

# Ephesians

## Ephesians 1:18 - The Father's inheritance

There are three parts to Paul's prayer in **Ephesians 1:18** - two of which we've covered already, the first delving into what "the eyes of our hearts being enlightened" means; the second what "the hope he has called us to" is about, and now the third as to what Paul was getting at when he prayed that the Ephesians would grasp "**the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.**"

In context this third part could be taken two ways: It could be referring to the riches of the glorious inheritance that **we** receive, that the Father secured for us in "the Holy Spirit deposit" in verses 13-14. So we know that **WE** have an inheritance, and that it's guaranteed. And the proof that it's guaranteed is the Holy Spirit giving us a taste now of what we'll be receiving in full later. But if that's what verse 18 is referring to, then it would be better phrased as "the riches of his glorious inheritance **FOR** the saints."

But it's not phrased that way in most Bible translations. Nor is it in Greek. Both speak of his glorious inheritance "**IN the saints.**" It's what the Father receives as **HIS** inheritance; and remarkably we are it. **WE** are his inheritance. Which is quite an insight into our Father, that he considers us his inheritance. Paul was praying that the Ephesians would "**come to know the Father better,**" but who would have guessed this about him?

But it fits **the greatness of the Father** that Paul so wanted to get across to the Ephesians. Because it was **the Father** who "blessed us in the heavenly realms" (verse 3), the Father who "chose us" (verse 4), the Father who "predestined us to be adopted as his sons" (verse 5), the Father who gave us redemption and forgiveness of our sins through his Son (verse 7), the Father who "made known to us the mystery of his will" (verse 9), and the Father who planned for us to be "the first to hope in Christ" (verse 12). And all of this because of the Father's "glorious grace that he's freely given us" (verse 6).

It's all been the Father's doing. And what was the purpose of him doing all these things for us? So that "it might be for the praise of his glory," or "the extolling of his glorious attributes," **verse 12**. There'd be humans on this planet, in other words, who would **get the picture** of just how great a Father he is to us, so that in word and deed we "declare his excellencies and virtues," as Peter phrased it in **1 Peter 2:9**.

It's what the Holy Spirit deposit is for too, to give us a **taste** of the Father's excellencies and virtues so that we **can** talk about how great he is, from our own experience. That's the plan. And top of the list of the Father's virtues is his love, which he makes known and real to us by "sending the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father'" (Galatians 4:6).

The Father himself, then, sent the Spirit to help us know him as Jesus has always known him, that he is a Father who deeply and intimately loves us. Which explains Paul's point in verse 17, that life now and forever is getting to know our Father better. Jesus said the same thing in **John 17:3** too, that "eternal life is **knowing the Father**," made real by seeing what he's like in Jesus. "See me, you see the Father," Jesus said in John 14:9. And what they saw in Jesus was his relationship with the Father, because that would show them the relationship the Father wished to have with them.

But what really flings the windows open to grasping this is when "the riches of his glorious inheritance **in the saints**" in Ephesians 1:18 means the Father views US as his glorious inheritance. WE are what he made all those plans for before our world existed. His great goal and purpose was to **inherit us as his family** "in accordance with his pleasure and will," **Ephesians 1:5**. This is what he lives for, to father a huge loving family forever.

So being one huge loving family forever is not only what **we** inherit, it's what the Father sees as **his** inheritance too. **In us he has his family**, and the chance to father a huge family forever in the same way he's fathered his Son forever. Because this is what he is: a Father. Fathering is what he loves doing, has always done, and deeply looks forward to doing forever with billions of his adopted children. Everything he planned before the creation of our world, that we've been reading about in verses 3-14, was geared to that one purpose. For him, there is no greater eternal future than that.

Somehow, then, everything that we experience as humans now ties in with preparing us and readying us for that. And it has to, surely, because if we truly are the Father's inheritance, then everything he planned for human life on this planet has to serve that purpose of **growing us up** to be his family.

And we have Jesus as our example **as to how he does it**. Because the Father set up Jesus with a human life too, and everything he planned in Jesus' life was designed to make him "the firstborn among many brothers," **Romans 8:29**. That was the plan, a whole family of humans "predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." So how did the Father prepare and ready Jesus, therefore, to be the firstborn in that family?

