

# The Biblical Doctrine of Inheritance

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well please turn back to Ephesians chapter 1 where we can read again at verse 18 with breaking in mid-sentence here but I want to highlight and focus on a key concept that this verse contains. Paul writes, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which she has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. This verse contains a word that is very important, a word that appears many many times in the Bible, a word that introduces us to a glorious theme that stretches right across the pages of scripture. It's a word that reveals to us the astonishing blessings and the glorious hope that belong to all who trust in Jesus. There's a big, big theological word in this verse. Which word is it? It's the word inheritance. Tonight I want us to spend a wee while thinking about this theme that Paul touches on in Ephesians 1 and which is highlighted in many many other places across the Bible. We're going to look together at the biblical doctrine of inheritance. Now in order to do that we're just going to ask two very very simple questions. First of all we're going to ask what does the Bible say about inheritance, just in kind of general terms. And then secondly we'll ask what does that teach us about the Gospel because if inheritance appears again and again in the Bible, which it does, then it must be important.

And for that reason we want to study it and we want to make sure we understand it because if we can understand what this concept is referring to then we're going to be able to understand a little bit more about what God has done for us and about what God wants for us. So question number one is this, what does the Bible say about inheritance? Well to answer that I just want to highlight four principles if you like that the Bible sets before us when we look at this whole concept of inheritance. And we're going to pick out various verses just across the Bible that reveal these things to us. First verse that we need to look at is in Exodus chapter 32 and verse 13. So we've gone from Ephesians way back to the second book of the Bible in Exodus but we see again that the concept of inheritance appears. Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Now Israel is another name for

Jacob that's Isaac's son. Abraham, Isaac and Israel, your servants to whom you swore by your own self and said to them, I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and all this land that I've promised I will give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever. Now that verse is highlighting a key point regarding inheritance and that is that inheritance is something that you're promised. Inheritance is something that you're promised. You go through the Old Testament and you see that all the way through the ages that are set, the ages of history set before us in the Old Testament is the fact that God promised a land to Abraham and to his descendants.

That's why we call it the promised land and often that land which God promised is described in terms of an inheritance. You see that in that verse there God says I've promised this land, they are going to inherit it forever. Inheritance is something that is promised and exactly the same thing applies today that's just fairly obvious. People will look at their estate, their resources, whether it's their assets or their house or their possessions or their finances and they'll promise it to somebody else they will say this house of mine I promise that it's going to go to you. That's a very simple thing but it reminds us of two really important points.

It reminds us firstly that inheritance in many ways lies on the fact that there is a bond between two parties. That inheritance is, it stands on the basis of a solemn promise whereby one person wants to give something to another so there's this bond between them on the basis of that promise.

[ 4 : 58 ] And secondly we're reminded that that promise of inheritance is not a casual thing, it's not a random thing, it's not something that you just treat lightly. That's why when we want to set up our inheritances we don't just write it on a scrap a piece of paper or we don't just send a text message to say to somebody this is what's going to happen you go to a solicitor and you make a will because it's a solemn serious commitment. Inheritance is far more than just a nice thought or a nice idea it's not just a brief whim it is a serious promise that is made. So if you're going to inherit something and maybe you are that's because somebody has made a promise to you. Secondly an inheritance is something that's given to you. Again that's very obvious but that's something that scripture highlights because he loved your father and chose that offspring after them and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence by his great power driving out before the nations before your nations created a mightier than you to bring you in to give you their land for an inheritance as it is to this as it is this day. Again that's a very straightforward point. An inheritance is a gift you don't earn an inheritance you don't work for it you don't buy it it's something that's given to you and in many ways an inheritance is a wonderful demonstration of kindness because when you inherit something you are you are enjoying the benefits of what somebody else has done and what somebody else has worked for. So imagine you inherit a house you didn't buy it you didn't build it you didn't maintain it but you're given it you receive the blessing of what somebody else has worked for and it's an extraordinary privilege to receive a gift like that an inheritance is something that is given. Thirdly an inheritance is something that is yours. If you look at number 2711 it says and if his father has no brother then you shall give us inheritance to the nearest kinsmen of his clan and he shall possess it and it shall be for the people of

