

I. Introduction

- A. In yourself, you're poorer than you think.
- B. In Christ, you're richer than you think.
- C. In yourself, there is frustration, immorality, depression, confusion, dysfunction, and brokenness, all covered over with a layer of self-justification and pride. In yourself, you're poorer than you think.
- D. In Christ, you're richer than you think. In Christ, there is healing, forgiveness, and a new start every day. In Christ, there is love, and joy, and peace. How much would you pay for real peace? IN Christ, you're richer than you think.
- E. Welcome to week two in our new series called Allies—creating a life where someone has your back. You have an ally in God, and you should have allies among God's people.
- F. I want to get right into Scripture today, so let me read it, and then go backwards a little bit, and give you the setup.

II. Scripture

- A. *3 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, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself (Ephesians 1:3-9, NKJV).*

III. Review

- A. You are looking at the longest sentence in the Bible actually; you're only looking at part of it. The sentence starts in verse 3, and runs all the way through verse 14. The author, a missionary named Paul, got so excited, he couldn't stop himself. So he gives you this amazing statement. In effect, he's saying, in yourself, you're poorer than you think, but in Christ, you're richer than you think.
- B. Last week, we looked at verses 3-6; today I want to get into verse 7-9. But there's something really cool here I want you to notice.
- C. Verse three says God has blessed you. That is a past tense verb, something God already did. He blessed you, He chose you, He adopted you, He accepted you. That was last week's message: what God did.
- D. Now, today, we move into verse 7, and notice the shift in verb tense. Today's verse begins with these four words—"In him, we have..." What tense is that verb, "have"? Present tense—Paul shifts the tense of the verb.
- E. He starts with what God did in the past (vv. 3-6).
- F. Then he moves on to what we have in the present (vv. 7-9). And don't miss the connection. The only reason we have what we have in the present is because of what God did in the past. The present blessings of God are always anchored on the past work of God in Christ.
- G. In the past, on the day God saved you, He blessed you, chose you, He adopted you, He accepted you. That was my message last week.
- H. This week, we move forward to your present possessions: What do we have? We have:
 - 1. Redemption (v. 7)
 - 2. Forgiveness (v. 7)
 - 3. Grace (v. 8)
- I. So, let's take these riches one at a time.

IV. What we have

- A. You have Redemption, v. 7
 - 1. *7 In Him we have redemption through His blood... (Ephesians 1:7, NKJV).*
 - 2. Today, redemption is a religious word.
 - 3. In the days when this book was written, it was not a religious word. Today, when I say redemption, some thoughts come into your mind that are probably religious. But back then, when Paul wrote the word "redemption" to the Ephesians, what came to mind for them was not religious.
 - 4. You see, in their society, slavery was a normal part of life. Every business had slaves. Every middle class person had slaves.
 - 5. And because many of the slaves were captured in war, some were highly educated, some were artistic, some were skilled craftsmen—in other words, a highly skilled workforce, without rights, and costing only what it took to keep them alive and functioning well.
 - 6. In the Roman society, slaves could save their pennies, and eventually buy their own freedom. The price of freedom was set by law. That price was called the ransom price.
 - a) *45 "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, NKJV).*

