

THE CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE TO THE RICHES OF REDEMPTION

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Let's Begin

Paul often used two words indicative of Christian character: grace and peace (v. 2; cp. Phil. 1:2). The order in which he used them remains significant. Before any genuine peace exists, there must be a personal response to God's grace; that is, His unmerited favor most visibly demonstrated at Calvary (Rom. 5:8). Both grace and peace find their source in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is primary, and peace is secondary. Peace may be the fruit on the tree's limb; however, grace is the root underneath which makes each and every piece of fruit possible.

No passage in Scripture reveals more fully the eternal riches we have in Jesus Christ than Ephesians 1. While the cross of Christ in time brought God's plan to fruition, Paul reaches far back into eternity itself and reveals the riches we now enjoy in Christ have their roots in a gracious, loving Father-God.

Therefore, as we reflect on the believer's response to God's riches of redemption in Ephesians 1, let's follow the simple outline below:

I. Christians Offer Praise to God for the Riches of Redemption in Christ (vv. 1-14)

II. Christians Offer Prayer to God for the Revelation of Redemption in Christ (vv. 15-23)

I. Christians Offer Praise to God for the Riches of Redemption in Christ (vv. 1-14)

Ephesus was the banking center of the ancient world. Hence, it is not surprising Ephesus possessed a sizable community of incredibly rich people. With this in mind, Paul's opening statement to the little band of "saints" becomes highly significant. He writes, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus...Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (vv. 1-3). The world measures wealth by a person's portfolio. "Saints" measure wealth by the infinite riches belonging to God Himself. In fact, when the Apostle thinks of our riches in Christ, he bursts into a doxology of praise to God Almighty. So should we.

First, Paul offers praise to the Source of our riches in Christ Jesus—"Blessed be the God...Who hath blessed us..." How incredible the riches of redemption in our Lord! Our Father is unmistakably wealthy. He blesses us with "all spiritual blessings." Indeed, He is rich in the very things we lack most. Not only is His grace rich (v. 7), but His mercy is rich as well (2:4). Elsewhere Paul adds both wisdom (Rom. 11:23) and goodness (Rom. 2:4) to God's portfolio.

In addition, not only are God's riches *incredible*, God's riches are also *available*. He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The riches God has are for family members only. God is not only the Father of Jesus Christ, He is our Father too (v. 2). All the riches of the heavenly realm belong to us; that is, the incredible riches God has are available to every child of God. Nor may His riches be depleted. Christians offer praise to God for the riches they have in Christ Jesus.

Second, Paul offers praise for the Scope of our riches in Christ Jesus. Without hesitation, Paul broadens his praise to God for "all spiritual blessings." Suppose a person receives a generous increase in salary for a job well-done. We would characterize such a raise as a *financial* blessing from God. Or, suppose a person whose health had been failing has experienced a marked improvement in his or her condition. Undoubtedly, we would characterize such a turnaround as a *physical* blessing (cp. Psa. 68:19). Similarly, when Paul speaks of "spiritual blessings," he is speaking of a particular type of blessing—blessings which are *spiritual* in nature.



More exists to life than either the material, the financial, or the physical, especially for the believer. Money may buy any of the blessings above. However, money cannot buy peace of mind; money cannot buy love; nor can money purchase joy. And, all three illustrate the “spiritual” blessings to which Paul insisted believers have full access. Hence, the scope of our riches in Christ includes the *spiritual*.

Additionally, the scope of our riches in Christ includes their *sufficiency*. Spiritual blessings have existence nowhere outside of Jesus Christ. Paul is clear: *all spiritual blessings are in heavenly places in Christ* (v. 3). When a person comes to Christ, a person comes to the Fountain of living waters. Hence, our praise is offered to God for the *scope* of His riches in Christ.

Third, Paul offers praise for the sphere of our riches in Christ Jesus. God’s riches are in Christ in *heavenly places*. The sphere of God’s riches is a thread interwoven throughout Ephesians (1:20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). Note, Paul is not referring to heaven; that is going to heaven when one dies. Instead, he refers to heaven coming down to us, blessings of the heavenly realm available to every believer in Christ.

Fourth, Paul offers praise for the Security of our riches in Christ Jesus (vv. 3-14). The riches of redemption in Jesus Christ for those who believe have no limits. Our Lord said it like this, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father’s hand” (John 10:28-30). We are secure in the Good Shepherd’s hands.

Paul reaches back into eternity and makes his point about the family’s security, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved” (vv. 4-6).

