Time to Reflect

- What are some of the possible reasons people have for choosing not to follow God and develop a lifechanging relationship with Him?
- How does it make us feel to know that we have been forgiven by God? How should we live as forgiven people?

Last week we started our study of Ephesians. We saw how this is a remarkable letter and it's packed full of guidance and advice that relates to Christian living. This week we begin to journey more fully into the contents of Ephesians and our attention is drawn to the riches and blessings that God lavishes on His people. We are reminded that we are chosen by God, as well as adopted and accepted by Him. We will also reflect on the process of salvation.

"Paul's letter to the Ephesians is as carefully structured as that great temple of Diana, and it contains greater beauty and wealth! We inherit the wealth by faith and invest the wealth by works. Without this balance, our spiritual riches do us no good."

(Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p25)

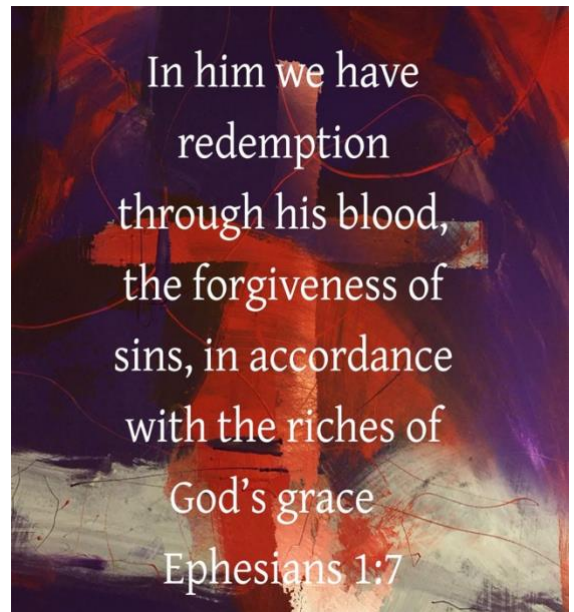
Specifics

- The prevailing theme of this passage is a reminder that Jesus Christ made it possible for us, as believers, to share in his spiritual riches. Warren Wiersbe articulates this well when he writes, **"Instead of spending it all, Jesus Christ paid it all. His death on the cross and His resurrection make salvation possible."**¹
- As we look at this passage we encounter the riches and blessings that God lavishes upon His people. (v4-6) highlight how we are accepted, adopted and chosen by God. At the most foundational level, we see how salvation begins with God and is not of human origin.
- It is through God's grace that we enter a lifechanging relationship with Him. We can't demand this relationship, we can't earn it and we can't buy it. It is simply God's gift, issued with His love.
- God chose us (v4) for a specific purpose. We are called to live holy lives and honour God in all that we think, say and do. We respond to God's grace freely and willingly, having been led by the Holy Spirit.
- The early verses of our passage get us thinking about the association between God's sovereignty and human will. This is a major theological topic.
- Wiersbe reflects on the complexity of this topic as he suggests, **"The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life. Both are taught in the Bible (John 6:37). Both are true, and both are essential."**²
- God is all-knowing. He is just and He is gracious. He calls us into relationship with Him and we have to make a conscious decision whether or not to follow Him.

¹ Warren Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians* (David C Cook, 2009), p29.

² Ibid, p30.

- (v5) tells us that God has adopted us. He does this so that we might immediately gain our inheritance and enjoy the fullness of life that God intends for us to enjoy.
- We are also accepted by God (v6). Wiersbe rightly observes, “We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God, but He, by His grace, makes us accepted in Christ.³” This is an eternal position and comes entirely from God’s amazing grace.
- It is also wonderful to fully realise and embrace that we, as God’s children, are redeemed and forgiven (v7). To be redeemed means to be purchased and set free through the paying of a price.
- (v7a) shows us that the eternal price was paid by Jesus on the cross. His sacrifice, and our willing and faithful response to it, means that we are free from the constraints of legalism and the consequences of sin.
- Christ also offers us eternal forgiveness (v7b). Wiersbe offers a beautiful reflection on this as he contends, “Christ died to carry away our sins so they might never again be seen (Ps. 103:12; John 1:29). No written accusation stands against us because our sins have been taken away! Sin made us poor; but grace makes us rich.⁴”
- (v8-10) get us thinking about God’s will. In a general sense, Ephesians has much to say about God’s plan for His people. Ultimately, God will draw all things in heaven and earth under Christ (v10).
- (v13) is particularly insightful as it focuses on the entire process of salvation. Wiersbe indicates that this verse “...tells how the sinner becomes the saint.⁵”
 1. HEARD – it is important that we hear the gospel of salvation. This is the good news that Jesus died for our sins, was buried, and rose victorious on the first Easter Sunday.
 2. BELIEVED – having heard the Word it is important that we respond to it. We are called to believe what we have heard.
 3. SEALED – having heard and believed, the Holy Spirit seals the believer. This is an interesting process as it speaks of ownership in that we become God’s children. It also refers to security and protection as God does not abandon us or leave us. Finally, it is also a mark of authenticity. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives is evidence that the believer is genuine.
- This passage reminds us that true and lasting riches come from God. These riches are not made of silver and gold. Rather, we are thinking about spiritual and eternal riches. We should be encouraged to realise and know that God wants the very best for us. He wants us to be spiritually rich.
- This passage also challenges us to remember that all of these riches come by God’s grace and for His glory.
- Wiersbe offers us a final thought as he suggests, “By faith we can claim God’s promises and draw on His limitless wealth to meet every need we may face.⁶”



³ Wiersbe, *Be Rich: Ephesians*, p31.

⁴ Ibid, p32.

⁵ Ibid, p33.

⁶ Ibid, p37.