

Heb. 12:25-29 The Kingdom of Christ (part 5): Receive the Kingdom

Today, we come to the last sermon from this passage (vv. 18-29) on the Kingdom of Christ. God has established his kingdom in his Son. The kingdom did not come through the prophets, or the Fathers of old. The kingdom did not come through Moses, the earthly mediator. The kingdom did not come through the priesthood of Aaron. The kingdom did not come through Joshua the great conqueror of Canaan. The kingdom did not come through David or his son Solomon. The kingdom was not established through Mosaic law and the old covenant with all its glory. NO! All those things were types and shadows for the King and the Kingdom to which they pointed.

Today, the kingdom of God has been established in the greater Moses, the true mediator between God and sinful men. Today, the kingdom of God has been established in the true high priest, the one who is both priest and offering as the sinless Son of God laid down his own life. Today, the kingdom of God has been established in the greater Joshua, the one who will not merely conquer Canaan, but will establish his kingdom throughout the entire earth, and then fill the heavens. This is the great plan of God, the greatest of all plans, as in Christ He will “fill all things.” And today, we gather! Why? Because we are the most gracious recipients of this kingdom. We have “received” this kingdom. It is interesting that all the religions of the world are based on works, what a person must do to be a part of the “kingdom of God.” The Jews still require the works of Moses and the law of the old covenant. Muslims require the 5 pillars of the faith. Hindus, Buddhists, animists of the world, still require great works of righteousness. But, let me ask, what must Christians do to be a part of this kingdom? Look at v. 28. The ESV says, “**Let us be grateful for . . . RECEIVING a kingdom . . .**”

By faith, we receive this kingdom. Throughout the Book of Hebrews our author has warned us over and over to “listen to God’s voice” and “not to refuse the one who speaks.” And to “refuse” is unbelief. It is to trample “the blood of the son underfoot.” To hear and see and know the truth and then to reject, to “**neglect such a great salvation**” (2:3) is to come under the wrath of God, who is a “**consuming fire**” v. 29. But to believe is to receive. Brothers and sisters, this faith! This is why we are here! We have received the Kingdom. We have believed on the Heavenly King, the Lord Jesus!

But, when we look at our lives, and see the sin, see the mess, as we feel the weight of this world, as we experience the effects of sin through sickness and death, through anxiety, depression, heartaches, etc., we have to know that the kingdom we have received has not “come on earth as it is in heaven.” And though we possess the kingdom by faith . . . NOW we still pray “**your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.**” As Christians, by faith, we have received the kingdom. A.W. Pink says this kingdom is a kingdom of “grace.” But, it is also a kingdom of “glory.” On the one hand, we wait for the glory to come for the glory to be consummated, for all the enemies of the king to be destroyed. On the other hand, by faith, we already possess the glory of heaven. I think of the old song, “*Glory came down and heaven filled my soul.*” This is what faith does. Heb. 11:1: “**Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen**” (KJV). We could say that “faith” brings the glory of heaven down to the soul . . . NOW. Yet, we still wait for the “glory” to be consummated, to be completed. With this in mind, I want to ask, “in what sense have we “received” the kingdom of glory. I have four truths (taken from A.W. Pink).

1. By grace we receive the kingdom of glory through the unchangeable Word of Promise. In other words, by faith, we have received the promise of God, which is unchangeable. What has been promised is ours. Why? Because God cannot change. Look over at Heb. 10:23: **“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.”** This means that the promise of God is as good security as the actual possession. God cannot change, and what He has promised is as good as the fulfillment. In other words, God will ALWAYS made good on his promise. There is NO WAY for his promise to fail. And to receive the promise is to receive the fulfillment. Think of a person who has a fully paid-up insurance policy. It belongs to him. No one can take it away. Why? Because it is paid up. There is nothing left to owe. Well, let’s say this person needs to buy a car and doesn’t have cash on hand. The insurance company will let him borrow money (like a bank) with no questions asked? Why? Because they know if they can’t make the payment, they can take from the principal of the policy. So, are the promises of God. They are paid up with his unchangeable character! Everything God has promised lies deep in the immutable counsels of his will.

