

Our Inheritance in Christ

June 14, 2002

Ephesians 1:11-14

"In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation-- having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of [God's own] possession, to the praise of His glory."

This week we will conclude Paul's passage of praise in Ephesians 1:11-14. Remember that Paul is blessing God, because God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing so that we might in turn bless God.

- *In Ephesians 1:3-10, what has Paul already blessed God for? Or in other words, what spiritual blessings has Paul praised God for?*

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In verses 11-14 we will see that Paul praises God for our inheritance in Christ. The apostle Paul gives us a glimpse of the glorious blessings God has planned for and promised to those who come to Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Here, Paul emphasizes 3 aspects of our inheritance in Christ, which we must understand so that we might have hope and offer up praise and glory to God. We must understand the ground, the guarantee and the goal of our inheritance in Christ.

First, We Must Understand the Ground of Our Inheritance.

In verses 11 and 12, Paul highlights two truths concerning the ground of our inheritance:

The First Truth, Paul highlights is the Fact of our Union with Christ. The ground of our inheritance is wrapped up in the phrase, "*In Him*." The "*in Him*" from verse 10 actually goes with verse 11. Paul says, "*In Him we have obtained an inheritance*."

- *Who does the phrase "in Him" refer to?*

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The "*in Him*" refers to Christ as it does throughout this passage. Remember that the spiritual blessings listed throughout verses 3-14 are only bestowed on those who are in Christ:

- In Christ we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing.
- In Christ we have been chosen.
- Through Christ we were predestined to adoption.
- In Christ He freely bestowed His grace on us.
- In Christ we have redemption.
- Likewise, it is in Christ that we have obtained an inheritance.

Because of our union with Christ we have a treasure house of blessings including our future inheritance.

The phrase "*We have obtained an inheritance*" translates a single compound word in the Greek text. It can be translated a number of ways and this is demonstrated by the various translations in our English Bibles. The two most prominent ways are: **1)** "*we were made an inheritance*" or **2)** as it is here in the NASB, "*we have obtained an inheritance.*" Both understandings are completely Scriptural and can be well defended. Unfortunately Conservative Bible scholars land on either side of the fence. The word used here originally meant "*to assign by lot.*" But the problem is that this is the only place it is used in the New Testament. So we have no other usage to help us determine its meaning here.

- *What is the safest approach in determining the meaning of a word?*

- *What is the context of Ephesians 1:3-14?*

- *Now as we move to verses 11-14, Which Position best fits with the context of our passage?*

- *How does this compare with Peter's instruction in 1 Peter 1:5?*

The Second Truth, Paul highlights is The Cause of our Union with Christ. As Paul moves on in verses 11-13, he emphasizes both the divine perspective and the human perspective of this inheritance that we have in Christ.

- *What is God's perspective of our inheritance? Or in other words, how did we obtain an inheritance in Christ from God's perspective?*

God's Predestination is mentioned in the phrase, "*having been predestined according to His purpose.*" We have obtained an inheritance in Christ because of God's good purposes as He predestined us to adoption as sons. In other words our inheritance is a result of God's saving process.

God's Power is noted in the phrase, "*who works all things after the counsel of His will.*" The Greek word translated "*works*" is the origin for the English words *energetic*, *energize*, and *energy*. Whatever God plans, He energizes, because He is all-powerful.

It is not sufficient to think that God only makes the plan. He makes the plan and actually works it out. God is powerful and whatever He plans He brings it to completion. Since God in His grace chose us to be a part of His plan for eternity, He will surely bring it to pass. Our inheritance in Christ is a result of God's power as He works out His plan in accordance with His will.

God's Preeminence is noted in verse 12 in the phrase, "*to the praise of His glory.*" "*To the praise of His glory*" is the next phrase in the Greek text. It further emphasizes God's perspective in relation to our inheritance. The whole process of salvation is God's work from beginning to end and it is to result in the praise of His glory. Our election, adoption, redemption and inheritance have as their end the praise of God's glory. He is completely deserving of endless blessing, endless honor, endless praise, endless glory and endless worship because of what He has done! It is all about God! His purpose! His Power! His Preeminence!