7. Jesus Himself paid our ransom. He set us free. We have redemption.
8. Now, I really struggled to come up with a non-religious substitute for the word redemption. Because when you really get what God is telling you here, it will blow your mind and I'm sorry, the word redemption just doesn't blow my mind. It's too religious. I'm too religious.
9. So I looked for a non-religious equivalent, and I'm going to lead up to the one that works best for me.
10. But first I want to make the case.
11. The problem with being a slave is that somebody owns you. You aren't free. But that's not how God made us. God created Adam and Eve, and told them to exercise dominion—through sin, they lost that dominion. They became slaves to every kind of brokenness mankind has imagined in our long, sorry history.
12. And then along came Jesus Christ. Jesus entered the slave market of sin. He found us standing there in our chains. He purchased us. He paid the price to set us free.
13. What price? The ultimate price—His own shed blood, His own sacrificial death on the Cross. That was the ransom, the price to redeem you; to set you free; to restore you to your God-given dominion.
14. So, here's the word I'd like to substitute for redemption—are you ready for it?
 - a) It's the word SELF-RULE.
 - b) In Christ, we have SELF-RULE.
15. Death doesn't rule you. Fear doesn't rule you. Anger doesn't rule you. Abuse from your past doesn't rule you. Shame. Guilt. Sin. Failure. Loss. Bankruptcy. Alcohol. Meth. Satan. Demons. Food. Body Image. Peer pressure. Death doesn't rule you. Your Inner Mess, your own flesh, the dark side, doesn't rule you.
16. You've been redeemed from the powers of darkness, and transferred into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
17. And what good news this was to the people of ancient Ephesus!
18. They were slaves to idols, to Artemis, and countless spirits. They were slaves to the stars, to the fates, to fear, and sensuality, and philosophy. They were slaves to multiple marriages, and all the psychological pain that brings. Those people were victims of forces beyond their control.
19. They were dysfunctional people in a dysfunctional society.
20. And along came Paul's message—God blessed you, God chose you, God adopted you, and God accepted you—so that now, for the first time your life, you have SELF-RULE through Jesus Christ who loved you and gave His life for you.
21. You are nobody's slave.
22. And so do you. What do you have? Redemption. What does that mean? SELF-RULE.
23. Now that brings up a question.
 - a) Why do I feel so many times that other forces still rule my life?
 - (1) I can't stop drinking, smoking, overeating.
 - (2) I can't stop arguing with my wife, my husband, my parents, my kids.
 - (3) I can't stop getting stoned, getting drunk.
 - (4) I can't stop gambling, spending money.
 - (5) I can't stop destroying every relationship I enter and sabotaging every good thing that comes my way.
 - (a) So you wonder if I have redemption—if I have SELF-RULE, why do I feel as if other powers are yanking me around all the time?
 - (i) Have you ever asked that?
24. Do you really want the answer?
25. Well, Paul starts giving that answer in chapter four, and we're only in chapter one! See, he's laying a foundation of TRUTH IN YOUR HEART so that later he can build a structure of WHOLENESS IN YOUR LIFE. You can't have the structure without the foundation. You can't have the WHOLENESS without the TRUTH—so you have to wait.
26. But for now, isn't it good to know you have redemption or self-rule because of Jesus Christ and His cross? Do you know what else you have?
 - B. You have forgiveness, v. 7.
 1. *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7, NKJV).*
 2. I want to press this as far as I can here, because this was first written in Greek, and we read it in an English translation, and it's not the normal word for sin.
 3. It's a less religious word, an everyday language word. It's not the word sins, though God absolutely does forgive us of our sins.

4. But here, He forgives us of our FAULTS, too.
 - a) You know all those screw-ups in your life? You have forgiveness.
 - b) You know all those mistakes you're going to make later today and tomorrow and the next day and the day after that? You have forgiveness.
 - c) You know those nasty habits that you think nobody sees? You have forgiveness.
 - d) Those self-justifying, self-absorbed styles of relating—you have forgiveness.
 - (1) All your sins, all your faults, all your guilt, all your shame.
 - (a) You have forgiveness.
5. And forgiveness comes from the Greek word that means to GET LOST. God told your sins and failures to get lost, so He can see you in your beauty, your wholeness, your dominion. So He can see the real you.
 - a) There are two voices that make us shrink away from God, and Adam and Eve proved them both.
 - (1) PRIDE: the voice that says I don't need God.
 - (2) SHAME: the voice that says God doesn't want me.
 - (a) Both voices are lies.
 - (b) God has forgiven you of all the things that make you hide from Him.
 - (c) So now, the only thing that keeps you from Jesus is your own dumb pride.
 - (3) You have forgiveness of all your faults.
6. And please don't ever think that God forgave you because He's something as lame as a lenient God or a super nice God.
7. He isn't. He isn't a wimp. He isn't a heavenly grandfather.
8. God is the Judge of all the earth. He is absolute justice and holiness and strictness rolled into one big ball along with absolute love and mercy and goodness.
9. If Jesus had not carried away your sins, if Jesus had not absorbed the wrath of God against sin, if Jesus had not offered the perfect sacrifice to pay the infinite ransom—then God would never have forgiven you.
10. That's why, regardless of what any preacher or teacher or upcoming book may say—this truth will never change:
 - a) *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36, NKJV).*
 - (1) And
 - b) *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27, NKJV).*
11. Translation?
 - a) LOVE CAN'T WIN IF HOLINESS LOSES.
12. But holiness has been satisfied in the death of Christ, and love wins every time a person comes to Him in faith and trust. Your forgiveness is solid, and it is real, and it is legal, and it is righteous, and it is not fraudulent, because it's in Christ Alone.
13. So we have redemption—self-rule—and forgiveness. You also have:
 - a) You have grace, v 7b, 8.
 1. *"...according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us... (Ephesians 1:7b, 8a, NKJV).*
 2. Grace is my personal life mission, my personal emphasis in my ministry. If I can convince a few people of the grace of God, I will die a happy man.
 3. But this is hard, because GRACE is the most counter-intuitive truth of all.
 - a) So either we reject it outright and think we have to pay for our blessings from God or...
 - b) Or, we melt it into some kind of gooey leniency, and make God a wimp.
 4. But whatever it is, it is the reason God forgave you, and the reason God redeemed you. Grace. Plus, it has been richly and lavishly poured out on you.
 5. Grace
 - a) Grace is God doing for us what we can't do for ourselves.
 - b) Grace is all that God is free to do for us on the basis of the Cross.
 - c) Grace is God's riches at Christ's expense.
 - d) Grace is you not earning, not deserving, not meriting, not winning, and not working.
 - e) Grace is God empowering, the Spirit indwelling, and Christ living through you day by day.
 - f) Grace is the supernatural power to live each moment of every day to the fullest for the glory of God, and the ultimate satisfaction of your own soul.

