

Secure in Christ

Grace Church of Gainesville

July 4, 2010

Corey Shepherd

The aim of our text this morning is to make us feel secure inside of Jesus Christ. We'll be coming from Ephesians 1.11-14. The 4th sermon in our march through Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

I was thinking last night about how to begin in such a way that you see the importance of this text for your life. And the massive challenge that occurred to me about how to do that was that the culture we live in is probably more successful than any culture in the history of mankind at giving its people a sense of security. So many people here have stable jobs; live in safe neighborhoods; have their children well educated; have access to lots of opportunity; a strong and good Military.

The effect of this is that often, God plays very quietly in the conscious of most Northern Virginians.

Life, minus God, seems relatively secure on its own.

ill. Church member in NY.

Security is just really, really big business in America. We protect our property, our name, our passwords, our future, our health....really everything. And because we live in a prosperous segment of a prosperous culture, our sense of security increases.

And while I'm not advocating that you drop your insurance, and quit saving your money, I want to remind you that any sense of security we have in things other than God is very, very fleeting.

Let's not kid ourselves this morning about how little movement it would take in worldwide politics or the natural world, or a personal tragedy to COMPLETELY destabilize our situation.

It may be the mantra of our day that we are the captains of our own fate, but the truth is that every moment we continue to exist is given to us directly by God.

So, to the secure among us this morning I want to challenge you.....where does your security come from? From where do you gain your sense of stability?

Now, there are others among us that don't feel so secure. Your lives feel like that board game with a little metal ball and the wobbling floor where the player tries to tilt the game so that the ball moves in the right direction. You feel unstable.

You tried to find stability in marriage, job, etc.....and its let you down. You know, you need something else.

Oh, friend, it is for you especially this morning, that I believe there is a word from God to bear you up.

Ephesians 1 began by **listing out some of the spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ**. Notice this in verse 3....read verse 3:

And then Rod has shown us many of these spiritual blessings:

- We are In Him (4)
- We are chosen (4)
- Predestined (5)
- Adopted (5)
- Redeemed (7)
- Forgiven (7)
- We know the mystery of the gospel (9)

And now we come to verses 11-14.....**two more spiritual blessings** that are ours if we are IN Christ.

Read 11-14

And these two blessings are described by Paul in order to **make us feel secure in the love and power of Jesus Christ**.

Every area of your life is prone to instability....your health, your marriage, your children, your job.... And so Paul here is going to give us two spiritual blessings that we have in Christ so that in this very unstable life, we have a sense of security....of grounding....of certainty.

From this feeling of security inside of the love and power of who Christ is will come a stability of soul enabling us to serve Christ joyfully, faithfully, come what may.

The first of these two blessings is our inheritance.

1. There is Security Because There is an Inheritance

Read 11

Alright so let's talk about this inheritance.

Do you have a hope beyond the instability of this life that makes its difficulties manageable?

This is what Paul had. He wants us to have it. You see it in **Romans 8.18**: "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

Paul wants us to share this tremendous hope: our future inheritance is so great that it makes every trouble in life seem small by comparison.

What is this inheritance?

There are at least **two aspects** to it.

1. The World

First, the inheritance is the world.

- **Romans 4.13**, "The promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be *heir of the world* was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith."
In other words, **if you share the faith of Abraham**, then you are a fellow heir with him, and the inheritance, Paul said, is "the world."
- If you are an heir of God, then you will inherit what is God's. **And God owns the world.** **Psalm 24.1** "The earth is the Lord's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." So if the earth is the Lord's and everything in it, then the heirs of the Lord will inherit the earth and everything in it.
- In **Psalm 2.8** God says to his Son, "Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession." And if we are fellow heirs with the Son, then we will inherit the nations.
- Paul puts it this way in **1 Corinthians 3:21-23**: "For all things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God."

What is our inheritance?

The world.

The earth and all that is in it.

The nations.

All things.

That is staggering. But it's security in an unstable world.

2. God Himself

Second, the inheritance is not only the world, but God himself. In fact, if we said that our great inheritance was mainly the things God had made, and not God himself, we would be idolaters.

