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Jason Henderson  
Market Street Fellowship

## The Inheritance

We're going to continue our search in the book of Ephesians today. We've come to Ephesians chapter 1 verse 11, and that is as far as we'll get today.

Today I want to look at the reality of inheritance. Lets just start by reading the verse.

"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will".

Now, I'm not going to get back into discussing the reality of predestination here. We spent most of a Sunday on that reality back in verses 4 and 5 of Ephesians 1. Suffice to say, that here again we do not see predestined individuals, we see a predestined purpose of the One who works according to His own will. We do not see God selecting individuals, we see God selecting the purpose and inheritance for all individuals, and that, as we have mentioned, is to have a people in His Son, sharing the life, righteousness, redemption, and placement of that Son, accepted in that Son, and becoming the increased expression and manifestation of that Son.

That is clearly mentioned in verses 4 and 5, and again, we spent some time on that. I just wanted to make mention of it briefly because it is in today's verse as well. We have obtained a predestined inheritance. That is what this verse says. We have come to a predestined purpose. You will not find here mention of the predestined salvation and damnation of individuals. Nor will you find that in Romans 8 and 9, and we walked through those chapters a few weeks ago.

So this morning I want to focus in on this word, this reality, of inheritance. And the first things I want you to notice here is the place of this inheritance. This sentence is now the 9<sup>th</sup> time in 11 verses, where Paul specifically states the reality of being IN CHRIST. And there are at least two other places where this is clearly implied. So, CLEARLY... this is of utmost importance to Paul.

What was important to Paul? That his readers understand that everything we have been given by God we have been given in and as the Person of Jesus Christ. Salvation isn't something Jesus Christ gives us. Salvation is Jesus Christ being given to us, and us living in Him. Redemption isn't something Jesus gives us. In Him we have redemption. (vs. 7). Love isn't just something God feels for everyone. We have been brought into the Son of His love, accepted in the Beloved. (vs. 4 and 6). We could go on and on. But here again...Jesus doesn't give you or I our own inheritance. But "In Him we have an inheritance.". You can't make that verse say anything else. Not in Greek, not in Swahili. **In Him** we have an inheritance.

Now before we go on to talk about the nature and reality of this inheritance, let me also point out that it says to those who are IN CHRIST, that we HAVE obtained this inheritance. Paul speaks of this as a finished work. Not future tense, past tense. Its done. It may not be revealed in our heart, it may not be realized or experienced.

You may not even know what in the world the inheritance is. But our knowledge of it is not the measure of what God has done. Our spiritual comprehension is not the measure of His completion. In other words, our ignorance of it and failure to enjoy it does not render it incomplete. It simply proves us still largely blind. In Him we **have** obtained an inheritance.

My point is not to be critical or divisive in what I'm about to say. But the reason I stress this is that you can hardly open up a commentary on Ephesians without finding the author pushing this inheritance off to the future at some point when we die or when Jesus blows up the earth. That's very troublesome to me. Christ finished something at the cross, but because we do not see it yet finished in ourselves, we insist, in DEFIANCE of Scripture, in defiance of the cross, that it is yet future.

Are we so biased in our view of reality, so prejudiced in our spiritual presuppositions that we cannot take note of the overwhelming use of the past tense here in this and all of Paul's letters. Notice just in the section of Ephesians we have covered:

- Vs. 3 "who HAS blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ"
- Vs. 6 "He made us accepted in the Beloved"
- Vs. 7 "In Him we have redemption"
- Vs. 8 "[the grace] which He made to abound to us"
- Vs. 9 "having made know to us the mystery of His will"
- Vs. 11 "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance"

And that's just in the first 11 verses. Let me say this plainly. I see this in myself, I see it in the church. I am not innocent, but I am identifying a problem. If you approach Scripture looking anywhere outside of Christ for life, love, fulfillment, adoption, redemption, blessings, promises, etc., then, not seeing them **in yourself**, and not seeing them in **the natural world**, you will have no other option but to make them into events that are still yet to come. Your Scriptural hermeneutic, the way you interpret the Bible, the way we even TRANSLATE the Bible, will necessarily be to push such things off into the future.

My point is that we will make them "things" you will experience one day after your body dies, or one day when God stirs up some great movement.

