Ephesians 1:11-14

The Seal of the Holy Spirit

Paul's letter to the Ephesians reveals a massive worldview. It gives a perspective on "things in heaven and things on earth" from a different dimension – like 3D glasses. Things are not yet as they are meant to be, but they will be. We have to see the world around us and see ourselves as God sees us in Ephesians.

Overview of series - This morning we are finishing our series regarding "Our Spiritual Blessings in Christ".

Trinitarian Blueprint – We've seen that God's plan to unite all earthly and heavenly things in Christ unfolds like the plans of a blueprint. Each member of the Trinity is involved in every part, but there are parts where Scripture emphasizes Father, Son, and Spirit in the plan. God the Father is seen as the Chief Architect – the one who decrees. The Son of God is the one who willingly accomplishes that plan. So that all that the Father decrees is fulfilled in, through, and with Jesus the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is the member of the Trinity who then applies all that the Father has decreed and the Son has accomplished by joining us together with Christ so that IN HIM (language used all over the Bible and especially in Ephesians) ***all who Jesus is*** and ***all that Jesus has done*** is now applied by the Spirit to those who put their faith in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit and the Blueprint - Up to this point, the Holy Spirit has been behind the scenes. He's involved in every stage of the entire plan of God, but He isn't on the forefront, not like the Father or the Son. This is actually very common in Scripture regarding the Holy Spirit. Jesus promised His disciples that the Father and the Son would send the Holy Spirit. He said this about the Spirit: "***He will bear witness about me.*" (Jn. 14:26).** The Holy Spirit is a person, He can be grieved, He can be quenched, but the Holy Spirit isn't seen as drawing attention to Himself, rather, He points others to Jesus and He unites us to Jesus through faith. He is the one who grants to us hearts of repentance. He is the one who gives to us faith and sustains our faith throughout the plan of redemption. He regenerates us, fills us, guides us, equips us, empowers us, and we'll see in this passage that He seals us and is our guarantee of final redemption.

Big idea – God in His plan of redemption has inherited us as His own possession. We are the heritage of God. He has redeemed us, and will one day redeem us. The word heritage is defined as, "a special or individual possession; an *allotted portion*." This special possession, this allotted portion of God, is a chosen people who hear and believe, and His plan of redemption for His children unfolds like a blueprint:

On any blueprint for the construction of a house there is a master plan, but the plan unfolds in stages – offsites → foundations laid → walls framed → mechanical parts installed (electric, plumbing, HVAC, etc.) → drywall and roof → paint and carpentry…until one day you walk in a finished home. God's plan of redemption unfolds like a blueprint. It's a plan from eternity past that is, in the mind of God, already completed, but it unfolds in stages. We talked about redemption in v.7 – the rescue from slavery to sin…this redemption plan unfolds in stages in our lives:

"Gods Plan of Redemption" (image)

Election → Person and work of Jesus → Calling → Redemption/Justification → Redemption/Sanctification → Redemption/Glorification

One verse we already looked at where you see this entire plan in a single verse is 1:4:

> **even as He chose us [election] in Him [the person and work of Jesus] before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless [sanctification] before Him [glorification]." (Eph. 1:4)**

The entirety of this plan of redemption is decreed by the Father, accomplished by the Son, and applied by the Holy Spirit. What is our part? Our part is to preach, to pray, to hear, to believe, to repent, to persevere, but in the end it is God who does all of this through us so that in the end God receives the glory and praise for it all. He has begun the work…He will complete the work. WE have great assurance of our redemption from sin because God is the author and perfector of it all!

4 points to see in this text this morning:

1. **God's Heritage (1:11)**

Look at v.11 - **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 (ESV). A better translation is probably the NIV, I want you to notice the difference**

> ***In him we were also chosen*, having been predestined… (1:11 – New International Version)**

The ESV seems to see God's children as inheriting something, where the NIV sees God as inheriting something. The lines can be blurred here, because God inheriting us gives to us an inheritance. But this passage speaks of us as God's inheritance, not God as ours. The word for "inheritance" is a word that means "chosen by lot". God has chosen you by lot. You are HIS PORTION, HIS LOT. The people of Israel were seen in this way. Look what Moses says to God speaking of Israel:

> **For they are your people and *your heritage*, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm. (Deut. 9:29)**

God redeemed Israel, and they became His heritage. What's the significance of us being inherited by God? **First**, this is another strong statement of the sovereignty of God. God is the one who has inherited you! Notice, that His choice and your destiny are "according to the counsel of His will". God has inherited you "having predestined you", and He is the one who "works all things [the whole plan of redemption] according to the counsel of His will". **Second**, this means that you have an inheritance in God. You are His heir. ***Oh wouldn't it be nice to be the heir of a billionaire? To inherit all that he has left to you.*** You are an heir of ALMIGHTY GOD! You are a son/daughter of THE KING OF THE UNIVERSE. What He has for you is far greater than anything you could ever inherit here on earth! Adopted into the sonship of the Son of God who is actually spoken of in Scripture as your Lord, your Savior, but also your brother! We share in an inheritance with Jesus the Son of God because we are the chosen heritage of God.

