

OUR RICHES IN CHRIST

Lesson Aim To praise the Lord for the amazing riches He has given believers.

Suggestion: Have the students read the Scriptures and answer the questions in the student lesson. Ask the questions below for class discussion where they fit into the lesson.

Introduction: God has not only saved the one who puts his faith in Jesus Christ, but He has also made him exceedingly rich in spiritual blessings. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3).

What riches do believers have in Christ? 1:3-14

1. Believers are **chosen** by God before the foundation of the world (1:4). God's choices in eternity past (His election/predestination) are based upon His foreknowledge (Rom 8:29-30; 1 Pet 1:2). The Bible does not reveal exactly what He foreknew when He made His sovereign choices, but it is certain that He did not mitigate man's responsibility to receive Christ before he could become His child (Jn 1:12). No one can successfully deny that God knows all things. He foreknew the need for His Son to die for all sinners before He had created anyone (1 Pet 1:19-20). Since God initiated the plan to save sinners and determined to have His Son die for the sins of all people (1 Jn 2:2), it is incredible to think that God did not know who would repent of their sins and receive His Son as Savior. So it is credible that God foreknew all those that would heed His command to seek Him while He could be found and call upon Him while He was near (Isa 55:6). Since Jesus opened the eyes of blind men, certainly God is able to open the darkened minds of sinners while He is near so they can receive His gift of salvation. This is His sovereign will. Both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man are taught in the Bible (note the responsibility of man in v. 13; cf. Rom 10:13). So it is plausible to say God's foreknowledge enabled Him to choose those that would respond to His call and receive the righteousness of Christ so they could be holy and without blame (blemish) before Him (cf 5:27).

2. Believers were **adopted** in God's family by Jesus Christ (1:5). The New Testament concept of adoption gave a person the position of an adult in the family. It did not have the idea of adding a person to a family. In God's family, believers are added when they are born again (regenerated), but they are adopted when they are placed as adults in His family. When they were born again, they were children, but children cannot use their inheritance until they become adults. Through adoption God gave them the position of adults so that they can use their inheritance now. God's purpose for all believers was made sure through predestination.

3. Believers are **accepted** by God in the Beloved (1:6), that is, they are favored by God without any of their own personal good works, because they are in Jesus Christ. They are potentially placed in Him according to God's plan before the foundation of the world. They are actually placed in Him when they receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

4. Believers are **redeemed** from bondage, **forgiven** of all sin by the blood of Jesus Christ (1:7). Christ's blood paid the price of sin (transgression) by His crucifixion. Believers are forgiven for these offenses by the riches of God's grace (cf. 2:4, 7). God's grace carried away their sins so they are remembered no more (forgiveness means to carry away - cf. John 1:29). Now believers are free to serve the Lord from a heart of love and gratitude.

5. God has **informed** New Testament believers of His plans previously unknown (1:8-10). He has given them wisdom and understanding (prudence) to know His total plan of redemption. The "mystery of His will" is defined as a secret that has now been revealed to His people. That plan is the eventual union of all things in Christ, which are in heaven and on earth. He will be the Head of all things. Without Christ nothing can hold together, but with Him all things will work together in perfect harmony and blessing. This will happen when the Millennial Kingdom is established on earth and Christ is the King of all kings in the world.

6. Believers have obtained an **inheritance** from God in Christ (1:11; cf. 1 Pet 1:3-5). They are joint heirs with Christ (Rom 8:16-17). They will reign with Christ in His Millennial Kingdom (Rev 3:21). Later in this chapter, it says that believers are made an inheritance for God (cf. 1:18). God has made believers a special gift for His Son to be His body (1:22, 23), to be His building (2:19-22), and to be His bride (5:23-32). This is Christ's inheritance.

7. When sinners hear the Gospel and believe it, they are **sealed** by the Holy Spirit (1:13). The Spirit seals those that are genuine believers and His seal guarantees their salvation forever. They cannot lose it. It indicates that God's transaction for their salvation is finished. God is now the owner of their bodies and spirit (1 Cor 6:19, 20). Their salvation will be kept secure until the day of final redemption (1 Pet 1:3-5).

8. The Holy Spirit dwells in believers and He is their **earnest** for full salvation (1:14). The earnest money is the down payment for a purchased item. It guarantees the full payment in the future. The same is true in salvation. The Spirit dwells in believers to assure them that they will dwell with all persons of the Godhead in the future. Full salvation comes on the day of redemption when their bodies will be resurrected and they will be like Christ, for they shall see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2).

These eight blessings are your spiritual possessions as a result of your position in Christ through salvation. The magnificence of these blessings should cause you to glorify God in your attitude, in your walk, and in your talk.

What is learned about believers in Paul's prayer for the Ephesian believers? 1:15-23

Paul recorded two prayers in his letter. The first one was for enlightenment (1:15-23), and the second one was for enablement (3:14-21). In his first prayer he gratefully acknowledged the believer's faith in the Lord and their love for all saints (1:15-16), but he desired them to grow in their spiritual knowledge of God (1:17-23). Believers need to know God intimately to cherish what He has done for them.

Believers know God as their heavenly Father at salvation. They know Him still better as the Spirit sanctifies them. They will know Him best when they are glorified in His presence. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation desires to make God increasingly well known to all believers. Paul desired the believers to know three things about God which is the subject of the remainder of his prayer.

First, Paul wanted believers to know **the hope of God's calling (1:18)**. God's calling will be fulfilled when Jesus Christ returns for His Church (1 Thes 4:13-18). This is the hope (confidence) of all believers in this age of grace (1 Pet 1:3). A knowledge of the return of Christ will make them faithful and wise (Luke 12:42-44), and it will purify their lives (1 Jn 2:28-3:3).

Second, Paul wanted believers to know they are **the glory of God's inheritance (1:18)**. In the future, God will display His work done in all believers. He has invested much in their salvation, sanctification and glorification. This marvelous work in their lives will bring rich glory to Him. Not only will He be glorified in the believers (2 Thes 1:10), but believers will be glorified in Him (Col 3:4). Knowing God's purpose for believers should cause them to glorify God in this life as well as in the next. This is God's will for them and in doing God's will there are great blessings for them.

Third, Paul wanted believers to know **the greatness of God's power (1:19-23)**. God's power was demonstrated in creation, in the flood, and in delivering Israel from Egypt, but the greatest demonstration of His power was in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This is the power available to every Christian (1:19). But God's power goes even beyond the resurrection of Christ. It also includes Christ's ascension to heaven, His exaltation over every dominion both in this world and in the one to come and His glorification before all His creation. The power available for believers is more than enough to make everyone of them successful witnesses and protect them from the attacks of Satan and his evil forces. This power should challenge the faith of believers to obey whatever the Lord says to them. God desires to empower His children to do good works for His name's sake.