

You're Much Richer Than You Think - Part 2

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Date: 06 February 2011

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[0 : 00] You are richer than you think. Most of you know those are the words of the current marketing slogan of the Scotiabank. You are richer than you think.

The advertising department of the bank has put together some very creative, clever commercials around those words. My favorite is the one with the middle-aged man who comes into the bank a bit disheveled because he's stressed out over financial insecurity, and he comes into the bank carrying his portfolio, which is obviously much in disarray.

The bank's financial consultant looks at the man and then looks at the portfolio, and he says to the man, you didn't get that at this bank, did you? The man responds, no, and then asks the consultant to take a look at his portfolio, saying, I think it is broken.

After a quick look through the pages, the consultant says, yes, it is broken. The man's face drops even further, and then the consultant says, but we can fix it.

The man does not know how to respond or express his gratitude and relief. There's this awkward exchange of high fives and fist pumps and handshakes, and then the slogan, you are richer than you think.

[1 : 24] To which the apostle Paul says a hearty amen. Yes, you are richer than you think. Now, I know that I'm being a bit acronistic in that.

Paul did not live when there was a Scotiabank present in Rome. But had there been a bank in Rome, and had that bank had the advertising slogan, you are richer than you think, I think Paul would have grabbed that slogan in the service of the gospel.

He did it with the dominant slogan of his time. Caesar is Lord. The words were the glue that held the empire together.

Roman citizens could believe anything else they wanted to, as long as they said Caesar is Lord. As long as they said the words that drove the imperial cult, the worship of Caesar as Lord and God. Caesar is Lord. Paul grabbed that. So did every other disciple of Jesus. Grabbed that slogan, saying, yes, there is a Lord. There is a sovereign. He turns out to be the man from Galilee, the carpenter from Nazareth, the one who gave his life on a cross.

[2 : 37] Jesus is Lord. And in relationship with the Lord Jesus, you are richer than you think. Or, as Paul would have said it, you are much richer than you think.

Much richer in the richer riches of the riches of the gospel. Now, our text today is the text we've been soaking in over the last three weeks.

The first chapter of Paul's letter to the Christians in Ephesus, verses 3 through 14. In the original, it is one long sentence.

One of the longest sentences in the Bible. 202 words. And what an alternative reading of reality it gives us. As you take the text in hand, think about it as if the Apostle Paul is now going to hand you a new portfolio.

And it's marked, you are richer than you think. If you are able, will you stand for the reading of good news?

[3 : 42] 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, just as he chose us before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless in him.

In love, he predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the beloved.

In him, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he made known to us the

mystery of his will, according to his kind intention, which he purposed in him, with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth.

In him, we have also obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to his purpose, who works all things after the counsel of his will, to the end, that we who were first to hope in Christ should be to the praise of his glory.

In him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory.

[5 : 25] Wow. Let us pray. Dear God, it's amazing. It's amazing what you did for a prisoner, sitting in a filthy jail, enabling him to think these thoughts and write these words.

Will you now help us enter into the reality the words are describing as never before? We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. You may be seated.

Every time I read that text, I see something else and think about something else. It's just so rich. Did you hear and see the words that Paul used? Every, freely bestowed, riches of his grace, lavished, inheritance, every spiritual blessing, grace which he freely bestowed on us, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, and we have obtained an inheritance.

Note especially the word in verse 7, riches, riches of his grace. The word is plutos, from which we get our word plutocracy, the super rich.

[6 : 50] The verb form of this noun means to fill, or to make full, or to fill up to the full. In relationship with the Lord Jesus, we have been made plutocrats.

Very, very rich people. Again, Paul is in Rome, in jail, going on five years now, the last two years in Rome.

He's deprived of nearly everything we think we need to make it in the world. He's deprived of all the riches that we think we need in order to live fully human, fully alive.

In Rome, in jail, Paul is caught up by how extravagantly rich he and we are. And did you notice, as we read the text, that it's all according to plan, chosen before the foundation of the world, predestined, he uses the word twice, according to his kind intention, or his good pleasure, according to his purpose, who works all things after the counsel of his will.

Everything God does for us in Jesus Christ, he does purposefully. God is not acting on some whim. God is not caught up in some emotional state, from which he will one day recover.

[8 : 05] No, it has been, and still is, God's considered, calculated, deep resolution, to make us rich.

And did you hear and see that phrase, in Christ? Or it's equivalent. Paul uses it eleven times in this one long sentence. We are richer than we think or feel, because of Christ, Christ.

