

INTRODUCTION

We’re back in our verse by verse study 2 Corinthians I’m calling “Hope for Cracked Pots.” Today I want to share a message with you entitled, “Salvation Guaranteed.” How many times have you seen or heard the phrase “satisfaction guaranteed?” I know there are plenty of reputable business owners who honor their money back guarantees. But there are people out there who try to take advantage of that phrase “satisfaction guaranteed.” You might have seen recently on ABC News that a judge in Washington D.C. sued a Korean couple who owns Custom Dry Cleaning for \$65 million over a lost pair of pants. His lawsuit is based on his claim that they didn’t live up to their advertisement for “satisfaction guaranteed.”

Here’s the story. In 2005 Roy Pearson got a new job as an administrative judge, which required him to wear a suit. He found that all of his suit pants were uncomfortably tight, so he took a pair in to be altered by the Chungs and paid \$10.50 for the alteration. When Mr. Pearson arrived the next day for the pants they weren’t ready. He stormed out. He eventually filed a lawsuit against the Chungs for fraud, negligence, and a scam. His lawsuit was based on two signs in the lobby of Custom Cleaners. One said, “Satisfaction Guaranteed” and the other said, “Same Day Service.”

Based on those promises, Pearson sued the Chungs for \$65 million. He claims that amount is based upon his “mental suffering, inconvenience, and discomfort,” plus the value of the time he has spent on the lawsuit. He also wants \$15,000 so he can rent a car every weekend to take his clothes to another dry cleaner! The Chungs offered to settle out of court for \$3,000, then \$12,000, but Pearson is intent on the lawsuit which will go to trial next month. For your information, the Chung’s have removed the signs that say “Satisfaction Guaranteed” and “Same Day Service” from their store! And as of just last week, Mr. Pearson was removed from the bench in the administrative court, and given “other duties.”

It’s hard to live up to the promise “satisfaction guaranteed” because there are plenty of people like Pearson, whose theme song is the old Rolling Stones ballad, “I can’t get no satisfaction!” Some people will never be satisfied! The Bible teaches true satisfaction comes from having a relationship with God. And God guarantees we can have that, so that’s why I’ve entitled this message, “Salvation Guaranteed.” The term “salvation” covers more than just your original commitment to Christ. The Bible teaches we have been saved—that’s justification; we’re being saved—that’s sanctification; and we WILL be saved—that’s glorification. And God guarantees our salvation.

We can read about it in 2 Corinthians 1:20-22. In our last message we discovered God’s favorite word is “Yes.” Jesus is God’s “Yes,” and because of that, we can say “Amen!” Let’s see if you remember, “Ready, Yes! Amen!” Let’s read it again, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God.” That great verse is like a volleyball setter who puts the truth up, and the spike is the great passage that follows—here are some of the specific promises of God that are yes in Christ. “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit (KJV: “earnest of the Spirit”), guaranteeing what is to come.”

God has never broken a promise and He always stands behind His guarantees. In this passage there are three great promises God guarantees.

1. GOD GUARANTEES OUR STABILITY—He makes us stand firm in His Son

Verse 21 says “it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.” Since we live in such an unstable world, there has never been a greater need for personal and emotional stability. I believe there are two different ways God’s guaranteed stability helps us.

(1) God gives us Strength to stand straight in an out-of-kilter world

Our world has become such a mixed up place that’s it hard to maintain balance. I can remember as a kid riding a carnival ride called The Tilt-a-Whirl. That was a good name, because that’s what it did—it tilted and whirled while the car went around in a circle. It was always fun to ride it, but it sure made me dizzy. Whenever I got off the ride, I couldn’t stand straight or walk straight. That’s what our world is like. It’s a tilt-a-whirl world. You turn on the news every day and learn of more senseless violence and random pain and suffering. The only way to get your bearings in this crazy world is to stand firm in Jesus Christ. Someone once said, “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.”

