



A Holy Inheritance Guaranteed

Series: The Most Remarkable Run-On in Holy Writ

Ephesians 1:3-14 (11-14)

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Introduction

The eternal plan of God in three movements -- the sovereign election of God by which He chooses for Himself, before the foundation of the world, out of all of sinful humanity, a people to be His own possession, a people to whom He would grant repentance, whom He would redeem from their sin and make His own special possession, whom He would bless with every spiritual blessing and upon whom He would lavish His love, predestining them to adoption as sons and daughters, encircling them with His love and bringing them into His family to the praise of His glorious grace.

Second movement -- the accomplishing of that purpose through the redeeming death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through His death that God's chosen people, the church, receive the eternal and restorative forgiveness of sins and are brought under the Lordship of Christ. We saw last week that the culmination of God's plan is gather all of the creation under the glorious headship of Jesus Christ, to bring everything under His absolute authority and rule.

Third movement -- the application of the plan and the gift of the promised Holy Spirit. What we will see this morning is the application of salvation to the souls of men and women and how it takes place and the glorious benefits that are the result of the application of salvation. **(Eph 1:11-14 ESV)** Paul is saying: "According to the plan and the purpose of God, who does whatever He pleases, we were the first to hope in Christ to the praise of His glory and we received the inheritance of being the children of God and not only us, but you also were sealed by the Holy Spirit and became recipients of that same inheritance when you heard the gospel and believed in Christ so that God's glory would be praised." So let's dig into this text and see what it is that Paul, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, means for us to understand. First, I don't want for us to miss the resounding theme that underlies all of this.

A resounding theme – to the praise of His glory

The resounding theme through this has been the phrase “to the praise of His glory.” Everything that is taking place, everything that God is doing, every way in which God blesses us is done with this primary purpose in mind... to point to the greatness of His glory. God’s glory is God’s excellence on display. God’s glory is the sum total, the infinite beauty and greatness of his perfections, it is the majesty and the wonder and the splendor of all that God is displayed for all to see. The Hebrew word for “glory” is “kabod”. It is derived from the idea of weight or heaviness. Originally the word “glory” conveyed the greatness of a person because of the weight of his wealth. When applied to God it refers to His greatness, fame, honor by virtue of His character and His nature. The Greek word for “glory” is “doxa” and when it is used of God it conveys the idea of divine and heavenly radiance or the loftiness and majesty of God. His glory is the display of who God is. Paul is telling us here that the plan of the ages, that includes His choosing his church to be his own, our adoption into the family of God, our acceptance in Christ, our redemption by the blood of Christ, and the joining together of everything under the rule of Jesus Christ as Lord – it is all to the praise of His glory. His glory is what this is all about. Now I know this may sound strange to some of you; you have never heard this taught before so follow with me. For others, this will be some review but I want to make sure that we understand this clearly.

God’s glory is manifest in His creation: (Psa 19:1-3). **God’s glory is put on display in creating His people for His glory:** (Isa 43:5-7). **Throughout the OT we see that God accomplished the Exodus and established the nation of Israel for His glory:** (Psa 106:7-8). **God’s glory is put on display in creating the church:** (cf. Eph1:3-6,12-14).

Jesus birth: (Luke 2:14). **The purpose of Christ’s coming and the cross:** (John 13: 31, 17:1). **Jesus will come again for this purpose:** (2 Thess. 1:9-10). **Everything that happens will result in God’s glory:** (Rom 11:36).

The great words of Isaiah 48 reveal the passion of God for his own glory where God says to those who have rebelled against and whom God will transform and change and save: **(Isa 48:9-11)** These are God-centered words and they destroy the man-centered way of looking at the world: *For my name’s sake! For the sake of my praise! For my own sake! For my own sake! How should my name be profaned! My glory I will not give to another!* What is clearly displayed here is the centrality of God in his own affections. God is passionate for His glory.

The biblical vision of God the God who is and not the god of our making is that the true God is supremely committed, with infinite passion, to uphold and display the glory of his name. From beginning to end, the driving impulse of God's heart is to be praised for his glory. God is at the center of His universe, not us and God is committed to magnifying the greatness of His glory, the greatness of His person, the sum total of His perfections. God must love His glory most, He must be uppermost in His affections or God becomes and idolater. Idolatry is to love something and value something more than God.

Now here's the truth...the inherent problem we have with the concept of God having ultimate allegiance to Himself, His preoccupation with His glory is that that does not sound very loving, right? It seems self-serving. But God's purpose to magnify His glory supremely is extremely loving. Here's why.