But more than because of Christ, in Christ. In Christ is our true location in the world. In Rome, in jail, in Vancouver, in all kinds of life circumstances, but also, and primarily, in Christ.

As East Stanley Jones, who spent his life for the people of India, used to say, in Christ, we are in everything that is in Christ. And if Christ is in us, everything Christ is, is in us.

Every spiritual blessing, freely bestowed, lavished upon us, according to the riches of his grace. All because of Christ, all realized in Christ.

[9 : 18] So, let us take a few moments, and open up this portfolio, that we have been given, and celebrate, just how much, God has given us.

Paul is going to identify, seven spiritual blessings. I think there are a whole lot more. Actually, he uses the word every. But of the every, Paul wants to identify, seven.

So, blessing number one, verse four. Just as he, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, chose us in him, in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and blameless before him.

Chosen, elected. As I encouraged you last Sunday, as you try to get your mind, around all that this blessing means, do not lose sight, of the fundamental point, Paul is celebrating.

Our salvation, is not grounded, in ourselves. our salvation, is not finally determined, by anything we do, or not do.

[10 : 26] Our salvation, is grounded, in God's free, sovereign, gracious choice, to make us his own. That is, we are not an accident.

No matter how you were conceived, no one in this room, is an accident. That you and I, have come within, the orb of the gospel, is not an accident.

That you or I, believe, what the New Testament, claims about Jesus of Nazareth, is not an accident. None of us, stumbled into existence.

And none of us, stumbled into the hearing, of the gospel. And none of us, stumbled into faith. Chosen, elected, before the foundation, of the world.

The second blessing, it's in verse 5. He predestined us, to adoption, as sons and daughters, through Jesus Christ, to himself.

[11 : 28] Again, as I mentioned, last Sunday, do not be thrown off, the trap, by this word predestined. Focus, on the fundamental thing, Paul is celebrating. We have, a destiny.

And it's not, our own making. Which means, it's not contingent, upon ourselves, to make it all happen. We have been, destined, with a destiny, and it is, to be adopted.

From long, before the world, was even a dream, there was a relationship. A relationship, between a father, and a son. A relationship, marked by, delight, creativity, intimacy, servanthood, and love.

And that relationship, made a decision, long ago. Dare I put it, in very simple terms? The relationship said, like, dude, this is too good, for us to keep, to ourselves.

Let us make creatures, who can also enjoy, this intimacy, this creativity, this servanthood, and love. And so, the relationship, made us, and predestined us, gave us a destiny, that we too, would become children, in this relationship.

[12 : 39] That we too, would join the son, in his enjoyment, of the father, and that we too, would have the father's embrace. Blessing number three, verse seven.

In Christ, we have redemption, through his blood. Redemption, it means, release from captivity, because the Lord Jesus Christ, has paid, the redemption price.

Jesus has come, and paid the ransom, that sets the captives free. And he has set us free, from all that holds, humanity in bondage. Free from the bondage, to sin, from the lordship, of powers, in the heavenly realms, from the forces, of darkness, from the lies, and accusations, of the evil one, and from the finality, of death.

He has released us, from it all, to set us free, so that we can actually, enjoy God's election, and adoption, of us.

Blessing number four, it's in verse seven. We have forgiveness, of our trespasses. Forgiveness. It's just not, it's not another way, to say redemption.

[13 : 54] It means more. Forgiveness, is all about, the restoration, of relationship. You see, theoretically, we could be released, but then not have, a relationship, with God.

Like someone, coming along, and setting a bunch, of captives, free from a jail, but then moving on, and wanting no relationship, with them. Forgiveness, is all about, establishing, a relationship, with the one, who sets us free.

Forgiveness, of our trespasses. Paul is choosing, his words, very carefully here. Sin, is the ordinary, garden variety, word, that we use.

And sin, means to miss the mark. Like an archer, pulling back, an arrow, and letting it go, and missing the target. We miss the mark. But transgression, means, to cross the line.

We come up, to a sign, on a door, or a gate, and it says, no trespassing. And we look at the sign, and we think for a little while, and what do we do?

[14 : 59] We press through. We do this, all the time. By his blood, Jesus erases, our sin. He erases, our missing, of the mark.

He wipes that off, the slate. And by his blood, Jesus, forgives, our trespasses. He chooses, not to hold, our willful disobedience, against us.