(2) God also gives us Courage to stand up against spiritual attacks

Spiritual warfare is real. Satan and his demons are constantly attacking God’s people. But through Jesus we have the power to stand firm in the face of these attacks. The Bible says, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then ...” (Ephesians 6:13)

One of my favorite movies is “Braveheart.” It’s the story of William Wallace who led the Scottish people against the wicked English King Edward. No army had ever prevailed against the frontal attack of the English cavalry. Every other army turned and fled at the sight of the mounted soldiers. But at the Battle of Stirling Bridge on Sept 11, 1297, William Wallace convinced his soldiers to stand firm. As the cavalry approached Wallace kept crying, “Stand! Stand! Stand!” As the cavalry reached the lines the Scottish soldiers raised sharpened sticks and broke the attack. Although they were greatly outnumbered by the English, the Scottish forces won the battle because they refused to retreat—they stood firm.

Every day we are attacked by temptations and accusations of the evil one. In the midst of this attack, the Captain of our salvation, Captain Jesus, says to us through His Holy Spirit, “Stand! Stand! Stand firm!” And God gives us the spiritual backbone to stand firm so we can have victory in Jesus. God says, “I’ll give you the strength and courage to stand firm—I guarantee it.”

2. GOD GUARANTEES OUR IDENTITY—He seals us with His name

This guarantee is found in verse 22, “He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us.” The fastest growing internet crime in the 21st Century is identity theft. Unscrupulous people are

trying to steal your name, social security number, and credit card information. The problem of identity theft has created an entire new business devoted to protecting the identity of people. Maybe you’ve heard the radio commercials of a company called Lifelock. The Founder of Lifelock comes on and says, “My name is Todd Davis and this is my social security number: 457-55-5462.” That’s really his name and SS number. And he leads a legitimate company that claims they can protect your identity from being stolen for only about a hundred dollars a year.

When it comes to your spiritual identity, don’t worry about it being stolen. God has His own lifelock on your identity—and when God locks something, it stays locked! The Bible says He has set His seal of ownership on you. The seal of the Holy Spirit can mean two different things.

(1) God marks us to display His ownership

The word “seal” can mean different things. When I say “seal” some people think of an amphibious mammal that swims in the ocean or performs at SeaWorld. Or some men probably think of a rubber gasket used in machines like engines or gas and oil drilling equipment. If you’re a homemaker like my grandmother you might think about the seal you’d put on the mason jars of pickles and jellies. Or if you’re in politics, you might think of the Presidential seal displayed whenever the President of the United States speaks. But the word “seal” in this context means something different than all of those meanings. In ancient times a seal was like a signature. A king or other ruler would melt wax on an important document, and then he would take his signet ring and make an imprint on the wax. That was his seal, which would carry all the authority of his name and his office. The Bible says God has sealed us in the same way. Haggai 2:23 says, “‘I will make you like my signet ring, for I have chosen you,’ says the Lord Almighty.” God stamps His name in our hearts through the Holy Spirit, letting us know we belong to Him. This guarantee is more clearly seen in Ephesians 1:13, “Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”

When you become a Christian, God marks you with a seal, the Holy Spirit. It’s almost like a rancher branding his cattle so everyone knows he owns them. I heard the funny story of two ranchers talking. One asked, “What’s the name of your ranch?” The other answered, “It’s the lazy Q, Four Winds, Triple W, Double D, Seven Stars, Nine Circle Ranch.” The first one said, “How many head of cattle do you have?” The second one answered, “None right now. None of them survived the branding.” Fortunately for us, God’s seal of ownership isn’t like a brand! It’s an invisible mark He puts in our hearts. But it’s His way of saying, “You belong to Me!”

