

Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:3-14

Ephesians 1:11-12

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Ephesians 1:11-12

Pray

Introduction

This verse (Eph. 1:11), is a very large verse! (Read Ephesians 1:11)

A verse this large can expand our understanding and viewpoint of God. Our God has predestined us, in Christ, for inheritance, for adoption. Not only in Christ, but through Christ! I hope and trust that over the last two weeks and through today that we will have a higher view of who God is and trust in him more fully that we might make him known and bring him glory!

Today, I want to take a look at this verse and expand on the truth of an all knowing, all powerful God. I especially want to look at God in times of suffering and how this verse is very good news to all who are hurting.

In Awe of the God who Called

“In him”

All things in life that we have are because of Christ.

When Paul starts out verse 11, **In Him**, he is making a continued statement. All that we are and all that we have been made to be is in and through Jesus Christ. The whole of our world pivots around being “In Christ.”

For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:3

I stand in awe of who God is. For he has made a way, through Christ, for us to receive an inheritance. We are co-heirs with Jesus Christ. We have a spirit of adoption and though we deserved death, we have been made alive in Christ!

See Romans 5.

- Do a bible study on your identity in Christ. Start in Ephesians and go from there!

“we have obtained and inheritance”

All of this through God’s divine mercy and grace in Christ. Our inheritance is so sure that Paul says we have obtained it. The verb tense here was often used by Greeks to describe an event that was so sure to happen they talked about it as if it did happen.

Peter talks of our inheritance this way:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith--more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire--may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

We can look forward with joy to day when we receive our inheritance that is being stored up for us and guarded by God’s power.

- Rest in the surety of your inheritance!

“having been predestined”

We have been predestined to be made alive in Christ, before the foundation of the world we were known.

We should scour the scriptures to fully understand the implications of predestination. We should not take for granted the views of this from other people and should strive to see Biblically what scripture says God's predestination.

- Study these scriptures: Acts 4, Romans 8, 1 Corinthians 2, Ephesians 1

Let us strive to have a high view of God and rest in the abundance of his character when we think of him as being all-knowing. For a low view of God will result in a lack of trust in the nature of the Almighty.

- Check out AW Tozer's *Knowledge of the Holy*

“according to the purpose of him who works all things”

All of this is according to the purpose of God our Father who works all these things.

Notice that it is God who is working out all things. He is the originator. He is the sustainer. The Greek reference is to super-natural and divine energy, energizing, effecting. God is originating and sustaining the fulfillment of his purposes through his own energy and effort.

This word for “works”, in the Greek is the same word used in Ephesians 1:20 that says, “this power that he **worked** in Christ when he raised him from the dead.”

The power of God is working in our lives to accomplish his will, this is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and it is dwelling within us in the person of God the Holy Spirit!

The God of the universe is continually effecting his will!

“to the counsel of his will”

Before the foundation of the earth, the Godhead: God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit; established a counsel that would dictate the entire course of the world. The word counsel in Greek refers to a “deliberate determination” and one scholar notes is counsel that is “coming from God and coming from God's heart of infinite love.”

The counsel of His will refers “not so much [to] God's intention as it is his heart's desire.” To hear of God's counsel and will should bring us peace and assuredness when we consider the character and nature of God.

We are not distantly known and objects of chance!

God, who is infinitely wise and loving, has formed a plan that will bring him the most glory and will bring us to our inheritance. His counsel and will bring forth the most good for the most number of people. He is eternal and can see the beginning and the end. His infinitude and the fullness of his being should cause us to rest assured that he has predestined all those who will be in Christ for adoption and inheritance.

Let us not forget that this is all “In Christ.” The counsel and will of God is fulfilled in Christ and through Christ. And we can look to him to see the goodness of God, the heights of mercy and the depths of grace.

“that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory”

The end result of all things is to be to the praise of God’s glory in Christ Jesus.

