

GRACE TO YOU

ROMANS 4:13-17

HOW TO INHERIT THE WORLD



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

I'm here to tell you that you've been left a massive inheritance. God told me to tell you that your name is in a will and that under your name is written two words describing what has been left to you. Two words don't sound a lot, until you hear what the words are. Would you like to hear about your inheritance? The two words are "The World." **"How do I inherit the world?"** you ask. The Apostle Paul explains in Romans 4:13-17. But he also warns us about another possibility. If we don't inherit the world, we will inherit wrath, God's wrath. **"How do I avoid inheriting wrath?"** is therefore another urgent question. Thankfully Paul helps us there too in the same verses.

BACKGROUND

In general terms we can summarize the first four chapters of Romans as follows:

- Chapter 1. The Gentiles are guilty
- Chapter 2. The Jews are guilty
- Chapter 3:1-19. Everyone's guilty
- Chapter 3:20-31. Get from deadly guilt to healthy joy through faith in Jesus.
- Chapter 4: Follow Abraham's example of faith in the promises and you'll inherit the world.



1. PROMISE-BELIEVERS INHERIT THE WORLD (13, 16-17)

The promise of the world

"For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world..." (13). Where does God make this promise? There's nowhere in the Old Testament these exact words are used. Paul is therefore summarizing the teaching of a few passages. First, God promised Abraham that he would be **"the father of a multitude of nations"** and changed his name to reflect that (Gen. 17:4-5). Second, God promised, **"I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God"** (17:8). Third, God promised that Abraham's multiplied descendants would **"possess the gate of their enemies"** (22:17).

To summarize this triple-layered promise: Abraham and his innumerable spiritual descendants will inherit all land occupied by God's enemies. In other words, Abraham and his spiritual descendants will inherit the world.

This raises a major problem because Abraham inherited nothing (Acts 7:5) and his spiritual descendants have so far come nowhere near inheriting the world, and that doesn't look like changing in the future. We solve this problem by acknowledging our misinterpretation of this promise and rightly interpreting it to refer to the renewed world Abraham and his spiritual descendants will inherit and occupy after their resurrection.

You'll notice that I've been referring to Abraham and his "spiritual descendants." That's because the Apostle Paul did that just before this passage (12), and also in this passage. Abraham did not get the promise by keeping the law but by faith through grace (13, 16) so that the promise would be guaranteed to future generations of believers (16). If the promise depended on people keeping the law, all it would take was one fail and the promise would be gone. But if God gives the promise by grace, and gives faith by grace, then it's **"guaranteed to all his offspring"** (16).

Abraham's ultimate Offspring and Seed, was Jesus Christ who inherits the nations (Ps. 2) and makes us co-heirs with him (Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Gal. 3:29). We will be promoted from stewards to co-owners with Christ (Lk. 16:12).

The promise to the world

Paul picks up Abraham as the prototype believer, and offers the same promise to anyone in the world, Jew or Gentile, who believes the promise like Abraham did (16-17). As an encouragement for the spiritually dead to believe the promise, he reminds us of Abraham's faith story: **"God gives life to the dead and calls into existence things that do not exist"** (17).

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Believe the Word. Trust in God's promises to you, not your promises to God. Trust in his Word not your works. The promise is through faith resting on God's grace, not effort resting on our goodness. Faith guarantees the promise; law voids the promise. We are standing on God's promises or falling on our promises. If you are in the world, you are offered the world through faith in the Word.

Inherit the world. Why would we work, work, work for a third of an acre with a little box on it, instead of resting in faith to eventually own the whole world? Everything you see in the world will one day be yours. Nothing will say, "Posted" or "Trespassers will be prosecuted." There will be no gates or fences and no property lines or disputes. The beaches, the rivers, the lakes, the mountains, everything will be ours.

GOD PROMISES THE WORLD TO THE WORLD

What do I inherit if I don't believe the promise?



2. LAW-DOERS INHERIT WRATH (14-15)

"For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression" (14-15).

Law-doers nullify faith

"The adherents of the law" are those who are stuck to the law as a way of salvation. They are glued to the law. They adhere to the law. If those glued to the law are heirs, then faith is nullified. If you are glued to the law you are not glued to Christ. Faith does not stick to Christ if it's mixed with any of our law-keeping.

