

## Blessing #4 Our Inheritance

Ephesians 1:11

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, December 15, 2019

Well, good morning everyone. I want to do something a little different before we get started in our sermon time this morning. I want to ask you a question that we do from time to time to get you thinking about our topic for today and get your juices flowing. The question is this: Why did you come to church today? It may not be something you've thought about before. Most of you have probably been coming to church ever since you were children. It's as normal to you as brushing your teeth. But why did you come this day to church?

I rode to church this morning (one of my children is sick and my family's home) and I was driving and thinking, "This is really weird. What is that? Oh, that's silence. I haven't heard silence on the way to church in months." It's not easy bringing a family to church, it's not easy coming if you're not feeling well - it's a commitment. So why did you come this morning?

If you think about it, there's probably a couple of ways we could answer that question. There's a couple of different responses you could have. One is, tradition. Some of you may come to church for tradition. This is just what you do; this is who you are. You've been doing this (like I said) since you can remember. Your father went to church, your grandfather went to church and your great grandfather went to church. So you go to church.

Mom went, grand mom went, great grandmother went. So you do this to uphold the legacy. It's in your bones, it's in your DNA. That's one way to answer the question. You come for tradition. The world would have to stop turning before you came to church on a Sunday, right? Some of you grew up with - they called it a "drag problem." Your mom and dad dragged you to church every Sunday. So that's one way to answer that question.

Another way to answer the question is that you come to church for appearance. Some of you may not come for tradition, but you come for appearance so other people will like you. It's the right thing to do in their eyes. That's what you're interested in. That's why you come to church: to make a good impression on your parents, grandparents, friends, and so on.

I'm always amazed by how many Christians live for that, by how many believers live for the approval of men. It's like a drug to them. They come into church asking, "Do you like me? Do you like me now? Do you like me? Do you respect me? Do you respect me now? Do you respect me?" And some of you may have come for that reason. You want the respect of others and that's why you're here.

Another way to answer the question is that some may come for programs. There are certain programs we offer that you like. Some may come for the music. We have a lot of wonderful musicians here in the church - that may have brought you in. Relationships is another one. We have a lot of wonderful people and they're very easy to relate to here at Grace Fellowship Church.

But can I ask you another question this morning? Just to kind of round this off, to follow up with that? One more question - did you come here to meet God today? Did you come here this morning to listen to Him? I

don't know if you know this, but the phrase, "Thus says the Lord" appears more than 400 times in your Bibles, 400 times. And the phrase "Word of God" appears more than 50 times. Because when you hear the Bible speak, you hear God speak. When you open up your Bibles, you meet God there. So the question is, did you come for that?

Hearing God from the Bible what we focus on as a church. The music is important to us, fellowship and relationships are important. We even have traditions that we keep, but the most important thing is for you to meet God in His Word.

And with that said this morning, we want to open up the Word of God together, and meet Him in a book that we've been studying for some time now. And that is the book of Ephesians. So if you would, open up your Bibles and turn there with me to the book of Ephesians. That's the book we're in this morning.

And as you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're in a series on the book of Ephesians called the "All of God" series because that's what this book is about. Ephesians tells us that our salvation is all of God. All the blessings and riches and treasures in the Christian life come from Him, and not from us.

In fact, this is what we sing about at Christmas time. Jesus is God's gift to us, right? Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Why? Because the Lord has come as a gift.

It's been said that Jesus turned God's judgment throne into a gracious throne. He turned God's wrath into mercy and grace. And He did it by becoming one of us, by joining the human race. We couldn't go to Him, so He came to us. We couldn't go to heaven on our own, so heaven came down. And that's what the book of Ephesians is about, because it tells you how He did that. It tells us how Jesus brought God's throne to us. The Gospel accounts tell us from the human level what Jesus looked like. The book of Ephesians tells you from the Godward level what was going on in your salvation from the perspective of heaven itself.

That's particularly what our text talks about this morning and I want to introduce it this way, just to get us started in this passage. I want to start it like this:

In one of the preaching magazines that I read, the story is told of a man who died and went to heaven where he was met at the Pearly Gates by Peter, who led him down the streets of gold and by the crystal sea where he saw mansion after mansion. That's what he saw there, in heaven. He saw a big house after big house until he came to a broken down shack in the middle of them. It was just a little rundown mud hut. And the man said, "What's that?" And Peter said, "This is for you. This will be your home for all eternity." And the man said, "Why? Why don't I get one of the big ones?" And Peter said, "Because we did the best we could with the money you sent ahead of time."

