In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. *Eph 1:13-14 ESV*

In him you also [trusted], when you heard the word of truth
Whilst Abraham and his descendants were the first to trust in Christ, Gentiles also now believe. In some respects, the last shall be first, as Jesus declared (Mat_20:1-16, Mar_10:29-31, Luk_13:23-30). Paul makes it clear that there will be an influx of Gentiles into the Kingdom ahead of the Jews (Rom_11:25-26) but that the Jews would eventually be saved. Salvation is available for all who will trust in Christ, without distinction, and without exception. It is no longer available only to the physical descendants of Abraham. The message of the good news of Jesus Christ has been delivered to the whole world. Race, culture, social status and genealogy no longer count. The Lord has seen fit to appoint certain people as messengers of the gospel, initially to the Jews (Act_2:21-24, Act_8:4, Act_10:36) and later to the Gentiles (Act_9:15-16, Act_11:15-18, Rom_11:13) so that people everywhere may have the opportunity to be saved. Some will accept the message, others will reject it, but those who reject it will be without excuse on the day of judgment (Joh_15:22, Rom_1:20).
The primary means of salvation is through the preaching of the Word of God (Rom_10:13-14). Unless someone has heard of Christ, how can they trust in Him? Preaching is indispensible. While the existence and power of God can be discerned by looking at creation (Rom_1:19-20), and we may even be able to deduce something about the Fall of man by the knowledge of the corruption of men's hearts and the existence of death, we can see nothing of God's plan for redemption and salvation in the world around us. This makes the Word of God desperately important, vitally important. For without it, we would not hear of God's wrath against sin, of His plan for salvation through the provision of a Saviour, and of the possibility of reconciliation with Him. There is no more important message in the world. All humanity, without exception, need to hear this wonderful message.
It is not only a message for the unbeliever, but a message also for the believer. We need constant and frequent reminders of the goodness of God, of His grace towards us, and of His faithfulness to us in spite our our unfaithfulness to Him. We too easily lose the sense of His love and grace towards us because of our ongoing struggle with sin and our failure to be consistently holy. The enemy then uses our failure to attack us and try to convince us that we no longer live in grace, and to suggest that we have lost our salvation. One of the keys to victorious Christian living is a correct and convinced knowledge of the grace of God. It allows us to approach God immediately for forgiveness and reconciliation, and gives us confidence in His decision and guarantee to keep us for Himself. Who does not need this sort of reassurance?

The gospel of your salvation
It is the gospel, the good news, of our salvation. *All* have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom_3:23). The solitary exception in the history of man is the Lord Jesus Christ. Every other person who has ever lived, and who will ever live in the future, is guilty of sin against the most high, and completely holy God. God cannot allow anything impure, corrupt or sinful in His presence. And man is corrupt and sinful to his core. God requires perfection in holiness (Lev_19:2, Lev_20:7) and obedience to His law (Jos_22:5, Psa_78:10). Man is unable to do this. Thus the distance between God and man is infinite, and far beyond the power of man to breach.

This is bad news, because on its own, it means an eternity of separation from God, and an eternity of the suffering that entails.
But the good news, the gospel, is that God had formulated a plan, before creation, to deal with this matter of sin and to provide a means whereby sinful man could be cleansed and reconciled to Himself. This plan required death. Not just any death, although death was the penalty set for sin. It required a very specific death. It needed to be someone who was fully human, but someone who was not tainted by sin. Only an offering that was perfect would be sufficient to meet the demands of justice. And that perfect offering was found in His Son, Jesus Christ, who came willingly to die as a payment for sin. He was not only perfect in His acceptance of the punishment, but He was perfect in every action and every thought and every attitude of His life. He was passively righteous and actively righteous.
By His death, the justice of God was satisfied, the wrath of God was turned away, and relationship could be restored between God and man. This is good news indeed! The demands of God that we were unable to fulfil were fulfilled on our behalf by God Himself. Wonder of wonders! As is always the way with our God, He initiates every action towards us, and meets all that He demands of us, in Himself, on our behalf.

And believed in him
Our hearts are turned away from God by nature. Left to our own devices, we would never choose to believe in Him. But at the right time, when He chooses, He open our ears and our hearts to hear and believe. This is an amazing work of the Holy Spirit. He takes a hard heart and softens it. He takes a rebellious heart and turns it into a heart that *wants* to serve and obey God. He takes deaf ears and blind eyes and opens them to see and desire this wonderful salvation. And then, out of the abundance of His love, grace and mercy, He grants the gift of faith to believe the Word of Truth.

