

## EPHESIANS 1:11-14

### INTRODUCTION

I am often amazed the things that grab the news headlines today. Not so long ago the main 10 o'clock news spent the first 15 minutes of the news on Rio Ferdinand missing his drug test and the implications of that for English's chances of qualifying for Euro 2004. How can such an unimportant event take up so much time on the main news? The reason is very simple; this is the sort of thing that interests people today.

This is what people are talking about. I remember the same thing happening just before the last world cup when David Beckham broke his toe. If only we had a true perspective of life then the sort of thing that would make the news would be the theme that we read about in the first chapter of Ephesians. God's marvellous plan of salvation for sinners is amazing news once we have a perspective on what is really important in life.

In the first 14 verses of chapter 1 we have seen God planning this salvation in the past by electing his people we have seen this plan being put into effect in the person of Jesus who died in order that we could be redeemed and forgiven and now we see this plan as it's further revealed through the work of Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the deposit and guarantee of even more and greater blessings to come in Christ. Should this not make the news headlines today? It would if we truly had God's perspective of life rather than a godless and worldly perspective.

Now as we have already looked at the blessings that we have graciously received from God, I now want to look at the:

### 1. THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE BLESSINGS WE RECEIVE

a) **We are God's heritage** - The NIV translates the first implication in verse 11 as 'chosen in Christ' but Paul has already said that before (v 4) so is Paul just saying the same thing again for emphasis. The Greek word means to 'cast lots,' thus to chose by lot. It is only used here in the whole New Testament. Commentaries and translators disagree on what Paul means here, which is why we get different translations.

Some think Paul wants to convey the idea of choosing (NIV) while others think it means to be allotted an inheritance and others think it means to be allotted to God as his own possession. I think it means that those who are in Christ are His allotted inheritance. This is in keeping with the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 32:9 & Psalm 33:12) where Israel is declared to be God's inheritance, but now however all who are in Christ both Gentiles and Jews make up God's divine possession. You see this is the first implication mentioned here of the blessing of salvation, which we receive because of Christ. We belong to God and are owned by him, he has paid the price the death of his Son and as a result we are his possession, his inheritance. We are not our own we were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Therefore we do have a duty to live up to our name as children of God. We have to remember in all that we do that we are not our own therefore we have no right to do what we want to do but we belong to God he has paid a high price to redeem us

therefore every day we must submit to Him and his Lordship within our lives. The reason why we are his allotted inheritance has nothing to do with us but because God planned it that way and therefore he predestined us for his own purposes (vs. 11-12).

In time he worked out his plan, he sent his Son to die for us, he brought the gospel to us, regenerated our hearts and has ever since continued to work out his plan for his own purposes and in accordance with his sovereign will. Now if God has done that for us so that we would be the possession of God then none of us can complain about the Lord's ownership of us, we ought willingly to submit to him, but sadly there are so many Christians who want still to do their own thing, who still put themselves and their needs and their families before the Lord himself. This ought not to be indeed it should not be. It's like someone saving your life and then we constantly malign that person through our words and actions.

How ungrateful would we be, but the truth is that sadly there are Christians who do that who by their word and actions show immense ingratitude to God. He has saved us and paid a high price so that we could be his possession but O how sad when we resist or even resent his ownership of us. We may never say we resist it or resent it but so often our own lives speak loud and clear against this ownership of us.

**b) We are to glorify him (v 12)** - This plan of God to save a people for himself means that those who do come to faith in Christ bring praise to his great and glorious name. I think when Paul says, "We were the first to hope in Christ," he is thinking of the Jews particularly. When he and the apostles and his fellow Jews came to place their hope in Christ (Romans 1:16) then God was working out and fulfilling his purposes and that purpose was to see his people living lives for the glory of God. The purpose of God is that others might see God's glory in believers, believers who are hoping in Christ and as a result that they might see the outworking of that hope to such an extent that they will bring praise not to the believer but to God himself. The question is; do our lives lead others to bring praise to God for his great salvation. Are we so living for God that others will see plainly that God is at the centre of our thinking and our lives?

Are we so single minded in giving ourselves completely to doing the will of God whatever that means for us or whatever that costs us so that others will see God's glory in us and as a result bring praise to God for his wonderful salvation for sinners like us. Those are big questions that ought to seriously challenge our commitment and walk with God.

**c) We hear the gospel and receive the Spirit (vs. 13-14)** - This is the third implication of the blessings outlined in verses 1-10. Paul's 'you also' (v 13) is making a comparison with those who were the first to hope in Christ (the Jews) with those who were also included in Christ which here means the Gentiles. They too were chosen for God's possession and we know this because they heard the gospel of salvation that is they heard the gospel, which shows one salvation and this gospel is true for it is the word of truth.

But hearing the gospel of salvation and knowing that it is the word of truth is of no effect in itself. One must respond to it and that is what happened to these Ephesians

for we read that having believed they were marked in him with a seal. That seal is the Holy Spirit we are told that here; but if that is not clear enough for us then it is very clear in Ephesians 4:30. The seal of the Spirit is not something the Spirit does to us but the Holy Spirit himself is the seal.

A seal in the time of Paul was a very common mark. Often your seal was dipped in wax and used like a stamp to guarantee the genuine nature of an important document. So what Paul is saying here is that the fact that someone has the Holy Spirit is clear evidence that they are genuine believers in Jesus Christ. A seal was also used to show a mark of ownership. In Paul's day a ship would carry cargo from different people.

