

Ephesians 1:11-14

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Preacher: Robin Silson

[0 : 00] So just to bring you up to speed, last week we were in chapter 1, 1-10 and we looked at the historical drama of redemption.

And we saw that we're not the lead character, Jesus is the main character of history, but that our significance is found entirely in association with him. Because we're in him, because we're connected to him, that's why we receive every spiritual blessing.

We're chosen, adopted, forgiven, redeemed and given a purpose. In our passage this morning, we're going to continue to look at what it means to belong to Jesus.

And we're going to be thinking about what that means for our, not just in our past, but what it means for our present and what it means for our future and how those two things are tied together.

You know, when it comes to salvation, we talk a lot and rightly so about forgiveness and the work of Jesus in the history, as a historical moment in history.

[1 : 01] But what Jesus has done and continuing to do in the drama of history doesn't end there, but extends in our own day-to-day life in real time. The formation of a new people, a community defined not by their own history, but by the work of Jesus finished in history and the unshakable security that gives us today and for eternity.

So that's where we're going today. Let me read the passage for us. So we're in Ephesians 1, just from verse, only a few verses today, from verses 11 to 14.

So this is God's word. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

In order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit, guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

[2 : 33] Let me pray. Almighty God, we come to your word this morning as people who are not perfect, as people who have sinned.

But we come as people who have been changed by your grace. And we come as people who want to receive the food of your holy word.

And so we ask that you'd minister to us, that you'd teach us, that you'd correct us, rebuke us, and train us in righteousness, so that we might be equipped for every good work.

We ask for this in his name. Amen. I want you to imagine that you receive, one day you receive a letter in the post.

And it's from a long lost relative. And it's someone you've never even heard of. You didn't even know about them. This is news to you. A letter comes to you.

[3 : 31] But somehow this old relative has tracked you down. And it turns out that they're loaded. And they've written in their will that you're going to inherit more money than you could ever imagine.

As a proof, as proof that it's not a stitch up, there's a cheque for 25 grand, 25,000, inside as a down payment, to prove that the future inheritance is there.

Here's what I want us to be the big take home this morning. In Christ, connected to him, our past, present and future inheritance is secure.

And the down payment is the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. And I want you to take that home because what that will do is, if we take that home, it takes away the kind of, any kind of, maybe perhaps, that creeps in time to time.

I know that it does with me and with all of us. Any lingering anxiety that sometimes creeps into our mind that our future is uncertain, that it is fragile, and that perhaps, because of things, circumstances that happen in our life, it kind of makes us think that the inheritance is flimsy.

[5 : 11] That's what I want us to get out of today. The first thing, then, that I want us to look at is that when this inheritance that we're going to receive, when it is decided by kind of the benefactor, the one who owns it, when is that decided that we're going to receive it?

If you received a letter like that in the post, you would naturally think, I don't know if I believe this, I can't believe this. It would feel like the lucky break you've only ever heard of in a novel or a film. But the reality is, the reality of your eternal inheritance for a believer is, it's even greater. Because it's not a lucky break.

And it wasn't something that was decided on a whim. It wasn't something that, you know, some great, long-lost relative found out about in time and tracked you down.

No, this inheritance, the spiritual inheritance, it was decided and ordained and planned for you, as we saw last week before the creation of the world, that you would receive it.

[6 : 25] Look with me in verse 11. In him, that's in Jesus, in Christ, in him, we were also chosen. Having been predestined, the future was decided, having been predestined according to the plan of him, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will.

In order that we were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. We get that idea of being chosen.

But here, that reality of being chosen, you see, it means more than just being kind of selected, like we said, on a whim. It means chosen, decided to receive something.

This is what we were destined for. When he chose us, we were chosen to receive something. That is God's will for us. And everything is geared towards God achieving that.

It is the plan of him who works out everything. In other words, this is what it means. It means that everything that happens, everything that happens in the whole of history is geared towards you, towards us, God's chosen people receiving that inheritance.

[7 : 48] You see, he says, works out everything. Everything that happens is for this will to come to happen. I mean, that is a staggering thing to behold.

Everything. Just think about that. This is what it means. It means somewhere, deep in the rainforest, a butterfly has just flapped its wings.

