

## The Greatest Inheritance – 07.12.09

**Intro** - Have you ever inherited anything? Has anyone ever died and left you something? Something that belonged entirely to them and they could choose to do whatever they will... and because of their will... left you something that now belongs to you?

**The Photo Albums** - My mom died five years ago. She didn't have much in the way of money or other possessions. But the one thing that she treasured the most - her photo albums - she left with me. To know Mom was to know her pictures. At every event she was always there with a camera. For each of us children and all the grandkids on graduation day, she put together the gift of a photo album. And yet even after giving hundreds of pictures and dozens of albums away, she still had a treasure trove of photo albums she had collected over the years. And these she left to me. I did nothing to earn them or deserve them. I know I am no more loved than either of my siblings, but for some reason - and only she knows why - she left me the photo albums. They are my inheritance.

This morning we are going to talk about our great inheritance as a Christ Follower. There are many Scriptures that talk about this, but none greater than Ephesians 1:3-14. And it is appropriate that this is the first lesson of seven **Life Lessons** that we are going to examine over the next seven weeks because everything that we have, everything we know as a Christian flows out of this Scripture. Paul begins his great letter to the Ephesians by telling them who they are because of who they are in Christ. And that's where we start today.

### **READ TOGETHER: Ephesians 1:3-14 NIV:**

<sup>3</sup>Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. <sup>9</sup>And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

<sup>11</sup>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 hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

1. God has given us every **BLESSING** ...  
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Eph. 1:3

**It all comes from God. It is all because of God. Consider:**

- God **chooses** us. (v. 4, 11)
- God **predestined** us. (v. 5)
- God **adopted** us. (v. 5)
- God **has freely given his grace** to us (v. 6)
- God **has forgiven and redeemed** us. (v. 7)
- God **has made known to us His mysteries.** (v. 9)
- God **purposed in Christ.** (v. 10)

In each of these things God is the doer. God is the giver. God is the subject. He is the one who has made all this happen. Not us. We are the receiver. We are the beneficiary. We are the ones who have received these great blessings.

**Illustration: The 3 parties to a Trust - the Trustor, the Trustee, and the Beneficiary.** The trustor (or grantor) is the person who makes out the document, who own the assets and who wants to give the assets to another. The trustee is the one who cares for the assets for the benefit of another. The beneficiary is the one who receives the benefits from the trust.

It is very tempting in these verses to immerse ourselves into the very great theological truths of our election as Christ followers. And if we are not careful, we can find ourselves sucked down into the mud of worthless debate and wonderment of why we were chosen and not someone else... or even why God must choose at all. But these are not the conclusions we should be drawing and certainly help us not at all in how we should live. These sermon series this summer is about LIFE LESSONS! So what lesson do we draw here? How does knowing that God has given us every blessing CHANGE how we live?

... so we give God every **PRAISE** ...  
“... to the praise of his glorious grace.” Eph. 1:6  
“That we... might be for the praise of his glory.” Eph. 1:12

The Bible is quite clear that our blessings are not to be squandered by us. They are not to spoil us. We are to take these many and abundant blessings and turn them back toward God. We are to praise him. We are to give Him the glory!

Have you ever encountered someone who is high and mighty, haughty, filled with their own importance in the world... not because of their own work or achievements, but because of the benefits of someone else's? Perhaps a rich child... even an adult child... who is living high on the hog from someone else's estate. It is not a pretty sight. How do we avoid such a sin in living so abundantly in God's great grace? How do we give God every praise?

**I praise God with my lips.**

“Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises.”  
Psalm 47:6

It is important that we put words to our praise. We are human, the one creation with vocabulary. We should use it for God!

## I praise God with **my actions**.

This is one of those simple truths, that everyone inherently knows, that I can't just say the words, I have to live the life.

**"Even a child is know by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right." Proverbs 20:11**

Those who are great are known to live consistent with their words. What they say and what they do are the same.

**"Moses... was powerful in speech and action." Acts 7:22**

And so I praise God with how I act towards others. I love them and put their needs ahead of my own. I love them the way I would want people to love me, not just with their words, but with their acts of grace, mercy and kindness.

**"Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions." 1 John 3:18**

But this is easy to forget, so also...

## I praise God with **my memories**.

It is so easy to become "spoiled" in God's good graces and in his great mercy. It's easy to become the "spoiled rich kid" instead of the grateful beneficiary. If I'm not careful, I'll begin to think that someone I deserved this great kindness from God. To protect myself from such hallucinations, I have to work on my memory. That's why Jesus gave us communion...

**"Do this in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19**

... and why the apostles and the church have, through the past two millennia, have practiced spiritual disciplines, so that they and we would not forget our great spiritual blessings nor forget who provided them.

## 2. God has given us a **DEPOSIT-GUARANTEE** ...

The word here is ἀρραβών transliterated from the Hebrew; literally, as a legal and commercial technical term, an advance transaction that guarantees the validity of a contract or a full purchase price *down payment, first installment, pledge*; This is what the Holy Spirit is for us... a down payment on the transaction that God has initiated and completed on our behalf.

**"Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance." Eph. 1:13-14.**

This means that we do not have to be searching, wondering whether or not we REALLY have this relationship with God. He does not wish us to wonder or be confused or uncertain of our relationship with Him. So He, again in His great mercy, with great wisdom and grace, has given us His Spirit. Each Christ follower is given this relationship with God NOW... not someday later to be in blissful, eternal peace in His Presence... but NOW! We have only to be quiet and listen for His presence in our lives, to see Him at work changing our lives, and to hear His still small voice speaking to us.

Here again, there is a plan that is greater than ourselves and our own peace. God has a plan for us and a plan for His universe:

... so we give God every **COOPERATION** \_\_\_\_\_.

**“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.”**  
Ephesians 1:11

So that we might know that this GREAT GIFT from God is not just for our own consumption, we need to know that God has His will. He has His plan. He has His purpose. And so it is important that we yield our plans to His plan, our will to His will, our purpose to His purpose.

It is the exact opposite of the way many people think. Without thinking, it is easy to pray that God blesses our work, our plans, our purposes without first seeking out what it is that God desires. This is the very definition of idolatry... making out a God for our personal benefit. But this is not what is described in Ephesians.

So how do we APPLY this LIFE LESSON of Cooperation? We cannot do it on our own, in our own abilities and power. So we must

**We rely upon God’s Holy Spirit **to know** God’s will.**

God does not leave us wondering about what He wants us to do. He gives us His Presence so we might know God’s will.

**“And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will. Romans 8:27**

Sometimes His will is to do a certain thing or another. Many times it will be the freedom to do what seems best to us. But in order to be clear about this, we must not continue to immerse ourselves into our own selfishness and our own desires. We must work

**“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is.” Romans 12:2**

**We rely upon God’s Holy Spirit **to do** God’s will.**

**In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness.” Romans 8:26**

Even when we know what God would have us to do, we are often weak in our will, in our obedience, in our own spirit. But God’s Spirit can help us in our weakness. God can and will give us the strength to persevere.

**Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. <sup>9</sup> But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. “2 Cor. 12:8-9**

**Conclusion: What are you doing with your inheritance?**

It’s possible to live in such a way that your inheritance makes no difference at all in your life. What if my Mom gave me such a great possession as her photo albums, yet I forever left them in a corner and never opened them up? You are given the great inheritance of God’s choosing, of His eternal election, of His grace, forgiveness, and redemption. What are you doing with these? What difference does God’s great deposit, His most precious Holy Spirit make in your life? **Let’s pray together.**