

005: No Guarantees

(based on Ch. 4 from *The End of the Pilgrimage*)

Have you ever misinterpreted a verse or passage of Scripture and then later came to realize how badly you botched it?

- I have! In large part, because of what I had been taught all my life
- Good ol' tradition at work again!
- But once I realized what the passage was saying, it took on a whole new meaning
- I am referring in particular to Romans 8:16-17
- let me read those verses
- **Rom. 8:16-17** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together.

In my defense, I never heard this passage preached or taught correctly, that I can remember.

- But, to my shame, I fell into a trap — and the trap is making assumptions about Scripture passages rather than honestly interpreting the passages, even if the interpretation doesn't fit my theological grid.
- I personally believe that is a major problem in Bible-believing Christianity — assuming, based on what we have been taught.
- But what if our teachers were incorrect on a particular point?

Are we obligated to perpetuate an erroneous tradition?

- God forbid!

- I appreciate my teachers, and learned much from them, but I am now convinced they missed some things, and I'm sure I have too — not one of us has all the answers.
- That is why having a teachable spirit is so critical.
- Putting aside preconceived notions, let's approach this Scripture passage in Romans 8 with an open mind.
- I always assumed ALL believers become both heirs of God AND joint-heirs with Christ at the point of salvation, as if there were a period at the end of that statement.
- However, I have since realized that, according to the verse, inheritance with Christ is conditional —
- the verse says, "**IF indeed we suffer with him.**"
- Somehow, I had missed that.

In the Bible, we find not **one** inheritance for Christians, but the prospect of **two**.

- The first is an unconditional inheritance.
- It is guaranteed and bestowed on all believers based on our position as being "in Christ."
- The inheritance is the gift of eternal life, AND becoming sons of God and, as sons, heirs of God.
- that is the first part of our text:
- **Rom. 8:16-17** The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God

The other inheritance is conditional.

- It is not guaranteed, but is awarded at the Judgment Seat only to those who qualify, based on obedience and faithfulness in stewardship (i.e., soul-salvation — how one progresses in sanctification).
- The inheritance is the privilege of ruling in the coming kingdom as Christ's co-heir.
- Try to imagine in your mind a chart:

Unconditional Inheritance	Conditional Inheritance
Guaranteed	Not guaranteed
Gift of eternal life	Reward for service
Bestowed on all believers	Awarded to qualified believers
Based on position in Christ: He makes you an "heir of God"	Based on faithfulness - You receive the prize of "co-heirship with Christ"
Assures that you will be resurrected before the Millennium to be in the kingdom	Results in being a ruler in the kingdom and a citizen of the New Jerusalem

Our unconditional inheritance can never be forfeited, for it is based on sonship, and all believers are sons of God.

- However, conditional inheritance can be forfeited, for it is based on qualifying as a firstborn son.
- In Bible times, firstborn sons received a double portion.
- That is, they received not only the regular portion bestowed upon all sons, but also an additional portion.
- Nevertheless, while it was referred to commonly as the inheritance of the firstborn, the father was under no obligation to give it to the firstborn.
- He could choose to give it to another, if he did not deem the firstborn son worthy of the firstborn inheritance.
- In other words, if a firstborn son disqualified himself for some reason, he would lose the special inheritance for firstborn sons.

A classic example of this is Jacob and sons.

- Reuben was the firstborn son and normally would have received the double inheritance, but Reuben disqualified himself by taking his father's concubine as his own.
- Thus, Jacob pronounced Reuben unworthy of receiving the double inheritance and, instead, gave it to Joseph, blessing Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.
- Reuben still received the unconditional inheritance guaranteed to all sons, but he did not receive the conditional firstborn inheritance.
- That was given to another who was declared worthy.

God reminds New Testament Christians in:

- **1 Cor. 10:11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.
- In other words, what happened to Old Testament Israel is to serve as a spiritual example to us, so that we might learn and not repeat the mistakes of Israel.
- Consider the Exodus (Exod. 12:21-28).
- How many of the Israelites — at the point of the Exodus, when they left Egypt — were saved people?
- Every one of them! How do we know this?
- They *all* believed God, and they *all* applied the blood to the doorposts, as God had said.
- The angel of death passed over *all* of them, and they were *all* delivered from bondage in Egypt.
- Then they were all baptized in the Sea, Paul says

Of course, the Passover is a beautiful picture of salvation in Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, John 1:29.

