

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Abundance of the Glory of the Inheritance

by Dan Trygg

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what is the wealth/abundance of the glory of His inheritance in the saints..."

Ephesians 1:18

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ unto an inheritance which is uncorrupted and undefiled and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵ who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed (uncovered) in the last time."

1 Peter 1:3-5

"By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going."

Hebrews 11:8

"And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able (powerful) to build up and to give the inheritance among all those who are having-been-sanctified."

Acts 20:32

We have been working our way through Ephesians 1. Paul introduced a series of amazing things that God has done on our behalf. Some of these were decisions He made on our behalf, even before He created the world. **He determined that those who would be in Christ would be holy and blameless. We would be adopted as full heirs. We would come to be to the praise of His glory.** His grace was freely given for us, so that we could have **redemption** (freedom from slavery to sin) through His blood, and **forgiveness** (release and sending-away) of our sins. **He made known to us the hidden plan of His purpose in Christ, so that we might choose to join with God's agenda, ...** that we, and all things, might be united and headed up in Christ. In 1:11 it says that "In Whom **we obtained an inheritance** (Lit., 'we were appointed by lot', or, 'we were given an allotment'), having been designated ahead of time according to the purpose of Him who inworks all things according to the counsel of His will, **unto us to be to the praise of His glory...**". **This is a very expansive, open-ended statement, raising our curiosity and expectation.** Truly, as Paul had exclaimed at the beginning of that entire paragraph, **"Blessed be God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing...!"**

Paul was praying for these believers to come to perceive the things that God has made available to them. The way he writes makes it clear that **the insights they need must be sought out from God and pursued.** They require wisdom or skill in coming to know God and these spiritual possibilities. They also require an "uncovering" of things that have been out of sight, ...things that had been intended for them, but had not yet been made evident. **God would have to "reveal" these things to them. He would have to give them the ability to see and perceive them.**

Paul mentioned three things that were important for them to know and understand: (1.) the hope or expectation of His calling; (2.) the wealth/abundance of the glory of His inheritance in the saints; and (3.) what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward them. Last time, we talked about "the hope of His calling". God has called us to be active partners with Him in the work He has for us to do in this world. We need to expect that, and be able to recognize His working, so that we can engage with Him in the opportunities He would place before us. **Today, we will explore what the "abundance of the glory of His inheritance" may mean.**

The word translated as "inheritance" here has a wide range of meanings. It occurs 168 times in the Greek translation of the OT, and an additional 14 times in the NT. It means "possession, property, allotted-portion, share, or inheritance". **If we are going to understand this, we need to do a little background work.** What does this word mean in the context of the Bible? How is it used? What are the possibilities here?

(1.) God Himself is described as the inheritance of His people. Psalm 16:5 says, "Yahweh is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot." The same underlying Hebrew word there is used in Psalm 73:26; 119:57; 142:5; and Lamentations 3:24, referring to Yahweh as our "portion" or "inheritance". Interestingly, at the end of Genesis 14, Abram returned *all* of the plunder he had captured from the kings who had taken Lot and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah captive. He did not rescue them to gain wealth, and he did not want any of them to think that he had become rich from *their* possessions. He returned everything to their original owners. In response, God commended him, saying, "Do not fear, Abram. I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward" (15:1). With God, Abram would have all that he would need. Abram had chosen God Himself, the great Provider, as his portion.

(2.) The people of God are referred to as Yahweh's inheritance. In 1 Samuel 10:1, when the prophet was anointing Saul to be prince over Israel, he said, "Has not the Lord anointed you ruler upon His people, upon Israel? ...He has anointed you over His inheritance to be ruler" (LXX). Psalm 94:14 says, "Yahweh will not abandon His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance." 1 Kings 8:51,53 says, "...they are Your people and Your inheritance which You have brought forth from Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace..., ⁵³ For You have separated them from all the peoples of the earth as Your inheritance." Cf. Deut. 32:9; Joel 2:17.

(3.) **The land was referred to as an inheritance, or allotted portion.** This is the most common usage of the term in the OT. It is used to refer to God giving the land of Canaan to Israel as their inheritance. When Joshua divided the land up, and portioned it out to the tribes and individual families, each allotment of property was considered to be *the inheritance of the Lord given to His people for their possession*. Of course, this idea began with God's call to Abram in Genesis 12. He promised, "...to your descendants I will give this land" (12:7; cf. 13:17). This promise was believed by Abram, and was passed along to Isaac and Jacob. Psalm 105:9-11 states, "The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac,"¹⁰ He then confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant,¹¹ saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance..." He gave the land of those that the Israelites defeated and dispossessed to them, as an inheritance (Psa. 135:12; 136:21,22).