Application: God is redeeming all things – things in heaven, things on earth. But that redemption is not finally complete, not yet. One day we will receive new bodies, the presence of sin will be done away with. We will have a new heavens and new earth. ***But now we live in a tension: We are redeemed, and we are being redeemed and we have a future redemption*** – we need to trust and hope in each!

So we wait, and while we wait in these broken bodies that are in the midst of a broken world we GROAN while we wait for the redemption of our bodies…we groan when we see drag queens at the Olympics mocking our Lord's Last Supper. We groan! Things are not yet as they are meant to be! We groan, but we groan in a way that glorifies God…we groan with hope and boldness and the expectation of our future redemption and inheritance. ***The ways that God is restoring you right now in your life is a foretaste of all that God will restore in the future!***

2. God's Procession of His Heirs (1:12)

Look at verse 12 – "so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory." There are two main ways to view this verse.

1. **The "first to hope in Christ" speaks of the Jewish people of whom Paul was a part, because in v.13 Paul switches from "we who were the first to hope" to, "In Him YOU ALSO".** So the "First to hope" are the Jewish people, but the "you also" are the Ephesian Gentiles. Paul is going to speak about the fact that Gentiles (everyone who is not Jewish) who were formerly alienated from the "citizenship of Israel" and "the household of God" are now made "fellow citizens" with the Jewish people (2:11-22). The NLT demonstrates this interpretation: **God's purpose was that *we Jews* (Jews not in original) who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. (1:12 – NLT).** The problem with this interpretation is that Paul up to this point is speaking of all believers in Christ, Jews and Gentiles. It's highly unlikely that he would switch to only speak of the Jewish people so abruptly. The readers seeing the word "WE" here would naturally see themselves included. Also, in v.14 He speaks of the "guarantee of OUR inheritance" which is clearly speaking of both Jews and Gentiles – Paul wouldn't have switched back and forth in that way to speak of different people groups – it would be confusing to the reader.
2. **The "first to hope in Christ" speaks of a grand procession of believers moving towards redemption – a procession that has a beginning, a middle, and an end.** Paul included himself and the Gentiles in this procession. They are the "first to hope", but there will be more. It could also be that Paul is speaking of Himself and the apostles as "we who were first to hope" and then switches to "you" speaking of the Ephesians and other churches who had received the gospel. Either way, I don't think Paul is trying to make a Jew/Gentile distinction here…he will do that later…but here he is pointing to a procession of saints before the Lord who all are being led to our final redemption.

This Spring Lorrie and I went to the Moody Bible Institute graduation to see my best friends daughter graduate. Lorrie and I had her in our children's ministry class when she was three. Her life has unfolded before our eyes. The graduation also unfolded as there was a procession of students who each took their turn to receive their degrees. From our perspective on the floor…each student walked past us one

by one. HOWEVER, those who were up in the balcony in the Moody Church…they saw the entire procession. They had a different perspective of the event.

God has a graduation ceremony. It is HIS procession for final redemption. He sees the entire procession of saints, the children of God moving from faith to graduation/final redemption.

There is a chronology of God's redemption in Christ, God sees the parts, and God sees the entire project as a whole. When you read Scripture, you can think of the procession. There are passages that emphasize specific parts of the plan. There are passages that speak of the entire plan itself. Paul is saying, "we are the first who have believed and there are many more to come!"

3. God's Seal of Ownership (11:13-14)

Look at vv.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, [14] who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it…"

All that the Father has decreed and the Son has accomplished is now applied by the Holy Spirit. The OT spoke of a day in the future where God would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32) – Jews and Gentiles alike. He is the "promised" Holy Spirit. We see the Spirit at work in the OT but we see a super abounding work of the Holy Spirit after Jesus ascends to the Father. The plan of God is unfolded in time, as God's chosen heritage "hear" and "believe" the "word of truth", the "gospel of…salvation"…and hearing and believing they are "sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is a guarantee" of their future redemption. God is the author and finisher of the plan, but it unfolds and it unfolds through the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

Two things to see in this passage about the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing about God's plan:

