

Ephesians Sermon Illustrations 1

EPHESIANS SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS

OUR DAILY BREAD, et. al.

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'Dumbbells, Get Moving!'

Ephesians 1:1-14

September 5, 2002

A drill sergeant barked out an order to a bunch of recruits: "All you dumbbells, get moving!" All but one obeyed. Angered by his seeming defiance, the sergeant marched up to him and growled, "Well?" The young recruit replied, "There certainly were a lot of them, Sir!"

It would be great if more of us as Christians felt that good about ourselves. It's not wrong to affirm our worth. The Bible does. We have been created to reflect the moral and personal nature of God (Genesis 1:26). Sin has marred that image, but because of love, God sent His Son to die for our sins. By trusting Jesus as our Savior, we are "accepted," just as the Father accepts Him (Ephesians 1:6).

We may feel unworthy of such love and grace, but we can still have a healthy sense of self-worth, belonging, and confidence. Because Christ has removed the guilt of our sin by paying its penalty on the cross, we know that we are fully accepted by Him (vv.7-14).

Feelings of self-condemnation may still come over us, but we must affirm our worth in Christ. When an inner voice keeps shouting, "You're a dumbbell!" silence it by saying to yourself, "God made me. Christ saved me. And that makes me a person of great worth!"

—Dennis De Haan

Though sin deformed creation's crown,
God says, "My child, do not despair,
For in My image you were made,
And in Christ's death you fully share." —D. De Haan

Nothing speaks more clearly of God's love than the cross

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You Seem So Happy

Ephesians 1:1-14

May 8, 1996

My daughter was playing basketball at a local sports facility when the manager asked her where she went to school. When she named her Christian school, the man expressed surprise. "But you seem so happy all the time. I thought Christians were supposed to walk around acting sad."

I don't think this man is alone in his view of Christians. Maybe it's because we have standards that warn us to avoid immoral activities that the world considers "fun." Perhaps it's because they think a somber, down-in-the-mouth lifestyle must accompany a serious faith. But I'm afraid the biggest reason could be that we as Christians too often let our list of problems overwhelm us and block our view of another list--the Lord's blessings.

We have a Father who has given us "every spiritual blessing ... in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). We have been chosen and adopted by Him (vv.4-5). And we are assured of eternal life (Ti. 1:2). No one is more blessed, and no one can be as happy as we can be!

Of course, there are times when we experience deep sorrow. Yet, because of God's countless gifts, our outlook can cause others to wonder why we seem so happy. --J D Branon

My soul is so happy in Jesus the Lord,
He comforts my spirit with songs in the night;
The joy of salvation in Him I possess,
His blood my sin covers, I walk in the light. --White

A heart in tune with God
will sing his praise.

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The great Scottish Bible expositor Alexander MacLaren once wrote:

'We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure-chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want. If a man is admitted into the bullion vault of a bank and told to help himself, and comes out with one cent, whose fault is it that he is poor?'

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October 28, 2001

Right Beneath Our Feet!

Ephesians 1:3

The Mount Morgan gold mine in Queensland, Australia, is one of the richest in the world. For many years, though, the original landowners lived in deep poverty on the mountain's barren surface. Even though the vast wealth was out-of-sight, it was beneath their feet all the time.

Many Christians live in a similar situation. They plod along and struggle through their spiritual lives, laboring every step of the way. They are unaware of the vast riches God has promised them, and therefore they do not claim them.

Grace, forgiveness, strength, wisdom, direction, the power to resist temptation, reconciliation, protection, lightened burdens—all these riches and many more are ours. But how do we become aware of them and claim them? The answer is: Prayerfully read the Bible and pay close attention when the Word of God is preached or taught.

Here's a suggestion. Whenever you read the Scriptures or hear them taught, look for the truths about "every spiritual blessing" God has given to you (Ephesians 1:3). When you discover a truth or a promise that clearly applies to you, say to yourself, "That's for me!" As you do, you'll be tapping into the riches of God that lie right beneath your feet. —David C. Egner

I look at the cross upon Calvary,
And O what a wonder divine!
To think of the wealth it holds for me—
The riches of heaven are mine. —Christiansen

Children of the King have no reason to live like paupers.

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Unclaimed Spiritual Blessings

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

To most people, the great depression of the 30s has been forgotten in the wave of prosperity that followed. Out of those hard times, however, came a story which has a strange ending yet teaches us a powerful lesson.

When a timid old lady approached the first desk she saw in an insurance office in Minneapolis, she was asked what she wanted. With trembling hand, she took from her well-worn purse an old policy and explained regretfully that she was unable to meet the current premium. She explained that it was hard for her to get work and what little she did get was hardly enough to clothe, feed her and keep a roof over her head.

After quick investigation, the clerk recognized that the policy was very valuable. He warned the old lady that she was making an unwise move to stop payment. Did not her husband have anything to say? It was his policy made out to her benefit, he explained. "My husband? Oh, he has been dead for three years," she remarked sadly.

Immediately the company officials went into action. They soon discovered that she was indeed telling the truth. What she didn't understand was that the policy was her husband's and that she was the beneficiary at his death. They were thus obligated to refund the overpaid premiums plus the full amount for which the husband had insured his life in her favor. The money was sufficient to keep her in comfort the rest of her life.

The greatest life insurance policy of all time became due when Jesus Christ died on the cross! Thousands of people continue trying to make payments on their own salvation while all they need to do is accept the immeasurable gift that is theirs through the death and resurrection of our Savior. To become the beneficiary of God's Life Insurance Policy, we need simply to acknowledge our need as sinners and thank Him for the gift of His only begotten Son who died on the Cross and rose again (2Cor. 9:15) that we might have God's forgiveness. (Source Unknown)

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Undeserved Blessings

Ephesians 1:3

January 6, 2005

Tennis superstar Arthur Ashe died of AIDS, which he contracted from a blood transfusion during heart surgery. More than a great athlete, Ashe was a gentleman who inspired and encouraged many with his exemplary behavior on and off the court.

Ashe could have become embittered and self-pitying in the face of his disease, but he maintained a grateful attitude. He explained, "If I asked, 'Why me?' about my troubles, I would have to ask, 'Why me?' about my blessings. Why my winning Wimbledon? Why my marrying a beautiful, gifted woman and having a wonderful child?"

