

Possessing Our Possessions

Reading: Rom. 8:32; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Phil. 3:3-15.

In reading passages like these, we should be strangely dull and insensitive if we were not left with the impression of much more yet to be, that there is a great prospect for the people of God. The Bible all the way through is a book of prospect, of movement forward and then failure to attain and a sense that there is yet something more to be. That marks the Bible in stages all the way through — failure to attain, a coming short, and the resultant sense that that cannot be all, there is something more, and here we are told that there is already secured unto us a tremendous inheritance. *“He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?”* (Rom. 8:32). Giving us His Son, He gives us all things, they are ours. The apostle says, *“All things are yours”*, they are yours, they belong to you. And yet we find him in this state, caught up in this sense of tremendous prospect and possibility, the greatness of what is yet for the Lord’s people beyond all his vast apprehension and attainment, giving him this sense, that, though he had come into such a wealth and such a fulness, it was nothing compared with what he knew was his in Christ, yet to become his in experience. So we have already secured unto us a great inheritance.

We have inherited with and in Christ, not by earning, by working, but the inheritance of faith in Christ Jesus goes far beyond anything that we have yet imagined. We have only sensed that there is very much more, that it is a land of far distances. It is ours.

But there is a difference between having an inheritance and enjoying it; having wealth secured unto you as yours, and experiencing all that it can bring and all that it means. *“Know you not that Ramoth-Gilead is ours, and we are still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria?”* (1 Kings 22:3). That is an Old Testament word. It is ours, belongs to us, but we sit still and do not take it.

So we begin at this time by reminding ourselves that in our coming into the Lord Jesus and receiving the Lord Jesus, we have been introduced into an inheritance far, far beyond our present knowledge and experience, and it is not only in the hereafter. Do not immediately mentally relate it to the hereafter. If our Christian lives are not characterised by a continuous apprehension of greater fulnesses in Christ, there is something very seriously wrong with us. The inheritance is to be known now. Its fulness will extend beyond all time, it must do for life is far too short and limited to apprehend God’s fulness in Christ, the all things. Nevertheless it is all ours now and for our exploiting, for our discovering, for our knowing and for our experiencing progressively and continuously now.

But if that is to be so, the turning of our possessions into possessions, the possessing of our possessions, there is a spirit needed; there is a spirit needed to make our possessions our inheritance, our experience. There is no doubt about it. This part of the letter of Paul to the Philippians is just full of that spirit necessary for this purpose.

A Spirit of Renunciation and Devotion of Heart

Firstly, it is the spirit of renunciation. *“What things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ.”* Yes, those which were gain, not bad things, not evil things to be put away, not wrong things to be given up, not things upon which the divine veto rests to be let go, but good things to be renounced for the best. That spirit has to characterise us that we will never be satisfied with good that is less than the best, a measure that is less than the fulness. Renunciation — yes, of good things and things which in their measure and in their way may have been gain to us — renunciation of these for the best. Devotion of heart is breathed here. Oh, how this man’s heart is set upon all that has come to him

in Christ! What a heart Paul had to exploit all the profound and unsearchable riches of Christ and to turn them to account.

Concentration of Purpose

Concentration of purpose. "*This one thing I do*". In all the ways, in all the aspects, in all the phases, in all the many-sided occupations — "*that I may know Him*"; that I may know Him along this line, down this way, and through that avenue, through all the avenues and ways I am alive here to make one thing govern everything — to know Him, the excellency — that does not mean only the splendour, but that transcendence, of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. Concentration of purpose, this one thing, an undistracted life, an undivided interest, everything gathered and focussed on one thing, in all that comes, this in some way must be made to serve this end — my fuller knowledge of the Lord. It is the only way to economise in life, otherwise you have a lot of waste things that mean nothing, count for nothing. This and this and this again, and everything, what has it in it of possibility, of potentiality, to bring me into some further and fuller knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord? Through sufferings, "*the fellowship of his sufferings*", through conformity to His death, that I may know Him. Concentration.

