

A. RECEIVING GOD'S RICHES

- There are many extravagant gifts that are ours because we are in Christ: Eph 1:3-14 NAS-- 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 would be holy and blameless before Him. In love ⁵ He predestined us to adoption as sons *and daughters* through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He favored us in the Beloved. ⁷ In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our wrongdoings, according to the riches of His grace⁸ which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight ⁹ He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He set forth in Him, ¹⁰ regarding *His* plan of the fullness of the times, to bring all things together in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.¹¹ In Him we also have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things in accordance with the plan of His will, ¹² to the end that we who were the first to hope in the Christ would be to the praise of His glory. ¹³ In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of the promise,¹⁴ who is a first installment of our inheritance, in regard to the redemption of *God's own* possession, to the praise of His glory.
- As we begin to grasp God's love for us "in the Beloved," let's pay attention to the areas in our lives where we have yet to experience and fully receive that love. (v. 6)
- The parts of us untouched by the Lord's lovingkindness are unlikely to trust or lean on Him. Receiving His love there involves identifying unmet needs and root causes.
- All humans were created to be loved, secure and to enjoy connection both 1) by God and 2) by those people closest to them. Obviously, people can't do that perfectly.
- Paul writes to tell us that God sees us and knows us and that we truly belong to Him. Healing and wholeness come by receiving this mentally, emotionally and spiritually.
- This passage in Ephesians can enable us to replace lies and deficits with the truth of the ever present, perfect love of each member of the Godhead.
- God's love ("agape" in the Greek) is the kind of love that is focused on providing the greatest good to the object of love and is not concerned with the cost. (v. 4)
- "Agapé means a "love feast"! This kind of love is based on commitment, sacrifice and faithfulness and doesn't expect anything in return" (Strong's G26)
- Love like that is the remedy for our distrust, discontent, and hopelessness. Progressively receiving this agape love will grow us in our ability to lean on God.
- Insights:

B. REDEEMED BY JESUS

- In a word, redemption is the treasure we receive from the Second Person of the Trinity, Jesus. It was the Father's plan but the Son accomplished it. (vv. 7-10)

- “Redemption” means to loosen what is bound; the payment of a price to ransom someone from the power of someone else; to deliver someone who is powerless to liberate themselves (Strong's 629)
- The essence of redemption is to be set free, liberated. This is the heart of the Gospel story seen throughout Scripture, maybe best typified in Egypt: Ex 6:5-7-- You can be sure that I have heard the groans of the people of Israel, who are now slaves to the Egyptians. And I am well aware of my covenant with them. “Therefore, say to the people of Israel: ‘I am the Lord. I will free you from your oppression and will rescue you from your slavery in Egypt. I will redeem you with a powerful arm and great acts of judgment. I will claim you as my own people, and I will be your God. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from your oppression in Egypt.
- The idea of being enslaved would resonate with a Jewish believer or any contemporary reader living in the Roman Empire where slavery was commonplace.
- Paul is using the picture of slavery to help believers understand that we have been purchased at a great price and now are able to enjoy freedom and fruitfulness.
- Though God's people, freed from slavery in Egypt, were physically free, they had yet to be freed from thinking like slaves. Many believers today have that same mindset.
- Some common beliefs associated with the slave mentality include:
 - My life doesn't matter (or matter much).
 - I have no one who completely loves me just as I am.
 - My worth is only as much as what I can do for someone.
 - I've never been 1st choice and never will be.
 - I must work hard to make up for my shortcomings and mistakes.
- The first step in experiencing freedom is to recognize any contradictory beliefs we have. Let's ask the Spirit to highlight any mindsets keeping us in bondage.
- LISTENING EXERCISE:
How deeply have I grasped hold of the freedom offered to me by Jesus?

Where in my life do I still feel trapped, stuck or bound?

Am I willing to let go of the lies that I have learned through my life experience and risk believing that I am loved and worthy and free?

- To enjoy our freedom in Christ to the full, that oppressive slave mentality has to go: Gal 5:1 JBP-- Plant your feet firmly therefore within the freedom that Christ has won for us, and do not let yourselves be caught again in the shackles of slavery.
- In addition to identifying any slave-like thinking, let's choose to focus of the truth of all that Jesus has done to ensure our liberty.
- Jesus did everything required in Scripture to serve as our Redeemer. For our sakes, He chose to become a human, fulfill the Law perfectly, and die to pay for our sin:

1. He was capable of making the payment required: 1 Pt 1:18-20 NLT-- God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And it was not paid with mere gold or silver, which lose their value. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God. God chose him as your ransom before the world began
 2. He was willing to take on the cost of our ransom: Mk 10:45 NLT-- The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many
 3. He is related to those needing redemption: Heb 2:14 NLT-- Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—the Son also became flesh and blood. For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil who had the power of death.
- As we see the enormous price Jesus paid we start to comprehend our great worth to Him. Our core needs find satisfaction as we receive the truth more and more deeply:
 - He gave His very life to buy our freedom. (v.7)
 - He shed His blood for us to accomplish our forgiveness. (v.7)
 - He lavishes upon us His grace, wisdom and insight. (v.8)
 - Jesus paid the ultimate price to make us His very own. His redeeming love and all the blessings He gives accurately demonstrate the true value of every child of God.
 - Insights:

C. ONENESS BY THE SPIRIT

- Paul describes all the blessings in this passage as spiritual. This is true because they apply to the soul and also because they are obtained by the Holy Spirit.
- One of the primary blessings we receive from the Spirit is the way He takes truth and reveals it to our inner man: Jn 16:13-14 MSG—"I still have many things to tell you, but you can't handle them now. But when the Friend comes, the Spirit of the Truth, he will take you by the hand and guide you into all the truth there is. He won't draw attention to himself, but will make sense out of what is about to happen and, indeed, out of all that I have done and said. He will honor me; he will take from me and deliver it to you. Everything the Father has is also mine. That is why I've said, 'He takes from me and delivers to you.'
- The treasures just keep piling up! The Spirit blesses us by helping us know:
 - The mystery of God's eternal plan by means of the Spirit and the Word (vv. 9-10, 13)
 - The truth that the plan brings everything together in heaven and on earth. (v.10)
 - The understanding that we are the inheritance that God desires for Himself. (v. 11, 14)
 - All the riches, rights, and privileges that are His are now ours! (v. 11-12)
 - We bring great glory to God just by receiving all He has done for us. (v. 12, 14)
- God's goal is "to bring together again for Himself all things and beings (hitherto disunited by sin) into one combined state of fellowship in Christ" (Thayer's Greek Lexicon)
- This oneness includes all things, things in the invisible realm and things that can be seen in our world and in individual lives. (v.10)
- That means that Jesus came to put an end to every struggle, division, and place of relational or personal brokenness by the work of the Spirit.

- Eventually, at the end of time, His justice will make all things right. But we don't have to wait until then to receive the blessing of His healing, unifying, integrating work.
- We can live as those who are loved, forgiven, and delivered from enemy oppression. Let's invite the Spirit to bring to light every division and bring it into oneness.
- Paul explains the division in our beings and why we often feel stuck and at war within ourselves: Gal 5:16-17 ERV-- So I tell you, live the way the Spirit leads you. Then you will not do the evil things your sinful self wants. The sinful self wants what is against the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is against the sinful self. They are always fighting against each other, so that you don't do what you really want to do.
- He writes elsewhere of freedom from this struggle. We experience this truth by getting in touch with the Spirit who lives inside and coming into agreement with Him: 2 Cor 3:17-18 NLT-- For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.
- We really are free from the penalty of sin (death) and the power of sin! However, we can readily see from these Scriptures that earthly transformation is a process.
- May we be open, willing and even eager to enter into the fullness of freedom and unity as the Spirit leads.
- Insights:

D. PERSONAL APPLICATION

ONE THING

The One Thing that I'd like to take away from today's class and believe God to accomplish in my life is:

PONDER THE TRUTH

Which verse stood out to you this week? Write it out below and take some time to review it often. Be still and expectant in God's presence, alert for new insights. Write it down.

PRAYER

Take your One Thing and your verse and turn them into a prayer:

"Lord, where do You want to apply these truths to my particular life circumstances?" How?

PRAISE

Praising God in song helps you engage your emotions, taking truth from head to heart.

PERSONALIZATION

Prayerfully consider these questions, asking the Spirit to guide you into a deeper understanding of the truth and to reveal His pathway for growth. Keep a written record.

Receiving God's Riches

- Continue to meditate on Ephesians 1:3-14 this week chewing on the "love feast" of God's grace and the blessings that Paul has set before us. Record your insights:

- Continue using the handout "Tools & Techniques: Spiritual Blessings" to address your day-to-day circumstances, places of discontent and any other obstacles to leaning on God.

Redeemed by Jesus

- Jesus has redeemed us, purchasing us at great cost to Himself. Take some time in prayer each day to thank Him for:
 - Giving His very life to buy your freedom. (v.7)
 - Shedding His blood to accomplish your forgiveness. (v.7)
 - Lavishing His grace, wisdom and insight upon you. (v.8)
- Hold these truths close to your heart and ask the Spirit to give you buy-in so that you come to believe them more and more deeply.
- Take note of how this impacts you in your relationship with Him and with others:

- Because of Jesus' redemption, you are liberated. Do you feel free? _____. Do you live free? _____. If not, you may have some slave-like thinking that needs to be addressed. Review the characteristics of the slavery mindset,
 - My life doesn't matter (or matter much).
 - I have no one who completely loves me just as I am.
 - My worth is only as much as what I can do for someone.
 - I've never been 1st choice and never will be.
 - I must work hard to make up for my shortcomings and mistakes.

- Which of these applies to you? How (specifically) does it show up in your life?
- Revisit this listening exercise on multiple occasions to aid you in receiving your freedom:

How deeply have I grasped hold of the freedom offered to me by Jesus?

Where in my life do I still feel trapped, stuck or bound?

Am I willing to do whatever is needed to experience freedom?

- Repeat this faith statement many times this week: *"I am loved and worthy and free!"*
Take note of anything that shifts in your thoughts, words, and feelings:

Oneness by the Spirit

- Jesus said the Spirit of Truth will lead you into all truth. He can bring wholeness to your heart by applying truth to every deficit, struggle, or division (within yourself or with others).
- Will you open your heart and memory bank in order to let the Spirit bring compassion and truth to the places you need it the most? _____. If not, why not?
- Invite God to minister to your unmet needs (to be seen, known, and to belong).
- Practice Listening Prayer, following these 4 basic steps:
 1. *"Help me, Father, identify my most predominant feelings around this situation:"*
Get in touch with these emotions and be present to them as you come to God in prayer.
 2. *"Lord, please bring to my mind a time when I felt these same feelings."* It can be a:
 - Specific memory
 - Environment that you experienced over and over in the past
 - Symbolic mental picture
 - Persistent feelings with no memory attached
 3. *"Holy Spirit, I ask you to show me what is the message I came to believe at this time?"*
 4. *"Jesus, what is the truth here?"*
- Come back again and again to the truths you're learning. Continue in it until your triggers diminish in power and your heart grows more and more full of God's love and blessings.