

PEACE AND HOPE: OUR PRESENT INHERITANCE

- A. Introduction: For a number of months we've been talking about the fact that as sons and daughters of God we have an inheritance. Our inheritance includes everything we need for this life and the life to come.
1. The Bible describes it as an inheritance in Heaven that includes spiritual blessing ( I Pet 1:3-5; Eph 1:3). This means we have provision in and from Heaven (or another dimension, the unseen realm). It is spiritual or unseen help that can impact the visible, physical world.
    - a. Some of our inheritance is present provision which we can access now: food, clothing, shelter (Matt 6:33); healing and deliverance from demonic oppression for your body, mind, and emotions (Matt 4:23,24; 9:35; etc.); angelic assistance (Heb 1:14).
    - b. Some is future provision: a home in Heaven when your body dies (II Cor 5:8); reunion with your body raised from the dead and made immortal and incorruptible in connection with the Second Coming of Jesus (Phil 3:20,21; I Cor 15:51-53); a return to earth after it is made new to live with God forever (Rev 21:3).
    - c. The fact that we have an inheritance does not mean a trouble free life in this life. There's no such thing as a problem free life because this world has been damaged by sin (John 16:33). "No more troubles" is for the life to come, first in Heaven and then on the new earth (Rom 8:18).
  2. Jesus came to earth the first time to pay the price for sin so that all who bow their knee to Him as Savior and Lord can become sons of God through the new birth. He will come again to renew the earth as He cleanses it of all corruption and death and establishes His eternal kingdom on earth.
    - a. Jesus' return will mark the completion of God's plan to have a family of holy, righteous sons and daughters with whom He dwell forever on this earth. Eph 1:4,5; Isa 65:17; etc.
    - b. I Pet 1:5--The salvation ready to be revealed is God's family and the family home fully restored. Until the completion of the plan God has promised to keep or guard us by His power through faith.
- B. The faith that accesses the power and provision of God in this life comes out of your view of reality (or the way you see things.) Faith is firm persuasion or conviction of the reality of things you can't see. You're so persuaded of them that it affects the way you live, the way you talk, the way you act.
1. Heb 11 lists a number of men and women who were commended by God for their faith. They view of reality gave them faith to receive promises and do exploits in this life. They believed what God said about things they couldn't see and it brought them help in the midst of life's troubles. v11;27;33-35
    - a. Many of us struggle with faith for present provision because we're constantly plagued with fear: What if this doesn't work? Or that does or doesn't happen? etc.
      1. When we examine the accounts of the people listed in Heb 11 we find that they knew there's more to life than just this life, and this perspective helped mitigate the fear that can undermine faith and prevents us from accessing present provision
      2. These people knew that any loss they experienced was temporary. Whatever they didn't receive in this life would come in the life ahead. Serving God faithfully is what matters most.
    - b. Not only did these men and women receive help, they had peace in the midst of troubles and hope for the future. Peace and hope in the midst of a fallen world is part of our present inheritance. It comes out of knowing about our future inheritance.
  2. Ps 37 gives a good picture of what present and future provision looks like in a fallen world. The psalm was written by David, one of the men commended for his faith in Heb 11 (v32). It is an excellent summary of how to look at and deal with the challenges and hardships of life. And it gives us insight into his view of reality. He experienced present provision but also had the hope of future provision.
    - a. v1,2--The psalm opens with the fact that in a fallen world there are evildoers or people who affect our lives in negative ways. Note that there is no explanation as to why the wicked are able to negatively affect the righteous. None is needed because it's just part of life in a fallen world. We have the erroneous idea that if something bad happens we must have left a door open somewhere.

