

MORE ABOUT OUR PRESENT AND FUTURE INHERITANCE

- A. Introduction: Through faith in Christ we've become sons and daughters of God. As such we have an inheritance that includes everything we need to live this life and the life to come. We're taking some time to discuss what that means. Eph 1:18
1. Many Christians mistakenly think that being a Christian means a problem-free life with plenty of material blessings. But Jesus didn't die to make this life the highlight of our existence. As eternal beings who do not cease to exist at death the greater part of our existence is after this life.
 - a. We've made the point that to appreciate our inheritance in Christ we must first understand God's overall plan. In eternity past He devised a plan to have a family and made the earth to be home for Himself and His sons and daughters (Eph 1:4,5; Isa 45:18). Sin took the plan off track.
 1. Jesus died on the Cross to pay for sin so it can be removed from all who bow their knee to Him as Savior and Lord and they can become sons of God through the new birth.
 2. Jesus will come again to cleanse the earth of corruption and death and make it a fit forever home for Himself and His family. That's the plan.
 - b. To appreciate our inheritance in Christ we must also understand that some of God's provision is for this life and some is for the life to come. You need to know which is which or you'll have false expectations about this life and end up disappointed and frustrated.
 1. God's number one priority right now is not to end all the suffering and pain of life. Rather He's working to gather His family. He uses the circumstances in this fallen world (situations and choices He neither orchestrates nor approves of) and causes them to serve this purpose.
 2. That doesn't mean there's no help for life's trials. But the ultimate stage for the reversal of life's pains and losses is in the life to come (Rom 8:18). The perspective that comes from knowing this makes the hardships of life easier to deal with.
 3. Joseph's story (discussed last week) is a tremendous example of God bringing eternal results out of life's hardships while preserving and providing for the one experiencing the troubles.
 2. In this lesson we're going to continue to look at the relationship between the present and future provisions of our inheritance.
- B. As sons and daughters of God we have an inheritance in Heaven which includes spiritual blessings. Let's review what this means and add to it.
1. Heaven is God's unseen home. It's in the unseen realm, a dimension beyond the perception of our physical senses. Col 1:15,16; Ps 2:4; Ps 11:4; Psalm 115:3; Psalm 123:1; etc.
 - a. In God's home there are spiritual provisions. Spiritual means invisible. The fact that we can't see it doesn't mean it's not real or less real than what we see. The spiritual preceded and produced the visible when the Invisible God spoke His Word (I Tim 1:17; Heb 11:3; Gen 1:3). The spiritual or invisible realm can and does affect and change the seen realm (II Kings 6:8-22).
 - b. If the veil that separates the seen and unseen realms was pulled back we'd see that, as sons of God, we're citizens of this unseen kingdom (Phil 3:20). As such we have provision in and from this other dimension—spiritual or unseen help that can impact the physical, visible world (Eph 1:3).
 2. But there's more to it. I Pet 1:3-5 gives us insight into what it means to have an inheritance in Heaven.
 - a. v4--Peter the Apostle wrote that it's "an inheritance which is beyond the reach of change and decay (imperishable), unsullied, and unfading" (Amp) and it's reserved for us. Reserved means to guard from injury by keeping an eye on. It "is kept safe for you in heaven" (Goodspeed).
 1. This is a reference to what awaits us in the life to come. This present life and everything in it is subject to change and decay because of the curse of sin, corruption, and death in the world. Even if you live to be 100 years old and reach all your dreams old age and death take it away.
 2. However there's coming a day, in the life ahead, where the hardships of life in a fallen world can never again touch us or take from us. This inheritance is beyond the reach of all harm.

