

OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

- A. Introduction: We are talking about developing strong, effective faith through knowing that God has given to us His kingdom (Luke 12:32), the kingdom is in us (Luke 17:20,21), and we are in the kingdom (Col 1:13).
1. The kingdom of God is the reign of God. God wants to reign in us and through us. God made men in such a way that He can indwell us and then express or demonstrate Himself through us.
 - a. When we are born again the life of God, the life in God (eternal life) comes into us. The kingdom or the rule and reign of God is established in us, in our spirit, when the life of God comes into us.
 - b. The kingdom is in us, God is now in us by His life, to work in us, transform us, strengthen us, heal us, etc. Rom 8:11; Phil 2:13; Col 1:29; Heb 13:21; etc.
 - c. Not only is the kingdom in us, but we are now in the kingdom. Through the Cross and the new birth we have been taken out from under the dominion or reign of sin, Satan, and death. We are now citizens of the kingdom of God, a kingdom where life reigns. Phil 3:20; Eph 2:19; etc.
 2. When we talk about all of this we are not talking about things that are going to happen some day. These are present tense realities. These are things you and I are and have right now.
 - a. We are now citizens of a kingdom, we now have in us, a kingdom where life reigns, a kingdom of full power and provision.
 1. These are spiritual realities. Spiritual doesn't mean "not real". Spiritual means invisible. Invisible or spiritual "things" are as real as visible, physical things.
 2. Faith "activates" these unseen realities which then produce physical, tangible changes in us and in our lives.
 - b. One of the biggest struggles we face is believing in the reality of things we cannot see, especially when everything we see and feel contradicts these unseen realities.
 - c. That is why accurate knowledge of and from God's written word is so important. God has "bent over backwards" in His Book to show us that unseen "things" are real, present tense realities, and that these unseen "things" can and will change what we see and feel.
 3. In the Bible God uses various "word pictures" to help us understand Him and our relationship with Him. No one picture gives full insight, but, taken together, they help us understand things that are beyond our finite understanding.
 - a. One of the word pictures God uses to help us "see" the unseen is that of heirs with an inheritance. Because we are in the kingdom and the kingdom is in us we are now heirs of God who have an inheritance. Eph 1:11; Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6,7; Col 1:12; etc.
 1. Inherit means to come into possession of, to receive. An heir is one who receives or comes into possession of. Both words convey present tense realities -- something you have now.
 2. Through using the word picture of heirs who have an inheritance God is conveying to us the idea that there are some things we are and have because we are sons of God.
 - b. This is where many Christians are: We are asking God to give us and make us what He has already given us and made us -- what we already are and have. We are like the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son.
 1. Both the prodigal and the elder brother were sons by birth -- with all the rights and privileges of sonship. The father gave both sons their inheritance (Luke 15:12). Yet the elder brother was bitter and resentful, asking for what he already had (v28-30).
 2. For whatever reason the elder brother did not walk in the light of what was already his. v31-- You, my dear son (Weymouth) have been with me all this time (Goodspeed) and all that is mine is already thine (Knox); everything I have is yours (Phillips).
 - 4 In this lesson we want to discuss what it means that we are heirs with an inheritance in Christ.
- B. God has "bent over backwards" in His word to convey to us His plan for us -- His plan to give us the kingdom, to bring us into the kingdom, to make us sons who are heirs with an inheritance.

1. Eph 1:4,5--Long ago, even before he made the world, God chose us to be his very own through what Christ would do for us; he decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault -- we who stand before him covered in his love. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to! (Living Bible)
 - a. The word adopt in the Greek is a compound of two words -- son and to place. v5--In love having previously marked us out to be placed as adult sons. (Wuest)
 1. Adoption in ancient times meant something different than today. It was a legal relationship.
 2. If a man had no male heirs he would adopt an adult male and make him his heir -- with full rights and privileges of sonship. Gen 15:2
 - b. In our culture adoption can have negative connotations -- the idea that the adopted child is inferior to a birth child, the parent is not the real parent; etc. None of those concepts are involved in the term Paul used.
 1. Through the new birth, through receiving the life of God, we have been born of God (I John 5:1). We are actual sons of God by birth and we were chosen by God to be placed as sons. We are sons of God by birth and by adoption.
 2. Adoption to the Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans meant being taken out of one family and incorporated into another. We were children of the devil (I John 3:10,12; John 8:44; etc.). Now we are sons of God.
 - c. John 1:12--But to all who did accept Him (Berkeley) to them He gave the right to become children of God (ASV), the authority (Rotherham), the privilege of becoming (Weymouth); he empowered to become the children of God (Knox).
 2. God came to earth to die for us so that we could become sons (Gal 4:4-7). Because we are sons we are heirs of God. Gal 4:7--And since you are a son you are also an heir through God. (Wuest); an heir through God's own act (Weymouth); made so by God (Goodspeed).
 - a. In the epistle to the Hebrews Paul was encouraging Jewish believers who were experiencing persecution to stay faithful to Christ. In doing so he discusses why a new covenant was needful and why it is better than the Old Covenant. That is a whole lesson for another day.
 1. But in chapter 9 we get a comment that gives us insight into our discussion. v15--He (Jesus) mediates a new covenant for this reason, that those who have been called may obtain the eternal inheritance they have been promised, now that a death has occurred which redeems them from transgressions involved in the first covenant. (Moffatt)
 2. Remember God's plan to make us sons. Rom 8:29,30--He called us and then, through the Cross, justified us. Through justifying us He qualified to be sons.
 - b. Jesus died to deal with our sins so that we could be justified or acquitted, be made sons, and become heirs of God. Titus 3:4-7--Become heirs, (Weymouth)
- C. Sons qualify for their inheritance because they are sons. God has qualified us for our inheritance by making us sons.
1. Col 1:12--Giving thanks to the Father Who has qualified and made us fit to share the portion which is the inheritance of the saints (God's holy people) in the Light. (Amp)
 - a. Make you sufficient for your share in the inheritance of the saints in the light (Rotherham); qualified us (Moffatt); entitled you (Goodspeed).
 - b. With joy constantly giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you for the portion of the share of the inheritance of the saints in the sphere of light. (Wuest)
 2. Col 1:13 goes on to say that God has translated us or taken us out of the dominion of darkness and put us into the kingdom of His dear Son. That is the new birth which was made possible by the Cross.
 - a. Translate comes from two Greek words. One denotes a change of place or condition. The other means move from one place to another.
 - b. You are qualified for the inheritance because you have changed families, changed kingdoms.

