

Series on the Book of Ephesians  
Ephesians 1:18  
Sermon #12  
August 21, 1988

## GOD'S INHERITANCE L. Dwight Custis

If you have your Bible open to Ephesians chapter 1, we come today to the second request in Paul's prayer. Perhaps it might be better to say that we come to the third request, because the first one is actually the one that is mentioned there in verse 17 of chapter 1, "That the God or our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit (should be capitalized--the Holy spirit) of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding (hearts) being enlightened." Then, he goes on to say "that y may know (first of all) what is the hope of his calling, (secondly) and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And (third) what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." So, whether you call this request number two or request number three, all three have to do with each one of us and we ought to be keenly interested in the things that Paul wanted the Ephesians in that day to know.

Thinking specifically of those requests, beginning with verse 18, "That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and so on, you notice that you have three things here that relate to the Lord. You have His calling, you have His inheritance, and you have His power. All of these have to do with the Lord and all of them have to do with us, those of us who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Speaking of the inheritance, because we are going to be thinking, this morning, of that request, "What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Some say that this inheritance is really the saints' inheritance, that is, it is our inheritance; but it is simply spoken of as God's inheritance because it is the inheritance that He gives to us. Others say that the hope which is mentioned in the request that we considered last week, "the hope of his calling," has to do with what the saints will experience internally in heaven; that is, what we are going to be when we get to heaven, and that the inheritance has to do with what we will have externally in heaven--that is heaven itself and all of the blessings that will surround us there, the glory of that new order. I prefer to leave this as the request stands in the text. I think it makes good sense and fits right in with what the Apostle Paul was saying when he speaks of "the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." That is, God has something coming when we get to heaven as well as realizing that we have something coming. Perhaps it could be best explained, when you think of this inheritance, if we look back at that expression that Paul used in the doxology at the beginning of this chapter. By the doxology, for those of you who are with us for the first time this morning, I am speaking of verses 3 through 14. Paul used an expression three times in that doxology that is related, I believe, to his prayer here when he prays about "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." That is the one that you find in verse 6 (let me read verse 5 with it), Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace." The second time you find it, or a similar expression, is in verse 12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." Then, in verse 14 you have it the third time. He is speaking of the sealing work of the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit who is "the earnest of uor inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

When we think about being in heaven, we need to think about two things. I believe Paul has set these up for us in these two requests. He is projecting us, of course, to the future. We need to think, and we always do think, of what it is all going to mean to us to be in heaven: no more sin, no more trials, no more testings, no more death, no more sorrow, none of the things that are so characteristic of this life. Paul would have us to know that we also need to think of what it is going to mean to the Lord. That is what our prayer request is concerned with this morning.

They hymnwriter Gerhard Tersteegan, I believe caught the meaning of these words when, in writing this wonderful old hymn, he gave us these verses:

[Pastor, I could not find this hymn in any of the books that I have so I am sure that I have not gotten it right--Joy]

Midst the darkness storm and sorrow  
One bright gleam I see  
Well I know the blessed morrow  
Christ will come for me

Midst the light and peace and glory  
Of the Father's home  
Christ will meet  
Is watching, waiting, waiting  
Till I come

Where no shade nor stain can enter  
Nor the gold be dim  
In that holiness unsullied  
I shall walk with Him

Meet companion then for Jesus  
That is suitable for Him  
From Him, for Him made  
Glory of God's grace forever  
There in me displayed.

He Who in His hour of sorrow  
Bore the curse alone  
I who through the lonely desert trod  
Where He had gone

He and I in that bright glory  
One deep joy shall share  
Mine to be forever with Him  
His that I am there.

When I was a child, and that was many years ago, you might be surprised that I could remember that long back, we used to sing that old gospel song:

O that will be glory for me,  
Glory for me, glory for me;  
When by His grace  
I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory,  
Be glory for me.

A man who came who came to our church to be the music director asked us to sing it one Sunday a different way. This is the change that he suggested:

O that will be glory for Him,  
Glory for Him, glory for Him;  
When by His grace  
I shall look on His face,  
That will be glory,  
Be glory for Him.