Israel a statute and rule as the Lord commanded Moses. Now the key word I want to focus on there is the word possess you can see it in the third line there. When somebody inherits something it's not just a loan it's not something they just have for a wee while it's there it belongs to them and all the force of the law is behind that an inheritance is something that is legally yours that's true today so so people will claim an inheritance and they will go to the law to back them up because their possession of that item is something that has to be grounded in the the the legal system of any society and that was just as true in the Old Testament if you look at that you can see in the last line says it shall be for the people of Israel a statute and a rule as the Lord commanded Moses. So when God taught people of Israel about inheritance wasn't casual wasn't just this wee idea it was something that was grounded in the in the legislation of their society. Inheritance was a legal transaction it was something that you had a right to it is legally yours you possess it it belongs to you and then fourthly in the Bible inheritance is something for your family this is actually been highlighted in several of these verses in all of these verses we we're just going back to the verse we read in Exodus 32 13 remember Abraham Isaac and

Israel your servants to whom you swore by your own self and said to them I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and all this land that I've promised I'll give to your offspring and they shall inherit it forever. Now you look at a verse like that it's full of family language you got Abraham and his son Isaac and his grandson Israel and then all the offspring that descends from them. In the Bible inheritance is bound up with your family we must never forget that back in the Old Testament the focus of of gods dealing with people was around the nation of Israel but that nation of Israel was one big family that's why it's called Israel Israel was the name that God gave to Jacob the nation is named after their ancestor and so this nation of Israel it was not really a political entity in the way that we think of nations today it was a big family nation and their whole national organization was structured around the fact that they were connected together as a family and divisions were made according to 12 tribes within each tribe there was provision made so that land would be passed on from one generation to another so you can go for example to Joshua and read chapter 13 to 17 and you'll read all about how different parts of the family are given different parts of the land each of these portions is to be an inheritance for that particular tribe and God was greatly concerned that family inheritance was maintained as much as possible we can read again in Numbers chapter 27 let's see what it says here you shall speak to the people of Israel saying if a man dies and has no son then you shall transfer his inheritance to his daughter and if he has no daughter then you'll give his inheritance to his brother and if he has no brother then you should give his inheritance to his father's brother and if his father has no brother then you shall give his inheritance to the nearest kinsman of his clan and he shall possess it and it shall be for the people of Israel a statute and rule as the lord commanded most system what's that telling us it's telling us that inheritance must wherever possible remain in your family inheritance in the bible is not just for anyone it's for your family it's bound up in this family bond around which god's purposes are being worked out so that's four principles that lie at the heart of the biblical doctrine of inheritance a very simple it's not complicated and it really echoes just much of what we know today in terms of inheritance inheritance is something promised to you inheritance is something given to you inheritance is something that is yours and inheritance is something for your family all of that is straightforward all of that still applies today you can think of a house or a croft or even a family treasure and we can understand all of the bible is saying in regard to inheritance but the point I want us to notice and in many ways the point I want us to focus on is that when paul writes about inheritance in Ephesians chapter one I don't think he's talking about houses or land or possessions I don't think he's even talking about what his ancestors in the