I thought that was funny, anyway ...

But I mention that story because I think there's a great misunderstanding in the Christian life. I think there's a great misunderstanding about heaven today, and the misunderstanding is that you earn your way there. You get the big house with money and with works. If you do enough good works, if you do enough good deeds, you can get a spot among the mansions.

I mean to put that in perspective, on one hand it's true that your works will be rewarded in heaven if you're a believer. It's true that God will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" if you've done well and if you've been faithful. But it's also true that you don't get into heaven by works. It's also true you don't get into heaven because you earned it. That's a big misunderstanding even in the Christian life. There's a lot of confusion surrounding this today.

For example, a couple of years ago, a major Christian magazine said that half the people they interviewed, half the Christians they interviewed said that they believe people from other religions will go to heaven if they are sincere. That's how you earn it. They said, that's how you get into heaven, by sincerity. It doesn't matter what you believe, it doesn't matter what your thoughts are about God. As long as you're authentic, you're saved.

The problem is the Bible never says that. God never made that promise because the demons are sincere and they're not going to heaven, right? Satan is sincere in his own weird way. He's very religious, he's the most religious creature on the planet. He's not getting in either. You need something more than that to go to heaven. You need something more than that to be saved - you need the grace of God. You don't get in by money, you don't get in by works, you don't get in because you earn it - you get in because God is gracious to you. That's the only way you're saved.

I remember listening to a deacon in my former church counsel a young man who thought he could be good enough for God. And the young man was telling this deacon (I was kind of watching the conversation take place) that he thought he could be good enough, could get into heaven by works. And the deacon replied, "How many? How many works do you have to do?" And he went on to tell the young man, "The answer is all of them."

If you want to get into heaven by works, you have to do every good work commanded in the Bible for the entirety of your life, and nobody can do that. It's impossible. And therefore, the only way you're going to heaven is by the grace of God. You have no other alternative. Sin once, you go to hell. And how many times have you sinned?

Which is what our passage is about this morning. This all leads into the text we want to look at today. And if you would read with me Ephesians 1, we're going to read from verses 1 through 12. It says,

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.

In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on 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 on us.

In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.

In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

Just a quick review of this passage, but I've told you before, that Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence in the Greek. It's been called the longest sentence in the Bible or the greatest sentence because every key doctrine of the Christian faith is found right here. If you read this passage, you'll find every key principle of our salvation mentioned in this chapter.

They all begin with verse 3 which says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." In other words, this is all about blessing. That's quite an encouraging way to start off a book of the Bible. Some books start off with judgement, some books start off with condemnation. This one starts off with blessing, and Paul goes on to tell you what those blessings are.

For instance, if you look in verse 5, he mentions "adoption" because that's the first blessing in the list here. God adopts you, which means He brings you into His family, makes you one of His own. And then he mentions the blessing of redemption in verse 7. If you look in verse 7, He buys you back from sin. That's another blessing you have. Verse 9 mentions the revelation of the mystery. We've talked about that in the last couple of Sundays, so I won't repeat that here.

And then we get into the blessing we want to talk about this morning, which is found in verse 11. It says, "In Him also, we have obtained an inheritance." The fourth blessing in this long passage here that we've been looking at over the past couple of weeks, is the blessing of an inheritance. In other words, the blessing of heaven.

Building on all the other things Paul has said in this chapter, he says that Jesus did all of this to give you an inheritance. He adopted you, redeemed you, showed you the mystery so you could have a place in heaven. The way this is worded is interesting here because after describing our adoption in verse 5, Paul goes on to say, "If you've been adopted and brought into God's family, you get what every member of the family gets. You get part of the estate; you get an inheritance."

I don't know if any of you have had a family member die-a parent or grandparent - but oftentimes, when they die, you sit down with a lawyer, and the lawyer reads off who gets part of the inheritance, right? Who gets part of the land or the house or the money that's left behind.

Paul says, "As a Christian, you get part of God's inheritance. You get what Christ has left behind." This is actually noteworthy because in the first century everybody didn't get this. Everybody didn't get part of the estate. Only the male children got the inheritance

. So if your parents died in the first century, female descendants didn't get anything. Daughters were left with nothing.