(2) God secures us to give us assurance

We are not only sealed *by* the Holy Spirit—that refers to God’s ownership—we are sealed *for* eternity, as we shall see in Ephesians 4:30. The Bible teaches a wonderful doctrine called the Security of the Believer. That means when you become a child of God, you can never lose your salvation. Another use of a seal in ancient times was to lock something away securely. For instance, when they placed Jesus in the tomb, the Bible tells us Pilate had his seal placed over the tomb. It was only a wax imprint, but it carried all the authority of the Roman Empire, and meant a death sentence to anyone who broke the seal. Of course that seal didn’t stop Jesus! But the use of Pilate’s protective seal is same the meaning of this great truth. The Bible says, “And do not

grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30) The reason you can’t lose your salvation is because God has placed the seal of His heavenly authority over your heart and nothing or nobody can break that seal! That’s why we have the assurance of our salvation.

Did you see the recent story about a lost dog’s reunion with his owner? Kari Mitchell in Missouri owned a Boston Terrier named Mickey. Four years ago, Mickey disappeared, and Kari assumed he was gone forever, but she never forgot about him. Last month, Kari got an interesting call from an animal shelter in Billings, Montana, 1,100 miles away...they wanted to know if she had owned a dog named Mickey! Mickey had been turned in as a stray—all dirty and scraggly. They were able to identify Mickey because Kari had a microchip implanted under his skin with her name and contact information. That microchip told the Montana animal shelter exactly who Mickey belonged to—he wasn’t a stray. He belonged to someone who loved him. When Kari was reunited with Mickey, he didn’t look like himself—his teeth had been worn down, and he no longer answered to his name. But he knew who she was and jumped into her arms.

That reminds me of the story of the Prodigal Son Jesus talked about in Luke 15. You may be like Mickey or the Prodigal Son and you’ve wandered far away from God. You might have even forgotten your name. But God hasn’t forgotten you. He has put His seal in your heart. The Prodigal son wandered from his dad and ended up in a pig pen. But one day he came to his senses and said, “I will arise and go to my father.” The reason he had that sense of need to return was because stamped into his DNA was the undeniable truth that he was his father’s son. Has that happened to you? Maybe you’ve drifted; maybe you’ve wandered; maybe you’ve done terrible things—but if you still and listen to your heart, you’ll sense a burning need to come back to your heavenly Father right now. It’s because He has sealed your heart with His name. You belong to God. And when you start back to Him, like that dad in Luke 15, God will run with open arms to welcome you back into His embrace.

3. GOD GUARANTEES OUR DESTINY—He gives us the deposit of His Spirit

We find this last promise described in verse 22, “God put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.” The word “deposit” is a financial term. You can often buy a car or another expensive item by making a down payment and after signing a few papers you can drive off in the car or take delivery of the item immediately. But this word in the Bible, translated “earnest” in the KJV, means money paid down without taking delivery of the purchase. If you’re wanting to buy a house for \$200,000 you might be required to pay \$20,000 earnest money to prove you’re serious about buying the house. You can’t move in until the closing, but earnest money is a promise of your occupancy. One reason God puts His Spirit in our hearts is to show us He is guaranteeing our final destiny. Think of it in two ways:

(1) The Spirit is God’s down payment in His process of changing us!

When you first become a follower of Jesus Christ, God places the Holy Spirit in your heart to begin to change you to be more and more like Jesus. The change is not instantaneous, it happens gradually day by day. The reason God saved you was NOT to just take you to heaven when you

die. God saved you to gradually change your character to be like Jesus. The Bible says, “For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son.” (Romans 8:29) We learn this is a never-ending process in Philippians 1:6, “He who began a good work in your will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

You may say, “Pastor, do you believe in predestination?” My answer is, “Absolutely!” Now the Bible never says God predestines some to be saved and some to be lost. Look again at Romans 8:29. “For those that God KNEW would trust Jesus, He predetermined their destiny—and that predetermined destiny is to become more like Jesus.

This is how I understand predestination. If you go out to Tyler Pounds Field and get on an American Eagle flight, the destination is already determined: DFW. Or if you get on a Continental Flight, the destination is set: Houston. Now you have a choice about whether or not to buy a ticket and whether or not to get on the airplane and sit down. But once they close the door and you make sure your set back is the upright position and your tray table is stowed away, your destination is set. Once you decide to follow Jesus, then your eternal destiny is set—your salvation is guaranteed. The Holy Spirit is constantly changing our character to make us more like Jesus.

