

153. Our Heavenly Possession.

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. *John 3,36.*

Which words of our Lutheran Catechism describe the sweet fruit of Christ's blessed redemption? The words, "That I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him *in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.*" Let us look at these heavenly benefits and treasures.

In the first place we have *righteousness*. This righteousness of Christ is clean, spotless, without the least deficiency or sin, higher and cleaner than the righteousness of the angels; for it is the righteousness of the Son of God Himself, who is much higher than all creatures. The brilliant light of His perfect righteousness far excels all other glory. And this highest, this glorious, this divine righteousness of the Son of God is the righteousness which is given and imputed to us Christians; the righteousness in which we live in His kingdom, the righteousness which is ours through faith. This righteousness is cleaner than heaven; it covers all our unrighteousness so entirely before God as if it were not there.

Therefore in Christ we also have a perfect *innocence*. We can truly say before the judgment-seat of God: I do not owe anything; all has been settled, the ten thousand talents are paid, every sin is atoned, and in Christ I am made the righteousness of God. Hence I am no more guilty; I am innocent; indeed, I have a perfect innocence. This is the innocence in which every Christian lives in the kingdom of Christ. This perfect innocence of Christ, given and imputed to us, is our heavenly possession.

And from this results the everlasting *blessedness*. Such blessedness is ours already in this life. He that believes in Christ "*hath everlasting life,*" – not after years, not after his death, no, *now*, in this life, the moment he believes. Therefore Paul writes to the Ephesians: "By grace are ye saved, through faith"; and to the Romans: "We are saved." As the blessed in heaven are saved, so we, too, are saved; they have salvation by seeing, we have it by faith; yet it is a real possession.

Prayer.

I thank Thee, O Lord Jesus Christ, for all the benefits Thou hast showered upon me. Through Thy Word Thou hast conveyed to me spiritual and imperishable gifts; in Holy Baptism, the washing of regeneration, Thou hast given me the assurance that I am a new creature, granting me forgiveness of sin and everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness for an inheritance. By faith and hope I am already in real possession of this glorious inheritance. O the grandeur of that heavenly possession! O the great glory of these treasures! Open my spiritual eyes that I may see and appreciate these Thy blessings. May it not be said of me: "But now they are hid from thine eyes." Lord Jesus, strengthen my faith! Amen.

Jesus, Thou art mine forever,
Dearer far than earth to me;
Neither life nor death shall sever
Those sweet ties which bind to Thee.

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