

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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Past, Present and Future Blessings

by Dan Trygg

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, ⁴ just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love, ⁵ predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, ⁶ unto praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely-bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have the redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of the trespasses (stumbling-asides), according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹ making-known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him ¹⁰ unto an administration of the fullness of the times, ...all things to be summed up in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. In Him ¹¹ also we received an inheritance (or, became a heritage, an allotted people), being predestined according to the purpose of the One inworking all things according to the counsel of His will, ¹² unto us to be unto the praise of His glory, we the ones having-previously-hoped in Christ. ¹³ In Him, y’all also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—in Whom having also believed, y’all were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ who is a pledge/down payment of the inheritance, with a view to the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:3-14

We talked last time about how **God had chosen, before He ever created the world, that those who would be in Christ would turn out a certain way. He designated ahead of time that we would be [1.] holy and blameless before Him (vs. 4); [2.] that we would be “adopted as sons” (vs. 5), meaning that He chose to give us the legal rights and privileges of heirs; and [3.] that we would be to the praise of His glory (vss. 11,12). These were past choices He made for our future with Him.** They are part of the “package” He decided in eternity past, before He ever created this planet, that would be key aspects that He would work out on our behalf. Obviously, since we were not yet created or born, **these decisions had nothing to do with any choices or merit that could be attributed to us. God made these decisions on our behalf totally out of the riches of His grace, and His kind intention.** It was from the fullness of His heart alone, ...not based upon anything we had done, or could do. **Past decisions that would affect our eternal future.**

Because of His abundant grace, He sent Jesus! In eternity past, Jesus was the eternal Word or Thought of God. He was *with* God and, at the same time, *was* God, ...much the same as your thoughts are *with* you and *are* you. Through this eternal Word, God brought all things into existence, and even now sustains them by the word of His power (Jn. 1:1-3; Heb. 1:1-3). **The eternal Word was willing to “empty Himself” in some way in order to become a human child, and came to live among us as the man called Jesus (Phil. 2:5-7; Jn. 1:14). He came to reveal the heart of the Father, and to redeem us from the punishment and bondage of sin (Jn 1:18; Mk 10:45). He took humankind into Himself and died in our place. He not only died for us, but also as us, and somehow we died together with Him (1 Pet. 2:24; 2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 5:6-9; 6:6-8). As Paul explained in Romans 3:24-26, God offers to “justify us” (treat us as innocent) as a gift, ...which is available to us through the redemption which is in Christ. “Redemption” is the payment made to purchase a slave out of bondage.** Christ shed His blood for us, ...His life for ours..., so that we could be set free from the bondage and consequences of sin. God put Him forward publicly on that cross, so that everyone could see that His infinitely valuable life would *more than satisfy* any debt incurred by us. **Jesus became the ransom price to redeem us.** This payment also removed any leverage or basis of accusation that the devil would try to use against us. Christ “canceled the certificate of debt... which was against us, ...and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Col. 2:14). In this way, **not only is there a basis made for our forgiveness and restoration in Him, but the enemy has also been disarmed.** He has no more legal right to accuse us, and no authority over us (Col. 1:13; 2:15). Even *more than that*, however, **He did all this when we were spiritually dead toward Him (Col. 2:13), ...and He made us alive in Him!**

So, back to Ephesians 1, when Paul is listing the blessings God has given to us, He says, “In Him we *have redemption* through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions” (vs. 7). **This is a present blessing, based upon a past action in history.** By the riches of His grace, God sent Jesus to pay our debt, die in our place, and purchase our forgiveness and freedom. **Because of this, we who are in Him are holy (set apart, dedicated) and blameless (unblemished) before Him in love. This is our present standing, because we have trusted in His past provision.**

According to verse 11, **we have also obtained an inheritance in Him.** He doesn’t spell this out, but **it has been provided by His grace and is intended to cause us to be to the praise of His glory** (vs. 12). God Himself is working all things out according to His purpose, including how this will come about. From verse 10, we learn that **God’s agenda during this time is to cause everything to point to Christ. He is the focal point of this part of salvation history.** Philippians 2:5-11 declares the same thing. Because He was willing to “empty Himself” and humble Himself, it is God’s purpose to highly exalt Him above every other name. 1 Corinthians 15:23-27 says that the Father is bringing all things into subjection under Jesus’ feet, during this time. **To the degree that we are yielded and**

responsive to Him, we are living out the agenda of God for the remainder of this age, ...until Jesus Himself comes in glory to establish His messianic kingdom on this earth. God, who is “in-working all things according to the counsel/purpose of His will, ...toward US to be to the praise of His glory...” Who are the “US”? “...the ones having previously hoped in Christ” (vs. 12).

