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INTRODUCTION TO THE RICHES OF A CHRISTIAN

Ephesians 1:1-1

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INTRODUCTION

We will start the preaching of God's Word with two stories and end with another story.

STORY 1:

A 71 year old woman in Florida was found dead alone in her apartment. Cause of death? Malnutrition. The lady wasted away to 50 pounds. Neighbors said she begged for food and got her clothes from the Salvation Army. The inspector who investigated the case found that the house was like a pigpen, a veritable mess. But they found two keys in her apartment. Further investigation showed them that the keys were for two safety deposit boxes.

The first safety deposit box contained seven hundred AT&T stock certificates plus hundreds of other certificates and a stack of cash worth \$200k. The other safety deposit box had no certificates but had cash worth \$600k. Adding the net worth of the two safety deposit boxes, it totalled over a million dollars.

STORY 2 :

Hetty Green was called America's greatest miser (kuripot). She inherited an estate so shrewdly that when she died, she left \$160 million dollars. But she ate only cold oatmeal everyday because she doesn't want to spend money heating the water. Her son's leg was amputated after a minor injury but she didn't bring him to the hospital immediately because she kept looking around for free clinics that can treat her son.

LESSON:

Story 1 : The old woman didn't know she had wealth so she wasn't able to use it.
Story 2 : Hetty Green knew she had wealth but didn't know how to use/enjoy it.

I believe a lot of Christians are dying of spiritual malnutrition or leaving miserable lives simply because they either don't know they have been blessed with spiritual riches or they don't know how to use their spiritual riches.

OUR LORD'S PROMISE : *John 10:10*

...I came that they might have life and have it to the full (NIV)

...I came that they might have life and have it more abundantly (perissos) (KJV)

We're going to start to study the Book of Ephesians

Some well-meaning preachers call this book the “spiritual treasure house” of the Christian or the “spiritual bank account” of the Christian.

And this is the only bank account that you can withdraw anytime and there’s no such thing as an overdraft.

- this book shows us the riches we have in Christ - Ephesians chapters 1-3
- But this book also shows how to use the riches we have in Christ – Ephesians chapters 4-6

Let’s start.

Ephesians 1: Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To God’s holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pray

ILLUSTRATION :

On one of our trips to Hong Kong, I had the chance to work with two famous directors for a commercial. The client, who was Chinese, brought us to an authentic Chinese restaurant and ordered a 10-course lauriat for us. In a lauriat, the dishes are served one by one. Since I was used to eating quickly and attacking the food right away, I ate a lot at the very beginning—until the director told me to slow down because there was a lot more to come. Of course, the important thing is not just to get full, but to really savor the food.

That’s exactly what we’re going to do as we study Ephesians. We’ll take it slow so we can really savor the message as we feed ourselves spiritually.

Before we go and dig in to the treasures of this book for the next few weeks, let’s see first who wrote this letter...

I. OUR CREDENTIAL IN CHRIST

Notice how Paul introduced himself :

v.1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus...

In all of the letters of Paul, there were only three ways he introduced himself :

1. An apostle (apostolos – one who is sent) of Christ Jesus
2. A servant (doulos – love slave) of Christ Jesus (Romans, Philippians, Titus)
3. A prisoner of (desmios – in bondage) Christ Jesus (Philemon)

And yet, he had every right to introduce himself according to his earthly credentials

Philippians 3:5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

Background: There were Jews who insisted that, in order to be saved, you needed to do something (circumcision, verses 2–3).

1 His heritage – circumcised on the eighth day (meaning born a Jew), of the stock of Israel (descended from a pure Jewish lineage), tribe of Benjamin (a faithful Jew); in short, “a Hebrew of Hebrews.”

2 His expertise – regarding the law, a Pharisee (an expert in the law), even called a Pharisee of Pharisees (which means, not only was he a Pharisee, but his father was also a Pharisee).

3 His experience – as for zeal, persecuting the church (he passionately defended the Jewish faith); as for legalistic righteousness, faultless (he was not only an expert in the law, but he also faithfully followed it).

EXAMPLE of trying to be saved with our credentials

From an earthly point of view – I come from the Zobel de Ayala family, originally from Spain, studied at Harvard, and was able to put that to good use in my successful career at J.P. Morgan.

From a religious point of view - I am born with this religion, I am an expert in this religion, I can even defend this religion and I faithfully follow the requirements of this religion...

IMPORTANT :

BUT continue to read Philippians 3:7-8

He counted his credentials a loss (garbage) and dung (waste – mabaho, walang kuwenta) that He might win Christ.

Paul wants more than religion, he wants a relationship with Christ.

QUESTION :

Why are people willing to pay \$10 every week to buy lotto? Answer : For a chance to win millions.

APPLICATION :

Paul knows He already has spiritual millions in Christ that whatever credentials he had is “dung” compared to what Christ has given to us.... Paul was willing to give up his 10 dollar life compared to the 100 gazillion dollar life that Christ has already given him.