Ashe's attitude rebukes those of us who often grumble, "Why me? Why is God allowing this to happen?" Even if we're suffering acutely, we must not forget the mercies God pours into our lives—such things as food, shelter, and friends—blessings that many are deprived of.

And what about spiritual blessings? We can hold the very Word of God in our hands and read it. We have the knowledge of His saving grace, the comfort of His Spirit, and the joyful assurance of life everlasting with Jesus.

Think about God's blessings and ask, "Why me?" Then your grumbling will give way to praise.—Vernon C Grounds

Are you ever burdened with a load of care?
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,
And you will be singing as the days go by. —Oatman

With unwanted burdens come undeserved blessings.
God never stops giving us reasons to praise Him.

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Ephesians 1:3

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

All the goodness of the past, the present, and the future, Christ bestows upon his people. In the mysterious ages of the past the Lord Jesus was his Father's first elect, and in his election he gave us an interest, for we were chosen in him from before the foundation of the world. He had from all eternity the prerogatives of Sonship, as his Father's only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and he has, in the riches of his grace, by adoption and regeneration, elevated us to sonship also, so that to us he has given "power to become the sons of God." The eternal covenant, based upon suretyship and confirmed by oath, is ours, for our strong consolation and security. In the everlasting settlements of predestinating wisdom and omnipotent decree, the eye of the Lord Jesus was ever fixed on us; and we may rest assured that in the whole roll of destiny there is not a line which militates against the interests of his redeemed. The great betrothal of the Prince of Glory is ours, for it is to us that he is affianced, as the sacred nuptials shall ere long declare to an assembled universe. The marvellous incarnation of the God of heaven, with all the amazing condescension and humiliation which attended it, is ours. The bloody sweat, the scourge, the cross, are ours for ever. Whatever blissful consequences flow from perfect obedience, finished atonement, resurrection, ascension, or intercession, all are ours by his own gift. Upon his breastplate he is now bearing our names; and in his authoritative pleadings at the throne he remembers our persons and pleads our cause. His dominion over principalities and powers, and his absolute majesty in heaven, he employs for the benefit of them who trust in him. His high estate is as much at our service as was his condition of abasement. He who gave himself for us in the depths of woe and death, doth not withdraw the grant now that he is enthroned in the highest heavens.

Praise--Even In Pain

Ephesians 1:3

February 10, 1997

Terry Waite, a courageous British negotiator during an international hostage crisis, had gone to Lebanon to arrange the release of prisoners. But he himself was arrested and detained in solitary confinement.

Through long, lonely days and nights, he was unsure that his life would be spared. Nevertheless, every morning he offered as his own a prayer written in 1596 by Queen Elizabeth I. In it he expressed "most humble and hearty thanks for manifold mercies so abundantly bestowed upon me as well as for my creation, preservation, regeneration, and all other of Thy benefits and great mercies exhibited in Jesus Christ."

Is this how we react to hardships? When troubles engulf us, we plead with God for relief from suffering, for healing of disease, for comfort, for strength, and for the supply of our needs. Such petitions are certainly legitimate, and we should bring them to the Father. But do we remember, as Paul and Silas did from the depths of a jail cell, to offer thanks for God's lovingkindness? (Acts 16:25). Do we praise God for giving us life itself, as well as the blessed promise of eternal life?

When we acknowledge God's great mercies, we are able to offer Him praise--even in pain. --V C Grounds

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings--name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done. --Oatman

Praise comes naturally
when you count your blessings.

Happy Inside

Ephesians 1:3-14

December 9, 1994

My 6-year-old son Steven and I were sitting beside his bed reading a book one evening when he suddenly whispered in my ear, "I want to know how to be a Christian."

Steven's first-grade teacher had been talking about salvation at school, and he wanted to get the matter settled. So we put aside the book and got down to business.

Since he had heard the story of Jesus all his life, it wasn't hard to explain salvation. Soon he was praying and asking Jesus to save him.

A little later, after he had run and told Mom the good news, we resumed our reading. Suddenly he looked up and said, "I feel all happy inside."

That's a good way to describe the peace and contentment that Jesus gives to us as Christians. It's a peace that comes from knowing that the penalty for our sin has been taken care of (Eph. 1:7). We have the assurance that we have been chosen and predestined to eternal life (Eph 1:4, 5,10, 11). We have the seal of the indwelling Holy Spirit who guarantees our future (Eph 1:13,14). And nothing can take us out of God's hand (Jn. 10:28). When bad times hit, we can call out for God's help as one of His children (Ro. 8:15, 16,17).

What else do we need to be happy inside! --J D Branon

O God, we thank You for the peace
And happiness You give
Because we've trusted in Your Son
Who died so we could live. --Sper

To know happiness,
get to know Jesus.

So Many Blessings

Ephesians 1:3-14

March 4, 2003

When disaster strikes, people are exceedingly generous in their outpouring of assistance. After the terrorist attacks in September 2001, New York City was flooded with an estimated \$75 million worth of towels, blankets, flashlights, water bottles, canned beans, shovels, toothpaste, stuffed animals, radios, rubber boots, and thousands of other items. There was so much stuff that those affected could not use it all.

This reminds me of what happens when we turn in faith to Christ as our Savior. We were facing a personal disaster. Our sins put us in danger of an eternity of separation from God. The future was dark, hopeless.

Then Jesus stepped in and offered rescue. When we trusted Him, our heavenly Father lavished us with spiritual riches. Now we have more blessings than we can possibly use up. We are part of God's family (Ephesians 1:5). We have "redemption" and "the forgiveness of sins" (Eph 1:7). We are heirs of the One who owns everything (Eph 1:11). Our inheritance is sealed by the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13, 14).

The blessings of being a Christian just keep on coming. They'll never run out. What a generous, thoughtful God we serve! Let's praise Him for the countless blessings that overflow in our lives. —Dave Branon

Give me a spirit of thankfulness, Lord,
For numberless blessings given;
Blessings that daily come to me
Like dewdrops falling from heaven. —Dawe

God's generous giving deserves thankful living.

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Paid In Full

Ephesians 1:3-14

November 5, 1998

With credit-card debt going through the roof and offers of new cards coming every week, many people have adopted a risky practice known as "rolling over" or "flipping." They routinely transfer their debt to a new card offering a temporary low interest rate. When the introductory period expires, they "flip" their debt to a new card. The danger, according to one analyst, is getting into a mode "where you move your debt around rather than paying it down. It's a lot easier to switch credit cards than to tackle your debt."

