

at the right hand of God. This is what Paul means when he writes of “all things being summed up in Messiah.” He means that through the power of our risen and reigning King, all will be made right and harmonious in the universe. Evil will be no more, and righteousness will reign forever.

Further, “things in heaven and things on the earth” (τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) amplify the meaning of the previous phrase “all things,” for the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places (Eph 6:12) will be forever vanquished, along with death and sin, and all will once again be universally giving praise to God, whether as objects of His just and sovereign wrath or as those upon whom He has set His love and united them together in His beloved Son, Yeshua. This is what Paul means by summing all things up “in Him.”

11–12 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 Messiah would be to the praise of His glory.

In the Greek text itself, v. 10 ends with “in Him,” referring to Yeshua, and v. 11 begins with ἐν ᾧ (*en hō*), “in whom,” meaning “in Yeshua.” Once again we see that the central focus of Paul’s message is that the believer has become united with Messiah in His death and resurrection, so that being “in Messiah” means be to declared righteous by God and also to be empowered by the Spirit to live out the new life the believer has been given (Rom 6:4).

Paul continues to enumerate the blessings that have come to those who have been given God’s grace in Yeshua. The fact that he uses the plural pronoun “we” emphasizes that Paul includes himself together with the believing community: *we* have obtained the blessing. Here Paul continues a theme that runs throughout the epistle, namely, that believers in Messiah Yeshua, both Jew and non-Jew, have obtained the same rich blessings of salvation, standing equally as children of God, having been adopted into His family (v. 5) through the saving work of Yeshua, applied to the elect by the Spirit.

But what is the blessing to which Paul refers in this opening line of our verse? Many English translations understand the Greek to be indicating that believers in Messiah, having been “made heirs” (v. 10), are promised an inheritance from God because they are now His children. Other translations understand the phrase to mean that the believers

themselves have become God’s own inheritance.¹

The issue revolves around the Greek word Paul uses here, which is *κληρώω*, found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures and in the LXX, only in 1Sam 14:41 and Is 17:11. However, the word is common in ancient Greek literature generally carrying the sense of “appoint by lot,” “cast lots,” and by extension, “allot, assign.”² But an added aspect of Paul’s use of the word here in our verse is that it is passive, which would seem to strengthen the idea that believers are viewed here as God’s inheritance (given the passive idea) rather than gaining an inheritance themselves.

Stressing the need to accept the passive form of the work which Paul uses, F. F. Bruce notes

that the nations of the world are assigned to various angelic beings (“the sons of God”), but Adonai retains Israel as His personal possession. (Deut 32:8–9)³

When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance,
When He separated the sons of man, He set the boundaries of
the peoples According to the number of the sons of Israel. For
the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the allotment of His
inheritance. (Deut 32:8–9)

The NET Bible version is an example of a translation that has adopted this interpretation, translating the opening phrase of our verse this way: “In Christ we too have been claimed as God’s own possession.”

If, however, we take the context of this opening chapter as providing the best indication of how to interpret Paul’s meaning in this phrase, the blessing that he lists is that we who are in Messiah Yeshua through faith in Him, have likewise obtained an inheritance as having been adopted into the family of God, and therefore having the privilege as well as the right to claim God as our Father.

This fits Paul’s teaching regarding the believer’s inheritance throughout Ephesians. Indeed, in v. 14 Paul emphasizes that the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) is given to believers as a “pledge,” guaranteeing their inheritance.

1 Cf. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 226-267; Marcus Barth, *Ephesians*, 2vols. in *The Anchor Bible Commentary* (Doubleday, 1974), 1:94; F. F. Bruce, *NICNT*, p. 263.

2 See *BDAG*, “*κληρώω*,” p. 548.

3 F. F. Bruce, *Ibid.*

Who [i.e., the Holy Spirit] is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:14)

We may also note the parallel in Col 1:12 –

...giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. (Col 1:12)

And Paul likewise speaks to this same blessing given to all believers when he writes:

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. (Rom 8:16–17)

Note also the words of James:

Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? (James 2:5)

Indeed, to understand Paul's meaning in our verse to be that God has given to all believers an inheritance flows from his emphasis in the previous context, that God has ordained His plan to bring about the "fullness of the times," that is, "summing all things in Messiah." This is the inheritance that belongs to every one of the elect in Messiah, namely, abiding throughout eternity in the very presence of God, in full communion with Yeshua and with all of those He has redeemed.