g) Grace is your heavenly Home Depot and Wal-Mart all rolled into one—except you don't have to pay anything, because God has bought the store and given it to you.

6. Grace

- a) If you need it, grace supplies it.
- b) If you break it, grace fixes it.
- c) If you lost it, grace restores it.
- d) If you regret it, grace forgives it.
 - (1) If you're sick, grace heals.
 - (2) If you're dirty, grace cleanses.
 - (3) If you're down low, grace lifts you.
 - (4) If you're up high, grace lowers you.
- e) Where you hurt, grace comforts.
- f) Where you fear, grace fortifies.
- g) Where you doubt, grace convinces.
- h) Where you can't, grace can.
 - (1) For the deluded, grace brings truth.
 - (2) For the addicted, grace brings freedom.
 - (3) For the dysfunctional, grace brings wholeness.
 - (4) For the lonely, grace brings life.

7. Grace is the work of God, doing the thing you need, exactly when you need it done, on the basis of the finished work of Christ, not on the basis of what you've earned or deserved.

8. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me / I once was lost, but now I'm found / was blind, but now I see.

9. Life without grace is craziness—life with grace is sanity and peace.

10. You might whimper, I need grace, I need grace.

11. No you don't. YOU HAVE GRACE and all you need, every day, since the day you first met Christ.

12. What do you have? Redemption or self rule.

13. What do you have? Forgiveness.

14. What do you have? Grace.

v. Conclusion

- A. Years ago, I brought some kids from the camp, who had lived in the country, to Chicago. A big group of kids and leaders went to the top of the tallest building in the world, the Sears Tower: one hundred ten stories tall, over thirteen hundred feet above the city—a beautiful panorama of a beautiful city.
- B. The country kids were blown away.
- C. One of them ran up to me and asked, Bill, where's Chicago?
- D. Everything he saw was Chicago, and he didn't see it. It was all around him, and he didn't see it.
- E. That's how we are too. God's grace is all around, and we don't see it: His forgiveness, His redeeming power and our self-rule.
- F. It is all around us, and all within us. It is true about us.
- G. Why don't we live that way?
- H. Because we don't see it—instead, we see the losses, and traumas, and abuses of the past. Instead, we see that we are victims of other people's sins, and other people are victims of our sins.
- I. So we limp along, when God designed us to soar.
- J. Which you is the real you, the you that you see, or the you that God sees? The you that everybody hates or rejects or mocks or the you that God loves and embraces and celebrates. Which you is the real you?
- K. The you that God sees and that's the real you deep inside, buried under an avalanche of dysfunction and unbelief.
- L. We need to unbury the real you.
- M. We're going to. Stick with us.
- N. Because in yourself, you're poorer than you think.
- O. But in Christ, you're richer than you think.