

Chapter 9

THE SECRET OF "ENTERING" OR "INHERITING" THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Many years ago, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, the President of Dallas Theological Seminary, in his remarkable book, *The Kingdom in History and Prophecy*, wrote,

There can be but one true system of interpretation (of the Bible). Accepted inferences of so-called Postmillennialism and Premillennialism as possible coexisting systems of interpretation constitute a serious challenge against the dignity and purpose of the Bible itself. Either the divine revelation follows a definite order in the development of the kingdom in the earth or it does not. If it does, there could hardly be two distinct programs coexisting in the mind and purpose of God. If there is but one order, an individual who confessedly knows nothing of the kingdom body of truth falls far short of being an approved workman, rightly dividing the Word of truth, when he, through prejudice or pre-conceived conclusions, is not willing to be moved and molded by the exact and accurate words of scripture. And how much greater is his failure when guilty of withholding these mighty transforming themes from others.¹

These wise words are very pertinent, especially to the conscientious student of the Word of God, who has attempted to wade through the veritable river of thousands of pages of material pouring from the presses on the subject of prophecy. These include views which range all the way from the so-called "consistent eschatology" of an Albert Schweitzer, to the "ultra-dispensational writings of E. W. Bullinger and Cornelius Stam. The only sensible course left to the bewildered student is to do what Dr. Chafer suggests, "to be moved and molded by the exact and accurate words of scripture!" As the actual scriptures which contain Paul's teaching and preaching on the subject of "the kingdom" are listed, there will be no room left for "pre-conceived conclusions," even if they have come from some of "America's greatest Bible teachers".

So, here is the list of references from the Book of Acts and the 'Pauline Epistles, in which Paul used the word "kingdom":

- Acts 14:22 - "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."
- Acts 19:8 - "And he went into the synagogue and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God."

¹ (Chicago: The Bible Institute Colportage Assn.), 1936; copyright 1915, p. 17.

- *Acts 20:25*- "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more."
- *Acts 28:23*- "And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him, into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening."
- *Acts 28:30, 31* - "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."
- *Romans 14:17*- "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"
- *I Corinthians 4:20*- "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power."
- *I Corinthians 6:9, 10*- "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."
- *I Corinthians 15:24*- "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."
- *I Corinthians 15:50*- "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom; neither does corruption inherit incorruption."
- *Galatians 5:19-21* - "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."
- *Ephesians 5:5* - "For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
- *Colossians 1:13* - "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son."
- *Colossians 4:11b* - "These only are my fellow workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me."
- *I Thessalonians 1:11-12* - "As ye know how we exhorted, and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye should walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory"
- *II Thessalonians 1:4, 5*- "So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which also ye suffer."
- *II Timothy 4:1* - ~ charge thee, therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who

shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."

- *II Timothy 4:18*- "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory forever and ever, Amen."
- *Hebrews 1:8* - "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom."
- *Hebrews 12:28, 29* - "Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire."

This impressive list of the Scriptures describing Paul's use of the word 'kingdom' and the phrase "kingdom of God," is a revelation in itself.

PAUL PREACHED "THE KINGDOM"

The first thing it reveals is that the Apostle Paul continued to preach "the kingdom of God" long after some of the Bible teachers say he had ceased to preach it. They say that before Paul wrote his so-called prison epistles - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, I Timothy and II Timothy - he had received a new revelation of "the body truth" concerning "the church as the body of Christ." Therefore, some of them say, "the only portion of the Bible actually written to us today is the prison epistles of Paul." The rest of the Bible may be "for" Christians today, but it is not written to them. Imagine what this has done to the lives of hundreds of conscientious Christians, as they have been told that the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, the words of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, and even the teachings of Paul in Romans, Corinthians and Galatians, are not written to them.

In the 1930's Dr. John C. O'Hair was pastor of the North Shore Church in Chicago and conducted a daily radio program with a large audience. During the first fifteen minutes of the program, he quoted II Timothy 3:16, 17 as proof that "all scripture is inspired of God," and preached salvation by grace through faith as clearly as anyone has ever preached it. Then, during the second half of each thirty minute broadcast, he would say something like this:

"But remember, my radio friends, that the only portion of the Bible actually written to us today, is the prison epistles of Paul. Do not let your pastor tell you that the Sermon on the Mount or the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels, or even Paul's early epistles, are written to us today. You must realize that after the twentieth chapter of Acts, the Apostle Paul received a new revelation. That revelation concerned 'the church as the body of Christ'. After he received this new revelation he no longer preached or taught 'the kingdom of God.'"