The **great hope** of the Christian church is described in **Revelation 21.3** like this: "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as THEIR God."

This was the **great hope of the Old Testament saints**, even though they had strong hopes for a land of their own. **Psalm 73:25-26**, "Whom have I in heaven but You? And besides You, I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my PORTION forever."

Psalm 16.5-6 "The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance."

This is our great inheritance: the Lord himself! We get God! Eternally, He will be for us! O how we need to **cultivate a great taste for him and his fellowship**. If he is not precious to you, what a **stranger you are to your inheritance!**

If you **love his gifts**, think on how **wonderful the giver** must be. And think what an insult it is to take a gift from someone's hand and delight in it more than you delight in the giver.

ill. your dad never came home from a business trip with gifts in hand, so that you would spend all your time admiring those gifts. He brought gifts home out of love for you, and to increase your love for him.

God himself is our portion. We were **made for him**. And all the good things that he has made for us are meant to reveal more of him and **send our hearts singing to God**.

One more beautiful thing about this inheritance that is ours. When we cross the threshold of heaven, and receive our inheritance, we'll also **have redeemed and glorified bodies. The reason this is so crucial is that if we are to enjoy the world and all that is in it, and if all these good things are not to compete with God and become idols, then we must have bodies capable of deeper, higher, fuller joys than we presently have. And we must be rid of all the pain and crying and tears of this world.**

Oh, what an inheritance is ours.

Oh, what a **ballast** in the stormy seas of this life. What a **great security**. What a **strong hope**.

What if you KNEW, really knew, that the future is glorious, and that in the end everything will work out?

Page 3

What if you knew that that future joys will one day make all present suffering seem small....how would it change you?

Would it make your current instability manageable?

God's aim is to secure us IN HIM, so that we can obey him, and live joyfully in an ever changing world.

Now, let me add on another layer of security here. Another layer of certainty. How did we come into such an inheritance?

ill. Have you ever received one of these? I've received one....modest....nothing life changing, when my paternal grandmother died.

But still, it's a blessing. And I received it because I'm a son to my father; who is a son to my Grandmother. So **my son-ship was my way into this very modest inheritance.**

How did we come into this eternal, God-given inheritance? Look there at verse 11.....

So, clearly, **being predestined led to the inheritance.** If we move up a few verses to 4, we see how **predestination and sonship are tied....**

Read 4 and 5. So you see, before the foundation of the world, he chose you, or predestined you to be His son....and **as a son, you become an heir.** And your benefactor is very wealthy.....the earth is the LORDS and the fullness thereof.

But the thing I want to draw your attention to so you feel secure inside the love and power of Christ, is that your **sonship was determined by the benefactor.** God made you his son, because it was his joy to give you a glorious inheritance.

Now, all kinds of disagreement surrounds this doctrine of predestination. It's a family discussion among sincere Christians with different takes. But what we must say, is that **it is a doctrine intended to give you security.**

ill. have you seen these promotional contests where you can be selected to play 18 holes of golf with a pro, or have dinner with a movie star. Maybe your name is drawn. Maybe you win some contest.

And I have to say, winning something like that has just **never intrigued me.** Not because I'm not interested in meeting a famous person, but because I know that I'm just there because they signed some contract to promote a particular company...and **the company drew up this little gimic, and now I'm there.**

I mean, I'm sure they'd be nice and all, but I'm not their friend. Playing golf with me is not on their top 100 list of interesting things to do.

But here's the thing. The beautiful thing. You did not **earn your way** into this inheritance. Your name **was not randomly drawn from a hat.** You are not just in on the **company plan.** Before the world was made, God chose you to be his own son, so that you could share in his glorious inheritance for all eternity. **You are welcome here.** You have been brought **here by the love of your benefactor.** God wants you.

And this great inheritance is yours. **In an unstable world, that is the sort of security I need.**

Now, let's look at the second spiritual blessing Paul describes in this text.

2. There is Security because we have the Holy Spirit

Now, the first thing I want us to **notice here is that the timing of receiving this spiritual blessing.**

Look at verse 13....when you believed...you received....and in receiving, this inheritance we have been talking about was immediately guaranteed to you.

