

A GREAT INHERITANCE ... for us and for Christ
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(EPHESIANS 1: 11-18)

I shall always remember the old lady who decided to bequeath to me her fortune. " My boy," she said, " I am a wealthy woman. I have property in England and South Africa, but I cannot expect to live much longer. I have decided to leave my possessions to you." When she smiled, she seemed an angel! Thereafter I walked on air until one of the local people asked how I was getting along with my hostess. Possibly he saw the excitement in my eyes, for he said, " She is a wonderful old lady, but she has one weakness. Has she spoken about her will yet? She makes one every month, and probably gets a real kick out of doing it. Has she told you she intends to leave everything to you? Ah, I thought so. She is always approaching new people with the same story. Her lawyer must be a patient man." Yes, that kindly lady made me her sole beneficiary, but she forgot to die-in time. " For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth " (Heb. 9: 16, 17). An inheritance depends upon three things: (i) Someone must have something to bequeath; (ii) That person must die before the will becomes operative; (iii) Then the beneficiary can claim the inheritance and rejoice in its provision.

Our Inheritance in Christ-1-11

Paul speaks of our inheritance in Christ, and then affirms that the Lord Jesus also has an inheritance in us. The Saviour had something to bequeath, and His death made it possible for beneficiaries to register claims. Against the background of slavery, the apostle speaks of redemption through the blood of Christ; but in Ephesians 2:5-7 the magnificent sweep of his vision encompasses the eternal breadth of God's purposes for the church. In the past, He quickened us together with Christ; in the present, He has made us to sit in the place of divine power; in the future, He intends to display His eternal kindness before the assembled hosts of heaven. When Royalty honors a subject, the act is reported around the world. Similarly, ". . . in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Jesus Christ." The forgiveness of sins, eternal life, the filling of the Holy Spirit, endowment of power, and the assurance that some day we shall be like Him, are all part of our great inheritance. Sometimes earthly inheritances are conditioned by restrictive clauses; a man may not register his claim until he has reached a specified age. Our inheritance may be claimed now.

Christ's Inheritance in Us- 1:18

It should be noted that, while Paul rejoiced in the first inheritance, he prayed for wisdom to grasp the full significance of the second. He prayed for three things: (i) That Christians might understand the purpose of God's call-the hope of His calling. There were things for which Christ fervently hoped. The apostle spoke of an inheritance. He envisaged the joys of ownership, and thought not only of a soul forgiven but of one possessed. An inheritance possessed may be used by its recipient to further his purposes and increase his pleasure. Christ plans to reach a world, but to do so needs instruments. Second only to the joy of possessing men is the thrill of using them. There is much latent wealth in

A GREAT INHERITANCE ... for us and for Christ the human soul, and this may be bequeathed to the Saviour. Yet in spite of every noble resolve, the fulfillment of our will can never be accomplished until we also die-" for a testament is of force after men are dead." We need to be crucified with Christ, for only then can the Lord Jesus take His inheritance. Thus (ii) Paul prays that Christians may become conversant with the details of this great inheritance; and (iii) asks that men might know " . . . the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe . . . " Yet the key to all this is the crucifixion of the self-life. The cross of Calvary stands at the centre of everything spiritual. Through His death for us we may inherit the riches of heaven; through our death for Him, He can inherit the riches of earth. He was glad to lay down His life for us; it is problematical whether we shall be glad to emulate His example. Elsewhere Paul speaks of our being laborers together with God-we are partners in a great concern. Together we work toward the one great end. However, we do well to consider a question. We have been able to claim our inheritance; has He been able to claim His?

Oh, teach me how to die, dear Lord;
To die upon a cross:
To give to Thee that which is Thine,
And count all else but dross.
Then teach me how to live, dear Lord,
To take Thy hand in mine:
To work, and pray, and seek for souls,
Until the world is Thine.

The Slave Who Refused His Freedom

Perhaps the supreme illustration of this two-way inheritance comes from the Bible itself. Under Mosaic law, provision was made whereby a slave could refuse his freedom in order to continue in the service of his master. In Exodus 21:2-6 we read the following commandment: " If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself he shall go out by himself: if he were married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master have given him a wife, and she have borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's and he shall go out by himself. And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an aul; and he shall serve him for ever." Here is clearly defined the difference between bondage and dedicated service. A slave may serve because he has no alternative. When he rejects freedom because love prompts further service, the Master may be assured this servant will be worth his weight in gold! The Master's kindness begets increasing love.

To be free is the greatest heritage of all, yet when a man voluntarily chooses to remain a slave-when he puts to death the inherent longings of his soul-the life which follows will be completely dedicated. The master thereupon inherits in his servant a wealth of devotion and service hitherto unknown.

I love, I love my Master,
I will not go out free:
For He is my Redeemer,
He paid the price for me.

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Why Don't You Get Out of the Way?

It is problematical whether Wales ever produced a greater preacher than the late Rev. R. B. Jones, for the influence of this man of God reached every part of the Principality. His untiring activity, his soul-stirring oratory, his deep faith in the Word of God, were those of a true prophet. All his students revered him, and to sit at his feet was unforgettable. Years after I had left his lecture hall, I stayed in the home of a saintly lady who had known the beloved Principal for many years. She told me of earlier times, when as a young minister R. B. Jones had first made an impact upon the Christian church. He was young, eloquent, determined, dominant. Everywhere he went, congregations overflowed the churches; yet something seemed to be lacking. Then one day a certain woman, a close friend of the young minister, said to him, "Why don't you get out of the way?" It was enough. From that moment God filled the soul of His servant with new power, and I am only one of the very many people who will forever thank God for the privilege of meeting and knowing this great man.

Dr. Scroggie's Testimony

I once heard Dr. Graham Scroggie tell a Keswick audience that he could remember a time in his early years in the ministry when he reached the end of himself. He was convinced he was a failure, and would never succeed in the ministry. Then one day he climbed a hillside, and sat in the shadow of a tree. Around him the world seemed to be falling to pieces; the outlook was bleak indeed. "And then," said Dr. Scroggie, "He took me, and blessed me, and brake me; and ever since has used me to feed a hungry multitude." Silently the great Keswick audience listened to the speaker as he developed his point. The greatest thing a Christian can do is to die; to reach that place of self abnegation where he is able to say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2: 20). Dr. Scroggie had received a great inheritance through the death of his Redeemer; the Lord Jesus received a similar inheritance when beneath a hillside tree His weary servant gave up depending upon self-sufficiency.

It has been said that John Newton was once the slave of a slave woman; that he had reached depths of human depravity unknown by most civilized people. Then Christ found him, and the grace of God commenced to lift the fallen man from the depths of shame. Gradually John Newton became stronger in the Christian faith, and ultimately entered the ministry. His charm and power as a saintly preacher were recognized in high circles, and finally the former slave of a slave woman became the rector of a renowned church in the City of London. This was the man who wrote-

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fear.

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