A young pastor in the Chicago area, whose fundamental church was being torn apart by this teaching, wrote to Dr. O'Hair and asked him how he could reconcile such

statements with these Scriptures:

In his final farewell to the Christians of the church at Ephesus Paul said, "And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone, *preaching the kingdom of God*, shall see my face no more" (Acts 20:25).

During the days when Paul was under guard of a soldier, awaiting his trial before Caesar in Rome, he called the Jews of Rome together, "to whom he expounded and testified *the kingdom of God*, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:23).

While he was writing his prison epistles, right up to the time of his martyrdom, the last two verses of the Book of Acts say, "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, *preaching the kingdom of God* and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30, 31).

Sad to say, the young pastor never received a reply from the great "radio pastor," and had to face the havoc wrought in his church, and many others, by such extreme ultra-dispensational teaching. The Apostle Paul himself wrote to Timothy, "*From such withdraw thyself*" (I Tim. 6:3-5).

Paul would no doubt have agreed with two of the best Plymouth Brethren writers of the past generation in England, C. F. Hogg and J. B. Watson. They were dispensationalists, but in their remarkable exposition of the Lord Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, they wrote,

There are, indeed, different keys with which to unlock the treasures of scripture, and every serious student of the Book 'will distinguish its "times and seasons," but too often the dispensational key becomes a knife, effecting its mutilation rather than its interpretation. A dispensation is a means to an end; God's means may change, His end does not. The end is to make men like Himself, that is, like His Son.... To turn the key into a knife can only contribute to defeat this end, and to do from within, but more effectively, what King Jehoiakim attempted to do from without.²

Once again, Paul's spiritual balance is evident. He did not go off on a tangent.. He continued to preach and teach "all the counsel of God." So, while he was receiving the additional revelations of truth God gave him concerning 'the church which is Christ's body,' with all the walls of partition between Jew and Gentile broken down, he continued to preach and teach "the kingdom of God. He knew and taught, right in one of his prison epistles," that God the Father has already "translated into the kingdom of His

² *The Sermon on The Mount* (Pickering and Inglis Ltd.), 1933, no copyright, p.14.

dear Son" every born-again member of the body of Christ (Col. 1:13), be he Jew or Gentile, bond or free.

Paul, himself a converted Jew, with a heart full of love for the Gentiles, must have reveled in those wonderful words of the Lord Jesus spoken in the house of the Gentile Roman centurion, whose faith was greater than any the Saviour had found in Israel, "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8:11).

PAUL TAUGHT TWO ASPECTS OF THE KINGDOM

The second fact evident to any unprejudiced mind which studies the list of Paul's references to "the kingdom," is that he taught the same two aspects of the kingdom that the Lord Jesus taught. The first is the present spiritual form of the kingdom in the hearts of all those who acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ, not only as Saviour, but as Master, Lord and King of their lives, here and now. The second, is the future, literal manifested kingdom when the Lord Jesus comes back to this earth in glory to reign for a thousand years of peace and righteousness.

The first aspect of the kingdom was described by the Lord Jesus in a literal translation of Luke 17:20, 21:

"And having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God is coming, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God does not come in such a manner that it can be watched with the eyes;³ neither shall they say, Lo here, or Lo there, for the kingdom of God is in the midst of you."

The Pharisees did not have the spiritual perception to realize that, in a spiritual sense, the kingdom of God was already "in their midst," in the person of this lowly Galilean rabbi, whom they did not recognize as the coming King of kings and Lord of lords. This was why the Lord Jesus startled the great Pharisee, Nicodemus, "the ruler of the Jews," by telling him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be *born again*, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He made it very clear that the spiritual form of His kingdom can be neither perceived nor entered except by those who have experienced the spiritual miracle of the "new birth."

