

The Promises Are Our Inheritance



Claiming Our Inheritance (Part 9)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue to study together our rich and exciting theme for this week, "Claiming Our Inheritance."

In my talk yesterday I unfolded the truth contained in the 2nd epistle of Peter 1:2-4, as these verses relate to God's provision for us. I summarized the truth contained in these verses in seven successive statements, and I'll just go through these statements once again by way of introduction to my talk today.

First, God's provision is in abundance.

Second, God is the only source, Jesus the only channel.

Third, God's power has already given us everything we need. And we noted that it's the perfect tense. It's not something that God is going to do, it's something He has done.

Fourth, and this is repeated for emphasis, it's all contained in knowing or acknowledging Jesus; that is, not just knowing about Him intellectually, but acknowledging Him and giving Him His rightful place in our lives.

Fifth, the provision is in the promises. That's the key to understanding everything. Let me say it again. Bear this in mind. Take it with you. The provision is in the promises.

Sixthly, by appropriating the promises, we participate in the divine nature. The nature of God Himself comes into us.

And seventhly, in proportion as we do this, we escape the corruption in the world through evil desires because the nature of God and corruption are incompatible. Wherever the nature of God comes in, there is no more room for corruption.

Now today I am going to deal in a practical way with the actual steps we have to take to enter our inheritance. In the Old Testament there's one book which describes how God's people Israel entered into the inheritance that God had promised for them. It's the book of Joshua. Rightly understood, this book of Joshua provides a pattern that we too can follow as we enter into our inheritance in the New Testament. I'm going to read the first three verses of the first

chapter of the book of Joshua. (Joshua 1:1-3):

> "Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, 'Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses.'" (NAS)

Now there are some important points for us to notice in this opening of the book of Joshua. It gives us the key to understanding what follows in the rest of the book. Bear in mind that God started what He had to say to Joshua with the statement, "Moses, my servant is dead; now therefore…" and I just want to point out a kind of principle in the spiritual life that often a death has to precede a new move. So many times, something has to die before we can take the next move. Moses had been one of the greatest leaders that God ever gave to His people and yet it was only after his death that his people could move into their inheritance. So although they mourned the death of Moses, it was not a disaster, but it was a necessary preliminary to the next move.

I believe we find this in our own lives spiritually. It's even, I think, something like the cycle of the seasons. At the end of the summer there comes fall, and then winter which is a time of death. But out of the time of death of winter there comes the newness and renewal of spring. And I believe there's something like that in our lives. I've noticed so often, when God has something new before me, something old has to die first before I can move into the new.

Let's go on then with this lesson from Joshua. Second point is that God required that all the people cross over. That's so different from the contemporary church, where if we get a 50% response from the people we think we're doing pretty well. But at this point, in dealing with His people, God said not one of them is to be left behind. They are all to cross over. And I believe there's something ahead of the people of God in the next few years that's going to be very like that, where all the people who want to belong to God's people and into God's inheritance are going to have to cross over.

Then I want you to note the tenses that God uses. In verse 2 He uses the present tense, "I am giving," but in verse 3 He uses the perfect tense, "I have given them the land." The lesson is this: Once God says, "I give it to you," after that God doesn't have to give it again. After that, as far as God is concerned, it has been given. When God says, "I give," that settles it. After that, it's "I have given." It has been given.

Now from then on Israel had the legal right given them by God to the entire land, but they still did not have experiential possession of the land. They didn't own any more of the land experientially than they did before God spoke. So I want you to see this point that there's a difference between the legal right and the experiential possession of what God has promised us. I think this is very important for us as Christians. I sometimes have commented that if Israel had been like some Christians, after God said to them in verse 3, "I have given you the whole land," they would have lined up along the east bank of the Jordan River, looked westward across the river into the land and said, "It's all ours." Well, it would have been true legally, but it was not true experientially. The Canaanites still dominated the land. So bear this principle in mind which emerges from the book of Joshua. It's one thing to have the legal right, it's another thing to have the experiential possession.

Now let's look at the actual process by which Israel moved into the land. Their first two successes came through miracles. A miracle opened the way for them to cross the Jordan and through a miracle they captured the first city of Jericho. But listen to this. After that they had to fight for all the rest. And the only way that they actually gained experiential possession was by placing their feet actually on the ground that they were claiming. God said to them, "Every place where you place the sole of your foot, that's what's yours in experience, not just in legal right."

Now all this is a very close parallel for us in the New Testament as we gain our inheritance. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew name Joshua is the same in the original language as the name Jesus. There are just two different forms of the same name, and we kind of get this picture: In the Old Testament, under a leader named Joshua, God led His people into a promised land. In the New Testament, under a leader named Jesus (which is the same name) God leads His people into a land of promises. So you see the difference? In the Old Testament, the inheritance was a promised land. In the New Testament, the inheritance is a land of promises.