having been predestined according to His purpose – As Paul has emphasized in v. 5 of our chapter, so here he stresses that the inheritance that is ours results from God's sovereign pre-determination, not something brought about by our own actions or worthiness which may have attracted God to show favor towards us. Using the same verb (προορίζω, *proorizō*, "to decide before hand") as he did in v. 5, Paul teaches us that God has chosen believers to be adopted into His family and that He has sovereignly determined that all who are His will be heirs of eternity with Him. Thielman, commenting on the similar emphasis of verses 5 and 11, writes:

In both places his basic thought is the same: the blessing of God's relationship with his people comes at God's joyfully

considered initiative. In verse 5, however, the accent falls on the pleasure that God took in his plan for his people. Here the accent falls on the considered nature of that plan.¹

who works all things after the counsel of His will – God’s predetermined plan to save unto Himself an enumerable group of people and to do so with eternity in view, was “according to His purpose,” but the following phrase piles word upon word to instruct us that this is in full accordance with that which pleases the Almighty. Here, once again, we see the Scriptures emphasizing that God is sovereign over every aspect of this universe, whether we consider something to be small and insignificant or large and having great significance.

We first note that God “works all things,” meaning that even though at times, in our fallen world and from our own finite perspective, things and events may appear to be random, in reality we know by faith in God and in His word that nothing is “random” but that “God causes all things to work together for good, to those who love God and are called according to His purpose” (Rom 8:28). The very fact that our world and the universe continues on, that the sun rises and sets and that the seasons follow the same order year after year, shows that God is the One maintaining the universe. Emphasizing the infinite unity between Father, Son, and Spirit, Paul accredits this sovereign work to Yeshua when He writes:

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. (Col. 1:16–17)

But Paul also strengthens this truth by stating that this sovereign and glorious work of our God is in full accordance (*κατά, kata*) with “the counsel (*βουλή, boule*) of His will (*θελήμα, thelēma*).” The word *boulē*, “counsel,” is used 12 times in the Apostolic Scriptures, referring both to the counsel given by men (whether individuals or councils) as well as the counsel of God. The word always includes the idea of “deliberation,” out of which a decision is forged. As Hoehner notes:

...the term gives a sense of deliberation: therefore, decisions

1 Thielman, *Ephesians in Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament* (Baker, 2010), p. 74.

and plans are not based on a whim but on careful thought and interaction.¹

The obvious emphasis that Paul wish us to understand is that God's predestined plan for the universe and for those He has chosen to be His own is in full harmony with His infinite being and attributes of love, justice, wisdom, and righteousness. Any idea that God ever acts capriciously or without eternal and specific purpose is completely foreign to the Bible, from beginning to end.

Consider again what this means for all who are "in Messiah." It means that God, from all eternity, not only purposed to save all who would be His, but that He also took great pleasure and satisfaction in determining every aspect necessary to bring His will to fruition. This, then, shows what a great and even unfathomable gift has been given to us in our eternal salvation. The inheritance which we now have in Yeshua and the salvation He has made for us, is of greater value and glory than anything with which we might compare it. Which brings us to the next words of Paul in which he extols the gift of salvation as having this final, ultimate and glorious purpose: that God's greatness and glory would be made known.

...to the end that we who were the first to hope in Messiah would be to the praise of His glory. – This parallels vv. 4–6 in which God's choosing of those who would be saved, and His setting all things into place by His sovereign predestination to bring them to Himself in faith, results in "the praise of the glory of His grace," so here Paul reiterates that ultimately the purpose of God's salvation of the elect is "the praise of His glory."

As noted previously,² some take the phrase "we who were first to hope in Messiah" to be describing Jewish believers in distinction from Gentile believers, reading Paul's words to mean "to the end that we [Jew people] who were the first to hope in Messiah would be to the praise of His glory." Commenting on this phrase, Barth writes:

The congregation of the saints is suddenly no longer described only by the anonymous pronoun "we." It is not an amorphous mass in which each individual may be exchanged for another; rather it has a structure. Christ is its head; the apostle and other servants installed by God address it with authority and are its foundation. Thus there is a vertical

1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 230.

2 See p. 53 above.

difference of authority in the church, and now a differentiation on the horizontal level becomes apparent. A group called “we” is distinct from another group addressed as “you.” Though both participate in the same love, election, and grace of God and are one body, some were first called to constitute God’s people, others were added later.¹

But such an interpretation of the phrase “we who were the first to hope in Messiah” goes against a clear and obvious theme of the epistle, namely, that Jews and Gentiles are equally members of God’s family and thereby have the same privileges and responsibilities to serve the Lord Who has saved them. To suggest that in our verse, Paul is teaching that in one case, i.e., that of Jewish believers, God’s predestination and specific purpose in salvation is limited to Jewish people, and that such a specific limitation accrues to the glory of God’s praise.

