

Last week we talked about that fact that someday everything is going to be brought together under the authority of Christ

- As chaotic as things seem and feel right now, and have seemed and appeared throughout history—there is actually a plan
- At the right time, God is going to bring everything together under the authority of Christ
- Christ really is going to **rule and reign**, set **right every wrong** and **restore all things** to the way they are supposed to be
- There will be a complete renewal
- And as we saw last week, it is going to be glorious!

This verse tells us that **because we are united with Christ**

- We have a part in that!
- We have received and **inheritance** from God

What is an inheritance?

- Something that is given to you by someone else that you, generally, **did not earn** (not a wage)
- Or, necessarily even **deserve** (not a reward)
- Unearned and undeserved (sounds like salvation by grace)
- It came to you strictly because of your connection with someone else (Cf. Jesus)
 - Unearned, undeserved, because of connection with someone else—inheritance

About our inheritance:

It is from God:

- Galatians 4:5-7
God sent him [Jesus] to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us **as his very own children**. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but **God's own child**. And since you are his child, God **has made you his heir**.

It is with Christ:

- Romans 8:17
And since we are his children, **we are his heirs**. In fact, together **with Christ we are heirs** of God's glory.

It is safe and secure:

- 1 Peter 1:3-5
All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with **great expectation**, and we have a **priceless inheritance**—an **inheritance** that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

It is beyond imagination:

- 1 Corinthians 2:9
No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.

In our culture, the concept of **inheritance** implies that someone else is a predecessor and we receive our inheritance upon their death

But Paul is taking his cue here from the **Roman concept of inheritance** predominate at the time

- According to Roman law, the moment a child **was born** he was his father's heir¹
 - So much so that an expert in Roman law from the 3rd c. A.D. (Paul the Jurist) said of children as heirs: "When, therefore, the father dies, it is not so correct to say that they succeed to his property, as that they acquire the free control of their own."
 - So, during the life of the father, the heir exercised **co-ownership**
 - There was this concept of togetherness and sharing

= We are heirs of God that **begin to benefit** from our **inheritance** the moment we are born-again

Ephesians 1:11 speaks to us and in the **past tense** says, "**we have received an inheritance from God**"

This inheritance is consonant with our salvation in the sense that it unfolds over time

- There is a **present experience**, but a **future fullness**

A look at some of our inheritance:

- **The benefits of our salvation**
 - Every spiritual blessing, election, predestination, adoption, sanctification, redemption, freedom, forgiveness, wisdom and understanding (Cf. Ephesians 1:3-8)
- **Future gifts**
 - Matthew 29:28
Jesus replied, "I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, **will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life.**"
- **Ruling and reigning with Christ**
 - Revelation 3:20-21
"Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. Those who are victorious **will sit with me on my throne**, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne."
 - 1 Corinthians 6:2^a & 3^a
Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? Don't you realize that we will judge angels?
- **The nations**
 - Psalm 2:7-8 (of Christ)
The king proclaims the Lord's decree: "The Lord said to me, 'You are my son. Today I have become your Father. Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession.'"
 - Revelation 2:26
To all who are victorious, who obey me to the very end,
To them I will give authority over all the nations.

¹ Merril F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, 618.

There are blessings, benefits, gifts, places and positions that are included in our inheritance

We **ought** to rejoice and praise God!

- Colossians 1:11b-12

May you be **filled with joy**, always **thanking** the Father. He has enabled you to share in the **inheritance** that belongs to his people, who live in the light.

We **are** going to experience these things

- Ephesians 1:11^b

For God chose us in advance (predestined us), and He makes everything work out according to His plan

His plan is for us to experience the fullness of our inheritance (as co-heirs with Christ) for our joy and His glory!

He predestined us for this and He is accomplishing it!

Philippians 2:13

For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

Remember 1 Peter 1 says about our inheritance:

“that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power **until you receive** this salvation”

The doctrine of **predestination**—that in some wonderful and mysterious way God is in control is of great comfort!

- “The doctrine has appeared exceedingly pleasant, bright, and sweet. Absolute sovereignty is what I love to ascribe to God.” –Jonathan Edwards²
- Though seems may seem very out of control in our lives and as if we are constantly losing... God is winning

Left to ourselves we would always work toward lesser things and our own destruction

We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased. –C. S. Lewis, “The Weight of Glory”, 1942³

So God is working in us for greater good! (our joy and His glory)

- **work** = energew = to work; to be active; to produce
- Romans 8:28-29
And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them. For God **knew his people in advance** [predestined], and he chose them to become like his Son
- We are **chosen and destined** by God to experience good for God’s glory (sanctification)

² Edward Hickman, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volume 1 (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), pp xii, xiii.

³ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory* Preached originally as a sermon in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Oxford, on June 8, 1942: published in THEOLOGY, November, 1941, and by the S.P.C.K, 1942

Paul does not state the mode in which God does this (predestines and works). He affirms merely the fact. He does not say that God compels us or that He overbears us with physical force

- Rather: **Simply that God is at work for our good and joy and for His glory and pleasure!**

When we grasp this (God working in us for better) we dive into life with God

- “We begin to recover from the sin-sickness that gripped Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden; at last we allow God to be God; and we discover that His sovereign purposes—even in the experiences that cause us pain—are for our good.” –Sinclair Ferguson⁴

Our good and God’s glory are not mutually exclusive (not enemies)

- **God purposes His glory and pleasure in such a way that he simultaneously brings His people the most blessings**
- What power is communicated in verse 11!
- **His pleasure and glory are not the enemies of our joy and good**

And what is our greatest joy and good?

