

# “The Glorious Inheritance of the Saints”

(Ephesians 1:11-14 ~ Part 1)

## Introduction

➤ As we turn to our text in God’s Word this morning, Ephesians 1:11-14, we are nearing the end of a massive – doctrinally profound – passage of Scripture (vs.3-14; one very long sentence [202 words in Greek; 244 in ESV]).

**Eph 1:11-14** ~ “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, <sup>12</sup>so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>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, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

➤ It is clear, in this passage (as well as in the larger context), that the apostle Paul simply gushed with a “kaleidoscope” or “dominoes” of praise and thanksgiving for all that God has done – is doing, and will do – for us in Christ! In almost antiphonal fashion, Paul moves from preposition to verb (back to preposition) describing, in divinely glorious and ultimately incomprehensible detail, the “who”, “what”, “when”, “how”, and “why” of our salvation in Christ.

“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,

↳ <sup>12</sup>so that we who **were the first to hope in** Christ

↳ **might be to** the praise of his glory” (vs.11-12)

[**Bold** = verb; Underline = preposition]

➤ As we study Ephesians 1:11-14, we find two main points concerning the glorious inheritance of the saints. That is,

## I. The **REALITY** of our Inheritance: “we have obtained an inheritance” (vs.11-12)

➤ In verse eleven, that apostle Paul wrote: “*In him we have obtained an inheritance*” (vs.11). That phrase, one word in Greek (*klēroō*, vb.), which appears only here in the New Testament, refers to either the means in which a person received something (i.e., by lot or assignment) or the thing (i.e., share) that was received [note: derived from *klēros*, n.; e.g., casting “lots” (Matt.27:35), “share” (Acts 1:17), “inheritance” (Col.1:12), “those in your charge” (1Pet.5:3)].

Eph 1:11 ~ “In Christ we too have been claimed as God’s own possession ...” (NET)

Eph 1:11 ~ “In Him we were also made His inheritance ...” (HCSB)

➤ In simple terms, the Christian’s inheritance is their salvation.

✓ **Illust:** “Our inheritance is the aspect of salvation which is primarily future. We were elected, or predestined, before the world or time existed; we have been redeemed in this present age; and we will receive our completed inheritance in the ages to come, when we enter fully into the Father’s eternal heavenly kingdom” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, 1:11-14).

**Eph 1:13-14** ~ “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, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance [*klēronomia*] until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

**Eph 1:18** ~ “having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance [*klēronomia*] in the saints”

**Col 3:23-24** ~ “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, <sup>24</sup>knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance [*klēronomia*] as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”

➤ As in our English vernacular, an inheritance refers to something that is passed down from one family member to another (typically, a parent/grandparent to a child/grandchild). In our day – with the epidemic of divorce, the dismantling of family, and the idolatry of materialism – the practical concept of inheritance is almost lost. Thinking generationally – leaving an inheritance to our children’s children (Prov.13:22) – is mostly a forgotten vestige of ancient times.

In Biblical times, however, the concept of inheritance was a common cultural practice. A child would receive a portion, or allotment, of his/her parent’s estate after the parent(s) died.

**Luke 12:13** ~ “Someone in the crowd said to [Jesus], ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.’”

**Luke 15:11-13** ~ [“The parable of the prodigal son”]: “And [Jesus] said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup>And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup>Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living.’”

**Luke 20:13-16** ~ [“The parable of the wicked tenants”]: “But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ <sup>15</sup>And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? <sup>16</sup>He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”

Matt 21:38-43 ~ “‘But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. <sup>40</sup>When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?’ <sup>41</sup>They [i.e., the chief priests and Pharisees] said to him, ‘He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.’ ... <sup>43</sup>‘Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits.’”

➤ The New Testament reveals that only the children of God (i.e., true Christians) will receive an inheritance from God as they are part of His heavenly kingdom. Only those who are “*in Christ*” will receive the inheritance, for it is only through faith in Christ that a person can become a child of God (see Eph.1:5; 2:3).

As we have already seen (vs.5), we become God’s children – heirs of God’s kingdom – through adoption (Eph.1:5; Gal.4:5). When we were unsaved, were spiritually destitute and hopeless (with no way to save ourselves). Out of His mercy and kindness and grace and love, God (“legally”) adopted us into His family making us heirs of His kingdom. We receive this spiritual inheritance not when God dies (for He will not and cannot die), but when we physically die (or when Jesus comes again).