Further, the immediate context does not support the view that “we who were first to hope in Messiah” is the proper understanding of the Greek phrase. For Paul has just described the ultimate purpose of God’s redemptive plan as being suited to “the fullness of the times,” which has as its focus “the summing up of all things in Messiah.” With this in mind, we should understand the phrase “we who were the first to hope in Messiah” to be all who come to salvation before the final consummation of all things takes place, that is, in the present time which is a time characterized by a sure “hope” of eternity. Note Paul’s use of “hope” in his first epistle to the Thessalonians.

...constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Yeshua Messiah in the presence of our God and Father, (1Thess 1:3)

The time of sure and “steadfast hope” is the time before the return of Yeshua to bring all things to their proper conclusion.

This likewise fits the verb that Paul uses, translated “first to hope” by the NASB. This verb, προελίπζω (*proelipzō*) carries the meaning “to hope before,” and in our context, “to hope before the final summing up of all things in Messiah.” Add to this the fact that the “we” of v. 7 surely includes all who have experienced redemption through the blood of Yeshua, and the “we” of v. 11 surely includes all believers, for they have obtained an inheritance through God’s predestination, then to interpret the “we” of v. 12 to be only Jewish believers seems clearly

¹ Marcus Barth, *Ephesians*, 1.92.

to disregard the flow of the context.

We therefore should understand Paul's words to mean that all, Jew and Gentile, who have been chosen by God unto salvation and adoption into His family— all who, by faith, lay hold of God's redemption in the Messiah and therefore possess the sure hope of Yeshua's return and will bring all things to their proper conclusion—all of these have likewise been predestined to bring about "the praise of His glory." What this means is clear: those who have been saved by God's grace and thus who are indwelt by the Spirit of God Himself, being adopted into the family of God, will never be lost. By God's sovereign grace He has not only predestined every event necessary to bring His elect to Himself, but He has also ordained that they will always be His and never be lost from His blessings and grace. As Yeshua stated:

This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. (Jn 6:39)

And it is this grand truth which Paul emphasizes in the next verse.

13 In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,

Once again, Paul repeats "in Him," that is, "in Yeshua our Messiah, Savior and Lord." Every aspect of our salvation: being justified, being sanctified, and eventually being glorified, is connected to Yeshua and His saving work.

you also – This is the first time in the letter that Paul addresses the Ephesian community directly. As we saw in the previous verse, the "you" in our text is not to be differentiated from the "we" of v. 12. Paul includes the Ephesian believers in all that he has proclaimed regarding the Father's love and grace by which the eternal work of salvation is accomplished for and applied to the elect. Thus, when he writes "you also" he is simply continuing to affirm what is true of all believers and therefore true of the believers in Ephesus and the other communities to which this letter would travel. By this Paul affirms that the Ephesian believers, perhaps the majority of whom were Gentiles, share equally with all believers God's magnificent gift of salvation in Messiah.

after listening to the message of truth – Two aspects are emphasized by Paul in this phrase. First is that the "message of truth" was "heard." While it is well attested that written messages were well known in the

first century, it is also clear that it was expensive to have documents copied. Therefore it is likely that most of those in the Ephesian community were not reading Paul's epistle but had listened as it was read. Further, while some may have had written copies of parts of the Tanach Scriptures, once again the likelihood was that most had become familiar with God's written word through listening as it was read and discussed.

But the point that we should emphasize is that this coincides with Paul's statement in Romans where he writes:

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah. (Rom 10:17)

By God's gracious providence, many of those living in Ephesus had heard the message of the gospel as the message was taken and proclaimed, not only by the Apostles themselves, but also by those who had come to faith through their giving of the "good news."

This reminds us, once again, that it is both our duty and grand privilege to be sharing the "message of truth," for the gospel is the very power of God, through the work of the Spirit, to bring about the salvation of those He is drawing to Himself.

The second emphasis in the phrase is that the "message" is characterized by containing "the truth." All too often people, even well intentioned people, turn the Gospel into their own "product" and inject it with error, which thereby clouds the truth. The message we are to speak and to live out is the message that we find in the inspired word of God. We must know this truth for ourselves and then we must share it with others without diminishing it nor adding something to it. It is the truth that the Spirit uses to set free those who are enslaved in sin.