

## OUR CHRISTIAN INHERITANCE

Romans 8:17

Our study of the great eighth chapter of Romans brings us face to face with another great doctrine of Christianity - the Christians's inheritance in Christ Jesus. Our text is Romans 8:17, but I want us to place it in context; so, we begin with verse 14. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." This is the great doctrine of the Christian's inheritance in Christ. In order to understand this doctrine we must raise and answer from Scripture three tremendously important questions

I. The first question is, "Who is an heir of God?" Our text plainly says that every child of God is an heir of God. "If children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Are you a child of God? If so, I am talking about your rights; I am talking about your inheritance. If you are not a child of God, this is not yours but it can become yours today. A human father may disinherit his son, but the heavenly Father will never do this. Just as salvation is by grace, so the inheritance of God's children is by grace. It is something that is firm and secure in the grace of God, as is justification by faith.

But you will notice that the text does not simply say that we are heirs of God, but that we are joint heirs with Christ. There is quite a difference. In law there is a difference between an heir and a joint heir. Suppose a father owns a farm and has three sons to whom he leaves it. In that event, each son gets a third of the farm. But suppose the farmer makes all of his three sons joint heirs. In that event, the farm belongs to each of the three sons. Each son can say this land is mine - ALL of this land. This house is mine -ALL of it. This may not work so well with selfish human beings, but this

is what we have in God's plan. I would never say it if it were not in <sup>42/</sup>scripture. I would never believe it if it were not written in the Book. But this text actually says that everything which the Father has given Jesus Christ He has given to me as God's son. The <sup>5</sup>scripture says there is not a promise given to Jesus that has not been given to the sons of God through the grace that is in Jesus Christ. It is absolutely beyond comprehension of the mind of man. Not only are we heirs, but we are joint heirs. Everything that belongs to Him belongs to me. Everything! Every promise that has been given to the Son has been given to the sons of God through Him. Are you a son of God? You are if you are a child of God. If you are not a child of God you are not an heir because you are not a son. There is no way in the world to be an heir unless you are a child of God through the experience of the new birth.

II. But there is another question we must raise from the text. "What is the nature of the inheritance that comes <sup>10</sup>of the children of God?" The text says that the inheritance is with Christ. It is something that is experienced in union with Christ - never apart from Christ. Every aspect of our inheritance relates to Jesus Christ. It relates to what Jesus gives us, it relates to who Jesus Christ is, it relates to what He does, it relates to the present and the future. Everything that Christ is, everything that He gives, everything that He does is our inheritance. But we would have to go deeper and be more specific to understand the glory of the doctrine of Christian inheritance. Therefore, I will describe it in a four-fold way:

(1) In the first place, our inheritance consists of those marvelous, indescribable spiritual blessings which Jesus Christ gives. The apostle Paul begins the Ephesian epistle like this: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:3). Then in Ephesians 2:7 he speaks of the "exceeding riches of His grace" which has come to the sons of God through the cross and through the resurrection of Christ. If you ask me to name some of these blessings which are present, some of the blessings which are the possession of every saint of God, I would list the riches of forgiveness, the riches of justification, the

riches of sanctification in Christ, the riches of the indwelling of Christ, the riches of joy, the riches of love, the riches of His power. On and on we could go because the blessings are absolutely unlimited. Paul says they are not limited. There is nothing lacking in them. He blessed us when we accepted Christ. Every blessing became ours at salvation. It is a past tense in the original. He blessed us, Paul says, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Many of us live like spiritual paupers when we should be living like spiritual millionaires. If you are a child of God you are rich in the things which count. You are rich in the things that make life meaningful and complete.

An earnest person asked me one day, "Have you had the second blessing?" I said, "I ~~did~~ <sup>did</sup> not stop at the second blessing! I have had the third one and the fourth one and the fifth one. Now they are running up into the thousands." This is my inheritance, to be ~~be~~ blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, not to wait until I get to eternity, but to live now. That is my inheritance.