In the list of references to the kingdom as used in the Pauline epistles, Paul also mentions the spiritual form of the kingdom. To the Romans he wrote, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17). To the Corinthians, "For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power" (I Cor. 4:20). To the Colossians, "Giving thanks to the Father... who hath delivered us

³ Dr. J. H. Thayer so translates the Greek word for "observation" (K. J. Version) which is used only this once in the New Testament.

from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (Col. 1:13).

Neither the Lord Jesus Christ nor Paul taught that "the church is the kingdom." But they both make it clear that as soon as a man becomes a member of the family of God through the new birth, he is "delivered from the power of darkness" and translated into the spiritual kingdom of God. So, today, the spiritual aspect of "the kingdom of Christ and of God, is now present on earth in the person of "the King of kings" Who indwells the bodies of millions of His followers, in the person of "the Spirit of Christ."

THE FUTURE LITERAL ASPECT OF THE KINGDOM

A continued study of Paul's uses of the word "kingdom" in his epistles shows that he agreed with His Lord in teaching a future literal aspect of the kingdom. The Lord Jesus, in Luke 17, set forth the spiritual aspect of the kingdom which "does not come in such a manner that it can be watched with the eyes." In Luke 19, He faced the fact that the Jewish people were expecting a literal, visible kingdom, in which He would be the King, defeat all of their enemies, deliver them from the power of Rome, and make them rulers with Him over the whole earth:

And as they heard these things, he added and spake a parable, he-cause he was nigh to Jerusalem and *because they thought* that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered unto them ten pounds and said unto them, Occupy till I come.... And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to he called unto him to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. - Luke 19:11-15

In this parable, the Lord Jesus pictured Himself as the nobleman going away "to receive for Himself a kingdom and *to return*," as King. He also pictured the rewards which His faithful servants, who did business for Him during His absence, would receive. One was to reign with Him over "ten cities," another over "five cities," and the "wicked servant" over no cities. The Lord Jesus knew that He would be coming back to this earth to reign and said so in no uncertain terms. In the last days before His death on the cross, here are His words:

"Then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When the Son of man shall come in his glory and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations" (Matt. 24:30; 25-31). "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:29, 30).

"The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. 13:41).

Dr. G. Campbell Morgan, the great English expositor of the Word, said of this aspect of the Lord Jesus Christ's second advent in glory:

I believe that the new era in the world's history will be ushered in first of all by this strange and marvelous angel visitation, and angel discrimination and angel separation. Angel discrimination means heaven's standards set up in the affairs of men. Angel separation means heaven's might enforcing heaven's standards.... I sigh for the coming of the angels. I feel increasingly that the government of men is a disastrous failure, and will he to the end.

Presently, when the church is complete, and lifted out, angels will take this business in hand, and there will be no seducer clever enough to dodge an angel, and there will be no scamp master enough of traffic to escape the grip of an angel hand. Buildings will crash at their touch and unholy places will be demolished at their bidding.

Yet the angels are only the King's messengers. Think of the king Himself, behind it all, coming to establish His Kingdom. This is an unbelieving age, a very clever busy one; but it is a very small age in its thinking. I love to get back from magazine articles and men's philosophies to my Bible, and I love to hear Him say, "The Son of man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend." That is my hope today.⁴

Dr. Morgan was right. The only real hope for this sin-cursed, war-torn world is the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. When He comes in power and great glory, He will solve all the physical, social, moral and spiritual problems created by man's sin and rebellion. In the physical realm, He will deliver the earth itself from the curse of sin into "the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21). He will set the earth's axis back on the perpendicular to the plane of its orbit around the sun, as it was before The Deluge, and the whole earth will have a semi-tropical climate. "Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree" (Isa. 55:13). With no tropical, temperate and frigid zones, and the whole planet canopied with vapor clouds, there will be no storms, no deserts and no rapid decay of animal and vegetable matter as there is today (Isa. 35:1-10). All the enmity will be taken out of the animal kingdom so that the lion will lie down with the lamb and the leopard, the bear, and the wolf will all lose their ferocity. The little child will have carnivorous animals for his pets and babies will be able to play with poisonous reptiles (Isa. 11:6-8).

