

The Thirty-second Chapter of Exodus tells us that, while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Law from the Lord, the people of Israel created a golden calf. Then Aaron said that the golden calf was their god, and the people worshiped the idol. Not surprisingly, the Lord was angered by this act. So the Lord said to Moses, "I have seen how stubborn and rebellious these people are. Now leave me alone so my fierce anger can blaze against them, and I will destroy them. Then I will make you, Moses, into a great nation."

Moses in turn responded, "Why are you so angry with your own people whom you brought from the land of Egypt with such great power and such a strong hand? Why let the Egyptians say, 'Their God rescued them with the evil intention of slaughtering them in the mountains and wiping them from the face of the earth'? Turn away from your fierce anger."

The Lord did not destroy the people. Instead, He continued to lead them for forty years through the wilderness, until at last they crossed into the Promised Land.

You might be asking, "What on earth does this story have to do with All Saints?" I'm glad you asked.

In his Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul wrote, "Because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan. God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him."

Notice that Paul wrote that the Jewish people, who were the first to trust in Christ, received an inheritance in order that they would bring praise and glory to God. He went on to say the Gentiles also received this inheritance so that we would praise and glorify the Lord.

When Moses interceded for the people of Israel in the desert, he said that if the Lord destroyed the people, the Egyptians would assume that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt with the intent of destroying them. If the Lord guided the people safely to the Promised Land, then everyone who heard about it would know that the Lord was the God who could and would save His people. If the Lord gives those who have trusted in Jesus an eternal inheritance, if He is able to lead us through death to eternal life, then all of creation will know that the Lord is the God who can and will save His people. All of creation will know that the Lord is faithful. All of creation will give praise and glory to the Lord because of His love, faithfulness, and power.

In other words, the destiny of the saints is a revelation of the Lord's power to save those whom He has promised to save. For that reason He will receive praise and glory. Our place with the saints will bring praise and glory to the Lord.

One of the characteristics of the fallen human nature is that we like to place ourselves at the center of everything. We want to think that the Lord chose us to receive an inheritance with

Christ because we've done something to earn it. The promise of eternal life, however, doesn't say something about us so much as it says something about the faithfulness of the Lord.

How can we have the assurance of the promised inheritance? How can we know that the Lord has destined us for eternal life with His saints?

First, we have been given the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance. When you make an offer to purchase a house, usually you include a check with the offer for a part of the purchase price. This earnest money is a signal that you really do intend to go through with the purchase. It is your pledge to follow through on the transaction.

The Holy Spirit is the Lord's pledge that He intends to give us an inheritance with Jesus in the resurrection of the dead. We can be sure that the Lord has given us the Holy Spirit because we have put our faith in Christ. In his First Letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, "No one can say Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit." If you have put your faith in Jesus, that is a sure sign that you have been given the Holy Spirit.

We also know that we have been given the Holy Spirit because it is the Spirit who gives us a sense of conviction of our sins for the transformation of our lives. When you do something wrong, and you feel genuine remorse, not just shame at being caught, but the genuine desire to change, that is the Holy Spirit at work in you. The Holy Spirit begins to transform the way we live.

We know that we have an eternal inheritance with Jesus Christ because we have been given the Holy Spirit. How can we know that God is able to give us that eternal inheritance? Here, St. Paul pointed to the resurrection of Jesus. He wrote, "I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms."

The resurrection and exaltation of Jesus give us the assurance that the Lord not only has the desire, but also the power to put an end to death. The Holy Spirit who has been given to us is the same Holy Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Because of this, we can have the assurance that the Lord will give life to us as well.

Why is it so important for us to understand all of this? What difference does it make in the way we live here and now?

When we understand the faithfulness and power of the Lord, we can live with hope, and that is something that the world desperately needs. The power of God, which raised Jesus from the dead, is at work in and through His saints, and will eventually make all of creation new. The earth was not created for destruction. Humans were not created for death. Rather, we were destined to have an eternal inheritance in the presence of the Lord.

When we understand the power of God for those who believe in Christ, we might look back to Moses on the mountain. Rather than acting in ways that bring more destruction to the world, we

can, like Moses, pray for the world. We can pray that the Lord will show His great faithfulness and power by bringing His justice, peace, and transformation to the world. Rather than throwing up our hands in hopelessness, we can remember that the Lord who raised Jesus from the dead is active through His church to bring a blessing to the world. A strange thing happens when we begin to pray this way. The Lord empowers His people to act in concert with those prayers.

All of that is part of why we celebrate All Saints. We do not celebrate All Saints simply because there have been some great men and women who are good examples to follow. We celebrate All Saints because it is a sign of the Lord's faithfulness in bringing new life to the world. It is a reminder of the promise of Christ that He will make all things new. It is a sign of our promised redemption as God's own people.