Paul says, “In God's household, things are different. To God, everyone gets part of the estate.” Not only that, we could say this, you don't earn it. You don't earn an inheritance, do you? You don't buy it with money. It doesn't work that way. Your parents buy it, your parents earn it, and they give it to you as a gift, which is what this is referring to here. Your salvation is given to you as a gift. Your place in heaven was given to you without money, without you earning it, all by the mercy of God. I really can't emphasize this enough. This is said over and over and over again in this chapter. The word “grace,” the word “mercy,” because this is why you're safe.

The Baptist preacher, John R. Rice once said, “All you have to do to go to hell is pay your own way.” I've heard another person say, “All you have to do to go to hell is nothing. If you want to go to hell, that's what you have to do – nothing, because you're already going there.”

John R. Rice goes on to say this: “All who end up in that dreadful place do so because they earned it, but heaven is different from that. You go to heaven because someone else earned it. You go to heaven because the way was paid for by another.” Paul says this over and over and over again in different ways in this chapter. But now, this morning, we're going to talk about how this relates to heaven in our inheritance.

So, if you're taking notes this morning, in Ephesians 1:11, we're going to look at four insights into our inheritance.

I don't know about you, but I love studying heaven. Amen? Does anybody else enjoy studying heaven? I mean, do you really want to live here forever, on this planet? I don't. I mean, BC is wonderful, it's beautiful, nice coffee and stuff. It's beautiful when it's sunny, but then when the clouds come, it's like I can't see anything. I say to visitors, “There's a mountain over there somewhere, I think.”

I want to study heaven. This passage is about that very topic. Because Paul says, “If you have one of these blessings in Ephesians 1, you have all of them. If you've been adopted, redeemed, and you know the mystery, then you have this as well. You're going to heaven.”

Another way to say this is that if God is taking care of you in this life, He'll take care of you in the next life. If God has given you all of this now, if you're experiencing all of these things now in this world, you will experience this one in the next one, you'll have a place in glory. I'll talk about this in a minute.

I talk to a lot of people that are worried about going to heaven – Christians. I'm not talking about unbelievers, but believers who are worried about what's going to happen to them when they die. Paul's writing this in here so you're not worried about that. So you know what's going to happen to you, so you know where you're going. And more importantly, in this passage, you know how you're going to get there. So let's talk about that with four insights into our inheritance.

The first one is this, our inheritance has been obtained for us. We won't spend too much time on this one, we'll focus on the other ones, but the first insight into our inheritance is that our inheritance has been obtained for us. As I just mentioned, it's been paid for by another. You didn't pay for it, God did. That's why you know you're going there. You didn't earn it, the Lord earned it for you and gave it to you by His grace.

And if you look in verse 11 - actually let's look in verses 7 through 11. It says,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance.

I've told you before, that as you read Ephesians 1, Paul's thoughts get higher and higher as you go. If you read this chapter from start to finish, you'll notice that the doctrine gets loftier and loftier and to the point that you end up in heaven itself. And if you read this all the way through, it reads like a staircase where every verse gets taller and taller. After talking about the mystery of His will in verse 9 and Jesus summing all things up, Paul shows you what this means. This is how Jesus will sum all things up for you. He'll do it by giving you an inheritance. He says, "In Him we also have obtained an inheritance" which is a play on words, because you don't really obtain an inheritance like we just talked about. You don't work for it, it's a gift.

But just to walk you through this, if you notice, Paul uses the word "we" here, in this verse. Which is not always important in the book of Ephesians. But if you look in verse 11, it says, "In Him we also have obtained an inheritance." Verse 13 says, "In Him, you also, after listening to the message of the truth." So you see a contrast here, you see a comparison between "we" and "you," the Jews and the Gentiles. So Paul says, "We, the Jews, the ones who believed, have received this."

He'll talk later in verse 14 with the Gentiles being given a pledge of their inheritance. And so the Gentiles get an inheritance as well. But here he's talking about the Jew. He's doing that because this is how the mysteries played out. This is how God reveals the secret, to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. Salvation came to Israel first. Jesus preached to the Jews, the apostles preached to the Jews. So that's what this is referring to.

But it would have meant something else as well, it would have taken on greater significance because the Jews lost their first inheritance. When they were thrown out of the Promised Land, they lost the land, they lost the temple, they lost the priesthood, and they lost their identity as a nation. And Paul says, "But for those who believe in Christ, for those who trust in the Messiah, God is giving this back to them. God is giving them something better. He's giving them an inheritance in heaven."