Continuation

And then continuation. "*I press on*." I am not going to be brought to a standstill, I am going on. Now this is just exactly what the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ and is in us will do. The operations of the Holy Spirit on the one hand, and the providential ways of God, strange and mysterious providences, these are all permitted to keep us on the stretch. Any life that is really under the government of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ, will never be allowed to settle down, will always be kept on the move — oh, yes, by strange means. The Lord knows how to deal with you and with me. He knows the tendencies of our make-up, our constitution, our natures. He knows us exactly, every one of us, and, oh that we could really believe it always, the way in which we are going is the way that the infinite and inscrutable wisdom of God knows to be the only way in which we shall come to a greater measure of Him. He vetoes such in order to economize, so that we shall not be spreading ourselves too widely but be directed into the essential channels. Yes, He deals with us because He knows us. His providential dealings with us and the Holy Spirit's operations in us are to keep us on the move, on the stretch with a *holy* discontent, for there is a great enemy to spiritual fulness. Do believe this, that there is no time in the life of a true child of God or servant of God when they retire, their work done. We ought always to be receiving so much from the Lord that we just cannot retire. Oh, we may wish sometimes to retire, but, like David, "*I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred. My heart was hot within me; while I was musing the fire burned; then spoke I with my tongue: Lord, make me to know mine end, the measure of my days*" (Ps. 39:2-4), that I have no time to waste. No, the Holy Spirit will keep us on the stretch, keep us in the way of the growing revelation of what is ours in Christ, so that we have more and more of Him, and we cannot just keep it to ourselves, it is too much.

Well, I was saying there is a great enemy, and so I turn to my friend Bunyan again to finish. "*And they came to a place called the Enchanted Ground*" and the air in that country was so enervating and drowsy that they all wanted to lie down and take a nap. It was all grown over with briars to slow up their progress and weary them so that they would succumb to the atmosphere. Even Hopeful suggests that "we lie down and have a sleep". Hopeful wants to go to sleep. Mr. Feeble-mind has to be taken in hand very strongly by Great-heart, and Mr. Despondency has to be laid hold of by Mr. Valiant-for-Truth. In this Enchanted Ground there are many arbours in which you can turn aside and sleep, Bunyan says, and some say that if you do, you never wake up again in this life. There is one arbour which bears the name of Slothful Man's Friend, and in that two men are asleep — Mr. Heedless and Mr. Too-Bold, and they give themselves great pains to

wake these two from their sleep, but they cannot be wakened. And then, this is what I am getting at — Bunyan is here so full of wonderful insight and suggestion: "This Enchanted Ground is one of the last refuges that the enemy has placed for pilgrims, wherefore it is, as you see, placed almost at the end of the way. And so it stands against us with the more advantage, for when, thinks the enemy, will these fools be so desirous to sit down as when they are weary at the end of the way, and when so like to be weary as when the journey's end is in view? Therefore it is, I say, that the Enchanted Ground is placed so nigh to the land of Beulah and so near to the end of their race. To lose hope, to lean from diligence, to lose your vision and take rest, to feel the weariness overcoming and to slow up your steps". I say a spirit is needed.

As they came to the Enchanted Ground, they espied a man upon his knees, and, drawing up closely, he suddenly sprang from his knees with new vigour and energy and they interrogated him and found him to be Mr. Standfast. They asked him why he was on his knees, and, a little abashed that they had seen him, he said, "Why, you see, I came to this country, this Enchanted Ground, and Madam Bubble came and offered me all her enticements not to go on, to turn aside, to take a rest, to receive premature prizes before I reached the City, and I found myself weakening under her influence, and I fell to prayer and I am saved, I can go on."

What need we say more? Oh, here is the fulness. It is there, it is ours, but we need a spirit to lay hold, to persist; this spirit — *"Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold", "neither am I yet complete"; "forgetting the things which are behind ... I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the on-high calling."* That spirit alone will turn us into the experience of what is ours. It is a terrible thing to have had a very great deal that belonged to us, and never to have known what we had. The Spirit of God would make us know. He would stir us to great earnestness in the quest that we may know, possess the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.