

The Incomparable Inheritance

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[0 : 00] Well now we are going to turn to Psalm 16 and our text is found this evening in verses 5 and 6 and we are thinking here about the incomparable inheritance.

O Lord, you are the portion of my inheritance and my cup. You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places. Yes, I have a good inheritance.

Now the subject of inheritance by way of introduction is one that interests most of us, probably all of us.

Because when we are on the subject of inheritance we tend not to think firstly of giving but of getting. And that most probably interests us.

When you hear people talking in general they tend to think about what they will gain from the estate of a relative or of a very dear friend.

[1 : 23] And it is usually in terms of what will be gained in terms of money or precious articles or property or even land.

We are familiar with the whole notion of an inheritance. We could of course take a different tack altogether and think about a spiritual inheritance.

To have passed on to us. To have passed on to us the treasures that are in the word of God. To have passed on to us the rich heritage in terms of books and study guides that help us to understand the truth of God.

There are those of us here tonight who were brought up on the Bible. We were taught it and we I think regarded in our own way that input as something precious.

As a real treasure passed on to us. The Shorter Catechism is a wonderful little compendium of Christian doctrine. And those of us who were brought up on to us.

[3 : 04] It was interesting. We had the Reverend James McKeever with us at our communion season. Friday, Saturday and Sunday last.

And he mentioned that he had been brought up. And well taught in the Catechism and in the Bible. And when eventually he came to faith.

You remember how he said it was all there. It was all furniture in his mind. His memory. And it was like an inheritance deposited that he didn't really know was there.

He didn't say that. I'm saying that. But when he came to faith. When the Lord worked in his heart. And he came to faith. All that spiritual inheritance.

That treasure. Suddenly became useful to him. And it was blessed to him. I can say the same. And there are others I'm sure here tonight. Who can say the very same.

[4 : 04] In fact I often marvel at how much scripture I learnt as a young person. That seemed to me when I was in my twenties to be totally gone.

But when I came to faith. Suddenly it was all there. And it just came forward. It was like a door was opened. And out it came. And it was so valuable.

So we could talk about a spiritual inheritance. Passed on from the generation before. Whether parents or Sunday school or Bible class teachers. I think it's probably true to say that nowadays less value than ever is placed on this spiritual inheritance.

And that's a shame. But it could be seen as something really worth having. However our subject is slightly different here. Because David in this psalm speaks of a priceless.

Of an incomparable inheritance. Or a portion as he calls it. And he does so with delight. You can really feel in the very words.

[5 : 16] He's delighted. He's enthusing. Because the inheritance is God himself. Oh Lord he says. You are the portion of my inheritance.

And my cap. And you picture the cap. Filled up and overflowing. You maintain my lot. You look after it for me.

The lines have fallen into me in pleasant places. Yes. I have a good inheritance. And he therefore is enthusing about this.

And we may be here tonight as Christian believers who enthuse in that inheritance too. But we're confronted in life every week by people who don't think tippings of our inheritance.

The atheist we mentioned earlier on when we sang in Psalm 14. The fool says in his heart there is no God. The atheist simply sees our claim as God is our inheritance.

[6 : 31] He sees it. He brushes it aside. He thinks it's nothing but intangible nonsense. The false religionist doesn't see.

He prefers to see something. An object he can worship. He's not interested in worshipping the invisible God. The God who has revealed what he's like in his word.

He's content to have some image or anything that he can worship. And that is true within the Christian church broadly considered.

There are people who emphasize because they like that. The outward things. The ritual things. The objects.

The helps as they call them to worship. But David talks in pure spiritual language here of God who is infinite spirit.

[7 : 36] And he says, O Lord, you are the person of my inheritance. So what I want to do for a wee while tonight is to look at three angles on considering this incomparable inheritance.

First of all, the atheist view. And then the false religionist view. And finally, the believer's view. And I hope that at the end of it, this will help us to see where we are ourselves, but also to engage people who are in the camp of the atheist or the false religionist.

We owe it to them. First of all, the atheist view. A word here before we proceed on this. It's all too easy to see who is an out and out atheist as Professor Richard Dawkins.

Or some other eminent academic scientist. It's all too easy to focus on people at that level. And forget that there are children in our schools and in our communities, in our cities and towns and villages.

Children who are atheists. Because their parents are atheists. I've told you the story about the little girl.

[9 : 01] I'm sure I've told you. My very first lesson in school, in my first charge, in Boner Bridge in Sutherland. And the Lord constrained me to do something I would not have done at all.

And that was take the topic for my very first lesson with primaries 1 and 2. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God.