- Thus, we sing that wonderful hymn, "When I see the blood, I will pass, I will pass over you."

- Knowing the entire nation of Israel was saved at the Exodus, what does God have to say about their inheritance?
- First, they received an unconditional, guaranteed inheritance.
- Jehovah God declared Himself to be the God of Israel.
- Their inheritance was Jehovah.
- **Ex. 29:45** I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God.
- **Ex. 29:46** And they shall know that I *am* the LORD their God, who brought them up out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I *am* the LORD their God.

God said this long before Israel took possession of Canaan land.

- His unconditional promise (their unconditional inheritance) was that He would be their God.
- Obviously, those born after the Exodus would have to decide whether to believe on Jehovah and thereby enter into the national promise.
- In like manner, individuals today need to make their own decision to believe on Jesus alone and thereby enter into the unconditional inheritance of the gift of eternal life that He bestows upon all who believe.
- What was their conditional inheritance?
- While the land belonged unconditionally to the nation, according to the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:7-8), it could be possessed only by those who believed God for victory over the enemy.
- **Deut. 4:1** Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you.

- **Deut. 6:18** And you shall do *what is* right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers,

The condition for inheriting (i.e., taking possession of) the land was obedience to God's Word and faithfulness (i.e., full dependence on the Lord for victory).

- Here's the point: saved Israelites unconditionally received God as their inheritance, but possession of Canaan land was conditional, depending on their obedience and faithfulness to Jehovah.
- Some make the mistake of equating Canaan land with Heaven, but that is an error of interpretation (a hermeneutical error).
- Canaan land is a picture of two things:
 - 1) spiritual victory in the present life, which leads to
 - 2) inheriting promised rest (i.e., the reward of rest) in the age to come.
- Incidentally, even after taking possession of Canaan land the Israelites had the potential of losing it, if they were to become unfaithful
- we won't read it, but that can be seen, for example, in Deut. 28:58, 63.

As children of God, we are guaranteed eternal life; we already have this aspect of inheritance as heirs of God.

- However, we are not guaranteed millennial inheritance; that is the reward for faithfulness.
- All believers will be in some realm of the millennial kingdom, but not all will inherit that kingdom or enjoy the benefits of ruling and reigning with Christ.
- what's the difference?

- perhaps I can illustrate – imagine a medieval kingdom, complete with a king and a castle
- The king owns and rules a vast territory.
- His subjects benefit from living in the village, under the king’s protection and bounty ...
- but only those heirs living in the castle are able to fully participate in reigning and enjoying the beauties and luxuries and opportunities of the king Himself.

There is a difference between merely living in the kingdom and inheriting it ...

- just as there was a difference for Israel living in the Promised Land and taking possession of it
- Abraham sojourned in Canaan land, but He did not possess it, according to Heb. 11:9, 13.
- Furthermore, for many centuries of Israel’s existence in the land, they did not possess the land, even though they lived there.
- Instead, foreign powers controlled the land and taxed the Israelites.
- Possession of the Promised Land was God’s intent for Israel from the very beginning of the nation’s salvation.
- Indeed, God introduced Israel to Pharaoh as His firstborn son (which is a conditional inheritance).

Ex. 4:22 You shall say to Pharaoh, “Thus says the LORD: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn.

- Nevertheless, for those Israelites (twenty years old and above) who did not believe God for taking the Promised Land but rather tested God in the wilderness, ultimately at Kadesh-Barnea, they were disinherited from entering the Promised Land, because they disqualified themselves.

- Even Moses was denied entrance because of disobedience!
- It was only after Joshua and Caleb led the people to believe God for victory to conquer Canaan land that they were able to enter.
- But even later, after Israel was dwelling in the land, the nation forfeited its conditional inheritance through disobedience, and so God removed them from the land.
- And so with Christians, from the very day of your salvation, God’s desire is to give you kingdom inheritance.

Incidentally, for those whom God knows will cooperate with Him in the sanctification process, He predestines them to the status of firstborn sons, inheritors!