(2) The Spirit is God’s earnest promise that the best is yet to come!

When you make a deposit on a purchase you are paying a small amount but you are indicating that more money will be following it. When God places the Holy Spirit in our hearts, He is guaranteeing us that there is much more to come! The Bible says, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:9) God guarantees there is more to come—heaven!

When my mother used to bake a cake she would mix up the ingredients in a bowl, use her hand held mixer, and then spoon it into the pans before she put them in the oven. There was always some batter left over and my brother, my sister, and I would argue over whose turn it was to lick the leftover batter. Have you ever done that? The batter left on the spoon and on the mixer beaters, and the bowl was a real treat! But that great taste was *nothing* compared to the taste of that cake when it came out of the oven. The batter in the bowl was just a foretaste of the cake. I think that’s what the wonderful blind hymn writer Fanny Crosby meant when she wrote, “Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine! Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God. Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood!” The blessings we enjoy now are simply a foretaste of the glory that will be heaven!

CONCLUSION

When I was a kid we lived in South Alabama only a block away from beautiful Lake Jackson, the largest natural lake in the state. I loved the water. I could hop on my banana bike and coast down the hill from my house and without peddling once ride all the way to the lake and zip off the end of the pier—bike and all! My family really loved to water ski, and I learned to ski as a kid as my dad pulled me behind his fishing boat. It wasn’t long before I learned to slalom, which

is using only one ski. The problem was we only had a couple of old, wide, ugly water skis. One of them had a place to put your back foot to slalom, but it wasn't designed to make sharp cuts. I wanted more!

This was long before sporting goods stores, so the only place to buy sports equipment was in the Western Auto Store. It was kind of a first-generation Wal-Mart. I was in there one day and saw the most beautiful slalom ski. It was a Cypress Gardens Dick Pope, Jr. Model. I felt like I couldn't live without it! I don't remember the exact cost but it was probably close to \$40. I had a job working on Saturdays at the Florala Feed and Seed store, where I made \$4 a day, so I asked Mr. Williamson, the owner of the Western Auto, if I could pay a little at a time on it. He agreed, so I paid a \$10 deposit. He took my money and then wrote my name on a tag and hung it on the ski, so nobody else would buy it. I can remember working for several weeks, and dropping by to pay a little more money. Each time I came in I'd look at that ski with my name on it and I'd grin as I thought about how I would be cutting a wake and throwing a wave of water 20 feet high, soaking my friends sitting on the pier. Finally the day came when I paid the remaining amount and he handed me my ski. I enjoyed using my ski for years. I wish I still had it, but one day somebody stole our boat and my Dick Pope Jr. ski was in the boat. By the way, if you ever see a Dick Pope Jr. Slalom ski with a gash in the top left side, it might be mine!

Here's the point. I made a deposit on that ski, but I didn't own it yet. But as soon as I made the deposit and saw my name on that ski, I was already thrilled with the anticipation of using it. But as great as the anticipation was, the actual experiences of skimming across the water and jumping the wake was a hundred times better!

God has done that and so much more. He has given us the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to give us a taste of what heaven will be like. We're not in heaven yet, but we should already be thrilled about the blessings we have now and live in anticipation of the promise of heaven.

Some people think the Christian faith is all about pie in the sky by and by...but I like to say, "Sure, but it's also about steak on your plate while you wait!" Right now we enjoy God's love, His presence, His grace, His forgiveness...can you imagine how much greater heaven will be?

Are you going to heaven when you die? Is your answer, "I hope so?" or "I don't know." or "I think so?" You don't have to give any of those answers. Because of God's guarantee, you can say, "I KNOW so!"

Are you experiencing God's stability? Are you aware that God has established your identity as His child and nothing can change it? Do you have the absolute assurance that your final destiny is heaven? You can answer "yes" to all these questions because God has given us His guarantee.

OUTLINE

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“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.” *1 Corinthians 2:9*



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes