

## HOW CAN I HAVE GENUINE ASSURANCE?

*1<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, we were allotted to him, (having been predestined in accordance with the purpose of him who causes all things to work for the sake of his own plan),  
12 in order that we, who previously hoped in Christ, should be for the praise of his glory.  
13 You also [were allotted] to him—having heard the word of truth, [that is,] the gospel by which you are saved, and having believed in it, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. 14 He is a “deposit” guaranteeing our inheritance, until the redemption of [God’s] possession, to the praise of his glory. (Eph. 1:11-14)*

### **Introduction**

Assurance of salvation is a precious spiritual commodity, especially in the midst of a world of uncertainty. To be able to say with conviction and certainty, “I am a child of the King,” is a great blessing—it is something God desires for His children in Christ to possess.

Assurance of salvation is a precious commodity; and for it to be genuine, it must be firmly based upon biblical grounds. The Apostle Paul’s desire is for these Christian people in Ephesus to have such assurance.

As we consider what he writes to them under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we are enlightened as to the biblical grounds for genuine assurance of salvation. If you possess the biblical grounds for assurance, you may be confident that you have good grounds for the assurance of your salvation.

### **I. You Can Have Genuine Assurance, ...if You are a Recipient of God’s Sovereign Grace (1:11-12)**

The Apostle Paul informs us that, as Christians, *“we were allotted to”* God. We were made to be God’s lot, or God’s portion. The Greek verb (κληρώω) literally means, “to appoint or obtain a portion by lot,” (i.e.; as a result of the casting of lots.) The apostle goes on to write, *“we were allotted to him, (having been predestined in accordance with the purpose of him who causes all things to work for the sake of his own plan.)”* That is to say, it was not by chance that we were allotted to God; on the contrary, God Himself predestined us to be His lot. We might say that in “the roll of the dice,” our “number” came up—but God planned it that way! According to Proverbs 16:33, *“The lot is cast into the lap; but every decision of it is from Jehovah.”*

Paul in these verses is specifically speaking about God’s Old Testament covenant people, as is evident when he writes, *“we who previously hoped in Christ;”* note Deuteronomy 32:9, *“Jehovah’s portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.”* But what he writes here applies equally to all who are brought into God’s covenant, both Gentile as well as Jewish believer—all who believe in Christ. In verse 13 Paul, addressing the Gentile believers, writes, *“you also [were allotted]*

*to him.*" Verse 14 speaks of both Old Testament and New Testament believers as being God's own possession: the Holy Spirit *"is a 'deposit' guaranteeing our [both Jewish and Gentile believer] inheritance, until the redemption of [God's] possession."* In his first epistle, the Apostle Peter takes the words originally addressed to God's Old Testament covenant people, Israel, and also applies them to the New Testament church, composed of Jewish and Gentile believers:

*... you are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people [appointed to be God's] own possession, so that you might display the virtues of him" who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. <sup>10</sup>Formerly you were "not a people," but now you are "the people of God. (1 Pet. 2:9-10)*

Furthermore, in Ephesians 2:19 the Apostle Paul declares that Gentile believers are fellow citizens and fellow members of the family of God together with Jewish believers: *"So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the family of God."*

We have been predestined *"in accordance with the purpose of him who causes all things to work for the sake of his own plan."* We have been predestined to be God's people by virtue of God's sovereign purpose and plan. God is here identified as the One *"who causes all things to work for the sake of his own plan."* That is to say, God formulates a plan that is solely the product of His own will—it is *"his own plan."* He then proceeds to carry out and accomplish that plan by sovereignly causing *"all things"* to function in such a way as to contribute to the fulfillment of His divine plan. By way of example and illustration, we may note such passages as Genesis 50:20. Concerning his brothers' scheme to sell him into slavery, Joseph testifies: *"As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to accomplish what is now being done, [namely,] the saving of many lives"* (Gen. 50:20.) Concerning our Lord's crucifixion at the hands of the Romans and by the instigation of the Jews, Peter testifies, *"This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross"* (Acts 2:23.) For our comfort and encouragement we may note the testimony of Romans 8:28, *"we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, those who have been called according to his purpose."*

The Apostle Paul further explains that our being selected to be God's portion was not only of divine origin, but also for a divine purpose, it was *"in order that we... should be for the praise of his glory."* It has been sovereignly purposed by God that we, as His redeemed people, should be the means of causing His divine majesty and excellence to be praised. One purpose of our redemption is that His love might be revealed and praised, being displayed in the redemption of those who by nature were His enemies, as Paul writes in Romans 5:6-8, *"when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. <sup>7</sup>Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. <sup>8</sup>But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for*

*us.*” Another purpose of our redemption is that His holiness might be revealed and praised, being displayed in the lives of those who were formerly committed to the service of sin, as Paul writes in Romans 6:17-18, *“But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. <sup>18</sup>You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.”* Yet another purpose of our redemption is that His power might be revealed and praised, being displayed in the resurrection and transformation of those who were dead in sin; in chapter two of Ephesians Paul will remind believers of their natural state, the state of sin and spiritual death from which we have been delivered: *“even when we were dead in transgressions he made us alive with Christ (by grace you have been saved) <sup>6</sup>and he raised us with him and seated us with him in the heavenly realms—in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:5-6.)