What gift could God give us to enjoy that would show him to be most loving, and therefore bringing Him the most glory for giving us such a glorious gift? There is only one possible answer, isn't there? It is **God, Himself**. If God would give us what is best and most satisfying and the greatest of all gifts, and in doing so to love us perfectly, he must offer us no less than Himself in the person of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for our fellowship and friendship and love and joy. And that is what this text is about, how we have come to receive the inheritance of God Follow the train of thought with me. Paul means for us to see that

The faithful, believing Jews have obtained and inheritance in Christ which they were predestined to receive

Paul writing as both an apostle and a Jew says to the Gentiles that are making up the church of God in Ephesus, tells them, "Hey look, we have been recipients of a great inheritance from God, as those who have believed in Christ before every one else." We were the first to receive Christ as Lord, to receive the salvation that comes from Christ alone. That is what he means here and in Romans 1:16. Paul emphasizes the fact that chronologically the Jews believed in Christ before the Gentiles did. But the gospel didn't remain with the Jews only. As Jesus told the disciples: **But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."** (Act 1:8 ESV) Historically, the Jews were the first to believe in Christ and so were the first to obtain the glorious inheritance promised through the word of God but then they took the gospel throughout the world and the Gentiles became recipients of the same inheritance in Christ, the

inheritance that comes through the redemption that is found in Christ alone. So the big question is obvious...

What is this inheritance? The concept of inheritance is not something new in the book of Ephesians. It is introduced in Genesis and comes to fruition in Revelation. The concept of an inheritance for the people of God began with the expectation of the inheritance of a land. God called Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and said to him: **(Gen 12:1-3 ESV)** It was the same expectation for Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel. Moses when he was to go and lead Israel out of bondage to Egypt, was instructed by God to tell the Israelites: **(Exo 6:6-8)**

Do you see it, though? The main issue of the inheritance was not the land. The land was important but only as it served the greater purpose. That greater purpose is found in the words: "I will redeem you...I will take you to be my people...I will be your God." That greater purpose is clear in the instructions regarding the construction and consecration of the Tabernacle, the tent of meeting with God. **(Exo 29:45-46)** All that comes to fruition in Exodus 40 when the Tabernacle is set up: **(Exo 40:34-38 ESV)** The concept of inheritance is simply this: God is creating for Himself a people to whom He will give Himself as their God and Lord, and who will give themselves to Him as His people. The inheritance is not land, it is God. It is God and the blessing that comes from having Him as our portion. The inheritance of God's people is not a piece of land, it is Him, it is fellowship with almighty God. The Levites understood that. **(Numbers 18:20)**. David understood that. **(Psa 16:5-6)**

Asaph wrote: **"Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."** **(Psa 73:25-26)**

Through the history of the nation of Israel, God's people, we see them take possession of the Promised Land, erect a permanent Temple in Jerusalem, but the underlying issue, the great inheritance is not the land or the Temple, but God who dwells with them. All of this is a type, however, a shadow of the true inheritance which is God in Christ. That is what Paul is getting at here. The true inheritance of God's people is not a piece of land, it is God in Christ for all of eternity. **(Rev 21:1-7, 22-23 ESV)**

God has given us Himself in the person of His son to be our inheritance. This is precisely God's intention in sending his Son. It is the fulfillment of all of the OT shadows and types. Ephesians 2:18 says that Christ came that we might "have access in one Spirit to the Father." And 1 Peter 3:18 says, "**Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous that he might bring us to God.**" God is after us to give us what is best – not prestige, wealth or even health in this life, but the enjoyment of the fullness of His glory and fellowship with Himself. Our every conceivable need is met in God in Christ -- peace, love, grace, wisdom, eternal life, joy, victory, strength, guidance, power, mercy, forgiveness, righteousness, truth, fellowship with God, spiritual discernment, heaven, eternal riches, glory – those and every good and eternal thing comes from God in Christ. **(Col 2:9-10 ESV)** This is the glorious inheritance in God -- fellowship and communion first and then the supply of every true need, now and forever. Paul is celebrating because as a Jew and as an apostle, he has been among the first to taste of this great inheritance, but we are not left out. Paul means for us to rejoice because

Gentile Christians have received the same inheritance as the Jews

Although the Jews were the first to receive this great inheritance, the scope of the gospel encompassed more than the Jewish nation. Paul says **(Eph 1:13-14 ESV)** When you heard the gospel and responded in faith, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit who was given to you as the guarantee of the very same inheritance – God in Christ – that Paul and the first ones to trust in Christ had received.