The social revolution which has been the dream of sages of the ages will be a glorious reality when "The Prince of Peace" sits upon His throne and reigns and rules

⁴ Wm. B. Riley, *The Evolution of The Kingdom* (New York: The Book Stall), 1913, p. 85.

humanity with a rod of iron. "And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa. 2:4). All the sick and the crippled will be healed by The Great Physician (Isa. 35:3-6). They shall "obtain joy and gladness and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

The moral and spiritual problems of humanity will be solved because "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." It will be the age, not of grace, but of absolute justice, when every major sin of rebellion will be judged on the spot. "Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth" (Zech. 14:12). The form of government will be neither monarchy, democracy, socialism, nor communism, but *theocracy*, with a perfect dictator, the Lord of lords and King of kings, ruling over the whole earth for a thousand years. "Every man shall sit under his own vine and his fig tree and none shall make them afraid" (Micah 4:4). "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:9).

This reign of the Lord Jesus Christ is called "The Millennium," a term derived from the Latin words for "thousand years." Every attempt has been made by the opponents of "pre-millennial doctrine," to explain away the explicit statements in Revelation 20:1-7. For, in this passage, six times in seven verses, the Holy Spirit inspired John to give the duration of the Lord Jesus' reign upon earth as one thousand years. One clear statement in the inspired Word should be enough to establish a truth. When the Spirit of God repeats a truth six times in seven verses, it should be enough to convince all except those who are blind *because they will not believe*. John wrote, "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.... and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4).

This, then, is the future, literal manifestation of "the kingdom of God" on earth, in which the Apostle Paul was assured that he would reign with his Lord. This is the goal which he, by precept and example, holds before all Christians as the proper goal of their lives - suffering with Christ that they may also reign with Him; attaining the out-resurrection from among the dead and winning the prize of the up-calling!

THE REQUIREMENT FOR "ENTERING" THE KINGDOM

Another of Paul's spiritual secrets is the fact that he made a definite distinction, as did the Lord Jesus, between "entering" and "inheriting" the kingdom. Both of them made it perfectly clear that the only requirement for any person to "enter the kingdom" (both the present spiritual form and the future literal form) is that he be truly "born again."

This was set forth by Christ in what might be called "the three *excepts*." To Nicodemus, possibly the President of the Sanhedrin, He said, "*Except* a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot *enter* into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). In the Sermon on the Mount, He said, "*Except* your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no ease *enter* into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). To those who were arguing over who would be greatest in His kingdom, He said, "*Except* ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not *enter* into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:3).

A careful study of these passages will disclose one basic requirement for entering the kingdom of God - the absolute necessity of being born again of the Holy Spirit. Only so can any person become a true child of God (John 1:12, 13) and have imputed and imparted to him the "righteousness of Christ" (I Cor. 1:30) - the only righteousness "which exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees."

It has been said that the Apostle Paul never preached or taught "the new birth." Then, what of these statements from his inspired pen:

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the *washing of regeneration* and the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation; the out-of-date things have passed away. Lo, all things have become new in quality" (II Cor. 5:17, literal Greek).

Paul, by experience (as seen in Chapter 2), knew that "the new birth" is a miracle of God. In fact, it is a greater and more costly miracle than the miracle of creation itself. When God wanted to create this planet, all that He had to do was to speak a few creative words. "And God said, Let there be light and there was light. ... And God said, Let there be a firmament" and there was a firmament (Gen. 1:3, 6, 7). "By the word of God, the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water" (II Peter 3:5). But when God wanted to take a poor, lost, hell-bound sinner and make him a member of the family of God, it cost Him every drop of the blood of His Only-Begotten Son to perform that miracle of spiritual regeneration. Paul knew that it was by means of this wondrous miracle that God hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and *hath translated us into the kingdom* of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13, 14).

There is, then, but one basic requirement for *entering the kingdom* and that is *the new birth*. Millions of church members in America today have never experienced this wonderful miracle. They do not even know that it is possible. The Lord Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Art thou a master of Israel and knowest not these things?... Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again" (John 3:7, 9). This is the reason a hard-hitting evangelist like Billy Sunday said, "Hell will be so full of church members their feet will be sticking out the windows!"

REQUIREMENTS FOR "INHERITING" THE KINGDOM

All born-again Christians will "enter" the future phase of the kingdom of God on earth, because they have already entered the present spiritual phase of the kingdom, but not all those who "enter" will "inherit" the kingdom. In other words, all Christians will be in the kingdom as subjects of the King of kings, but this does not mean that all Christians will sit on thrones and reign with Him. This may come as a distinct shock to many sincere students of God's Word. However, it is the clear teaching of both the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostle Paul and needs to be known by every child of God living on earth today.

