

Isaiah 63:7-9 (Opening)

- 7** *I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD,
the praises of the LORD,
according to all that the LORD has granted us,
and the great goodness to the house of Israel
that he has granted them according to his compassion,
according to the abundance of his steadfast love.*
- 8** *For he said, "Surely they are my people,
children who will not deal falsely."
And he became their Savior.*
- 9** *In all their affliction he was afflicted,
and the angel of his presence saved them;
in his love and in his pity he redeemed them;
he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.*

Introduction

What does it mean to be an heir?

Well, like I usually do, I went to my nearest on-line dictionary and looked it up.

According to Dictionary.com, an heir is a person who inherits or has a right of inheritance in the property of another following the latter's death.

Usually when I think of an heir, I think of some rich family, like the Rockefeller's, the Carnegie's, the Walton's (Sam, not John Boy), or even the British Royal family. But you don't have to be in a wealthy family to be or have an heir. In fact, most financial planners recommend that adults should have a will to legally define who their heirs are so there's less of a legal issue after you're gone.

But being an heir doesn't just have to do with stuff. You can also be heir to a position, like in the British Royal family. Queen Elizabeth II is the queen of England (in case you didn't know), and her son Charles is the heir to the throne, unless he gets mummy upset and she decides to skip a generation. After all, Charles is going to be 66 this year, and he's not getting any younger!

So, why am I talking about heirs and inheriting? Well, as we continue our journey through the book of Romans, we're at a point where Paul talks about, among other things, our inheritance. Let's take a look at Romans 8:12-17.

Romans 8:12-17

¹² So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received

the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ 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.

Not in debt to the flesh

Paul just finished saying in the previous paragraph here in Romans that if we’re in Christ, His Spirit lives in us, and gives life to our mortal bodies.

That’s a great thing, because Paul has explained to us that the law of sin, that great distraction that lives in us that pulls us away from doing good things, is what brings us death. So if we remain in Christ, His Spirit lives in us; that gives us the ability to do good things, and brings us life.

So, because of all that, we don’t owe the flesh anything, mainly because it does bad things for us, causes us to keep doing those things that we know we shouldn’t do. Since we have the Holy Spirit living in us, we are freed from our indebtedness to the flesh. Paul said it earlier back in verse 2 of this same chapter here in Romans.

Romans 8:2

² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Here’s the problem we run into, though. That distraction I just referred to; the law of sin and death, that human nature that we have to go off and do whatever we want to do, even if it’s wrong; that distraction is going to do everything it can to keep you from doing what’s right.

Paul said it himself back in chapter 7. He kept doing the things he didn’t want to do, and the things he knew he should be doing, he didn’t do. I find myself right there with Paul every day. Sometimes it’s little things,

but sometimes it's bigger things. The distraction, the law of sin that lives in me, has a strange pull. I know it's wrong, but I do it anyway.

But Paul says there's a way to take care of that problem. It's not instantaneous; it takes time. There is a way to defeat the law of sin and death, through the Holy Spirit. And Paul says it is a life-long process.

Paul explains it in his letter to the Christians in Colossi.

Colossians 3:1-6

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming.

Yes, because of all these sins and more, the wrath of God is coming. And the sinful nature that is in us wants to do these things. This is the struggle that Paul talks about, not doing what's right, and doing what's wrong. Paul continues here in Colossians 3 saying that we must put them all away, and that all of us did these evil things before we were Christians. That sinful nature want's to pull us back into them.

Led by the Spirit

So, how do we not get pulled into doing those things that we used to do before we became Christians? Do we just keep trying harder and harder to not do them and finally we'll win the battle on our own?

Nope.

The only way we can win the battle is by giving up. I know that sounds wrong, but it's true. We need to understand that we can't win that

battle. Only God can win that battle by our giving up to follow Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Let's take a look at Galatians, chapter 5, verses 16-18.

Galatians 5:16-18

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. ¹⁷ For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. ¹⁸ But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

What does Paul mean by “walk by the Spirit”? Well, let's take a look at what Paul doesn't say here. He doesn't say “Well, keep trying and finally you'll stop doing those things.” We know he wouldn't say that because of what he wrote in Romans 7 that we just talked about.

Paul understood that the law of sin that resides in mankind won't overcome itself. Only by walking in the Spirit can we put to death, or kill, those sinful desires. But how do we walk by the spirit?

Well, when we were immersed, we received the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is our guide to doing what's right and not doing what's wrong. Over time we grow to understand the leading of the Holy Spirit by learning God's will for us, by studying and understanding His word, what's written for us in the Bible. That's why Paul said in 1 Corinthians 2:12:

1 Corinthians 2:12

¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

God tells us His will in the Bible, and gives us His Spirit so we can understand His will. And through understanding His will, we can focus

on doing what's right, not through our own ability, but because of the Spirit.

In his second letter to Timothy, his spiritual son, Paul told him this:

2 Timothy 1:6-7

⁶For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

That power, love, and self-control are what help us to overcome the power of the law of sin and death that is in our flesh. We can't do it on our own.

