

The Guarantee of Our Inheritance

In today's text, Paul continues to bless the Lord for the many spiritual blessings He has poured out upon us: unconditional election, redemption by the blood of Christ, enlightenment of God's eternal plan for the cosmos, and, in verses 11-14, the guarantee of a glorious future. Let's read the text.

Ephesians 1:11-14

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, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Now, let's make some important observations from the text. Notice the use of “we” in verses 11 and 12, the use of “you” and “your” in verse 13, and then “we” and “our” again in verse 14. Here's what most scholars conclude from these pronouns: in verses 11 and 12, Paul is referring to the Jewish believers who were the first ones to believe the gospel of Christ, in verse 13 he is referring primarily to the Gentile believers in Ephesus, and then in verse 14 he is referring to all of them together.

1. **Believing Israel is God's chosen inheritance (11,12)**

The words in the ESV, “we have obtained an inheritance,” is actually one word in the Greek original. It is an aorist passive indicative verb that can also be rendered, “we were chosen as his inheritance,” and some scholars (John Stott, F.F. Bruce, and others) believe that to be the better translation. If this be the case, the Apostle is showing us that the true Israel (of Deut. 32:9) is the community of Jewish people who have put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah. Notice he teaches us that they became His inheritance 1) in him (Christ), 2) by His eternal plan, and 3) for His glory.

Then Paul makes a remarkable statement about us.

2. **We also have become God's chosen inheritance (13,14)**

How did such a thing happen? We were included in Christ. This is one of the great mysteries of the gospel. See Ephesians 3:6. The greatest division among humans in all of history is destroyed by the gospel! We'll examine this more closely in our study of Chapter 2:11ff.

Notice also that we were included when we heard and believed the gospel. Certainly God is the Prime Mover in our salvation. Apart from His foreordination and His atonement and His gift of regeneration, no one would be saved; but, at the same time, the Apostle is quick to show that no one is converted apart from hearing and believing the word of truth.

Lastly, notice that we are sealed by the Holy Spirit until the day of redemption. A seal accomplishes three things: 1) it authenticates us, 2) it brands us, and 3) it secures us. What great news this is. God will not change His mind about us. He will not leave us nor forsake us. We are His until the end and forever. Ultimately, we are guaranteed an inheritance because we are His inheritance!

Discussion Questions

1. What are the implications of Paul's theology regarding Israel—that the true Israel is the church of believing Jews and Gentiles, and not simply ethnic Israel?
2. What difference does it make for us to know that we are God's inheritance?
3. What are the major challenges for believers when we come to believe that everyone who is saved must hear and believe the gospel message?
4. Why is it important for us to know about the “sealing” of the Holy Spirit?
5. Paul says three times in verses 3-14 (6,12,14) that these truths are all to God's glory. What does it mean for us to live for the praise of His glory?

Going Deeper

1. How would your life change if you were to live consistently for the praise of God's glory?
2. How can you better spend your time, energy, and financial resources so that more lost people can hear and believe the gospel of Christ?