Somewhere deep in the ocean, a whale may have just given birth. Somewhere in the mid-Pacific, a man has just caught a fish. And I don't understand how this works, but all those things that have happened, everything, God is somehow using everything in the plan of time to make sure that you receive your inheritance.

How does that work? Everything that happens throughout the entirety of history, every moment, every second, is happening so that you receive your inheritance to the praise of his glory.

All those things, everything God is using in ways beyond our comprehension so that we sitting here right now, along with all of God's people together, will one day receive a spiritual inheritance.

[9 : 08] Everything that happens, happens so that we receive. And the reason why? for the praise of his glory. He chose you to receive it.

He predestined you to have it. He bequeathed it to you. Our inclusion is wrapped inside God's eternal purposes of receiving praise for his glory.

But perhaps, I wonder, the biggest, the question that might come out of this is, you might think, well, inheritance, okay, I understand the kind of illustration with the money.

What exactly is the inheritance? What is a spiritual inheritance? What does that even mean? To answer that, I want to ask you a question because I think this gets to the heart of what, maybe what we, we kind of misunderstand what a spiritual inheritance is.

I want you to imagine that one day, that someday, you know, hopefully, you know, someday you get to heaven and in heaven you have perfect health, you have perfect emotional and mental faculties, you've got no depression, there's no anxiety, there's no stress, you have all, there's all the believers there, the friends, the community, all the community you could ever wish for and you have perfect joy and all the fun and hobbies with everyone you've ever loved.

[10 : 33] But the only thing is, Jesus isn't there. Would that be okay? That is not the inheritance you promised.

It sounds like everything you'd want but inheritance in heaven is only heaven if Jesus is there.

Heaven without Jesus is no inheritance at all. It's not, that's not heaven. That's not the inheritance that we're promised. It's not heaven and it's no inheritance.

You see, that's what the presence of the Holy Spirit is actually preparing you for because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit, it is the Spirit of God so it is the Spirit of Jesus and so receiving the Spirit is a foretaste of having Jesus himself and being in his presence.

Can you see how that all fits together that Jesus' Spirit with you now, the down payment, ensures that you meet Jesus your inheritance for real?

[11 : 47] You receive the Spirit of Jesus as a down payment because your inheritance is the person of Jesus in real time.

It's the reason, it all comes back to this tiny phrase that you have to come back to in Ephesians, especially chapter 1, all the way through that, in Christ, in him, inheritance comes because of a connection to Jesus being spiritually located in him.

It's what the Jewish people had been waiting for. Jeremiah 31, it's the promise of it coming. Their history, the whole of the Jewish people, their history was a long wait for this specific inheritance. They were waiting for the Messiah and their hope wasn't a human emotion, it was the, you know, their hope, it wasn't just, wishful thinking. It was the first historical fruit of God's plan coming into being.

They looked forward to having a saviour. Now they had one and they had the Spirit as a down payment that they would receive him in heaven. That they would meet him and be with him for all time.

[13 : 05] The same is true for us. Our future inheritance, you know, it's anchored in a will that was signed before you were born.

Jesus awaits and the Spirit presence reminds you that the check will clear. Jesus awaits and the presence of the Holy Spirit reminds you that the check will clear.

here's the problem. Even if the will is signed, why is it, why is it, and I know this myself, why is it that our hearts have a way of acting like it's a forgery?

Even if the decree is eternal, our feelings often still tell us that our future is fragile. Why is that? It's a question we need to wrestle with which is where we're going to move to the second point, the inheritance anxiety.

The inheritance anxiety. Now the problem here that God's word helps us to address I think in our own lives it's not explicit. It kind of lies in the background.

[14 : 22] Before we get there, the reason it's there is I want you to notice with me in just these few words there is a definite order in how God's plan of salvation has worked out.

Look with me in verse 12. Paul is talking about himself here and he's talking about fellow Jewish Christians. He says, look, in order that we, Paul is by birth a Jew, he's talking about other people who've been born as Jews.

In order that we who were the first to put our hope in Christ. Jewish Christians were the first, they came first. The resurrection of Jesus was first believed by the disciples who were Jews in the upper room.

Then it was preached on Pentecost to Jews who put their faith in Jesus. They were the first to hope in like chronological time in Jesus Christ.

And this is where the problem comes. It comes to anyone else who was believing in Jesus but didn't have that Jewish family heritage. It's where, it's kind of, because they weren't in the first, there's kind of an anxiety, a sowing of doubt.