nation of Israel passed from one generation to another paul's not talking about any of these things when paul talks about inheritance he is talking about the good news of jesus christ so that's really interesting because if you were asked the question if someone came up to you and asked you the question and they said what do you get if you become a christian how would you answer that so imagine somebody came up to you says this christianity thing what's it all about what do you get if you become a christian what would we say well we'd probably say well you get forgiveness you'd say we get salvation that's true we get hope we get eternal life all of that is true but from a biblical point of view you could also answer that question by saying if you are a christian you get an inheritance that means that if we understand what an inheritance is then we're going to understand more clearly what the gospel is all about so if in the bible inheritance is something promised something given something that is yours and something that's for your family what we need to recognize is that all of these are teaching us about the gospel all of these things are teaching us about the good news of Jesus Christ so that brings us to our second question what does this teach us about the gospel and we can just go through our same four points and see what we learn so in the gospel you are getting an inheritance that means that god is promising something to you if you look through the bible you will see that again and again and again god makes promises to his people god is never casual god is never kind of half-hearted in his dealings with people god comes to his people with the utmost solemnity and seriousness and he makes promises these promises take the form of a covenant relationship and over time god builds that promise up from genesis 3 through Noah through Abraham through Moses through David all culminating in the coming of Jesus Christ where the great promise of salvation is given to all who repent and believe and it's telling us that Christianity is firmly grounded on the promise of god now that's a very very important thing to recognize and we have to to make sure we grasp the fact that that promise of god is unchanging and it is unbreakable it's a promise to forgive a promise to heal a promise to restore a promise to protect a promise to save a promise to love a promise to bless god says i promise that i will do it i promise that i will do it all and we must never ever forget that the gospel is based on god's promise this is one i think of the many distinguishing features of Christianity because i think so much of the world's religion is based on our promise isn't it so we think to ourselves if we promise god that we'll do this we come to god and say god i promise that i'll do that i promise that i'll try harder i promise that i'll stop doing this i promise that i'll change we come to god and we promise to do stuff that is not Christianity because at the heart of Christianity is not our promise

our promise at the heart of Christianity is god's promise in an inheritance it's not the one who receives that he makes the promise it's the one who gives and so in the gospel god is promising you that he will save you and if you are a Christian that's where you can rest your heart you can rest because no matter how much you doubt or how much you stumble or how much you struggle which we all do we all do does any of that change the promise of god so if god's made a promise to save you do your mistakes or failures or weaknesses do they change that promise of course they don't because it's god's promise and we rest on that not on our own strength and not on what we do and that's why as a Christian you can rest on god's promise and if you are not yet a Christian then you come to god on the basis of that promise that's how everybody comes to Jesus we do not come to Jesus promising that we will be good enough for him nobody can do that we come to Jesus on the basis of his promise to save us so you can come to god and say i'm coming to you because you promised and i am relying on that promise not on my own strength we come relying on what god has promised for us and inheritance is based on a promise the gospel is based on a promise and do you know there's many many aspects to that promise and there's probably many things that we could see here i just want to highlight one thing that the bible makes clear and that is that that god's promised inheritance is beautiful you look at verse six of sam 16 it says the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places indeed i have a beautiful inheritance and that language i think is echoed slightly in in Ephesians 1:18 where paul talks about the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints now we humans we thrive on beauty we long for beauty we love beauty you look at the world around us today you look outside and you think it's just so beautiful so stunning so wonderful we love that beauty we need it we long for it and god's promise is that we will inherit all the beauty of the new creation god promises us a glorious beautiful future that's our inheritance if we trust in him so at the heart of the gospel is god's promise if the gospel is an inheritance that's telling us that god is giving us something an inheritance is something that's a given and that's teaching us that at the very heart of the gospel is the fact that god gives now that's i i know that i'm i'm not teaching you anything new here but it's something so important to remember because that's what we mean when we say that we are saved by grace because grace is a free unearned gift from god so just in the same way that you don't build the

[ 21 : 29 ] house that you get to inherit neither do you build the salvation that you inherit from god that's a really really important thing to remember every single person here who thinks that they have to get themselves to a certain standard before they can become a Christian you must must must listen to what is being said here in terms of our salvation in terms of our inheritance we do not build it god builds it god pays for it god provides it he earns it he gives all we have to do is receive it by faith that's all you have to do all you have to do is receive it never ever forget that the christian message is not about what you can give to god it's about what god will give you why would god do that why would god give you all that why would god just give you an inheritance well the answer to that is so simple it's because he wants to god wants to give it to you he wants you to have all the wonderful abundance of his inheritance so just think of everything that is made available to you in the gospel the forgiveness of sin reconciliation with god so that your relationship is restored peace with yourself with others with god hope for eternity love that is never ending all of that and everything else god says it's a gift it's an inheritance that i'm passing on to you you but we must never ever forget that in order to give you that gift god paid the highest price of all look at romans 8:32 he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him graciously give us all things that verse makes a beautiful link between gods giving to us and gods not sparing of his own son there's no limit to how far god will go for you in order that you might have this wonderful beautiful inheritance god wants to give it to you if the gospel is an inheritance that means that god's blessings are over possession god's blessings are over now this is really i think quite astonishing god wants to take the the abundant fullness of of the blessings that are his and he wants them to be yours look at colossians 11 and 12 may you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy giving thanks to the father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light now there's a really

