

Sermon Series: *The Book of Ephesians*



All Things to the Praise of His Glory

(Ephesians 1:11-13 ESV)

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ 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.

Introduction

Two weeks ago, as we were making our way through this one incredibly wonderful sentence, verses 3-14, we ended our discussion in verse 10, which cracks the door on God's ultimate purpose in this world. This may be the most glorious sentence in the whole Bible. We should be reminded of what Paul was teaching.

In the previous paragraph (v.7-10), which in the original text is not a separate paragraph, Paul was explaining the third (v.7) and fourth (v.9) blessings in this opening eulogy¹ (v.3-14). Paul was expounding upon the lavish nature of God's great grace. First, he mentioned God's lavish grace in the forgiveness of our trespasses, which are our intentional sins. He is so graciously forgiving that he forgives us not only of our unintentional sins, but he also forgives us of our intentional ones. Second, we see God's lavish grace in giving us wisdom and insight so that we might know him and understand his ways and his will.

Third, God's lavish grace is given to us in the fact that God has, as we see in v.10, revealed to us his previously hidden mysteries. Paul teaches us that God's mysterious will has now been **"set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time."** Jesus' coming into this world changed everything and was the beginning of an unfolding of God's grand plan which had never been seen before. The arrival of messiah had cosmic and eternal effects.

When Jesus arrived on Palm Sunday he did so according to the God's specific plan. When Jesus was betrayed, arrested, beaten, unjustly accused, condemned, and crucified, these all happened according to God's specific plan (Acts 2:23; 4:28). God's plan, according to v.10, is **"to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."**

Before Jesus came, this plan was a mystery, it was a plan that was hidden. However, as Jesus grew and fulfilled prophecy after prophecy (reference?), it became clearer and clearer that he was messiah. Then, as we celebrated Easter last week, when Jesus rose from the dead, the mystery was no longer a mystery. It was a proven fact. The resurrection is proof positive that Jesus indeed was God's messiah. God's plan—once hidden but now revealed—is to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (in him).

Jesus is the center piece of God's plan in this world. *He* is the focal point. No human holds this exalted position. Man is not the focal point of God's plan, Jesus is. Jesus is the keystone of history and of the future. *He* is the exact image of the invisible God. *He* is our salvation and he will be the summation of all things. God will one day unite all things *in him*, things in heaven and thing on earth, in him.

That phrase, ***in him***, is one you will hear again and again throughout this letter. We have already heard it six times (If you are reading in ESV, NASB, or NIV) but in the original it's there are seven times. It appears again at the very end of verse 10, which almost all major English translations exclude, although the KJV does include it.

Paul just can't stop talking about Jesus. He is central to everything that God has done and is doing in this world. And he is even the goal of this world. One day all things will be united *in*

¹ The Greek word from which we have our word 'eulogy' simply means 'to speak well of.' Paul, in this opening glorious sentence is speaking well of God the Father (v.3-6), God the Son (v.7-12), and God the Holy Spirit (v.13-14).

him. The entire universe will only find it's fulfillment *in him.* Life is found only in him. Satisfaction is only found in him. Hope is found only in him. Eternal life is found only in him.

Why are we so ashamed of him? Why are we so afraid of saying his name? Why do we not speak of him as much as Paul does? When is the last time you spoke one sentence to sum up your theology and mentioned Jesus eleven times? When is the last time you summed up your theology and mentioned Jesus even once?

Our culture doesn't want us to talk about Jesus... but Paul can't stop talking about him.

God help us if grow silent regarding the saving name of Jesus.

- In him is every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (v.3).
- In him we were chosen before the foundation of the earth (v.4).
- In him we were predestined to adoption as sons (v.5).
- In him, the Beloved, we have been blessed (v.6).
- In him we have redemption through his blood (v.7).
- In him God has set forth his plan (v.9).
- In him will all things one day be reunited (v.10).
- In him we have obtained an inheritance (v.11).
- In him have we hoped for our salvation (v.12).
- In him we were sealed with the Holy Spirit (v.13).
- In him have we believed (v.13).
- In his name is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe, both to the Jew & the Gentile.

