



DUDLEY'S MONTHLY MESSAGE

ROMANS 8:16-17

JUNE 2018

What's in the Inheritance?

In the eighth chapter of Romans, the apostle Paul is describing what living in the promised land looks like since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus.

He skillfully uses the story of Israel's exodus and occupation in Canaan as a template for us. The Spirit leads us rather than an actual cloud and pillar of fire. We share the full inheritance, which is the life of Jesus rather than a small piece of real estate. We share not only in his access to the Father and the assurance that we are now identified as sons of God, but we share in his mission on earth.

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.

Romans 8:16-17 (ESV)

People without a mission have trouble finding meaning. We are not designed to be idle, nor to be satisfied with being comfortable. We are under assignment, under authority, and under his care. The first disciples weren't clear as to the purpose of the cross, resurrection, and ascension. They still wanted to know when God would restore Israel as a political entity. (See Acts 1.) Jesus gave a direct answer: "You are witnesses." They were the extension of God's promise through Isaiah regarding the suffering Servant who would fulfill his global mission of blessing the whole world.

The way of God's new order was to restore the reflectors. Adam and Eve were

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created to reflect the glory of God as they managed creation. They lost their intimacy with God, and thus sin alienated them from the very source of life that could enable them to do their assignment. All of humanity followed them and needs restoration. Jesus came as the last Adam and did what was necessary to create a new people who are reconciled to God and empowered to rule over creation while submitting to our Father's rule.

All of Paul's persecutions were met with **a divine comfort that gives hope to others . . .**

The order of the new creation seems strange to us who have grown up as Adam's kids. God demonstrates his strength through weakness. The familiar story of Paul and his "thorn in the flesh" comes to mind. Three times he asked God to remove it. God answered that his grace is enough and his strength is made evident in Paul's weakness. The entire letter from Paul to the Corinthians, which we know as "2 Corinthians," has a theme of this kind of witness.

First, we are comforted to comfort. (See 2 Corinthians 1:3–9.) Paul tells of being in such turmoil that he and those with him despaired of life. They weren't sure they would even live. The external pressure was immense. *"Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead"* (v. 9). All of Paul's persecutions were met with a divine comfort that gives hope to others who face such pressures. In other words, Paul realized that his life was not about his own pleasures and ease, but about comforting others who face trouble. *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God"* (vs. 3–4). For those who see the salvation of Christ as a refuge from affliction, this is shocking. For those who get it that the inheritance includes his mission of demonstrating God's strength through our weakness, it gives hope.

Second, we are conquered to conquer.

(See 2 Corinthians 2:14–17.) Paul uses the metaphor of a military general who has won the battle and marches into his own city with the captives in tow. To cover the awful smell of war, blood, death, and dirt, they engulfed the parade with incense and perfume. Since the love of Christ has captured us, we have his smell on us. To some, it smells like death. They are people who still view God as an enemy and do not want to be captured by his love. To others, we smell like life. They are attracted to weak people who have a Lord who still loves and identifies with us. We shouldn't be surprised that there is conflict. It is all part of our inheritance. Jesus still elicits both hatred and faith.

Third, we are filled to be poured out.

(See 2 Corinthians 4:7–12.) *"But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed . . . So death is at work in us, but life in you"* (vs 7–8, 12). Paul was thoroughly acquainted with this way of God's kingdom. He was a witness to Stephen's death.

Stephen was a man full of the Spirit, power, and wisdom. When he was stoned, the fullness was poured out of the broken vessel, and Paul saw the light of the glory of God in Stephen's face. Later, on a trip to Damascus, he saw that same light focused on him. He met the living Lord. Stephen had experienced death while Paul got life. It is part of the inheritance.

*"We are afflicted in every way but not crushed . . . So death is at work in us, **but life in you.**"*

Fourth, we are freed to serve.

(See 2 Corinthians 6:1–9.) Isaiah had promised a day of salvation where God's people would be restored. (See Isaiah 49.) Paul declared that the day had come in Jesus and that we are partners with him in declaring it and demonstrating it. He was committed to preventing any obstacle to that announcement getting out. He was willing to severely limit his personal liberty in order to reach that goal. He endured misunderstandings. He was called false names by many. There was physical pain, emotional stress, relational

disappointment, and the constant pressure from the Jews who didn't accept the Messiah. It was all part of the inheritance.

We not only get to go to heaven when we die. **We get to share his life now.**

Fifth, we boast in another's glory. (See 2 Corinthians 11:16–33.) *“If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness”* (v. 30). The immature Corinthians were tempted to be ashamed of an apostle who looked so weak. They wanted a hero of the faith who could rise above all such things as afflictions. Many false apostles were boasting of their status, gifts, and numbers of followers. Paul understood that our role is to reflect the strength of God's grace in the midst of our own weakness. We all tend to boast in our own strengths. We need to know that we are valuable. Since the worldly metrics indicate that only the apparent winners are important, we are tempted to show how we are winners—in their eyes. The way of God's new creation is our boasting in his value. It is alright to be weak when

sharing life with the one who has defeated death and now rules from the right hand of the father. We know the truth while the crowds don't. Many will not notice, but many who are weak will find hope. It is part of the inheritance.

We not only get to go to heaven when we die. We get to share his life now. We are called to him to reflect his glory. Our own glory is restored when we are operating as sons and partners with God who is offering life to the dead, light to the blind, power to the weak, and hope to those who despair.



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