**Gal 3:29** ~ “And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.” (see Eph.5:5; Col.1:12)

**Rom 8:15-17** ~ “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

As is true of salvation, the Christians inheritance is received by faith and not by works or keeping the law. It cannot be earned, it is not deserved, but given by God’s grace alone to those who believe.

**Gal 3:18** ~ “For if the inheritance [*klēronomia*] comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.” (see 1Cor.6:9; Gal.5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col.3:24; Heb.9:15).

And, since God is the (one and only) self-existing and eternal (immortal) God – who cannot die – and since His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, the Christian’s inheritance is an eternal inheritance. Far beyond human comprehension and description!

**Heb 9:15** ~ “Therefore [Christ] is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance [*klēronomia*] ...”

**1 Peter 1:3-5** ~ “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, <sup>4</sup>to an inheritance [*klēronomia*] that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Peter described this inheritance using three qualitative terms: “to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading” (vs.4a).

“imperishable” (*aphthartos*) – This word can literally be translated incorruptible or even immortal. In other words, the believer’s inheritance is not subject to decay or death; it will not be worn out with the passage of time, or deteriorated in any way. All earthly possessions will ultimately decay and be destroyed, but not the spiritual inheritance the believer has in the kingdom of God. It is permanent.

“undefiled” (*amiantos*) – Not only is this inheritance eternal (“imperishable”), it is also eternally pure (“undefiled”). It is incorruptible, unpolluted and unstained by sin or any impurity. The inheritance (salvation) that God gives to His children is not only permanent, and also pure.

“unfading” (*amarantos*) – In addition, the believer’s inheritance will never fade or weaken in any way. It is impervious to change; it will not depreciate over time, nor will it ever dim or be diminished. Our salvation is not only permanent and pure, but also perfect.

**1 Peter 1:4-5** ~ “... kept [*tēreō*] in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup>who by God’s power are being guarded [*phroureō*] through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The Christian’s inheritance is as eternal as the Christian’s salvation/glorification is eternal. Heaven is the securest place in the universe because God is the greatest Watchman!

**John 10:27-29** ~ “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup>I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”

**Jude 24** ~ “Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy”

- True Christians will receive an eternal inheritance from God because they – by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – are children of God. As God’s children, through Christ’s sacrificial and substitutionary death on the cross (Is.53:4-6; 2Cor.5:21), Christians are children of God and therefore legal heirs of His spiritual and eternal kingdom.

#### **A. For those who are “IN CHRIST” (vs.11)**

- As we have already seen many times in our study of this, one of the most prevalent themes – if not the most prevalent theme – in Paul’s letter to the Ephesian saints is what it means to be “in Christ” (i.e., “*In Him*” (vs.11; see “*Christ*” vs.9). This represents the Christian’s union (relationship/fellowship) with Christ – the Christian is in Christ, and Christ is in every Christian. Variations of the phrase “*in Christ*” is used over 30 times in this relatively short book.

So far, in our study of this book, we have seen this phrase several times. For example,

**Eph 1:1** ~ “... To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus”

**Eph 1:3** ~ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ ...”

**Eph 1:4** ~ “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world ...”

**Eph 1:7** ~ “In him we have redemption through his blood ...”

**Eph 1:9** ~ “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ”

This is one of the simplest, yet profoundest, definitions and descriptions of what it means to be a Christian. For a true Christian does not merely profess Christ, they possess Christ; a true Christian does not just know things about Christ, they know Christ; a true Christian does not only follow Christ when it is beneficial, easy, or convenient, they are faithful to Christ. Though no Christian lives this out perfectly (see Heb.10:14; Jms.3:2), this is what it means to be “*in Christ*.”

A true Christian belongs to Christ. A true Christian is devoted to Christ. For the true Christian, Christ is their greatest love and pleasing (glorifying) Christ is their greatest desire. The Christian’s whole identity – their reputation, their desires, their affections, their relationships, etc. – is swallowed up in what it means to be “*in Christ*.” They believe in Christ, they worship Christ, they follow Christ, they live for Christ, and they persevere in Christ.

**Gal 2:20** ~ “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

➤ All this to say that what follows the phrase “*in Him*” (vs.11) is for Christians, and only for Christians. Only Christians are saved (forgiven, redeemed); only Christians are sanctified (made holy, righteous); only Christians God’s children (everyone else is a child of the devil [1Jn.3:10], or a child of God’s wrath [Eph.2:3]); and, consequently, only Christians will receive the glorious inheritance given to those who are “*in Christ*”!