interesting word in that version that's the word qualified now that's a word that i think we really really need to think about because i think this is touching on an issue that we all struggle with qualified just means exactly what we think it means the idea of being sufficient or adequate you think of a job you need to be qualified to do that so if you want to get a job in a school or a hospital or an oil rig or whatever it else it may be you need to show that you've got the piece of paper the document that says that you are qualified and one of the big problems that many of us have in in walking closely with the lord and in even coming to faith with the lord or serving the lord is because we think we are not qualified don't we we think it's a standard of quality that you need to reach if you're going to be a christian and we think i am not at that standard i don't have the qualification that other people have and in terms of god's inheritance in terms of receiving the fullness of all the blessings of eternity we think to yourself we are not adequate we're not good enough we're not qualified god says yes you are yes you are because if you put your trust in jesus christ then you are now qualified to be the owner of god's inheritance so think of heaven think of the new creation think of the perfect universe that god is going to restore and where he is going to place his people think of that land think of think of the new creation who does it belong to? belongs to you it is yours if you are trusting in jesus and god confirms that through his own statutes and laws remember go back into the old testament when often when it talks about inheritance it talks about statutes and laws very often you go through the the bible and you discover all this strong complicated legal language we've been studying the letter to the romans in the mornings and it's full of legal language and you can read that kind of initially and you take you can think well all this seems a bit kind of cold and clinical it's all a bit kind of legal and complicated why does it have all that kind of legal language it can seem dry and almost a bit impenetrable but do you know the truth?

that legal language should thrill our hearts it should absolutely thrill our hearts because that legal language of scripture is there because god wants to ensure that when he gives you your inheritance no one can ever take it away no one can ever take it from you no one can ever deny your right to possess what god has said will be yours nothing can take it away it cannot be lost cannot be stolen because god is making it legally binding so if you trust in Jesus Christ god's inheritance is going to be yours it is going to be 100 percent yours it is undeniable unchangeable and irrevocable it is yours because if you trust in Jesus then you are the heir so think about it like this for a moment and um if you imagine uh imagine you could take a visit um a visit to heaven and think about uh think about the documents that you maybe find in heaven you'd maybe find a visitor's book uh you'd maybe find uh a membership list or something like that where do you think you would find your name in heaven you think well maybe you'd find it in in the visitor's book or maybe you'd find your name on a list of invite list of invites who are able to come or maybe you'd even find your name on a list of members uh in terms of of people uh who are able to be there all of that's probably true but what I want you to recognize is do you know where you really will find your name you find your name on the title deeds because god is saying this is going to be yours this is your inheritance and that's quite amazing to think that when you get to heaven you're not going to arrive as a guest you're not going to arrive as a um resident you're not going to arrive as a visitor you're going to arrive as an owner because it's your god is saying I am going to give you my inheritance and that is why our inheritance in Jesus Christ is permanent look at Peter chapter one sorry I should say first Peter I think blessed be the god and father of our Lord Jesus Christ according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading kept in heaven for you who by god's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time now look at that there's a phrase in there that is utterly astonishing you have this inheritance that's perfect it's imperishable it's undefiled it's unfading it's being kept in heaven for who for Jesus no

for you a perfect inheritance is for you God's blessings are going to be ours so the gospel is an inheritance because it's based on a promise the gospel is an inheritance because it's something that's given the gospel is an inheritance because it's something that's ours and finally the gospel is an inheritance because we receive it because we are part of God's family that's one of the wonderful things that's that we've noticed studying adoption last week and that is emphasised in the New Testament the spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children then heirs heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him

