

Signed, Sealed, Delivered

You also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13).

Scripture: Ephesians 1:1-14

Song: “Church on Fire”

When a woman receives an engagement ring, there is a lot of excitement because of everything the ring signifies. The relationship and the significant commitment behind her ring are certainly important, and even the ring itself, but it is the wedding ring that will be the symbol of the marriage covenant.

When a sinner hears the gospel and responds by confessing sin and receiving salvation by faith in Jesus, then the Spirit of God marks that person as part of God’s family. The Spirit seals the believer as a fully adopted son or daughter from the start. The Spirit does it all, but the salvation is truly “your salvation.” The evidence of the Spirit within our hearts authenticates our salvation. As members of the family, we have the privileges of natural-born sons and daughters but also the responsibility to live as members.

Father, thank You for providing the way of salvation through Jesus, Your Son, and for giving the Spirit’s seal of my adoption into Your family. In Jesus’ name, amen.

December 1–6. **Jason Cybulski** lives in Oregon with his wife and three children. He is the pastor of community groups in a local church and enjoys coffee, cooking, and teaching people to live God’s mission.

Hope in the All-Powerful

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe (Ephesians 1:18-19).

Scripture: Ephesians 1:15-23

Song: “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less”

There was nothing more exciting for me in my youth than to play on my city’s Little League all- star team in the summer of 1993. Our team had aspirations of reaching the Little League World Series, but first we had to win our local tournament. We had lost the first game and were down on the score, with one out remaining in the second game. Our best hitter, Andy, was at the plate. Already five feet nine inches tall, Andy could hit the ball like no other 12-year-old we knew. We were confident that he was going to come through for us. But not so. Andy struck out. The tournament was over for us.

All our hopes had gone out to the plate with Andy, but he didn’t accomplish what we needed. He didn’t have the power to bring us to victory in that game.

Our heavenly Father is the only one with the power to accomplish our hope for eternal victory—because of His “incomparably great power” to conquer death. God demonstrated His power in raising Jesus from the dead and giving Him power and dominion.

Dear Father, I praise You for Your power at work in my life to bring me to eternal victory in Jesus. In His name, amen.

The Origins of the Savior

David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife (Matthew 1:6).

Scripture: Matthew 1:6b-15

Song: "All the Way My Savior Leads Me"

Researching family history has become popular, and people are uncovering all sorts of stories about family members who lived long ago. With information about ancestors who maybe immigrated from another country or moved to a different city—and given the events that happened because of changes in each person's life—researchers might come away thinking, I might not have been born if _____ had not happened!

If researchers discover unsavory characters, they might want to ignore that branch on the family tree or focus on another branch that doesn't carry the bad influences.

A sure fact is that no matter what our past, God knows all about it and He can work in our lives for His good purposes in the future. We see this in the way God worked through David's line of descendants with Bathsheba—a woman David married after getting rid of her first husband, Uriah, a good man. Bathsheba is in Jesus' family tree (Matthew 1:1).

God has demonstrated His power and faithfulness to accomplish His salvation and good purposes in history. This includes the stories of sinful people whom He redeemed for His work and purpose. He will work in our lives as well toward His purposes and our good when we seek Him and follow Him.

Father God, thank You for knowing me and my family history and for redeeming me into Your eternal family. In Jesus' name, amen.

God: Forever and Always

About the Son [God the Father] says, “Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom” (Hebrews 1:8).

Scripture: Hebrews 1:6-9

Song: “Behold Our God”

People who move up corporate ladders into roles to lead colleagues who were formerly peers sometimes struggle to establish their leadership authority. This is especially so if their new position and authority are not well supported from the higher management levels. Expressed affirmation from the top helps to reset how the rank and file of the organization view the one who was promoted over them.

Jesus, the Son of God, has never been promoted, or demoted. He always has been, always is, and always will be fully God. We know this from the Old Testament, in which Christian Bible scholars identify some 350 references to Jesus. These begin in Genesis 3 (v. 15) and continue into Malachi 4 (vv. 5-6). Jews have read all these passages for centuries, and still do, yet many still miss Jesus. It is as if they need an affirmation of who Jesus is. God gives that affirmation to them, and also to Gentiles, in today’s Scripture. The Father affirms the authority of Jesus and His role as supreme judge.

All of us, Jew or Gentile, must recognize the sovereignty of Jesus, the Son of God. And we must respond to the fact that He will deliver justice to all people.

Heavenly Father, thank You for helping us see Jesus as He truly is and for calling us to respond to Him in faith and repentance. In His name, amen.

Jesus Is Always the Same

[About the Son God says,] “You remain the same, and your years will never end” (Hebrews 1:12).

Scripture: Hebrews 1:10-14

Song: “Unchanging”

In the world of fine dining, sameness can be a killer. Top-rated restaurants must keep innovating their menus to maintain their preferred status. Of course, the innovations must be good and appealing to patrons. And so chefs spend hours adjusting and changing their recipes to create new menu items with new tastes to offer their guests. The key is to provide a novel dining experience at each visit so people come back. Only mediocre chefs will serve the same thing day after day.

While “same old same old” might not be so good in fine dining, regularity and stability are very good when it comes to relationships. The Lord makes relationship with Him easy because of His character of stability and consistency. His sameness gives us reason for confidence in our God.

This fact is so important that the writer of Hebrews returns to this truth toward the end of the letter, stating that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). This is part of Christ’s identity and character, and also His promise. We do not need to worry about the Lord changing His mind about His children. He will always love us, always be with us, and always be good to us. And this will never end because He never ends.

Father, thank You for being consistent in Your love for us, Your presence with us, and Your goodness to us. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Just Like Daddy

The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word (Hebrews 1:3).

Scripture: Hebrews 1:1-5; Matthew 1:1-6, 16-17

Song: "Thank You, Jesus"

Growing up I looked a lot like my mother, and not at all like my father. But my dad and I shared many common interests and behaviors. You wouldn't be able to look at me and then pick out my dad in a crowd. But if you spent time with us together, talking or playing a game with us, you would certainly conclude that we are father and son.

Jesus was conceived by the Spirit (Matthew 1:18) and born as a human descendant in David's family line, as foretold in Scripture (Isaiah 11). Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and His Father are exactly the same. The Son has the same glorious radiance as His Father and completely represented His Father—living as God incarnate on earth, teaching, loving, and serving to reveal God to us. Everything Jesus said and did while on earth reflected His Father in Heaven. This is why we come to know God the more we turn our attention to Jesus. When we read Scripture, with faith and desire to receive the truth that reveals God, our hearts and lives are transformed by the one who sustains all things, including each of us. Get to know Jesus as your Savior and Lord through His Word and receive God's life-changing and sustaining power

Father, thank You for sending Your Son to show us Your power and glory. I want to know You more. In Jesus' name, amen.