

OUR GUARANTEED SPIRIT SEALED INHERITANCE

(SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2019)

Scripture Reading: Ezek. 36:22-32; Eph. 1:7-14

INTRODUCTION

We live in two realms: earthly and the heavenly.

We have two citizenships: earthly and heavenly.

We are to pray for daily bread. We pray for spiritual bread and strengthening.

You might get an earthly inheritance. If you are in Christ, you are guaranteed a spiritual inheritance.

No conflict but there is a need for the right perspective or balance.

Col. 3:1 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. **2** Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

Do we get this balance right? Probably not.

Not called to be monks.

We probably are too focused on trivial, earthly matters.

Imagine you were one of Bill Gates' three children. Supposedly the three kids are only going to get \$10 million each instead of billions.¹

Let's say you had a \$10 million inheritance coming to you.

How often would you think about that?

Probably every day you woke up.

Has God the Father promised us something greater or less?

How often do we think of this inheritance?

It is difficult for us to appreciate all that God has done and has promised.

This gets back to the need to make sure our thoughts are shaped by God's truth.

¹ <https://www.cheatsheet.com/entertainment/the-real-reason-bill-gates-children-wont-inherit-much-of-his-fortune.html/> Accessed 9/27/19

Our goal is not to escape this world but live this life in terms of what God has promised us in the life to come.

1) BRIEF REVIEW

Verses 3-14: One long, rich sentence

Past, Present, Future

Triune Work of God

Verses 3-6: Father

Verses 7-12: Son

Verses 13-14: Holy Spirit

There is a perfect unity and harmony in the work of God.

Verses 3-5: Eternal view

Verses 7-10: Historical and present work in Jesus Christ

Last week the focus:

Never lose sight of God's grace and the fullness of God's plan of redemption.

Verse 10 - The incredible plan of God focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Restoration, Unity, and Lordship

All things were created in Christ (Col. 1:16). Through sin endless disorder and disintegration have come into the world; but in the end all things will be restored to their intended function and to their unity by being brought back to the obedience of Christ (cf. Col. 1:20).²

We also observe: *in Him*

Start of verse 7

Start of verse 11

Start of verse 13

² Francis Foulkes, 60-61.

Finally, in terms of review:

This passage is an example of rich theology and doxology – **truth that should lead to praise!**

2) OUR PROMISED INHERITANCE, EPH. 1:11-12

Think of the flow of OT History.

Abram is called out of spiritual slavery and given the promise of seed, a nation, and blessing.

Gen. 15:7 ¶ Then He said to him, “I *am* the LORD, who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it.”

Abram was told that his descendants will be in slavery for 400 years. (Gen. 15:13)

Israel redeemed from slavery.

They should have quickly moved to the Promised Land.

Because of unbelief, first generation did not enter the Promised Land.

After 40 years, they finally took possession.

English – inherit (verb), inheritance (noun)

Greek – verb form and noun for inheritance.

Before Israel received her inheritance, God told her in Deut. 9:4.

Deut. 9:4 ¶ “Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess (**inherit**) this land’; but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is driving them out from before you.

We also consider from Hebrews that the promise of land was not the ultimate promise.

Heb. 11:9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; **10** for he waited **for the city which has foundations**, whose builder and maker *is* God.

Abraham waited for this ultimate promise and inheritance.

And you are called to wait for this promise.

Verse 11 emphasizes the security of this promised inheritance.

Based on predestination

God's purpose

Counsel of His will

There are things that God does promise with absolute certainty and things He does not.

In this life, God promises His faithfulness, that those who wait on Him will never be put to shame.

In this life, we are not promised everything will work out the way we want.

You are not promised all your dreams and plans will come true.

There is the absolute certainty in terms of the eternal promises and our share in the fullness of God's work.

Notice the pronouns in these verses.

Verses 3-6: us

Verses 7-10: we, us

Verse 11: we

Verse 13: you

This leads to a question.

Are verses 11 and 12 referring to a different group than verses 13 and 14?

Seems to be some difference, but what is the difference?