[15 : 41] And the question at the forefront of every non-Jewish mind that still believed in Jesus is this, does that make the Jewish believer more special than me?

He went to them first, what if my future, my salvation is more flimsy? What if my future is less certain? After all, Paul himself is from a Jewish family and, let's be honest, so was Jesus.

A nagging little seed creeps in. All of a sudden, the inheritance promised, changes becoming from something that you would expect to something maybe not too sure of.

and there's a natural default response. And the natural thing that we do if we're unsure if something's going to happen is we respond with, well, what can we do?

What can I do to ensure that the eternal life, the inheritance, having Jesus, is still going to head my way? What can I do to show this thing up?

[16:55] And once you ask that question, spiritual life is lived now of a place of security but with an insecure, fragile mindset. Inheritance becomes a maybe rather than a certainty.

And the church, if those mindsets are left to fester, it splits into those who, into a group that feel kind of second, like they're a second class believer, just kind of hanging on in there in the background. Now, you might have heard me say of me before and I don't think in our small group of believers we have people with Jewish heritage.

I may be wrong but whereas we might not have that difference, we all come from different backgrounds. Some of us come from Christian families, have been taken to church since we were knee high and can't remember a day when we weren't following Jesus.

but that's not everyone's story. There are others who took a different path, never went to church, didn't come until they were older, came to Jesus much later in life and in their early, more formative years far from him led a life of rebellion, hedonism, doing our own things with selfish motives.

[18:14] There are two temptations here. The temptation for the first who's grown up and can never remember a day, that's at one extreme, is to feel superior.

I never did any of that hedonistic nonsense. I was in church behaving as a good Christian should. but the latter, which I think is what I want to hone in because I think this is the direction of the passage, is to think that because you didn't have that, that somehow you must play spiritual catch-up to those other Christians.

What that leads to is believing and living in a way that assurance for your future comes from trying harder, from being better, from doing the right things and saying the right things and making sure that you act not in conformity to the will of Christ but act in conformity to the way the church acts, from comparing yourself to another Christian and trying to be more like them.

When you live and compare yourself in that kind of a way, you just end up in a constant swinging, a flux spiritually, because what happens is we end up tying our future to how we're doing.

You have a good day spiritually, you feel secure, great. You sin and mess up, not only do you feel rotten, but you feel like your future is dependent on you.

[19:51] And you've got no peace, you've got insecurity, and the inheritance feels like, one day you feel it's yours, the next day you don't. if you've ever felt like that, I certainly have, if you've ever felt like that, then I want you to hear this third point.

It's the inheritance gift, the inheritance gift. The inheritance, Jesus, is a gift that you receive, and your receiving of it is not because of how you compare to anyone else.

It's not dependent on whether you had a good day where you've obeyed, or whether you've fallen short. Your inheritance is dependent on one thing, and one thing only.

Look with me, verse 13. This is Paul speaking to the non-Jewish believers, and you also, and you also were included in Christ, when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you believed.

It happened when you heard and you believed. You also. He's talking to the non-Jews in the letter. Remember, the you is not singular, it is plural, so he's talking to the whole church, he's saying, and he's talking to us too.

[21:24] you also, you church in Winsborough, together, and every one of you, when you heard the gospel of salvation, when you heard that God the Son came down in the person of Jesus of Nazareth and lived a perfectly sinless life, and when you heard that he died on the cross in your place, taking the punishment for your sins, and when you heard that he was raised to new life from the dead, by God the Father, defeating sin, defeating death, and defeat all evil, when you heard this, and you believed it, you were redeemed.

You were bought at a price. You were included in Christ. When you heard that a great exchange happened, that Jesus takes your F and gives you his A plus perfection, when you heard that, you were included in him.

And as much included in him as anyone else, no more, no less, in Christ, connected to him forever, having a relationship with him forever, this is the gospel truth of you also.

And the assurance comes next, when you believed, verse 13 again, end of the verse, when you believed, this is what happened, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.

You were sealed in. You were sealed in. You remember in the old, well, a long time ago, when people used to write those things, you remember them?

[23 : 06] They were called letters, and they would, but even older than that, they would seal the envelope with wax. They used to have their personal seal that they'd imprint onto the wax before they had envelopes where you could lick it and seal it.

