God’s sovereign determination over people. What he’s saying is this. God sovereignly said, “I’m going to build a people, a people for my own purpose.” What it says here is the distinguishing mark of this people is that they hope in Christ to the praise of his glory. This is how you know them. Those are the people who hope in him.

You see, we live in a place to where a lot of people are not hoping in him. You can go to a football game just like this guy went to a football game. He’s an Oklahoma fan. He’s sitting right in the middle of a huge group of Texas Longhorns fan. When his team does something well and he roots and declares his allegiance, everyone around him thinks he’s a fool. This is the same thing with those whom God has predestined to become his people. You see a lot of people and they look at Jesus and they scorn what he’s done. Yet, we’re the people who stand and, not only hope in Christ, but we declare our allegiance to him, even if we’re made fun of it. He goes, “This is how you know who my kids are. They’re hoping in Christ. They’re doing so for the praise of my glory.”

What we have seen in this amazing sentence starting in verse three is that God blesses us, that he chooses us, that he redeems us, that he forgives us, and that he adopts us as a people. He brings us into his family. That's an amazing thing if you think about it. Paul continues to write about this. In the book of Galatians chapter four verses four through seven, it says, "When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. You are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God." What Paul's saying here is this. As heirs through God, we have an inheritance.

Romans chapter eight says that we're co-heirs with Christ. What that means is that when God's giving the inheritance to his son, which is everything, is that we're actually partakers of Jesus's inheritance. We don't get a secondary inheritance, we get part of his. It's an amazing thing, in particular, where you think where the journey began, because Romans chapter 10 verse five says that the whole journey began with us being enemies of God. Some of us, we don't remember a life where we felt like we were enemies of God. That's why when we read the Bible, we discern what God remembered about our life before Christ. He said, "No, you were an enemy. You did not believe in me. You did not appreciate me. You did not love me. You sinned against me. You were inclined away from me, not toward me. You were an enemy."

He has made enemies, not only has he just forgiven us, he's literally gotten to the place where he's forgiven us, he's redeemed us, he's blessed us, he's adopted us all the way to the place to where he says, "I'm going to write you into my will." Now, this about this for a second. Think of an enemy you've had in your life. Maybe you have one right now or maybe someone who doesn't like you so much. What would it take right now for the person that you like the least on the earth for you to write them into your will? This is what God did for you and for me. He says we were enemies. This is the fulfillment of his grace in our life. He says, "This is how much I've done in your life. You deserve to die. Not only am I going to give you eternal life, I'm going to give you something to enjoy for eternal life." It's an amazing thing. We have inheritance.

In 1 Peter chapter one, he sort of talks to us about the quality of this inheritance. He says, "He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, to an inheritance," and then he describes it, "that's imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you." He talks about it in terms of quality. Now, sometimes we think of inheritance on the earth as like money, property, land, jewelry, something we can own, feel. The Bible is a little bit vague as exactly what the inheritance is. Some places he said, well, we know there's a house because he says, "I'm going to prepare a place for you. I'm going to return and I'm going to allow you to live in a house that I've prepared for you." In heaven, there's some kind of shelter, some kind of dwelling for us. We're like, "That's my inheritance." I would say, "Yeah."

Peter, he writes of the inheritance as eternal life, that we'll live forever with him. There's different ways of what comes to us, but what Peter does here is he tell us the quality of these things that come to us. The first quality, he says it's imperishable. It won't die. It's imperishable. You see, life on earth is like playing Monopoly. We get the board out. We go around a few times. We make some money. We pay taxes and we try to stay out of jail. Then when the game is over, it doesn't matter what you acquired, whether it's hotels on Boardwalk or whether it's rent from owning Baltic Avenue, it all goes back into the box. It's just like life. Doesn't matter what you acquire, you're going to leave it. Either it's going to perish or you're going to perish, but you and it will not live forever together. It's perishable, but in heaven, the inheritance that God has for us, it will never end. It will never dim. It will never die.

The second thing we're told about it is it's undefiled. See, the stuff in your pocket right now, money, it has a pretty sordid history if you've ever thought about this. You're not the first hands who's touched it. If you have a bill that's really old and it's really loose, you think about the history of that bill. That bill has bought probably vegetables and it could have bought drugs. It paid the tab to watch Cinderella and maybe for someone else to watch pornography. Everything on this earth that we have, all the money that we have, it has a past that has stains and defilement all over it. It's not all pure. It's not all perfect.

What's also true is that if you inherit something here on the earth, whatever that inheritance is, at one time, did not satisfy its previous owner. They had it and yet they were still unsatisfied. You inherit it, you may be happy for a little bit of time, maybe happy a lot of time, but it's never going to satisfy your soul. What he's saying here is this. The inheritance that we receive in heaven, it will not only satisfy us forever, but it has absolutely no mixture with anything that is defiled. There's no sin. There's no stain in it. It's perfect. It's pure.

