

These two verses are used by Paul in the broader context of his defense against the charge of being untrustworthy and appear to be the climax of that defense. Observation of God's work in their lives and in Paul's should have hindered them in so quickly and casually accusing Paul of being untrustworthy.

The four-fold work of God mentioned in these verses calls us to observe and judge our own lives (cf. 2 Cor 13:5). It touches on aspects of the past, present and future work of salvation but all have effect on our present life.

1. ***The meaning of "establishing" and having been "anointed"***

The grammar appears to group these four works of God into two pairs which is supporting by Ephesians 1:13-14 where the "seal" is identified as the Holy Spirit. "Establishing" and "anointed" are more easily understood by beginning with "anointed".

a. *Anointed*

Anointing with oil was done medicinally and cosmetically and symbolically with priests and kings. The latter found a figurative parallel in those chosen by God for service, i.e., "anointed" ones. (Christ means Anointed One. Cf. Isaiah 61:1 and Acts 10:38.)

According to 1 John 2:20 children of God have an anointing which is the Holy Spirit. Analogous with the OT we are a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) with priestly duties (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; 15:16). When a person turns to Christ and becomes a child of God, he or she is anointed by God, hence appointed for service, to bear fruit.

b. *Establishing*

Paul wrote concerning establishing in 1 Corinthians 1:8 (cf. Col. 2:7). It is the continuing work of God in His children, all the way until Christ returns, to make them strong or establish them in their faith, so that when Christ does appear and their relation to God is checked, God will assure that no charges can be placed against them. (Cf. Philippians 1:6)

When we bring together the current work of establishing and the past work of anointing, Paul is declaring that God is the One who makes us faithful, and increasingly fruitful, disciples of Jesus Christ. (Cf. The metaphor of the Vine and the Branches in John 15 as well as Galatians 3:3) It is the work of God in our lives that we continue to grow as believers and His children (cf. Hebrews 12).

2. ***The meaning of having been "sealed" and having been given a "down payment"***

a. *Sealing*

There are generally four reasons, not necessarily exclusive, why a seal was placed upon something in NT times: to identify something, e.g., as ownership, to certify authenticity, to conceal or keep secret contents, and to keep something secure.

When a person comes to faith in Christ Jesus, God gives that person His Holy Spirit and thereby marks that person as belonging to Him. The Holy Spirit is the "seal" (Ephesians 1:13) and is necessary and exclusive mark of being a child of God (cf. Romans 8:9 and context). The seal as a mark of security is developed in the following figure.

b. *Receiving a down payment*

The word Paul uses refers to a partial payment in advance that obligates the purchaser to make full payment in the future. The down payment is part of the full payment and the act of making the down payment requires the full payment later. Hence, the added explanations in translations such as "as a guarantee", and "what is to come." When God gives the Holy Spirit to a believer, He obligates Himself to complete the full redemption of that person. The Holy Spirit is only part of what we will get. Our full salvation is not yet completed. He is the firstfruits (Romans 8:23).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the believer is that which assures the believer's redemption. He is God's guarantee of more to come. He is God's mark upon the believer, that that person is truly His child and, as His children, we can expect a much greater inheritance.

3. ***Correctly understanding the significance of God's work in a believer***

This four-fold work of God, though largely initiated in the past, has significance for us today. It is important that we think it through and not misunderstand what God is saying through Paul.

a. This is God's work and not our own, as emphasized in the literal sentence structure. We cannot guarantee our salvation by doing good works, but would we deny it in an attempt to do so (Cf. Ephesians 2:8-10).

God is at the center of our salvation. We benefit, but He wants the glory from it.

b. This work of God will produce its evidences. After becoming a child of God it will be the natural tendency to be growing more like Christ. Sin is not natural to the new nature which the believer has and is contrary to the present work of God in every believer. Good works are evidences of what is happening within the believer and not acts of obligation or ways of earning something with God. (Ill.: the husband who does good things for his wife for the joy it brings her rather than out of obligation or to "earn" respect.) The Holy Spirit evidences Himself in the true child of God when the child of God strives to be obedient out of a heart desire to do so.

Does this passage speak of my experience? Is God making me a more fruitful, faithful disciple? Believers are also called to treat each other as those in whom God is working. Their response will show whether that is true.

The Spirit of God is present in God's children and is at work in their lives. Those who by faith in Jesus Christ have come to God belong to Him. We need to show that we believe this and that it is true in our lives, by following from the heart God's truth.