While chapter-verse division remains a necessary literary tool for our English translations, at times the breakdown may hinder the flow of the Greek language. Were Paul speaking this passage, when he begins in verse 3, he would not take a breath until finishing verse 14! In the Greek, verses 3-14 are one, long, compound sentence.

Paul reveals our salvation in Christ was *purposed* by the Father (vv. 3-6). According to Paul, God has “chosen us in Him” (v. 4). In this verse, we discover what has been called the “doctrine of election.” The term translated “chosen” means “to select,” “to pick out.” Another word similar to election is “predestination” (v. 5; see chapter one’s *Golden Greek Nugget*). Therefore, while election is a mystery beyond human comprehension, it is a doctrine the church must embrace for the simple reason Scripture teaches election!

However, we must not embrace the fallacious understanding that some teach, which suggests election cancels out human free will. Nor is it Biblical to suggest a person must be born again before he or she can believe the Gospel. The great Baptist, B.H. Carroll said if being born again preceded a person’s belief, then it would be possible to be a born again unbeliever, a condition he rightly viewed as absurd. The New Testament knows of no such teaching. Instead, when



Paul is speaking of election, he is simply teaching us the absolute impossibility of our taking any credit for our salvation. God freely saved us, we cannot save ourselves. Therefore, since it is God Who saves us, we offer praise to Him for the security He provides.

In addition, Paul uses another term to explain our security in Jesus Christ—“adoption” (v. 5). Adoption is a twin truth to the new birth. While in one sense we are born into God’s family through regeneration, in another sense we are placed into God’s family via adoption. Being an adopted child of God means entitlement to all the privileges of every other son or daughter of God (cp. Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23). And, because we are adopted, we are “accepted” without qualification.

Reflection Connection

Do you think there is enough teaching on election and predestination in the church? Explain. Perhaps this would be a great opportunity for your pastor to lead a discussion on this topic.

Just how is adoption possible? We have been purchased by Jesus Christ (vv. 7-12). We have “redemption” through the blood Christ shed on Calvary. To be redeemed was to be bought off the slave market, an apt analogy for the child of God. Sin makes slaves out of us. However, through Christ’s death, our sins have been paid. We now are free to serve our Master, the Lord Jesus Christ. He makes known “the mystery of his will” (v. 9) in order to bring us all together in Him (v. 10).

Finally, Paul reveals what all adopted children of God have in common, “That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (vv. 12-14).

When we heard the Gospel and believed the Gospel, the Holy Spirit “sealed” us up to the praise of His glory. All believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of the living God, sealed by Him until the day of redemption. When we are sealed, the Lord is saying you and I belong to Him (cp. 2 Tim. 2:19).

Unadulterated praise stands as the appropriate response to the magnificent salvation Jesus Christ secures for us. God the Father *selected* us, Christ the Son *saved* us, and the third Person of the Triune God, the Holy Spirit, *seals* us. What further reason is there to offer worshipful praise to our God?

No wonder the Apostle cannot contain himself, breaking out as he does in reverent worship “to the praise of the glory of his grace” (v. 6). When we get to heaven, no one will be bragging saying, “What a wonderful person I am.” To the contrary, all of the saints of God will be rejoicing, singing “What a wonderful God I have Who selected me, saved me, sealed me, and now secures me for all eternity without end!

II. Christians Offer Prayer to God for the Revelation of Redemption in Christ (vv. 15-23)

Paul switches focus from *praising* God for the riches of redemption believers possess in Christ Jesus to *praying* for eyes to be opened and hearts to accept the riches God plans for all who trust in Him for salvation. He writes, “Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers” (vv. 15-16). Paul’s praise to God for salvation turns to prayer to God for revelation.



Recall the Apostle Paul is in prison, chained to a Roman guard as he pens the letter to the Ephesians. Not only do we find Paul offering ecstatic praise, he also thinks of others rather than his desperate circumstances. Far too often we find ourselves pitifully groping in our unfortunate circumstances. Paul would have none of this! He praises God for the riches he possesses even if he is in prison.

First, let us consider the *delights* of his prayer (vv. 15-16). Paul could not cover the joy and happiness he experienced as he thought about the riches of redemption. Some prayers appear like drudgery. However, Paul's prayer in this text reveals delight, he "ceases not" to give thanks for the Ephesians. Why? For starters, he gives thanks for the Ephesians' *commitment* to the Lord Jesus, their faith in Him. But secondly, Paul thanks God for their "love unto all the saints" (v. 15). Faith is a perpendicular relationship. By that we mean faith is *invisible*. On the other hand, love is a horizontal relationship; that is, love is *visible*. Hence, while one cannot convince another faith is real, it is possible to convince another love is real. How so? While faith is invisible, love remains visible! Love, then, becomes tangible evidence for faith's reality.

