THE WORD HERITAGE REFERS TO something that comes or belongs to an individual by reason of birth or that is received as an inheritance. In some cases, a grandparent may give away a treasured possession, saying, “I want you to have this before I’m gone.” At other times, the donor designates in a legal document how he wants his possessions to be distributed after his death. When the donor passes on, ownership is transferred to the beneficiaries based on the content of that will or last testament.

While a heritage may be a physical possession, it also can be more than a tangible object. For example, it may be a family tradition or particular skill. Years ago, my wife’s Grandma Friesen taught Debbie how to make the Dutch rolls known as zwieback. She showed her how to mix the ingredients and knead the dough until it was smooth and elastic. After allowing the dough to rise until it was double in size, she would punch it down and then shape it into rolls with a larger ball of dough on the bottom and a smaller piece on top. After the rolls rose a second time, she would bake them until golden brown. Although the ingredients are simple, those rolls are very good—especially with a cappuccino or a cup of tea! Making zwieback is a part of Debbie’s heritage that I have particularly enjoyed over the years.

Of greater value than any inherited possession or tradition, however, is a spiritual heritage. Before Debbie and I were married, I learned that her family had a custom of...
singing grace when they sat down to a meal together. As our two children grew up, and now with our seven grandchildren, we have continued that practice. So that tradition passed from my wife’s grandparents and parents down to Debbie, and now to our children and grandchildren. Giving thanks for one’s food in that manner is a part of my wife’s spiritual heritage.

In Psalm 16, the Psalmist expressed appreciation for his heritage. We read in verse 6, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” The reference to “lines” or boundaries alluded to the way Canaan had been divided many years earlier. God had promised Abraham and his descendants that He would bring them into the Promised Land and give that territory to them for a heritage. So when Israel came into Canaan, the land was divided by lots with each tribe except the Levites receiving a portion as their own.

While the Jewish people of that day may have rejoiced over the fertile territory that was their inheritance, the Psalmist, thought to be David, rejoiced in a heritage of far greater value. He declared that his heritage was the Lord Himself! The presence of God at his right hand was the Psalmist’s assurance of guidance on the “path of life,” of “fullness of joy,” and of “pleasures for evermore” (verse 11). He was deeply appreciative of the privilege of having the Lord as his heritage.

I did not have the advantage of a spiritual heritage. While both sets of Debbie’s grandparents were Christian people, neither of my grandfathers were godly men, and both of my grandmothers died before I was born. When Debbie’s Grandma Friesen would visit our home, I recall being impressed by her concern that a heritage of faith be passed along to our children—her great-grandchildren. Though she taught Debbie how to make zwieback, there was something of more importance to her than family traditions. She wanted faith to be transmitted to the next generation.

Grandma Friesen’s steadfast faith developed through hard circumstances. When she was young, her mother and two sisters had tuberculosis. The sanitariums were full, so the porch of the family dwelling was fixed so the sick could be quarantined right there at home. Grandma Friesen would step through a window to care for her mother and sisters, but her efforts were to no avail: her mother passed away while still in her forties, one sister died at the age of eighteen, and another at age five. After they were gone, Grandma Friesen married, and then she came down with tuberculosis while she was carrying her first child. However, she prayed and God healed her! She wanted her children and grandchildren to know of that healing. The power of God had reached into her heart and saved her and Grandpa Friesen as well, and they held on to their trust in God through many years until they passed on.

On the other side of Debbie’s family, her Grandpa Brown had been taught as he was growing up about Heaven and Hell. When he was in his late teens, Gospel workers came over the mountain to the community where he was living and held meetings. His parents had told him he would be eternally lost if he did not experience the new birth, and God put conviction on his heart. One day he yielded. He testified, “I promised the Lord as I knelt in the barn that if He would save me I would serve Him the rest of my life. The glory of the Lord came down. It seemed like a beam of light pierced through the old shake roof of that barn and went down into the depths of my soul.” He said the condemnation, worry, and care were gone, and the joy of another world filled his heart.

The choices Debbie’s grandparents made established a spiritual heritage for her family that has continued on now for four generations of descendants. Debbie did not work for that heritage. She did not earn it, she did not plan for it, and she paid no price for it. It came by virtue of the fact that she was born into a God-fearing family.

We have a goodly heritage. We did not earn it or deserve it, but we value it. We embrace it. We love it! We do not want to treat what we have received in a careless or casual manner.

So it is with you and me as we consider the blessings we have in our Apostolic Faith heritage. When I step onto this campground or into one of our churches, I think of those whose names I will never know who dropped money into the tithes box, who arranged for this campground property to be purchased, for this tabernacle to be erected, and for the church sanctuary to be constructed. I did not pay for these structures. I did not plan for them. I enjoy them simply because I show up.

No doubt that is how David felt when he said, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places.” David looked over what had been bequeathed to him, undeserving though he knew himself to be, and he acknowledged that what he had received was “pleasant.” Then he went on to say, “I have a goodly heritage.” While he appreciated the tangible possession...
that was his, his gratitude went beyond that to encompass his spiritual heritage.

Our heritage in the Apostolic Faith is more than a piece of property in southeast Portland. It is more than a church building. It is something that will endure longer than any physical possession—it is a set of teachings and practices. It is the sound Bible doctrine of this Latter Rain Holiness Gospel, which veterans of the faith preached here for generations and handed down to us.

Our heritage is understanding what a prayer meeting is—to know about a prayer room where workers gather before each service, prayer requests are read, and prayers are prayed that God will undertake for the needs described.

Our heritage is the fact that we can come into a church service and hear testimonies of deliverance from sin. It is understanding the meaning of true salvation—that the power of God can take sin out of a person’s heart and make him or her a new creature in Christ Jesus. Victorious living is a part of our heritage. It is understanding that we do not have to live a life of sinning and repenting and obtaining forgiveness, and then sinning, repenting, and obtaining forgiveness again, and going through that cycle of utter failure time after time. We have proved that the Lord is able to save to the uttermost! He is able to forgive past sins and eradicate the sinful nature with which we were born through the experience of entire sanctification. That is part of our heritage. While we know that the Apostolic Faith organization does not have a corner on this doctrinal belief, we are aware that most religious circles of our day present the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a manner that accommodates sin. They allow for sin and failure, but our heritage in this faith—the faith of the Apostles—upholds the Biblical teaching of deliverance from sin. We have seen it proved true through the years in the lives of people around us. We have heard testimonies of God’s transforming and keeping power, and have experienced it ourselves.

Our choir sometimes sings a song that includes the words, “How I love this place!” We do love this place, but even more we love what this place stands for! It stands for victorious living. It stands for what the grandparents of some here experienced, and what their descendants can experience yet today.

We have a goodly heritage. We did not earn it or deserve it, but we value it. We embrace it. We love it! We do not want to treat what we have received in a careless or casual manner. The Apostle Paul challenged the believers at Thessalonica to “stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). That is what we want to do. If the Lord tarries, we want the great-great-great-grandchildren of Debbie’s Grandma Friesen and Grandpa Brown to enjoy the same Gospel their forebearers preached, taught, and experienced.

No matter what your background, you can be included in the benefits that are part of this spiritual heritage. We encourage you to yield your life to God. Pray a prayer that reaches Heaven, and God will answer. You can experience the power of God this very day, and become a beneficiary of this goodly heritage.

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