Were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance
The image of a seal conveys (at least) four thoughts, all of them wonderful.
Firstly, a seal is a mark guaranteeing authenticity. Anything marked with a seal is so marked to indicate that it is the real thing. There is nothing fake about it (see 1Ki_21:8, Est_8:8, Joh_6:27, 1Co_9:2). The seal is so important that in ancient times a document was only considered to be genuine if it was sealed. In like manner, we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit as an indication that we are truly His. There are many who would put on the appearance of being believers, with moral behaviour, regular church attendance and spiritual sounding talk to convince themselves and others, but the only mark of authenticity is the presence of the Holy Spirit in and on a life. This presence gives an inner assurance of salvation, a deep and abiding love for the Saviour, and a life-long desire to follow Him, even to the ends of the earth.
Secondly, it indicates a fixed and final condition, completion (Est_8:8-10, Isa_8:13-16, Dan_6:17, 2Ti_2:19). Once something was sealed, it could no longer be altered or tampered with. The seal guaranteed that it would arrive in the same condition as it was when sealed. We are made righteous and holy in the sight of God when we are born again (Rom_3:21-22, 2Co_5:21, Eph_1:4, Eph_1:7). This is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit as a consequence of the Cross. And the seal of the Holy Spirit guarantees our ongoing righteousness and holiness before God. This also is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit as a consequence of the Cross. Thus we have total confidence in God's ability to keep us in the faith to the end and not cast us out.
Thirdly, a seal was used to formally ratify and confirm a transaction or covenant. Jeremiah sealed the deeds of the field which he bought (Jer_32:10-14, compare

Jer_32:44). Nehemiah and many others affixed their seal to the written covenant between God and His people (Neh_9:38, Neh_10:1ff). God Himself has sealed us with the Holy Spirit to establish and confirm the covenant He has made with us.
The fourth idea is that of ownership. As an illustration, in Biblical times, a timber merchant may go to the docks to select a batch of imported timber for His business or personal use. Once he had selected it, he would mark it with his seal to indicate to all that this batch of timber belonged to him. At a later date, he would send his servants back to the dock to collect the timber that had his seal on it. By this means, the timber was marked and reserved for him alone, and was kept safely for him until it was collected. The seal of the Holy Spirit is our guarantee that our rightful owner is coming back to collect us at the appropriate time. By this, we have great assurance and comfort (2Co_1:22, Eph_4:30, 2Ti_2:19).
This then begs the question, "What does that seal look like?"
Firstly, there will be a recognition of sin and offence before God that brings repentance. There will be no true seal of the Holy Spirit if repentance is missing (Act_2:38, Act_11:15-18).
There will be an inward renewing and sanctification. A person who is truly born again should have some inner sense of change, of becoming different and more like Christ. While this may not necessarily be an instant and dramatic change (although it often is), there should be a growing awareness of change for the better in actions and in attitudes. This change will be motivated by an increasing desire to know and to be like Jesus Christ. These changes only come about as the Holy Spirit works within the believer. There should be evident in decreasing measure the works of the flesh and in increasing measure the fruit of the Spirit (Gal_5:19-25). This is a life-long struggle, but a struggle that indicates the Holy Spirit's seal on a person's life. Paul struggled also with this. *"For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.... For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing"* (Rom 7:15, 18-19). This disappointment in ourselves at our inability to honour God with our actions is a clear indicator of the seal.
There will also be an increasing confidence in the goodness of God towards him; an understanding that God is his Father,and that he is an adopted son (Rom_8:14-16), that his hope is genuine and his salvation is sure (1Jn_5:13). Sometimes people are concerned that they may have committed the unforgivable sin, blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mar_3:29, Luk_12:10). In fact, this concern would seem to indicate that they have not done so, as it is evidence of the operation of the Holy Spirit in their life. If they had committed that sin, all conviction would be absent as the Holy Spirit would then have taken a "hands-off" approach to to them.
There will also be a desire to know Him and be with Him. The Psalmist expressed this well when he wrote, *"As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God"* (Ps 42.1) and *"How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.... For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere...."* (Psa 84:1-2, 10) The Holy Spirit stirs within us a longing to know our Saviour, to draw near to Him.
Another sign of this seal to consider is that of the gift of tongues. When Peter was preaching to Cornelius and his family, the Holy Spirit fell on them and they began speaking in tongues and extolling God (Act_10:44-48, Act_11:15-18). This sign indicated to Peter that these people had received the Holy Spirit and thus had become believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus indicated that tongues would be one of the evidences

of believers (Mar_16:17) as it was on the day of Pentecost (Act_2:1-4).
Those who have the evidence of this seal in their life can have complete and total assurance of their salvation. The seal of the Holy Spirit is the guarantee of their inheritance. For more on our inheritance, see notes on Eph_1:11.
If any or all of these signs of the seal are missing, we should carefully examine ourselves to see if our faith and our relationship with Jesus Christ is genuine. Paul warned, *"Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?--unless indeed you fail to meet the test"* (2Co 13:5). This is a serious warning, and one that all who claim to be Christians should heed. There is no warrant in Scripture for assuming we are saved based on our religious upbringing, or sincerity in doing good, or even our knowledge of the Bible. The only guarantee of salvation is a real relationship with Jesus Christ, and that sort of relationship will carry with it certain signs and evidences that it is genuine.

Until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.
See notes on Eph_1:11-12.