

## Experiencing the Hope, Riches, and Power of God

Dear Friend,

There are so many things that can make us feel hopeless and powerless as we are thrown into a pit of despair that can seem almost impossible to climb out of. I know that in order to avoid such I need to know more than just about God, I really need to know Him.

Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:17-20 is a prayer for us to get to know God better. In verse 17 he asks, "*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.*"

When we ask for the Spirit and Power of God to grant us wisdom and revelation in Him, we are asking for a deeper knowledge of God in the midst of the chaos and confusion of daily living. That is why the hope spoken of in verse 18 is so important. It says, "*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.*"

The hope spoken of here is much more than just hitting the high notes in life by achieving personal ambitions. It involves the awesome inheritance awaiting those who trust in God and have received Christ as their Savior. This inheritance was described in verse 3 of Ephesians 1 where it says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.*"

It is when I forget this blessing, and the inheritance it involves, that I find myself being swallowed up by anxiety and worry. I know if I am going to have the "*hope of His calling and the riches of the glorious inheritance of the saints*", I must be aware of God's power at work in my life as I trust Him to meet every need.

Paul goes on to pray in verse 19-20 that we may realize, "*And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.*"

When I think about the exceeding greatness of God's power, I am reminded that He is the one who created the atom. From the atom, the atomic bomb is made. Now God is extending a power to those who believe, which is even greater than the atomic bomb.

In order to grasp the hope, the riches and power we have in Christ let us take a closer look at our true identity in Jesus Christ outlined in the book of Ephesians.

As we saw in Ephesians 1:3 we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. Ephesians 1:4 goes on to declare that in Christ we are holy and blameless because through Jesus Christ we are adopted as God's children (vs. 5,6).

I must confess that there are times when I don't feel like a holy, blameless, adopted child of God. At those moments all I feel is overwhelmed, hopeless and on the edge of despair. It is then I have a choice. I can continue down that road of doubt or I can cry out to God in prayer, requesting a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as I dig deeper into the scriptures asking for the enlightenment they provide.

With "*the eyes of my understanding enlightened*", I gain a new understanding of what it means that my sins are taken away and I am forgiven through God's grace as Ephesians 1:7 describes. As this happens, I am brought under Christ's authority (vs. 10, 11).

The fact that you and I are under the authority of Christ is evident by the Holy Spirit who is at work in our lives as Ephesians 1:13 explains, "*And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.*"

I am seeing as I get older that when God gives us the "*spirit of wisdom and revelation in Him*", hope takes root within and a new realization of the riches of the glory of His inheritance takes place. This begins to happen as I continue to study the identity in Christ given to those who believe.

In Ephesians 2:6 we see that we are raised up to sit with Christ in glory. "*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*"

Knowing that God has given us a place beside Christ in heaven, allow us to be more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who strengthens us. This happens because, *“We are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10).

Through my own power I know I cannot *“do these good works which God prepared for us to do.”* I must be shown by the Holy Spirit daily what these are in accordance with the wisdom and revelation given in the word of God. Then I need to believe the promises in the scriptures that declare, *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me”* (Philippians 4:13).

Believing that we are brought near to God through the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:13) releases the exceeding great power of God in our lives. As this happens, He will, *“Grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith”* (Ephesians 3:16, 17).

When this happens as you are *“Rooted and grounded in love,”* you will *“be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God”* (Ephesians 3:18-19).

“Filled up to all the fullness of God”, that is what the scripture promises and what Paul was praying for in Ephesians 1:18-19. As the power of God which *“He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead”*, explodes in us we will begin to realize what Ephesians 3:20 means when it says, *“Now unto him that is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.”*

It is this power of God that works in us which frees us to *“Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine”* (Ephesians 4:14). Instead verses 23 and 24 of Ephesians 4 says that through the power of the Holy Spirit, *“You will be renewed in the Spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”*

Putting on the new self in the likeness of God through the power of the Holy Spirit involves speaking the truth in love. It means speaking up and out when we see social injustices or wrong. Such wrongs may even make us angry, but as a new creation in Christ we refuse to internalize this anger. *“When angry, do not sin: do*

not ever let your wrath (your exasperation, your fury or indignation) last until the sun goes down. Leave no (such) room or foothold for the devil (give no opportunity to him)” (Ephesians 4:26-27 The Amplified Bible).

We are told in Ephesians 4:30-32, “*And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.*”

We grieve the Holy Spirit when we mistreat one another and let bitterness, rage and anger consume us. If we are going to experience the hope, riches and power of Christ we need to be mindful each day of the importance of kindness, compassion, and forgiveness.

We are told in Ephesians 5:1-2 to, “*Be imitators of God, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*” What a challenge, these verses put before us. They challenge us to be imitators of God, living a life of love as a fragrant offering to God. As we live this life of love through the power of the Holy Spirit, we become “children of light” in a world of hopelessness.

As children of the light, we must be students of the word and will of God. God’s word, the Bible is clear and speaks directly to each of us and our daily needs. That is why I must feast on God’s word daily, reading the Scriptures and applying them to every area of my life.

In the Word of God, we see we must continually be filled with the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18-20 tells us, “*Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

As we overflow with a continual song of praise and thanksgiving, we will maintain a spirit filled flow in our lives that will positively affect our relationships with others. This will cause us to, “*honor Christ and put others first.*” Ephesians 5:21 through Ephesians 6:9 shows us how this filling of the Holy Spirit the hope and power of God changes the way husbands, wives, children, employees, and

employers relate to one another. In these verses we see how important a selflessly submissive attitude is in all our family relationships.

Whether it is in our marriage or on the job we must “*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6:10-15 NIV).

If we are going to experience the hope, riches and power of God, we must put on the belt of truth. This means believing the word of God and the promises of God instead of the lies of Satan. Ephesians 6:14 goes on to tell us to put on the breastplate of righteousness. This is the righteousness of God, provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Putting this breastplate of righteousness on enables us to be defended against Satan’s attacks on our emotions and sense of self-worth. The breastplate of righteousness assures us of our forgiveness through Jesus Christ, thus freeing us from guilt, which tries to destroy our joy and peace.

Ephesians 6:15 directs us to have our feet, “*Fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.*” Equipping ourselves with this footgear of a readiness to spread the good news enables us to share with a hurting world that there is hope for Christ is risen.

All of this armor is for the front of the body. This shows that we are to be a people moving forward and not on the run. There is no armor for the backside.

If we are not going to let the devil keep us from experiencing the hope, riches, and power in God we must, “*Take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take up the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” (Ephesians 5:16-17 NIV).

The shield of faith allows us to resist the flaming arrows of doubt that the evil one would throw at us. It enables us to see life from God’s perspective with the knowledge that God has everything under control. Such knowledge makes it

possible for us to see beyond our circumstances and know with certainty that the victory is ours through Christ Jesus.

The helmet of salvation protects our minds from doubting the hope, riches and power that God has given us. It provides the peace and the assurance we need of our salvation when Satan is trying to throw doubts into our minds of God's love for us.

The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God is the only offensive weapon that we have in this list of armor. Through the sharp two-edged sword of the word of God we are able to take the offensive against Satan and experience victory.

Now we are told to "*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints*" (Ephesians 6:18). What a privilege prayer is. The invitation is given to us to talk directly to the creator and redeemer of the universe. Such an invitation is beyond human comprehension.

That is why Paul prayed, "*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places*" (Ephesians 1:18-20).

As this prayer takes place in our lives, we will put to work the directives given in the Book of Ephesians. Then God "will be able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us" (Ephesians 3:20).

Your brother in Christ,

  
Larry Rice