

EPHESIANS 1:11-12
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 21, Aug. 1, 1999

INTRO: Believe it or not, we are nearing the end of this very long and complex sentence in Ephesians 1:3-14. When I considered the complexity of this sentence I could not help but wonder how Paul expected these relatively new converts from paganism to understand all this. But from Ephesians 1:1 it is clear that Paul does expect the people at Ephesus to understand all he is talking about. But we must not forget that Paul spent about three years at Ephesus and he must have taught them many things during that time. I remind you of the title we have given of Ephesians 1:3-3:21. It is "the wonderful work of salvation." But 1:3-14 we said was the blessed source of salvation. God Almighty revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; is the source of our salvation. This passage speaks of the work of all three Persons of the Triune God. From verse 15 our attention will be drawn to the writer of this letter, the Apostle Paul. Here things will begin to be a little easier to understand.

Ephesians 1:3 informed us that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing IN CHRIST. Jesus Christ is the central theme of the both testaments of the Bible. We have seen a number of blessings we have in Christ. In our last message we suggested that God planned the Church for the administration of the earth during the millennium. In our present verse we find another blessing, which is that in Christ we also have become God's inheritance. We will look at the predestination of those in Christ who have become God's inheritance. We will see how God predestined the believer and what He predestined the believer to.

So we consider this morning another blessing we have in Christ and that is that:

g. We became an inheritance in Christ (1:11-12)

This morning we will look first at the words, "...in whom also we have obtained an inheritance..."

This verse begins with the words, "in whom." This is a reference to Jesus Christ. In Christ; in Him; in whom; these are key phrases

in Ephesians. He is central to Christianity.
Is He central to your life?

But note the word *also*. In verse 10 Paul has expounded on the reason why God planned the Church, which is made up of both Jew and Gentile. He has informed us that God planned or purposed the Church in Himself and for Himself. Then he reveals what God has planned the Church for. My understanding of this verse is that she is to be steward of the millennial age! That is simply fantastic. Christ, with the Church as steward, will head up all things, both those in heaven and those on earth.

But now He says, "In Him *also*..." here we have additional information on the Church. This additional information has to do with inheritance. Not only have believers been destined to be stewards of the millennium but they have become an inheritance as well. We will speak more about this in a moment.

Another word we must take note of is the pronoun "we." Who does the "we" speak of? Up until this point the pronouns *we* and *us* and *our* refer to all believers. But in verse 13 Paul says, "you *also*" referring to the Gentile Ephesians. So somewhere prior to verse 13 Paul makes a shift from speaking of all believers to speaking of Jews and Gentiles. Where does the shift occur. It has been my understanding and that of most commentators that this shift occurs right here in verse 11. But on closer study, I believe the shift occurs in verse 12. I will deal with that in verse 12.

The next words in the text, "...have obtained an inheritance..." are more difficult. They may be translated either, *we have obtained an inheritance* or, *we became an inheritance*. In the first translation the believer receives an inheritance and in the second he becomes God's inheritance. Both views are biblical. In verse 14 the believer has obtained an inheritance and in verse 18 the believer is God's

inheritance. The question is which is correct in verse 11? At this point I cast my lot with the view that we have become an inheritance. But we will look at the believer's inheritance in verse 14 and God's inheritance in the believer in verse 18.

Now the words, "...being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will..." show us how predestination took place. The words, "...that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory", show why predestination took place. So let's look at predestination and how it took place.

Now let us review predestination before we go on. You will remember from our exposition in 1:5 that the word *predestination* means *to mark out beforehand*. In the earlier message I mentioned that predestination in Scripture never speaks of being predestined to heaven or hell. In this verse we find that we are predestined in Christ, not while we were outside of Christ. In the earlier message I also mentioned that the believer is predestined to three things in Scripture: 1 to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29); 2 to adoption (Eph. 1:5); and 3 to be to the praise of God's glory (Eph. 1:11-12).

You will remember also that according to my view predestination never guarantees that what God wants in my life will happen. Predestination is what God has marked me out to. For example: He has predestined me to be conformed to the image of God's Son here in life. But not all believers are conformed to the image of God's Son. Nevertheless, that is what God wants. We have also seen that God does not always get what He wants. He wants all men to be saved, but only a small percentage are.

With that bit of review, we want to now consider how those who have become God's inheritance have been predestined. The fact

that we have been predestined means God had a plan and a motivation to do something and a basis and a reason for doing what He did. I would like to illustrate God's plan for the believer from our plans to add to the existing church building. The other day I helped raise the walls on our new addition to the church building. The building contractor had a question with regard to the building plan and so he began to search for the blueprint. Well, the blueprint shows that which is marked out beforehand. It is the predestination of the building.

