

Ephesians 1: 11 & 12; “Predestined to an Inheritance”, Message # 4 in a series entitled – “The Exceeding Greatness of his Power”, a Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall on March 6th, 2019, for those gathered at his home.

It is the beauty and glory of Christ and what He has done for sinners such as us, which is in view from verse 3 to verse 12. Paul begins with saying that every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places has been given to those who trust in Christ; that they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. We are told that the object in God’s choosing was to take those people whom He had chosen and to make them His saints. We can see from the way that Paul has written these verses that God’s purpose has not been to commend anything good in those whom He has chosen, but to set forth the fact that His purpose in choosing them unto salvation was all of grace. It was not founded on their ability to save themselves from their sins, or to change themselves to make themselves holy, but rather they must be redeemed, bought and purchased through Christ’s shedding His blood on the cross, and on that basis, then, God can spiritually adopted them into His family by His making them accepted to Him in Christ, in the One Beloved of God, for who He is and what He has done for them.

What Christ purchased, then, by His redemption, is conveyed to the saints as an inheritance, their having been predestined to it by God the Father. This is what we want to think about, in greater depth, this evening. I want to share with you, 1st of all – The particular nature of this inheritance, which is a spiritual inheritance. 2nd – The particular working of God’s will in relation to this inheritance. And 3rd – The particular order of application in relation to this inheritance. God knows, and wants to convey to us, by the way that these verses are stated, that He has particular purposes that He would have us to understand better so that we will live our lives to praise of His glory. May each of us pray to receive all that God has for us here.

1st of all – Let us think together about the particular nature of this inheritance, which is a spiritual inheritance.

In opening up the meaning of this word “inheritance”, here in this place, we should remember that it relates in the primary sense to the death of the one bequeathing the inheritance; in this case, our Lord Jesus Christ. “In Him also we have obtained an inheritance”. That is, it was because Christ had all of the elect of God in His mind when He drew up His last will and testament on the night in which He was betrayed and went to the cross. Turn with me over to Matthew 26, verses 26-28. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take eat; this is My body.” “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying , ‘Drink from it, all of you.” “For this is My blood of the new covenant, (of the new testament, it reads in the King James) which is shed for many for the remissions of sins.” The word in the original Greek is diathekes (διαθηκης) which means a covenant or a testament. This was a different covenant or testament from the Old covenant and testament, in which the people of Israel offered up sacrifices for their sins which were according to the law, through the priests. It was because the Lord Jesus was of a different order of priests, it was because of the fact that He was of the order of Melchizedek, and was perfect in obedience to all of God’s holy law, obeying its precepts and suffering its punishments, in our place, that He was able to come and establish the work of righteousness and present the offering of the sacrifice of His own body and blood, so that He could purchase this eternal and spiritual inheritance for His people. It was His Person and His work which brought into being the New Covenant.

Turn with me over to Hebrews chapter 9, verses 11-19. “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.” “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.” “For if the blood

of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.” “For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.” “Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood.”

You can see here that the sacrifices which were offered by the priests under the Old Testament on behalf of the children of Israel were typical of Christ's sacrifice; they pointed to His greater sacrifice and offering of Himself. But these offerings were in no way able to cleanse the conscience from dead works in order that the worshipers could serve the living God. Only Christ's coming and making a New Covenant which would be a New Testament which would both secure and convey blessings to those believing in Him, could avail to the saving of the soul. The blood of bulls and goat and the ashes of a heifer, when they were sprinkled upon the unclean person among the Jews, could only sanctify and purify the flesh ceremonially, but they could not cleanse the heart and the conscience.

