

The Great Inheritance

by T. Austin-Sparks

The inheritance is the full purpose and content of redemption, and it is only through being born again, being baptized into Christ, and having a circumcised heart that we can gain the inheritance.

Scripture: Joshua 1:6, Luke 12:32, Acts 20:32, Acts 26:18, Romans 6:4, Ephesians 3:20, Colossians 1:12, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 9:15, 1 Peter 1:4

Topics: "Inheritance", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

T. Austin-Sparks emphasizes the significance of the inheritance in the life of believers, drawing parallels between the Old Testament and the New Testament. He explains that the inheritance is not merely a reward but the very essence of redemption, which encompasses past, present, and future salvation. Sparks warns that many may miss this inheritance, just as the majority of Israel did in the wilderness, and stresses the necessity of a circumcised heart and spiritual readiness to claim it. He highlights the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to overcome spiritual battles and take possession of their inheritance. Ultimately, he encourages the congregation to be strong and courageous in their pursuit of God's promises.

Transcript

"And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

"...to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me" (Acts 26:18).

"...giving thanks unto the Father, who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Colossians 1:12).

"...knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance" (Colossians 2:24).

"And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place of the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15).

"...unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4).

The greatest thing that is taken over from the Old Testament into the New, and from the old Israel to the new Israel, is that which is called "the inheritance". This inheritance governs everything in both the Old Testament and in the New Testament; all that is in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is governed by the inheritance. It is the inheritance that justifies and explains redemption. That was true in the redemption of Israel from Egypt, and it is true regarding the redemption of the Church from this world. All that is governed by the inheritance. Redemption was never just something in itself. The redemption of Israel out of Egypt was a mighty thing, and we have seen that it was a demonstration of the 'exceeding great' power of God; yet all that was not just to have Israel out of Egypt.

It was the inheritance that explained the tragedy of Israel, and it was a terrible tragedy! Six hundred thousand men came out of Egypt, but only two went into the inheritance. All the rest of the six hundred thousand men died in the wilderness. The New Testament makes a very great deal of that as a matter of warning to the new Israel, that is, the Church. You must read your New Testament in the light of the inheritance, for that is what governs it in all its aspect. The inheritance is the interpretation and explanation of our very existence. It is the positive factor in our very birth.

When I came to the Lord I was a young man and very enthusiastic. You know, there is a saying that "fools rush in where angels fear to tread", and I had a brother who was some years older than I was and he was not the Lord's. He was a very strong man physically and could have knocked me to the ground with one blow. In my enthusiasm I asked him about his salvation. He looked me up and down, and I felt like a grasshopper! He did not knock me down with his fists, but he knocked me down with a word, for he said: 'I was never consulted as to whether I wanted to come into this world. I just came into this world without having any choice. Therefore, my being here is not my responsibility, and I have no intention of taking any responsibility for my life.' That knocked me down and I had no answer to it at the time. I was just a young Christian, but since then I have learned the answer. Why are we born? Why are we in this world? We are here with a great possibility in view, for there is a tremendous thing bound up with a human life. If I had known then what I know now I would have had the answer, and it would have been this: 'Do you not recognize that God has a great purpose in your being in this world? This is not a negative thing, that we just happen to be here. There is a great inheritance to be gained or lost.'

If you ever have time, go through your Bible with that word 'inheritance', especially in the New Testament is the explanation of the word.

With this in view, of course, we come to the Book of Joshua, which is the book of the inheritance for the old Israel, but it is the book of the power of the Holy Spirit to realize the inheritance. Joshua himself represents the energy of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God rested upon Joshua because Moses had laid his hands upon him, and that anointing had the inheritance in view. The word of the Lord to Joshua, after the death of Moses, was: "Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt cause this people to inherit the land" (Joshua 1:6). By the anointing Joshua represents the energy of the Holy Spirit unto the inheritance.

Now this is a statement of fact. I am not giving you something that I have studied. I am giving you the stated facts of the Word of God, which says everywhere that there is an inheritance for the people of God which they can miss or gain. I am sounding very forceful. That is because I take things seriously, but this is a very serious matter. There is nothing more serious in the Word of God.

WHAT IS THE INHERITANCE?

If I were to begin to explain the inheritance and try to cover all that it is, this conference would be a very long one indeed. So you will excuse me, but I will just say one or two things about this inheritance.