(2) Our inheritance consists of what Jesus Christ IS. Name the divine attributes and you will discover that the Word of God promises to the children of God the qualities that belong to Christ. For example, in I Cor<sup>inthians</sup> 1:30 Paul says that Jesus Christ has been made unto us divine wisdom. In the same verse he says that Jesus Christ has been made unto us divine righteousness. He has been made unto us sanctification. He has been made unto us redemption. He has not withheld himself from us at all but he has given of himself to His children. The apostle John is so daring that he says in I John 4:17, "As He is (that is as Jesus is) so are we in this ~~world~~ world." The character and glory of God in Christ are our ~~our~~ inheritance.

Finally, the Scripture teaches that we shall be absolutely like Him. John says in I John 3:2, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." But that final realization begins in this life as we partake of the character of God and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, not only receiving His grace, but also receiving of Him what He is in His very person.

(3) Our inheritance also consists of what Christ DOES. What Jesus Christ does, He shares with His people. It is an amazing truth. What He does He does not c alone, according to scripture. For example, Jesus Christ is coming to judge the world again. But, according to scripture, He will not judge it alone. He shares that judgment with His people. Paul says in I Corinthians 6:2, "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?" The apostle Peter was concerned about his great sacrifice. In Matthew 19:27 he turns to Jesus and says, "We have forsaken all to follow thee. What shall we have therefore?" Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, ye who have followed me in regeneration, when the Son of Man shall come in His glory and shall sit upon His throne of glory, then ye shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." If you would confine that word to the apostolic band, it is a general promise in Revelation 2:26. Jesus says, "To him that overcometh I will give the rule of the nations."

Christ is coming. He is coming to judge the world, but He will not exercise this apart from His own family. He is going to share with us the inheritance of judgment. He will also share with us <sup>in</sup> the inheritance of government. Scripture tells us that Jesus Christ is going to rule the world. In Revelation 11:15 John says, "The kingdoms of the world are become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and forever." However, the Revelation does not simply teach that Jesus is going to reign; it also teaches that God's saints are going to share the inheritance of government with His Son forever! Revelation 20:6 says, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

Some people believe in a general resurrection. I believe they are confusing scripture and missing one of the greatest blessings in all the world. The first resurrection is spoken of in Revelation 20:6, and it is the resurrection of the just - the resurrection at the rapture of the church. John says, "Blessed and holy is he that is in this first resurrection. For on such the second death (that is hell) hath no power but they shall

be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign." Who shall reign? The saints of God. "They shall reign with Him a thousand years."

The inheritance is not only what Jesus gives in His grace and what He bestows of His character, but the inheritance is actually a share in His judgment of the world and its government. This is our inheritance. It is so exciting that we can scarcely comprehend and believe it. We were made to rule and reign. We shall reign with Christ. The Scripture teaches that. We shall judge with Christ. What is His is ours and we are inheritors of it - heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ.

(4) Our inheritance consists of ALL things. Scripture says nothing less. Hebrews 1:2 says that "Jesus Christ has been appointed heir of all things." Revelation 21:7 says that "the saints of God" (that includes you if you are a Christian) shall inherit ALL things. That is Scripture. We generally stop by speaking of the heavenly mansion or the new body, but Scripture teaches a great deal more about the inheritance of the saints. It will include a new body. We will have a new body that will correspond to the glory of the perfect age - a body that will have no trace of death in it. That will be a part of your inheritance.

There will also be the inheritance of a home in the Father's house - that is heaven. It is spoken of in John 14. It is spoken of by Peter in I Peter 1:3-5. He spoke it in a time of great persecution when the suicide rate was at an all time high. He praises God. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>who</sup> for according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again, hath caused us to be born again (the original says) to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last day." Heaven is sure, God is guarding it for us, and He is guarding us, Scripture says. The two shall be brought together - the inheritor and the inheritance.