The third thing we're told is it's unfading. It's not going to fade. It's not going to erode over time. You see, you and I could inherit maybe on this earth a house like this. At one time, this house was actually probably a beautiful house. If you have imagination and real creativity to see what it could have looked like when it was really strong, when all the boards were brand new, maybe a little bit of color, maybe some paint, and all of a sudden what happens is it erodes. This happens to everything we own in life if you ever think about it. If you leave your house for a year, you're not going to come back to it and it's going to be better or cleaner. Everything on this earth that erodes, but the inheritance that's waiting for us in heaven, not only when you get there, it will never, ever, ever fade. Isn't that amazing?

Not only have we moved from being enemies of God to heirs of God, but he gives us an inheritance that is absolutely remarkable. What are we to do with this? I think two points of application. First is this. Let's praise God for his generosity that points us to heaven. I want you to think about the pleasures in this earth. Every pleasure on earth is literally embedded with an arrow that's pointing us to God, to heaven. Tasty food, a cool drink, physical touch, warmth, beauty, art, music, mountains, ocean waves, gardens, friendship, laughter, dancing, gratifying work, every single one of those things is literally God has etched in it an arrow that we're supposed to look at and follow the arrow.

That's what he's saying. People who hope in Christ follow the arrow up. In other words, he's saying, "I want you to enjoy the things that I've given you on the earth, but as you enjoy them, don't think of them as the end. Think of them only as a foretaste of its perfected form when it's in heaven," so that we don't find ourself thinking, "This is home." We're still looking forward to the place in heaven that is our true home.

The second thing I think we can do is leverage his generosity around his mission. You see, there is a lot of people, and you know this, this inheritance language and then prosperity teachers. It causes a great distraction to a great number of people. The logic of the prosperity gospel is this. God is rich. I'm God's kid. Therefore, I should be rich. Then we add to it the problem of timing. We say God is rich now. I'm his child now. I should be rich now. The ultimate problem with the prosperity gospel is timing. Think about this for a second, guys. God told us that our inheritance is imperishable, undefiled, it's unfading, and it's kept in where? Heaven for you. It's not here. The good news, Providence, is that you will prosper in every way in heaven. There, all the shiny things won't distract your heart from worship like they do here.

What are we supposed to do with God's generosity when we're here? Well, we already looked at the first one, that we're supposed to look up and hope to God. We're supposed to enjoy it, but we're also supposed to exchange it. Enjoy and exchange. Why exchange? Well, this is what Jesus said about our things, his generosity to us now on the earth. Matthew chapter six verse 19 through 21 says, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Think about this for a second. If you were a millionaire back in the Civil War with Confederate currency and you had foreknowledge of the outcome of the war, what would you do with that currency? If you were wise, you would enjoy a little and exchange a lot. If you knew you were going to another country and this currency meant nothing in your lifetime but you could go ahead and actually exchange it now for the currency of the country that would become, well, a wise person would say, "Let me live frugally while I'm here and then when the war is over, there will be more than I can enjoy then." What Jesus is saying is, "I'm telling you the outcome of the war." The outcome of the war is our currency here on this earth is good for nothing in heaven, but we can exchange some of it now.

What he's saying is this. "What I've given you, I want you to enjoy." If you have things, God really wants you to enjoy them so do. Enjoy them. Thank God for them. But also be wise enough to say, "Jesus told me not to store up treasures on the earth, but literally to exchange them by storing them up in heaven." How we make that exchange is we invest them toward kingdom end. We invest them in his mission. We invest so that other people can hear of the gospel. Let's live modestly and exchange the rest in what he's doing in the world and in his kingdom in heaven. I think this is one of the things that really fortified Paul in his understanding, why he was so shaken with danger and yet so strong in his soul.

The second thing that was this, is that God has sealed and secured us with his Spirit. You see verse 13 it says, "In him, you are also sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." Now, if you had a valuable possession at this time, you put your seal on it as a proof of ownership. We do the same thing today. We brand cows. You got a bunch of cows with a bunch of other ranchers and all the cows are in one field together, everybody puts their mark, their seal on the cow, so that everyone else knows that one belongs to me. We do the same thing with a deed or a title or a car or a house. You look at it and there's a seal. It's proof of ownership.

Just a few weeks ago, my son was eating the last of the cookies. I said, "Hey, why don't you share some of those?" I'm joking with him. He knows I don't really want one, but I actually did. He goes, "No." Of course, we're bantering back and forth. He goes, "But you know, I really would like some milk." I said, "Why don't you go get some milk?" I'm looking. I got a little smirk on my face. You know what he did? He licked his cookies and then he went and got his milk. What he's saying is, "This is proof of ownership. These are mine. These belong to me." God does the same. He doesn't lick us, but God does the same thing to us. For those of us who have trusted Jesus Christ and believed, he puts his seal on us. God owns us.