**John 14:6** ~ “Jesus said ... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

**Acts 4:12** ~ “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

**1 John 5:12** ~ “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.”

### “*having been predestined*”

➤ Those who are truly “*in Christ*” have “*been predestined*” (vs.11) to be in Christ. As we have already seen in our study of the book of Ephesians, simply put, the word “*predestined*” (*proorizō*) means “to predetermine”, “to preordain”, or “to decide beforehand” [the same as in English; not the same as “foreknowledge” (*prognōsis*), see Rom.8:29]. That is, before the foundation of the world, God determined who would be saved – not based on their goodness or good works (or God looking down the corridors of the future to see who would believe), but according to His sovereign purpose and pleasure (Eph.1:4, 11; Rom.9:11; 2Thess.2:13-15; 1Jn.4:19).

**Eph 1:4-5** ~ “even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined [*proorizō*] us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ ...”

**Acts 4:27-28** ~ [Christians' prayer]: "for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, <sup>28</sup>to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined [*proorizō*] to take place."

Acts 2:22-23 ~ "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – <sup>23</sup>this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan [*horizō boulē*] and foreknowledge [*prognōsis*] of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men."

**Rom 8:28-30** ~ "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. <sup>29</sup>For those whom he foreknew [*proginōskō*] he also predestined [*proorizō*] to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. <sup>30</sup>And those whom he predestined [*proorizō*] he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified."

### *"according to the purpose of [God]"*

➤ Those whom God has chosen for salvation were chosen *"according to the purpose of [God]"* (vs.11). The *"purpose"* (*prothesis*) of God refers to His intention or design. This is the basis of God's why God predestined some to salvation. To put it simply, God chose them for salvation because He determined it to be so. Or, to put it another way, God chose who would be saved based upon whom He wanted to save (Ps.115:3).

**Eph 3:11** ~ "This was according to the eternal purpose [*prothesis*] that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord"

Eph 1:5 ~ "he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose [*eudokia*] of his will"

**2 Tim 1:9** ~ "who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose [*prothesis*] and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began"

➤ God is sovereign over everything, including our salvation. God's sovereignty is never limited, manipulated, or altered in any way. In fact, it is never seriously challenged (see Ps.2:1-3). God is the Creator, and we are His creation. God is infinite, and we are finite. God is immortal, and we are mortal. God is perfect (holy, in and of Himself), and we are imperfect (unholy, apart from Him). God is all-knowing, and we know very little. God is the Potter, and we are the clay.

**Jer 18:1-6** ~ "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: <sup>2</sup>'Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words.' <sup>3</sup>So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was working at his wheel. <sup>4</sup>And the vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter's hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as it seemed good to the potter to do.

<sup>5</sup>Then the word of the Lord came to me: <sup>6</sup>'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter has done? declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.'" (see vs.7-11)

**Isa 64:8** ~ "But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand."

**Rom 9:20-21** ~ "But who are you, O man, to answer back to God? Will what is molded say to its molder, 'Why have you made me like this?' <sup>21</sup>Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for dishonorable use?" (see Is.29:16)

### “according to the counsel of [God’s] will”

➤ This means that God did not first consult humans, or any of His creation, to determine what He should do. God did not look down the “corridors of the future” to find out who would believe, and then save them based on their decision. God’s redemptive plan does not rest on the foreseen decision or responses of human beings.

Rather, God “*works all things according to the counsel of his will*” (vs.11). This means that God’s purpose is informed by His own “*counsel*” (*boulē*; plan or decision) – or, “*the counsel of his will*” (vs.11). Who did God consult when devising His redemptive plan for mankind (before the creation of the world)? Himself. Salvation is going according to God’s sovereign plan, which was informed by God’s sovereign will.

**Acts 2:23** ~ “this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite [*horizō*] plan [*boulē*] and foreknowledge [*prognōsis*] of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

**Acts 4:28** ~ “to do whatever your hand and your plan [*boulē*] had predestined [*proorizō*] to take place.”

**Rom 11:33-36** ~ “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! <sup>34</sup>For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?’ <sup>35</sup>Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?’ <sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”

➤ Moreover, salvation is according to God’s sovereign plan, which was informed by God’s sovereign will, and executed by His sovereign work (“*works all things ...*”; vs.11).