In Greek, it means "to choose something by lot or by process." And while it doesn't tell us what this is referring to specifically, it has to be a reference to heaven. The new heavens and the new earth, the streets of gold, the crystal sea, the resurrection of the dead, all of these things are tied up in here.

But Paul doesn't actually go into that because that's not his point in the passage. His point here is not to talk about what you get, but how you get it. His point is to tell you how this comes to you, and he says, it comes to you by grace. Israel receives this inheritance by grace. I mean, of all the nations of the earth, God chose Israel for this. Of all the peoples of the earth, He picked them out to give this to. He didn't choose the Medes and the Persians. He didn't choose the Greeks and the Romans and the Egyptians, although they were far more impressive than the Jews. They did some amazing things. He chose Israel.

Israel called Gentiles “dogs.” You guys would've been called dogs by the Jews. And Paul says that it doesn't have any bearing on this. It has nothing to do with it because their salvation was all of grace. The inheritance was given to them out of mercy.

We actually just went through the first part of the Old Testament in the Ironman's Bible study. And you may not remember this, as you're going through, Israel doesn't conquer the Promised Land, God does. God tells them to march around the city of Jericho and blow trumpets. That is the dumbest battle strategy in human history. March around the walls of this city, and then blow trumpets. What's that going to do? Nothing, because God was the one who gave them this. God gave them their first inheritance and Paul says that God is going to give them their last one. It's all of God.

Which brings us to the next insight into the inheritance that Paul mentions here. And that is that it has been predestined for us. It was obtained for us or it was obtained for Israel, particularly. Secondly, it was predestined for them. Paul repeats the word “predestination” twice in this chapter to show you how gracious this was, how merciful God was in giving this. I'll mention the other time in a moment.

The Greek word for “predestined” is a compound word from “pro” – before, and “orizo” - to decide. And it means “to decide something beforehand, to choose it ahead of time.” And if you notice, it says here that God predestined Israel. It says, “In Him, also we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined.” In other words, we were predestined, not just some things about us. Paul says that this is a personal predestination. God didn't look down the tunnels of time to see what we would do. He saw us, he predestined us. It's a personal thing.

You actually see this repeated in other parts of the Old Testament concerning the nation of Israel. Deuteronomy 7 says, “The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But the Lord chose you because He loved you.” That's why God chose Israel, because He loved them.

He actually repeats this at another point for the church as well. If you look up in verse 5, it says the same thing about us, about every believer; Jew and Gentile. It says, “In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will.” So you see that word repeated there. There's a reason it's repeated in this passage - because Paul is telling you how gracious God was in giving this to you. He predestined it for you.

You could make the argument that everything in verse 11 applies to us as well, because all these things are repeated in the New Testament for the church. But Paul's point here is that our salvation is a sure thing. It is a certain thing. Your inheritance--your going to heaven--is not questionable in the mind of God, it's settled, because it doesn't depend on you. It didn't depend on Israel; it doesn't depend on you. They didn't earn it and you don't earn it, which means you can't lose it. It doesn't rest on your shoulders.

The Jews did not get into heaven because they were good enough, because they kept the law and because they kept the commandments and did the sacrifices. Read the Old Testament, you read about a very bad people. You don't get in because you were good enough either. It's all because of the mercy of God.

Steve Lawson once said, “No one struts into the narrow gate. No one struts into heaven. You get in with your head hung low or you don't get in at all.”

I remember years ago, I went to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. It was one of the church built on the spot where Jesus was born. And to get in, they had like a three-foot doorway and I'm a short guy, and even I had to stoop to get into that thing. It was to remind you of how you need to bow when you come into the presence of God. The only one who struts in heaven is God. Everyone else bows their head low because it depends on Him.

Another way to say this, is if you're wondering what is God doing with the world? What is He planning with the universe? Paul says, this is what he's doing, this is what he's planning - He's saving sinners. That's the mystery of his will. That's the secret to the universe. God is bringing people into heaven. He's giving them an inheritance. He's choosing people for an inheritance.

I think so many times we misunderstand the doctrine of predestination. We get the whole thing wrong because we see it as an obstacle to evangelism. Paul says it's not an obstacle, it's an encouragement. This is God's plan for the world. We all do this. We all see all the crazy stuff going on and we wonder where is God? This is where God is. This is what He's interested in. He's bringing people to heaven. We don't know their names (that's hidden from us), so we evangelize everyone.