We shall also inherit a new world, a new cosmos, a new universe. Just as God on the day of resurrection is going to make new bodies for His children, so God is going to create a new cosmos. New heavens and a new earth. A new world empire. Not only is the individual going to be resurrected and redeemed, but the whole order of things is going to be recreated. Paul talks about it in glowing terms in Romans 8:19-25, which we will expound at length later. What I am saying here is that the inheritance of God's children does not simply include a new body and a heavenly city, but it includes the whole world - the whole universe. Our telescopes have never found the limits of outer space, but the saints of God will. The saints of God shall inhabit and inherit all things. "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth," Jesus said in Matthew 5:5. We shall not be confined to one little city or one particular place. The whole universe resurrected and redeemed shall belong to every one of us who is an heir and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. This is the note on which the Revelation closes. John saw it. John takes us through the time of great tribulation following the rapture of the church. He takes us through the time of Anti-Christ and the false prophet. He takes us through Armageddon. He takes us through the thousand year reign of the saints with the Savior, He takes us through the binding of Satan and the great White Throne Judgment. Then he stands beyond history - beyond the tribulation, beyond Armageddon, beyond the Millenium, beyond the judgment of God, beyond the work of Satan, and he sees a new order that God has brought in - a new cosmos, a new universe that has been resurrected for God's children. This is the reason that I think today's space exploration is so relevant and touches something in the human heart. Everything that the space people find is going to be resurrected and going to belong to me and to you in God's great new tomorrow. This is what Scripture teaches.

John saw it in Revelation 21. He says, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea." That is the new order. That is the cosmos redeemed and resurrected. Then he saw the new Jerusalem coming down to center in this new cosmos, this new earth. "And I saw the new

Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." It will be situated at the center of this new world. But we will not be confined to that. The whole redeemed universe, which is incomprehensible and about which science knows very little, is going to belong to the children of grace. Then John says, "And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold the tabernacle or the dwelling place of God is with men and He shall dwell with them and be their God and they shall be His people." Here is the climax: The Old Testament says, "The portion of mine inheritance is God" (Job 73:26). That is the ultimate in the inheritance of the saints - God. We are going to have Him. He is going to dwell with us forever and ever in the Father's house, in the new cosmos, in a redeemed world order that Jesus Christ is going to bring in for God's children beyond history.

It is absolutely inconceivable, therefore, when Paul says, "Heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus," He is saying more than you and I can ever take in and understand. Yet, we can believe it and to believe it is to let this world shrink into nothingness before our eyes. I have found more inspiration and more motivation to be faithful and to ~~serve~~ my Lord through this than any other revealed truth in the scripture. To believe this is to be able to keep your head up and keep your perspective in a world given to materialism and headed to judgment.

We shall inherit ALL spiritual blessings right now. Finally, we shall inherit ALL things - not only the new body, the home in the Father's house, but the whole created order.

III. How do we qualify to be an heir? The rich young ruler came to Jesus and asked the question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" The statement itself is a contradiction within itself: "What must I DO?" It is not an inheritance if you DO to get it. It does not come that way. It is not based on your achievement in life. It is based on who you are. It is based on your relationships - your relationship to God



through Jesus Christ. Doris Duke inherited \$300,000,000 from James B. Duke. Why? Was it because she worked in the tobacco factories in Durham? She never worked a day in those tobacco factories. It was because she was the born child of James B. Duke. She inherited all things because of her relationship to James B. Duke. That is the only way that you and I can ever be heirs - through sonship, relationship, being a child of Jesus Christ. It does not matter who we are. It does not matter how weak or how lonely we feel and who our parents were. Thank God, you can be a son of God and be rich in the things of God in this life and you can look forward to all the inheritance that belongs to Jesus Christ. Are you a son of God and an heir of God?

Some years ago there was a man in the west who was living in dire poverty. He was struggling to get enough to eat. Then one day a British nobleman died. When he did, it was discovered that the closest heir was this poor man in the west. The nobleman's estate belonged to him all the time, but he did not know it. What did this man do when he discovered that he was a millionaire? Did he say, "It is good to know you have something to fall back on. One of these days I may go look into it." Of course he did not act so foolish. He did not act like a lot of people act about their true riches in Christ. On the strength of the word that he was heir to the estate, he went to town, bought himself a new suit, and a ticket to England. The newspaper reporters interviewed him. They said, "Where are you going?" He replied, "I am going to England to take possession of my estate." Of course he was! You and I are immeasurably richer than this man, or any man humanly speaking. But have you, by faith in the riches of His grace, appropriated it to your heart?

You may be a believer and living like a pauper. You may not even know that you need not live that way. Live like a rich man - you ARE rich. You have everything. Do not worry about the perishable, material things of this world. You are rich. But if you do not have Christ today, you are so poor. No matter what you have materially, you are poor and you will be poorer if you die without Christ. Are you an heir? You are if you are a son. You can become an heir because "to as many as received Him, to them gave he the right to become sons of God" (John 1:12).