This is why Paul wrote to the Roman Christians, "The Spirit himself is constantly bearing joint testimony with our [human] spirit that we are God's children, and since children, also heirs; on the one hand, heirs of God and on the other, joint-heirs with Christ, providing that we are suffering with him in order that we also may be glorified together" (Dr. Wuest's "Expanded Translation" of Rom. 8:16, 17). In this remarkable passage, the Greek word for children is "born ones" and through the "new birth" every "born one becomes an "heir of God" to eternal life. For the "born one," this part of the promise is unconditional and automatic. Not so the second part of the promise. It is one thing to be an "heir of God." It is another thing to be a "joint-heir with Christ." Christians are only "joint-heirs with Christ, *providing that we are suffering with Him in order that we also may be glorified together.*"

Though the wording is somewhat different, this passage is almost identical in meaning to that which Paul wrote to Timothy: "It is a faithful saying, For if we died together with him, we also shall live together; if we endure suffering, we also shall reign as kings together. If we deny him, he also will deny us" (literal translation of II Tim. 2:11, 12). The Lord Jesus Christ will never deny a true child of God eternal life. But, He will deny the unfaithful child of God, who denies his Lord, the privilege of "reigning with Him in His kingdom."

The very Greek word translated "inherit" is a term which merited a special explanation by the great Greek lexicographer, Dr. J. H. Thayer. Among the meanings he gives for it are, "To receive the portion assigned to one... To receive as one's own; to be a partaker of; to obtain." Then he shows how in the Greek versions of the Old Testament, this word was used in the phrase "to inherit the earth or the land" so often that it came to mean to the Jews the possession of the Land of Canaan and especially the final possession of the land under the reign of the Messiah.⁵ According to Dr. Thayer's explanation, the very Greek verb for "inherit," used three times by the Lord Jesus Christ and at least seven times by the Apostle Paul, would connote "to inherit

⁵ *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York: American Book Co., 1889), pp. 348, 349.

Messiah's kingdom," whether or not the word 'kingdom' is used with it. At least five times, Paul uses the noun form of the same Greek word.

A study of the uses of this remarkable word in the New Testament will show *three definite major requirements* for a Christian to *"inherit the kingdom."*

1. The Christian, saved by grace, must not go back to "law-keeping" as a means of earning the right to "inherit the kingdom." This is the pivotal point of Paul's whole heart-broken letter to the Galatians. He was writing to Christians who had been born into God's spiritual family through his own spiritual travail. Now he was "travailing in birth *again* for them, that Christ might be formed in them" (Gal. 4:19). Paul knew that if they were to "inherit" Christ's kingdom, they must not try to work in their strength, but let Christ Himself be formed in their daily lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Listen to his impassioned appeal to them:

This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Me ye so foolish? Having began in the Spirit [by the miracle of the new birth], are ye now made perfect by the flesh?... For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles through faith... For if the *inheritance* be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. - Galatians 3:23, 10, 13, 14, 18

Paul was writing to the Galatians as Christians, who had already entered the kingdom of God, by grace through faith in Christ, urging them to go on to possess their "inheritance." He was really warning them that if they did obtain the inheritance, it would be on God's terms of grace and not legal works. How similar was his warning to the Hebrew Christians in an oft-neglected passage:

"Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28, 29).

CARNAL CHRISTIANS WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM

2. The Christian who would inherit the kingdom of God must not go back into the sins of the flesh from which he should be delivered. In three terrific passages, in three different pastoral epistles, Paul warned the Christians in Galatia, in Corinth, and in Ephesus, that if they continued to indulge in the sins of the flesh, they would not *inherit* the kingdom of God. So terrible is the list of sins Paul gives that many have said Christians could never be guilty of such things if they are really saved. But the great Apostle knew that the carnal nature in a saved person is no different than the carnal

nature in an unsaved person. Besides, these Christians were living in a pagan civilization where the cities were cesspools of moral iniquity. Paul knew that his new churches were like tiny little islands of Christian virtue in turbulent seas of immorality and vice of every kind. So, he did not dare mince words. He named the sins from which these dear Christians of his had been delivered, and warned them never to go back into these cursed practices. His warnings are as much needed in America today as they were in ancient Greece and Asia Minor.