One commentator said it this way, he said, “Neither faith nor human merit determines our destiny. God alone does that, and His purpose is set in stone, being part of a larger plan. He is involved in every intricate detail of the universe and nothing can ever stop His plan for things, which is why we share the Gospel with everyone.”

You know, an old country preacher was once challenged by an atheist who asked the preacher why he believed in God, why he believed God would defeat evil. And the old country preacher said, “Well, my Bible says in the beginning, God was in charge, and it says He's in charge at the end of it. So I figured between the beginning and the end, nobody's going to whoop Him.” “Whoop” means “whip.” It's a southern term.

“Nobody's going to take Him off His throne,” and he goes on to say, “Would you like to know about Him too?” He shared Christ with the atheist. Paul is saying here: no one's going to take God off His throne.

And it leads us to the next point we're going to talk about this morning, the next insight into our inheritance. The first one is that it's been obtained for us. Your inheritance, your pathway to heaven was paid for by another. You didn't pay for it, God did. You didn't earn it, He earned it for you. Bringing us to a second insight into our inheritance, and that is that it's been predestined as well. Just to show you how free this was, just to show you how gracious and how little you did for it, Paul says, “God predestined it for you, chose it ahead of time.”

I hope that gives you some encouragement this morning. You're not in some mindless place roaming through the universe. That's not the existence you have as a Christian. Your pathway has been predestined by God so that you can't lose it or mess it up.

Bringing us to another point here, another insight into our inheritance, and that is that it's being worked out for us. It's being worked out for us. Which means that not only did God predestine this for us, but He's doing something about it now. God didn't just wind up your life and set it in motion, He's working in it at this moment.

Which you see if you read in verse 11. It says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

As I mentioned earlier, if you notice, as Paul is describing this, he doesn't tell us too much about what the inheritance looks like because that's not the focus of the passage here. He doesn't answer all your questions about heaven. There's other books of the Bible that talk about that. But what he does tell you is how you get there, how you get an inheritance. And the way you get that, he says, is by the work of God, not your work. Can't emphasize that enough - God's work: "Having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things."

Many words in this passage that are only found one time in the whole of Scripture, because Paul is just being as creative as he can to describe all these wonderful things that Christ has given us.

God "works all things" from which we get the word "energy." You could translate verse 11 like this: "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to His purpose who energizes all things." The idea here is God energizes you. He gives you the power to be saved.

Before you were dead, before you had no power on your own, to do anything for God, you were lifeless, helpless, sinful, covered in sin. Now, you have the power to please God because He's given that to you. You ever feel powerless in the Christian life? You ever feel helpless? You shouldn't. You have the power of God living inside you.

It also says that, "He does this, He works all things," which means God moves heaven and earth for this. He moves heaven and earth to save you. There's nothing left out of His plan for your salvation. You know, this is important because like I said before, the Jews put a lot of emphasis on their works. And if you read the New Testament and you read Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees, it is just one long argument about works and grace, right? I mean, it's works, works, works for them. It was law, law, law. But now, Paul says, "Your works have nothing to do with it because this is all about the work of God. Yes, you believe and you repent and you do all those things, but it's in response to His work."

You see this repeated several different ways in the New Testament. Just to show you how important this is, a couple of different passages that say the same idea. One of them is Romans 8:28. Anybody memorize Romans 8:28? Isn't that a great verse? "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." Here, you see what God specifically does for us. It says, "He causes all things to work together for good." That means that nothing that happens to you that is good is an accident in the Christian life. Your salvation, your repentance, the moment you believed, none of that was random. God caused all of that in your life, which should be an encouragement to you.

Philippians 1:6 also says, “For I'm confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” That's also a wonderful verse because it says, God's going to finish what He started. If you can identify with Ephesians 1:3-10, Paul explains that God is going to finish the process. He's going to put you in verse 11 as well. He doesn't just save you, He keeps you safe. He doesn't just call you, He keeps you called all the way to glory.

Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.” Why do you do good works? Because you are His workmanship. That word “workmanship” means “artwork” or “masterpiece.” You're a piece of art to God, you're His masterpiece because your salvation is a thing of beauty to Him. He has a very deep interest in it.

