

Is Your Future Secure?

In these troubled economic times, the concern of many people is how secure their future is. Is there enough put back for retirement? Will the stock market recover? Will Social Security survive? In today's Templates of Truth, Paul presents key insights to the greatest security our future holds.

Many people today struggle with the assurance of their salvation. When you asked some people if they are destined for heaven, they will respond with some expression of hoping so. There is a definite uncertainty in their answer. In Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus he uses two key words that turn uncertainty into full assurance when it comes to our salvation – *sealed* and *pledge*. From these two words come the idea of “once saved always saved” or the more doctrinal designation referred to as the “security of the believer.” What does that mean?

Perhaps we should start by identifying what it does not mean. It does not mean that you can claim belief in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior & Lord, then live like the devil and in the end you'll still make it heaven. Critics like to raise this perception as a means of disqualifying Christianity as real and genuine. Security is not a license for sinful living. That doesn't mean that Christians never sin, but it does mean that a distinction in their lifestyle can be duly noted. True believers in Christ have a life that has been transformed. That transformation results in holy & righteous living. A person whose life consistently demonstrates attitudes & behaviors that contradict their spiritual professions & confessions is actual manifesting a lie. Their profession of faith is simply not authentic. The transformation has never actually occurred. They may have gone through the motions, but true spiritual change never happened. Satan keeps many such people thinking they are saved when, in actuality, they were never saved to begin with.

True salvation comes *after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed* (Ephesians 1:13). The word, *listening* means to hear with understanding and to heed what you have heard. So it is not just hearing a presentation of the Gospel from the pulpit; it is understanding the message, accepting the message as truth, and making a decision in your life based upon that understanding and acceptance. That decision is demonstrated through *belief*. This word not only embraces belief about Jesus, but also involves committing your life to Jesus and living your life in obedience to His Word, the Bible. Many people hear a Bible message but fail to understand it because they are not open to it. For many people, the Bible condemns the attitudes and behaviors they want to enjoy in their life, so they close their minds and hearts to its truth. Salvation can never come to such persons until they are willing to accept and commit their life to God's way of living as clearly presented in His Word.

Once a person has truly committed their life to Christ, then Paul affirms, *you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise* (1:13). That word, *sealed* denotes several meanings. It means to acknowledge and authenticate. I am a notary public. I can witness your signature to an official

document and I place my seal & signature on that document acknowledging that you are who you say you are and the document you are signing is an authentic statement or agreement. It also refers to a stamp of ownership, similar to the brand a farmer would place on his livestock. The brand, or seal, identifies his ownership of the animal. The word also refers to a stamp of guaranteed delivery. The stamp you place on a letter is issued by the United States Postal Service and ensures their guarantee to deliver the letter to the recipient you have addressed. Paul says the Holy Spirit is given to the believer at salvation to acknowledge & authenticate his salvation as genuine and real; to serve as a stamp of divine ownership by God; and, to guarantee delivery of the believer safely into God's presence at the appointed time.

Not only does the Holy Spirit seal us, but Paul goes further to say that He *is given as a pledge of our inheritance* (1:14). The word, *pledge* can be best understood as a down payment or as earnest money. Such a commitment of funds provides certain guarantees. It holds the property so that no one else can buy it out from under us. It also promises there is more money to come. In many cases, the earnest money is non-refundable, even if the deal fails. The word can also refer to an engagement ring, which establishes a permanent lifetime commitment with a wedding day promised. When we trust Christ as our Savior, the Holy Spirit is given to us as God's down payment or engagement ring for *our inheritance*, referring to eternal life in heaven with Him – our wedding day. It promises more to come and is non-refundable. Once we truly have the Holy Spirit in our life, He can never be taken back.

The economy cannot guarantee your financial future, but God can guarantee your spiritual, eternal future. The issue is, are you truly saved or have you just gone through the motions? True salvation results in true Biblical living. Is your life bearing the authentic seal of God? Is His engagement ring clearly displayed on your hand? Is your future secure?

That's today's Templates of Truth. This is your Bible teacher, Rick Smith, reminding you to attend church this Sunday for Bible study and worship, pray for one another, and always strive to abide in Christ. Until next time, have a blessed and glorious day in the Lord Jesus.