Is it possible to approach our spiritual account the same way? Could we be lulled into thinking that promising to change or trying harder is enough for the moment, like making minimum payments on a maxed-out credit card? What does it take to tackle the enormous debt of our failure and sin?

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross, has done something we could never do--He paid the debt in full. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. 1:7).

How's your spiritual ledger? Dotted with minimum payments of human effort? Or cleared by God's grace? --DCM

Jesus paid it all,
All to Him I owe;
Sin had left a crimson stain--
He washed it white as snow. --Hall

Christ paid a debt He didn't owe to satisfy a debt we couldn't pay.

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Enough For Everyone

Ephesians 1:3-21

March 19, 2000

An elderly Scottish woman stood in the doorway of her cottage and basked in the light and warmth of the summer sun. According to author J. R. Caldwell, she shaded her eyes as she looked up and exclaimed, "I've got a whole sun to myself!"

Caldwell commented, "I could say the same. This is just one of the beautiful things in nature that you have as much as I have. [Likewise] you and I and millions of the redeemed have individually the whole heart of Christ... There is room for all."

This truth is simple and self-evident, yet its implication is so profound that it almost overwhelms us. God's gracious gift of salvation can be experienced by all who believe (Eph. 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19), and we can fully enjoy its blessings without diminishing their enjoyment by others. We who know Christ and His limitless provisions are not deprived, even though other believers are drawing on them too.

In a sense, every child of God can say, "I've got the Son all to myself." Joy, assurance, peace, and the awareness of His presence are just a few of the many benefits that are given without measure for every believer to enjoy.

Remember, if you are born again, God has given you "every spiritual blessing ... in Christ" (Eph 1:3). —Richard De Haan

We're loaded with benefits daily,
Sent down from the Father above;
His mercies and blessings abounding
Are gifts of His marvelous love. --Anon.

The well of God's blessings will never run dry.

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An Experience In Immensity

Ephesians 1:3-23, Eph. 3:18-19

June 11, 1998

My wife and I were traveling through northern Texas on Interstate 40, and we pulled off at a rest stop. On a metal sign was a description of the area. One sentence caught my eye. It read, "Traveling the high plains of Texas is an experience in immensity." How true! Stretching out as far as the eye could see was the vast open space of land and sky.

Getting to know the infinite God can also be described as an experience in immensity. His love for sinners and the salvation He provides truly surpasses all knowledge.

Paul expressed this in Ephesians 1 when he wrote of being chosen in Christ "before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4), of being "predestined... according to the good pleasure of His will" (Eph 1:5), and of knowing the "exceeding greatness" of God's power (Eph 1:19). And in chapter 3, he said that the extent of God's love is so great that it "passes knowledge" (Eph 3:19). As we learn more and more about its "width and length and depth and height" (Eph 3:18), we can only stand in awe of its vastness. God's love is the ultimate experience in immensity.

When we repent of our sins and trust Jesus as our Savior, we begin to experience the greatness of His love. --D J De Haan

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure--
The saints' and angels' song. --Lehman

The measure of God's love is that He loves without measure!

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GOD'S HERITAGE IN HUMANITY

Ephesians 1:4

F B Meyer. Our Daily Walk

"The Lord's portion is His people."-- Deut 32:9.

"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."-- Eph 1:4.

WE DO not become God's property when we consecrate ourselves to Him, but only awake to see that we are already His, and assume that manner of life which they should live who are not their own, but have been bought with a price (1Co 6:19, 20). The three symbols of God's care of His own, as enumerated by Moses in his Song, are exquisitely beautiful.

"He kept him as the apple of his eye" (Deut 32:10). Almost instinctively we raise our hand to protect the eyes if anything threatens us, and it is thus with God's care to us. How carefully the eye is preserved from impurity and evil by the strong bony socket in which it is set, by the eyebrows and lashes which catch the dust and grit, by the eyelid closing over, and the tear-water washing it. Thus the soul which God loves may pass through the evil of the world without taint or soil, because of His gracious keeping power.

"As an eagle" (Deut 32:11). When the young eaglets are able to fly, but hover about their nest, unwilling to venture from the cliff, the mother-bird breaks up their eerie home, drives the fledglings forth on to the air, compels them to use their wings, flutters beneath to catch them if they are inclined to fall, and bears them up on her strong wings until they can fly alone. So it is in life that sometimes God has to break up the happy conditions to which we have been accustomed from our birth, and drive us forth. But it is for our good since only so can we acquire the glorious powers of sustained flight on the wings of the wind.

Divine leading (Deut 32:12). God teaches us to go as a mother her little child; His hand leads and guides our tottering steps (Ho 11:3, 4).

The Epistle to the Ephesians gives us a list of the blessings, like a string of pearls, which God our Father, the Owner and Lover of our souls, heaps upon us, and is waiting for us to appropriate and use (Deut 1:3). His love to us is no passing fancy, but the carrying out of an eternal purpose. He redeems us from the love and power of sin; He abounds towards us with the riches of His grace; we are kept and sealed by the Holy Spirit; and ultimately shall be presented before Him, without blemish, to the praise of His glory.

PRAYER - What can I lack if I have Thee, Who art all Good? Verily, the heart is restless, until it rest in Thee alone. AMEN. (F B

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MORE THAN A CONTRACT

Ephesians 1:5

We are all accustomed to contracts. We are often required to sign them, whether with a builder to construct our house or with the department store when we purchase an appliance. Contracts, formal or informal, specify what happens if one of the parties fails to live up to an agreement.

When we put our trust in Christ for salvation, however, we do more than sign a contract. We enter into a binding relationship with God whereby He makes us His children by the new birth and by adoption (1Peter 1:23; Ephesians 1:5). Because of this close family relationship, we are permanent heirs of an eternal inheritance reserved in heaven for us (1Peter 1:4).

Contracts can be broken if one of the parties fails to keep his part of the promise. Fortunately for us, our eternal destiny is based on more than some legal agreement we make with God. Rather, we are secure because of our family relationship with Him. If a youngster fails to show up for dinner, the parent's obligation isn't canceled. The parent starts a search for the child. One member's failure doesn't cancel the relationship.

How thankful we can be that eternal life is based on our relationship with God through Christ. -H W Robinson

We're members of God's family,
We're children of the King;
Because we've put our faith in Christ,
To us He'll always cling. -Sper

We are heirs of God not merely by contract, but by birthright.