3. Paul is the one to whom God gave the revelation that we are heirs of God to help us understand what God has done for us through the Cross of Christ and the new birth.
 - a. Jesus commissioned Paul and sent him out to preach the news of the inheritance believers have in Christ (Acts 26:14-18). v18--For to the Gentiles I am sending you (Rieu) that their eyes may be opened (Moffatt) turning them from dark to light (Basic) and from Satan's control (Goodspeed), the dominion of Satan (ABUV), the authority of Satan (Rotherham), that they may receive remission of sins (ASV) and get a share of what the people enjoy who are made holy by believing in Me (Beck).
 - b. Paul's concept of heirs and inheritance was Roman. Paul was a Roman citizen and both he and the people to whom he preached and wrote would have understood the concept.
 1. Under Roman law a person's body may have died but his legal personality, his identity, continued on in his heirs. The father lived on in his family -- not with his children but in his children. This is another word picture of the union that now exists between a believer and God.
 2. Under Roman law, from the moment a child is born he is his father's heir -- not when the father dies. When the father died the son acquired free control of the inheritance. However, in and through his father he is already a possessor of, a participant in the family possession.
 - c. The point for our discussion is this: We come into possession of our inheritance when we are born again -- when the kingdom comes into us and we are put into the kingdom. Under Roman law a father lived on in his sons. God wants to reign in us, in every part of us, and express Himself through us or "live on" in us by His Spirit, by His life.
- D. Because we are sons of God we are heirs of God and have an inheritance. What is our inheritance?
 1. The Bible calls us joint heirs with Jesus. The phrase joint-heir means a joint possessor or a participant in common.
 - a. Rom 8:17--And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also; heirs of God and fellowheirs with Christ -- sharing His inheritance with Him; only we must share His sufferings if we are of share His glory. (Amp)
 - b. This is another lesson for another day, but we need to make this comment: The sufferings we share with Christ are persecution and any cost to our flesh because we put God's will above the desires of our flesh.
 2. Our inheritance includes everything that we have in Christ -- through our union with Christ. Our inheritance is everything Jesus, as a man, had -- everything that was given back to Jesus in the resurrection. There are present and future aspects to our inheritance.
 - a. Our inheritance includes entrance into heaven, a glorified body like Jesus' resurrection body (I Pet 1:4), participation in Christ's future kingdom in the new heaven and new earth (Eph 1:11) -- all future.
 - b. But our inheritance includes what Jesus had when He lived on this earth as a man dependent on the life of the Father in Him -- access to the Father, protection, provision, authority and power over the works of the devil.
 3. If you understand what it means that you are an heir of God, a joint-heir with Jesus, who has an inheritance in Christ you will realize that we don't need to try to get something from God. We need to learn to walk in the light of what we already have but just can't see.
 - a. Our inheritance is made up of invisible or spiritual realities which can produce physical, tangible changes in us and in our lives -- through faith.
 - b. We will deal with this more fully in upcoming lessons. But, the point for our discussion now is this: Faith is walking according to things you cannot see, according to unseen realities, according to what God says and not what you see and feel. Faith is agreement with God's word.

E. Conclusion: As we close, let's consider some more things Paul said about our inheritance. Remember, this

is a man who learned to live by the power of the kingdom within, resurrection power, and overcame in the midst of some extremely difficult circumstances. He learned to live by the present provision of his inheritance in Christ.

1. In order to walk in the provision of our inheritance in this life we must know what we have. That knowledge comes from the word of God and the Spirit of God.
 - a. With the last words Paul spoke to the church at Ephesus he turned them over to the word of God. Paul understood knowledge of our inheritance comes to us through the word of God. Acts 20:32--I commit you to God -- that is, I deposit you in His charge, entrusting you to His protection and care (Amp) and to the revelation of his grace (Rieu) which has the power to make you strong (Basic) and to give you your proper possession (Williams) among all who are dedicated to him (NEB).
 - b. Paul prayed for Christians that they would know by revelation of the Spirit of God the riches of their inheritance in Christ. In Eph 1:18 Paul prayed that they would know:
 1. The magnificence and splendor of the inheritance promised to Christians. (Phillips)
 2. What the wealth and glory of the share he offers you among his people in their heritage. (NEB)
 3. How rich is His glorious inheritance in the saints. (Amp)
2. Our inheritance is everything God has provided for us in this life (present tense) and everything God has promised us for the life to come (future).
 - a. We need to study God's word and find out what we have, what we possess, as heirs of God. We need to pray and ask Him to help us see what we already have so that we can walk in the light of it.
 - b. Eph 1:11--And here is the staggering thing -- that in all which will one day belong to him we have been promised a share (Phillips); In Him too we have been made heirs (Weymouth) and we obtained an inheritance (Amp).