

Title: Riches of the Gospel
Text: Ephesians 2: 1-7
Date: September 6, 2012
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Ephesians 2: 7: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

We delight in the gospel of our Redeemer because through the gospel God shows his child our sin and shows the believer **the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.** This is the truth of God whereby the Spirit of God makes Christ the life and breath of our inner man. This is the truth whereby God makes a man entirely new, entirely what he was not before, and makes all things entirely new unto us.

I. WE SEE THE RICHES OF GOD TOWARD US BY HOW HE WAS LONGSUFFERING TOWARD US WHEN WE WERE IN OUR NATURAL STATE.

EVERY MAN AS WE ARE BORN INTO THIS WORLD IS DESCRIBED HERE. When you hear me use terms such as, “the old man”, “the flesh”, “the unregenerate”, the old nature” and so on...this text describes it.

Dead

Ephesians 2: 1: And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;...

“Dead” says it all.

- Not hurt—dead!
- Not wounded—dead!
- Not paralyzed—dead!
- Not almost—completely dead!

Illustration: Life goes out of a body. No pulse, no heartbeat, not a spark, or twitch, a cold lifeless corpse.

Application: This is the spiritual condition of everyone as we are born into this world the first time—of some sitting here now. We are born with no spiritual life, no spiritual movement, no spiritual ability to save ourselves from this condition, as spiritually lifeless as a corpse in a coffin. Fallen man is worthless! Dead men can do nothing. Lifeless men are not looked to or depended upon for anything. That is what every man is as he is born into this world—including every chosen child of God.

Illustration: If our condition of being spiritually dead was on a scale as—“0”—now we are going further backwards into the “minus” direction.

Dead and Corrupt

As if dead were not enough—it is added—v1:...**dead in trespasses and sins.**

Illustration: A dead carcass is bad enough. But worse is a dead carcass covered in ants and maggots and rot.

Natural man is not only spiritually dead, We are covered over—immersed—in our own corruption. We are crawling with the filth of our own trespasses and sins.

Swept Away

Ephesians 2: 2: Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,...

Natural man is swept along with the current of the world.

Illustration: Rip tide down the shore. Living folks are able to fight against it, but a dead man is merely swept away by the current.

The believer strives against being conformed to this world. But natural sinners not only do not fight against the course of this world—but gladly are swept along with the flow!

Application: Since Adam sinned and death passed upon all men, mankind has progressed further and further away from God. It is the course of this world to go away backwards from God.

- From the vilest to the one who appears best
- From the poorest to the richest
- From the filthy gutters to the pristine cathedrals

All natural men are in the same polluted ocean, swept away by the same “course of this world”, not toward God, but only further away from God.

Under Power of Darkness

But we go backwards even further—Paul also says natural man is under the dominion of the devil—**v2:...according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:**

2 Corinthians 4:4: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,...

Why is it that the natural man cannot receive the things of God? Why is there no delight in Christ? Why does the natural mind not see the exceeding sinfulness of sin? Why does the natural mind not sit at Christ’s feet, in our right mind, delighting to hear of these riches bestowed upon God’s saints? The prince of the power of the air has blinded their minds.

No Exeptions

There are no exceptions, this was so of each of us whom he has called. **v3: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.**

Some of these lusts and desires were the obvious polluting pleasures of the flesh. But there were some who appeared good—their lusts and desires were the intellectualism of the mind:

- Philosophies
- Vain deceit
- Feigned faith perhaps as was Paul’s.

God's elect were put in Christ by God the Father before the foundation of the world.

Ephesians 1: 3: Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: 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: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

God's elect were sanctified, justified and accepted in Christ our Surety before the foundation of the world. So there is no possibility that any of God's elect shall perish under the wrath of God.

But "by nature," in our natural state, even God's elect were "children of wrath, even as others." The principles and motives of our natural heart was no different than any other sinner. We were as ignorant of God as any other. Our natural heart was enmity against God just like every other sinner. We deserved the wrath of God like every other sinner.

II. WE DELIGHT IN THE GOSPEL BECAUSE IN THE GOSPEL WE HEAR OF GOD'S RICHES OF MERCY, LOVE AND GRACE TOWARD US.--Ephesians 2: 4: But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5: Even when we were dead in sins,...

But God who is RICH in Mercy

Mercy is God withholding from us what we have fully earned and fully deserved. Angels fell but God showed them no mercy. But when man fell it was the mercy of God that did not immediately destroy the whole human race.

Illustration: Why do you always preach about sin?

We can never appreciate the riches of God's mercy until we know the depths of our sins. Truly in proportion as we see how great a sinner we are the more we will value the riches of God's mercy. But we can't know the riches of mercy till God makes us to know the poverty of our sin.

Illustration: Luke 7: 37-47

It is painful when God makes us to know our sin. But it is the only way we will rejoice in the riches of God's mercy—**but God who is rich in mercy.**

His Great Love

But God...**for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins,...**God's love for his elect is unsearchable.