To his beloved Galatians he wrote:

Brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

... This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But, if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revilings and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they *which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* - Galatians 5:13, 16-21

Remember, Paul was writing these words to Christians who had already entered the spiritual form of the kingdom of God through the new birth. So he was not speaking to them about "entering" the kingdom. They were already in the kingdom. He was warning born-again ones what they must not do if they expect to *"inherit the kingdom of God."* Paul did not say that those who commit such sins would not "enter" the kingdom because he knew that the kingdom of God will be made up of saved sinners - and sinners saved from these very sins. If "those that do such things" cannot enter the kingdom, then few, if any, human beings could ever be saved. His inspired arrangement of this list of seventeen "works of the flesh," or sins, is so inclusive that no adult human being could plead innocence of all these sins. A person may not be guilty of the first four sins against chastity, but is he innocent when it comes to "pride" ("emulations") or "wrath" or "envy"? A moral man may pride himself that he is not guilty of "adultery," "murder," or "drunkenness," but what about "witchcraft" and "idolatry"? The biblical definition of these from God's viewpoint, was given by Samuel when he said, "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft and stubbornness is as idolatry" (I Sam. 15:23). Who can say that he has not been guilty of one or many of these sins? If those who are guilty cannot "enter" the kingdom, who then can be saved?

Besides, Paul makes it clear that, from God's viewpoint, this list, terrible as it is, does not complete the story of human iniquity. Those little words, "and such like," tell us that there is no end to God's list. But this is why the Lord Jesus came to earth. The angel said to Mary, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people *from*

their sins" (Matt. 1:21). Paul said it in his own personal testimony:

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry;

Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious...

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. I Timothy 1:12, 13, 15

Paul made this statement at the end of his life. Paul's Saviour was a perfect Saviour, not only from the guilt and penalty of sin but also from the power of ever-present temptation. With such a Saviour, he knew that neither he, nor any other Christian, had any excuse for these sins in his daily life. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.... And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:16, 24). At the judgment seat of Christ, what Christian will dare to stand up and accuse his Lord of being an imperfect Saviour from either the guilt or power of sin? "wherefore, He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

Those Christians, then; who appropriate daily, by faith, the grace and power of their Risen, Regnant Lord; who walk in the power of the indwelling and anointing of the Spirit of Christ, and have crucified the flesh with its desires, will "*inherit the kingdom of God.*" They will be "joint-heirs with Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. Those Christians who remain carnal and continue to do "the works of the flesh" will "suffer loss," be saved "so as by fire," and will be subjects in the kingdom in which they could have reigned.

"AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU"

To his spiritual "children" in Corinth Paul wrote:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not Inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, not effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

All such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. - I Corinthians 6:9-11

What a thrilling testimony to the power of God the church in Corinth must have been. In his little flock there, the Apostle saw men who were living miracles of God's grace and power. Some of them had been homosexuals and effeminate who required a psychological, as well as a spiritual, miracle to be transformed. Some had been saved

from alcoholism and some from cursing tongues and greed of gold. "And such were some of you, but ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified!" How? "In the name of the Lord Jesus" and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now Paul warns them, "Do not dare to go back into these terrible sins from which you have been delivered. For if you do, you will not be privileged to reign with the Lord Jesus in His kingdom. You shall not then inherit" the kingdom of God."

Some have said that Paul was warning Christians that they would lose their salvation if they went back into sin. But he does not say that they will not "enter" the kingdom. He said that they will not "inherit" the kingdom. They can fail to possess their potential inheritance, but they cannot lose eternal life. Paul is not contradicting here what he wrote in Colossians: "For ye are dead and your life is hid *with Christ in God*. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory" (Col. 3:3, 4). If one Christian could be lost after being truly saved, then the security of the Godhead itself could be broken, and no Christian would be safe.

In his letter to the Ephesians, the Apostle gives the same warning to the Christians in Ephesus, a center of pagan vice and sin:

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us....

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints....

