

Time to Reflect

- Can you think of some reasons to explain why the eyes of human hearts are often closed to the Christian message?
- What do you think it means to live as a person who has eternal hope?

In our last study our attention was drawn to the riches and blessings that God lavishes on His people. We were reminded that we are chosen by God, as well as adopted and accepted by Him. We also reflected on the process of salvation. This week we will focus on the importance of spiritual growth and we are encouraged to understand what great wealth we have in Christ. Beyond this, we will study Paul's great prayer and how it affects our daily Christian living.

"We discovered that we were 'born rich' when we trusted Christ. But this is not enough, for we must grow in our understanding of our riches if we are ever going to use them to the glory of God. Too many Christians have never 'read the bankbook' to find out the vast spiritual wealth that God has put to their account through Jesus Christ."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p41)

Specifics

- Our passage begins with words of praise and commendation. Paul drew the attention of the Ephesians to the occasion when he heard about them, especially their faith in Jesus and their love for all God's people (v15). This is heartwarming to read and reflect on. Little wonder that Paul rejoiced (v16)!
- Such a positive position should, surely, be the intention and desire of every Christian – to love and serve God and other people.
- Warren Wiersbe suggests, **"The Christian life has two dimensions: faith towards God and love toward men, and you cannot separate the two."¹**
- Yet this is only the beginning of our passage and Paul had much more to say. He realised that the Ephesians still had to grow deeper in their relationship with God. As such, he prayed for them.
- There are four main requests made by Paul in what could be referred to as his 'prayer for enlightenment.'
- It is important to realise that spiritual enlightenment comes from the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation (John 14:25-26) and He reveals to us the truth of God's Word so that we can grow deeper in our relationship with God.
- This enlightenment also comes to the heart of the believer (v18). Wiersbe offers an important observation as he writes, **"The inability to see and understand spiritual things is not the fault of the intelligence but of the heart. The eyes of the heart must be opened by the Spirit of God."²**

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p42.

² Ibid, p43.

- Paul's prayer contains four important teachings that help us understand the spiritual riches that God has given us and encourage us to go for growth.

1. That They Might Know God (v17b)

- As Christians, we should all be striving to know God better. Our relationship with Him should be one that is growing deeper and closer.
- Wiersbe brilliantly reflects, *"The believer must grow in his knowledge of God. To know God personally is salvation (John 17:3). To know Him increasingly is sanctification (Phil.3:10). To know Him perfectly is glorification (1 Cor. 13:9-12).³"*
- Paul wanted the Ephesians to grow in their knowledge of God and not settle for a shallow relationship. The more we learn about God, the more we love Him. This love then leads us to long to grow closer to Him each and every day.

2. That We Might Know God's Calling (v18a)

- God calls us by His grace and not because of any good work we can achieve. He calls us, firstly, to faith and then to service.
- As Christians we have been called out of darkness and into God's marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9). This is the transition from hopelessness to hopefulness, and God wants us to be a people who know and live with His eternal hope. This carries with it an assurance of and for the future.
- No matter what is going on in our lives or how challenging our circumstances may be, there is always hope because of what Jesus Christ has done for us.
- Wiersbe unpacks this further as he observes, *"The believer's hope is, of course, the return of Jesus Christ for His church (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 John 3:1-3). When we were lost, we were 'without hope' (Eph. 2:12), but in Jesus Christ, we have a 'living hope' (1 Peter 1:3) that encourages us day by day.⁴"*
- This hope should help us spiritually as we journey through life – challenging us to pursue purity, embrace radical obedience, and demonstrate total faithfulness to God.

3. That We Might Know God's Riches (v18b)

- This does not refer only to our inheritance in Christ (v11), but His inheritance in us. It's incredible to realise that God looks at us as part of His great wealth.
- When Jesus returns, we shall be *"...to the praise of his glorious grace" (v6)*. God has invested in us and He longs for us to fulfil our potential. He looks to our future and isn't limited by our past.
- Wiersbe highlights, *"We Christians live in the future tense, our lives controlled by what we shall be when Christ returns. Because we are God's inheritance, we live to please and glorify Him.⁵"*
- As we strive to know God's riches, we are stepping into a life of dedication and devotion to Him.

4. That We Might Know God's Power (v19-23)

- The power of God that Paul refers to is the divine, dynamic and eternal strength that is available to all Christians (v19). We need to believe in God's power and embrace it every day. There are those who would seek to separate us from Christ and rob us of experiencing God's riches (v21).
- We cannot face the trials and tests of life without the power of God. We have to learn to depend on God and trust Him without reservation.
- We are called to experience God – His calling, His riches and His power. This is truly transformative and it leads to a deeper and more blessed relationship with Him. This is 'Reading The Bankbook.'

³ Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p43.

⁴ Ibid, p44.

⁵ Ibid, p45.