- ***What is the human perspective of obtaining an inheritance? From our point of view, how did we obtain an inheritance?***

First in verse 12 he says, "*we who were the first to hope in Christ.*" Literally it is, "*we who were the first to hope in the Christ.*" He stresses the idea that the apostles and other first-generation Jewish believers were the first to receive Christ by faith.

In verse 13 Paul continues by saying, "*In Him you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed.*" Paul is now speaking specifically of the Ephesian believer's placing their faith in Christ. He emphasizes that they had listened to the gospel message and believed it.

Paul says in Romans 10:17, "*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" Faith is the positive response to the message of the Gospel. Faith is our response to God's elective purpose. John MacArthur says, "God's choice of men is election; men's choice of God is faith. However it is necessary to mention in this regard that only those who are chosen by God will be given the faith to believe.

Second, We Must Understand the Guarantee of Our Inheritance.

Paul goes on to say in verses 13-14, "*You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.*"

- ***How does God guarantee our inheritance according to verses 13-14?***

God's Seal: In Paul's day an official document would be sealed with wax. An impression would be made in the hot wax with the signet ring of the king or another official. The seal would signify that the document was official. The Spirit of God is our seal. Let's look at four things that the seal of the Spirit signifies.

1) **Security:** In ancient times the seal of a king, prince, or noble represented security and inviolability (cf. Daniel 6:6-7). When we became a Christian, God put His Holy Spirit in us. He stamped us with His signet ring, thus declaring us secure.

2) **Authenticity:** In ancient times the seal signified authenticity. The seal served as the Kings authentic signature (i.e. 1 Kings 21:6-16). When God gave us His Holy Spirit, He declared us to be authentic children of the King.

3) **Ownership:** In ancient times the seal also served as a completion of a transaction noting final ownership. When the Holy Spirit seals believers, He marks them as God's divine possession and declares the transaction of salvation as official and final.

4) **Authority:** In ancient times the seal emphasized the absolute authority of the decrees represented by the seal. Those who possessed the sealed decree had the Kings delegated authority (cf. Esther 8:8-12). When Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we are delegated to proclaim, teach, and defend God's Word and His Gospel with His authority! When God gave you the Holy Spirit, He gave you the only guarantee you'll ever need.

God's Pledge: The Holy Spirit not only guarantees our inheritance in Christ with His seal, but also with His pledge. Paul says in reference to the Holy Spirit in verse 14, "*who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.*" The term *pledge*, a word borrowed from the commercial world originally referred to a down payment on a purchase. In later times came to refer to any kind of pledge in general and it eventually came to be used for an engagement ring. The Holy Spirit is a divine pledge of our inheritance. He is given as a down payment guaranteeing our future inheritance. He is given to the church, Christ's bride as a divine engagement ring.

The term *inheritance* here in verse 14 refers to our final future blessings in glory.

- ***What do the following passages have to say about our future blessings in glory?***

John 14:3

Revelation 22:4

Philippians 3:21

1 Corinthians 6:2

Revelation 3:21

1 Corinthians 9:25

1 Thessalonians 2:19

2 Timothy 4:8

James 1:12

1 Peter 5:4

1 John 5:11

This is only a brief and incomplete summary of the many blessings of our inheritance in Christ. But what a wonderful inheritance it is indeed!

Third, We Must Understand the Goal of Our Inheritance.

Paul notes this as he closes out verse 14, "*with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*" The goal of our inheritance in Christ first involves the completion of the redemptive process. Paul has in view here the final redemption of God's own possession, the summing up of all things in Christ.

The ultimate goal however is noted in the final phrase, "*to the praise of His Glory!*" We are chosen and redeemed so that we may be restored to the intended divine purpose of creation—to bear the image of God and bring Him glory!

APPLICATION:

- *How should the promise of a future inheritance motivate us to live our lives?*