- **Rom. 8:29** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.
- God predestines those whom He knows will be faithful, to conformity to Christ (i.e., Christ living His life through theirs), which qualifies them to remain in the status of firstborn sons, as Jesus.
- He wants to be the firstborn among MANY brethren.
- But sadly, many believers disinherit themselves from that blessing by lifestyle choices, by living unto themselves, unfaithfully, in disobedience (i.e., not cooperating with God in the sanctification process).

The apostle Paul warns repeatedly of the danger of disinheritance.

- **2 Th. 1:3-5** We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other, so that we ourselves boast of you

among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, *which is* manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you also suffer;

- How can one be *counted worthy* of the kingdom of God?
- Is Paul teaching works-salvation? Of course not!
- the kingdom of God is NOT heaven, as so many believe
- the kingdom of God is the Messianic, Millennial kingdom, particularly, the ruling realm of the kingdom
- Paul is not speaking about matters of salvation, or we could say, unconditional inheritance.
- He is speaking to saints about sanctification, that is, conditional inheritance.

Of course, he is referring to the Judgment Seat.

- That is the place where one will ultimately be found worthy or unworthy of inheriting the kingdom.
- On that day, the works of all who are in Christ will be tested by fire, to determine *of what sort it is*, (1 Cor. 3:13)
- If one's work abides (being of the gold-silver-precious stones type), a reward will be given.
- On the contrary, if one's work is burned (being of the wood-hay-stubble type), all will be lost, yet the individual will be saved yet as through fire
- What is it that can be lost or forfeited at the Judgment Seat?
- it is an inheritance in the millennial kingdom
- and what can cause the forfeiture?

listen to these verses:

1 Cor. 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal. 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Eph. 5:3-5 But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

These verses are typically misinterpreted.

- Those who lean toward Arminian theology say Paul is warning believers they will lose their salvation if they persist in grievous sins, particularly sins like those listed.
- This view must be rejected on the preponderance of Scriptural evidence to the contrary.
- Believers are eternally secure.
- Another common misconception is held by Calvinist-leaning theologians, who claim that those who persist in these sins demonstrate they were never saved in the first place.

- This view is based on the Calvinist tenet of Perseverance (the “P” in the T-U-L-I-P acrostic) that insists true believers will Persevere (i.e., continue behaving) as saints throughout the Christian life, or else they are demonstrating they were never saved in the first place.
- But Paul does not assume these folks are unsaved.
- Nor does he assume they will go to hell instead of heaven

Paul assumes those who are doing these things are believers who are continuing in sin.

- For example, in the Ephesians passage, he says, *let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints;*
- He clearly recognizes the possibility that this kind of sinful behavior can persist in the lives of genuine Christians, even if it is not appropriate.
- His purpose, therefore, is to issue a stiff warning: if you persist in this kind of behavior, you will not inherit the kingdom of God.
- let me say it again, at the risk of being redundant
- Many have taught that inheriting the kingdom of God is the equivalent to being given the gift of eternal life, but the Scriptures do not bear this out.

the phrase *kingdom of God* is not a reference to heaven

- It makes no sense to admonish believers to be counted worthy of the kingdom or to live in such a way so as not to forfeit the kingdom, if by *kingdom of God* he means heaven or the gift of eternal life.
- No, Paul uses the phrase *kingdom of God* in an eschatological sense, to refer to the millennial reign of Christ

- Thus, at stake is whether believers who persist in unrighteousness will inherit reward in the millennial kingdom of Christ
- By the way, the tense of the Greek verbs in these passages conveys the idea of one who CONTINUES in these sins.
- It is not speaking of someone, who in their past, got away from God, lived for themselves and committed one or more of these sins, and then got right with God.
- Consider the blessed ramifications!

We are not necessarily disinherited from the kingdom if we commit one of these sins.

- That gives great hope to us all, considering we continue with the problem of indwelling sin, even after salvation.
- Thus, Paul's clear warning is that believers who persist in sin will not inherit the millennial kingdom.
- (Incidentally, the list of sins is not exhaustive, for Paul adds the disclaimer, *and the like*, in the Galatians passage, leaving the list open).
- The key word in all these passages is *inherit*. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament gives three definitions for this word that are especially helpful.