Second, consider the *desires* of Paul's prayer (vv. 17-18a). The Apostle continues, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know..." The thrust of Paul's desire for the Ephesians is that they may know, that they may be "enlightened." The Greek word translated as "enlightened" is *photizo* which literally means "to give light," "to shine," "to illumine." Our modern English words for "photograph" and "photography" come from this Greek root.

Paul's chief desire is for others to have the heavenly Light shine on their hearts, revealing to them both the sinners they are and the Savior Jesus Christ is. Hence, his desires are expressed as love for the Ephesians. In addition, his desires are experienced when the Ephesians obtain the revelation God gives in Jesus Christ. Do we have that kind of passion for others to know Christ like we know Christ?

Faith is a perpendicular relationship.

How often do we pray to our Lord for others to gain the "spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him"?

Third, let us consider the *details* of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. Paul reveals in detail what he means by being enlightened. He writes, "that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (vv. 18b-23).

As he begins, Paul says to be enlightened means to know God's *purpose for us*; or, in the Apostle's words, to know, "what is the hope of his calling." Every



Reflection Connection

Think for a moment about God's "calling" in your own life. Is it clear? Are you fulfilling it? Be prepared to share with the entire group and allow time for others to share.

Golden Greek Nugget

Twice Paul uses the Greek term *proorizō* in chapter 1, in both instances translated as "predestinated" in the English Bible. The term comes from two Greek roots, the first of which is *pro* and literally means "before." The second Greek word is *orizō*, and means "to determine," "to mark off by boundaries." Placed together in a compound word, it carries the idea of determining in advance or marking off boundaries in advance. When God looked down through the eons of time, He drew boundaries around our lives, ultimately bringing us face to face with Jesus Christ. What a mighty God we serve!

believer has an individual calling from God (cp. Phil. 3:14; Heb. 3:1; 2 Tim. 1:9). Note also that when Paul refers to "hope," he is not referring to wishful thinking, as in, "I hope Alabama beats Auburn!" Rather Paul is expressing the idea of assurance, the idea of confident expectancy! God's purpose for calling us is for us to become like His Only Begotten, the Lord Jesus.

Next, Paul says to be enlightened means to know God's *prosperity to us*. As we discovered in the first section of this chapter, God's riches of redemption knows no boundaries for the child of God. Paul now refers to the "riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (v. 18c). Our inheritance is in Christ (vv. 11, 14; cp. 1 Pet. 1:4). The wealth of the universe is at our disposal because it all belongs to Him. Even more, from God's view, His children are a significant part of the wealth He owns! One said it well, "God was not satisfied in possessing suns and stars; He wanted sons and saints."

We cannot miss this life-changing reality—*Paul is not considering what God means to us but what we mean to God*. How often we remain concerned about what we get from God rather than reveling in the glorious truth of what we mean to God. We are dearer to Him than all the worlds He has ever made.

Finally, Paul says to be enlightened means to know God's *power in us*. Note Paul's words again, "the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward... according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ..." (vv. 19-20a). The very power God employed at creation is identical to the power He brings into our lives. No believer may legitimately claim he or she cannot accomplish a task or life calling for lack of the power to do so. Nor is the power Paul describes any less potent because it will be wielded through us. Note the descriptive words Paul uses, "exceeding," "greatness," "mighty," and "fullness" (cp. v. 23).

Most visibly, God's power was displayed at Christ's tomb when He raised the Lord Jesus from the dead (v. 20). However, Paul goes on to describe the same power "to us-ward who believe." We are joined to Christ as a body is joined to a head. We share in His resurrection, ascension, and in His exaltation. Hence, the power of God is on display in us to overcome temptation, to live a victorious Christian life, and to fulfill His particular calling in our lives.

Wrap Up

Only a lifetime of study does justice to Ephesians chapter 1. And, even then, the riches of His redemption remain unexhausted. Our response to God's salvation in Christ is to praise Him for His marvelous grace. Then, as our praise reaches heaven, we turn our sights toward others—both believers and unbelievers—passionately praying to the God of Heaven to shine brightly into their hearts, revealing the Lord Jesus and His calling upon their lives.

