

CHRIST . . . and the size of our bank balance
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(EPHESIANS 1-3)

Paul would have made an excellent bank manager! He possessed an expert knowledge of sound investments. There are great financiers who, in spite of increasing wealth, are too poor to purchase a moment of happiness; there are ordinary laborers who possess the heavens. Wealth is a peculiar thing: sometimes in filling the hand it empties the heart. Paul's exposition of eternal wealth falls into four sections, but the connecting link is Christ.

In Whom we have redemption-1:7

It must be remembered that in ancient times redemption was something vitally linked with slavery. If a man were beset by adverse circumstances, he could sell himself and become a slave. A friend might endeavor to obtain his release, but if the slave owner insisted, the man remained in bondage. The only exception to this rule was made in the case of a kinsman (Lev. 25:48). Any person belonging to the slave's family could pay the redemption money and demand the liberation of the unfortunate kinsman. Paul saw in the bondage of sin a slavery destined to chain the soul for ever. Then the Son of God became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. Through the miracle of Bethlehem Christ became our kinsman; through the triumph of the Cross the debt was paid. In Him we have redemption-we go out free.

In Whom we have an inheritance-I : II

Here we have progression in Paul's thinking. Redemption set free the slave, but the liberated man could be poor and in extreme need. The news that the freed man is suddenly to receive a great inheritance is truly astounding. Redemption means liberty; an inheritance suggests wealth. Nevertheless an inheritance must be claimed, and certain formalities observed. The person from whom the money is to come might have made certain conditions, and the man to benefit needs to acquaint himself with these details being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory " (i : I 1, 12). " For whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son . . . " (Rom. 8:29). Eternal wealth thus comes within our grasp; but conformity to the divine pattern is requisite. For this purpose we are sealed with the Holy Spirit -we are God's possession.

In Whom ye are builded together for an habitation of God-
2:22

The church of God knows no racial barriers, " for he is our peace, who hath made Jew and Gentile one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us " (2: 14). There are many slaves who have found new freedom. Their gratitude knows no limitation, for they desire to become the perpetual servants of their new Master. The Old Testament slaves who preferred to remain slaves had holes bored in their ears: this was the sign of their willingness to stay servants for ever (Deut. 15:16, 17). Similarly God's sign is placed on our hearts when the Holy Spirit comes to take control. The Christian who avoids fellowship advertises the sickness of his soul. The church of God is the greatest institution in existence, for within its circle fellowship banishes

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In Whom we have boldness and access unto the Father-
2: 18; 3: 12

Every true Christian is well acquainted with the path of prayer. Boldness brings one to the royal door; access reveals that the door is open. Redemption replaces rags with the garments of salvation; the inheritance replaces fear with a sure hope for the future; the fellowship banishes loneliness, and introduces one to the greatest happiness in the world; access to God opens the divine treasure house and supplies an open check on eternal riches (see 3:16-19). There is no one quite as wealthy as the man who walks with God. To be filled with the fullness of God is to be a millionaire. Thus Paul covers the entire range of redemptive truth. The Cross liberates us; the risen Christ supplies an inheritance; Pentecost brings the Holy Spirit to unite the redeemed slaves; the High Priestly work of the Saviour makes access to God a reality. Ephesians 2:4, 5 reveals the riches of the past; v. 6 reminds of the riches of the present; v. 7 surpasses all, and reveals the unspeakable joy of the future. The epistle to the Ephesians is indeed a guide for wise and ambitious investments. It is possible to invest time as well as money, and the dividends are excellent! This is a gilt-edged security!

He Managed a Bottle Store

I first saw him when he arose from his seat in a crowded Sunday evening evangelistic service in South Africa. His appearance commanded attention. He was tall and stately, his hair was silvery grey; but worry had lined his face. He was the manager of a bottle store! He desired to become a Christian, but was unwilling to leave his employment. One year later I returned to his city, and found him waiting to speak to me. He was desperate, and confessed he had been planning to commit suicide. I reminded him of my earlier words, and reaffirmed that happiness would be quite impossible unless he ceased meddling with liquor. He refused to consider the idea, so I promised to send a wreath to his funeral. "What do you mean?" he asked. "Well," I replied, "the way you are going on, you will soon be in your coffin, and a few flowers might help to brighten the procession." Within a few days the slave was free; and then came the news of his "inheritance." Although he was advanced in age, new employment was quickly forthcoming, and ultimately he was able to consider the purchase of his house. When the owner heard his testimony, she asked how long he had been her tenant and how much rent per month she had received. Then she astounded him by saying, "You can purchase the house, and all the money I have received as rent shall be considered as payment on the price of the house." Her announcement left him speechless, for it meant he was to get the house for practically nothing!

Stamping Canadian Logs

I shall never forget my first train journey in Canada. My wife and I had disembarked at Quebec, but since the first preaching appointment was to be in the Acadia University in Wolfville, it was necessary to journey into the Maritime Provinces. I sat at the compartment window watching the huge rivers in which millions of logs were floating toward the waiting mills. Canadian logging companies purchase vast areas of timber, and when the logs are ready for delivery

CHRIST . . . and the size of our bank balance each one is stamped or sealed with the company's mark. Then they are slipped into the surging waters, and the journey down-stream begins. Before this is completed the logs mingle with many others; but the sealing mark is indelible. When the time comes to lift the logs from the water, identity of ownership is never in doubt. Similarly, Christ purchased us with His own blood, and we are sealed with the Holy Spirit. In our journey through time, we may be among millions of other human logs, but God's seal in our hearts is never removed. When the great day of complete and ultimate redemption dawns, we shall be lifted from the river of time to take our place in His great plans for eternity.

He Can Get Me In!

The story has often been told of a little boy who looked through the railings guarding Buckingham Palace. His face reflected the desires of his heart, when Prince Edward saw him. Taking the lad by the hand, the Prince conducted him through the great gate and into the royal apartments. When Queen Victoria heard of the boy's interest, she commanded that he should be washed and clothed with a new suit, and when finally she sent him forth, he seemed a prince in his own right. I remember a night in New Zealand when a young woman found difficulty in understanding how she could be accepted by God. At that time the present Queen and her husband were touring the land, and I reminded my listener that the royal visitors were staying in Government House. She agreed that this was so, and that the place was well guarded by officials and soldiers. I asked, "What would happen to you if you tried to get in through the back window to see the Queen?" Her answer was rather explosive when she said, "I should be out on my neck!" "But supposing the Duke of Edinburgh came out to say, 'So you desire to see the Queen, and cannot. Young lady, do not worry, just come with me and I will take you to her.' What would happen then?" "He could get me in." She understood when I said, "We would never gain admittance into the Royal House of Heaven. Our sins would keep us out. Yet the Prince of Peace came forth to seek us, and His word is, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.' " Perhaps the apostle Paul had such thoughts in his mind when he wrote, "In whom we have boldness and access unto the Father." The Lord Jesus brings to us redemption, an inheritance, security, and the inestimable privilege of communing with our heavenly Father. Christ is the secret of all true wealth. He is the key to the divine treasure house; He supplies it all.

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