And once the teacher introduced me to the class and I introduced myself, before I got into the lesson, the little girl put up her hand, please Mr. Cowie, she said, there is no God anyway.

Five. Five. That was in 1981. In the Scottish Highlands. That approach, my dear friends, has gone on apace.

Our children, I say that in terms of the children of our land, so many are like that. And therefore, what we have to remember is that you take your starting point with the little children and you go right up to the highest academics.

[10 : 17] When you think about the atheist view, that's the point I'm making here. And their view is that since there is no God, there is no real value in talking about God as your inheritance.

Because it amounts to nothing. The atheist who never read the Bible dismisses any claims that the Bible may make upon our allegiance to God.

He's simply not there. But in the second place, there are atheists who have been brought up with more than a little knowledge of the Bible.

Some have even made it their business to study it. And they cannot, in their conclusions, they cannot accept that the God of the Bible, who is portrayed as the God of Lamb, could consign anyone to hell.

Or indeed, create such a place as hell. And so, they don't believe in God, the God of the Bible. They don't believe in God.

[11 : 31] One has engaged over the years with Jewish Holocaust survivors, or the children of Holocaust survivors, who have affirmed very aggressively, there can be no God.

The God of the Old Testament is a myth. The God you claim is the God and Father of your Lord Jesus. It's myth.

The God of the Old Testament. The God of the Jews. There's no God. How can you go to Auschwitz? How can you go to Belsen, and these other death camps, and say God is the God of love, is the living God?

They say these things. How can you tell me that God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life?

No, no, no, no. I can't accept that. And we've got people of different shades within the atheist camp.

[12:41] All needing help. All needing the help of those of us who know that we have the incomparable inheritance in the living God.

We need to be aware, therefore, of what they think, and we need to be ready to pray for them and help them to see things differently. They say, they combine to say, the only reasonable way to view this world and the universe itself is that it's just, it just happened with the bang, and it's going on and on over billions of years, and will go on, and we just fit in like tiny pieces in a jigsaw.

That's it. We need to be ready to engage these folk. We need to help them see that the eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die philosophy is sad and lonely and it is most miserable.

Indeed, we need to gently tell them that the Bible speaks to them in the words we were singing, the fool has said in his heart, there is no God.

And we need to tell them that when the Bible calls them fools for not believing in God, it doesn't mean they're stupid. It doesn't mean they lack knowledge and intelligence.

[14:19] It means they haven't begun to think properly. They haven't engaged with all the evidence. They've dismissed almost simplistically the Bible.

You remember I said a moment ago that the person who takes a view, he's read the Bible, he can't believe God could create hell. What's that about?

It's simply about I don't accept that. It puts man in the judgment seat judging God. That's what it does.

It says that man has the right to judge God on his own opinions. It takes no cognizance of what God is really like.

What is his attitude to sin? What is his attitude to unrighteousness? What is his attitude to those who dismiss the Bible's teaching that God created the universe?

[15:38] That poor scorn in the view that the hallmark of God is on everything he has made in the invisible microscopic world and in the great cosmos we're part of.

We have to help the atheist to see whatever shade he is this is a poor view. It's a defective view. It's a view that wills not to believe and it wills not to see the evidence.

And we have to say to him that his inheritance is pathetically poor and miserable and it will end in the very place they refuse to believe in in a lost eternity.

We have to help them to get there. And the best way to do that is to make them think about Jesus who he is and what he came to do.

Well that's for starters the atheist view we want to understand it and help atheists to see that the whole emphasis of the Bible is on God himself being the eternal inheritance of those who believe in him who trust in him.

[17:06] We're singing that there in the very section of the Psalm 14 where the fool is saying in his heart there is no God. You see struck down they are with dread for God is with the just you evil doers shame the poor but in the Lord they trust.

And we're to help them to see that rather than wait to the end of all things to find out that we're wrong come with us and we'll do you good we'll help you to see God has shown us and he can show you.

Secondly the false religionist view there was a wee while in my Christian experience when I was young in the faith that I thought what's the point really of singing psalms about the gods of the nations are idols dim yeah I thought that and then I began to think a bit more and read around a bit more and suddenly I realised that the psalms are just spot on huge swathes of the world worship idols of wood and stone silver and gold the work of men's hands and I discovered that the psalms are speaking into 21st century world and false religionist world view they share false gods there are millions and millions yes tens of millions worshipping false gods and the bible tells us how they got there way back in history it's not about primitive religion it's about the inherent problem in man that's

