

Ephesians 1:11-14 | A Better Inheritance

Tyler Velin | September 19th, 2013

How many of you have ever inherited anything from anyone?

I have received two things as a quasi-inheritance, but each of them were in different ways. The most recent thing I inherited was my grandpa's old Bible. This is special to me because in a large part my grandpa is one of my biggest motivations in being a pastor.

I remember talking to my grandpa one day, and he said that his greatest regret in life was not being a pastor. If he could go back and do it all over one day, he would do that. He moved him and grandma out to Seattle to get training for it, but it was just too hard for them to stay out there. But that desire to show the beauty of Christ was infectious with him. I remember when he was at his weakest with cancer he pulled me aside and said, "Tyler, make sure my family knows about Jesus." His desire for Christ was hugely influential on me. So when my Grandpa died last year, I cried when grandma gave me his big, old, leather bound Bible, which contained his notes, his thoughts, his family history and his prayers. It was one of the best things I have ever received. It was an unexpected blessing, which shapes my life and my joy today.

The second thing I got was a little different. My grandpa's father in-law, Grandpa Bear, was awesome. He was one of those old timers who lived in Podunk Miles City Montana for most of his life, and loved guns, guts and God. There was something that was common knowledge in the Velin family. And my family has lots of cousins and we are all pretty close, but you knew, when you turned 12, Grandpa Bear would give you your first gun. It was always a little Ruger 22, and I still have mine to this day.

While Grandpa's Bible was unexpected, this gun was expected. You knew that one day you were going to get a gift from Grandpa Bear, and no one wanted to be 12 years old more than Grandpa's Great Grandchildren. My family was one of the younger ones and so we had to watch as our older cousins got theirs, and we just had to sit and wait with anxious anticipation. And at 96 years old, Grandpa Bear lived to see each of his 13 great grandchildren get their 22 long rifle.

While these things aren't perfect examples of inheritance, what we are going to look at today is. You see an inheritance is something owned which is given to someone else to be a beneficiary of. This language of inheritance is shaping our text today and the same anxiousness me and my cousins had, will come out as Paul talks to us about inheritance today.

Pray

Shaun read our text before we got going here, and we are going to come back to that text, but first we need to go back to some older texts.

Gen 12:1-3

So here we have the institution of what is called the Abrahamic Covenant. God came to this guy named Abram and said, go to this land and I will bless you, I will make you a blessing, and I will give you possession of the land.

God promised blessing to Abraham and his family. But God's plan isn't just to give, God's plan was also to get. We see that five chapters later as God revisits his covenant with Abraham.

Genesis 17:7

God made himself Abraham's God. God chose Abraham and said, Abram, 1.) Go over here, 2.) I'm going to bless you and give you a land, 3.) Abram is a dumb name, know you are Abraham, 4.) I'm doing this because I'm your God.

God picked his people. He didn't wait for Abraham's input. He didn't wait for Abraham to discover him. God because he is the true God said to the moon worshipper Abraham, I'm going to be your God, and you are going to be blessed by that.

We see this in **Ex 6:7** God chose to make Israel his people. God did the same thing with Adam and Eve. He didn't sit down with them and say, hey, I know that within a few years there are going to be some alternative god's out there, but I want to sit down and give you a few good reasons why I should be your God. God simply made Adam and Eve, and as creator he had creator rights over them. This is how God's people live. Do that.

God throughout history we see this pattern. Out of all three of Noah's sons, God chose to bless Shem, God found Abram's family wandering in the wilderness, and out of all of Shem's descendants, chose to bless Abram. Between Ishmael and Isaac, God chose to bless Isaac. Between Jacob and Esau, although Esau was the first born, God chose to bless Jacob. From the line of Jacob, God chose Judah and Joseph, from the line of Judah, God chose David, from the line of David, God sent Jesus. God has always been a God who takes his people at his own bidding.

Why is God so diligent at planning this stream of blessing, from Adam to Christ? Why did God choose to make Abraham's people vast and innumerable? **Deut 4:20, 32:9.**

God takes for himself a people as his inheritance. Why, because as we saw last week, he is the blessed blesser. He does all that he pleases and he has chosen to delight in his people. As broken as Israel was in the Old Testament, as many times as God called them idolatrous whores, they were God's inheritance, his chosen possession, his desired inheritance.

Now at this point, God's inheritance in this text is the nation of Israel. But that is why this passage is so important to us in Ephesians: **Eph 1:11-14**

Now why is this important for us? This background is important information to us because as Paul says, we have received an inheritance in Christ, but that inheritance is received only because God has worked all things according to the counsel of his will.

Well we just saw the counsel of God's will. The counsel of God's will in the Old Testament was to create a people for himself. God was carving out his inheritance because he has creator's rights over the world. And God in the perfect counsel and plan of his will chose to bring us into his inheritance through Christ, who is our inheritance.

We have been given Christ as our inheritance so that we can be made God's own inheritance. The weight of what Paul has just said is huge. Because in the Old Testament it was only the Jews who could be God's inheritance, only those who were circumcised according to their Jewish background, but now we see that those who hope in Christ have received the inheritance of Christ!

God's plan was never one narrow people group defined by race, God's plan, the whole counsel of his will was to create for himself a people group defined by Christ. Christ is the blessing that the Jews had been waiting for in the Abrahamic covenant. The Kingdom of Christ is the land that the Jews were waiting for, and the blood of Christ is the sign that the gentiles needed to be brought into it.

