

4. Living in poverty while you are rich

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The World Bank estimated 1.29 billion people were living in absolute poverty around the world in 2008. Of these, about 400 million people in absolute poverty lived in India and 173 million people in China. The World Bank defines absolute poverty as a family living on less than US \$1.25 per day.

For the sake of the illustration I am about to make, let's say one of these 400 million poor people who lives in a Mumbai slum in India happens to be a lost son of Mukesh Ambani who is the chairman and CEO of the Reliance Industries Limited, the foremost company of the Indian energy and materials group. His personal asset is over \$22.3 billion and is not only the richest man in India but the fourth richest man in the world.

Can you imagine any reason this poor man should continue to live in that slum instead of moving into the Antilla Tower, the personal residence of Mukesh Ambani, that is 27 stories high, 400,000 square feet of living space with parking space for 160 cars and 600 full-time staff to take care of all of their needs? You can not.

Like that, many born-again believers of Jesus Christ do not know the riches in the Lord because they do not seek wisdom that comes from the Holy Spirit. In this chapter 1, apostle Paul is praying for us to know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance and apply them into our lives.

A. PRAYING FOR ALL THE SAINTS

Ephesians 1:15-16 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

In all of the prison prayers of Paul, the opening portions of the Book of Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, we discover the blessings he wanted his converts to enjoy. In none of these prayers does Paul request material things for them. His emphasis is on spiritual perception and real Christian character. He does not ask God to give them what they do not have, but rather prays that God will reveal to them what they already have.

I love to hear that someone is praying for me. Of course, I know that my Lord Jesus intercedes for me in heaven all the time, but it is still nice to hear someone telling me, "Hey, the Lord put you in my heart, so I've been praying for you." I like that. It encourages me. Here we see apostle Paul not only prays for the believers in the Ephesian church, but also for all the saints in the future.

Apostle Paul prays for us for four things. Here they are:

B. FOR THE SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND REVELATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM

Ephesians 1:17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, This, of course, is the highest knowledge any human can have. The atheist can claim that there is no God for us to know, and the agnostic can state that if there is a God we cannot know Him. The reason they make that kind of comment is that they DO NOT have the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

A couple of months ago, I watched an interview of Dave Silverman, the president of the American Atheist Association, who said, "America has never been a Christian nation and never will," on a FoxNews program. Wow, obviously this very educated man either doesn't know anything about the American history or simply willfully being ignorant of it. Without the Spirit of God, a man may have a ton of information, but he really cannot attain the wisdom of God.

This willful ignorance of God led mankind into corruption and condemnation. In Romans 1:18, Paul describes the stages in man's devolution: from willful ignorance of God to idolatry – substituting a lie for the truth – to immorality and indecency. Where does it begin? It begins with an unwillingness to know God as Creator, Sustainer, Governor, Savior, and Judge.

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness

Listen, all the believers of Jesus Christ must grow in the knowledge of God: To know God personally is salvation; to know Him increasingly is sanctification; to know Him perfectly is glorification. Since we are made in the image of God, the better we know God, the better we know ourselves and each other.

I know that there are many born-again believers who don't care to know the Lord Jesus and His Word intimately. They know that their fire insurance was paid up by Jesus, so they know that they will go to heaven. But they don't care to grow in Him and they don't mind being stagnated in their spirit. But when they get to heaven, they will regret that they literally waste so much of their time on useless things while they are on earth.

C. FOR KNOWING WHAT IS THE HOPE OF HIS CALLING

Ephesians 1:18a the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling,

In my Christian walk, I've come across many writings and sermons by great authors and pastors who could fashion their words so precisely to fit into their phrases that they could open up my mind's eyes. But none could top apostle Paul with the exception of Jesus Christ, of course. I just love the way the apostle wrote here.

The Greek word for 'enlight' is "photizo" where we get our English word "photograph". Do you know what the definition of 'photograph' is, other than 'picture taken'? It means 'light in'. How true, taking a picture is practically letting the light of the image into a dark box that contains a roll of film or digital card. Just a side note at no extra charge.

Let's think about that word 'enlightment' – where it is coming from and where it is going to. I know that the sound of this word rings a feel of the New Ages cult mumbo jumbo, but they are the ones who hijacked it from the Bible and abuse it.