Because redemption is a divine work with a divine purpose, there is the assurance that God will fulfill that work in the lives of His elect people: *“those whom God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified”* (Rom. 8:29-30.) The certainty that God will be faithful to accomplish His divine work of redemption in the lives of His people is expressed in this passage by the use of the past tense—God’s work of bringing His people into glory is so certain that it can be spoken of as an accomplished act: *“those he justified, he also glorified.”* Consider, too, what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:8-9, *“[God] will also confirm you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

You can have genuine assurance, if you are the recipient and the object of God’s sovereign grace. You can know that you are the recipient of God’s grace if you can answer “Yes” to the following questions: Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as your only source of redemption? Do you see the Holy Spirit working in your life to make you an object of praise and glory to God?

## **II. You Can Have Genuine Assurance, ...if You are Sealed with God’s Holy Spirit (1:13-14)**

The apostle goes on to write, *“you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.”*

God’s people bear upon them and within them the mark of identification that they belong to God, note Revelation 7:2-3, *“Then I saw another angel coming up from [the place of] the rising sun, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: <sup>3</sup>Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the forehead of the servants of our God.”* The seal of identification God uses to mark His own people is none other than the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is identified as *“the Holy Spirit of promise”* and *“a ‘deposit’ guaranteeing our inheritance.”* The Holy Spirit’s presence in the Christian’s life is the promise and the pledge of the full life of God that is yet to come—the glorification spoken of in Romans 8:30 where it states, *“those he justified, he also glorified.”* The *“deposit”* is a down payment **in kind**, a down payment that guarantees that the full sum will be delivered as promised. By way of illustration: The deposit (or, earnest) may have been 10% of the promised shipment of wheat or some other grain—a portion of the actual commodity was shipped as a pledge that the whole shipment would surely be sent. Thus, as *“the Spirit of promise,”* the Holy Spirit presently minister to God’s people a portion (a down payment in kind) of the life and blessing of God and His heavenly kingdom. Furthermore, His present ministry is the promise (or, guarantee) that God’s people will finally receive the full bounty of the life and kingdom of God.

Paul goes on to assure us that the Holy Spirit is *“a ‘deposit’ guaranteeing our inheritance, until the redemption of [God’s] possession.”* The imagery Paul uses is what is commonly referred to in purchasing as “the lay away plan.” You go to the store and select a high priced item you desire to purchase (perhaps a kitchen appliance or an entertainment system.) You place a deposit on that item (perhaps 10-25% of the purchase price) and the store holds that item in reserve for you—it is laid away for you. Then at a later date, you return with the balance of the payment to claim the item you selected, which has been laid away for you, and you take the item home with you.

In Paul’s use of this imagery, at first, God is presented as the Buyer and the Christian is viewed as the seller, with the Holy Spirit being the Down Payment, or “deposit.” Here the Holy Spirit is presented as the Guarantee that the LORD will finally return to give His people the full payment (the full blessing of His life and presence and kingdom.) Then, with a slight shift in the image, Paul goes on to present the Christian as the item being purchased by God. By so doing, the apostle is bringing out the fact that the Holy Spirit is also the guarantee that the LORD will surely come back to claim His people as His very own: embracing them as the object of His divine affection and love for all eternity.

You can have genuine assurance, if you have been sealed with God’s Holy Spirit. What is the evidence of having been sealed with the Holy Spirit? Are you able to truly address the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ as your heavenly Father, with a true love and affection for Him? Referring to Christian people, Paul writes, *“you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption; and by him we cry, Abba, Father”* (Rom. 8:15.) Do you experience in your life the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s presence, as described in Ephesians 5:18b-21? According to that passage, the evidence of being *“filled with the Spirit”* consists of the following: *“Speaking to each other with Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs”*—can you freely engage in spiritual conversation about the things of God, or are such topics awkward for you and foreign to your experience? *“Singing and praising the Lord in your heart”*—do

you find a spirit of praise in your heart offered up to the Lord. Is there a rejoicing in Him? *“Always giving thanks to our God and Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for all things”*—do you have a spirit of gratitude and trust as opposed to a spirit of complaint and bitterness? *“Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ”*—are you willing to comply with and cooperate with your brethren? Do you exhibit a spirit of submission motivated by a holy fear of Christ; or do you insist on your own way? A measure of such things will be present in your life if you possess the Holy Spirit as *“a deposit,”* testifying to the fact that you have been redeemed to be God’s own possession.

## **Conclusion**

How can I have genuine assurance?

Examine your life. Do you find that you possess the biblical grounds for genuine assurance? Does your life indicate that you are a recipient of God’s sovereign grace? Have you received Christ as your Savior and have you surrendered your life to His Lordship—is there evidence of these things in the way you live? Does your life indicate that you are sealed with God’s Holy Spirit? Is the Holy Spirit present in your heart, and does your life show evidence that the Holy Spirit is in control?

If you possess the biblical grounds for genuine assurance, you may be confident that you have good grounds for such assurance.