Jews vs. Gentiles?

Some understand that is what Paul is saying.³

Other commentators would say Paul is not speaking of two different groups, but what all believers share together.

Look at verse 12.

Verb: **first trusted** or hoped... It is a verb used just one time in the NT.

Referring to Jews?

³ Klyne Snodgrass, 54.

Possible.

Some would say that first trusted is not a reference to time, but simply emphasizing that someone is **now trusting** in Christ and that a glorious promise remains for the future.⁴

Notice the end of verse 12.

Should be to the praise of His glory.

It is possible to see that this is speaking of the great day of judgment.

Very possible to get lost in the theological depths of this passage.

Not a bad thing to ponder things deeply, but we don't want to miss the forest for the trees.

Let's step back to appreciate what Paul is saying here.

God's work of grace in the OT pointed and prepared the way for the coming of Christ.

There is a wonderful unity that we share with believers now and those who came before us.

One commentator has written:

As in v 4 the purpose of God's choice is that believers be holy and blameless before him in love, and as in vv 5, 6 the purpose of his predestination is that believers be in relationship with himself and to the praise of the glory of his grace, so in vv 11, 12 the purpose of his appointing is that they be to the praise of his glory. God's purpose in choosing Israel had been expressed in similar terms, and the notion of God's acting for the sake of his name and his glory was an integral part of OT thinking. Now this is said with regard to the purpose and destiny of the Church. In the final analysis God's working out of his purpose serves his own glorification and the believing community exists to further that end. The praise of God's glory is the goal of its whole existence, not merely of its cultic worship.⁵

As we move to verses 13 and 14, listen to Colossians 1:3-6 which has some similarities with our text here.

⁴ Max Turner, *Ephesians*, New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition; ed. D. A Carson et al.; Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 1225.

⁵ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42; Accordance electronic ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 36.

Col. 1:3 We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, **4** since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; **5 because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, 6 which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth;**

3) THE SEAL OF THE SPIRIT, EPH. 1:13-14

God's incredible work of salvation has both an eternal foundation and a working out in time.

Election and also calling and conversion.

We also see how God has determined to save sinners through the preaching of the gospel message.

Sinners are called to **believe**.

And those who do believe are then sealed with the Holy Spirit.

All of this should be very familiar, but let us consider in greater detail these two verses.

There is some question on translation of verse 13, but we will focus on what is clear.

The first key word of verse 13 is the word **heard**.

The culture of that day was mostly an oral culture.

This is not to say that people could not read, but the ministry of spreading the gospel came mostly through preaching and teaching.

The Apostles did not pass out literature, they preached the gospel and taught the Word of God.

Listen to a brief description of Paul's earlier ministry in Ephesus.

Acts 19:8 And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God. **9** But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. **10** And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Rom. 10:17 So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

What did people hear?

Paul uses two phrases: **word of truth** and **gospel of your salvation**.

John Calvin said of these two phrases the following:

Both deserve our careful attention. Nothing is more earnestly attempted by Satan than to lead us either to doubt or to despise the gospel. Paul therefore furnishes us with two shields, by which we may repel both temptations. In opposition to every doubt, let us learn to bring forward this testimony, that the gospel is not only certain truth, which cannot deceive, but is, by way of eminence, *the word of truth*, as if, strictly speaking, there were no truth but itself.

All other religions are based on either empty thinking or false claims.

What is the word of truth, the gospel of salvation that those who received this letter heard?

It certainly is that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, came to earth, lived a perfect life, was crucified, was buried, and rose again on the third day, and that He now reigns over all in Heaven.

Jesus Christ did all of this in place of sinners for their salvation.

Some who do not understand the truth mock and attack this by saying all you have to be saved is believe something?

You could murder, lie, cheat, and steal and you just believe something and then you get to go to heaven?

Satan seeks to attack the truth by either reducing it or adding to it.

Salvation is God's work. It is God's mighty power that changes dead and rebellious hearts such a sinner is called to believe and trust in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

So, we don't reduce salvation to the fact that you raised your hand or prayed a prayer.