God in times of Suffering

I want to address the people here today who have gone through, are going through, or will go through hard and difficult seasons. When faced with difficult seasons, we can easily come to a place where the foreknowledge of God doesn’t seem good and kind and loving. We should wrestle with the character of God. God is big enough to handle our complaints and from what I read in Scripture, there are many people who wrestled with God’s character. And we should not have a blind, dead “faith” but one that is proven and true. For Peter says that it is through trials that our faith is tested, as by fire.

The result of hardships and suffering is and should be the glorification of God. We may not understand why there are hardships but through them, we find a sweeter knowledge of the Most High. For there is a reason for the hard paths that we travel. And we should exalt our view of God. He needs to be high and lifted up. When we have a high view of God, our struggles in life diminish. They don’t go away, they just grow less as we behold the immense magnitude of the benevolent and loving Creator God. Yahweh that redeems and heals. He who leads and guides. He who has judgment and mercy, wrath and grace. His loving kindness stretches to the heavens and his faithfulness to the clouds (Ps. 36:5). He is love and the fullness of everything that is good. And he does not forsake us when we are alone. We are everything in Christ. Christ is the very same yesterday, today, and forever. The foreknowledge of God crushed Jesus Christ that we might live. He made him to be sin who knew no sin. That in life we will have hope everlasting in the love, mercy, and grace of God. And as we are in Christ, we can take heart, for Christ can relate to us in every way.

One Who Relates

Isaiah 53 says, “He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised and we esteemed him not.”

And that’s good news, for then we can be like Paul, who goes so far as to say in Romans, “I consider the sufferings of the present time not worth comparing to the glory that is to be revealed to us.” He also says to the Corinthians, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction.” Of this, he says, “We were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the death sentence. **But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead.**”

We have one who has gone before us, Christ! When we are despairing even of life itself, let us know that we have a God who relates!

As Hebrews 4 says, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”

I can guarantee you that in the midst of your hardest times, God is with you. David says in Psalm 23, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” As David also says in the 139th Psalm, “How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them! If I could count them, they are more than the sand. I awake, and I am still with you.”

- Get a hold of and hold fast to the promises of God, view God highly

He even says again in Psalm 139:

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you. For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

Psalm 139:7-17

This is a beautiful illustration of the predestination of God, his foreordained counsel and will and the fact that he is currently working it to completion!

- He knows you, today!

And we can go back to those two simple words, “In him.”

In Christ, we have, as Hebrews 6 says, “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul. A hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain.”

Example

This doesn't mean that the hard times will magically become easy and we will find our prosperity and health and wealth. The hard times will be hard times. We will have raging storms and tempests about us. Paul's ship really wrecked, he was beaten, mocked, flogged, betrayed, wrongly accused, and beheaded.

Jesus really suffered in life, had no home, was despised, betrayed, beaten, and crucified!

The hard times will be hard and our emotions will rage but remember that Christ is our firm foundation and the steadfast anchor of our souls. In him, we are predestined for adoption!

A buoy on a stormy night is tossed to and fro but doesn't depart from its location. Why is that? Because it is anchored to the bottom. All of the tempest can rage and the wind and waves can come but the buoy remains tethered and steadfast with its anchor. And that anchor is there in the calm and the storm.

The Purpose of Suffering

The purpose of suffering is to bring glory to God. For our focus in suffering should turn to God. When we are relying on God, we will glorify God. God has set us apart and predestined us to praise of his glory.

Through our tribulations and suffering, we can comfort those who mourn. Paul continues his beautiful discourse on suffering in 2 Corinthians, saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, **so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.** For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too."

The scars that we bear can be used to comfort. We can become the comfort of God to those who are suffering. In Christ, we are adopted, saved, redeemed. And we can join him in his suffering that we might share his comfort abundantly! And share it with the world that is grieving.

If you are struggling with God in a difficult season, lay down before him your grievances and let him prove himself to be true. The truth of God will emerge and your faith in him will be stronger and you will be able to comfort those who mourn as God has comforted you.