How would anyone know who owns what? Each owner put their own seal on their goods. Farmers do this today when they brand their cattle and sheep to show who owns them. Well in Paul's day the same thing was done by placing your seal on the goods so that everyone would know that, that particular object belonged to you. Every salve carried a seal of ownership. Well in the same way Paul says that the presence of the Holy Spirit is a mark of ownership that this person belongs to Jesus Christ. Another use of a seal was when you did not want something to be tampered with; you put your seal over the opening so that if the seal were broken you would know that it was tampered with. We do the same today with medicines etc; they have a seal that needs to be broken in order to open it. This seal is to protect us from harm in case someone tampers with our medication.

Well the same is true of the Christian believer we have the Holy Spirit which is God's seal that we are not to be tampered with. He is our protection we belong to Him no one else has any right to tamper with God's possession. Therefore put these uses of the seal together and we see the Holy Spirit is our seal the one who as a result of his work will show others clearly that we are genuine believers that we are owned by God and protected by him from all spiritual harm and ruin.

This is the Holy Spirit that was promised in the Old Testament the one that would come after Jesus has left this earth the one who will carry on the work of Jesus in and through the lives of his people. But Paul's whole point in this verse is that we heard the gospel and responded to it and as a result we received the Holy Spirit because of God's eternal plan to save us from our sin. Because 'he chose in Christ before the creation of the world' (v 4) then in time he brought us into contact with the gospel of salvation. We could easily have gone through this life without ever having come into contact with the gospel of Christ. There are many in our land today who have probably never heard the gospel clearly preached or explained to them. Yet if we are Christians today then God has been so gracious to us and brought the gospel to us.

For each one of us the story of how we heard the gospel might be different, but as you think about it underneath all the circumstances of hearing the gospel there was God working out his will and fulfilling his purposes by working behind the scenes. But hearing the gospel is one thing but believing it and receiving it is a completely different matter. Yet we were enabled by God through his Holy Spirit to be convinced that the gospel was the gospel of salvation the gospel that could save us and that it was true.

We were enabled to trust in Christ to believe and therefore be saved. The Holy Spirit is our seal as a result, so that every Christian who is genuine and who belongs to God will possess the Holy Spirit. When we are looking for evidence as to whether someone is saved or not then we are really looking to see if this person possess the Holy Spirit. The evidence of his work is clear for we will display the fruit of the Spirit within our lives (Galatians 5:22).

So are you a Christian? Do you have the Holy Spirit? Where is the evidence? If you do then you possess God's seal, the seal will marks you out as genuine, as belonging to God and as such one who cannot be tampered with without God's permission to do so. All of this happens to us only because of God's plan and his working out of that plan in conformity with his own purpose for our world.

We ought to give him all the praise and glory, we have nothing to boast about, we did nothing even going along to a meeting to hear the gospel was God's plan for us therefore let us be truly grateful to him and praise him and seek to glorify his name in all that we do and in all that we say.

**d) We are guaranteed an inheritance (v 14)** - The word that is translated, as 'deposit' was used as a legal and commercial term in Greek, which meant the first instalment, or down payment or even pledge. Just as we might buy a new car or new furniture and we are asked to put down a deposit. That is our guarantee that we are going to buy it, it is a promise that there is more to follow.

The word is used in Modern Greek for an engagement ring, which really is a pledge guaranteeing that there is more to follow i.e. marriage. Well Paul says that the Holy Spirit is our down payment, which guarantees that there is more to follow. Having the Holy Spirit within us now is wonderful; but it is really only the beginning for the Christian he is the deposit of much, more to follow. He is our guarantee of even more blessings to follow. The blessing that Paul focuses upon here is the blessing of our inheritance, which we receive in full when the redemption of those who are God's possession takes place. But I thought we were redeemed already is that not what Paul has already said (v 7), so how can we be waiting on our redemption?

There is a very real sense in which our redemption has been accomplished already as a result of the blood of Jesus Christ. However else we understand redemption we must remember that Christ has paid the full price for our redemption on the cross. So in one sense redemption is complete but the complete unfolding of all that redemption means is something that is still in the future.

Paul is saying therefore that the presence of the Holy Spirit in us now is a guarantee that all that redemption means will in due course be realised. This is why the bible uses all three tenses to talk about our salvation. There is a sense in which we have been saved, there is a sense in which we are being saved and there is a sense in which we will be saved. We have been saved through Christ and his death and that guarantees that we are being saved as we live day by day in this sin sick world with all the effects that this world has upon us. Likewise the fact we have been saved means we will be saved and delivered from sin and all its effects upon our lives. We do not yet experience heaven in all its fullness, we know a little of heaven because

we have God's presence now and we belong to him but we one day will know heaven fully and will be completely redeemed as a result of what Christ did for us on the cross.

But Paul's point here in this context is that this promised inheritance will one day be ours and if we have any doubt just look at the work of the Holy Spirit in your life now. He is your guarantee of more to follow. He is our guarantee that we are God's possession and we belong to him not because of our merit but because of God's eternal plan and because of his work in bringing his plan to completion.

We will make it, we will get to heaven if we are redeemed because the Spirit is our guarantee He is our down payment of our heavenly home with all that that entails for us. We have a very bright future, even if our future in this world does not look bright because of illness, or disability or other concerns and worries, if we have the Holy Spirit then one day we will be able to experience the full implications of our redemption, the full effect of Christ's death on the cross for us, will one day be fully realised and experienced. I am looking forward to my future are you? I trust you are. You can only look forward to it, if you are redeemed, if you have believed the gospel of salvation the message of truth. If you have then you possess the Holy Spirit you are guaranteed your inheritance. One that day when redemption is fully seen for what it is then God's glory will also be seen for what it is and it will elicit praise from his created beings.

Everyone will see and be astonished that Christ's death has had such dramatic effects and all that people will be able to do is to praise him and extol him for his wonderful glory revealed and displayed in Jesus and in all his precious and redeemed people.

That will be a great day, I trust we are all looking forward to it and in the meantime I trust we are seeking to live our lives with that final destination firmly fixed in our minds.

Amen