

# Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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## Inheriting Eternal Life

(Jerry Fite)

**T**He lawyer asked Jesus, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 10:25). Is eternal life something we inherit? If so, it is emphasizing the necessity of relationship. We think of receiving an inheritance from our parents’ estate when they pass from this life. Because we are family, we receive a portion of the estate divided equally among surviving siblings.

Paul writes, “For the wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life...” (Romans 6:23). Eternal life is a “gift” of God, not something we deserve on our own merit. What we deserve as “wages” for our sinful deeds is death. But notice the relationship that is emphasized: “...but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Only in Christ do we receive eternal life. It is not because God is our Creator, and we are His creatures that we will have eternal life. But through our faith in God’s only begotten Son shall we receive eternal life (John 3:16). Believing the Father by

hearing or heeding His Son’s word provides access to the gift of eternal life. Jesus said, “Verily, verily I say unto you, I say unto you, he that heareth my word and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of judgment into life” (John 5:24). How we treat the preached word of Christ determines our worthiness of eternal life. Paul spoke to the Jews in Antioch who had rejected the Gospel and said, “Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (Acts 13:46)

Though eternal life is a gift, inheriting it is demanding. Because the world to come has not appeared the moment we were baptized into Christ, we must remain faithful and patient. We are not to be “sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Hebrews 6:12).

Our relationship with Christ will demand suffering for his cause. But we are blessed because great is our reward in heav-

en (Matthew 5:12). We are “joint heirs with Christ” but realize that to be “glorified with Him”, we must “suffer with Him” (Romans 8:17).

Back to the question of the lawyer regarding inheriting eternal life, we see he had another issue which we must guard against. He desired “to justify himself” (Luke 10:29). He believed he had the right relationship with God; he knew correctly the law he was to heed in order to have the right relationship with God, the giver of eternal life; but with the motive of self-justification he questions, “Who is my neighbor?”

As Jesus’ illustration points out, our neighbor is one who needs our help, and we have the opportunity to assist them. The lawyer no doubt was living with a much narrower definition of his neighbor than this. We must continually guard from reducing God’s requirements as revealed to agree with how we are currently living. “God justification”, not “self justification” is the way to eternal life.