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More Than A Contract

August 27, 2003

Ephesians 1:5

We are all accustomed to contracts. We are often required to sign them, whether we're closing a business deal, taking out a bank loan, buying a car, leasing an apartment, or purchasing a major appliance. Contracts, formal or informal, specify what happens if one of the parties fails to live up to an agreement.

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We're members of God's family,
We're children of the King;
Because we've put our faith in Christ,
To us He'll always cling. —Sper

We are heirs of God not merely by contract, but by birthright.

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Accepted in the Beloved

H. A. Ironside, Litt. D

Years ago I was preaching in the small town of Roosevelt, Washington, on the north bank of the Columbia River. I was the guest of friends who were sheep-raisers. It was lambing time and every morning we went out to see the lambs—hundreds of them—playing about on the green. One morning I was startled to see an old ewe go loping across the road, followed by the strangest looking lamb I had ever beheld. It apparently had six legs, and the skin seemed to be partially torn from its body in a way that made me feel the poor little creature must be suffering terribly. But when one of the herders caught the lamb and brought it over to me, the mystery was explained. That lamb did not really belong originally to that ewe. She had a lamb which was bitten by a rattlesnake and died. This lamb that I saw was an orphan and needed a mother's care. But at first the bereft ewe refused to have anything to do with it. She sniffed at it when it was brought to her, then pushed it away, saying as plainly as a sheep could say it, "That is not our family odor!" So the herders skinned the lamb that had died and very carefully drew the fleece over the living lamb. This left the hind-leg coverings dragging loose. Thus covered, the lamb was brought again to the ewe. She smelled it once more and this time seemed thoroughly satisfied and adopted it as her own.

It seemed to me to be a beautiful picture of the grace of God to sinners. We are all outcasts and have no claim upon His love. But God's own Son, the "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the World," has died for us and now we who believe are dressed up in the fleece of the Lamb who died. Thus, God has accepted us in Him, and "there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." We are as dear to the heart of the Father as His own holy, spotless Son.

"So dear, so very dear to God, More dear I cannot be; The love wherewith He loves His Son, Such is His love to me.

So near, so very near to God, Nearer I could not be, For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He."

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Ephesians 1:6

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

What a state of privilege! It includes our justification before God, but the term "acceptance" in the Greek means more than that. It signifies that we are the objects of divine complacency, nay, even of divine delight. How marvellous that we, worms, mortals, sinners, should be the objects of divine love! But it is only "in the beloved." Some Christians seem to be accepted in their own experience, at least, that is their apprehension. When their spirit is lively, and their hopes bright, they think God accepts them, for they feel so high, so heavenly-minded, so drawn above the earth! But when their souls cleave to the dust, they are the victims of the fear that they are no longer accepted. If they could but see that all their high joys do not exalt them, and all their low despondencies do not really depress them in their Father's sight, but that they stand accepted in One who never alters, in One who is always the beloved of God, always perfect, always without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, how much happier they would be, and how much more they would honour the Saviour! Rejoice then, believer, in this: thou art accepted "in the beloved." Thou lookest within, and thou sayest, "There is nothing acceptable here!" But look at Christ, and see if there is not everything acceptable there. Thy sins trouble thee; but God has cast thy sins behind his back, and thou art accepted in the Righteous One. Thou hast to fight with corruption, and to wrestle with temptation, but thou art already accepted in him who has overcome the powers of evil. The devil tempts thee; be of good cheer, he cannot destroy thee, for thou art accepted in him who has broken Satan's head. Know by full assurance thy glorious standing. Even glorified souls are not more accepted than thou art. They are only accepted in heaven "in the beloved," and thou art even now accepted in Christ after the same manner.

Ephesians 1:7

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

Could there be a sweeter word in any language than that word "forgiveness," when it sounds in a guilty sinner's ear, like the silver notes of jubilee to the captive Israelite? Blessed, for ever blessed be that dear star of pardon which shines into the condemned cell, and gives the perishing a gleam of hope amid the midnight of despair! Can it be possible that sin, such sin as mine, can be forgiven, forgiven altogether, and for ever? Hell is my portion as a sinner—there is no possibility of my escaping from it while sin remains upon me—can the load of guilt be uplifted, the crimson stain removed? Can the adamant stones of my prison-house ever be loosed from their mortices, or the doors be lifted from their hinges? Jesus tells me that I may yet be clear. For ever blessed be the revelation of atoning love which not only tells me that pardon is possible, but that it is secured to all who rest in Jesus. I have believed in the appointed propitiation, even Jesus crucified, and therefore my sins are at this moment, and for ever, forgiven by

virtue of his substitutionary pains and death. What joy is this! What bliss to be a perfectly pardoned soul! My soul dedicates all her powers to him who of his own unpurchased love became my surety, and wrought out for me redemption through his blood. What riches of grace does free forgiveness exhibit! To forgive at all, to forgive fully, to forgive freely, to forgive for ever! Here is a constellation of wonders; and when I think of how great my sins were, how dear were the precious drops which cleansed me from them, and how gracious was the method by which pardon was sealed home to me, I am in a maze of wondering worshipping affection. I bow before the throne which absolves me, I clasp the cross which delivers me, I serve henceforth all my days the Incarnate God, through whom I am this night a pardoned soul.

God's Lavish Display

Ephesians 1:7

October 9, 1998

Last year I visited Niagara Falls for the first time and was awed by the sight and sound and overpowering sense of it all. Every minute, about 200,000 tons of water plunge into the Niagara River gorge in a thunderous ovation to the lavish, generous nature of God.

The Lord could have used a lot less water, but He didn't. He could have made the falls lower, but He built them 12 stories high. And because they are what they are from the creative hand of God, people come from all over the world to see Niagara Falls.

What a picture of God's grace in Jesus Christ! "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Eph. 1:7, 8). The Greek word translated "abound" means "an exceeding measure, something above the ordinary." God's grace toward us is not squeezed out from an eye-dropper or carefully rationed like water during a drought. His grace is a Niagara of superabundance so lavish that we marvel at its display.

Today, as you approach God to "find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16), remember how much there is--grace beyond measure. --D C MacCasland

His love has no limit, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again. --Flint

God's heart is always overflowing with grace.

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November 16, 2001

Breaking The Grip Of Guilt

Ephesians 1:7

Can you think of anything too hard for God to do? Put yourself in the shoes of a fellow Christian who has committed a sin so awful that the person simply cannot imagine that God would forgive it. Think about what he or she considers to be impossible for God.