- b. Peter wrote that this inheritance will bring the salvation that's ready to be revealed in the last time.
 - 1. He makes clear what salvation he means—the one the prophets wrote about (v10-12). After Adam sinned God revealed that He would send a Redeemer to undo the damage done (Gen 3:15). From then on the Lord gave increasing revelation through His prophets about His plan to deliver men from sin, corruption and death and they wrote about it (John 5:39; Luke 24:27).
 - 2. v5--“Ready” means prepared for use. God has been working toward the culmination of His plan for a family on earth since man fell. The “last time” is a reference to the Second Coming of Jesus to complete the plan. At that time we'll receive the final portion of our inheritance.
 - 1. We'll reunite with our bodies raised from the grave and made immortal and incorruptible. We'll return to earth made new to live here forever.
 - 2. The salvation “ready to be revealed” is life on this earth as it was always meant to be.
 - 3. To fully appreciate our inheritance we need to recognize that we're part of something bigger than ourselves, something that involves everyone who, since Adam and Eve, has put faith in the revelation of God's grace through the Cross of Christ given to their generation.
 - a. None of them ceased to exist when they died. When their bodies stopped working they passed into God's unseen home (Heaven) and they await the completion of the plan.
 - b. Peter wrote the epistle we're citing to people who were experiencing increasing suffering due to persecution for their faith in Christ. He urged them to stay faithful and maintain a holy lifestyle no matter what because the end result—the completion of the plan—is worth it.
 - 1. Note how he instructed them to view themselves. I Pet 2:11--I implore you as sojourners, strangers and exiles [in this world] (Amp); I beg you as aliens in a foreign land (NEB).
 - 2. We need the same perspective. This life and this world is not our final destination, our ultimate home. We're only passing through this world as it is. I Cor 7:31--This world in its present form is passing away (NIV).
- C. I Pet 1:5--Peter assured them (and us) that until the plan is completed (future provision) God will keep us by His power through faith (present provision). We access our present inheritance through faith.
- 1. Sadly, we've made faith a formula. If you do the right thing, say the right words, jump through the right hoop, push the right button, you'll get the results you want.
 - a. The Bible gives a definition of faith. Heb 11:1--Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (NIV); a conviction of the reality of things we do not see (Weymouth); faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses (Amp).
 - 1. This is consistent with Paul's statement that we walk (or conduct ourselves) by faith and not sight. Faith is being assured of things we can't see. II Cor 5:7
 - 2. The Greek word translated faith in the New Testament means a firm persuasion or conviction. The faith that accesses our present inheritance is a persuasion of unseen realities that have been revealed to us through the Bible, the Word of God.
 - b. Faith is more than a formula or technique to get help from God. It's about your perception of reality. We all have view of reality. It's the way we see or interpret the world.
 - 1. You don't have to make yourself think it terms of your view of reality or remember to say the right words to say or work the formula. It comes naturally.
 - 2. For example, if your view of reality is that everyone is against you, you'll interpret everything through this perception and act accordingly. If someone cuts you off in traffic or a clerk is rude to you at the store or your boss reprimands you, you'll automatically assess these incidents in terms of your view of reality: That happened because everyone is against me. This perception then shapes how you act in each situation.
 - 2. The definition of faith we cited above (Heb 11:1) is followed by an entire chapter devoted to numerous Old Testament men and women who were commended by God for their faith. v2--It was for faith that men of old were renowned (20th Cent); This is what the ancients were commended for (NIV).

