

God's Inheritance in the Saints

THE MORE ONE considers this subject, "God's Inheritance," the more wonderful it becomes to those who aspire to follow Jesus Christ our Lord. In the earlier days of the apostle's ministry, Paul assured the church at Ephesus in his farewell address to them, after three years in their city, "Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, . . . I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—Acts 20:18-27,31

The whole counsel of God which Paul had not shunned to declare to the church at Ephesus during his three years' stay among them, related to kingdom truths as they affected Jew and Gentile, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Also, there was the receiving of the Holy Spirit.

Further revelations made to the apostle, as described in his letter to them some years later, disclose in greater detail the outworking of God's purposes in the creation and development of a Divine family—a New Creation headed by Christ—and God's great purpose respecting the angelic hosts, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places [heavenlies, *Wilson's Emphatic Diaglott*] might be known through the church the manifold wisdom of God."—Eph. 3:10

There were plans and purposes hitherto hidden not only from men but from principalities and powers in the heavenlies, and for ages and generations "according to the eternal purpose" in Christ Jesus our Lord, and "according to his good pleasure which he [God] hath purposed in himself." (Eph. 3:11; 1:9) Thus we can see the distinction of the whole counsel of God in the early proclamation of the glad tidings by the apostle, from those deeper truths as expressed in his letters and epistles to the various churches, and especially to the church at Ephesus.

DEEPER TRUTHS

In the opening salutation of the letter to the Ephesians—chapter one, verses three through seven—Paul explains, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places [things, *Marginal Translation*] in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love," having chosen us a New Creation ["a people for his name"—Acts. 15:14]

“unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”

Further, we read, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”—Eph. 3:17-19

The objective truth of the apostle’s letter was “that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel”—the glad tidings. (vs. 6) The seed thought embracing all the apostle’s remarks in his letter is found in chapter one, verses eighteen and nineteen, “The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe.”

Paul’s prayer was “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” (chap. 1:17) He wished the same revelation of truths from God to himself to be passed on to all the saints that they also might acknowledge God in all his perfections of life and being, and to behold the glory of these in the face, or person of Jesus Christ.—II Cor. 4:6,7

This being so, they would appreciate in the spirit of their minds their own spiritual growth and confirmation of faith by embracing these treasured gifts—these remarkable revelations of God’s purposes for his people, which were hidden for ages and generations in the foreordained purpose of himself, but were now made known.

The apostle is careful to make quite clear that those revealings of God’s purposes and truths have to do with the inner man, one’s inner self—the heart of man and his innermost affections and motivations. This wisdom and revelation concerning God and his purposes appeals not to the human, the external self, nor is it anything that man can acquire by self-effort. “The world by wisdom knew not God.” (I Cor. 1:21) “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit.”—I Cor. 2:9,10

The apostle is referring to the eyes of the heart. The eyes of your understanding being ‘lit up,’ enlightened by God’s Spirit, you may know what is the understanding of these great truths, these disclosed purposes of God. “The light of the body is the eye,” said Jesus. “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”—Matt. 6:22

In other words, if one’s mind is centered upon God, the heart becomes devoted to God’s Word, and one can say, as David expressed himself, “The LORD is my light and my salvation. . . . One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the

days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.”—Ps. 27:1,4

When the heart and its affections confirm the thoughts of the mind, the whole being responds in action. One has perceived and accepted a purpose and thenceforth endeavors to reach the goal visualized. Paul said, “I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do.” (Phil. 3:13) In the Christian life nothing is ever achieved without a conviction of its being right, and a growing enthusiasm to accomplish it. “The entrance of thy words giveth light.” (Ps. 119:130) “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”—vs. 11

HIS CALLING

The calling, or invitation, is a high, a holy and heavenly calling; an invitation from God in Christ Jesus to you and to me who hear, earnestly listen, and accept his Word. It is an invitation to be united with Christ in spiritual life, in eternal life, in life immortal.

To know God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent “is life eternal.” (John 17:3) The “exceeding great and precious promises” are given to enable us, by them, to become “partakers of the divine nature” (II Pet. 1:4), and to attain to the unity and oneness possessed by God and Christ, as Jesus prayed, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me.”—John 17:21

The apostle declares that he hath chosen us in Christ “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love;” having chosen us, elected, or predestinated us,

unto sonship “by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.”—Eph. 1:4,5

THE HOPE OF THIS INVITATION

The basis of the hope is that God’s will and purpose might be accepted and performed in those called. No other purpose, condition, or attainment is to be considered. “This is the will of God, even your sanctification.” (I Thess. 4:3) Your beings are set apart for a Divine purpose, to be “sons of God” (Phil. 2:15), members of Christ’s body, the church of Christ, and the bride of Christ.—Rev. 19:7; 21:2; 22:17

This hope embraces also the expectation of being the temple of God, the heavenly Zion. We read, “The LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. . . . here will I dwell.” “This is my rest for ever: . . . I have desired it.” (Ps. 132:13,14) It is “builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.”—Eph. 2:22

The crowning hope of this called-out class is, doubtless, to see their Lord and to be with him, as he promised; and he will not leave them comfortless. This has been the most glorious hope, the most joyful anticipation, and the crowning feature of faith for all saints down through the Gospel Age.