In an article on forgiveness, Pastor Charles Stanley wrote about talking to a teenager who was having a hard time believing that God could forgive her sexual sins. She told him she was a Christian and had asked Jesus many times to forgive her. Even though she knew the Bible says God had forgiven her, she still felt dirty in her heart.

This teenager thought she had found something that was too hard for God to do—forgive her. When we tell ourselves that our sin is so bad God won't forgive us, we are doubting His power. We are robbing ourselves of the great gifts of a clear conscience and fellowship with God (1 John 1:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

Does guilt for sin have its icy hands around your heart? Is it strangling your joy and making you forget that God's forgiveness is not based on what you do but on what Christ has done? Ask for His forgiveness. Then thank Him for it, and moment by moment remind yourself of the wonder of God's grace. —J D Branon

Thinking It Over - If you're struggling with accepting God's forgiveness for something you've done, meditate on these verses: Psalm 32; 51; Ephesians 1:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; Colossians 1:13, 14.

When God forgives, it's time for us to forget.

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The Iron Collar
Ephesians 1:7
January 17, 2000

A missionary in West Africa was trying to convey the meaning of the word redeem in the Bambara language. So he asked his African assistant to express it in his native tongue. "We say," the assistant replied, "that God took our heads out." "But how does that explain redemption?" the perplexed missionary asked.

The man told him that many years ago some of his ancestors had been captured by slave-traders, chained together, and driven to the seacoast. Each of the prisoners had a heavy iron collar around his neck. As the slaves passed through a village, a chief might notice a friend of his among the captives and offer to pay the slave-traders in gold, ivory, silver, or brass. The prisoner would be redeemed by the payment. His head then would be taken out of his iron collar.

What an unusual and graphic illustration of the word redeem! Ephesians 1:7 states, "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." Jesus died on the cross to purchase our freedom from the bondage of sin.

Have you put your trust in Jesus as your Redeemer? Let Him take your head out of the enslaving collar of sin and set you free. —
Vernon C Grounds

Redeemed--how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy--
His child, and forever I am. --Crosby

Christ was lifted up on the cross that we might be lifted out of our sin.

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Mysterious Ways
Ephesians 1:11
July 19, 2005

The twists and turns in the life of Jacob DeShazer sound like the plot of an intriguing war novel. But taken together, they show us the mysterious ways in which God moves.

DeShazer served the US Army Air Corps in World War II as a bombardier in the squadron of General Doolittle. While participating in Doolittle's raid on Japan in 1942, DeShazer and his crew ran out of fuel and bailed out over China. He was taken to a Japanese prison camp where he trusted Jesus as his Savior. After his release, he became a missionary to Japan.

One day DeShazer handed a tract with his story in it to a man named Mitsuo Fuchida. He didn't know that Mitsuo was on his way to a trial for his wartime role as the commander of Japanese forces that attacked Pearl Harbor. Fuchida read the pamphlet and got a Bible. He soon became a Christian and an evangelist to his people. Eventually, DeShazer and Fuchida met again and became friends.

It's amazing how God can take two men who were mortal enemies, bring them together, and lead them to Himself. But it shows us that He is in control. And nothing—not even a world war—can stop God from working "all things according to the counsel of His will" (Ephesians 1:11). —Dave Branon

My times are in my Father's hand;
How could I wish or ask for more?
For He who has my pathway planned
Will guide me till my journey's o'er. —Fraser

Every child of God fills a special place in His plan.

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Spurgeon, C. H.
Morning and evening

Ephesians 1:11

When Jesus gave himself for us, he gave us all the rights and privileges which went with himself; so that now, although as eternal God, he has essential rights to which no creature may venture to pretend, yet as Jesus, the Mediator, the federal head of the covenant of grace, he has no heritage apart from us. All the glorious consequences of his obedience unto death are the joint riches of all who are in him, and on whose behalf he accomplished the divine will. See, he enters into glory, but not for himself alone, for it is written, "Whither the Forerunner is for us entered." Heb. 6:20. Does he stand in the presence of God?—"He appears in the presence of God for us." Heb. 9:24. Consider this, believer. You have no right to heaven in yourself: your right lies in Christ. If you are pardoned, it is through his blood; if you are justified, it is through his righteousness; if you are sanctified, it is because he is made of God unto you sanctification; if you shall be kept from falling, it will be because you are preserved in Christ Jesus; and if you are perfected at the last, it will be because you are complete in him. Thus Jesus is magnified—for all is in him and by him; thus the inheritance is made certain to us—for it is obtained in him; thus each blessing is the sweeter, and even heaven itself the brighter, because it is Jesus our Beloved "in whom" we have obtained all. Where is the man who shall estimate our divine portion? Weigh the riches of Christ in scales, and his treasure in balances, and then think to count the treasures which belong to the saints. Reach the bottom of Christ's sea of joy, and then hope to understand the bliss which God hath prepared for them that love him. Overleap the boundaries of Christ's possessions, and then dream of a limit to the fair inheritance of the elect. "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's and Christ is God's."

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"HE'S UP ANYWAY!"

Ephesians 1:11

Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.- Psalm 121:4

Linus Mandy wrote, "A friend was telling me she helped out at a kid's summer camp a few years ago. After rounding up the troops for the night, she told them, 'Let's go to sleep and put our cares in God's hands.' 'Yeah,' said one of the ds, 'He's up all night anyway!'"

We all battle with the problem of worry. Fears about the future gradually creep in. Then they get stronger and stronger, and can eventually become overwhelming. This happens when we begin to replace our faith with anxiety, shifting the burden from God's strong shoulders to our frail ones. We fret. We're afraid. We can't sleep.

At times like this we need to remind ourselves that God is always on the alert. He never sleeps (Ps.121:4). He knows everything, including what we fear (Ps 44:21). He is everywhere (Ps 139:7-10). He is in charge of our world (Eph. 1:11). Therefore, we do not need to be afraid.

Do you really believe that God sees all, knows all, is all-powerful, and is in control? Then put your cares in His hands. Entrust Him with whatever it is that's keeping you awake at night. He'll take care of it. He's the One who never slumbers nor sleeps. -- David C. Egener

When fear and worry test your faith
And anxious thoughts assail,
Remember God is in control
And He will never fail.- Sper

Worry is a burden God never meant for us to bear.

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IN CONTROL

Ephesians 1:11

"I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it" (Isaiah 46:11).