**Hebrews 5:8** tells us that “Although he was a Son” (in very nature God, Philippians 2:6) Jesus as a human like us “learned obedience through the things he suffered.” This was the key to growing him up. In every word and deed Jesus needed to obey his Father perfectly. Which he did. He “brought the Father glory on earth by **completing** the work his Father had given him to do” (John 17:4). Which sounds wonderful, but it tells little about the **suffering** Jesus went through to fulfill his Father’s will.

**Hebrews 5:7** tells us “he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death.” It was so tough obeying his Father’s plan for him, that there were times in Jesus’ life when no words could express how he felt. He could only groan, sob, bawl and weep. So he learnt obedience through suffering all right. But that was the Father’s way of starting his family, because “once Jesus was made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him,” **verse 9**.

Jesus had made it through with flying colours, which made it possible for him to now bring others into the family too. And it would be **the same process** for them too, because that’s how he’d made it through. He learnt obedience through suffering, and we are called to follow in his footsteps (1 Peter 2:21). So now it’s our turn to learn obedience through suffering - our obedience being **to Jesus** (Hebrews 5:9), because that’s what our Father set up to perfect us.

So, it’s going to be a rocky road for us too, because what Jesus taught is impossible for us humans to obey, just as it was for Jesus obeying his Father. But that’s the standard the Father set. He “chose us in him before the creation of the world to be **holy and blameless** in his sight,” **Ephesians 1:4**. So nothing less than perfection will do. Which seems like an impossible task for us feeble humans to fulfill, but the Father isn’t about to lose out on his inheritance because we “are weak in our natural selves” (Romans 6:19).

That’s why, on our believing what the Father’s planned for us, he gives us “the promised Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 1:13), because “the Spirit **helps us in our weakness**,” **Romans 8:26**.

Which sounds wonderful, but it too tells us little about the suffering the Holy Spirit goes through to keep us “in accordance with God’s will,” **verse 27**. Because he too, just like Jesus, “groans,” **verse 26**. No words can express what the Spirit feels either. He sees how helpless we are. We don’t know how to pray or what to pray for. It is so easy, then, for us to get caught up in the traps set for us in the culture, and flounder around in a world that has one goal in mind, “to separate us from the love of God,” **verse 39**.

The very thing our Father wants for us most, that we know he loves us and he dreams of us being with him forever as his family, is what life all around us stifles and hides. But the Father, because he really is our Father, knew this would be a problem for us, so he plugs us into “the mind of the Spirit,” **verse 27**. And what the mind of the Spirit in us does is pray to the Father on our behalf that, no matter what, we will never lose sight of the most important reason we have life: it’s because “we are God’s children,” **verse 16**, and therefore we are his glorious inheritance too.

But, as we see in the groaning this causes for the Spirit, this can be agonizingly tough for the Spirit to do, because he knows the process too, that we must learn obedience through suffering - and nothing less than perfect obedience too. And what that takes for each of us as individuals is what the Spirit has been landed with. It’s his job to “intercede for us saints in accordance with the Father’s will.”

So he is constantly going to the Father with what we need to teach us obedience and perfect it. So when the Father “searches our hearts,” **verse 27**, what he sees is the mind of the Spirit at work in us, agonizing over us because perfecting our obedience is going to mean suffering. It’s as unavoidable for us as it was for Jesus. The result will be the Father glorifying us (**verse 30**) as he glorified Jesus (**John 17:5**), but “we share in Jesus’ sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory,” **Romans 8:17**.

Which makes life a bit sticky for us, because we have no idea what the Spirit sees in us that needs sprucing up, or what methods the Spirit has in mind for growing us up and perfecting us to become the Father’s inheritance. But one thing we can have total confidence in, is that nothing in this world can stop the mind of the Spirit **completing the work he’s been given to do** as well. His job being that nothing “in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord,” **verse 39**.

We can rest assured, therefore, that no matter what happens to us in this life now, the Spirit is taking it all to the Father on our behalf and praying for the Father to answer our need. And it may include getting the Father’s blessing on what the Spirit wants to do with us too, whether it’s correction we need or a good dose of encouragement. A tough job for the Spirit, though, convincing us that “all things are working out for our good,” **verse 28**, when, from our point of view, what’s happening to us is anything but good.

But when we realize it’s all been put in place by the Father because we are his inheritance and he has no intention of losing it, it begs the question in **verse 31**, “What will we then say in response to this?”