But, you see, God already stirred up a great movement. It was called the cross. And more than that, God already brought you into the death of His Son. "You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God". Why? So that you could live in and by the life of that Son in whom is life, love, fulfillment, adoption, redemption, blessing and promise. In Him all of this has its completion and fulfillment. And in Him you have been made complete – regardless of what you have seen heretofore.

**Col 2:8-10** Beware lest anyone rob you through philosophy and vain deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic elements of the world, and not according to Christ. (9) For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. (10) And in Him you are complete

The question remains, do you know as you are known. You may tire of hearing me say things like this. But I will only stop saying such things when I see that you and I have stopped looking outside of Christ for what God has given to the human soul.

And if the reality of being in Christ, and Christ being your life, remains to us a theology and not a reality, then we must do as Paul did. We must fall on our faces and ask that the One who appeared to us unto new birth, would now appear in us as the life of the believer.

Ok, the inheritance. I've been dealing with this a bit in the 9:00 AM class on Colossians where in chapter 1 vs. 12 Paul writes "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light". Notice again the past tense – "has qualified" – and of course that qualification is through bearing His death and being found in His life.

But I want to look at three realities with respect to the inheritance. And this will probably take than one week.

1. What is the nature of the inheritance?
2. To whom does the inheritance belong?
3. What is the inheritance specifically?
4. and how is it ours?

Lets start with the first question. What is the nature of the inheritance? What do I mean by that? I mean what is the substance, the kind, or quality of the inheritance? What nature is it? I once used an analogy something like this. Lets say your wife asks you to take out the trash and when you come back in she'll give you a present. Well, you know you have to take out the trash anyway, but you begin to wonder if maybe she found a 20 dollar bill under a couch cushion that she's going to give to you. Or maybe she's whipped up an ice-cream sunday and as soon as you get back you get to eat it. So you go and take out the trash and come into the kitchen...and her present turns out to be a hug.

Well, I don't know what most of you would think about that. But my point is simply that a hug and ice-cream and cash can all be considered presents, but they differ from one another in quality, nature, kind. Both involved a giving, but one present is material, one is emotional. Why am I talking about wives and ice-cream? Because that just happened to me last night. No, simply to say that whenever we read a word like inheritance in the Bible our natural mind immediately begins to fill in the blanks. And frankly, at first, all we have is blanks. So there is a lot of room for vain imaginations.

We read a word like "inheritance", and it immediately passes through the darkened, self-consumed filter of the natural mind. Generally speaking, we will then begin to make up the greatest thing that we can imagine receiving from God and that thing becomes what we look for as our inheritance. For one person it might be health and wealth in the present age. For another, it might be God knocking them over a few times in a prayer line. For another it has to do with a physical healing. For another it is some form of prophetic gift or "anointing". Another it's the American dream – marriage, kids, white picket-fence, a dog named Lassie. Another it's a booming ministry. And still for another its just God telling them at the end of their lives - "well done, good and faithful servant".

I am not saying that God doesn't heal or that he won't provide with finances through His body, etc. **I am simply saying that your own heart becomes the defining of a reality that His heart has already defined.** Our own lusts, spiritual or natural, become the definition and hope of inheritance, when in fact He has already

predestined, defined, and given an inheritance in Christ. Its not given unto you to classify or define it. It is given unto you already defined, and ready to be revealed.

And its not just that you haven't figured it out yet, but keep trying. No, we don't know it because we can't know it unless it is shown to us. That is the nature of all spiritual reality. You'll never "figure it out". Its not the "Bible code". You don't need a super-computer. It must be revealed.

Remember when God told Abraham to leave his country, his kindred, and his Father's house? Why did He do that? Because here is another testimony of coming out of one country, kindred, and fathers house into another place to dwell, in Christ, another kindred, those who share His life, and another Fathers house (John 14).

Well, what did God say to Abraham when He sent him out? "Abraham, leave your own country, kindred, and Father's house, head due west, turn left at Albuquerque, follow a shaved camel for 38 miles, and then look for the road sign that says "Promised Land". No, he says "Abraham leave and go to a land **that I will show you**". I will show you. Abraham could have said. "Hey God, why don't you just tell me where it is? Why don't just give me the address and I'll type it into mapquest and get a map. I love maps. " Because this land was not really just a piece of real estate.

I understand that it involved a natural land in the type and shadow. But God was speaking of an inheritance, using a natural place to dwell and all the bountiful provision there, to speak of a spiritual place to dwell, and all of the eternal provision in Him. And so with Abraham, his inheritance was something that had to be shown to Him.