The thought of being, through the eternal ages, with Christ, who is the embodiment of love, has been, and still is, the joy and thrill of all who have abandoned self for him, from his First Advent until now. It has been mutually so expressed by Jesus himself, and by his prospective bride. Jesus said, “I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there

ye may be also.” (John 14:3) “Surely I come quickly,” and his beloved bride exclaims exultingly, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”—Rev. 22:20

Our Heavenly Father has done everything necessary for the encouragement of those who aspire, and humbly seek to attain this inheritance in Christ. God has exercised his powers for the encouragement of faith in his children more than has ever been done throughout past ages. We read, “God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.”—Heb. 6:17-19

THE RICHES OF GLORY

What are the riches, or wealth, of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints? An inheritance is an estate. It may be material possessions or personal attributes, or virtues. The Scriptures, in speaking of God’s inheritance, usually refer not to material possessions, but to nations, peoples, men. “The LORD will not cast off his people, neither will he forsake his inheritance.” (Ps. 94:14) The LORD is the strength of his people. “Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance.” (chap. 28:9) The tribe of Levi was chosen in place of the firstborn of Israel as God’s inheritance, and was told, “Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, . . . I am . . . thine inheritance.”—Num. 18:20

The scripture we are considering reveals that God's inheritance are those whom he is pleased to call and accept through Christ as his peculiar treasure. The Apostle Peter refers to the church of Christ in this way. "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." (I Pet. 2:9) It is these who are to know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance.

God's inheritance is his New Creation, those sanctified ones, likened in virtues to himself, created in Christ Jesus our Lord. They are begotten of God's Spirit, and to be molded, shaped, and fashioned through adverse circumstances and conditions and experiences into the image of God's dear Son. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."—Rom. 8:29

Paul reminds us of Christ in writing to the Hebrews. "God, . . . Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, . . . Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high."—Heb. 1:1-3

Hence we realize as Jesus declared, None but God's Son can reveal the glory of the Father. "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:27) Christ is then the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

One may ask, what is really the glory of God, and what are the riches of the glory of God in his saints? We reply, modern use of the term 'glory' has robbed it somewhat of its intensive value as it pertains to our mighty Creator and to our beloved Redeemer—King of kings and Lord of lords. It is something more than that which gives majestic splendor, or a symbolic mantle, or an insignia of high position. It may include these, as with the robes of glory and beauty of the High Priest.—Exod. 28:2

The Shekinah light over the Mercy Seat, between the cherubim of the Tabernacle, signified the appearance of God in a restricted sense. But when God was speaking with Moses at Mt. Sinai he there disclosed the original meaning of the term glory, as Moses had requested to see God's glory, saying, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," and God replied, "I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken." "And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand." "Thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." (Exod. 33:17-23) Moses was not permitted to see God's face, the expression of all his virtues; for God said, "There shall no man see me, and live."—vs. 20

In this our day, and since Pentecost, we are privileged to see "the glory of God in the face [person] of Jesus Christ." (II Cor. 4:6) So the glory of God is not just the brightness of his presence, the illumination of his shape, or can it be a halo attending his person, or limited to any external splendor. Neither are these the glory of his inheritance in the saints as mentioned in Ephesians 1:18.

THE GLORY OF GOD

The glory of God must be explained as the fullest contents of God's own nature, embracing the aggregate of all his attributes according to their revealed completeness, as manifested in Jesus. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." We remember the incident when Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"—John 14:8,9

The glory of God, then, is not merely an attribute, or one feature of the revelation of God. It is the greatness of all, and every feature, of his personal perfections. These virtues are in store for such as turn to God and Christ Jesus in full consecration and devotion; to be participated in and received of God through Christ, as John declared in his Gospel. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth, . . . And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."—John 1:14,16

It is, indeed, an astounding thought for us. One might ask, how can this be? By what means have we received of his fullness and grace? According to the Scriptures, it is in the receiving of God's Holy Spirit in our hearts, through Jesus Christ. The Scriptures reveal God's glory to be the excellency of all the Divine attributes and virtues in perfection, both in his personality and in creative power.

Paul exhorts, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another,

if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity [love], which is the bond of perfectness.” (Col. 3:12-14) These are the very characteristics of God himself, and of his beloved Son, Christ Jesus. These same characteristics, or attributes and virtues, of God and of Christ Jesus, are to be God’s inheritance in the saints—the wealth of God’s glory.