Another example may be a title. When you buy a house, you can say, in a manner of speaking, *“It is my house . . . I am the owner,”* though the bank holds the title. But, you and ONLY you have the right to the title. God holds the title. But, he has promised it to you for now and for eternity.

This means that ALL God has promised in the gospel of Christ is ours . . . NOW. Now, in Christ, we have come, as 12:22-24 says to **“Mt. Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal fathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.”** In Christ, ALREADY, by grace, you have received the kingdom of glory. NOW, if you have received the kingdom, you have received Christ and the blessings that come from him. Now, your sins are forgiven. The wrath that your sins deserve have fallen upon Christ, as he laid down his life as a sacrifice for you. NOW, you have been reconciled with God, which brings peace. NOW, you have been adopted into heaven’s family. You are a child of God. NOW, you been redeemed, through the blood of Christ, you were purchased from sin and its slavery. NOW, you are alive, by the Spirit, as God works in you with the same power he rose Christ from the dead. All these things, and more, are yours now in the kingdom of Christ . . . NOW.

But, we also wait for other glories of heaven to come, promises yet to be fulfilled. Rev. 21:4 says One day, **“He will wipe away every tear from your eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”** One day, faith will be made sight . . . We will see Him as He is. Why? He has promised! God’s promises are as good as the actual possession of the things He has promised. For us, now, this means we can endure! This is what Heb. 11 is all about! Abel offered a better sacrifice than Cain. Abraham obeyed God and left his country. Sarah received power to conceive, even past the age 90. Abraham was as obedient to sacrifice his Son, (the very son of the promise). Moses, with all his authority and power in Egypt, left it all. Israel marched around the great walls of Jericho. Rahab went against her city and helped the Israelites. Other conquered kingdoms, enforced

justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of the sword, etc. Others suffered mocking and flogging, chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, sawn in two, killed with the sword, etc. WHY? By faith, they believed the promises of God which cannot be changed. So, we must also endure EVERY situation the providence of God gives to us.

2. By grace we receive the kingdom of glory as we have been given the firstfruits of it. If you are a Christian, you have received the kingdom of glory. And you know this because God has given you what the Bible calls “firstfruits” of this kingdom. This example is pretty easy. You may have a huge harvest of corn or tomatoes coming in at the end. But, in the beginning you pick the most beautiful, tomatoes and ears of corn. And when you taste them, you say, **“I can’t wait for the rest to come.”** Another example is earnest money given on a house. If I want to buy your house, you may require some kind of deposit in the form of a downpayment that secures the deal. In the same kind of way as we wait for the full kingdom of glory to be revealed, we are given a downpayment; we are given earnest money by God (And there is no end to his bank account). We are given an installment NOW.

These are the comforts given by God, NOW to his children, those things which can only be given by Him through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. These are the great blessings of heaven that come to us through Christ . . . NOW. Jesus, the One who sits at the right hand of God in heaven says to us NOW, **“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”** (Matt. 11:28). These are special drops of grace, given to us now, all bound up with faith in Christ. How do you think those saints from Heb. 11 endured? How were recipients of the Hebrews letter to endure? Brothers and sisters, there is a vast difference between us and the world! God says to us: **“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary”** (Is. 40:28-31).

Brothers and sisters, as we wait for all his promises to be fulfilled, we do not lose heart. We endure. We keep on! And as we keep our eyes on Christ and the promises of God, we keep going! Paul says to the Corinthians: **“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart . . . But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.”** (2 Cor. 4:1, 7–12). We do not lose heart! Why? We have received a KINGDOM of glory. And, we have the firstfruits, which come down to us by the Spirit as we wait for all God’s promises.