Jesus is the only credential He needs

It is the same with us . Sometimes we feel insecure, telling ourselves, "I am just a small person, I have no education, I do not have any money," and so on and so forth. But the truth is, the only credential we need is that we are connected with Christ—the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and Creator of heaven and earth.

PROOF :

Challenge – trying times?

God's Promise - “*I can do everything through Him who gives me strength*” (Phil 4:13)

Challenge – tight budget?

God's Promise – “*And my God will meet all your needs according to His riches and glory* (Phil 4:19)

Challenge – tough people

God's Promise - “*Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge: I will repay,*” says the Lord (Romans 12:19)

NOTE :There are other hundreds of promises in the Bible that you can “withdraw” for every challenge you might have in life.

IMPORTANT : And for each promise:

Please Read **2 Corinthians 1:20** *For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ...*

II. OUR CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

v. 1.... an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. (emphasis mine)

Read Exodus 33: 15 *Then Moses said to him, "If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."*

Background : (on why Moses said this) **33: 3** *Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way."*

Read also Numbers 14:40-45

QUESTION

Who wants God's Manifest Presence? (explain the difference between Manifest Presence and His Omnipresence)

To have God's Manifest Presence we have to be at the centre of His will.

FOLLOW-UP

How do we know we are at the centre of His will?

When we are obeying His commands.

Now that by God's grace, we are establishing His church, we must make sure that

- 1.His Manifest Presence is with us
- 2.by being at the centre of His will
- 3.by obeying His commands.

IMPORTANT :

That's why the Vision and the Mission of this church is based on His great command and on His great commission :

VISION OF THE CHURCH**A church that obeys the Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40)**

36 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. ^[a] 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ^[b] 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

...and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in ^[a] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

“To be a disciple and to make disciples of Christ.”

Disciple : Greek “matheteo” – meaning “a learning follower”

NOTE :

And if we follow His command, then we can be confident of His presence because we are at the centre of His will.

That is Paul's confidence.

III. OUR COMMITMENT IN CHRIST

v. 1 “To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.”

EXERCISE :

(In your mind) Name 5 things to describe the one on your right.
Name 5 things to describe yourself.

Now, in those 5 things, did the word “holy” come up.

Look at how Paul describes the church in Ephesus.

“To the saints...”

CLARIFY:

1. In the Bible, the word saint is not a “title”, it is a “state” of a believer who received Jesus as Lord and Saviour.

Proof?

- a.) Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (Paul described them as “carnal” 1 Corinthians 3:1,3,4 and yet he also called them and the church “saints” 1 Corinthians 1:2; 6:1; 6:2; 14:33; 16:1; 16:15)
- b.) Greek word for saint “hagios” – meaning “separated, consecrated” meaning God has already separated us for Himself. “Hagios” is the same word translated also as the word “holy” in the New Testament.

That’s why our commitment in Christ is...

1. To live holy lives in Christ...**IMPORTANT :**

We do not live holy (hagios) lives in order to be holy. We live holy lives because God has already made us holy because of Christ Jesus. Praise be to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! (We will study this as we continue with the book of Ephesians)

Living holy lives means we do not live as the world lives.

SAMPLE:

On the negative : No more cursing, unbridled lust (sex outside of marriage), pride and etc.

On the positive : Unselfishness, caring for one another, worshipping...and etc.

2. To live faithful lives in Christ.

v. 1 *“...to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.”*

Greek “pistos” – meaning “sure”, “true”

In Filipino “maaasahan”, “sigurado”

In short, it’s a commitment. It means it is not based on what you are feeling at the moment or your mood or what’s happening around you. IT’S A DECISION.

So, even if you feel don’t feel like being faithful, you still decide to be faithful because it’s a decision.

IMPORTANT

One of the commendations of Christ when He comes back as stated in the Parable of the Talents is this, *“Well done, my good and faithful servant”* That is going to be the basis of His rewards for us : Did we live holy lives? Did we live faithful lives?

CONCLUSION :

As promised earlier in the sermon that I will start it with two stories and end it with a story :

During the Great Depression, there was a man in Texas named Yates. He wasn't spared by the Depression that he struggled with debilitating poverty, struggling to even bring food on the table. Their dilapidated house stands in a land that they own, it's called Yates's Field. It's a sheep ranch.

One day a geologic crew from a large oil company came knocking on their door. They wanted to do a "exploratory" drilling promising him a large portion of the profits if they struck oil. He signed the papers and let the oil company take over the land.

They drilled. Five hundred feet...none. Eight hundred feet...no oil. One thousand feet and still no oil until they came a little over eleven hundred feet and the oil came gushing out high in the air.

Overnight Yates and his family became millionaires simply because they allowed the oil company to take over their land. Now it's called Yates Pool.

It's the same with our relationship with Christ, we have to allow him to take over our lives in order for us to discover the spiritual riches that we have in Him.

Have you given Him your life yet? The Bible says, "If today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Our problem is not that we do not believe, it's that we do not want to believe because we will be giving up our very own lives. But I tell you, when you give up your life and your pride to Christ, then you would have struck gold. He Himself will be your portion.

Let's pray.

S.G.D.