I read all those verses to you and just try to get your minds around this, because I meet so many Christians (and I've said this before, but I want to emphasize this again) who think they're going to lose their salvation. I meet so many believers here in Chilliwack and in other places who are scared that if they sin one more time, if they mess up one more time, that's going to be it. God's going to be done with them. It's like they have so many marks and if they just make one more mess-up, they're done.

And that's because they don't understand their Bibles. They don't understand what this says. Paul says, “You can't lose your salvation because you are God's workmanship. It's not about your workmanship. You can't be thrown out of heaven because you're His possession and He won't let that happen to you.”

I meet other believers who say that they're not so much afraid they're going to lose their salvation *per se*, but they're afraid they're going to lose their testimony. They're so worn out. I don't know if some of you feel that way. They're so worn out fighting and wrestling and struggling with sin that they're afraid that they're going to blow it. They're going to go into work and just pop off and ruin their Christian testimony. Paul says that you shouldn't worry about that either because your Christian life depends on the power of God and not your own. Your life is in His hands. He's working in you. He's perfecting your salvation. He's causing all things to work together for good. So what do you have to worry about? You shouldn't fear those things.

The power of God is what keeps you from losing your salvation. You don't do that. You don't keep yourself from losing your salvation because you didn't earn it in the first place, God did. It all depends on Him. The same power that created the universe lives inside of you. The same God who formed the earth and raised His Son from the dead is personally committed to your life. So you're going to be fine.

This is an evil world, isn't it? I can remember growing up in a little town in Tennessee 30 years ago, and the world has changed. It feels that way anyway. But whatever is outside of you cannot compete with what's inside of you. You're going to be fine.

One commentator said, “I need not torment myself with the fear that my faith may fail because it was grace that led me to faith in the first place, and it will be grace that'll keep me in the faith until the end.” Amen?

Which brings us to one more insight into our inheritance, which is an important one, because it brings all this together. It sums it up for us. Because after telling us that our inheritance has been obtained and predestined and worked out by God, Paul tells us why that is. At the end of the verse here, he tells us why God did that. And he said it was because of his counsel.

The fourth insight into our inheritance, the final one, is that our inheritance was based on his counsel. Which means it was planned out by God. It's another way of saying this was all thought out by God. If you are saved in here this morning, if you are a Christian, it's not an accident. It was the plan of God all along. And if you end up in heaven, if you end up in glory, it's the same thing. It was the plan of God.

If you read all of verse 11, it says, "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

To walk you through this, some of your Bibles don't have the word "counsel" there, but they use the word "purpose" or "motive," which is the same idea. It means that God did this on purpose. God did this according to plan. This was all His idea. He wanted to save you so He saved you, period. He wanted to give you an inheritance, so you have one. He lined everything up in the world in order to do that. World events, world powers, world leaders were all used for this, to bring you to Christ. We don't know how that works. That's beyond our understanding. We don't know how all that plays out, but that's what this says.

You know, you read the Bible, you read the Old Testament, and who do you read about? You read about the Jews. Do you know the Jews did not have that much power in the ancient world? The Babylonians had power. The Medes and Persians and Egyptians had power, but you don't read about them, you read about Israel. And then you go to the New Testament, who do you read about? You read about the church. The church didn't have that much power. Rome had the power. Why is it like that? Because this is God's focus. God's focus is the church. He uses everything for the church.

And I might add this, He doesn't do this because you're great, He does this because He is great. Amen? Don't get too inflated here. God does this because the world revolves around Him, not because it revolves around you. He's the hero of the story. He's the star of the show. And we need to remember that.

You know, we read this and don't think anything about it because we're kind of used to seeing God in this light. But the Ephesians didn't. In the ancient world, the Roman gods weren't like this. They didn't have this much power. They weren't sovereign, they weren't in control. You can read the stories of Zeus and Hades and Poseidon and they were just out of control. They were completely influenced by world events. The wind blew the wrong way, they fell to pieces. Paul says, God's not like that. A true God is not affected by the wind. Nothing changes His counsel or His mind in the slightest.

Also if you notice, Paul says, He does this, He saves you after the counsel of His will. Not someone else's will, but His will. Not someone else's plan, His plan. God didn't go around and take a poll before He did this. He didn't go around and take a survey, He just did this. He just saved you, which is another reason why you know you are saved because nothing changes His will. This is how you know you're going to heaven, because nothing ever messes up His plan. If God wants to save you, then He saves you. Who's going to stand in His way? Who's going to tell Him "No"?