And so, for any and all elect sinners to be saved, Christ had to become the Mediator of a New Covenant by means of His death. His death was for the redemption of the transgressions committed under the first covenant or testament; that is, so that all persons under the covenant of law and their own works, which are dead works in the sight of God, could be forgiven, and they be justified in righteousness. This is applicable to both Jews and the Gentiles, everyone who is under the covenant of works, in the sense of a person's attempting to justify themselves in the sight of God by their own works. In regard to both Jews and Gentiles, there is a need for Christ to redeem us; everyone who is under the covenant of works. There is the need for Christ to redeem us, to pay the purchase price to buy us back from our slavery to sin and our bondage to doing Satan's will, to bear the punishment which we deserve, for not having done God's will. And Christ did this in order that all who would believe in Him might receive the promise of obtaining an eternal inheritance based upon their believing in the Person and the finished work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is the nature of the inheritance. It is the purchase of all of the blessings of salvation which are conveyed to every single one of God's elect people in stages. First, there is grace which given them before and during their conversion to Christ in their being called and justified. And then there is the grace which is given to them which relates to their being called and justified in their initial or definitive sanctification which leads to their progressive sanctification leading to holiness. These blessings are an integral part of their inheritance purchased for them by Christ in the New Testament or covenant. This then leads on to their physical death where their eternal inheritance is further conveyed to them in their being made perfect in their spirit the moment that they die, and then at the Day of Christ's Second Coming, receiving their bodily resurrection which completes entirely their inheritance in terms of their redemption. But at that time we the people who have been saved, will come to know the full reality of receiving the eternal inheritance in finding our God to be our inheritance forever.

This is what is mentioned in 1st Peter chapter 1, verses 3-5. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” We see here that our inheritance is ultimately eternal life, that life which will not fade away as this life does. But that

eternal life begins with our being begotten again to a living hope through Christ's resurrection. Every blessing which comes to us through Jesus Christ leads us on to the final climax of blessing when we see our Savior and inherit the eternal glory of being with the Triune God forever.

Now 2nd – Let's think together about the particular working of God's will in relation to this inheritance.

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...” Here we see the doctrine of our inheritance being directly linked with the doctrine of God's predestinating all of His elect people to that inheritance; that is, all the blessings of salvation from being chosen in eternity past to being glorified by Christ on the Last Day, and all the blessings of being with God and Christ eternally. But sometimes this doctrine of predestination is hard for even Christians to receive because they falsely think that if God predetermines whether He is going to save someone that they do not have a choice in the matter. But we should understand that this is not true at all. All people are free agents. They have the freedom to choose, but without grace they will not choose to be saved on gospel terms. Gospel terms are those which are found in the Bible related to receiving Christ and the grace that can be found in Him in connection with God's work in giving the gift of salvation to you. You are always free to choose, but without grace you will not choose rightly. This is why God must take the initiative to save you. It is because you cannot save yourself; neither will your own choice of Christ necessarily save you. You may choose but only God can give the inheritance, and that inheritance is obtained only by the right kind of faith in Christ.

Acts chapter 20, verse 32 – “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” You can see here that it is only God who through the word of His grace that a person has faith and is built up in their faith and receives the inheritance of all spiritual blessings in Christ. These blessings come through faith in Christ when God sanctifies you; when He sets you apart to His eternal and divine purposes, to work grace into your mind and heart so that you will approve of things which are true according to the Bible and excellent in terms what you should be doing with your life, which is learning what is good and true and right; those things which will lead to holiness and righteous conduct and character. The word “inheritance” is *εκληρωθημεν* in the Greek. It means to have a part or lot; that is, that they obtain the right to have an inheritance, to have a part and lot in this matter that is given to them by God, through faith in Christ.

Turn with me over to Acts chapter 8, and we will look at verses 14-24. “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.” “For as yet He had fallen upon none of them.” “They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.” “Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” “And when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit.’” “But Peter said to him, ‘Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!’” “You have neither part nor portion (nor lot) in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.” “Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you.” “For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.” “Then Simon answered and said, ‘Pray to the Lord for me, that none of the things which you have spoken may come upon me.’”