1 Corinthians 6:19 says, "You are not your own. You were bought with a price." His proof of ownership, he says here, is his Holy Spirit. Romans eight verse nine says, "Anyone who does not have the spirit of Christ does not belong to him." This is the proof of ownership. It's not your works. It's not your religion. It's this. Is the Holy Spirit in your heart? If he is, you are owned. You are his possession. You are safe and sealed by the Spirit. If you do not have the Spirit but have a thousand good works, you have nothing. That is the seal. The seal is a mark of ownership. When we talk about security, the question for us is not, "Can I lose my salvation?" The question is, "Can Christ lose a Christian?" You got to ask the question, "Are we owning Christ or is Christ owning us?" He says, "I own you." Are we in his hand or is he in our hand? He says, in John 10, he's going to tell us, "You're in my hand." Then he says, "Let me tell you how strong my hand is."

Look what John 10 says. He says, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them. They follow me and I give them eternal life. They will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." Now, whose hands are stronger than God the Father and God the Son? Answer: no one. This is what he says. God the Son, he picks us up. He holds our hands. Nobody can strip us out of his hands. He says, "I lose none that are in my hands." For safekeeping, double measure, God the Father says, "You know what I'm going to do? I'm going to put my hands over Jesus's hands." This is how safe we are. Yet, you look through scripture. Isn't it true that there's verses that seem to hold security at arm's length? Hebrews chapter three verse 14 says, "We share in Christ if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end." That word, if, these words are like, "Wait a minute. Is it possible then that if I don't hold my original confidence firm to the end, then I'm out? I'm going to lose something here."

There's two things that you need to know about these passages. I counted about nine of them this week where you're looking and you're like, "Okay, how do we explain this?" Well, each one of these passages, first of all, they have a context. In this passage, he says we share in Christ if we hold our original confidence firm to the end. He doesn't say we will share in Christ. The difference is this, is that our endurance of faith is not the wage that we pay to share Christ. It's the proof that we do share in Christ. What you find that is the commonality of all these passages that seem to threaten our security is that passages like these are written to threaten our security in everything but God. In other words, a genuinely safe person reads these very verses and instead of running away from God, they run to God. The running to God is proof that they're in God.

Romans 8:16, he says, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." When we run to him, God's spirit says, "You're safe. I know you've sinned. You're safe. You're with me." He's the guarantee, literally the down payment of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. What do we do with this? Two things. First is let's believe in Jesus and rest in his strength. You see the utter necessity of belief when he says, "When you heard the gospel of your salvation and believed, you were sealed." We have to believe. We have to believe that Jesus died on a cross, rose from the dead. We also have to believe what he promised everyone who believed in him would happen to them. That is that if we believe, he takes away our sin and he gives us his righteousness. As people who continue to sin on the earth, what a difference it makes to be assured in the discouraging darkness of our own imperfection, that we have a perfect righteousness outside of ourselves.

You see, the good news about the gospel is that your best days on the earth, they do not add to your righteousness before God and your worst days on earth do not detract from your righteousness in God. The reason is because your righteousness is Jesus Christ. He's sitting at the right hand of the Father. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever more. This is the hope of justification by faith. It's not up to you. It's up to him and he's made it available to us. If you know Christ, the invitation is very simple. Rest in the strength of your shepherd. If you don't know Christ, you can trust him today.

The second thing I think that we need to apply to our life is this. Let's help people hear this gospel. You see, the necessity of belief is preceded by the necessity that they hear. If people don't hear the gospel, they can't believe the gospel. If they don't believe the gospel, they can not be saved. This is why, as a people, we believe sincerely that God has called us to tell people about Jesus Christ. Let's look for opportunities this week to do just that. You know, God has given us a pretty remarkable gift if you think about it. Month by month, we get to do something that helps us to remember what he's done, but it also helps us to proclaim to one another that we believe what he's done and it's called the Lord's Supper. For those that will be serving us, if you want to head to the back and get the elements ready.

When we take these things, the bread and the cup, symbolic of his body and his blood, we're to do those two things. We're to remember what he's done and to proclaim to others that we believe what he's done. If you don't know Christ, we would ask you to respectfully allow these elements to pass by. We would love to talk with you after the service and introduce you to Christ or to just talk to you about things that you're not certain about. We would invite you though at this point and time just to pass. If you know Christ, you're welcome at this table. We invite you to do it. Jesus said a third thing needs to take place here though and that is that we first need to examine our heart. As these things are being passed, I invite you to pray and ask God, "God, is there any sin in my life I need to confess?" Confess it to him. Now, I would also say to you that as you're being passed, if you have the time, I want you to just listen. We had a little team sort of do a really cool recording of each of the chapters of Ephesians and what we want to do is just to play that for you as it's being passed, just to marvel at the grace of God, of what he's made available to us. If you would, let's bow. Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we thank you for your kindness to us, for the mercy and grace that you've given to us to take us from being an enemy all the way to being sons and daughters, as heirs and co-heirs with Christ. It is amazing. We thank you for the strength that you have as our shepherd. We bow before you. We thank you. We ask God that you would reveal anything in our life that needs to be confessed at this time. We pray this in Jesus's name, amen.



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