(4.) **Sometimes, money and possessions were referred to as "an inheritance".** In Luke 12:13, a man asked Jesus if He would divide his father's estate between his brother and himself.

(5.) **We also have an inheritance laid up for us in heaven,** ...an inheritance which is our birthright as ones who have been born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is described as "undecaying, undefiled, and unfading". This is reserved or kept in heaven for us, and will be revealed when Christ returns (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Paul was praying that we might come to perceive "the wealth of the glory of His inheritance in the saints". This was the second thing we were to come to understand. The first was to know what is the "expectation of His calling." **What has God called us to?** And how does this second petition fit with that? **God has called us to be a people set apart for Him, ...a people for His own possession and purpose. And, what is that purpose?** According to Ephesians 1:9,10, **His purpose is to bring everything together in Christ, ...that everything would be summed up in, or point to, Christ.** God has called us to be His people appointed to partner with Him in this great endeavor. **We are to live to magnify Him, lead people to Him, and make active disciples of those who will respond to the message of His grace. That is our calling! That is our purpose, as followers of Christ!**

What do all of these word pictures of "inheritance" all have in common? They are referring to resources that are available to those who are the "heirs" or "owners" of the inheritance. God Himself is the Creator and Distributor of these resources. **It is important for us to understand that our place is as stewards. Only God is the ultimate Owner.** We ourselves have been called-out and have been recruited to participate with Him in His agenda to magnify Jesus, during the remainder of this age. **We are "resources" to Him, in that we are to be co-workers in His kingdom enterprise. But, He also has given resources to us,** ...our time, talent, skills, spiritual gifts and abilities, and physical means..., **which are to be used in partnership with Him.** But, we are not to simply look at what we have in our own pockets, or what we currently see in our possession. **We are to see that God has a wealth, and abundance, of resources which He can open up and provide for us as we are doing His will.** There is no shortage with God. As Hudson Taylor observed, "God's will, done in God's way, will never lack God's supply."

This is not prosperity preaching, or some "get rich theology". No. **The early Christian movement did not grow because of material wealth. It grew because everyday people developed eyes and ears of faith, so that, like Abram, when God called them to do something, or go somewhere, they fearlessly did what He said.** The "inheritance" or "allotted portion" God has called us to operate in *has* all the resources necessary to do what He would ask of us. They might need to be discovered, or developed, but they are available, ...they *come* with the *calling*.

One of the predominant themes attached to the word "inheritance" has to do with territory. God gave people an inheritance, ...a territory in which they lived and operated. Often, they were called to expand into new territory, or go to a new place. **In the OT, this often involved the displacement of other people. In the NT, it involves the conversion and attachment of other people.** We are to *bring* the good news, and *be* the good news to others, ...not be a threat to them. Our "warfare" is not with flesh and blood. The opponents we seek to displace are the spiritual forces that have been entrenched in peoples' lives. **As the darkness is pushed back by the light of Jesus, ...the light of grace and truth..., people will be drawn to Him, and will find freedom.** *That* is what we are called to, and part of *the wealth of the glory* of our inheritance in Christ enables us to do that. The "glory" is the radiance of God's goodness, grace and love shining out from the lives of those who are filled with His Spirit, and who show love in practical ways. Jesus called people to come to Him and experience a life that would fill their emptiness, if they would follow Him. *That* is our message! It is the enemy who steals, kills and destroys. Jesus came to give life, and to give it overflowing (Jn. 10:10). *That* is part of the inheritance that is available to those who follow Jesus! **Jesus calls us to disciple the nations.** In Psalm 2, Yahweh spoke of His Son, saying, "Ask of Me, and I will give the nations as Your inheritance." *We* are called to that same inheritance, ...the ends of the earth (Psalm 67).

The apostle Paul said that **God and the word of His grace are powerful to build us up and give us the inheritance** among those who have been set apart for Him. God can lead us beyond words to spiritual insight and into tangible experience. **Ask Him to lead you deeper and help you see more clearly what He has for you.**