Now, the reason that I have had us read this passage is to show you that only those who God has given saving grace to, according to His predestinating purpose, shall be able to receive the Holy Spirit after they have believed. It is not something which is automatic. God must give the

gift of salvation and the Holy Spirit when someone believes the gospel. If you look up at verse 12 it says – “But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized.” “Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done.” So Philip had preached the gospel faithfully, and many persons believed and were baptized, and Simon was one of them. He had made his decision, his choice to believe in Christ, but something was still very wrong in his heart. Something was still wrong with his life which indicated that he had not yet come to know the Lord. He made it evident to Peter that he did not know the Lord by his offering Peter money in order that he might be able to have the power to lay his hands on people and convey the Holy Spirit to them. This indicated to Peter that he was not a Christian at all.

He said to Simon, “Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!” “You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God.” So Peter was saying that he did not yet have the inheritance. He did not have part nor portion; he did not have a “lot” in the matter of salvation. What our text is saying is that a person cannot have an eternal inheritance unless God predestines them to it, and conveys it to them by the Holy Spirit. Let us understand that our God is a God of purpose. He has plans and He has reasons for all that He does in relation to all people and all things, and it is not arbitrary. He most particularly determines who He would have Christ redeem and save. Redemption is always particular, as it is described for us in the Bible. It is not general or universal, although the free offer of the gospel is for all men, but if redemption were general then all men would be saved.

The Bible tells us that it was not for all men that Christ died, but it was for some men, who God would purpose to show mercy to. And since God is infinitely great in wisdom and glory, His purpose cannot be thwarted in regard to any person that He has created. Therefore we must come to Christ on His terms of humbling ourselves to receive the teaching of how we come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and not make salvation a matter of our own intellect or desires. You will notice that Peter does not declare Simon to be a reprobate, but He exhorts him to repent of the wickedness that he had committed and pray that the thought of his heart would be forgiven him. He perceived by his gift of apostolic discernment that Simon was poisoned by bitterness and still bound by iniquity. In other words, he was not saved at all yet. He could have no assurance of having the inheritance of eternal life, unless he repented of his sins of covetousness and desire to have power by which to impress other people so as to make himself look great. This is nothing but pride and selfish ambition.

We do not read of Simon’s ever having repented or really understood his sinful condition. He asks Peter to pray that none of these things which Peter had said would come upon him, but he did not cry out at that time for mercy from God and the ability to turn from his sinful thoughts and ways. There is not any reason given to us here that we could rejoice that he ever did receive the eternal inheritance. But as those who love the Lord, let us be those who desire to see the salvation of the greatest sinners; their being brought to true and saving faith in Jesus Christ. Unless a person has committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, attributing the works of Christ to the Devil, or saying that the Holy Spirit is unclean, let us have the faith to believe that we should continue to pray for those who have been deceived and who have walked away from Christ, that they still might come to Him if God will have mercy upon them, and give them this inheritance.

3rd – Let us think about the particular order of application in relation to this inheritance.

Verse 11b and 12 – “God works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.” Let us remember that God’s purposes

in predestination and election are much greater than we can possibly comprehend; why He should choose some; predestinating them to eternal glory, and passing by others leaving them in their sins and to their own wisdom and devices, is past our finding out. We should believe that God is infinitely wise in all that He does and all the way that He orders all things after the counsel of His will. Deuteronomy 29: 29 says – “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Let us rest in that, and trust in Him, that He has great and good reasons for everything that He does. He saves all who He saves according to order that He purposed. The gospel would come to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. And Paul says that it was this way, so that those Jews who first trusted in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. And all Christians should praise God for the inheritance which He gives. Let us remember the truth of Psalm 145: 17-21 – “The LORD is righteous in all His ways, Gracious in all His works.” “The LORD is near to all who call upon Him, To all who call upon Him in truth.” “He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him; He also will hear their cry and save them.” “The LORD preserves all who love Him, But all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD, And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever.”