In other scriptures, the apostle gives the same interpretation of God’s glory and goodness. Speaking of Israel’s rejection of their Messiah, Paul reasons, “Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering?” (Rom. 2:4) Then he speaks of making “known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called.”—chap. 9:23,24

THE PURPOSES OF GOD’S INHERITANCE

The characteristics of God created in the church by his grace in Christ Jesus is an inheritance God is waiting to possess, awaiting their completeness as the bride of his beloved Son. (Rev. 19:7) “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” (Eph. 2:7) God will make manifest to the whole realm of his universe—to angels and men—his wisdom and love in the New Creation to fulfill his purpose of filling the earth with holy, happy people, when “the glory of the LORD” shall fill the earth and “all flesh shall see it together.” (Isa. 11:9; 40:5) Thus will be proven to the whole human race, the living and the dead,

that God is love, and that his compassions never fail.—Lam. 3:22

It is indeed the surpassing love of God and of Christ Jesus in all the virtues of love—the height and depth, the length and breadth of all that they are in character and person—through the merit of our Lord’s redeeming sacrifice, by which we are privileged to participate in and possess these same virtues to a degree, even now, this side the veil of death. They are begotten in us by God’s Holy Spirit, through his Word. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (II Cor. 3:18) “We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”—I Cor. 13:9,10

The thought of our hearts should be, “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.”—Gal. 2:20

GOD’S POWER

Think of the “exceeding greatness” of God’s power “to us-ward who believe, . . . Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead.” (Eph. 1:19,20) How surpassingly great is the power of God that he exerts for those who permit him to direct their steps and desires in the narrow path of life! He has called them and quickened them to a living hope by “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved

in heaven” for those “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”—I Pet. 1:3-5

Our cooperation in this creative work of God within the heart, is in our submission to the will of God, the abandonment of self at every cost, in all humility and obedience in our walk of faith. There will be, as with Paul, fightings without and fears within. (II Cor. 7:5) There will be fightings against retaliations to ridicule, snobbery, misrepresentations, humiliation, setbacks, crossbearings, and self-denials within. But “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” (II Cor. 9:8) “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”—Phil. 2:13

This is all in accordance with his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead. The transference of the life principle of the Logos from spirit to human had been achieved, as we read, “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14) But the transference of the life principle of a human being to that of a spirit being had never been demonstrated until the raising of Jesus by the mighty power, or strong arm, of Jehovah.

The same mighty power is now raising us up also, says Paul, implanting in the church of Christ the wealth and riches of God’s glory, his character, his perfections, which, in the saints, is accounted of God as his inheritance. “Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”—Rom. 8:29

OUR TRIUMPH IN CHRIST

“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31) “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him [Christ Jesus] that loved us.”—vss. 35-37

With the increasing pitfalls and subtle snares about us, this question of separation from Christ is most assuredly worth considering at such a time as this. Paul says, “I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, . . . shall be able to separate us from the love of God.”—vss. 38,39

Paul is like a man proving every link of a chain. Carefully and fervently he has tested all, and is satisfied that none of these can cut him off from the love of God. Nothing can intercept the strength that shall avail to make him more than a conqueror through Christ Jesus our Lord.—Rom. 8:37

Let us pray that our eyes of understanding may be kept open to the last moment, and receptive to all God’s promises for us. May we hold fast to faith, to the essential knowledge and Truth of his Word for our growth in his grace, in fellowship, devotion, and praise, always remembering, it is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”—Col. 1:27

God is our inheritance. It is ours to be his inheritance, and to appreciate with a full heart the hope of his calling, the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of his power to usward who believe, which will enable us to become copies at heart of God’s dear Son. ■

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

QUESTION: Please explain John 10:27,28, “My sheep . . . follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” Does this text support the philosophy, “Once in grace, always in grace?”

ANSWER: The expression, “Once in grace, always in grace,” is not scriptural. It is true, however, just as Jesus said, that no man is able to ‘pluck’ a follower of the Master out of his care. These are protected from all spiritual harm emanating from sources outside of themselves. If they keep their hearts pure before the Lord, all the resources of Divine power will be enlisted on their behalf to protect them against any, and all, enemies seeking to destroy them as “new creature[s]” in Christ Jesus. (II Cor. 5:17) One of the promises is that the “eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.”—II Chron. 16:9

This does not mean, however, that a Christian cannot take himself away from Divine care by permitting bitterness to enter and rule his heart, or otherwise becoming lax in his spiritual responsibilities. Paul wrote, “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (I Cor. 9:27) Paul realized that through unfaithfulness he could become a ‘castaway,’ yet he was also assured that all his enemies combined, of whatever sort they might be, could not separate him from the love of God.—Rom. 8:31-39 ■