Which is right? Obviously, both are right. It is going to be glory for us; it

is going to be glory for Him. I believe that this is what Paul had in mind when he prayed, "that ye may know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." To state it another way, he said, "I want you to come to an understanding of what it is going to mean to God when you are in heaven." You see, He is our inheritance; we are His inheritance. I agree with you that we are getting the better side of that; but the Word of God stresses this other. Paul was saying in his prayer that this is a truth that we need to know. I am sure that I am speaking to some, this morning, who do not think in terms of the coming of the Lord or of our departing to be with the Lord in these terms. We think of what it is going to mean to us. It is going to mean such tremendous change as far as our persons are concerned because we will be perfected. It is going to mean a great change as far as our environment is concerned. But, you see, Paul says, "I want you to know what it is going to mean to Him, what it is going to mean to Him to have you there."

There are many reasons for this. It certainly will help us to endure and understand our trials. We spend our time thinking about what our trials mean to us and the difficulties that we experience in going through them; but we do not give too much consideration to the fact that through these trials God is working in our hearts because He is thinking in terms of the time when we are going to be in heaven and when all of the glory that God has manifested toward us in the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be openly and so graciously displayed. It is going to make us more diligent in our pursuit of holiness. This can be a source of great comfort to us, to accept the death of our loved ones. You remember that while the Lord Jesus was here on earth He prayed that we would be with Him, and He prayed it in these words in John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." When our loved ones are being taken from us why we are praying to keep them here. I did that with my own folks. The Lord is praying that we would be taken to be with Him. He is looking forward to that time when you and I are in His presence. When we think of this in the light of what it means to the Lord, it is a source of great comfort to us.

This truth will help us to keep our lives on course. The grand purpose of our lives while we are here on earth is expressed a number of times in Scripture. Paul said, as he wrote to the Corinthian church, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Before we are saved we think about how everything is going to affect us, what it is going to mean to us, what it is going to profit us; but when we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ that all has to be changed. If I am eating and drinking and whatever I do it is not just to satisfy myself, but to make sure that my life is pleasing to Him.

Paul said practically the same thing when he wrote to the Colossian church, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men" (Col. 3:23). You see, it is important that we know this. Only the Holy Spirit, as we have seen in considering this prayer, can really teach us what it means so that it will fill our minds with understanding and transform our lives with a constant desire to please the Lord in all that we are and in all that we do. That ye may know what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.

Now. Let us think for just a moment about that part of this request, "the riches of the glory of His inheritance."

Back in verse 7 we read about the riches of His grace. Now we are thinking today about the riches of His glory, the glory of His inheritance. When Paul uses the word "riches" in connection with spiritual truth, he is thinking not only of the idea of sufficiency, but the idea of an abundance. God exercised (let me put those two words together) the sufficient abundance of His grace when He saved each one of us. Salvation, we know, comes to us free; but the cost to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ was enormous. We cannot begin to calculate what the death of Jesus Christ meant with respect to our salvation.

Now, what was God's purpose in salvation in exercising the riches of His grace that we might come

to understand the riches of the glory of His inheritance? I have been saying it over and over again as we have looked into this prayer and I hope that you will never forget it. I am sure that many of you are not learning it for the first time. The purpose of God in salvation is for us to become like the Lord Jesus Christ. God could not possibly, I feel that I am standing on the authority of Scripture when I say this, have undertaken to do a greater work than to transform guilty defiled sinners into a people who are like the Lord Jesus Christ, people who had His complete disapproval, into people who have His complete approval. We have learned that God will not and God cannot possibly fail in the task which He has undertaken with any one of us. It might look impossible to us. We can all see how much yet remains to be done. There may be times when we are not really making any progress at all as far as the things of God are concerned; but God is at work and He will not give up on any single one of us. When we stand before Him in that glorious day, He will not only take glory to Himself from us, from what He has done in our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit, but each one of us will display His glory, display the riches of the glory of His inheritance. Glory, of course, is the Bible word that is used for the very character of God. When He reveals His glory He is revealing Himself. When we stand before God He has been changing us from one degree of glory into another and there we will be as His inheritance, transformed into His own glory, manifesting the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ. Others will not have to look, and look at us as they do now perhaps to find anything that resembles the Lord Jesus in our lives, because there there will be an abundant evidence of what God has been doing in our hearts since the day that we were first saved. "That we might know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." We are God's inheritance just as primarily He is our inheritance.