- b. God's people are instructed not to fret or be envious and do what is right no matter what. Fret, in the original Hebrew language, means be angry or vexed. Envious means the same thing in Hebrew as in English: Don't be jealous of someone's position or possessions. v1,7,8
1. The reign of the wicked is temporary (v2, 9-15, 20, 28, 34-36, 38). That is the theme in this psalm. Don't let the injustice, unrighteousness, and unfairness of life in a fallen world drive you to act in ungodly ways. Commit it to the Lord. All will be made right, some in this life and some in the life to come.
  2. The ultimate state for the reversal of life's losses, injustices, and pain is in the life to come. We will inherit the earth and righteousness will prevail. Until then, God will provide for His people who trust in Him.
    - A. v11--But the meek [in the end] shall inherit the earth (Amp) and be happy amidst great prosperity (Harrison). v29--The upright will have the earth for their heritage and will go on living there for ever (Basic).
    - B. v25--Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly forsaken, nor seen their children begging for bread (NLT).
    - C. v39,40--The salvation of the [consistently] righteous is of the Lord; He is their refuge and secure stronghold in the time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them...from the wicked, and saves them, because they trust and take refuge in Him. (Amp)
- c. God's people are admonished to trust Him. Trust is the Old Testament counterpart to faith. Faith is only found twice in the Old Testament. The word trust is used instead.
1. Two different Hebrew words for trust are used in Psalm 37. One means to be confident and sure. It expresses the feeling of safety and security felt when one can rely on someone (v3,5). The other means to seek or take refuge (v40).
    - A. Remember, David, wrote this psalm, was commended for his faith. We pointed out in the last lesson that doesn't mean David never felt fear. It means that when he was afraid he chose to put his attention on God and His Word to him. He chose to trust God. Ps 56:3,4
    - B. Trust or faith (persuasion, confidence) comes from the Word of God because it tells us who God is (what He's like) and what He has done, is doing, and will do. Rom 10:17
  2. David knew the importance of letting the Word of God shape his view of reality. From his youth up he was aware of admonitions in scripture to fill his mind with God's Word (Ps 1:1-3; Josh 1:8). As king of Israel he was charged with daily reading and well as writing out the words of God (Deut 17:18-20). This built a strong conviction or persuasion in David that enabled him to access help in this life and have hope for the future.
  3. Like everyone who lives in this fallen world, David experienced hardship and pain. Among other things, he lost an infant son. Despite the grief, he had hope because he knew he'd one day be reunited with his son. That gave him hope and peace of mind. II Sam 12:23
    - a. Heb 12:1--David and his son are now part of the cloud of witnesses (people in Heaven who are part of the same plan of salvation as us). They, along with us, await the completion of the plan.
    - b. A quick note of explanation about the infant's death. His death is directly connected to David's sin (an affair with a married woman and arranging her husband's death). This doesn't mean your loved one died because you committed a sin. This was a unique, one-time situation.
      1. As the king of Israel David was charged with leading the nation in godliness and showing God Almighty (the only God) to the pagan people groups around them. He failed miserably in his duties by his disobedience, and he brought great reproach to Israel and the Lord. I Sam 23:14
      2. God didn't make the child sick. He got sick because that's life in a fallen world. Through Nathan the prophet, the Lord connected the death to David's disobedience so Israel and the surrounding nations would know: I am the Only God. I am separate from all evil. I keep My Word. God's Word says: The wages of sin is death.
        - A. David's sin required a death. If he had died the redemptive line through which God said

Jesus was to come would have been broken (Gen 3:15). The child died in David's place. David truly repented of his sin (Ps 51). He and the son were reunited when David died.