According to v17, enlightenment is coming from the Holy Spirit who was given by the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit enlightens the spirit within us and opens our eyes of understanding to know the hope of God's calling.

Isaiah 11:2 The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

With a man's natural mind, he cannot understand the things of God. He needs the Spirit of God to enlighten him. The Holy Spirit reveals truth to us from the Word, and then gives us the wisdom to understand and apply it. He also gives us the power – the enablement – to practice the truth.

In the NT, the word 'heart' strictly means 'inner man' rather than a 4 chambered muscle that pumps blood throughout your body. The inner man, your spirit can see, hear, taste, smell, and touch. That is "real you." Your body is nothing more than a container that is getting older each day. This is what Jesus meant when He said of the unbelievers of His time:

Matthew 13:13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.

See the last word in the first portion of v18? The word "calling" in Greek is "klesis" and it contains meaning of 'reason' and 'purpose'. Do you know any young people who don't know what they are going to do when they grow up? Many of them cannot think or don't want to think except the next video game they want to play. It is no wonder why they have such hard time dealing with their own future. They don't know their hope of calling. Even many grown-ups have the same problem.

If you are a born-again Christian, you have a clear hope of calling from the Lord. You may say, "I don't know what I am called to do." The Bible guarantees you that if you seek the Lord, He will clearly make it known to you through His Holy Spirit as you dig into His Word.

The hope that belongs to our calling should be a dynamic force in our lives, encouraging us to be pure, obedient, and faithful. The fact that we shall one day see Christ and be like Him should motivate us to live like Christ today.

D. FOR KNOWING GOD'S RICHES

Ephesians 1:18b what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

I want all of you to notice the very important point the apostle is making it here. He didn't say, "your inheritance in Christ," rather "His inheritance in the saints." Much to our surprise, God actually looks on us as a part of His great wealth. You born-again believers are a portion of our God's riches, because God the Father invested His Son Jesus and His Holy Spirit in us.

Listen, God deals with us on the basis of our future, not our ungodly, worthless, wretched past. He chose Gideon the coward who was hiding in a winepress and called him "might man of valor" in Judges 6; God chose Peter the foot-in-the-mouth who always said something stupid, and used him to bring over 3000 people to Christ with one sermon in Acts 2; God chose an arrogant broken English speaking Southern Swedish snob with an itchy trigger finger and made him be a pastor and Bible teacher to teach the Word of God to you guys now.

Our past is past. We Christians live in the future tense, our lives controlled by what we shall be when Christ returns. Because we are God's inheritance, we live to please and glorify Him.

E. FOR KNOWING GOD'S POWER

Ephesians 1:19-23 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power 20 which He

worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. 22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Ever since the fall of man by disobedience of Adam and Eve, the entire creation suffered. Before the sin occurred, there was no death, no decay, no getting old, and no botox. Now everything will die eventually.

In other words, no one can reverse the power of death. It is no wonder the Bible declares death as the last enemy:

1 Corinthians 15:26 The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.

But three days after Jesus was crucified, death became history. Jesus overcame the death and rose from the grave. That's the power I am talking about. Apostle Paul is praying for us that we may know death-conquering-God's power toward us. The Greek word Paul uses for 'power' is "dynamis" where we get the English word "dynamite."

No authority or power, human or in the spirit world, is greater than that of Jesus Christ, the exalted Son of God. He is far above all, and no future enemy can overcome Him, because He has been exalted far above all powers.

Some of the skeptics of the Bible would say, "So, what does that got to do with Christians?" The answer is in v22 and 23. Because we are believers, we are in the church, which is Christ's body – and He is the Head. This means that there is a living connection between you and Christ. Physically speaking, the head controls the body and keeps the body functioning properly. Through the Spirit, we are united to Him as the members of His body. This means that we share His resurrection, ascension, and exaltation.

Get this guys, the power of the Holy Spirit, through the resurrected, ascended Christ, is available to all Christians – by faith. It is grace that supplies the riches of God, but it is faith that lays hold of the riches. We are saved by grace through faith, and we live by grace through faith.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) To Christians, heaven is not only the final destination, but also a motivation for godly life on earth.

2) We Christians live in the future tense, our lives controlled by what we shall be when Christ returns. Because we are God's inheritance, we live to please and glorify Him.