There is a noticeable change in verse 13. Paul shifts his address from an inclusive “we” to a direct “y’all”. In the following verse (vs. 14), Paul returns to the “we/our” focus. **He takes this “aside” to describe and clarify how they (the recipients of his letter) came to be included in the “we” he had been talking about in this passage.** The “we” are the ones “having previously hoped in Christ”. **How did they come to be “in Christ”?** “...in Whom, *hearing* the message of truth, the gospel (‘good message’) of your salvation, ...in Whom, *believing*, ...y’all *were sealed* (certified, marked with an identifying mark of ownership) in/with/by the Holy Spirit of the promise...” **They came into Christ as they heard the good news and believed or trusted in Jesus. It is not enough to hear the message, ...or even to know that it is true (cf. Jas. 2:19).** There must be a further action taken. **The hearer must choose to trust in Christ, ...to entrust themselves to Christ. When a person does that, the Holy Spirit puts the mark of Jesus upon them.** As Paul writes in Colossians 1:13, at that moment of faith, the Father “drew us to Himself out from the authority of the darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son of His love.” Or, as the apostle John wrote, “whosoever took Him, He gave to them authority to become children of God, ...to the ones believing/trusting unto His name or person” (Jn. 1:12). **Again, it is not enough to hear or know. There must be a definitive choice to identify with Jesus, ...to “take” Him. If we hear, believe in (trust in) and take Him as the Redemption, Redeemer and King, then God will make us new, transfer us out of the authority of darkness, and seal us with the mark that identifies us as one of God’s children.**

The Holy Spirit Himself, ...His abiding Presence upon and in us..., is that seal, down payment and guarantee of our inheritance. (Note that Paul returns to the inclusive “we”. The person who had been an outsider [y’all], had now been included in the family of God [us/our], by faith in Jesus.) The language in Ephesians 1:14 is not entirely clear. It just states that “y’all were sealed with ...the Spirit”. It is not specific if the Spirit does this, or God. Paul writes about this same event, however, in two other passages. There, it is very plain. **God is the One who is sealing us with the Holy Spirit.** 2 Corinthians 1:21,22 says, “The One confirming us together with y’all in Christ, and anointing us, is God, ...the One sealing us and giving the down payment of the Spirit in our hearts.” 2 Corinthians 5:5 says almost exactly the same thing, “...**God, the One giving to us the down payment of the Spirit.**” The word translated as “pledge” or “down payment” was a legal term that was the first installment of a contract. It was meant to be a tangible first step toward the guarantee of the full contract. It had two dimensions to it. First, it was a *present* price of commitment, and, second, it was meant to be the guarantee of full payment in the *future*.

What is the Spirit a down payment of? It is a down payment or guarantee of “our inheritance”, or “the inheritance of us”! Just as verse 11 could be understood in two ways, so this portion of verse 14 is also capable of two interpretations. Either it is to be understood as a guarantee of *our* inheritance, ...or it a guarantee that God is coming to fulfill His promise to *all of us* who are in Christ, ...namely, that *we* are the inheritance, the “allotted portion”, a people for God’s own possession. The next phrase supports this second understanding, “...unto the redemption of the possession...”. In other words, **the Holy Spirit is the identifying mark, the down payment, and earnest of the full redemption which God intends to complete when Jesus comes back.** We live in the age of “the already, but not yet.” We already have *some* aspects of our heavenly inheritance, ...and we ourselves are already set apart and are capable of living for God and bringing Him glory. When Jesus returns, however, ...**when God comes to complete what He purposed before the foundation of the world, then the prophecies and promises will be fulfilled, ...the partial will be made full, ...the mortal part of our old selves will be “swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4), and God Himself will dwell among the people He has redeemed, a people who have chosen Him, ...a people who will delight to serve and honor Him.** All things *will be* summed up in Christ, ...sin and evil will be removed, and the shadow of death will be gone forever. **The world will be remade, and we will dwell with God forever, as the people of HIS possession! What a glorious day!**

So, when we go back to the main sentence, Paul is saying, “**Blessed be God, ...who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ, JUST AS... before the foundation of the world, He had a plan.** He decided that those who would be “IN CHRIST” would be holy and blameless, adopted as full heirs, and would be to the praise of His glory. **IN CHRIST, we have redemption, freedom and forgiveness from sin, and have been purchased to be a people for HIM,** a people who are set apart to be dedicated to Him, a people who have obtained an inheritance (or, who have *become* His inheritance) and have been marked and sealed as His own by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit, to serve as a guarantee of the fulness of all that He has promised. **This has all been by God’s initiative. It was nothing we had done. He has made these decisions in eternity past; ...He has poured out His grace in space/time history in Jesus’ life, death and resurrection; ...He has made known His grace to us, and, upon our faith response to Him, ...He has sealed us for His own; ...He is working all of this out in the world around us, as well as in the depths of our own hearts; ...and He will bring to completion what He started, ...so that Christ might be exalted, and our lives might lift HIM up.**