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, who is an idolater, hath any *inheritance* in the kingdom of Christ and of God. -- Ephesians 5:1, 2, 3, 5

Again, Paul states clearly that the Christian who goes back into the flagrant sins of the world after he has been saved through the sacrifice of Christ, can have no inheritance in Christ's kingdom. Considered in the light of Paul's teaching in Hebrews 12:5-8, and Hebrews 10:26-31 two remarkable truths come into focus. First, the *professing* Christian who continues in sin and has no chastening of a Heavenly Father upon his life, has never been truly saved. "If ye be without chastisement, whereof all of the sons are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons."

Second, the *true* Christian who becomes rebellious and continues to sin willfully, will become guilty of the sin unto physical death and will have to face punishment, as well as loss of reward, at the judgment seat of Christ. "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing.... The Lord shall judge *his people*. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Paul did not teach that any Christian could ever be sinlessly perfect, experientially, in

this life, but he warned that no Christian has an excuse to continue in sin. He preached that Christ is a perfect Saviour, first, from the guilt and penalty of sin; second, from the power of present temptation, and third, from the "very presence of sin.

3. The Christian who would *inherit* the kingdom must be filled with the Holy Spirit and let the Spirit produce His "fruit" in the daily life. The first two requirements for inheriting the kingdom have been negative. The third, which the Lord Jesus, the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter all clearly teach, is positive and dynamic. Any student of the New Testament who will carefully compare the Lord Jesus' teaching in The Beatitudes (Matt. 5:2-12), Paul's list of the nine-fold "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22, 23), and Peter's list of the requirements for "*an abundant entrance* into the kingdom" (II Peter 1:3-11), will be startled by the close correspondence between the three passages. There is not room for an exposition of them here. All that can be done is to point out the emphasis which the Lord gave to "inheriting" the kingdom and urge others to make a thorough study of these wonderful passages in which Paul and Peter reinforce their Lord's teaching.

The Lord Jesus Christ's Beatitudes are not innocent little sayings to be taught to Sunday School children as "beautiful literary gems." They are the most revolutionary teaching that our world has ever heard. They are also the requirements which Christ laid down for His born-again disciples if they were going to reign with Him in His kingdom. Here are the Christians Christ congratulates because they are going to "inherit Messiah's kingdom on the earth." This is manifest in a free, but accurate, translation of three of the Beatitudes:

"To be congratulated are the beggars in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them."

"To be congratulated are the meek, for they shall inherit Messiah's kingdom on earth."

"To be congratulated are they which are persecuted for righteous-ness sake: for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them."

The Lord Jesus was speaking to His own disciples (Matt. 5:1, 2). He was not congratulating them because they had "*entered*" His kingdom, nor even telling them how to enter it. Rather, He was challenging these saved men to meet the requirements for "inheriting" His kingdom. First, they must become "beggars in spirit." That is, they must admit that they were nothing, they had nothing, and they could never be anything, apart from His Divine grace. Second, they must become meek ("serenely humble and obedient"). Third, they must let Him so live in them that they would be "persecuted for righteousness' sake." Then they would "inherit the earth." If all nine of the divinely produced characteristics of the "fruit of the Spirit" mentioned in His Beatitudes are evident in their lives, then "the kingdom belongs to them." Each of the Beatitudes has a present and a future fulfillment, but it is the future fulfillment which Jesus is emphasizing, as evidenced by His last Beatitude:

"To be congratulated are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake, Rejoice, and lump up and down for joy: for great is your reward in the heavens [at the Judgment Seat], for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (literal Greek of Matt. 5:11, 12).

Where did Paul get his determination to reign with Christ? From his Lovely Lord, Himself. Who can contemplate the possibility of such eternal rewards and not say with Paul,

"This one thing I do.... I press toward the goal for the prize of the up-calling of God in Christ Jesus!"

THE PRIZE OF THE UP-CALLING
Chapter 9: The Secret of "Entering" or "Inheriting" the Kingdom of God

Copyright, 1969, by Kenneth F. Dodson and family
First Printing – Baker Book House, 1969
Second Printing – Baker Book House, 1972
Third Printing – Schoettle Publishing Company, Inc., 1989

Schoettle Publishing Company, Inc.
P.O. Box 1246
Hayesville, NC 28904

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