

10-02-16 – How Much is Enough?

Eph. 2: 8-9

It is told that someone asked a multi-million dollar tycoon, “How much is enough?” He answered, “Just a little more.”

How would you answer that question? How do you measure success or wealth?

“From year to year, depending on the ebb and flow of the global economy, several people vie for the title: “The Richest Person in the World.” These people – multi-billionaires – have more money than they can spend, for the earnings and interest on their fortunes exceed all possible expenditures. Yet the richest person on earth is only one heartbeat away from losing everything.” You really can’t take it with you.

“The richest man in the world at one time owned oil wells, refineries, tankers, and pipelines; also hotels, a life insurance company, a finance company, and aircraft companies. But he surrounded his 700-acre estate with bodyguards, vicious dogs, steel bars, searchlights, bells and sirens. In addition to being afraid of planes, ships, and crackpots, he feared disease, old age, helplessness, and death. He was lonely and gloomy and admitted that money could not buy happiness.”

(from news reports about the late Howard Hughes).

The letter to the Ephesians gives us insight to what real richness is. “It catalogues the endless wealth and wondrous riches of God’s people. Ephesians tells us about the riches of God’s grace, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, His rich mercy, and of our unsearchable riches in Christ.” (Understanding the 66 Books of the Bible, D. Jeremiah, p. 211)

Ephesians is kind of a unique book. We don’t really know if it was sent specifically to the church in Ephesus or as a round-robin letter to multiple churches in the area at the time. If this is the case, it even more relates to any NT church, even to us today.

In Romans through Galatians, the theme is “Christ in You.” In Ephesians through Philemon, the theme has shifted to “You in Christ.” What does it mean to be **in Christ**, to share in the life of the Lord, Jesus Christ?

The overall theme of Ephesians particularly is: *“The believer in Christ, the believer in the body of Christ, and the church.”*

Eph. 1:3 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. NIV

Heavenly Realms – This is something we are experiencing right NOW! Yes, it’s in the future too, but this is the unseen realm that we are a part of. We have war in the heavenly realms and we have the blessing in Christ in the heavenly realms. Jesus is seated (with us) in the heavenly realms. The heavenly realm is the seat of Christ’s authority and power!

Eph. 6:12 - For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. NIV

We are living in a heavenly realm – 24x7x365 – There is an unseen realm out there waging war against all Christians – but not against unbelievers – no need.

“When we received Jesus Christ as Lord, we have already received all that God intends to give us. Any failure, therefore, is not because we are lacking anything, but because we have not appropriated what is already ours.” (Adventuring Through the Bible, R. Stedman, p. 609, 610)

Eugene Peterson says it like this: “God raised Jesus from the dead, enthroned him in the heavens, gave him all power, and fills all things with his presence. We don’t have to wait for something to happen before we can live joyfully and confidently. We can’t put off being the people God has called us to be, hoping that some ship will come in making our lives different. The ship already has come in. ... In Christ we have everything we need to live in faith with God and to be active in love for others – and we have it right NOW!” (The Message Study Bible, p. 1831-1832).

We are truly RICH in Christ... How rich do you consider yourself?

However, the only way we can have these riches is to be in Christ. That is the only possible way...

Eph. 2:8-9 - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.NIV

The Message - Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It’s God’s gift from start to finish! We don’t play the major role. If we did, we’d probably go around bragging that we’d done the whole thing! No, we neither make nor save ourselves. God does both the making and saving.

When we acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord we become entitled to the glorious riches of God in its various forms.

Ephesians tells us about the endless wealth and wondrous riches for God’s people.

1 – The riches of God’s Grace (Eph. 1:7 & 2:7) –

Eph. 1:7 - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace NIV

Eph. 2:6-7 - And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. NIV

God has poured out upon us His grace and its benefits. We are recipients of the riches of His grace that we can enjoy in the present – **now**.

In Christ, **we have redemption** – freedom from slavery. Redemption requires payment for this freedom. Jesus paid this price for us “through His blood.” The lifeblood of Jesus was paid on the cross for our redemption. What was foreshadowed in the O.T. by the sacrifice of animals, was realized once and for all by the shed blood of Jesus Christ who laid down his life to ransom us from sin.

In Christ **we have forgiveness of sins**. The term forgiveness means to release a person from that which binds them. Sins are binding. We feel the guilt and remorse, the separation from God and His blessings. Jesus redeemed us from our **sin** – a one-time event. But here the term is **sins** – which are the failures we make along the way of our Christian life. Sin refers to our sinful condition before we receive Christ – Sins refers to our sinful acts or deviations from the right path. Forgiveness deals with both. All of this freedom is included in the riches of God’s grace that we can experience right now.