We all have the same inheritance together and Paul tell us how it took place. You heard the word of truth. That is you heard the gospel, not some vague message about being a better person and coming to church, and helping people out, or finding purpose, or being happy or “living the good life” or being sacrificial or nice to stray animals... No, you heard the word of truth, the gospel which tells each of us that we are sinners, lost because of our sin and separated from God and deserving only hell and death. But God intervened. Out of His great glory and rich mercy He sent His only Son, our Lord Savior Jesus Christ who willingly to this earth in human flesh and having lived a perfect life died a sacrificial death for us taking the penalty of our sin upon Him and was raised from the dead three days later so that we could have His righteousness and the forgiveness of God if we would trust in Him and what He has done and we would surrender our lives to Him as Lord and God. That is the gospel, it is the word of truth. We ought to realize the great blessing that is ours to have the truth. We should

cherish the Word of Truth and the preaching of it. We forget all too easily that men and women of days gone by shed their blood for the sake of the Truth so that we might hold it in our hands. Paul says you heard it. The idea of hearing is not just that the words of truth hit your auditory nerve and produced a signal in your brain. It is the idea of hearing and obeying. That's the point of what Paul is saying. Having heard the message you were so persuaded by it that you were willing to turn from sin and surrender your life to the Lord Jesus Christ and trusting in Him as the only way of salvation. **(1Th 1:9-10 ESV)** This is how salvation happens from our perspective. Then Paul means for us to see

The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of our inheritance until we receive it in full

Paul says that **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.** God made promises through the Old Testament prophets that he would give all his new covenant people the Holy Spirit. (Jer.36:27; Joel 2:28). And we are given the Spirit, Paul says here, so that we may be sealed –what does that mean? What does it mean that believers have been sealed by the Holy Spirit (v. 13)? The word is used in three different ways in the New Testament. 1) To lock something up or to close it in. (Matt 27:66; Rev 20:3) 2) To give a sign of authenticity. (Rom 4:11; 1 Cor 9:2) 3) A mark of protection (Rev 7:3).

So to be sealed with the Spirit means that the Holy Spirit: 1) seals in faith and seals out unbelief and apostasy. 2) is the sign of God's ownership and our authenticity as the children of God. 3) protects us by His power until we reach our final destination in heaven. Now certainly the inheritance spoken of here involves the future, eternal fellowship and joy that we will experience with Him in heaven. But our inheritance in Christ is also a present reality. That's what he means when Paul calls the Holy Spirit guarantee of our inheritance.

That word guarantee is the word, "arrabon." It is a word that means, promise or downpayment with the promise that the rest of the money will come later. It is a word that came to be used to refer to an engagement ring. Think about that. What is an engagement ring? It's a guarantee to the young lady that there is much more yet to come, namely, a husband and a house and marital intimacy! This "arrabon" is literally God's down-payment which acts as a promise, a guarantee, a pledge, that there is much more of our salvation yet to come. Does this make

sense to you? All that we experience by the Holy Spirit, freedom worshiping God, all the joy that we experience here on earth are only the down payments. Can you fathom that? When we get to heaven, what we will experience is immeasurably greater than what we experience here. Everything that we enjoy in Christ, is only the deposit. Our greatest experience of joy and fellowship with God in Christ right now is only a foretaste of what is to come.

How does this promise affect us?

It changes everything doesn't it? If God in Christ is our inheritance then we must look with anticipation to the day when we as His people, because we have been justified by faith in Him and sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, will receive the fullness of our inheritance and see Jesus face to face, magnified in glory, fully revealed as Lord over all and all of that to the praise of the glory of God the Father. Now, by faith, through the testimony of the word, we have glimpses.

Peter, James, and John had a glimpse of the glory of Christ during His transfiguration on the Mount of Transfiguration. Stephen the martyr. Paul on the Damascus Road.

Even we right now see the glories of the Lord, but **“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.” (1Co 13:12)**

Right now, the fullness of Christ's glory is out of view – we can perceive His glory right now only by faith in His infallible Word, but a day is coming soon in which Christ's glory will be the focal point of the universe. He will captivate our attention forever. He will be the source of the blessedness of the redeemed forever. There is a day coming when we will see for certain the glorious vision of God in Christ. We will stand in the Presence of Christ and see His glory, without a veil, no longer through a glass dimly, but face to face. On that day we will see once and for all how silly it was to have been enamored by the fleeting pleasures of sin and of this world. All that our flesh desired will seem as mud puddle compared to the ocean of His glory. And this beholding of Jesus in all his glory will prove overwhelming as we are transformed, glorified and made perfectly into His image. We will forever reflect, forever partake of the glory

and perfection of the magnificent Son of God. That is the glory of our inheritance, the wonder of the gospel, God's gift of Himself to us.

This is a real glory, a real inheritance that shines through the gospel in Christ, and it is seen not with physical eyes, but with the eyes of the faith right now, but then face to face. **But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"-- these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. (1Co 2:9-10)**

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