### B. For those who “HOPE IN CHRIST” (vs.12)

➤ After describing the sovereign work of God in salvation, Paul shifted to the human reality of salvation: “*so that we who were the first to hope in Christ*” (vs.12). The Christian’s “*hope*” (*proelpizō*; i.e., “first to hope” or “hope beforehand”) is not wishing thinking or nervous anticipation. The word basically means trust, as in a confidence in something that has not yet happened.

**Rom 8:23-25** ~ “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope [*elpis*] we were saved. Now hope [*elpis*] that is seen is not hope [*elpis*]. For who hopes [*elpizō*] for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope [*elpizō*] for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”

➤ Since this hope is based on, rooted in, the promises of God, it is absolute and unwavering. God does not – in fact, cannot – lie (Num.23:19; Heb.6:18; Tit.1:2). Therefore, His promise to save those who believe (and condemn those who do not believe) should not be doubted or diminished. For God will never break His promises, and no one (and nothing) can undermine God’s sovereign plan.

**John 10:25-29** ~ “Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father’s name bear witness about me, <sup>26</sup>but you do not believe because you are not among my sheep. <sup>27</sup>My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup>I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. <sup>29</sup>My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.’”

**Rom 8:31-39** ~ “What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup>He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup>Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup>Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised – who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. <sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... <sup>38</sup>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, <sup>39</sup>nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

**1 John 5:13** ~ “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.”

- True Christians are eternally secure in Christ (based on the person and work of Christ) – they cannot lose their salvation, nor have it taken from them [more on this next Sunday, Lord willing]. The assurance of their salvation must come from the genuineness/sincerity of their faith in Christ (not internal goodness or external good works). However, a true faith in Christ will produce a faithfulness to Christ (see Matt.7:24-27; Jn.14:15; Jms.2:17, 26; 1Jn.5:2). While no one is saved by good works, all who are saved are saved unto good works.

**Eph 2:8-10** ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works [ergon], so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works [ergon], which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (see Gal.2:16)

*“to the praise of [God’s] glory”*

- Salvation comes from God’s sovereign purpose, according to His sovereign work and will, and for His sovereign glory – *“so that we ... might be to the praise of his glory”* (vs.12). God is sovereign over salvation so that He receives all the glory for our salvation. We are not saved because we are so good, but because He is so good. We are not saved by the good works that we have done, but by the good works that Christ has done for us.

**Eph 2:8-9** ~ “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, <sup>9</sup>not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

**1 Cor 1:28-31** ~ “God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

**Rom 3:27** ~ “Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith.” (see Rom.4:2-3; 9:16; 11:6)

**Gal 6:14** ~ “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

- I have heard it said that a Christian boasting in his/her salvation is like “a rooster taking credit for the dawn”, and “a weatherman thinking he controls the weather.” Or, by analogy, perhaps we could say that a Christian taking any credit for his/her salvation is as ridiculous and obnoxious as the donkey Jesus rode on His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem thinking that all the praise and adoration directed at Jesus was for him.

✓ Illust: “I will probably never forget a conversation I had with a man many years ago. Our casual and friendly conversation took a surprising turn for the worse when our discussion about the sovereignty of God homed in on the sovereignty of God in salvation. At one point he angrily sat up, pounded his index finger on the table and adamantly exclaimed, “I get credit for my belief!” I was stunned, and momentarily speechless. “Did he really just say that?” I thought to myself.

- Scripture is incredibly clear that salvation is a gift of God, from first to last, so that no one can rightly boast, brag, or take credit for their salvation – that all glory, honor, and praise for our great salvation would be directed solely upon God. For He alone is worthy of such lofty praise.

✓ Illust: “Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, but a gift for the guilty” (Steven Lawson).

## Conclusion

- The truth of the Gospel is this: Salvation is not ours to lose (through our unrighteousness), but only ours to gain (through Christ's righteousness). We never have, nor will we ever, deserve God's forgiveness. No one goes to heaven because they are good enough – no one. True salvation is by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone – not through any human effort or works or goodness.
- The Christian's inheritance is indeed glorious – it gloriously displays the glory of God. Our salvation – from justification to glorification – is ultimately for the glory of God. Likewise, our lives should be lived for the glory of God. We exist to glorify God. God has saved us so that we would glorify Him in our salvation – from the moment of our conversion and all throughout eternity.

**1 Cor 10:31** ~ “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”