Paul recorded for us in this epistle two of his prayers that he had been praying for the Ephesian believers, and, as I have said, I am sure that he prayed these prayers for other believers as well. Paul seems to have taken this second request in this prayer as his starting point for his second prayer. Will you turn to the end of the third chapter and notice how he begins this prayer? He starts introducing this in verse 13, but his prayer actually begins in verse 16 where he says, "That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, (notice the end result of this) that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:16-19). My, what an amazing thing to say about anyone. What great hopes Paul had for the people of God. But, you see, Paul says, "My basis for being able to answer this is because of the riches of His glory and because of the work that God is doing in us by His Spirit strengthening us in the inner man that Christ may have His home in our hearts that ultimately we might be filled with all the fulness of God--all the fulness of God. We can see that when we talk about the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, we are dealing with riches that are perfectly capable of accomplishing what God has set out to accomplish in our lives.

What does all this mean? This means that in that day God is going to be pre-eminently satisfied with what we are. Then He is going to find, and I would not dare say this if we did not have this truth in Scripture, His delight in us (and this is the thing that I am a little hesitant about) as He also finds His delight in His begotten Son.

Remember that at least on two occasions when the Lord Jesus was here, the Father spoke from heaven and said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Or, we could translate another way, "In whom I find all of my delight." If you turn to 2 Corinthians 5, you will find that the Apostle Paul said, "I make it my ambition that whether living or dead I may be well-pleasing to Him, and if I am well-pleasing to Him, then this puts me in the category with the Lord Jesus Christ where God can find His delight in me. God can find His delight in you." There are limitations upon that delight now because we are still in the flesh and we are still capable of sinning and we can still displease God and disobey God and grieve God, but God is at work in our heart according to the riches of His glory and He is going to bring us to the place when we stand before Him that He will find all of His delight in us. "He and I in that bright glory," Tersteegen said, "One deep joy shall

share; Mine to be forever with Him, but His--His--that I am there." So you see that this is a truth that is very encouraging. I wish I could find words to express what I see in these words; but I trust that the Holy Spirit will enable all of us, myself as well as you, to see how unspeakably precious we are to God, how He delights in us now and how He will delight perfectly in that day when His work is finally completed in us.

Let me call your attention to the title at the end of this request, "the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

How many of you have ever seen a saint? You do not need to show hands this morning. Who is a saint and what is a saint? Paul used the word in verse 1 of this chapter, did he not, when he spoke of writing to the saints which are at Ephesus. So, evidently, there were saints in Ephesus. Well, a saint is simply a child of God. A saint is a Christian. A saint is a person who knows Jesus Christ as his Saviour. If you fall under that category this morning, you are a saint. By definition, the word "saint" means one who has been set apart. Set apart by whom and from what and for what? Just being set apart does not really mean much to us. A saint is one who has been set apart from his sins, but he has been set apart for God. The word "saint" speaks of one who belongs to God. He is not only to be a godly person, but he is to recognize that he is God's very possession. They are the people of the world in every generation whom God has personally and specifically chosen for Himself. He has called them to Himself by His grace through the Lord Jesus Christ. When the Apostle Paul speaks of saints he is saying, in effect, remember that you are not your own: You are bought with a price. God paid an infinite price in order that your sins might be forgiven and that you might be His.