And then he takes, the rap, for our trespasses. And then brings us, into relationship, with him, and the father. I sometimes, pray, with a book, entitled, A Diary, of Private Prayers.

Written by Donald Bailey, in 1949. Any of you, know this book? It's a great treasure. I've recently bought it, for our staff to read. And I turn to this book, to help me pray, especially times, when I'm too weary, to formulate my own words, or at times, when I'm feeling, too guilty, and too ashamed, to pray.

In the book, Bailey has a prayer, for each morning, and each evening, of each day of the month. Now, last January 18th, I was deeply ministered to, by the prayer, that is for the 18th evening.

[16 : 12] Bailey has the readers, pray this confession. For my deceitful heart, and crooked thoughts, for barbed words, spoken deliberately, for thoughtless words, spoken hastily, for envious, and prying eyes, for ears that rejoiced, in injury, and rejoiced, not in the truth, for greedy hands, for

wandering, and loitering feet, for haughty looks, have mercy on me, O God.

And then Bailey has us, pray this. Almighty God, in asking your forgiveness, I cannot claim, a right to be forgiven, but only cast myself, on your unbounded love.

I plead no merit, I can plead, no extenuating circumstances, I cannot plead, the frailty of my nature, I cannot plead, the force of the temptation, I encountered, I cannot plead, the persuasions, of others, who led me astray, I can only say, for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, my Lord, Amen. Amen. And wonder of wonders, he forgives. He wipes the slate clean, and he overcomes the trespass, because he wants the relationship.

There's more in this portfolio. Blessing number five, it's in verses eight to ten. Then, in all wisdom and insight, he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, with a view to the administration, suitable to the fullness of time.

[17:43] It almost reads like a very thick contract at the bank, doesn't it, with all these words. That is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens, and things upon the earth.

God has made known to us the mystery, the mystery of history. Now, this word mystery, that Paul uses, does not refer to something, that is hidden, which only those, who have the key, can open, only the elite spiritual, can know.

No, the word mystery, refers to God's purpose, for the world, that has been there, from the beginning, but which we could not discover, on our own, which has to be revealed, in order to be known.

And what Paul is celebrating, is the fact that it, has been made known, and it's been made known, because the key to the mystery, has come to the world. Jesus Christ has come.

He is the key, to the mystery of history. And what Paul is celebrating then, in this long, every spiritual blessing sentence, is that in relationship to the key, we know the mystery.

[18:51] And what is the mystery of history? It will all be, summed up in Christ. All of history, is going to be, summed up in Christ.

All the lines of history, economic, political, scientific, moral, are going to be, summed up in Christ. At a time, determined by God, who works all things, after his good pleasure, everything in the universe, will be summed up in Christ.

Now, Paul uses, an image rich word here, in the text. The word is built, on the word, kephale, which means head. So the literal, reading of the word, summed up, is summed up, under a head.

Or summed up, under one head. This is why, some people render the verb, recapitulate. Gather up, under one head.

Or more graphically, put on the head. Put the head, back on. Recapitulate. That is the mystery, which none of us, would have ever been able, to discover on our own.

[19:59] God is going to, recapitulate all things. God is going to, put the head, back on all things. Which means, that apart from Jesus Christ, and his grace, we are running around, with our head off.

All over the world right now, and I'm struck by this, the first time in my lifetime, all over the world, people are asking, what is wrong? What's gone wrong? The other day, I heard a newscaster, for CNN say, I don't understand, what has gone wrong?

The biblical answer, very simple. we are running around, with our head off. We have capitulated, to powers, beneath our dignity.

We have sought comfort, in things, that now hold us captive. I was speaking, to a group of pastors, near San Francisco, this last Wednesday. And to a person, these pastors, were lamenting, the collapse, of western civilization.

One pastor spoke, of the implosion, of western civilization. What has happened, to western civilization? Paul's answer is, we're trying to do this, on our own.

[21:20] We're trying to do this, with our head off. But the mystery, now made known, to all who want to know it, is that in his good pleasure, God is going to, recapitulate all things.

God is going to, put the head, back on the human race. And even now, God is working, all the lines of history, toward the great end, when the crucified, Lord, will be head.

We know, the mystery. There's more, to this portfolio. Blessing number six, in verse 11. In Christ, also, we have obtained, an inheritance.

Of course, this one long sentence, has been leading, in this direction, right from the beginning.