What does this mean for us. God has given us Christ in the cross, and Christ has defined our worth before God. Last week we saw Paul used the term adoption through Christ Jesus, the fullness of that adoption is that we have become God's desired inheritance through Christ Jesus.

God chose to desire you because he desires Christ. The greatest gift God can give himself is

himself. And when the glory of Christ covers the sin of our hearts, we are so attractive, so beautiful, so wonderful to God that it is his delight to take us as his inheritance. Because of Christ, you are treasured. Because of Christ, you are precious. Because of Christ, God rejoices over you. Because of Christ, those who believe in him do so to the praise of God's glory.

God gets. In salvation through Christ, God receives his glory. God receives his inheritance. Your ultimate worth is found in Christ, because Christ is of ultimate worth. That is our inheritance.

Now in one sense Paul is talking about the immediate, we have received Christ, in him we have our inheritance. But Paul references that the best is yet to come.

Eph 1:13-14

I want to point something out about verse 13. Look at the emphasis Paul places on the gospel and our response to it. 1.) We see that it is not enough to see the gospel. Christian community, godly living, justice and morality all reflect the gospel, but Paul places an emphasis on hearing the gospel. 2.) The gospel has power to save. It is not to hear God is love, or God is acceptance, or God is joy. While all of these may be true, the saving message of the Bible is the gospel. God saves through the word of the gospel. 3.) Belief is a response to the gospel. To hear the gospel and not respond in worshipful-belief is to sin. This is important to understand because in all of Paul's talk about election and predestination, there is also a responsibility for those who are in Christ, to believe in Christ. And also to persevere in that belief. You must believe. Your church will not believe for you. Your family will not believe for you. Jesus will not even believe for you, you must hear the gospel, respond to the gospel, and believe in the gospel in order to receive the inheritance of Christ.

Those who have received the inheritance are those who believe in Christ.

Now this can be hard can it not? I'm a Titans fan. I know how hard it is to believe. As much as I want to believe that the Titans will win every game, I see their roster, I see their schedule, and I see their Free Safety. We all know that belief requires commitment. We all want to believe the Griz will do well. That our parents will be healthy. That the cancer will go away. That our needs will be met, but when we step back and look at what is going on, belief is definitely a difficult task.

Belief is easy, perseverance in that belief is difficult. That is why God has given us a great inheritance in Christ.

Christ talks about this inheritance in **John 14:16**. A helper is coming. Jesus says a little later that it is to our benefit that Jesus leave because when Jesus has left, the helper will come.

Jesus speaks more graphically about this helper in **Acts 1:8**.

Now when most people, myself included first read that passage we jump to what we see the apostles doing through the Holy Spirit. Healing diseases, speaking in tongues, raising the dead to life. But that is not the context of this verse. Those things certainly did happen through the power of the Holy Spirit, but there is a different context here. Right before Jesus said this, the apostles were all gathered, in hiding, and scared. And Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would come and they said, is this the time when you restore your kingdom. Is this the time when our enemies are wiped away, and then Jesus answers with 1:8.

The power of the Holy Spirit is first and foremost a power of belief, and a power for witness.

Jesus spoke of this in **John 14:26, 15:26**

The Holy Spirit preaches the gospel to us so that we may receive power of gospel belief. This is also our inheritance. We have just seen salvation in a purely Trinitarian manner in the last two weeks. Last week we saw that God planned for us to be adopted in Christ so that we may receive redemption from our sins, and Christ has also given us the Holy Spirit who declares to

us the will of the Father as seen in the son.

I love the immediacy of this text. When you believed in him, you were sealed by the Holy Spirit. Christians possess the Holy Spirit. That means that not only was the gospel meant for you through God, not only was it applied to you through Christ, but it lives in you through the Holy Spirit.

That means that yes this world is a hard place to believe. This campus is hard place to believe. Your dorm room is a hard place to believe, but we have one who speaks to our belief in all circumstances.

How often do we pray to God, pray to Jesus and neglect to pray to the Holy Spirit. He is equally God, and he has the power to affirm and seal our belief in our hearts. He will declare to us the sweet story of the gospel in the darkest hour of our soul, in the isolated recesses of our trials. On the mountain tops and in the valleys we have the greatest preacher ever dwelling in our hearts preaching to us the message of salvation and hope in Christ.

The beautiful thing is that one day we will not need to fight this battle with unbelief. **1 Peter**

1:3-9

Our faith, sealed by the Holy Spirit is keeping us for a time when faith is no longer needed. He also preaches to us the beauty of the time to come when faith is no longer needed. A time when sin, and unbelief are laid in their grave and all we have is worship in the throne room of God. Christ and the Holy Spirit are our inheritance here, but we have an inheritance yet to come. An inheritance on which angels long to look.

I love how Paul concludes this section: "to the praise of his glory."

God's inheritance is his own glory. Our inheritance is being witness, and objects of God's glory. We live in a valley. On one side is the cross, standing tall and proud, high above time and space standing as a mountain of inheritance, and on the other side is the glory and inheritance which is to come. We live between the two peaks of the Cross and the Kingdom, but in the valley we thrive on the hope that trickles down their slopes. The waterfalls of worship and the streams of scripture fan our hearts to God and give us faith to believe in these hard times.

Faith and joy are our inheritance, to the glory of God and the good of his people. We have our inheritance, we are called to live in our inheritance, because we were called to be an inheritance. To the praise of his glory, we treasure Christ, believe in Christ, and give glory to God. This is our burden, our joy, and our salvation.