The inheritance is the full purpose and content of redemption, and redemption is a far, far greater thing than we have ever recognized. Redemption is only the beginning of salvation. When we speak about salvation we are really thinking of people coming to the Lord. We ask them if they are saved, and many Christians will say: 'I was saved so many years ago.' So salvation is just a matter of coming to the Lord Jesus, being saved from our sins and receiving the gift of eternal life. But if you look into the New Testament you will see that there are three tenses of salvation. "We were saved", which is the past tense; "we are being saved", and that is the present tense; "we shall be saved", and that is the future tense. Therefore salvation covers past, present and future. If you want to get just a little idea of salvation, look at Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15. At the beginning of that chapter Paul says that he is reminding the Corinthians of the gospel which he had preached to them, and then through that chapter he tells us of the gospel which he had preached and shows that that gospel leads right through to the eternal glory, which includes our resurrection body, and our position and condition in the eternal ages to come. He looks at the sun, then at the moon, and then at all the stars, and says that "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars... so also is the resurrection of the dead" (verses 41, 42). There is much more in that wonderful chapter, and this is the gospel which he preached. Well, that puts salvation on a very much higher level, does it now? Peter said: "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." This great inheritance is the content of redemption. The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews calls it the "so great salvation" (2:3). The Lord Jesus said to the first members of the new Israel: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). He also said that the Kingdom of heaven shall be taken away from the old Israel and given to the new (Matthew 21:43). So the inheritance is the Kingdom!

What is the meaning of that word 'kingdom'? It is the sovereign reign - reigning together with Christ. He is the destined Lord of this unity, so the kingdom is not only being with Christ, though it will be a wonderful thing to be with Him when He comes in His kingdom, but it is more than that - it is reigning with Him, being members of the government of the eternal kingdom; and, more than that, being members of the Royal Family that governs.

It is impossible to describe the inheritance! These are some of the things revealed in the Word of God. In the case of the old Israel, Moses had great difficulty in explaining the inheritance. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, but he had difficulty in explaining the land into which the people were going. He said that it was "a land flowing with milk and honey... a land of hills and valleys... a land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:9,11,12), and the Bible tells us that the eyes of the Lord never rest favorably upon anything that displeases Him. So, if Moses could not explain it, and Paul could not do it, I give it up! Paul tried to explain the inheritance: "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him" (I Corinthians 2:9). I say again, we must give it up, but let us register the impression. To be called according to the eternal purpose is a tremendous thing to gain. It is therefore a tremendous thing to lose, and that is why the Bible is all about the inheritance.

THE ESSENTIAL BASIS OF THE INHERITANCE

Now we go back to the Book of Joshua, and here we see the essential basis of the inheritance.

We recall what happened when the people went over the Jordan. I dare not stay now to speak about the crossing of the Jordan, though I may touch it again later, but there is one clause that I like very much: "When all the nation were clean passed over Jordan" (Joshua 4:1). We speak of people making 'a clean breast of it', and by that we mean that there is no compromise, no reservation, nothing that they are holding on to. They have made a clean job of it, and that is what the Jordan means. You know that it is a symbol of baptism, being baptized into Christ. When I baptize anyone I always demand that there is enough water to get them right under and I make sure that they do go under! I hold both their hands, in case they put a hand out. No, they must go under altogether, and if I did not bring them up within forty seconds, that would be the end of them! Now, I am not trying to be humorous Paul says: "We were buried with him through baptism" (Romans 6:4), and it says of the Jordan that its banks overflow all the time of harvest (Joshua 3:15). It is a complete inundation, a complete burial of everything. Jordan is only a type in the Old Testament, but that type contains the New Testament spiritual principle, so Paul says: "We were buried with him through baptism" - and if God does not raise us with Him, that is the end of us! That is the spiritual position of the people who are going into the inheritance.

Now there is this interesting thing: When the nation were clean over Jordan the Lord commanded that the whole new generation should be circumcised. While I am speaking about this, remember Paul's interpretation of circumcision: "Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh... circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit" (Romans 2:28,29). As we said earlier, circumcision is a sign of separation unto God. It is an interesting and impressive thing that the new generation which had arisen in the wilderness had never been circumcised. The parents had neglected this command of God, and those parents had all died in the wilderness. This means that they had ignored the spiritual law of heart separation unto God, so what arises is this: there is no entering into the inheritance without a circumcised heart. The heart has to be wholly and utterly for the Lord. If that is not true, sooner or later there is going to be a tragedy in the Christian life.