If you study the attributes of God, one of the attributes of God is independence. And that means that God is independent of His creation. He is self-existent. He doesn't need creation for anything. It's the same way with His plans and His counsel. His counsel stands independent of this world. God doesn't set things in motion and then we come along and mess it up. He's a bigger God than that.

The story is told of a Japanese warlord who built a large statue of Buddha in the 16th century that took 50,000 men five years to make it. It was an enormous project that almost bankrupt the man. A few years after the statue was created, an earthquake came along and destroyed the whole thing, crumbled it to the ground. And as the story goes, as the statue was falling, the warlord shot an arrow at it in anger and he said, "I put you up at great expense and you can't even take care of your own temple."

Name one God in human history that can do this in Ephesians 1. They can't look after the temple. They can't stop an earthquake. The true God can; Jesus Christ can. He can move heaven and earth to do this. He can plan time and eternity all around this idea, and He can give you an inheritance if He chooses. And Paul's point in this chapter is that you can have all this if you trust in Christ. All this is yours if you believe what he's been saying in this chapter.

You know, I'll say a little more about this next week, but I think this is an important thing for us to grasp as a church. I think this is essential for us, because we can be so man-centered in our thinking. Amen? Am I the only one? We can be so self-focused in our religion? We think, "It's all about me and my works and my good deeds. It's all about my will and my plans and my counsel. That's what the world tells us. That's what society says." The Bible says it's all about God. The Bible says it's all about His works and His good deeds and His will. That's what saves you. That's the only way you're going to heaven.

Which leads me to ask, do you believe that today? Do you believe everything Paul is saying in this chapter, and has it gripped your heart? We're having prayer time this morning and several people pray that the Lord would grip our hearts with this passage. This can be some academic stuff. This can be stuff that's kind of pie in the sky. It's not why Paul is writing it. He wants you to take this home with you. I mean, are you taking home the fact that He has adopted you and redeemed you, and revealed to you the mystery, you of all people? Do you believe that He can give you an inheritance?

Again, we're not talking about what the inheritance looks like so much, but the fact that He could give it to you at all. And are you God-centered in your thinking? Are you focused on Him?

I've met a lot of Christians, it kind of comes with my job. That's the majority of people I interact with on a daily basis. And I will tell you, the Christians I have met that are content and peaceful and joyful and happy are the ones who are thinking about God and not themselves.

I spend hours every week trying to get Christians to stop thinking so much about themselves and think about the Lord. This is where your hope is found. This is what this passage is about. I mean of all the things to start talking about in the book of Ephesians, Paul could have talked about troubles and problems and trials - he starts talking about God, because God is the solutions to all of that. Jesus came to change God's judgement throne into a throne of grace so that He could take all the credit for it. Would you believe that this morning?

You know, in my studies this week, I looked up the richest family in the world. And if I got it right, it was the Waltons, the owners of Walmart. Not the Waltons from the TV show, they were very poor. According to Bloomberg Billionaire Index, the Walton family brings in \$3 billion a year, 4 million an hour and 100 million a day. Which means that in the course of this sermon and in our time together this morning, they've earned \$4 million. That's hard to understand but in this time we've been together, they've earned a fortune.

But let me tell you this, I don't know if the Waltons are saved or not. I don't know much about them, but I know they can't take it with them when they go. I know that money won't help them in eternity, but this will. You can take this with you if you trust in Christ and receive this free gift. Would you do that this morning? Let me pray for us.

Father, we thank you Lord, for this – could I just say Father --this staggering passage on what You have done to save us. We read this whole chapter and we don't even see our works in it, this is all about your works and what You have done and we rejoice in that, Lord. Thank you so much for showing us this.

And Lord, as we read this, I pray for my friends who are here this morning, those who are struggling with trials, troubles, maybe wrestling with sin, that they would be reminded of what this says; their hope is in You. And You were the one that saves us, You are the one that keeps us saved, You are the one that brings us into heaven. As we're celebrating this Christmas season, there's nothing that reminds us of that more than Christ's birth. Thank You, Lord, for what You have done in sending Your Son.

May we go out this morning rejoicing in that, may we go out a congregation of people, a church that is focused on You more than anything. Thank you, Lord, for what You have taught us this morning. May we go out and I apply it to our lives, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.