fallen he worships what he can see he makes an image that he thinks is suitable to worship Paul puts it this way in Romans 1 he changes the knowledge of God that which is in him because he's a human being made in the image of God he takes that knowledge and he translates it into worshipping the creature instead of the creator you find it there in Romans 1 and you see it's our business therefore to not to scorn those that are enmeshed in these things but to have a heart for them to pray for them I was thinking recently of reading something about mission work in India and it struck me you know these great missionaries who went to India some from Scotland top of the tree academically they give up everything to go and they pleaded with the Lord to give them India well look at India today it's 20 years or more ago now that the tariffed missionaries officially tariffed missionaries out and wouldn't allow others to come in we saw that in our own church's work because of those who worship false gods who will have nothing to do with God who is pure spirit infinite spirit then create the eternal the invisible God made visible only in the person of his son the word eternal word became flesh we have to help them to get there they can't say oh lord you are the portion of my inheritance they're groping after him in the dark I was listening the other night to the news and well there's no prizes for getting this across druidism is on the app in the UK is that light or darkness I return to druidism and there was a guy speaking about it brings you into liberty it sets your mind free well free to go your own way free to shut out the light of the glory of

[22 : 09] God in the person of Jesus Christ is that freedom is that true freedom is that true knowledge surely not it is false religion it is going back into darkness it's retreating into darkness and it is a sure way to go down into the vortex of darkness and death darkness but there are those within the pale of the church who believe a lie they are in the church but they simply don't accept the Bible's way of obtaining this inheritance they don't accept that it's all of Jesus and not of us at all there can't be a bit of contribution that is meritorious on our part we must have Christ the whole

Christ his work his whole work or we will have nothing of that eternal inheritance and there are people who are in the churches who simply don't accept that there are people in the churches who don't even accept that you can know God personally it's about just going through the ritual sticking to the traditions and hoping for the best the preacher of the 18th century George Whitefield called people like that and they were around as far back as that baptised pagans that's what he called them and then he preached you must be born again well things have not improved sadly we're on the way down again we're on the way further away from God with that view or these views of what it is to believe in God it's false religion and in a sense it's worse than the idolatries we've been talking about because it's idolising our opinion it's making our opinion more important than God's it's saying no to God's way and yes to our own way that's why it's important friends to have it the Lord's way to be content in receiving and believing the good news in Jesus it's not about hoping that it'll be alright in the end about taking our chances that's worse than Russian roulette so he was thinking oh well hopefully having done my best I'll get to it that's not good news that's bad news our hope is to be built on nothing less than all the promises that are in Christ Jesus yea and amen and receiving him and his wonderful work as our saviour as our sin bearer as one who has made over to us our right standing with God that's good news and that is the opposite of false religion's way even when it's a way within the church and so we're encouraged to recognize the tragedy of false religion and to help people even within the church as to what it is to say in truth by faith oh

Lord you are the portion of my inheritance and of my cap you alone maintain my lot and then we can say the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places yes I really do have a good inheritance we want to not only avoid the false religion that's easy to see but the subtle false religion within the church itself paying lip service to the things of God but living life our own way and believing what we ourselves are prepared to believe yes having faith but a natural faith a faith that is not of the spirit of God that doesn't receive Christ as all let us beware of being within the church and of being a false religionist well enough of that let's turn lastly to the

Christian believers view and the language here of course in the text is very much cast in the language of the book of the law of numbers 18 where the people were assigned their portion from the Lord that is of the promised land and the Levites were distinguished from the rest the priestly caste was set apart and in numbers 18 you read the words you shall have no part in their land that is they weren't to have the land in terms of division because the Lord was their part and their inheritance now that didn't mean that they weren't allowed to have a wee bit here and there in the land what it meant was there was the priestly families didn't have their name on a part of the land

you know how you have

[28 : 33] Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali and Judah and Simeon and so on all the families had their names on the land but not Levi they were given a little corner here and there they did quite well actually but only because the Lord himself was their inheritance and the important thing here is to recognize the Bible's teaching that the most important inheritance to have is not this bit of land or that bit of land or this possession or that possession or this many or that many or this house or that house but the Lord himself because if we have the Lord we have everything the atheist is of the view that he'll take what he can and he'll take whatever inheritance is going so will the false religionist what are we different how are we different we can if we're thinking about it our real heart's desire is for the Lord himself as our inheritance then it doesn't really matter what we have here in this world if we have him and the psalmist you see

David himself had more than a little but he hung loose on what he had he had it but it didn't matter to him what mattered was he had the Lord himself as his inheritance it was this sense of not only belonging to the Lord but that the Lord was graciously giving himself to his servant as if he's saying I am your inheritance that's why David testifies Lord you are the portion of my inheritance I have a good inheritance because I have you Paul talks about that doesn't he in 2nd Corinthians he talks about about having all things in Christ and having