These blessings are available to us only by the Grace of God. We can’t earn or deserve it, yet God gives it to us generously – more than we can fathom. We receive this by faith – belief.

We are truly rich in Christ!

2 – The riches of the glory of His inheritance with the saints (Eph. 1:18-19a) -

Eph. 1:18-19a - I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. NIV

Paul is showing them and us that it is within the deep recesses of our being that we can understand and truly see by the Holy Spirit everything that God has made available to us. The heart is the area within us of thought and moral judgment as well as feeling.

By this form of riches, we begin to understand the hope that we have in Christ, and the calling by which He calls each of us to service in Christ. There are no spectators in God’s kingdom – here or in heaven. We are all participants – workers – servants – ministers for God. This Calling has already taken place when we accepted Jesus and became His, and it is an ongoing calling. It looks to the future, to the blessed hope of eternal glory.

Paul is informing us that we will inherit all the **riches** of God Himself. That’s an inheritance – we get for us what He has for Himself. In the O.T. Israel was promised the land as an inheritance. We in the N.T. are promised an inheritance in heaven. An inheritance that will last forever.

We also inherit His “incomparably great power” – an unimaginable power in Christ to strengthen us and take us through anything we face.

We are truly rich in Christ!

3 – His rich mercy (Eph. 2:4) –

Eph. 2:4 - *But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.* NIV

Our God is rich in mercy, and He extends that out to all. This is very tricky to understand, and we really can't get our brain around this totally. God extends His mercy to all, even those who reject God. His love is so gracious that He even extends mercy to those who spit in his face in an effort to draw them to himself. Hab. 1:13 tells us that God's eyes are too pure that to even look upon sin, yet he is not hostile against those he has created, unless all is exhausted. He loves them and has made possible their reconciliation to himself through Jesus Christ. God would be justified to abandon those who reject Him, but instead His love leads to His mercy toward them and also to those who believe. We have this great gift in our possession.

We are truly rich in Christ!

4 – Our unsearchable/boundless riches in Christ (Eph. 3:8-9) –

Eph. 3:8-9 - *Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.* NIV

In 2 Cor. 12:11 Paul tells us basically that he felt he was a nobody, while at the same time recognizing that God has made him a somebody. When my kids were small I copied a sign that said, "I am somebody, 'cause God don't make no junk." We hung them in their rooms. However, we all need to have Paul's kind of humility to be an effective servant for God. So, Paul fulfilled God's ministry calling to preach the gospel to the Gentiles by the grace of God – a monumental ministry.

So he preached to the Gentiles about the boundless riches of Christ that are ours to possess. While it is a mystery to those who do not believe, it is revealed to those who do believe. God holds no secrets from his children. You should know the riches you are entitled to in Christ.

We are truly rich in Christ!

How rich is God's grace toward us?

2 Peter 1:3 - Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! The MESSAGE

So how do we fall away from these promises? Why can't we appropriate these things for our own lives? Are you fully aware of the riches of God you have to enjoy? Are you living in those promises?

We are in a very real battle against a spiritual world and a spiritual enemy in the invisible realm.

The MESSAGE – Eph. 6:13-18 - *Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out.*

All of us can get bogged down with clutter that can distract us and we focus on the clutter instead of the mission.

*"Paul lived in a fragmented world, but he himself wasn't fragmented. He lived with clutter all around him, but he himself wasn't cluttered. The way he uncluttered his life and unified the fragments was to focus on the essentials. And he shares these essentials with us as he concludes his letter to the Ephesians: **God's Word and Prayer**. That's what gave him focus in a fragmented world, and it's what will give us focus as well. That's what uncluttered his life, and it is what will unclutter ours." EP*
(The Message Study Bible – Eugene Peterson – p. 1839)

Belief and behavior have to be knit together or the process breaks down. Ephesians helps the healing process for these two attributes of the Christian life to become and stay one.

How much is enough? Enough means – satisfied. We will never be satisfied with the riches of the world. The only satisfaction we can expect to experience is in Christ through Faith, and that is a gift to us from God himself. Receive that gift today and live in the riches given to us in Christ.

The riches of His Grace – the riches of the inheritance we have in Christ – the riches of His mercy – and the unsearchable/boundless riches in Christ. This is what is offered freely to you along with eternal life and freedom from guilt and forgiveness of sins.

We are truly RICH in Christ!