How Does One Get "In" Him?

You might be wondering, "How does one get 'in him?'" Believing in him is how one gets "in him." Putting your faith in him is how you are united with him. Paul explains this in verse 13.

Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ *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.*

Notice how this happens. Look at verse 13. First, you **heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation**. The first step to getting *in* Christ is to **hear** the gospel. You hear the word of truth. This means there are things you must know in order to be saved. There is truth that if you don't know it, you cannot be saved.

The gospel is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is particularly related to **Jesus**. The gospel is not "God loves you, do you believe this." That's part of it but not all of it.

The gospel is the good news that though we are sinners and by nature cut off from God because of our sin, Jesus came and offered up his holy life as an atoning sacrifice, even though he never sinned. Then he rose up from the dead proving that his holy life was acceptable to God in satisfying his just wrath against all sin. Having been raised, Jesus now gives to all who trust in him the gift his own Holy Spirit who makes sinners holy and happily delivers them into God's presence forever to enjoy his company forever with never-ending, and ever increasing joy. That's the gospel in 40 seconds.

Listen to Lecrae rap the gospel in 55 seconds. Click [here](#).

Listen to Trip Lee rap the gospel in 98 seconds. Click [here](#).

That's the gospel. And the first step in getting "in him" is to hear it. You must understand it.

The second step in getting "in him," is that you must **believe it**. You must treasure it, not merely acknowledge that it's true. You must cherish this truth and trust that Jesus will get you happily into heaven and into the presence of God.

Hear. Believe. Receive. Trust. That's how we get in Christ.

Then the third step is getting in Christ, is being sealed with the Holy Spirit, but I'm going to save that for next week.

In Him We Have Obtained an Inheritance

Once you are in him, then blessing after blessing accrues to you. The fifth blessing Paul mentions in this glorious sentence is that **in him we have obtained an inheritance**. As we have noted before, you will see that this blessing is one the believer *has already* obtained.

An **inheritance** is something one cannot receive without the death of someone else. It is a blessing left to one after the death of another who loved them. We stand today on the first Sunday after Easter and here is Paul telling us that those of us who are in Christ have received an inheritance. Through the death of Jesus, we have received the blessings that he intended we have through his death. We have received something that we could not receive if he had not died.

No one receives an inheritance unless there is first a death. It is in the death that there is the transfer of ownership. When one person dies, and bequeaths an inheritance to one whom he loves, then the inheritance legally becomes the property of the heir upon the death of that person. Jesus, through his death, has bequeathed to us an inheritance. There is a gift that becomes ours through the death of Jesus that would not be ours if he had not died. This gift is now legally ours by virtue of his death. His death was gain for us who would trust in him. In him we have obtained an inheritance.

How Did we Receive the Inheritance?

Paul does not at this point explain exactly what the inheritance is. He moves to something else first. He proceeds to explain **how you received the inheritance** before he ever explains what the inheritance is. In Paul's thinking, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, before he expounds what the inheritance is, he first explains the ultimate reason of how you received the inheritance. This is significant.

If you were to learn that you had received an inheritance, I suspect you'd first prefer to learn what you had received rather than hear all the details of how you got it. But that is not how Paul thinks. In his thinking, knowing how you received your inheritance is of primary importance.

How did you receive this inheritance? What is the ultimate reason for your obtaining this great blessing? Paul answers the question in verse 11,

Ephesians 1:11 (ESV)

In him we obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

The *deepest reason why believers have obtained an inheritance is because they were predestined to receive it.* The term 'predestination' (προορίζω), means "to foreordain," or to determine in advance;"² "to come to a decision beforehand—to decide beforehand, to determine ahead of time, to decide upon ahead of time."³

This term is similar to election, but is technically different. Whereas 'election' refers to God's choice of particular individuals whom he would save, the term 'predestination,' refers to the destiny assigned those whom God elected. From this passage we learn that those whom God elected to save are also predestined to receive an inheritance. They are not merely chosen to be saved by God, but they are also predestined to be given a particular inheritance. God

² Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964—), 456.

³ Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 359.

intended in advance of time that he would grant certain persons an inheritance. He planned to give certain people certain things.

The fact that God predestined believers to receive an inheritance does not mean that their choices were unimportant, but that God's choices are of primary importance. Neither does it mean that human choice is unnecessary, but simply that God's choice is necessarily foundational. The divine choice is decisive while human choice is dependent. This becomes clear as Paul continues to explain.

Notice whose purpose is definitive in predestination. Predestination happens based upon **"the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will"** (v.11). Who is this? Who is "him who works all things according to the counsel of his will?" It is, of course, God the Father. He is the one and only God who has the power "to work all things according to the counsel of his will."

This, of course, applies to "all things," both good and bad. But in the context it refers to how God chose to work salvation. Salvation is God's free gift to give. He may give it when and how he chooses and he is not obligated to save any guilty sinners.

(Psalms 3:8 ESV)

⁸ *Salvation belongs to the Lord;
your blessing be on your people!*

(Jonah 2:9 ESV)

⁹ *But I with the voice of thanksgiving
will sacrifice to you;
what I have vowed I will pay.
Salvation belongs to the Lord!"*

(Revelation 7:9-10 ESV)

⁹ *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

Salvation belongs to the Lord and it is completely up to him to determine how he would or would not use it. God didn't consult with anyone else on making this decision. He alone, in the counsel of his own triune will, purposed how and to whom and when he would give salvation.

Why did he choose to do it like this? Verse 12 answers this question.

Ephesians 1:12 (ESV)

¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

The answer ultimately is "to the praise of his glory." God chose to save the way in which he did so that those whom he saved would "be to the praise of his glory." This was his aim in how he saved the Jews and in how he saved the Gentiles.

Who is the "we" in this verse? Who are those who "**were first to hope in Christ?**" The Jews were. So here Paul has Jews in mind. In verse 13 he has Gentiles in mind.

Ephesians 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ In him you also...

The 'you also' refers to Gentiles. The 'we' in verse 12 refers to the Jews. The 'you also' in verse 13 refers to Gentiles. In both cases God chose to save in the way he did "**so that we might be to the praise of his glory.**" We see this for the Jews in v.12 and for Gentiles at the end of v. 14, "**to the praise of his glory.**"

God determined beforehand, that in Christ he would give, to those whom he chose to save, an inheritance. And when Christ died, God gave it to those whom he had elected to save, but he then applies salvation to our individual lives at the various times of his choosing. He does this so that we all might be **to the praise of his glory**.

Some of us who are in Christ were united with him very early in time. All those who became Christians were Jews. God saved them the way he did so that they might be **to the praise of his glory**. Some Gentiles also listened as the gospel was being proclaimed among the Jews and they believed it **so they can praise the glory**.

Some of us came to a saving knowledge of Jesus when we were younger and have had the joy walking with him for decades. We can testify that we were not smart enough to choose him without him first choosing us, therefore we can praise him for his glory. Others came to faith much, much later in life. We can testify that we were not smart enough to choose him without him first choosing us, therefore we can praise him for his glory.

This is the ultimate purpose and goal of the salvation of all people, so that we might be to the praise of his glory. God's great plan to (re)unite all things in Jesus, things in heaven and things on earth, is part of his grand plan to enfold us into a happy experience of glorifying all of who he is for us in Christ. We were created to enjoy giving glory to God. We were predestined to receive this great inheritance. We were chosen to join the hosts of heaven in giving him glory. We were created to know and experience his love. Amen.