In 1854 the Russian poet and diplomat Fyodor Tyutchev described the frightening world conditions as he saw them then. In a letter to his wife he wrote, "What is bewildering is the conviction—and it is becoming more and more general—that in all the perils that confront us, the direction of affairs is given over to a way of thinking that has no longer any understanding of itself. It is like being in a carriage, descending an increasingly precipitous slope, and suddenly realizing that there is no coachman in the box."

The world does seem to be traveling in a runaway vehicle, hurtling wildly through the dark night toward terrible destruction. The racial tension in South Africa, the ongoing religious conflict in Northern Ireland, and continued death and fighting in the Mid-East could cause us to feel as if the world is reeling wildly out of control. But the Christian views this frightening scene differently. We believe that even though Satan is called the ruler of this age, God has a plan for this world and is in ultimate control. We have confidence in Isaiah's promise that what God has spoken will come to pass. We know that God "works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph.1:11). God's hand "is stretched out over all the nations," wrote Isaiah, and "who will turn it back?" (Is 14:26, 27). In the midst of turmoil we have hope. God rules. —D. C. Egner

Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure.—Browning

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Ephesians 1:11

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

Our belief in God's wisdom supposes and necessitates that he has a settled purpose and plan in the work of salvation. What would creation have been without his design? Is there a fish in the sea, or a fowl in the air, which was left to chance for its formation? Nay, in every bone, joint, and muscle, sinew, gland, and blood-vessel, you mark the presence of a God working everything according to the design of infinite wisdom. And shall God be present in creation, ruling over all, and not in grace? Shall the new creation have the fickle genius of free will to preside over it when divine counsel rules the old creation? Look at Providence! Who knoweth not that not a sparrow falleth to the ground without your Father? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. God weighs the mountains of our grief in scales, and the hills of our tribulation in balances. And shall there be a God in providence and not in grace? Shall the shell be ordained by wisdom and the kernel be left to blind chance? No; he knows the end from the beginning. He sees in its appointed place, not merely the corner-stone which he has laid in fair colours, in the blood of his dear Son, but he beholds in their ordained position each of the chosen stones taken out of the quarry of nature, and polished by his grace; he sees the whole from corner to cornice, from base to roof, from foundation to pinnacle. He hath in his mind a clear knowledge of every stone which shall be laid in its prepared space, and how vast the edifice shall be, and when the top-stone shall be brought forth with shoutings of "Grace! Grace! unto it." At the last it shall be clearly seen that in every chosen vessel of mercy, Jehovah did as he willed with his own; and that in every part of the work of grace he accomplished his purpose, and glorified his own name.

On Purpose

Ephesians 1:11

When a cowboy applied for an insurance policy, the agent asked, "Have you ever had any accidents?" After a moment's reflection, the applicant responded, "Nope, but a bronc did kick in two of my ribs last summer, and a couple of years ago a rattlesnake bit me on the ankle."

"Wouldn't you call those accidents?" replied the puzzled agent. "Naw," the cowboy said, "they did it on purpose!"

That story reminds me of the biblical truth that there are no accidents in the lives of God's children. In today's Scripture, we read how Joseph interpreted a difficult experience that had seemed like a great calamity. He had been thrown into a pit and then sold as a slave. This was a great test of his faith, and from the human standpoint it appeared to be a tragic case of injustice, not a providential means of blessing. But Joseph later learned that "God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

Are you passing through the deep waters of trial and disappointment? Does everything seem to be going against you? These apparent misfortunes are not accidents. The Lord allows such things for a blessed purpose. So patiently trust Him. If you know the Lord, someday you will praise Him for it all!—Richard De Haan

What looks like just an accident
When viewed through human eyes,
Is really God at work in us—
His blessing in disguise. —Sper

God transforms trials into triumphs.

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Ephesians 1:13

Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. (r.v.)

Possessed. — The saints have been purchased at great cost by the precious blood of the Son of God. Not only their spirits, but their bodies, have been bought with an infinite expenditure. Is it not a wonderful thought that God should have thought it worth his while to expend so much on us! But, since He has done it, we cannot suppose that He will not make all He can of us! He will bring his estate under cultivation; there will be no corner of it that will not yield Him produce.

To be redeemed. — Our bodies are owned by God, but they are not yet entirely redeemed. And if we should die before the Lord's advent, they will return to their mother earth, possessed but not redeemed. Hence the apostle says that we are waiting for our adoption — to wit, the redemption of our body (Romans 8:23). We are under the sentence of corruption for Adam's sin; but we are to be redeemed.

Sealed. — In Ezekiel's day a mark was set on the foreheads of the men that sighed and cried for sin (Ezekiel 9:4); and in the Apocalypse we read of the sealing of God's servants (Revelation 7:2, 3). For sealing there are needed the softened wax; the imprint of the beloved face; the steady pressure. Would that the Spirit might impress the face of our dear Lord on our softened hearts, that they may keep it for evermore!

This sealing is an earnest of our inheritance. — The eternal future is all unknown, yet we may guess at it, because the work of the Spirit within us is the first fruits — the grapes of Eshcol, showing what the vintage will be; the earnest-penny, which is the pledge as well as part of the entire payment; the first streak of the coming day. (Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily)

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SEALED WITH A PROMISE

EPHESIANS 1:13-14

Several centuries ago, a Japanese emperor commissioned an artist to paint a bird. A number of months passed, then several years, and still the artist did not deliver the painting. Finally the emperor became so exasperated that he went to the artist's home to demand an explanation. Instead of making excuses, the artist placed a blank canvas on the easel. In less than an hour, he completed a painting that was to become a masterpiece. When the emperor asked the reason for the delay, the artist showed him armloads of drawings of feathers, wings, heads, and feet. Then he explained that he couldn't complete the painting until he had done exhaustive research and study.

In a sense, Christians are similar to that piece of art. We are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13), and predestined by God "to be conformed to the image of His Son" (Ro 8:29). But the process takes time. The "artist" is the Holy Spirit—sent by the Lord Jesus at Pentecost to indwell believers. Slowly but surely He leads us to spiritual growth and maturity. Our transformation requires years of patience and will not be finished until we enter the presence of our King.

The day is coming when all Christians will be like Christ. But now we are growing and preparing. As we follow the Spirit's guidance through one experience after another, we become more and more like the masterpiece we will be someday in Glory. —D. C. Egner

The work Christ accomplished for us on the cross,
His Spirit can now accomplish in us on earth.