I've explained that the example of Joshua and the Israelites entering their inheritance applies as a very clear and practical way to us as Christians entering our inheritance. You see, when we are born again and become God's children legally, from then onwards we are heirs to all that God has. This is what Paul says in Romans 8:16-17:

> "The Spirit himself [that's the Holy Spirit] testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

That's essential. We have to know, through the witness of the Holy Spirit, that we really are the children of God. Otherwise our claim to be God's children is not endorsed by the Holy Spirit. We must have the Holy Spirit's endorsement to our claim. Then Paul goes on to say:

> "Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and coheirs with Christ…"

That's exciting. The entire inheritance of God belongs to us. We share the inheritance with Jesus Christ. Everything that belongs to Jesus Christ belongs likewise to us as sons of God. But there's an "if" that follows and sometimes people read the Bible and skip the "if's," but this is a very important "if" and I want to read it:

> "Now if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and coheirs with Christ [now here's the "if"], if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory." (NIV)

So we are heirs to the whole inheritance. We are heirs to all the blessings, but we are also heirs to the sufferings. And we cannot skip the sufferings and expect to inherit the blessings. That's very clear. The condition is "if we suffer with Him." So, to gain experiential possession of our inheritance as Christians, we need to follow the example of Israel. It's not enough just to line up on the east bank of the river and look across at our inheritance and say, "I've got it all." I've met people who've told me, "I got it all when I accepted Jesus." My answer is, "You got it all legally, but you don't necessarily have it all experientially." That's exactly illustrated by the experience of Israel and sometimes I go so far as to say to people, "Well, if you've got it all, where is it all? Let's see it! Demonstrate it! Use it! Let's have the evidence." But so many times people have it all in theory, they have it all in doctrine, but they don't have it in real experience and there's where we have to apply the lesson of Joshua. What are the principles that apply to us? I would suggest these are the main principles:

1. Where necessary, God will do miracles. But God will not do miracles where they're not necessary.

2. Like Israel, for most of our inheritance we will have to fight. We will not enter into our inheritance unless we're prepared to take on the powers of darkness that oppose us and defeat them with the weapons God has made available to us. Christians who will not fight will not enter into their inheritance.

There's a little rather vulgar word that's used in common speech today. It's the word "guts." Doesn't sound good in a sermon. Some people call it "intestinal fortitude," but I want to suggest to you that you probably will get to heaven without theology. I doubt whether you will get there without "guts." It takes "guts" to be a Christian. It takes "guts" to enter our inheritance.

3. The third principle from Israel under Joshua is this: that we have to set our feet on what God has promised us. We have to take possession of it individually and personally for ourselves. And this is where the sufferings come in because when we do that, we'll find that we inevitably share in Christ's sufferings.

Let's then look briefly as I close at our two responsibilities, the two things we have to do. I'm going to say them in very short words.

First of all, we've got to be prepared to fight.

Secondly, we have to set our feet on what we claim to be ours of our inheritance.

FIGHT!

SET OUR FEET!

All right. My time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. Tomorrow I'll be unfolding to you the full extent of our inheritance which is no less than all the promises of God.

Radio Program

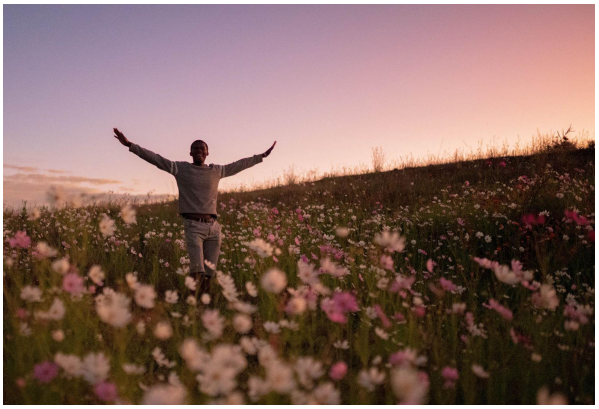
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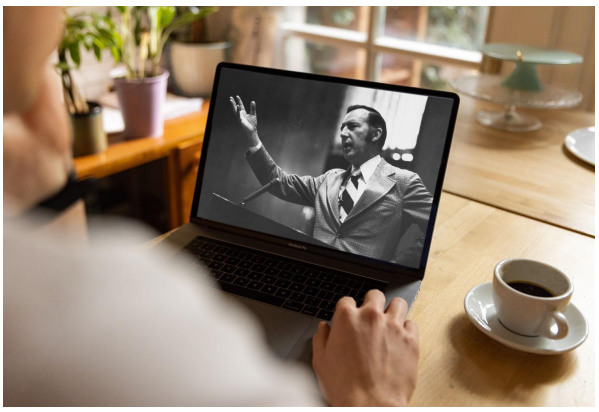
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