[Adopted heirs and Children of God](#)

But I think the most revolutionary part of this little paragraph in Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome is the last three verses. Paul says that the Holy Spirit isn't a spirit of fear. That's the law of sin and death that's a spirit of fear. If we're following the law of sin and death, then we should be in fear; fear of God's wrath, like Paul talked about in his letter to the Colossians.

No, the Holy Spirit is a spirit of adoption. What does that mean, a spirit of adoption?

Well, let's look at the concept of adoption, specifically the concept of adoption from first century Rome, the people that Paul was writing to.

When the head of a household didn't have any male heirs (because male heirs were all that was important and women didn't inherit property), he would find a man that was involved in his life in some way that he felt would make a good replacement for him over his household. He would make a monetary agreement with the head of that man's household so he would release him from his family and allow him to become a member of the first man's family. Once all the

legal paperwork was completed before a magistrate, that man was, for all legal purposes, the son of the man who adopted him.

Notice, first off, that I said that a man was being adopted. Most adoptions in first century Rome were of adults, or at the very least teens, not children. Children weren't adopted to become heirs because children had an inconvenient way of getting sick and dying, and that would leave the man without an heir again. Adults had a proven track record of health, so people were more apt to adopt them as an heir.

As an example, almost half of the Emperors of Rome from the time of Augustus until almost 200 AD, were adopted to define the heir and successor to the throne. Lots of important people in Rome were adopted.

Paul points out to the Christians in Galatia that we are no longer children and slaves, but adopted adult heirs of God and brothers and sisters of Christ. Let's look at Galatians 4:1-7

Galatians 4:1-7

¹ I mean that the heir, as long as he is a child, is no different from a slave, though he is the owner of everything, ² but he is under guardians and managers until the date set by his father. ³ In the same way we also, when we were children, were enslaved to the elementary principles of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

It's important to notice that both the Romans 8 and Galatians 4 scriptures use a specific term referring to God that only children use when referring to their father. "Abba! Father!" The first word, Abba, is transliterated from Aramaic into Greek and then into English. A version

of that word is still used today in Arabic and Hebrew. Its best definition isn't "Father", but more like "Daddy!" a loving expression used in private, personal conversation. The second word here, Father, is the Greek word **πατήρ** [*pater* /pat·ayr/] which is the general term for a male ancestor. Pater was probably used to define the transliterated Aramaic word Abba for non-Aramaic and non-Hebrew speaking readers.

So, the Spirit allows us to speak to God in a very informal and familiar way; we can call Him "Daddy". So, not only is God our Father or Daddy, if we are in Christ, but the Spirit tells us that we're heirs of God with Christ!

Let that sink in for a minute.

What does it mean to be an heir of God with Christ?

Well, an heir inherits all the possessions of a person when they die. That really doesn't help us understand this, though, since God never dies. So what good does it do us to be heirs of God with Christ?

We are not heirs of God in the way we think about an heir in the earthly sense. As children of God, we are heirs to the promise that He gives; the promise of eternal life.

Paul explains it to Titus this way in Titus 3:4-7.

Titus 3:4-7

⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Conclusion

So, even though we're not rich, or in a wealthy family, we really are heirs, if we're Christians.

Because we're adopted as children of God, we're heirs to something much better than just money, stuff, or even an earthly kingdom. As heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, we inherit a place in an eternal Kingdom, where we will live together with God and Christ forever.

Yes, Paul says it won't be smooth sailing; we'll suffer. But the end result will be worth the little bit of suffering that we'll have to go through in our short earthly life, for the eternity we'll spend as our inheritance.

1 John 4:13-21 (Closing)

¹³ *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴ And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. ¹⁵ Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶ So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

¹⁷ *By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.*

¹⁸ *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹ We love because he first loved us. ²⁰ If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. ²¹ And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Bible Study

Ephesians 1:3-10

³ *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,*
⁴ *even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love*⁵ *he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,*⁶ *to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.*⁷ *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*⁸ *which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight*⁹ *making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ*¹⁰ *as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.*

Deuteronomy 25:5-10

⁵ *“If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the wife of the dead man shall not be married outside the family to a stranger. Her husband’s brother shall go in to her and take her as his wife and perform the duty of a husband’s brother to her.*⁶ *And the first son whom she bears shall succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.*⁷ *And if the man does not wish to take his brother’s wife, then his brother’s wife shall go up to the gate to the elders and say, ‘My husband’s brother refuses to perpetuate his brother’s name in Israel; he will not perform the duty of a husband’s brother to me.’*⁸ *Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him, and if he persists, saying, ‘I do not wish to take her,’*⁹ *then his brother’s wife shall go up to him in the presence of the elders and pull his sandal off his foot and spit in his face. And she shall answer and say, ‘So shall it be done to the man who does not build up his brother’s house.’*¹⁰ *And the name of his house shall be called in Israel, ‘The house of him who had his sandal pulled off.’*

1 Peter 1:3-12

³ *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, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶ In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ⁸ Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, ⁹ obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

¹⁰ *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. ¹² It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*

John 3:1-8

¹ *Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." ³ Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"*

⁵ *Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*