We've been chosen, we've been predestined, we've been redeemed, we've been forgiven, we've

been clued in, on the mystery of history, all leading, to sharing, in an inheritance.

We have been made, partakers, in an inheritance, Paul says. Now, if you've studied, this passage at all, you might know, that there's a debate, about whose inheritance, Paul is referring to.

[22 : 33] Is it ours? Something that we have obtained? Or is it God's? Something God has obtained? Like in the Old Testament, where again and again, God speaks of his people, as his inheritance, as his portion, as his possession.

So, is it that we now possess something? Or is it that God, now possesses something? I wonder, if Paul put it the way he did, that is vaguely, because he means both.

That is, God now possesses something, something new. He possesses us, men and women in Christ. And that makes sense. God chose us, God elected us, God adopted us, God redeemed us, God forgave us, for himself, to make us his own, to make us a people.

And, he is investing, all of his wealth, in his inheritance, in his people. Like a new homeowner does. Investing all they have, to make this home, all it can be.

Or like the owner, of a hockey team does. Investing all of his wealth, to make sure the team, gets to the Stanley Cup. Or, like the owners, of the Packers, and the Steelers, are doing, with their Pluto money, so that they can make it, to the Super Bowl.

[23 : 50] Packers 24, Steelers 17. God, has also, obtained an inheritance, and he's investing, all of his wealth in us.

And we thereby, have obtained, an inheritance. Because, we get in on this. We are his inheritance, and then, we get to enjoy, his inheritance, as he invests, in his people.

We get to get on, in on, him preparing, a place, for his people. A new heaven, and a new earth, where our head, is finally, back on. Which leads us then, to the seventh, great blessing, in our portfolio.

Verses 13, and 14. You were sealed, in Christ, with the Holy Spirit, of promise. Who was given, as a pledge, of our inheritance, with a view, to the redemption, of God's own possession.

Sealed. When we believed, we were sealed. When we hear, the gospel, of our salvation, and believe, to whatever degree, we are sealed.

[24 : 58] As it happens, when we sign, mortgage paper, in the bank. The mortgage, is sealed. It's sealed, to authenticate, the deal, but it's also, sealed, to secure, the deal.

When we believe, we are sealed, with the Holy Spirit. My goodness. God authenticates, the deal in Christ, with the Holy Spirit.

God secures, the deal, with the Holy Spirit, with the third person, of the Trinity, with God himself. Who says, Paul, is a pledge, of this inheritance.

Now, interesting, the word here, is the word, Aribon. And Aribon, comes from, the business world. It means, both, down payment, and first installment.

Now, get this. An Aribon, will bind, both the buyer, and the seller. Both the buyer, and seller, are bound, by this Aribon.

[25 : 58] When a buyer, puts down, an Aribon, as the down payment, but then fails, to pay the rest, the buyer, must then, lose the down payment.

When a seller, puts down, an Aribon, as the first installment, but fails, to deliver, on the rest, the buyer, must then, pay twice, the down payment, the first installment.

If they don't deliver, they have to give, twice the first installment. My goodness. The living God, has authenticated, the deal in Christ, with the Holy Spirit, and the living God, has sealed, the deal, in Christ, with the Holy Spirit.

God is saying, that if he does not, fulfill the promise, which is impossible, given his character, but if he does not, fulfill the promise, by using this word, Aribon, God is saying, he will pay twice, the first installment.

God will pay twice, the first installment. God is going to pay, twice the Holy Spirit. God is going to pay, twice himself, if he doesn't, give us the deal. What a portfolio.

[27 : 09] We are richer, than we think, or feel. We are much, richer, than we think, or feel. We have a, solid anchor, chosen in Christ, before the foundation, of the world.

We have a new identity, predestined to adoption, as sons and daughters, through Christ. We have new freedom. We have redemption, in Christ. We have restored relationship, through his blood, the forgiveness, of our trespasses.

We have perspective. We know the mystery. It's going to be summed up, in the true head. We can keep our balance, in the midst of change, and turmoil. We have an inheritance. We have shares, in God's inheritance.

And we have security, sealed. God himself, the first installment, on our future. Last Sunday, our son, and his family, worshipped with us.

And afterwards, David, who usually comes up, with a little pithy line, after he hears a sermon. David said, to me, you know what it all means, dad, don't you? He was referring, to this long sentence.

[28 : 09] You know what it all means, dad, don't you? And I said, what? It means, God's, got your back. It's going to be okay.

To the praise, of the glory, of his grace. Amen.