

Ephesians 1: 7-10; “The Riches of His Grace”, Message # 3 in a series entitled “The Exceeding Greatness of His Power”, a Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 20th, 2019, for those who gathered at his home.

All of the blessings that we as Christians have been given, are given to us according to the riches of Christ's grace. In Christ, every Christian is a spiritual rich man. We have here 1st – The Riches of Redemption; the forgiveness of our sins. We have 2nd – The Riches of Grace abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence. And 3rd – We have the Riches of knowing the Mystery of His Will, which is found in the way that He gathers us together in Him. I want to take a few minutes with each one of these points so that you will understand just how great Christ's riches are.

1st of all – In Christ we have the riches of redemption; the forgiveness of our sins.

Verse 7 says – “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...” Redemption is a concept which is rich in meaning. It has its roots in Old Testament Israel's being brought out of their slavery in Egypt. Turn with me to Exodus chapter 6, and verses 6-8. “Therefore say to the children of Israel: ‘I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments.’ “I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.” “Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.” “And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.”

Notice how it was only the Lord who could bring the children of Israel out from under the burdens of their slavery. It was only He who could rescue them from their bondage. He says that He would redeem them with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Pharaoh would not let the people go even after Moses and Aaron went to confront him with the message from the Lord. But the Lord had promised that he would rescue them. We need to see that this is a picture of how we are redeemed from our sins. We are in bondage and slavery to sin. We must needs be rescued not only from sin's power and reign over our lives, but also Satan's power and His rule over our lives. God promises all sinners everywhere that He can do this great thing when we believe in Christ. When we believe in Christ, we are not only brought out from under the burdens of sin and Satan, but He will also bring us into the “land” of our inheritance; that is, the kingdom of God where all the blessings of salvation shall be communicated to us.

Our verses that we are studying tonight are telling us that all believers in Christ come to realize that they have been redeemed, they have been bought and purchased, by the precious blood of Christ. They have been saved from the dominion of sin, and they have been translated into the kingdom of God's beneficent rule and His eternal and everlasting love is made known to them. What we are talking about is the redemption of the soul and body of a sinful person, to bring them out of their bondage to sin, and into all the blessings of salvation. This is what the Lord Jesus alone could do, and He did it on our behalf; we who are sinners. He did it on our behalf, it is saying here, according to the riches of His grace. There was a need for Christ to purchase all these riches for us; to satisfy the righteousness and justice of God, so that He could convey His mercy and His love to us.

Look with me over at Psalm 49, verses 5-9. “Why should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at my heels surrounds me?” “Those who trust in their wealth and boast in the multitude of their riches, none of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him – for the redemption of their souls is costly, and it shall cease forever – that he should continue to live eternally, and not see the Pit.” Now, I want you to notice the confidence of these believers who are saying these things; the sons of Korah. They are not trusting in their earthly wealth; they are trusting in the fact that God has redeemed them. They state that no mere man is able to give to God a ransom for their souls. No mere man is able to pay the purchase price so that they will be

released from their captivity and bondage to sin; have all of their sins forgiven, and have the prospect of God's help continually in relation to their being holy. They do not fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity at their heels surrounds them. What is the iniquity at their heels? It is not original sin. Rather, I believe that it is the sins which are committed by the believer when they are walking through this life as a sincere believer, but still troubled by the indwelling remaining corruption of their heart and actions which fall short of perfect obedience. Day by day they find these sins in their hearts, sins in their words, and sins in their actions at certain points.

Why is it that they do not fear? It is because they are trusting in their strong Redeemer. Because they are trusting in His great redemption they are clothed in His righteousness. They remember the prayer of the Psalmist in Psalm 130, verse 3 – "If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?" "But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared." And in verses 7 and 8 it says – "O Israel, hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption" "And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities." It is only by the riches of grace that this confidence comes. No matter how much money or earthly riches a man possesses, he will not be able to buy this great salvation of his soul, nor can he expect the redemption of his body on the last day; the Day when Christ returns. But on that great Day, all of those who have been redeemed by Christ shall know the redemption of their body; all of the righteous shall receive their glorified bodies. Why? It is all because of Jesus Christ our Lord's person and His work. The infinite value of His person gives infinite value to His work. And His Person and work give infinite merit and power and glory to the great salvation that Christ has purchased on our behalf through His obedience and His sufferings.

In John chapter 1, verses 16-18 John says – "And of Christ's fullness we have all received, and grace for grace", or "grace upon grace." "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." "No one has seen God at any time." "The only begotten Son, or the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him." It is the riches of God's grace which redeems our life from all distress because Christ has fulfilled the law as our great Redeemer. Galatians 3: 13 says – "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us." And in Galatians 4: 3-5 Paul says – "Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world." "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons." It is because of Christ's perfect righteousness imputed to us who believe, and His awful sufferings, his bleeding on the cross, pouring His life out unto death, on our behalf, to pay the penalty for our sins; this is the reason that we are redeemed.

What was it that sustained godly Job in all of the trials that he went through; of losing his 10 children, all of his possessions, his health, and the approval of his friends, and even his wife? It is found for us if we will turn over to Job 19: 25 – "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another." "How my heart yearns within me!" This is why we look for Christ's Second Coming. It is that we will see the One who loved us and gave Himself for us, so that we might be redeemed; body, soul, and spirit.