And if the seal was broken, you knew the lepta had been tampered with, but the seal kept it inside. That's it.

You are, when you believed, you're put in Christ, and you're sealed, not with wax, but by the Spirit of God, and no one tampers with him. This is not a vague hope, your inheritance, is a stamped document.

You are marked as one who belongs to God, like sheep that bear the mark of a shepherd. You see that? You know that, don't you, on the hillside, you might be driving up to the highlands, and you see on the hillside hundreds of sheep, and you think, how on earth does one farmer tell from one sheep to another?

But they've all got little markings. Sometimes they have clippings in their ear. There's a way that they're marked, like sheep that bear the mark of a shepherd. He can spot them on a hillside.

[24 : 18] That's mine over there. You are marked with the Spirit, sealed and marked with the Spirit of God as belonging to him, bought at a price, God's own son.

Your future is not flimsy. It is certain, it is secure. is a guarantee, which is where we're going to move to our fourth point, the inheritance guaranteed.

Here's really where the rubber hits the road, where the truth meets our daily anxiety. The Holy Spirit is the down payment, it's the deposit, that your inheritance, that Jesus awaits you.

Look again. from verse 13. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, and here we have it, verse 14, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

There is a past, a present and a future to belonging to Jesus. In the past, there was a moment when you put your trust in Christ, when you believed. But also, there is a present aspect, isn't it?

[25 : 40] Every day you keep on believing and so as you become more like Jesus, you're being redeemed every day, becoming more like him. But there is a future. One day you will be redeemed fully and made new completely and the inheritance will be received in its fullness.

We will meet Jesus face to face. Here's the beauty of receiving that deposit now, the Holy Spirit. if the check, if the down payment has cleared and you've received the Spirit of God as promised, that rewires us when we hit the flimsy day.

It rewires us when we mess up. Can you see what it does? Rather than the old way of doubting your future and scrambling around, trying harder to prove yourself, trying to be like those other people, those other Christians who seem whiter than white and have it all together, you get to rest in the deposit.

We get to take our anxiety and stress and pressure to the living God. We get to rest in what the deposit tells us. It tells us no more what is happening in our lives. Your future is guaranteed.

You will meet Jesus. When you lose your temper on Tuesday, you don't have to wonder if your inheritance has been revoked.

[27 : 00] you have the down payment. Jesus is there for you. Instead of just trying harder, we get to live in light of an assured inheritance, the assurance of being in the presence of Jesus.

He is the inheritance and it all happens for the praise of his glory. He is glorified for what he has done and what he is doing and the ripples of his glory are for our good.

In Christ, you're located in him, you receive him and everything given to him comes from him to us.

To receive an earthly inheritance, someone has to die for you to receive it.

In the gospel inheritance, the one who has died, garrison tees it because he's been raised and because he's included you in forever union with himself.

You get to rest today. And if you want to know this future, maybe you're hearing all this and you've still got that anxiety, maybe you know for yourself that you've not put your trust in Christ yourself, maybe you know that you're not connected to him, that this is something that, I just want you to know that this is a life that is offered to you, that this inheritance is promised to anyone who puts their trust in him.

[28 : 43] And so why not believe in his word of truth to you right now? Because you see what it says? It says when you believed, when you believed in the word of truth, why not believe in it right now?

Maybe some of you, for the first time, the gospel of salvation and then you too will be included and then this inheritance will be yours. And you not as a second class believer, but as with the same with every other member of the church, every spiritual blessing will be yours in him.

And you will have a secure, forgiven, eternal future that will never perish, that will never spoil, that will never fade, but that will keep you secure forever.

forever. Let's pray. Almighty God, we just thank you for the gospel of salvation, and we thank you that for us who've put our hope in you, believed in you, in the gospel of salvation, that you've given us that seal of the Holy Spirit, that our future is promised, it is certain, and nothing or no one can ever take that away.

we all have days when we feel like it's fragile, we all have days when we feel like it's flimsy, but we act like it's dependent on us.

[30 : 31] Help us to leave that life of swinging between those pillars of one day we feel great, the other day we feel fragile, and give us a confident, hopeful, trust in you, that whatever we do, this inheritance will never be revoked.

And so I thank you for the goodness of the gospel. Bless as we pray, and be with us we ask, in Christ's name. Amen.