That is absolutely critical. Why? Because it **does away with any idea of classism** within the people of God.

You may have been saved for 50 years, and be the godliest guy in the Northern Hemisphere. You may have been converted last night. Same fullness of the Spirit's work on your behalf. **Same incomprehensible inheritance.**

In this passage specifically, and in Ephesians as a whole, one **thing Paul is working to tear down is the division in the church between believing Jews, and Gentiles.** This will be especially true in 2.11-22. But its also going on here.

Notice the **'we' in verse 11.** He's talking about **Jews.** They received this great inheritance.

But then notice the **'you' 13....nows he's talking about Gentiles....they get the Holy Spirit who guarantees something....what....**

Verse 14....our inheritance.

Conclusion---there is no distinction in God's people.

Galatians 3.28-29, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”

Page 4

All of us are co-heirs of this wonderful inheritance. **All of us have the Holy Spirit, sealing us, guaranteeing our eternity.**

Now, **I don't think in our church there's a classism issue between ethnic groups, or genders**, but I think one thing we need to hear from this text is that all of God's people...**no matter their 'level' of maturity**.....

- we all have the Spirit.
- We all have the inheritance.
- We all have all of this laundry list of spiritual blessings.

Sure, some may have more knowledge.....more experience.....more maturity.

But **maturity in Christ is simply coming to realize and be transformed by what has been true of you all along.** Maturity comes as these spiritual blessings effect us more and more. And the spiritual blessings are ours from the beginning.

So be careful about ranking things where God makes no distinction.

ill. It's like showing up at the **voting booth on election day**. Nobody asks how much money you gave to the **political action group**. They don't ask for evidence of whether or not you **put your flag out on Independence Day**. They don't see if you **sing during the anthem at games**, or take your **hat off**. They don't care if there's a **copy of the Constitution** on your bookshelf at home.

They want to know one thing: are you a citizen? If you are.....you get to vote.

Those who have trusted in Christ have ALL the spiritual blessings of the sons of God....whether they were born into the family last week or 4 decades ago.

Ok, that is the timing of the spiritual blessings. **Let's look at the nature of it.**

We must answer 2 questions in order to mine these riches:

1. What does it mean to be sealed by the Holy Spirit?
2. What does it mean to say that the Holy Spirit is a guarantee?

Sealed by the Holy Spirit

The idea here is that the **Holy Spirit in us functions to authenticate us** as true sons and daughters of God.

In **2 Corinthians 1.22** Paul uses this same language of sealing and guaranteeing, “and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.”

Notice that the the Holy Spirit is **PUT ON US** as a seal.

- **It's like he's stamped on us.** Same idea in **Revelation 7.3**, where the seal of God is on the people of God to protect them from wrath.
- Another example is **Romans 4:11 where Abraham's circumcision is called the sign and seal of the righteousness he had by faith.**
It authenticates the righteousness as genuine.
- And in **1 Corinthians 9:2 Paul says that his converts are the seal of his apostleship.**
Paul's converts authenticated his apostleship. They demonstrated that he was the real thing.

This is **very similar in ancient times to what a King did with his specially designed signet ring**. When a decree was written he would press his signet ring into hot wax and then that impression would be applied to the decree that went out into all the land. The mark of the signet ring authenticated that the decree was truly from the King himself. It was no imposter.

So, before God, the Holy Spirit is our seal...the validation of our sonship. The authenticator that we are not imposters.

Holy Spirit is a guarantee

Some of your translations, or maybe a footnote, say that the **Holy Spirit is the down payment for our inheritance** until we acquire possession of it.

That is helpful. The Holy Spirit **guarantees our inheritance through a down payment.**

There is a **now, and not yet reality** to our experience of redemption. We **experience some of the blessings of redemption now** (that is the down payment....the guarantee), but those same blessings point forward to something future, and better.

ill.I remember going to put things on **layaway as a kid**. Man that was beautiful and painful at the same time.

It was always the big ticket items. I mean, we could walk into the store with a buck, and walk out with a GI Joe figure. But the GI Joe Aircraft Carrier, now that was a different story. You had to put that behemoth on layaway. And what we did was put a deposit down....a down payment....as if to say, yes, we really want it. We are serious.....and one day, will pay the full price and claim it as ours truly.