Galatians 4 says something very similar you're no longer a slave but a son and if a son then an heir through God faith in Jesus Christ brings us into a wonderful new family that's one of the amazing things about becoming a Christian all over the world people long for family family is something that's so special a close family is something to be cherished and those who have lost family or who are separated from family are living with extraordinary pain and sorrow because family is such a precious thing in the gospel we are brought into God's family and as members of that family we receive the inheritance because God wants to bless his children God wants to be good to his children God wants to pour out the very best that he has and he wants it to be yours but there's a sense in which God's family is different to families on earth because sometimes as I'm sure you know here in the world inheritance can sometimes cause problems in families so you you will maybe sometimes have people who fight over an inheritance so you have maybe different family members maybe two brothers or or siblings who who argue over who deserves the inheritance and it has to go to one or the other they can't get they can't both get it it either has to be split in two or given to one or other there are many problems caused through claims for a who through divided claims regarding inheritance that's something that's that we see in the world but you'll never find that in God's kingdom you'll never find that in God's kingdom because God's inheritance is different it's a shared inheritance and every single God member of God's family is an equal co-air that means that no one will ever be left out and they will never be insufficient to go around it means that in God's family there's no competition no rivalry no favoritism we all inherit God's blessings together so we as Christians or if you become a Christians we can say to one another can you believe that we are all going to share in this look and think about all that we're going to have as we look forward to our inheritance we know that there is enough for us all and that we'll be able to share in it together and I really really want you to know that there's room for you all in this inheritance there's room for you all and God is offering it to you so the gospel is described in terms of inheritance because it's a promise it's something that's given it's something that's ours and it's something that is grounded in the fact that we are part of God's family and I think that I want I think we can close just by summing it all up very simply and I mentioned this a wee bit last week as well but

[ 37 : 28 ] I just want to mention it again at the heart of the whole idea of inheritance is the fact that you want to give somebody your best we don't leave our failings in our wills we don't we don't well certainly I can't imagine why anyone would want to pass on their their their failings their debts their mistakes when it comes to thinking about what we want our children to inherit we're thinking about our best and we're wanting to give our best to those who will inherit from us and you know that God is exactly the same God wants you to be the heir of his very best the best that he has is what he wants to give and that's what summed up in Revelation 21 now this is a wee bit of a long passage but I'm going to read it all because it sums it up so powerfully then I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away and the sea was no more and I saw the holy city new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God prepared as a bride adorned for her husband and I heard a loud voice from the throne saying behold the dwelling place of God is with man he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God himself will be with them as their God he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore for the former things have passed away and he who was seated on the throne said behold I am making all things new also he said write this down for these words are trustworthy and true and he said to me it is done



I am the alpha and the omega the beginning and the end to the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment the one who conquers will have this heritage and I will be his God and he will be my son at word heritage same word as the word inheritance the wonder and glory of what is described in these verses is what God wants to give you and you've got these amazing words just there in verse six if you're thirsty God will give it to you in other words if you're needy if you can't pay if you can't offer God anything he says come to me and I'll do it all and that makes perfect sense because who is it who decides who gets the inheritance it's the one who gives and so it's up to God as to whether he is going to make an offer or not and God is the one saying if you're thirsty if you can't pay if you can't bring me with anything it doesn't matter because trust in me and you'll inherit it all thanks be to God amen let's pray dear God our Father we thank you so much for just for what we've learned from your word tonight about this beautiful doctrine of inheritance we we just don't deserve it at all in any way Lord we don't deserve it but we praise you as the God who just gives so much to us and we pray that every one of us would hear your voice calling us tonight and every that every one of us would just have that extraordinary privilege of being heirs to all that you have thank you for being such a generous and wonderful God amen