Now before you predestine something or before you make a blueprint, there is a purpose or plan in mind. And the blueprint is a visible outline of the plan which was already present in the mind. This plan we find in the word *purpose* in verse 11. It is the Greek word *prothesis*. It means to set out beforehand and thus means a purpose or plan. Before our building committee had a blueprint drawn up they had a purpose in mind. The purpose was to meet the growing need for more room. They established that the greatest needs at present were not a larger sanctuary, but more foyer room and Sunday School classrooms. This purpose is clearly evident on the blueprint which came later. Now God has a blueprint for every believer. We call that predestination. And this blueprint is according to His purpose.

Now what is the procedure to get from purpose to blueprint? Ask our building committee. It is no small task because there are so many different options and opinions. So how is it done? Well, this passage tells us. First you go for advice. Look at the word *counsel* in verse 11. It is a word we could well translate *advice*. Now I know that our building committee went to various places for advice.

When God drew up his plan which would ultimately become His blueprint or predestination, He too went for advice. But

where does God go for advice? Well, He went to the highest source possible - Himself. But there was a particular aspect of His personality that He went to. He consulted with His will. He said to Himself, "What do I want?" Look at it in verse 11, "...being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel or advice of His will.

Now you will say, "That sounds very egotistical, or self centered." Yes. It is. You see, God can do exactly what He wants because what He wants is always good. God is good, totally good. So all He wants is good (See Mark 10:17-18). If God did not do what He wanted or desired then He would do wrong, which same He cannot do. The first question asked in the Shorter Catechism is, "What is the chief end of man?" Or in other words, "For what main purpose did God create man?" And it correctly answers, "To glorify God..." Does that not sound self centered? "I will make man so that man will glorify me." But, you see, God is entirely good and when He is glorified the best thing that could happen to man happens. When God is glorified man is benefited.

And so, when God made plans for man so He might predestine him, he consulted with His will and said, "What do I want?" And what He wanted He did! But is that so different from our present construction here at the church? Did we not build because it was our united will? We got together and decided we wanted to meet the growing need. You see, when what we want is in line with the will of God, we too can do what we want.

But I would like to point out one more thing. We can want to do God's will because feel we are obligated to it or because it pleases us to do His will. We could add to this church building because we felt obligated to it, or because it pleased us. Now I ask you why did God make all these plans for man? Did He feel

obligated to it or did it please Him? Our plan will cost us thousands of dollars. God's plan cost Him the highest possible price - His only Son. Look at Ephesians 1:5 for this interesting bit of information, "...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." It was the good pleasure of His will that motivated Him to move on our behalf. God loves you! God wants you for Himself for all eternity!

That brings us to the purpose of all this which we find in verse 12. "That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory." The words, "we who first trusted in Christ" are set over against "you also" in verse 13. Before we consider that, you might want to mark something in your Bibles. The root of the word translated *trusted* in verse 12 is *elpizo*, meaning *to hope*. (The NIV is correct here.) How the word *trust* got in here I don't know but it is not a good translation.

Now who are those who first hoped in the Messiah? Obviously, the Jews. So Paul here, for some reason or other, sets the Jew and the Gentile in contrast. Possibly Paul is reminding the Gentiles that they are dependent on the Jew for this great salvation. We do well to remember that our Saviour informed the Samaritan woman in John 4 that salvation is of the Jews.

Now the purpose given for predestination is that they, the Jews, might be to the praise of God's glory. But this is a purpose for the Gentiles as well (Eph. 1:5-6; 14). Three times in this first long sentence we find this phrase, "...to the praise of His glory" (1:5-6; 12; 14). Once the phrase reads, "...to the praise of the glory of His grace..." I would like to point out a difference in the phrases *to the praise of His glory* and *to the praise of the glory of His grace*. In the latter phrase the glory is limited to the glory of His grace. Now grace is the divine enabling of

man by God to either become a Christian or to successfully live the Christian life. If one should gather the stories of the grace of God in mankind, great libraries could be filled with books.

But the glory of God's grace is limited to one aspect of all God's goodness. To be predestined to be to God's glory is unlimited. It is the goodness of God in His creative powers; His holiness; His faithfulness; His truthfulness; His wisdom; His love; His omnipresence; His omnipotence; His omniscience; His righteousness: His justice etc... etc... To be designed to be to the praise of His glory unlimited means we will get to know Him better and better and our praise of Him will be greater and greater! That, according to Paul, is part of the purpose of predestination; God's blueprint for man!

CONCL: In Christ we have become God's inheritance. Those who have become His inheritance have been mapped out by the plan put in place by the advice of God's own will. God was pleased to perform His will on our behalf. Ephesians 1:3-14 spells out in some detail for us the wonderful work of salvation. What a tremendous topic this is! The complexity of this passage simply overwhelms me. I have not troubled you with the interpretational problems in this sentence, but I confess much of it is beyond me. I can only say with Paul, who saw so much more than I do, "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out!

In verse 12 of our passage this morning we saw the purpose of it all. It is that we might ever exist to the praise of God's glory. I would like to close this message by reading a few passages from the book of Revelation for a little insight into man's existence in heaven with God (Read 4:9-11; 5:8-14).