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Interest in Advance

Ephesians 1:13-14

The Holy Spirit, who indwells every believer, gives us a foretaste of the coming glory of heaven. He is therefore called the "earnest" or pledge of the inheritance we shall receive by God's grace in eternity (Eph. 1:13, 14). In biblical times, the word "earnest" was a trade term for the initial payment on a debt. It was made as a promise that full payment would be forthcoming. In principle, then, when an earnest was given, the final installment was guaranteed. Likewise, the joy we experience now through God's Spirit is just a kind of first installment of the rich blessings that His children will receive in eternity.

A wealthy man called his faithful assistant into his office one day and said, "I've put your name in my will, and someday you'll receive \$10,000. Since it may be a while before you get that legacy, I want to make you happy now by paying you the interest on that amount each year. Here is a check for \$600 as a starter." The surprised clerk was doubly grateful. The prospect of the inheritance was certainly good news, but the money he received in advance gave him complete assurance that someday the entire \$10,000 would be his.

As God's children, let's rejoice in the riches we now have in Christ through the Holy Spirit. He is our guarantee of the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory" that our Heavenly Father will one day give to the heirs of salvation (2Co 4:17). Our present blessings are but a token of the greater inheritance we will eventually receive.

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Ephesians 1:14

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

Oh! what enlightenment, what joys, what consolation, what delight of heart is experienced by that man who has learned to feed on Jesus, and on Jesus alone. Yet the realization which we have of Christ's preciousness is, in this life, imperfect at the best. As an old writer says, "'Tis but a taste!" We have tasted "that the Lord is gracious," but we do not yet know how good and gracious he is, although what we know of his sweetness makes us long for more. We have enjoyed the firstfruits of the Spirit, and they have set us hungering and thirsting for the fulness of the heavenly vintage. We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption. Here we are like Israel in the wilderness, who had but one cluster from Eshcol, there we shall be in the vineyard. Here we see the manna falling small, like coriander seed, but there shall we eat the bread of heaven and the old corn of the kingdom. We are but beginners now in spiritual education; for although we have learned the first letters of the alphabet, we cannot read words yet, much less can we put sentences together; but as one says, "He that has been in heaven but five minutes, knows more than the general assembly of divines on earth." We have many ungratified desires at present, but soon every wish shall be satisfied; and all our powers shall find the sweetest employment in that eternal world of joy. O Christian, antedate heaven for a few years. Within a very little time thou shalt be rid of all thy trials and thy troubles. Thine eyes now suffused with tears shall weep no longer. Thou shalt gaze in ineffable rapture upon the splendour of him who sits upon the throne. Nay, more, upon his throne shalt thou sit. The triumph of his glory shall be shared by thee; his crown, his joy, his paradise, these shall be thine, and thou shalt be co-heir with him who is the heir of all things.

Guaranteed Future

Ephesians 1:13-14

July 13, 1999

One day my friend Arthur Lewis, an expert in biblical Greek, was walking along the streets of Athens. Accompanying him was a professor who teaches Greek. They stopped occasionally to read the signs in shop windows.

As they gazed into a jewelry store, they saw a sign with the word arrabon on it. When they entered and talked to the proprietor, he told them that in modern Greek the word arrabon means "an engagement ring." The Greek professor thought for a moment, then commented, "How interesting! In the New Testament that's the term for 'a guarantee, a down payment.'"

In Ephesians 1:13, 14, we are told that the Holy Spirit is given to believers as an arrabon, a down payment, a guarantee of heaven. The blessing of the Spirit's presence in our hearts is a foretaste of the greater blessings we will enjoy when as the bride of Christ we are eternally united with our Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus.

Now the Spirit lives in us to give us guidance and power to live for God (Jn 16:13; Gal. 5:22, 23). But someday we'll have even more: We will live in the very presence of God. With joyful anticipation we await that day--for our future is guaranteed! --V C Grounds

God's guidance and help that we need day to day
Is given to all who believe;
The Spirit has sealed us--He's God's guarantee
That heaven we'll one day receive. --J D Branon

The greatest joy on earth is the sure hope of heaven.

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Help Them To Achieve

Ephesians 1:15-23

January 9, 1998

Newspaper columnist Jean Calmen once wrote about a teacher she called Miss K. In her youth, Calmen had been a student of Miss K's, so she sent the teacher a copy of a column she was especially proud of.

Miss K had always taught her students to have confidence in their abilities. That's why Calmen was disappointed when her aging teacher responded with a handwritten note that said, "I was aware of the fact that you were intelligent, but I never thought that someday I would be reading articles from your pen in the newspaper." Calmen had expected her former teacher to say, "I knew you could do that."

If anyone should instill hope and bring out the best in others, it should be the Christian. In Ephesians 1, the apostle Paul let his "students" know that he prayed for them constantly. And he did so with great expectations. He wanted them to rise above self-serving behavior and develop the character and likeness of Christ. He told them they could do anything God wanted them to do through Christ who would strengthen them (Phil 4:13).

As we experience God's power in our own lives, we can encourage others. Together we can help each other achieve great things for Him. --M R De Haan II

If someone sees the best in me,
I make the best my goal;
His faith that God will strengthen me
Encourages my soul. --D J De Haan

A little spark of accomplishment can ignite great endeavors.

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A Powerful Lesson

Ephesians 1:15-21

July 24, 2002

In 1892, John Hyde boarded a ship in New York harbor and set out for India. His goal was to proclaim the gospel to people who had not heard about Jesus. During the next 20 years he earned the nickname "Praying Hyde" because he often spent hours and even many days in prayer for the salvation of nonbelievers and the revival of Christ's followers.

On one occasion, Hyde was upset about the spiritual coldness of a pastor, so he began to pray, "O Father, you know how cold—" But it was as if a finger stopped his lips from uttering the man's name.

Hyde was horrified when he realized that he had judged the man harshly. He confessed his critical spirit and then determined not to focus on the shortcomings of others but to see them as individuals whom God loves. Hyde asked the Lord to show him things that were "of good report" (Philippians 4:8) in the pastor's life, and he praised God for the man's virtues. Hyde learned later that during this exact time the pastor's spiritual life was revitalized.

Let's not be faultfinders—even in prayer. We can follow Paul's example of focusing on what God has done and what He can do in the lives of others (Ephesians 1:17, 18, 19, 20, 21). Instead of praying against people, let's pray for them. —Joanie Yoder

Prayer - Father, give me the wisdom to know how to pray for others—with kindness, not criticism; with love, not anger; with grace, not judgment.