We also must not add to salvation by making it depend on man's obedience or moral improvement.

We also must consider that what is most important is not knowing the exact moment when God worked in your life so that you came to saving faith.

What is more important is that you are trusting now in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Have you been brought to that place of true conviction of sin, a knowledge of your own unworthiness, and a rejoicing in God's mercy found in Jesus Christ?

The last part of verse 13 – **you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.**

Later Paul uses similar language in Ephesians.

Eph. 4:30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

The verb sealed is used over 20 times in the NT.

Here the meaning of sealed is based on the ancient meaning of identifying authenticity and ownership of something.⁶

One of the things that we see in our age today is the quest that people try to express their own identity often in very bizarre ways.

The goal is self-knowledge and self-expression.

Be true to yourself, believe in yourself, etc.

Throughout our text we see what is most important in terms of who we are.

Chosen by the Father

Adopted as sons

Accepted before God in the beloved

Recipients of God's revelation

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

We don't need to worry about creating our own identity. We have to be focused on who we are in God's sovereign and gracious work.

The end of verse 13 speaks of the Holy Spirit as the promise.

This is language is connected with a number of OT passages where the Holy Spirit was promised to come upon God's people.

We read earlier from Ezekiel 36.

Another passage is Joel 2:28.

Joel 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward

⁶ Snodgrass, 54.

That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.

We might be a bit troubled by these promises in terms of the language.

Should you be prophesying, having dreams, and seeing visions?

Is this the proof that you have the Holy Spirit?

Indeed, some have argued that the Holy Spirit is some second blessing that not all believers have really been given.

You have to do something extra to truly be filled with the Holy Spirit.

What we can say is this. There were wonderful and incredible signs when the Holy Spirit came as promised in the book of Acts.

There were prophecies, dreams, visions, incredible healings, and more.

And no, God's word does not teach that these same miraculous expressions are to be expected in every age.

One significant reason is that we have the completed canon of Scripture.

Another reason is that the age of the Apostles is past.

It is not that God is limited or that we just live in a boring age. Not at all.

What God wants us to communicate is not new revelation but to communicate faithfully what already has been given.

And this is done through the working of the Holy Spirit!

Let me again quote from John Calvin on the work of the Holy Spirit.

The true conviction which believers have of the word of God, of their own salvation, and of religion in general, does not spring from the judgment of the flesh, or from human and philosophical arguments, but from the sealing of the Spirit, who imparts to their consciences such certainty as to remove all doubt. The foundation of faith

would be frail and unsteady, if it rested on human wisdom; and therefore, as preaching is the instrument of faith, so the Holy Spirit makes preaching efficacious.

My friends, we still see the sovereign working of the Holy Spirit all around us.

The miracles at the time of the apostles were amazing.

But what miracle compares to spiritually dead sinners being made alive by the power of the gospel through the working of the Holy Spirit?

Let's finish with verse 14.

The Holy Spirit is called the guarantee of our inheritance.

What does this mean?

The word guarantee is used only 3x in the NT and in all cases it speaks of the Holy Spirit.

Another translation might be **down payment** or **deposit**.

Something amazing has been given but more is still to come.

And notice as I mentioned last week there is a redemption through the blood of Christ that we are given now, v. 7.

There is also a future redemption, which is what verse 14 is about.

Maybe you have heard the expression "already and not yet."⁷

Already we enjoy God's grace and work of salvation.

Yet, the glorious thing is more is to come.

This is not our best life now!

It is in Romans 8 that we probably have the fullest description of this already but not yet.

Listen to four verses from Rom. 8.

Rom. 8:22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. **23** Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. **24** For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is

⁷ Dennis Johnson, *The Message of Acts*, 65.

not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? **25** But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for *it* with perseverance.

CONCLUSION

Our goal is not to escape this world but live this life in terms of what God has promised us in the life to come.

Praise

Service

Sacrifice

Hope

Prayer

Closing Hymn: 247

Benediction: Rom. 15:4-6

For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind *and* one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.