Your inheritance is like that. It is a leaving of a whole creation, a whole kindred, and a whole kind...and a coming unto, a coming into, something, rather someONE that cannot be known by mere words, it cannot be pulled up on Google, you'll never find it on a map. It must be revealed. "The Spirit has been given that you might know the things that HAVE been freely given to you by God". Yes, we need to be shown, or we'll make it natural, material, carnal, and self-serving every time.

The inheritance that you HAVE in Him is eternal and therefore spiritual. That doesn't mean that you don't experience it in this body. For goodness sake, that's the whole point of writing the New Testament - that those who had received the inheritance in Christ would know, experience, and express it in earthen vessels. But it is spiritual and eternal. It may bleed over into the realm of material even as the kingdom of God can have manifestation in the earth by healing a leper. But a healed leper isn't the kingdom of God. A healed leper is a healed leper...a manifestation of the kingdom. But the kingdom of God, Jesus tells Pilate on his way to the cross, is not of this realm, otherwise my servants would fight for me.

He could have said to the Jews that day, even as he said to Nicodemus in John chapter 3 "you have seen the demonstration and manifestation of the kingdom of God in and through me for the last 3 and a half years, and yet unless you are born into that kingdom by my Spirit, you will never see it. You will never know the reign of the true King. You will never be made to be a kingdom".

That kingdom was not then, nor will it ever be, a transformed natural creation. It is God's rule in Christ, and it is set up in a people who will be made a kingdom and priesthood. You see the Jews tripped on that one. We're tripping on it today.

**Luk 17:20** And being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered and said, The kingdom of God does not come with observation. 21 Nor shall they say, Lo here! or, behold, there! For behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

I'll leave that alone for now, except to say that let us not make the same mistake the majority of the Jews did in the first century. Let us not demand that Christ establish a material kingdom of our own design, and fail to allow him to establish in us the everlasting kingdom that the Father already designed and brought about in Christ's resurrection.

I got a little off track, but what I was trying to say is that you can, and will, miss the nature and reality of the inheritance if you do not allow God to "show it to you". This inheritance is not a someTHING that He will give to you. This inheritance is someONE in whom all things that He is are made yours by sharing His life.

So this inheritance that Paul references here in Ephesians 1:11 is first of all not natural, earthly, material, corruptible. As I said, it may impact and manifest in the natural, earthly, material, and corruptible. But it is spiritual and eternal.

Now to many that immediately sounds like a disappointment because we want the inheritance to be in and of the realm where our heart is. We don't want to BE a kingdom, we want to see, touch, and reign in a kingdom. We don't want the blessings and promises made to patriarchs and the prophets and fulfilled in Christ. Who knows what those even were? We want God to grant us our own blessings and our own individual "prophetic" promises. We want our promises to be yes and amen apart from the One in whom they are yes and amen. Can you understand what I'm saying.

I know there are so many in the church saying "God promised me this", "God promised me that" and everyone waits for God to fulfill their personal promises. But what about the 2000 years of promises given to Israel and the Fathers that are now ours in Christ?

Now I know that God communicates with people at times like He did with Paul saying things like "you will surely testify for me in Rome". I know that. We're a church that believes in such things. But what I take objection to is Christians taking promises made to the Son, fulfilled by the Son, made reality in the Son, and applying them to themselves apart from the Son, as an independent natural man. I object to that because as far as I can see in the Scripture, the only thing that God promised the fallen adamic man was "thou shalt surely die". How about that for a personal prophetic promise? Yes, you either die in the Lamb, and then live in the lamb. Or you die apart from the Lamb, and bear judgment in yourself.

I'm just saying, again, that we want a tailor-made salvation and inheritance that grants us the things that our hearts crave the most. To this, Jesus would say "where your treasure is, there your heart is also".

If our inheritance and treasure is in the earth, our heart is fixed there also. And we will only ever envision this inheritance to be **a better version of what we already love**. A better version of what we've already come to know as treasure. The best of the old, rather than the new. The best of the dead, rather than the living. The best of the natural, the material, the temporal, rather than "the glory to be revealed in us."