Christ as well we are able to say by faith not only that we belong to Christ but Christ belongs to us that's a wonderful thing he is my inheritance and all that is his will be mine in its own measure apportioned by him to me things that we can scarcely imagine in the world to come but things that he somewhat lovingly called many dwelling places the English the old version is many mansions but it's literally many dwelling places I go to prepare a place for him and it's spoken about as his many dwelling places things and you see it's important to us whatever we have of material benefits in this world the real issue here is how we view having the

Lord because if we view having the Lord as a kind of add-on a wee bit of an insurance policy that will pay out at the end when we pass on that's a pathetically poor way that's an insult to him it ought to be infinitely more precious to us than that to say oh Lord you are the portion of my inheritance because we're talking here about knowing in our hearts that he has given himself to us not only did he give himself on that accursed cross but he has given himself and all that is his to us as surely as Christ desires by faith we have a goodly we have a wonderful inheritance now

John Calvin in his own interesting way poses the question how then he says can we be sure that we are taught a right in true godliness he's commenting on this passage and his answer is this if we reckon that God alone suffices for our happiness I like that if we reckon that God alone suffices for our happiness happiness that gets right into the nitty gritty doesn't it because it then makes us think about everything else as of little real consequence at last it is useful to be used for his glory and that's the way we should view it we have it on trust from him whatever we have to use for his glory and therefore we're not to be like the poor atheist who whose creature comforts are everything to him or the false religionist who is concerned only to heap up in these days for himself to get better and more nowhere to as Calvin says here to reckon that God alone suffices for our happiness because then we are truly happy then our relationships with others are in the right place then when we love someone else we love that person not as we love the

[35 : 15] Lord our God when we are happy with that person it is not to be as happy as we are that the Lord is our God you see what I'm saying if we reckon that God alone suffices for our happiness then as Calvin says we are taught a right in true godliness and we can say hand on heart oh Lord you are the person of my inheritance to be to be to be supremely happy I'll carefully say that to be supremely happy with anything or anyone other than the Lord is not to have him really as the portion of our inheritance we are to take pleasure in him supremely we are to delight ourselves in him supremely our portion that which gives us supreme happiness and contentment is to be the

Lord they called Jeremiah the weeping prophet Jeremiah was a very faithful and courageous prophet and the king of the day hated him and the king of the day could have cut him to pieces but that was just too far but he did everything he could to make Jeremiah's life a misery and they chucked him down into a well shaft that was pretty deep 30 feet or more and he was stuck in the mud smelly mud sitting there in the mud left to die and from that experience at least from that experience he wrote his lamentations and in chapter 3 of his lamentations he talks about himself being hidden from the Lord's sight and cast aside and so on but then he says as he reflects further on his position he says this

I recall to my mind and I have hope it is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed for his compassions fail not they are new every morning great great is thy faithfulness and he says this therefore the Lord is my person and I will hope in him see the point God Jeremiah Jeremiah was not from a poor background either but he was made to have nothing and he was left to die he didn't actually he was rescued but he didn't know that when he expressed these words the Lord is my portion saves my soul he's my inheritance therefore

I will hope in him Paul the apostle was a wonderful man of God in many ways outstanding but that same apostle who had many friends and many fellow workers got into a situation where the enemies of the truth were against and persecuting and even godly men and women too forsook Paul and fled and Paul records that everyone forsook him but he said the Lord stood with me and comforted me and Paul was happy in that that the Lord was with him and was his portion when everyone else had left him the

Lord is the portion of my cap and so we are to think about our lives and about life under the sun and about all that confronts us about all that's dear to us and put it all in his rightful place that the Lord is to be at the center and the sun of our life yea O Lord you are the portion of my inheritance and of my camp you alone maintain my Lord the lines have fallen to me in pleasant places yes I have a good inheritance something you don't hear so much about nowadays is the great missionaries of the church and one of the greats

[41 : 02] J.D. Fraser who went to Lissoland in the east was an honors graduate B.Sc in engineering and he gave up all his prospects of a wonderful future to be a missionary of the cross Alexander Diff from our own stable was a brilliant fellow and gave it all out to be a missionary of the cross why because the Lord was the person the inheritance of men like them and there were women too let's not forget that because in him the possessor of all things we possess by faith all things and we can give up all things when we're called to do that for his sake so let's make it our business to persuade the atheist to come out of his camp and the false religion is to come out of his and let us reaffirm in our hearts by the grace of the Lord that he alone is the portion of our inheritance and in him we really do have a good inheritance amen