Paul mentions saints repeatedly throughout this epistle. Let me just show you. I have already shown you where he speaks of saints here in chapter 1. I can add to that verse 15 where he says, "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints," Cease not to give thanks for you." Then, in the second chapter and the nineteenth verse you will see, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God." In chapter 3 you have Paul speaking of himself in verse 8 when he says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." In the eighteenth verse he says, as he gives his prayer for them, "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ." In the fourth chapter you find him speaking of the saints in the twelfth verse. He says in verse 11 that he has "given some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teacher; For the perfecting of the saints." The saints are not yet what they should be. Consequently, they are being perfected. Then, in chapter 5 verse 3 he says, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you as becometh saints." You see, God has separated us from our sins. Then, chapter 6 verse 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel." So, saints are mentioned in every chapter of Ephesians.

This is a word that we ought to be using for each other instead of just the word "Christian" which has really gotten to the point where it does not mean much. If you ask a person if he is a Christian why most times he is going to respond in the affirmative. If you ask him if he is a saint, he may stop a minute before he answers you and he may not even know what you are talking about unless he is acquainted with the language of the New Testament. It is good for us to remember that we are saints so that we will remember whose we are, why we are here, and of how God is going to be delighted when we are all with him in heaven in our glorified state where we will be His inheritance.

Perhaps those of you who are parents can really understand this, especially those of you who have children who have left the home and you look forward to those times when they are all back and the

whole family is together. There is just really no time like that. You just wish that you could hang on to the past and keep your family together. Perhaps God has given that feeling in our hearts to that we would understand His delight. We have never really been home, have we? We are on our way home. We are all His children. God is looking forward to that day when we are going to be there. Paul says, "As I pray for you, I want you to know what it is going to mean to God when He gets all of us safely home at last and we are changed into the very likeness of the Lord Jesus.

What do we get out of salvation? We get God. We get the Lord Jesus Christ. We get the Holy Spirit. What does God get? He gets us. He gets us. He is our inheritance; we are His inheritance. Make sure that you are asking the Holy Spirit to make you know what this great truth means. I am sure at this very moment God delights far more in the fact that we are His than you and I have ever been able to delight in the fact that He is ours.

Look at Ephesians 1:15. I want to give you a test, this morning, by which you can examine your own heart as to whether or not you are a saint. In verse 15 Paul says (I am speaking of chapter 1), "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." Paul took two things, as I mentioned when I was dealing with that verse, as evidence that a person has really been saved. One is that his faith is in the Lord Jesus. The second is that he loves the people of God. If I can state it in the light of what we have been seeing in our text today, loving the saints means loving the people whom God loves. They are the people in whom God has a special interest. They are the people whom God loves in a special way. In fact, He has loved the saints from all eternity. He loved us long before we knew Him. It is false to say that we love God if we do not love the people He loves. You see, the two go together. That is the reason that when the Lord Jesus was asked for the great commandment of the Law, He could not give one without giving two; because if you love God, you are going to love His people. So this is a truth that should remind us as we think of us as God's people being His inheritance, that knowing this truth will make us love each other more; and with greater love there is going to be greater fellowship and with greater fellowship among the saints there will be a stronger witness to this ungodly world in which we live. But, you see, when the fellowship of the people of God is broken and we forget whose we are and why we are here and what God has done in our hearts to make us His own, then the message that should be going out into the world is cut short.

I pray this prayer for you, and I hope you are praying this prayer for me, that we may know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," and that you and I by His wonderful grace will be looking forward to that wonderful day when the Lord will delight in us as He delights in His own beloved Son.

Remember, Jude concluded his epistle, "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

Many years ago I asked the question, Whose joy is Jude talking about in that passage? I had to come to two conclusions from what he has to say in his epistle and from what we find in the Word. "The exceeding joy" is, of course, going to be mine and is going to be yours; but "exceeding joy" is also going to be the joy that God has in His heart as He has us all home and delights in us, in what He has accomplished in our hearts through our dear Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I trust that you are going to be there and that you know that you are going to be there because you are trusting in this moment in the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, and in your heart you know that God has put a love for the people for whom He has such a special love.