

THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

"The Believer's Inheritance"

Ephesians 1:11-14

Introduction

1. God has blessed believers with everything in Christ (1:3). Among these blessings are election, predestination, acceptance, redemption, forgiveness of sins, and the making known of the mystery (the millennium). This is a formidable list of riches received at conversion to Christ.

2. As if this is not enough, there is still more. This is the significance of the word "also" (v. 11). His bounty is more and more. His riches overflow to the child of God. What is mentioned here is the inheritance of the believer. There are two basic statements about this.

1. The inheritance DESCRIBED vv. 11, 12.

a. What? v. 11

There are two ways to grasp this verse. The first is to say that God has actually given an inheritance to the believer. It would be similar to Israel inheriting the land in the Old Testament. Paul speaks like this in Colossians 1:12. The other possibility is that which gives a clearer emphasis to the aorist passive verb of the text. It would signify then that we were made God's heritage. It would compare with Israel's relation to God in the Old Testament as belonging to Him. Here it would mean we are God's special chosen people of the New Testament (cf. 1 Pet. 2:9). The two views might well be combined to read the text in this way: "we were taken into the inheritance so as to become the Lord's portion, not only in purpose, but in fact."

b. How? v. 11

This question is answered by the verb predestined. In turn it is governed by the phrase "according to the purpose...." The word is clear: foreordained to all of this. It is therefore neither by chance nor by our own efforts. It is brought about by God's purpose and by

His own efficiency. The verb "working" is a strong term noting inward activity. The use of "all things" is assuredly comprehensive and can only be understood in the light of His eternal purpose in which everything is ordered. But this control is exercised in accordance with the nature of His creatures so that no violence is done to the constitution which God Himself has given them. There is no injustice nor violence whatsoever.

c. Why? v. 12

The reason God has acted as described is that believers might be the means to allow God's divine majesty and excellence to be praised. Pride is eliminated (Eph. 2:8, 9) while His adoration is given prominence because His character is seen in us. What a goal for an inheritance!

2. It is SHARED vv. 13, 14.

a. Who? v. 13

The previous verses may well be applied to the Jewish believers as these to the Gentiles. This seems to be the force of "ye also." Here is the first mention of the controlling theme of Ephesians: Jews and Gentiles in one body by the Spirit.

b. How?

Here are important verbs: hearing and believing. Both are aorists. They are able to be rendered "having heard/believed" or "on hearing/believing." It is clear, however, that no one becomes a child of God unless the Word of truth (that truth which constitutes the good news) namely the Gospel of our salvation is heard. Moreover, believing is an integral feature which precedes the sealing with the Holy Spirit. The double use of "in whom" shows there is a vital union with the Lord Jesus in this passage.

c. Why?

1) The Spirit as a seal This is done for at least three reasons: to authenticate as genuine, to render secure, and finally to denote ownership. This concept of sealing is found elsewhere (4:30; 2 Cor. 1:21).

It is done by the Spirit of promise. This means He came by promise of the Father and the Son, but also that He promises better things to come (being an earnest).

2) The Spirit as an earnest The word "earnest" was originally a Hebrew term, then Greek, and finally Latin. It connotes two ideas: here is a pledge and here is part of the price of anything purchased. This is used of the Spirit three times in the New Testament (here, 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). This may well be what is meant by the "firstfruits of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:23). In any case, the Spirit is the earnest all the way until the purchased possession is redeemed fully. That will take place when we get to Glory. The word "purchased possession" really is interesting. It is an acquisition of property. It is something peculiarly belonging now to God. Since the word "earnest" is a legal and commercial term used of a deposit, first installment, or down payment, the meaning is evident. The presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives now is a foretaste of the joy and blessedness of the life to come.

Conclusion The end of v. 14 is the conclusion reached at the end of the Father's work (v. 6), the Son's (v. 12), and now of the Spirit's.

Our past

The Father chose us.
The Son purchased us.
The Spirit wooed us.

Our present

The Father made us adult sons.
The Son reveals His will to us.
The Spirit seals us and is our earnest.

Our future

The Father will receive us as accepted.
The Son will inherit His people.
The Spirit will claim us in final redemption.