THE PLACE OF THE HEIRS OF THE INHERITANCE

Do you notice what the Lord said when this nation was circumcised on this side of Jordan? He said: "This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you" (Joshua 5:9). What does that mean? Have you ever thought about that? The reproach of Egypt rolled away! When they were utterly separated in heart unto the Lord the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. Who were these people? They were the children of Israel, and 'Israel' was Jacob's other name. What does 'Israel' mean? It means 'a prince with God'. These people were therefore, by Divine decree, children of a prince with God, and, as children of a prince, they were princes. What would you think if you saw a man, who was a prince of the royal household and therefore an heir to all that that household inherited, in prison, with his clothes in rags, his food being doled out to him from time to time, never able to choose anything for himself, and without money or home of his own? What would you say? 'What a shame!' That would be a reproach to a prince, would it not? It would be a great shame upon such a person! Yet these children of a prince with God were in Egypt like that. No, princes ought never to be in a position like that! That was the reproach of Egypt, the shame of the whole situation. It is called the house of bondage, and no prince ought to be in that.

These people are now clean over Jordan, the hearts are circumcised, and now they are wholly for the Lord. The reproach and the shame of the past are rolled away.

What a glorious thing to have the reproach and shame of our past life all rolled away! Why are you not shouting 'Hallelujah'? I think it is because you are listening to the word but are not having the spirit - or perhaps I should say that you are taking the word seriously. But our rightful place, dear friends, is where all the reproach of the past is rolled away. That is the place of the heirs of the inheritance.

THE CROSS AND THE INHERITANCE

This is the deeper, and inward meaning of the Cross, because the New Testament teaches us that the Cross is the place of spiritual circumcision. And this just says one great thing: only truly crucified Christians, and only a truly crucified Church can meet the enemy in the coming battle with any hope of victory. This entering into our inheritance is something which is withstood by all the principalities and powers. All these evil powers in the universe are set against one thing, that is, God having a people for Himself to whom He is going to give the Kingdom, when the kingdoms of the world become the kingdom of our God and His Christ. I say that all the spiritual forces are so against that. As we have seen, they will fight to keep the people from coming out to the Lord, and if they cannot do that, they will work to keep them from going on. That is the wilderness story! And if they cannot prevent them from going on, they will not give up the battle. Now you have the story of the Book of Joshua. The people are now in the new possession, and are not fighting with the world. That was in Egypt and in the wilderness. You are not now fighting with the flesh, but you have come through into the heavenly places, and the warfare is in the heavenlies. It is spiritual against the spiritual hosts of wickedness. There is no hope of victory in this realm unless we have come through the meaning of Jordan and heart circumcision.

Now I come to my last point:

THE BATTLE FOR THE INHERITANCE

The principalities and powers have the kingdoms of this world in their power at present, but the power is the birthright of God's Son. The kingdom was eternally appointed for the Son of God, and for all who are with Him. Do you think the energy who so strongly controls this world is going to give it up easily? He will not give up one spiritual meter without a fight! Every bit of spiritual progress is resisted by the evil forces. Surely you know something of what that means! For many weeks I had a most terrible battle over the message of this congruence. Night and day, for a long time, I was in that battle. Then some of you know what a battle it was for you to get here! And I can tell you that it has been like that for many, many years! Whenever there is something new of the Lord in view, when there is going to be some new ground taken for the Lord, when the Lord's people are going to move on into something more in Him, there is always a battle. It may be a battle in the spirit, it may be a battle in the soul, it may be a battle in the body, it may be in yourself, or it may be in other people and in other things, but no bit of spiritual ground is going to be taken easily. The enemy sees the implication of the people of God taking the inheritance; his kingdom is weakened, his reign is shortened, and his days are numbered when the people of God go on to the possession. Are you going to let him win? Are you going on? Are you going to take the kingdom? Are you afraid? You notice that in the first two chapters of Joshua the Lord says to Joshua so often: "Be strong and of a good courage!" Why should we not be afraid and of good courage?

Go back to Joshua, and you find that it is not he who is in charge. Joshua looked "and, behold there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand... and he said... as captain of the host of the Lord

am I now come" (Joshua 5:13,14). It is the captain of the hosts of the Lord who is in charge! Joshua, as we have said, represents the energies of the Holy Spirit, and it is in this spiritual connection that the Apostle Paul utters some of these wonderful words: "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all ages for ever and ever" (Ephesians 3:20). We can count on the energy of the Holy Spirit! The battle may often be very fierce. The enemies may seem to be very strong, but He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world.

So our last word in this connection is: "Be strong and of a good courage!"

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