And so when you walk into Kmart, you get a little taste of that awesome toy b/c its sitting back there on the shelf....ooo....that'll be good when I get that home. But it wasn't full joy b/c I could look but not touch.

Page 5

And in this way, the Holy Spirit functions as a down payment of our future redemption.

Our taste of the Spirit now, gives positive evidence to us that God's promises about the future are true. This inheritance will indeed be glorious.

Take note. The Holy Spirit is a seal, and as such authenticates our sonship before God. As a down payment, the Holy Spirit authenticates to us the realness of our future inheritance.

The Holy Spirit in us is a **foretaste of heaven's glory**. Our experience in the Holy Spirit **whets our appetite** for heaven.

Paul talks a lot about this experience:

2 Corinthians 5.4-5, "For while we are still in this tent, we groan, being burdened—not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

Romans 8.23, "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits [first experience; the down payment] of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."

How do we experience this down payment?

Imagine the **most treasured experiences of the Holy Spirit** we have ever had and then realize they are only a foretaste, the tip of the iceberg, of what is to come.

- Remember the **release in coming to Christ** and knowing you were **forgiven**?
- Remember that time when in **worship you were struck with awe**?
- Remember the time you **followed the Spirit's leading** and were wonderfully used?
- Remember **the satisfaction of finding the fruits of the Spirit** surprising you with goodness where you once responded wickedly?

Think of all this and then multiply it a million fold.

Do you have the guarantee of the Holy Spirit? It is the real thing, but nevertheless just a taste! What will the first 5 minutes be like when we come into the fullness of our inheritance? The first hour? The first 10 years?

Have you tasted the down payment of the Holy Spirit? No? Then...BELIEVE!

So you see the logic of security in this text. You were predestined before the world was made to become sons and daughters of God; brothers and sisters of the firstborn Jesus.

As sons and daughter, you become co-heirs with the risen Christ, and receive an inheritance beyond comprehension: the world and God himself, experienced in glorified bodies.

And this inheritance (and your sonship) is guaranteed to you by the Holy Spirit of promise.

What security! What anchor dropping security that is in the storms that life brings!

Conclusion

I want to close with two challenges...two applications. Both leap from the text, and neither of them have I given fair attention to.

First, challenge....look at the beginning of **verse 11, "in Him,"** and then the beginning of **13, "in Him."** Are you in Him friend? It means, in Christ.

- Are you in Christ, where there is satisfaction and peace?
- Or are you outside of him where there is no refuge from him?

More than any other description in Paul's writing, this is what he uses to describe people who are forgiven....people who are saved. Hundreds of times, Paul uses the phrase. Dozens of times in Ephesians alone. So the question comes to you now, are you in Christ?

In Christ, are **all of these blessings**. Outside of Christ, there are **no blessings**. There is only **horror**.

And so I ask you has your life at some point **collided with this great Christ** in such a way that you went from be **separated to in?** From **outside to in?** From under **wrath to forgiven?** From **enemy to son** or daughter?

You come **into Christ by believing the gospel**. That is what verse 13 says.

The gospel is the word of salvation to those who will believe it. **Here's the gospel:**

.....

Oh friend today, **Jesus will take you in**. He will make you his. He will give you a great inheritance. He will give you His Spirit.

But if you won't come into Him.....there is no refuge from Him.

Page 6

Second challenge. Where, Christian, do you look for security? Are you looking to costumes of security—things that give the appearance, but ultimately can guarantee nothing? Or do you look to Christ....his inheritance....his Holy Spirit as the stabilizing force in your life?

This is no small matter. Notice why:

And so we see this in verses 12 and 14 in this little phrase, 'to the praise of his glory.'

These great truths of inheritance and Holy Spirit are described to give you security inside the power and love of Christ....when that is happening.....praise is going up from your heart and mouth to God. And there is nothing God is more passionate about than gaining glory for himself.

In an unstable, uncertain world, there is a secure place to live. Its inside of Christ. Let's live there this morning.

May it have that effect on us today.