

## Our Riches in Christ

March 28, 2021

One of the things that has helped me deal with the troubles of the last year is to remind myself of my many blessings. One of the things that reminds me of my blessings is to read the blogs of missionaries serving in other countries. Their hardships point to my blessings and remind me to give thanks. One such article, by Jonathan Trotter, was titled, "Ten Reasons You Should Be A Missionary." Other missionaries added things to the list. Here are some of the reasons given. This is a little bit tongue-in-cheek.

- You'll get to try new things, like typhoid fever.
- Your driving skills will "improve." He showed a short video of a typical busy city intersection in Cambodia that has four lanes of traffic and no traffic lights or signs.
- You'll learn to be grateful for the little things, like cheese and soft drinks. The missionaries got excited when such things showed up in the local stores, which was rare.
- You get to try new foods, like fish heads and fried bananas.
- You discover you can do new things, like living without all-the-time electric power and running water, taking cold showers, or cramming in a vehicle with 18 other people.
- All the chicken is "free range," although mostly they eat the garbage in the gutters.
- Losing weight is easy because of the frequent bouts of diarrhea.
- If you can't have pets, due to your unpredictable lifestyle, the spiders are big enough to double as a pet.

As this list reveals, not all Christians have the same material blessings. But all Christians share the same spiritual blessings. It is good to be reminded of these on a regular basis and give thanks for them. In the Bible book of Ephesians, Paul reminds the Christians in the city of Ephesus some of the spiritual riches we all have in Christ Jesus.

He begins by praising God.

**Ephesians 1:3 (NIV) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.**

Praise is our first obligation to God. Let's look at these spiritual blessings together.

**1. God has always planned to save those who entrust their lives to Jesus.**

**Ephesians 1:4 (NIV) "...he chose us in him (Christ) before the creation of the world...**

Providing for salvation in Jesus was not God's plan B because of the Israelite's unfaithfulness. It was not a backup plan in case the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus. God always knew these things would happen and planned for Jesus to be the savior of the world. God so loved us he sent his son to die for us so we might live eternally with him. God has always planned to save those who entrust their lives to Jesus.

## **2. God covers us with Christ's righteousness.**

**Ephesians 1:4 (NIV) For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.**

We are not holy and blameless. I am not holy and blameless. We have never been fully committed to God, which is what holy means. We have never been without sin, which is what blameless means. The only really holy man was Jesus. He is the only person who deserves heaven. We are not holy and blameless. We need to be both in order to live with God.

When we became followers of Jesus God applied Jesus' death to our sins. And he took Jesus' holiness and blamelessness and applied them to us. God covers us with Christ's righteousness.

## **3. God adopted us.**

**Ephesians 1:4-5 (NIV) In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons (children) through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—**

Just as God, before creation, planned our salvation, he planned to adopt us. All humans are God's creation. But he wanted more. He wanted relationship with us. So, he adopts us into his family.

When you adopt someone they become your heir, a joint-heir with your other children. That means we have become inheritors of the same things Jesus will inherit as the Son of God. Paul writes of this in one of his other letters.

**Romans 8:16-17 (NIV) The (Holy) Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.**

We have been adopted into God's own family and are co-heirs with Jesus. When Jesus returns to earth and receives the recognition and glory that is His, we will receive glory with Him.

God's plan has always been to adopt us into a close, personal relationship with himself.

#### **4. God redeemed us from the consequences of our sin.**

**Ephesians 1:7 (NIV) "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins"**

Before we became Christians, our sin had already ruined us. Our sin had already condemned us to hell. Though we had not yet stood trial before God, we were as good as judged guilty and condemned to hell. That is the eventual outcome of all who do not follow Jesus. Our only hope was that someone would stand in for us and redeem us from the sentence that already hung over us.

That is what Jesus did. Jesus volunteered to stand in for us. Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins with His blood. With the blood of Jesus God purchased us back to himself.

**The word redeem means "to buy back." God bought us back from the consequences of our sin.** We put our faith in Jesus and were forgiven of our sins.

One time years ago, our neighborhood had the county bring out a trash dumpster, one of those big long ones. The dumpster was for people in our neighborhood to clean out and throw out their bulky junk, stuff that would not fit in a trashcan. By the end of two days it was full and overflowing.

The day after I saw it full, I saw something else. I saw two men with a pickup truck going through the dumpster, pulling stuff back out. They had pulled out a lawnmower, some bicycles and other stuff. Some of this they would fix up to use again. Other items they would take to sell for scrap metal.

Christian, you and I were living in the dumpster of sin, eventually to be dumped into hell. But in accepting Jesus, God pulled us out of that dumpster life. He bought our freedom with the blood of Jesus. God redeemed us from the consequences of our sin.

#### **5. God revealed His plans to us.**

**Ephesians 1:7 (NIV) "And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached**

**their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."**

If you owned a farm or business, you would not be expected to tell your employees your plans. Look what Jesus said to His followers the night before He died.

**John 15:15 (NIV) I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.**

Because we are the friends of God, He told us the future.

When I worked in the mailroom of a large company many years ago, we would often be told something new to do. Rearrange the work tables, or change the procedures for handling materials. But they rarely told us why we were making the changes. That lack of information would start all kinds of rumors about what was happening. We would have been better motivated if they told us why they were making the changes. We would feel more a part of the team.

God wants us to be part of His team. He wants us to feel the joy of seeing His plans come to fruition. So He has told us the ultimate goal of His plan. Quite simply, His plan is that ultimately all things, all people, all institutions, all governments, all nations, all the world will come under the rule of Jesus Christ. When Jesus returns to earth every eye will see Him and every person will know that HE is the LORD of all the earth. He will become king over all the earth.

Have you ever said, "I just don't know what the world is coming to." Well now you do. And you are a part of it.

We don't have it as rough as some of our missionaries do. But we all have things we are dealing with. Some of these are just part of life. And some have to do with the pandemic. But even in the midst of our troubles we are blessed. And keeping your blessings in mind can help you deal with all that you are facing each day.

Review your blessings. Give God thanks for each one. And rejoice in his love for you.