Be a grace-giver, not a faultfinder.

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I'm Rich!

Ephesians 1:17

May 10, 1995

A troubled Tallahassee couple had been kicked out of their house and were sleeping in a battered car. They were afraid their three children would be taken from them and placed in a foster home. But then they won \$709,943 in the state lottery.

Suddenly they were rich. They rented a stretch limousine to pick up their after-tax payoff of \$565,554.68.

Imagine stumbling on to that kind of money. How would you feel? What if you won 100 times that much?

How would all that money compare with the kind of riches described in Ephesians 1? If we have put our hope of salvation in Jesus Christ alone, we are spiritually rich! Do we realize it?

The anxieties of daily troubles can blind us to what it means to know the Son of God, the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance, and the power that He has to provide for us (Eph. 1:18, 19). Bills and mindless desires can make it easy to envy those who stumble upon infinitely less than the eternal riches we possess.

Father, forgive us for our distraction and unbelief. Open once more these eyes that desperately need to see the inexpressible riches You have given us through Your Son Jesus Christ. --M R De Haan II

You may have much gold and grandeur,
Yet by God be counted poor;
He alone has riches truly
Who has Christ, though nothing more. --Anon.

To be rich in God is far better than
to be rich in goods.

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Faith & Riches

Ephesians 1:18

October 10, 2005

Do you want to be rich? Do you think your faith will bring you riches? What kind of riches are you looking for?

There's good news and bad news if wealth is what you want. The good news is that God's Word does promise riches to the believer. The "bad" news is that it doesn't have anything to do with money.

Here are some examples of the riches that can be ours as believers in Jesus Christ:

An understanding of God the Father and the Son, "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2, 3).

Christ, "the hope of glory," living in us (Colossians 1:27).

Mighty strength in our inner being, "through His Spirit" (Ephesians 3:16).

Having all our needs met by God (Philippians 4:19).

The "wisdom and knowledge of God" (Romans 11:33).

"Redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins," which comes from God's grace (Ephesians 1:7).

Yes, God's Word promises us great riches—treasures that we cannot even attempt to purchase with any amount of money. It is these riches that we must seek, enjoy, and use to glorify their source—our heavenly Father.—Dave Branon

The treasures of earth are not mine,

I hold not its silver and gold;

But a treasure far greater is mine;

I have riches of value untold. —Hartzler

God's Word promises riches that money cannot buy.

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Ephesians 1:19, 20

Spurgeon, C. H.

Morning and evening

In the resurrection of Christ, as in our salvation, there was put forth nothing short of a divine power. What shall we say of those who

think that conversion is wrought by the free will of man, and is due to his own betterness of disposition? When we shall see the dead rise from the grave by their own power, then may we expect to see ungodly sinners of their own free will turning to Christ. It is not the word preached, nor the word read in itself; all quickening power proceeds from the Holy Ghost. This power was irresistible. All the soldiers and the high priests could not keep the body of Christ in the tomb; Death himself could not hold Jesus in his bonds: even thus irresistible is the power put forth in the believer when he is raised to newness of life. No sin, no corruption, no devils in hell nor sinners upon earth, can stay the hand of God's grace when it intends to convert a man. If God omnipotently says, "Thou shalt," man shall not say, "I will not." Observe that the power which raised Christ from the dead was glorious. It reflected honour upon God and wrought dismay in the hosts of evil. So there is great glory to God in the conversion of every sinner. It was everlasting power. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him." So we, being raised from the dead, go not back to our dead works nor to our old corruptions, but we live unto God. "Because he lives we live also." "For we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God." "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Lastly, in the text mark the union of the new life to Jesus. The same power which raised the Head works life in the members. What a blessing to be quickened together with Christ!

July 16, 2000

Forty Amazing Days

Ephesians 1:20-21

During the 40 days between His resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus appeared again and again to His disciples. What an amazing and significant time that was! It seemed as if He came out of nowhere, then just as mysteriously He would vanish from their sight. He spoke to them about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), and even ate with them (Luke 24:43). These appearances were not some figment of their imagination.

When I was a boy, I used to ponder those mysterious events. Where did Jesus come from when He appeared, and where did He go when He disappeared? I came to believe that Jesus was able to slip from heaven to earth and back again during those 40 days. Then on the 40th day He ascended and disappeared into a cloud to remain at the Father's right hand until the time comes for Him to return (Acts 1:9-11; Ephesians 1:20, 21).

Mystery still remains, but I find comfort in the fact that the Bible records those events. They strengthen my faith in knowing that before Jesus' disciples began to preach the gospel, they were absolutely sure He was alive. They also reassure me that heaven is near at hand.

How wonderful to know that Jesus is alive and that heaven is only a step away! —Herbert Vander Lugt

Jesus the Savior reigns,
The God of truth and love;
When He had purged our stains,
He took His seat above. --Wesley

No matter where we are, Jesus is only a prayer away.

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Why The Ascension?

July 15, 2000

Ephesians 1:22-23

God raised Jesus from the grave and exalted Him to His right hand in heaven (Ephesians 1:20). Yet for 40 days Jesus made many bodily appearances to His disciples. But the 40th day was different. With His disciples looking on, He slowly ascended into the sky until a cloud hid Him from view (Acts 1:9).

Why didn't Jesus continue His visible appearances on earth? He had told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would not begin His work until after He left (John 16:7). The time had come for His followers to trust His word instead of relying on their physical senses (20:25,29). Their Master's slow, visible, and final ascent was a dramatic way of saying to them that a new era was about to begin.

From heaven Jesus would send the Holy Spirit to replace His bodily presence. Christ would form the church and rule as its Head (Ephesians 1:22, 23). By His Spirit, He would live within His followers and fill them with peace and power. In heaven He would intercede for them before the Father's throne (Hebrews 7:25). He would no longer be visibly present, but He would still be with them in a very real way (Matthew 28:19-20).

The same is true for every believer today. That's why we can be thankful that Jesus ascended to heaven. —Herbert Vander Lugt

He who came to save us, He who bled and died,
Now is crowned with glory at His Father's side;
Nevermore to suffer, nevermore to die,
Jesus, King of glory, is gone up on high. --Havergal

Jesus ascended to heaven that He might continue His work on earth.

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