Contentment

An additional point on suffering is that we have been given everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3). And in that, we can rest in Christ, not forgetting our emotion and not ignoring the restlessness of our souls but finding a divine contentment.

Oh that we would be like Paul, who in writing to the Philippians says, "I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

Trusting in God

Beloved, we are firmly rooted and established in Christ in God. We have no need to doubt God but can confidently draw near to him and his throne of grace. For he who shaped the world has known us from before its foundation!

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Ephesians 1:11

Let me close with a word of exhortation.

Closing Exhortation

We who are in Christ have been blessed by God the Father in and through Jesus Christ. Before the existence of time began, we were chosen, set apart. That we would be holy and blameless. Before anything was, God knew you! Though we deserved death and condemnation, we have received redemption through the blood of Christ! We have obtained our inheritance; we are being set apart and guarded through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. And it is here, with Christ as the sure and steadfast anchor of our souls, that we rejoice when we are grieved by various trials. For we are being refined, that our faith will be genuine and that it will result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ!

This is our destination on earth, bringing glory to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ. We were made to exalt God.

Ephesians 1:11-12 Breakdown

1. In him
 - a. The presupposition of this sentence is that this is all in Christ.
 - b. Our inheritance and predestination is through Christ
 - c. As Paul continues to stress in this chapter, we are to view our lives and inheritance and view of God in and through Christ
2. We have obtained an inheritance
 - a. Divine mercy and grace to us, through Jesus Christ, have given us an inheritance
 - b. 1 Peter 1:3-5
 - i. Paul's use of the past tense signifies our acquiring of an inheritance so sure that it has already happened. Peter shows us that God's power is guarding us, through faith, for the day when we acquire the inheritance
 - ii. Cf. Ephesians 1:13-14
 - c. Another way to translate this series of words would be to say that "In Christ, we have been obtained as an inheritance"
 - i. Scripturally accurate, this is an interesting thought. That the forethought counsel of God has made us to be Jesus Christ's inheritance
 - d. Strictly translated, the verb "we have obtained" means to be "chosen from lots"
 - i. However, there is no chance or luck involved with our inheritance. We have been given this inheritance:
3. Having been predestined
 - a. The purpose of him who wills has adopted us in Christ
 - b. It was decreed beforehand, foreordained, and predestinated that we would gain our inheritance in Christ
 - c. We should wrestle to understand the implications of predestination and study the scriptures to gain further understanding to the nature of God.
 - i. There are several passages that speak of God's predestined plans for humanity.
 - d. "According to the purpose"
 - i. God's purpose for us reveals his nature. What do we know about God, what do we know of him to be true?
4. According to the purpose of him
 - a. Our predestination is according to the purpose of God the Father
 - b. Proportionally, from his character and purpose, our inheritance in Christ has been foreordained for the purposes of God the Father.
5. Who works all things
 - a. Though we have obtained and though it was predestined, God works (present tense) all things according to the counsel of his will
 - i. Psalm 139 paints a beautiful picture of the way that God works his predestined will according to the counsel of his will
 - b. This same word "works" is used in verse 20 to describe the working of the resurrection of Christ

- i. The same way that God worked through Christ in raising him from the dead
 - ii. It is an energetic, super-human energy that brings about the counsel of God's will
 - c. The Greek tense indicates that God is the initiator of this work and the sustainer.
 - i. God is continually working His perfect will
 - d. This is a different word than that used in chapter 2, God works his will in that we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works (good deeds)
- 6. According to the counsel of his will
 - a. In Christ, God is working all things according to the counsel of his will
 - b. Counsel -> "deliberate determination coming from God and coming from God's heart of infinite love"
 - c. Will -> this word refers more to emotive work than volition. "Thus God's will is not so much God's intention, as it is his heart's desire"
- 7. So that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory
 - a. As DanMike said last week, the focus of all things is to bring praise and glory to God.