Ephesians 3: 17: That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, 18: May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Something of that love is revealed in that God's love was great toward us—**even when were dead in sins.** Sin is an abomination to God—a stench, a thing abhorred by God.

Illustration: When you come upon a dead animal in the woods covered with maggots—the stench of it, the vileness of it—causes us to turn and go the other way. Could you love something like that?

God is infinite purity, perfect holiness. God hates sin with perfect righteous hatred. But God who is rich in mercy with his great love wherewith he loved us EVEN when we were dead in sins. This mercy and love are never at the expense of justice. Christ bore the penalty we owed divine justice.

Romans 5: 6: For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 7: For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. 8: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9: Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. 10: For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. 11: And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

Christ Jesus is Salvation. Jesus Christ is God come from heaven in the flesh of like those he came to save. He is the One Holy and Righteous Man of God. He was made under his own law. He fulfilled—honored and magnified—his own law in precept and penalty. He justified every elect child of God. He purged all the sins of every elect child of God by his own blood. And because this Faithful Man is God the Son everything he accomplished for his people is eternal. Nothing can be added to it, nothing can be taken from it—not now, not ever. And the GodMan Mediator now reigns upon his own throne the mercy seat.

With mercy and love came the riches of his grace.

Ephesians 2: 6: (by grace ye are saved;)

Grace is the favor of God.

- Free grace—there is no worthiness, no merit, nothing of value in those God chose.
- Sovereign grace—it is God’s right to choose whom he would
- Distinguishing grace—Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated
- Superabounding grace—“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound:” (Ro 5:20)

(By grace ye are saved;) If God demanded the least work from us in order to be saved there would be no hope for any sinner—but salvation is all of grace!

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Romans 3: Justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Romans 11: 5: Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.

It is the grace of God that makes guilty sinners white as snow. By grace we are accepted in the Beloved. By grace we are sanctified in Christ by the Spirit of God. By grace we are saved with an everlasting salvation. Nothing melts the heart of stone but grace. Nothing brings a sinner to rest in the obedience of Christ alone but grace. Nothing makes the believer delight to walk after God but grace.

Illustration: All we heard at Danville was how God has saved us by grace? Did it make you want to sin against God? It made me want to honor him in this life.

IV. WE REJOICE IN THE GOSPEL BECAUSE WE HEAR OF THE RICHES OF ETERNAL LIFE BY CHRIST JESUS--See the three things he says here. **v5: God hath "quicken'd us together with Christ."; v6: "Raised us up together with Christ", "And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."**

He "hath quicken'd us together with Christ."

Christ really laid down his life and was buried in a tomb. But by the operation of the Holy Spirit--("quicken'd by the Spirit"), by the power of the Father, by His own divine power, Christ raised up His own body. All the elect of God are members of his body. When Christ was quicken'd—all the elect of God were quicken'd in him. Not in our experience of grace, but in Christ. And it is because we were quicken'd in him that Christ brings the gospel to us and the Holy Spirit enters in and quickens us to newness of life. **"You hath he quicken'd who were dead."**

We experience true God-wrought conviction of sin only when we have been made alive. We only begin to fear God when alive. The spirit of prayer enters in when we are quicken'd. Only when alive do we begin to beg God for mercy!

Raised us up together with Christ

Then Christ arose from the grave and all the elect of God arose in him--"members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." Likewise, when we experience this quickening grace, we are not left in the tomb of sin and misery. Once we have been brought to come to God not on the grounds of our works but on the ground of Christ's finished work, Christ says, "Lazarus come forth!" The Holy Spirit applies to blood inwardly and purges our conscious.

And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus

All the benefits and blessings of His death and resurrection floods our soul. We behold Christ ascended up where He was before, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. But now we behold that when he arose, we arose in him.

We cease living for ourselves, for this world, and our affection is not set on Christ above. Sin is dethroned in our hearts. The fear of death and hell and Satan has lost its grip upon our souls. We see Christ having conquered all and we trust him to keep us. Christ in glory is our hope, our assurance, that one day we will be with Christ in eternal bliss.

Application: Now how did all this come about? Why did God quicken your soul? Was it because you and I did something? No way! It was because God put you in Christ--you were a member of Christ. We were raised to "a good hope through grace"? Because, as a member of Christ's mystical body, you have already ascended, and are already sitting at the right hand of God with Christ, who is sitting as the head of His body there. Then the gospel becomes a delight of riches freely bestowed upon us:

- Total depravity becomes glorious because by the depths of our sins we see the heights of his love.
- Election is precious because Christ is the Elect in whom God chose us.
- Particular Redemption is glorious because by Christ redemption of his particular people our sins have been put away.

- Irresistible grace becomes precious because we behold how the Spirit raised us from the dead and the flesh profited nothing.
- Preservation of the saints becomes precious because it is by this same power we persevere—kept by the power of God.

The riches of God's mercy, love and grace becomes one harmonious gospel that delights our souls!

Ephesians 1: 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Ephesians 3: 19: And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

Colossians 3: 1: If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Amen!