

• *Our part in God's plan to reunite the universe*

At the end of verse 10 Paul moved from the present to the future. God has a plan for the future, a plan 'to bring together all things in Christ'. Now he speaks of our part in that plan.

God starts this work of reuniting the universe – says Paul – by bringing into being a united human race under Christ. Paul refers first to Jewish Christians ('we who first hoped in Christ') and then goes on to mention the Ephesians who were gentile Christians ('you also'). In this passage 'we' means the earliest generation of Jewish Christians; 'you' means 'you gentile Christians at Ephesus'.

**Jewish Christians**

First, **he has something to say about Jewish Christians.** *'In Him also we were allocated an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will'*<sup>1</sup>, *in order that we might be to the praise of His glory, we who first hoped in Christ'*<sup>2</sup>.

1:11

1:12

**1. Christians are allocated an inheritance**

**1. Christians are allocated an inheritance.** The translation here is disputed. (i) Sometimes it is taken to mean 'we were chosen' (see the New International Version – NIV). (ii) Sometimes it is taken to mean that we were 'made an inheritance' for God. The idea that God has believers as His inheritance is sometimes found in the Bible. (iii) Sometimes it is taken to mean that we have already obtained our inheritance; 'we have obtained an inheritance' says the old Authorised Version. The first interpretation makes Paul repetitive; it twice has the idea of being chosen. The second interpretation is good biblical thinking but has no parallel in Ephesians. The third interpretation gives the impression that inheritance is automatically received with our initial salvation; this is out of harmony with Paul's teaching elsewhere.

• *The most likely translation of 1:11*

• *an inheritance "allocated" – but which requires faith and patience to be "inherited"*

The most likely translation is: 'we were given an inheritance' or 'we were made heirs' (see NIV footnote) – that is, people who will get an inheritance. I translate: 'we were allocated an inheritance'. It is common biblical teaching that believers will 'inherit' the promises. They must persist in faith so as to get to their inheritance. Paul often mentions it after he has mentioned justification or sonship (as in Romans 8:16–17) and it seems he does the same here. He mentions the matter explicitly in 1:18.

**2. The pathway of our life is also planned**

**2. The pathway of our life is also planned.** We are allocated an inheritance, *'being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will...'*. This means that not only is our actual future inheritance planned for us; also God has planned the course that we shall take in life to get to our inheritance. Our good works are foreordained (as Paul will say in 2:10). God is working everything together in our life so as to bring us to our destiny.

**3. Fulfilling our destiny will bring glory to God**

**3. Our fulfilling our destiny will bring glory to God.** When we achieve God's will for our life it will be 'to the praise of His glory'. We shall get honour for achieving something of God's purpose, and He will get honour too.

**The gentiles also involved**

Next, **Paul tells us that gentiles will be involved in this also.** In verses 11–12 Paul is speaking of 'we who first hoped in Christ', the first Christians who were all Jews. But now he says that gentile believers are destined for inheritance also (see what he will say in 3:6). He says, *'In Christ also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,*

• **The same salvation and inheritance comes to gentile Christians**

and having believed in Him, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise <sup>☞1</sup>, who is the down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory' <sup>☞2</sup>. The same salvation and inheritance that has come to Christian Jews has also come to Christian gentiles. The proof that Christian Jews and Christian gentiles are equal at this point is that gentiles have received the Holy Spirit just as Christian Jews have.

☞1 1:13  
☞2 1:14

• **The seal of the Spirit**

After a person has heard the gospel and has trusted Jesus Christ, he can expect to receive the 'seal' of the Holy Spirit. We remember the story of Acts 10 and 11. When the gentiles first came into the church it was perfectly clear that God had accepted gentile believers because He gave them the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:44–47 and 11:15–18 are parallel passages to Ephesians 1:13.

• **The gift of the Spirit is a conscious experience**

This gift of the Spirit is obviously a conscious experience. Paul is referring to more than a secret and hidden new birth.

- (i) It was an obviously experiential matter in Acts 10 and 11.
- (ii) Paul goes on to say that the seal of the Spirit is a down-payment of our inheritance; and it is not possible to have a down-payment of heavenly glory without knowing about it.
- (iii) Similarly in Galatians 3:1–5 Paul refers to a gift of the Spirit which follows simple faith. Paul was looking back to something that was well-known in their experience.
- (iv) How can a 'seal' be secret and hidden? A 'seal' is that which makes things certain and obvious. The outpouring of the Spirit is obvious to others (as in Acts 10:44, 45) and it is surely obvious to the persons themselves (see Romans 8:15–17 which has much in common with this passage).



• **A foretaste – a down-payment**

The sealing of the Spirit is a foretaste of heavenly reward. You were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, says Paul, 'who is the down-payment of our inheritance until the redemption of the possession, to the praise of His glory' <sup>☞1</sup>. The sealing of the Spirit is a down-payment of heavenly reward. It is a part of heavenly joy, empowerment and assurance that will be fully given to us in heaven. Paul says it is a down-payment until we get our full reward on the day when our final redemption comes to us, that is, on the day of resurrection.

☞1 1:14

• **A motivation to go after our final inheritance**

The sealing of the Spirit should motivate us to go after our final inheritance, because it is the foretaste of our final inheritance. The 'sealing' is an experience now of what we shall have in great abundance in heavenly glory. The person 'saved through fire' loses inheritance. The person 'rewarded' receives a high level of glory. The 'down-payment' of the Spirit is a sample of the reward he is looking for.

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