Law-doers void the promise

Faith sticks to the promise. It separates from the law and glues itself to the promise. But if we are glued to the law, the connection with the promise is dissolved. We are disconnected from the promise. The promise has no power or force. When we go to God with our law-keeping, we are effectively giving God a book full of all the Gospel promises, and over each one is stamped "VOID"!

Law-doers inherit wrath

Instead of inheriting the world with the promise-believers, law-doers inherit wrath. Only **where there is no law, is there no transgression** and no wrath (15). But there is a law, God's Law, even if only in the conscience, and therefore there is transgression, and therefore there is wrath.

We may spend our lives building up an inheritance for our children, but when we die we get an inheritance of divine anger. We will own it and never be able to disown it. We'll never be able to diminish it or give it away. We may have had our name on many pieces of property and many possessions but now all we see is God's wrath. Wherever we turn, whatever we touch, we encounter and experience God's wrath.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Change the inheritance. Although your inheritance presently says "God's wrath", that can be changed to "The world." Your eternal inheritance can be changed if you abandon all your works and believe the promise of God. It can be changed right here, right now, and forever.

Stop doing. You are angering God by nullifying faith and voiding the promise. It's not a small thing or a neutral thing. This is a massive offense to God. It's saying, "My doing is better than your doing. My works are better than your Word."

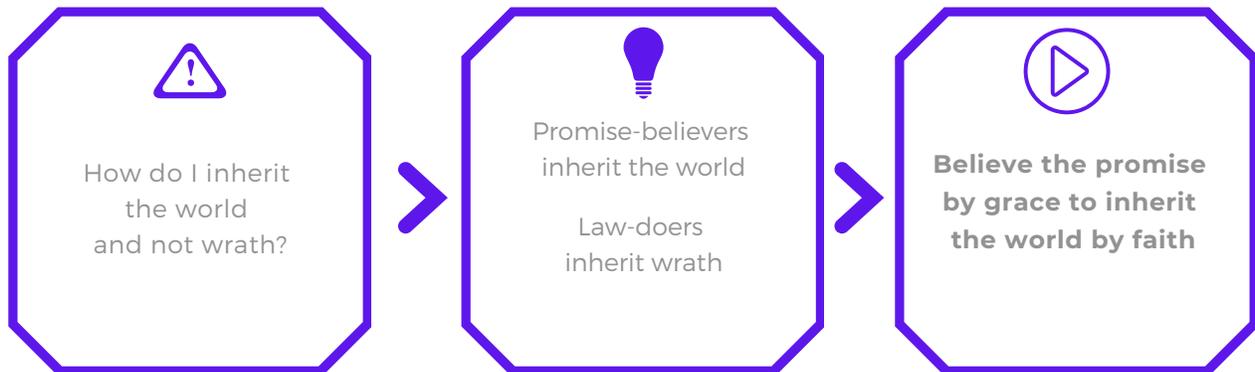
WORK FOR THE WORLD FOR A TIME
OR RECEIVE THE WORLD FOREVER.



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

Where is your name? What will is your name on? Has God willed you the world or his wrath?

Where is your inheritance? Have you limited your inheritance to the present ownership of a few acres and investment accounts? Or have you expanded your view to the whole world? Wherever you go in the world, you can look around and say, "One day this will all be mine."

Who is your inheritance? For Israel, enjoyment of the land was tied up with enjoyment of God. So it will be in the new heavens and the new earth. Our greatest joy will not so much be owning the world, but owning Christ who owns the world and will enjoy sharing it with us.

Prayer. Wealthy God, give me faith in your promise so that I can inherit the world by grace instead of your wrath as I deserve. Fill me with joyful hope of my eternal inheritance.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of an inheritance? What spiritual lessons does that teach you?
2. How does this change the way you view the world?
3. How do you know if you are a promise-believer or a law-doer?
4. Why does God use Abraham as the prototype believer?
5. How can you get the Gospel promises of the world out to the world?
6. How is God's wrath revealed and experienced in hell?

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