- a. The author lists some by name (Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Joseph, Moses, etc.) and gives information about them. Their lives show us what faith or persuasion looks like.
 1. These are real people who, like us, have a part in God's plan of salvation that is ready to be revealed. And they were kept and are kept by God's power through their faith.
 2. If we were to read the accounts of their lives we would find that they all stayed faithful to God despite opposition from people, feelings, circumstances. And they held fast to what God said about things they couldn't see.
- b. Faith wasn't a formula for them. It was based on their view of reality and they ordered their lives accordingly. These accounts shows us what it looks like when people live with the consciousness that this life is not all there is and we're only passing through to something better. v13-16
 1. They recognized there's more to come after this life, promises still to be fulfilled. They considered themselves strangers and pilgrims in this earth (as Peter exhorted his readers).
 2. They looked forward (not backwards) to a heavenly homeland. They didn't have all the details we have about the life to come (because the Bible was still being written). But they knew they'd be reunited with their bodies to live on earth again. Job 19:25,25
 - A. v39,40--They knew a plan was unfolding that included people as yet unborn and that they, along with those future people, will see the end result.
 - B. They're now in the unseen Heaven waiting for the same salvation to be revealed as us. Earth made new, a return to earth, resurrection of the dead.
3. Such a perspective gives you hope and peace in the midst of life's trials. We'll say more about this next week. But consider several thoughts.
 - a. Hebrews was written to believers facing persecution. The author wrote to encourage them to stay faithful to God no matter what. The author reminded them: You took joyfully the spoiling of your goods because you know you have a more lasting treasure in the life to come. Heb 10:32-34
 1. Heb 10:38--He further reminded them that we live (ZAO) by faith. The word translated live isn't the same one used in II Cor 5:7. This word means we have life by or through our faith.
 2. His point is: Even if you die (which all people do—it's simply a matter of when and how) you'll live on because of your faith in Christ. His readers knew there's life after this life.
 - A. Jesus Himself said in reference to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that God is the God of the living. Matt 22:32
 - B. Peter, James, and John saw Moses stepped out of the unseen realm to speak with Jesus just prior to the crucifixion, demonstrating that he lives on. Luke 9:30,31
 - b. Then the author gave the examples of these Old Testament people. Even though they're bodies are dead, they live in that heavenly country and await the completion of the plan.
 1. We pointed out last week that Joseph never returned to Canaan in his lifetime. He died in Egypt. But his perception of reality motivated his actions. He knew he'll stand in Canaan again when he's reunited with his body raised from the grave and made his family swear to take his bones with them when they went home. Gen 50:25,26; Ex 13:19
 2. Heb 11:22--[Actuated] by faith Joseph, nearing the end of his life, referred to [the promise of God for] the departure...out of Egypt (Amp).
4. When we examine the lives of these Old Testament saints, not only do we see hope of future provision or inheritance in the life to come, we see present provision in their lives. Through faith these people did exploits and received real help and provision during their lifetimes. But this happened as they ordered their lives according to unseen realities. v33-35
 - a. v11--Abraham and Sarah had a child (Isaac) when they were both too old and she was barren. Through trust in the Invisible God's faithfulness, Sarah received strength from the unseen realm to conceive and deliver a child.
 - b. v24-27--Moses rejected the power and wealth of Egypt, choosing instead to suffer affliction with his people, because he knew there was a greater reward was ahead. He endured by seeing Him

who is Invisible. Awareness of future provision gave present strength.

1. v26--For he looked steadfastly at the ultimate, not the immediate, reward (Phillips); he fixed his gaze on the coming reward (Weymouth); he looked beyond to the reward (Conybeare).
2. v27--He persisted as one who was constantly seeing Him who can't be seen (Beck); he held on to his course (NEB) as seeing the Invisible One (Wuest).

A. Many of us think that if we had a supernatural experience (like a vision of God) we'd be strong in faith. We presume Moses had strong faith because he actually saw and heard God a number of times through the years. But humans are made in such a way that if we don't keep our attention on something the reality of it fades.

B. The Greek word translated "seeing" in v27 means the act of physical sight. But there's more to it. Vine's Dictionary of New Testament Words says it especially indicated the direction of the thought to the object seen (contemplation). You think about what you have seen.

C. Moses, like you and me, had to think about and call to memory what he'd seen and heard when it was challenged by sight and feeling. That is much easier to do if your perception of reality is in line with what God says about the way things really are.

c. The writer of Hebrews pointed out that others chose torture and death rather than reject God and His will. v35--But others trusted in God and were tortured, preferring to die rather than turn from God and be free. They placed their hope in the resurrection to a better life. (NLT)

1. Because these people had an eternal perspective it removed a lot of fear from their lives. You don't have to fear losing something when you know there's restoration ahead.
2. Nothing can come against us that's bigger than God. All loss is temporary. Every wrong will be made right. Missed opportunities are merely postponed. It's part of our inheritance.

D. Conclusion: We still have more to say, but consider these thoughts as we close. Having an inheritance doesn't mean a problem free life. It means help in the midst of trouble.

1. As far as present provision, sometimes that means deliverance out of, sometimes it means deliverance in the midst of.
2. I Pet 1:5--But either way, no matter what you face in this life, God will keep (guard) by His power until our full salvation is revealed. Nothing can prevent you from receiving your inheritance. May that certainty strengthen your faith in the face of life's troubles. More next week!