B. Our sin has been paid for through Jesus' death on the Cross. No more death is required for those who know the Lord.

- C. The Epistle to the Hebrews was written to believers who were experiencing increasing persecution and being pressured to give up their faith in Christ. The writer encouraged them to stay faithful no matter what because the end result is worth it. (There is some dispute as to who wrote Hebrews. I believe it was Paul.)
1. Paul gave the examples of these Old Testament saints to remind his readers that real people (just like themselves) were helped in the hardships of life and had hope for the future no matter what happened.
    - a. And even though they all left this earth (died) many centuries ago, they all still live and will return with us to inherit this earth and see and participate in the completion of God's plan.
    - b. Paul ends his letter with final instructions for these people: Heb 13:5,6--Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" (NLT)
  2. We could do numerous lessons on Paul's points in these two verses, but consider a few brief thoughts.
    - a. One of the themes we've brought out in this series is: Keep your priorities right. Recognize that the most important things are those that will outlast this life. Matt 6:25-33; Matt 16:26
      1. If you keep your priorities and focus right (recognize there's more to life than just this life and eternal realities are most important) your heavenly Father will take care of you.
      2. The word content in Heb 13:5 means to be sufficient, to be possessed of sufficient strength, to be strong, to be enough. It's not an emotion. It's a view of reality. I have what I need to deal with whatever comes my way because God is with me.
    - b. Another theme: Be content or satisfied with what you have. Remember that the ultimate stage for the reversal of life's inequities is in the life to come, first in Heaven and then on the new earth.
      1. God has promised never to leave you. The emphasis in the original Greek is on: never, ever, ever. If God is for you, nothing can be permanently against you.
      2. Another theme: Don't fear what men can do to your body. If the inward man is born again through faith in Christ then you will be reunited with your body through resurrection of the dead to live on earth again. Matt 10:16-31; etc.
    - c. Also note this: The statement: I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee (Heb 13:5) is a quote from Deut 31:6-8. God made this promise to Israel at the edge of Canaan when they were ready enter.
      1. Paul wrote: God has said some things (Heb 11:5) so that we may confidently say some things (Heb 11:6). Note that what we say is not a direct, word for word quote of the scripture verses.
      2. The scripture has been taken in by the speaker and become part of his view of reality. It's not a parrot-like repetition. It's a heartfelt expression of a view of reality based on God's Word.
  3. Paul experienced great hardship as a Christian. He experienced the challenges of travel in the ancient world as he spread the gospel throughout the Roman world. He was persecuted, pursued, lied about. Yet this was his attitude: I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil 4:13
    - a. This was not a religious cliché to him. It was his view of reality and it gave him confidence or faith. He wrote these words while in prison facing possible execution. Let's get the context.
    - b. In Phil 4:11 he stated that he had learned to be content. Although this word is different than the one used in Heb 13, the idea is the same: competence, sufficiency; a contented satisfaction or self-sufficiency based on the fact that I have all I need. I have Almighty God for, with, and in me.
      1. Note that he learned to be content, implying a process of persuasion that took some time. We can see his growth and development. Early in his ministry he asked God to remove Satan's messenger, a fallen angel that followed him around, stirring up strife and persecution where ever he went. II Cor 12:7-9; Acts 14:1-5; 19; etc.

2. The Lord's answer: My grace or strength is sufficient (same word as Heb 13:5) or enough. My grace is all you need; power comes to its full strength in weakness (II Cor 12:9,NEB).

c. By the time Paul was jailed in Rome he had learned to access this provision of his inheritance and walk in the strength of God.

1. Phil 4:11-13--Do not think that I am saying this under the pressure of want. For, however I am placed, I, at least, have learnt to be independent of circumstances...nothing is beyond my power in the strength of him who makes me strong. (20<sup>th</sup> Cent)

2. Phil 4:6-8--He learned to give it all to God. He knew nothing could come against him that's bigger than God. All loss is temporary and we have a future in the life to come. Therefore he had peace or tranquility of mind in every circumstance because he had hope for the future, not just in this life but the life to come.

d. Paul was released from this imprisonment. When he was later jailed again and facing execution, he wrote a final letter to his son in the faith, Timothy. Paul knew he was about to die (II Tim 4:6). But his view of reality gave him peace and hope in the midst of it. His testimony: God will deliver me and preserve me unto his kingdom (II Tim 4:18).

D. Conclusion: We began this series back in January by describing Paul's final meeting with some people he loved dearly. This is what he told them: "Now, I'm turning you over to God, our marvelous God whose gracious Word can make you into what he wants you to be and give you everything you could possible need in this community of holy friends" (Acts 20:32, The Message Bible).

1. Our inheritance comes to us through God's Word. The Living Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, died on the Cross to pay the price for sin and open the way for us to become sons of God with an inheritance.

a. The written Word of God (the Bible) tells us what Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection provided for us. It also produced the faith we need to access the provision of our inheritance.

b. Christians have trouble accessing the present provisions of our inheritance because they try to have faith without going to the source of faith, the written Word of God.

1. Become a regular, systematic reader of the New Testament. That means: Don't skip around or open to random verses. Read each book and letter from start to finish, over and over.

Don't get out the concordance or look up a bunch of words (you can do that at another time).

Don't worry about what you don't understand. Understanding comes with familiarity.

2. Regular, systematic reading of the New Testament will shape your view of reality, give you confidence in God and the unseen realities of His kingdom, along with a certainty that His power can, is, and will affect you and your life. That's what faith is all about.

2. God has given us an inheritance with present and future provision -- everything we need for this life and the life to come. Our inheritance includes peace of mind in the storm that comes from hope for the future. This peace and hope give us strength for the journey. May we know the riches of the glory of our inheritance in Christ. Eph 1:18