The Holy Spirit is a seal – "you…were sealed with the Holy Spirit". The word "seal" was used in many ways in Paul's day, but here it is probably being used as the marking individuals who are set apart for ownership (as with animals – like branding). The Holy Spirit is the seal of ownership by God. Later in Ephesians 4:30 Paul will tell the Ephesians – "do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, ***by whom you were sealed*** for the day of redemption". We are owned by God. The Spirit has sealed us setting us apart as God's property. You are not your own, you were bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:20)…do not grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed. The Holy Spirit is a person who has taken up residence within you, and you can grieve Him. You can quench Him, or you can be led by Him, be filled with Him, and see the fruit of the Spirit in your life! Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Do not grieve the Holy Spirit…rather, as Paul says later in Ephesians 5:18, "be filled with the Holy Spirit". What does it mean for Christians who are already filled with the Holy Spirit to be filled with the Holy Spirit? The analogy is given of someone who is drunk with alcohol. We would say that when someone is drunk they are "under the influence" or even "they are out of control". Why? Because alcohol has taken control. Paul says in Ephesians 5:18, "Do not be drunk with wine….be filled with the Spirit"…instead of being controlled by alcohol, be controlled by the Spirit of God.

The Holy Spirit is a guarantee – "*sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, [14] who is the guarantee".* The Holy Spirit guarantees that we will inherit all for which God has chosen us as His heritage. The word for guarantee was used in Paul's day to speak of a deposit or a down payment, much like the way we would put a down payment on a house. What is the down payment for? For our future redemption.

Now the words, *"until we acquire possession of it"* are better translated by the New King James Version.

> **who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession… (1:14 NKJV)**

It isn't that we are acquiring something, it is God's future redemption of His purchased possession for whom He has given a down payment. When you purchase a home, you put a down payment on it, and at that point it is your possession, but it's finally your possession later on. Remember that the word "redemption" (v.7 – απολυτρωσιν) carries with it the idea of purchased from slavery. In v.7 our redemption is seen as "forgiveness of sins". Here it is speaking of our final and future redemption because the Spirit is our down payment "UNTIL the redemption" that is in the future. A parallel passage is Romans 8:23 – "we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption (απολυτρωσιν) of our bodies."

We are the purchased possession, and the Holy Spirit is the down payment guaranteeing our future redemption.

"God's Plan of Redemption" (image)

Back to "God's Plan of Redemption". In v.7, redemption is seen as our "redemption/justification", but in v.14 redemption is seen as our "redemption/glorification". The Holy Spirit assures us of this future redemption.

HAVE YOU BEEN SEALED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT…HOW DOES THAT HAPPEN? God seals you…but it's through hearing, and believing. How can I know? Do you see the fruit of the Spirit in your life…or are you constantly controlled by the flesh? Have your coworkers, family members been sealed? How can they be sealed…by God…but through your preaching. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). How can they hear unless someone preach? (Rom. 10:14)

AS we come to a close to this series, I want to once again emphasize what Paul has emphasized in this opening to the book of Ephesians. "Grace and glory will have the final word."

4. God's Final Word

Notice that with each spiritual blessing Paul has mentioned in this section he has shown that the ultimate purpose of each is to the praise of God's glory and grace. God's glory and grace is seen in this text at its beginning in v.3 at it's ending in v.14 and is threaded all throughout.

- **In v.3 – Paul began His Berakah, which is a Jewish praise to God, blessing God for the blessings that He has given to us.**
- **In vv.4-6 Paul praised God for our firm foundation in which He chose us, predestined us to adoption, to present us to Himself as holy and blameless – "to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. (1:6)"**
- **In vv.7-10 we saw that we have redemption and revelation that are given to us in Christ - "according to the riches of His grace" (v.7b).**
- **In vv.11-12 – He has chosen us as a heritage to be His heirs – "to the praise of His glory" (1:12).**

- **In vv.13-14 – We have heard, we have believed, we have been sealed, and we will one day be redeemed – "to the praise of His glory" (1:14).**
- **It's EVERYWHERE IN THIS PASSAGE AND EVERYWHERE IN SCRIPTURE**

God HIMSELF is the gospel. What is all of this pointing to? What is the big idea of it all? Creation, fall, restoration of all things, present forgiveness, future redemption and glory? What is the point? GOD IS GLORIOUS!

He is the main point of it all. My job as a creature is to praise the Creator! The more you see His plan and His glory in the plan, the more you will praise Him for it! He is the one who chooses, I am the chosen. He is the one who Predestines, I am predestined. He is the sanctifier (holy and blameless), I am the sanctified. He is the Father, I am the adopted child. He is the one who forgives sins, I am forgiven. He is the Revealer, I receive revelation. He is the Inheritor, I am inherited. He is the Sealer, I am sealed. He is the redeemer, I am the redeemed. He is the Architect, Christ is the purpose and plan, and I am IN HIM. He is Glorious! I am the one who glorifies Him!

Where are we going next? Paul tells us in v.15…. "For this reason…" and he begins a prayer for the Ephesians. In response to this glorious vision of God and Jesus in Ephesians - How Then Shall We Pray? That's the title of our next series