2nd – The Riches of Christ's Grace abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence.

Verse 8 – "Which (grace) He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence." This verse shows us what particular care God takes to watch over us, and to watch over His own word to perform it in our lives. He is very wise and prudent because He makes His grace abound toward us, knowing that there is much imparted grace that is needed, even after the gift of regeneration is given, to change and transform our minds, to enliven our hearts, and to establish all good in our actions, if we are to become mature in living our Christian life to Him and to His glory. Turn with me over to Titus, chapter 2, verses 11-14. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of

our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.”

Now, you can see here that it was the riches of God’s grace being shown to us in His mercy, through His sending of Christ into the world, that sets the stage for our being made completely holy. It is His wisdom and prudence in making Christ the perfect pattern for our holiness. It is the wisdom of God to purpose to make us like Christ, to conform us to His image, in our sanctification. It is because Christ lived the perfect life, and died for us, that we can make learn to make progress in holiness. God’s grace, it says here, teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. It teaches us to live soberly, righteously and godly lives, looking for the 2nd Coming of Christ which will bring us to perfection in holiness. In the meantime, during this time of our earthly pilgrimage, the Lord will be redeeming us from every lawless deed, (He will be delivering us from every evil deed by His power, working by His Spirit, in connection with the truth of His word) and in the process of this He will purify us for Himself, to be God’s special people. And He will give us grace to be zealous for good works.

The riches of Christ’s grace are applied to us in all wisdom and prudence in relation to answering our prayers in regard to making progress in righteousness. Psalm 19, verses 12-14. “Who can understand his errors?” “Cleanse me from secret faults.” “Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me.” “Then I shall be blameless, and I shall be innocent of great transgression.” “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.” How wise God is, how prudent He is, in making His grace abound to us so that we will actually take an active role in mortifying sin and the habits of sin in our lives; so that we pray to be cleansed of secret faults and understand our errors, and be kept back from presumptuous sins so that God will not let them have dominion over us. We need to realize that God’s grace is greater than all our sin. His Spirit will give you wisdom, based upon the great redemption of Christ, so that you will be one of those who will be fearing God and turning away from evil.

His makes His grace to abound to us in all wisdom and prudence, by turning our attention to the end of all of His blessed work of redemption so that we will see that it is He who will bring us to that blessed and glorious end, of complete redemption. We need to see that the great redemption which Christ purchased is also being wisely applied, very wisely and very prudently, in stages. There is the gift of regeneration which breaks the power of sin and sets us free to live righteously and godly in Christ Jesus. There is the imputation of Christ’s righteous to cover all of our sins and all of our efforts at being righteous and holy. And then the last stage of the application of redemption will take place at Christ’s Second Coming, at the end of the world. Turn with me, over to Romans chapter 8, verses 18-23. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” “For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” “For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now,” “Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” “For we are saved in this hope.” What is the basis of all this? It is that Christ Jesus has become our strong Redeemer, and will bring us to eternal glory and the perfect of holiness.

Then 3rd - We have the Riches of knowing the Mystery of His Will, which is found in the way that He gathers us together in Him.

Verses 9 and 10 say – “Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which he purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.” A mystery, in the New Testament, is something “that once was hidden and now

revealed; a secret now open". (W. Robertson Nicoll) I believe that the mystery of God's will which Paul is talking about here is related to His purposes in how He gathers His people during this present Church age, and how He will bring us all together at the time of Christ's Second Coming; to be together as one body of the redeemed for all eternity. This begins with the apostles and the early Church preaching the gospel to all nations.

Look over at Romans 16: 25-27 – "Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret since the world began but now made manifest, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith – to God alone wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever." "Amen." The mystery kept secret was the gospel itself coming to all the nations of the world; not just to the Jews. This was something that had been kept secret since the world began. There were many hints of it in the Old Testament Scriptures. But it was not until Christ came and broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile, and making them into one new man in the Church; this truth being given in visionary form to Peter in Acts 10 and to Paul to give to us in this very epistle, that the mystery really came to light.

Paul says in Ephesians 3: 3 – "How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power." The gospel of Christ Himself, the truth of His Person, being two natures in one Person in order to become the only Mediator between God and Man is another facet of this truth we are thinking about together. We are gathered together as God's elect in Him.

There is also the mystery of the Jews being converted as a nation and their being brought into the Church in a future day. This is mentioned in Romans 11: 25-29 – "For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in." "And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer, or the Redeemer, will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'" "Concerning the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but concerning the election they are beloved for the sake of the fathers." "For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." And then verse 33 – "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

This is the dispensation of the fullness of the times of the New Testament; that God might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on the earth – in Him. Concerning the end of the age and our gathering together to Him, we should remember that the mystery of iniquity must be revealed first. 2nd Thessalonians 2: 7. And then at the time of the end, the mystery of the rapture and glorification of the Church. 1st Corinthians 15: 51-54 – "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet." "For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." "So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.'" This is how we shall all be gathered together as the whole body of Christ's elect people. Let us always be looking forward to that glorious day when we shall see our Redeemer face to face.