3. By grace we receive the kingdom of glory by the realization of faith. What a mystery . . . that God would create “faith” for this purpose, that we might receive the kingdom of glory. And to receive something is do it NOW. Faith is for US . . . NOW. NOW, we behold by faith . . . the

glories of heaven. One day we will see . . . faith will not be needed. Paul says, “**For NOW we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.**” (1 Cor. 13:12) Faith is for NOW. But, what does it do? It brings the glories of heaven to us. In speaking of the differences between “grace” and “glory” A.W. Pink says, “*Now grace and glory are one and the same in essence, differing only in degree: grace is Heaven brought down to the soul, glory is the soul conducted to Heaven. Grace is glory commenced, glory is grace consummated.*” We wait for the consummation of all things! But, for now, faith realizes that those things for which we wait are **ALREADY OURS!**

This means by faith, **EVERYTHING** God has promised about the kingdom of glory is ours. **FAITH** holds on to all the glories of heaven and connects our soul to the promises. In this way, we “receive” the kingdom of heaven. Look back at Heb. 11:1-3: “**Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation. By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.**” Do you remember my illustration about the bacon a few months back? Kristen is cooking bacon in the kitchen. As I lay in my bed, I smell the beautiful aroma . . . from my house, purchased with our money, being cooked on our stove. And as I lay in my bed, the bacon is already mine. I just haven’t eaten it yet. In kind of the same way, by faith, I “smell” heaven. Yet, at the same time, it is already mine. This is what faith realizes: “It is the substance of things hoped for.” It brings distant things near and gives to the future a present reality.

And let me say, this is supernatural. Faith is a great powerful gift. “***We have this treasure in jars of clay***” (2 Cor. 4). The worldly person does not understand how the Christian can believe such things. They cannot understand why we believe and act the way we do (examples). This is why Paul says, “**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. And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.**” (1 Cor. 2:12–14) It is because as Christians, we have “received” a kingdom.

4. By grace we receive the kingdom of glory by the embraces of hope. Faith and hope are both powerful spiritual graces, both created by God for his people to “receive” the kingdom now. We cannot receive the kingdom without faith and hope. Faith **BELIEVES** the promises. Hope is different, though it works alongside faith. Hope anticipates something to come. “*I hope to win the ballgame.*” “*I hope the hurricane doesn’t hit the coast.*” “*I hope I stay healthy this week.*” We use the language of hope in this way. But, the spiritual grace of “hope” is much more powerful. The **HOPE** of glory looks forward in anticipation for the things we already possess by faith. In my previous examples, I do not know if they will come true. But, the heavenly hope is a **SURE** expectation, a **DEFINITE** assurance of a future realization. (A.W. Pink)

Back to my bacon illustration. If faith lays hold of the bacon, knowing it is promised by (Kristen) and I can smell it. Hope anticipates what I **KNOW** is coming. And since faith has already laid hold of it, hope cannot be disappointed. This is how they go together. This is why hope is called

“*the anchor of the soul*” (Heb. 6:19), for it lays hold of the glory that is stored for us in heaven. Again, with the bacon. If I know it is in the kitchen being prepared with smells coming back to me, I am excited in anticipation. This is what hope does in the soul. It brings great excitement for what is to come. This is why our author says we have received a kingdom which “CANNOT BE SHAKEN.” The Kingdom we behold by faith and anticipate with hope is the everlasting kingdom of Christ!

These are the things Hebrews teaches us about what it means to receive the kingdom. We have received a kingdom that has come down to us through the promise of an unchangeable God. And we know the kingdom is real because we have received its firstfruits (by the spirit). And know brothers and sisters, the firstfruits have come to us through the person and work of Christ. The greatest witness to the world of the glories of the kingdom come to us because “**God so loved the world that He gave he only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life**” (John 3:16). This is the story of the Book of Hebrews. And, we have received the kingdom by faith, which is the “substance” of things to come. And, finally we anticipate the glories of the kingdom because we have a hope that anchors our soul to this kingdom. Is there anything more glorious than this? Receive the kingdom!

Therefore, “*seek the things that are above.*” Act like a citizen of the kingdom. Present acceptable worship. You’ve often heard the phrase “*He is so heavenly minded he is no earthly good.*” Well, I want to present the opposite. If we were more heavenly minded, we would certainly be of more earthly good! Brothers and sisters, be encouraged today! You have received a kingdom that cannot be shaken. God has promised. You have the firstfruits. You’ve realized these things by faith. And your hope will not let you down. Be encouraged!