1) to receive a lot

2) to receive the portion assigned to one, receive an allotted portion, receive as one's own or as a possession

3) to become partaker of, to obtain

For Paul to teach that persistently sinning Christians will not inherit the millennial kingdom is NOT the same as saying they will not be IN the millennial kingdom.

- All believers will be physically present in that age but not all will become partakers of (or participants in) Christ's millennial kingdom.
- They will not inherit it.
- No doubt, that will result in missed opportunities, shamefulness, and much sorrow.
- What is clear from the Scriptures is that the millennium will not be experienced in the same way by all believers.
- Understandably, many Christians will agonize and weep over the fact that they persisted in sins throughout their pre-millennial earthly existence.
- They did not appropriate the provision of Christ for living a victorious life.

Parallel to the Pauline warnings are the admonitions in the book of Hebrews.

- Contrary to what some may teach, the warnings are not directed toward *professing* Christians, challenging them to get persevere unto final salvation (regeneration).
- Rather, they are warnings to believers to persevere unto the saving of their souls, that is, perseverance unto reward.
- That hermeneutical key makes all the difference in interpreting the book of Hebrews.
- Consider the apostle's admonition in Heb. 3:7-14
- **Heb. 3:7-9** Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: *"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years.*
- **Heb. 3:10** *Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.'*

- **Heb. 3:11** *So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"*
- **Heb. 3:12-13** Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called *"Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*
- **Heb. 3:14** For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.

The writer draws our attention to the wilderness wandering generation.

- They hardened their hearts, provoked Jehovah, and tested Him numerous times.
- So God issued a verdict (v. 11), *They shall not enter my rest.*
- We know that generation did not enter into the Promised Land.
- They died in the wilderness.
- Does this imply they were unsaved and went to Hell, as some prefer to teach?
- No, it simply means they forfeited their conditional inheritance, which was based on obedience and faithfulness.
- Their unconditional inheritance, based on believing God at the Passover ensured their salvation.
- Jehovah was their God.
- They could never become disinherited from their God.

That generation of Israelites, even though they died in the wilderness and never entered the Promised Land, remain believers, nonetheless, and will be resurrected

- But they were saved people who forfeited their status as firstborn sons.
- They are like Christians who are *saved, yet so as through fire*.
- They will be in the millennial world to come, yet they will be disinherited from ruling with Christ.
- Notice how the apostle warns New Testament Christians — using the Israelites as an illustration in v. 12.
- He urges us to take heed, lest we develop an evil heart of unbelief.
- If Christians can have an evil heart of unbelief, do you suppose they can have an evil heart of covetousness or adultery or drunkenness, or any of the sins Paul lists in 1 Cor. 6, Gal. 5, or Eph. 5?
- Of course! That is the point.

Israel's evil heart of unbelief disqualified them from entering the promised rest, resulting in wandering and death in the wilderness.

- So you, dear Christian, if you persist in an evil heart of unbelief or other sins (as opposed to depending on God for victory) will forfeit your status as a firstborn son.
- In other words, you will not qualify to hear “well done,” and you will not inherit reward in the millennium.
- You will be disinherited at the Judgment Seat if you have not lived in obedience and faithfulness to the Word.
- What a tragedy to be avoided!
- So what should we do?
- According to v. 13, we should exhort one another daily so that we do not become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

The next verse (v. 14) gives the blessed reward for those who persevere in faithfulness.

- They will be made partakers of (i.e., co-participants with) Christ, both presently and in the age to come.
- This is a promise of rulership in Christ's kingdom.
- Unfortunately, some have relegated v. 14 to be a soteriological verse (that is, a salvation verse about regeneration), suggesting it must be held on to or consistently demonstrated by one's life.
- But in context it is clearly a soul-salvation text.
- In other words, for those saints whose soul is presently being saved (sanctified), they are partakers (participants) with Jesus *now* and, if they continue faithful, will be deemed partakers with Him *then*.

In conclusion, the apostle issues a strong warning:

- **Heb. 3:19** So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.
- **Heb. 4:1** Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.
- Child of God, don't fall short of the rest God has planned for you in the age to come!
- Don't lose your status as firstborn son!
- Don't squander your millennial inheritance!
- If Moses could lose his inheritance in the Promised Land temporarily, how much more should we take heed?
- I challenge you to THINK ON THESE THINGS!