- Here we must get to the point of our **inheritance**
- We so rejoice at the **benefits** of it that we forget **the point of it**
- A couple of weeks ago we talked about the fact that God is glorified when we enjoy the gifts he has given us
 - But if it ends there we become idolaters
- We have to realize that the purpose of the gifts is to **highlight the Giver** (the giver not the gifts)

“All the gifts of God are given for the sake of revealing more of God’s glory, so that the proper use of them is to rest our affections not on them but through them **on God alone**” –John Piper⁵

God is the Gospel!!!

- 1 Peter 3:18
Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God
- Ephesians 2:13
But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to Him through the blood of Christ.
- Cf. Ephesians 1:5

“You made us for yourself and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.” –St. Augustine⁶

God is working in us to do everything necessary to “**enthral us with what is most deeply and durable satisfying, namely himself.**”⁷ (THIS CAN BE PAINFUL—CONFRONTING LESSER AFFECTIONS)

All of our joy must be funneled into this one fact—that God is the ultimate gift for us to enjoy!

- Jonathan Edwards describes those whose hearts rejoice in the gift of salvation, but who never really turn the corner to rejoicing in the Giver:
- “The first rejoice, and are elevated with the fact that they are made much of by God; and then on that ground, [God] seems in a sort of way, lovely to them... They are pleased in the highest degree, in hearing how much God and Christ make of them. **So that their joy is really a joy in themselves, and not in God.**” –Jonathan Edwards⁸

⁴ Sinclair B. Ferguson, *Let’s Study Ephesians Together* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 18.

⁵ John Piper, *God is the Gospel*, 117.

⁶ St Augustine, *The Confession of St. Augustine* (New York: Washington Square Press, 1962), 1.

⁷ Piper, 13.

©2011 Britt Merrick

Identity Issues | Ephesians 1:11

11.20.11

Here is the **danger of wrongly thinking** about our identity (as we have been) and our inheritance (as we've mentioned)

- We must realize that the goal of it all is God Himself
- We must realize and rejoice in that fact that our ultimate inheritance (or portion) is God
- This was the joy of Israel

Psalms 16:5

Lord, you alone are **my inheritance**, my cup of blessing.

Psalms 73:25^b-26

I desire you more than anything on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and **my portion** forever.

Lamentations 3:24

I say to myself, "The Lord is **my inheritance**; therefore, I will hope **in him**!"

And the Lord is enough!

Habakkuk 3:17-18

Even though the fig trees have no blossoms, and there are no grapes on the vines; Even though the olive crop fails, and the fields lie empty and barren; Even though the flocks die in the fields, and the cattle barns are empty,
Yet I will rejoice in the Lord! I will be joyful in the God of my salvation!

Psalms 73:24-26

With Your counsel You will guide me, And afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but You? And **besides You, I desire nothing on earth**. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and **my portion forever**.

But it is not just that He is ours but we are His!

- Ephesians 1:18 (Cf. 5)
- God sees His people as His **inheritance** or **special possession**
- It started with Israel, and then others were grafted in to create the Church

Deuteronomy 4:20

Remember that the Lord rescued you from the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt in order to make you **his very own people and his special possession**, which is what you are today.

Deuteronomy 32:9

For the people of Israel belong to the Lord; Jacob is his **special possession**.

Psalms 33:12

What joy for the nation whose God is the Lord, whose people he has chosen as **his inheritance**.

Psalms 28:9

Save your people! Bless Israel, your **special possession**.
Lead them like a shepherd, and carry them in your arms forever.

Psalms 33:12

What joy for the nation whose God is the Lord, whose people he has chosen as **his inheritance**.

⁸ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 2, ed. John Smith (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1959), 247.

Psalms 94:14

The Lord will not reject his people; he will not abandon his **special possession**.

1 Peter 2:9-10

...you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, **God's very own possession**. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

Once you had **no identity** as a people; now you are God's people.

This is God's plan... that we are His and He is ours (present experience & future fullness)

2 Corinthians 6:16 (Present experience)

I will live in them and walk among them. **I will be their God, and they will be my people.**

Revelation 21:1-3 (Future fullness)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any sea*. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, **and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them**

This concept of **ultimate togetherness** is why Scripture uses the **metaphor of marriage**

- That we are the **bride of Christ** and He is our groom (Cf. Israel as wife)
- Cf. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb
- Revelation 19:6-7

Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying,

"Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready."

This is why we are prompted to say with God's people though all time:

- Song of Solomon 6:3
I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine

This is our **inheritance** that God has given us by **predestining** us and giving us a place among His people (first Israel), by **uniting us with Christ** (through faith and repentance), and this is what He is **working out according to His plan**

- A present experience, and future fullness (now we only see and experience dimly)

Jeremiah 32:38-41 (Our good and God's glory intermingled)

They will be my people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart and **one purpose**: to worship me forever, **for their own good** and for the good of all their descendants. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them: I will never stop **doing good for them**. I will put **a desire** in their hearts **to worship me**, and they will never leave me. I will **find joy doing good for them** and will faithfully and wholeheartedly replant them in this land.

Our inheritance

- Better than any loss you have ever suffered (**Romans 8:18**)
- The hope of it far outweighs anything you are sad about, or do not have now
- The Object of it and His love is greater than anyone who has ever rejected or not loved you
- Anyone who doesn't want you
- Anyone who has overlooked you
- His love is better than life... and you are His!!! And He is yours!!!