And friends, I am not simply talking about fast cars, nice homes, and a 401K. A lot of religious people think of those things as vanity, and yet never really elevate the inheritance, the treasure, out of the realm of the natural world. They simply seek their treasure in other natural things that they think are more spiritual. Are you following me? They don't want a fast car, they just want an exploding ministry, abundant provision, perfect divine health, a mansion in heaven, a kingdom business, and an anointed platform. Friends, I am not denying that God doesn't do some of these things. But I am pointing out that even though these things are deemed "spiritual", they can be just as much the lusts of a man's heart for a natural inheritance. Some THING that God will give to them or do for them or with them. Rather than counting all dung that was gain to me, hating even our own life, and being found in Him.

And that is where we will begin to locate the reality of inheritance. It is first of all spiritual and eternal, not material and carnal. Our second question was, "to whom does the inheritance belong". The answer is, of course, Christ. It is his by birthright, and it is yours by participation in Him. It is His as the heir, it is yours as a "joint-heir" (Eph. 3:6), i.e. one who has been joined to the one Heir.

1 Corinthians 6:17 "the one who has joined Himself to the Lord has become one spirit with Him".

I'd like to say quite a bit about this, although we're running out of time. We'll just go as far as we can today and pick it up next week.

If you'll remember when we looked at the words "blessing", and "redemption" in this study in Ephesians, I mentioned that you don't just get to decide what these words are referring to. You have to understand what we've been given in Christ in the light of what was promised. The promised "blessings" referred to in verse 3 happens to go all the way back to Abraham. The "redemption" mentioned in verse 4 happens to have thousands of years of history pointing to it and showing the understanding of it. It is the same with the word "inheritance".

Just as we've said that you can't make up what the inheritance is, you also cannot make up who the inheritance belongs to. The inheritance belongs to Christ. I realize that this verse says that we have obtained it. But it first says that it is "in Him" we have obtained it. The inheritance belongs to Christ as God's firstborn.

Now when the Bible refers to Christ as the "Firstborn", it has nothing to do with a time where Jesus was birthed by God. Its not like God had Jesus, and Jesus has a whole bunch of other god-like brothers and sisters. No, that's Mormonism. And its not a reference to Jesus being the first thing God created. No, that's Jehovah's Witness. Do you see what happens when the natural mind tries to interpret Scripture without reference to the testimony.

**The firstborn is a reference to the one who receives the inheritance.** The firstborn is the heir. If we know the Old Testament, then we know that the right of firstborn was the right to everything the Father had and everything the Father could give to a son. **Christ is not the firstborn in that He was God's first kid. Christ is the firstborn in that He is the eternal One who was "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death", so that the Father could bring Him forth out of the womb of death to receive an inheritance that was predestined and promised since before the creation of the world.**

So although Christ was, in fact, the firstborn of the virgin Mary...that is not what this word "firstborn" refers to. Christ is the one who broke open the womb of death, and brought a body with Him into the light of the new day. Christ is, as Scripture says, the firstborn **from among the dead**. He is the firstborn of many brethren – that is those who share His one resurrected life. He is the firstborn of a new kind, a new seed, a new man – the body of Christ. The many who share His life. But the inheritance belongs to Him because He is God's firstborn from among the dead.

Now you could go to innumerable Old Testament Scriptures to demonstrate this. The firstborn got all that the Father had promised. In Psalm 89, God says to David "I will make you my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth" (which prophetically speaks of Christ). Well, we all know that David was the 8<sup>th</sup> son of Jessie. How could he be firstborn? Firstborn is the heir of the Father.

Remember the story of Jacob and Esau. First Esau disregarded his birthright and sold it to Jacob for a cup of stew. And then, since Jacob had the birthright, He received the inheritance from Isaac. He received the blessings. He received the reign over His brethren. Its all right there in that story.

My point is simply this, and we'll have to stop here. Jesus is the firstborn from among the dead. He broke open the womb of death, and made, in Himself, the way out from among the dead. He was the eternal Word, one with the Father, but became a man. Why? To teach people how to be nice? No. To stop war in the middle east? No. So that **through death** He would break open the womb of death, as a head opens the womb for a body. He was the firstborn from among the dead. He was the firstborn in the resurrection. And, just as in every single type and shadow of the Old Covenant, the firstborn received an inheritance from His Father. The Firstborn was given all that the Father had promised His Son. The inheritance belongs to the firstborn.

We'll pick up next week by looking at exactly what that inheritance was, and how we are made partakers of it.