

Our Treasured Possessions

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if you'd have your bibles open at Ephesians chapter 1, and really we're going to be thinking about verses 18 and 19 this evening. And three things that Paul prays for these Ephesian Christians, three very important things, hope, riches and power. In the turn of the century there was a gentleman called by the name of William Randolph Hearst. He owned a newspaper publishing company and really his business was at the forefront of leading the way in how newspapers were published and it's still they implement the techniques that he used back then. As a result of owning this company he became a multi-millionaire and in his spare time one of his favourite hobbies was to collect very valuable pieces of art. So much so that he filled his house, that he had to build storehouses and warehouses to contain all these pieces of art. One day he was sitting in his mansion and he was reading a magazine and in that magazine he seen a very rare precious piece of art. So he picked up his phone and he phoned his agent and said to his agent, look I'll give you all the money it takes and all the time it takes if you will go and trace down this very precious piece of art.

And so off his agent went into the world looking for this piece of art and was away months and months on end and then one day he returned and went into the mansion and William Randolph Hearst waiting with great anticipation, did you find the piece of art that I was looking for? He said, sir yes I got it, I found it. He said where was it? And looking Mr. Hearst in the face he said you're never going to believe this but at all the time it was in one of your storehouses. A story is in many ways a modern parable of what we're like as Christians because we possess a great treasure and yet we can be like Mr. Hearst and we can forget and not even know that what we possess in our relationship with Jesus Christ. And the reason Mr. Hearst did not know that he had this very valuable and precious piece of art is because he never took the time to enjoy it, to appreciate what he possessed. And in this letter that Paul writes to these Ephesian Christians he really writes to share with them how they should enjoy the treasures that they possess in the Gospel. He begins his first chapter writing that they would know, he just retells them the Gospel, he tells them the good news that in love God predestined them, that is he chose them before the foundation of the earth. He reminds them that God in Christ redeemed them, brought them back from the kingdom of darkness and brought them into the kingdom of light. He tells them in verse 7 that they were adopted as children, sons and daughters of the living God. He tells them that the Holy Spirit now lives in them if they are in a relationship with Christ and he is the seal and the guarantee. And then he just finishes verse 14 and he says all of this to the praise of his glory. And Paul bursts into prayer as a result of retelling the Gospel and he begins to pray and he doesn't, it's funny, he doesn't pray and say God give them something new. God give them a new blessing, not he prays God would you open the eyes of their heart to see what they possess in the Gospel. Would you enable them to see the hope that Christians have, the riches that they possess and the power that they know in the Gospel. And so this evening I really just want us tonight to focus upon these three treasured possessions that we have in our relationship with Jesus Christ if you're a Christian.

If you're not a Christian and you're hearing this and you're thinking oh well I can turn off. Well I'd encourage you to listen and listen to the great things that you can enjoy in a relationship with the Son of God. Paul begins by saying to them in verse 7, he begins his prayer by thanking God for their faith and their love. In verse 16 he tells them that he's not forgotten to mention them in prayer. In verse 17 he says, I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation so that you may know him better. He posits all of his prayer on this request that the spirit of God may lead us to know Jesus better and I hope that's the prayer of all of our hearts tonight. And then he says in verse 18 the verse I want us to look at. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Can I just say by wave context he doesn't want us to have a head knowledge tonight. Paul doesn't really care if we know all about redemption, adoption and all these things and it's just in our head what Paul wants us to have is a heart knowledge. He wants us to see the treasures that we have in the Gospel. And so he says I pray also that the eyes of your hearts may be enlightened and the first thing that he says in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you. In order that you may know the hope to which he has called you. I begin by asking a question. Do we live as people of hope? Are our life's characteristics of those who have hope in the Gospel? What is hope? What is the hope that we're to have in what Paul is speaking about here? Is it a hope that is, we could say I hope tomorrow it's going to be a sunny day? Is it that sort of hope? Is it the sort of hope that says

I hope that this year that I'll be able to go to the gym and get, keep fit and go on holiday? Is it that sort of hope? Now Paul says I pray that they may know the hope to which they've been called. It's a Gospel hope. And it's a hope that does not compare to any other hope in this world. On Paul David trip defines biblical hope as a confident expectation of a guaranteed result. Let me say that again. A confident expectation of a guaranteed result. That's what Gospel hope is. That we have a hope when we're in a relationship with Jesus Christ. That what he said that he will give us, what he said that he will do will come to pass. And so Billy mentioned this morning that when we were those who are with out God in their lives, they're without hope. And conversely those who are with God have hope, a living hope. I was trying to think how I could best explain what biblical hope was. And as reminded when not long after I became a Christian, I'd worked in a chemist and every Saturday afternoon I would have my lunch break and I'd walk across the road and visit my grandfather who was in a nursing home. And I've mentioned my grandfather here before and he was a godly old man. And I remember I used to go across hoping that we'd just chat, talk and then he would read the Bible and pray with me. And often when I'd go across

I'd find them completely asleep. And so I'd sit down next to them and they'd build ladies next to them and they would begin a conversation with me and they'd say, oh, you're Phil's grandson and you work across in a chemist. And that would lead into this long story about oh, the chemist, that used to be the butcher 60 years ago. Oh, down the road, you know where you went to school? That used to be a park and there was a fountain there. And my husband was a miner and so on and so forth. And they'd literally just tell me their life story. They would walk me through their lives and tell me all the things that they've done all about their family. And then as it got closer and closer to the present, the conversation would get that bit awkward as they would start to say things like I've been in here for seven, 10 years, and a family don't visit me. And then they would start to complain about things.

[8 : 38] And I used to remember hating the end of these conversations because I never knew what to say. And often at that my grandfather would awake from his sleep and the nurse would come and say, look, you can go through to his room with your grandfather. And through I'd go and I'd have 10 minutes left of a lunch break. And I can remember this so clearly that every time I sat with him, he never spoke about the past unless it was across, unless it was what Jesus has done, unless it was to praise God. And he was just about to die. And he always spoke about going to heaven. He always spoke about he was ready to meet his maker and savior. He epitomized what it was to live as a person of hope. And I want to ask us tonight, do we live as people of people, are we people of hope in this place? Do we know the hope that we have in the gospel? That this life isn't just it? That there is a long eternity before us where we will praise the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Paul elsewhere in the go and his letter says in Romans five, we have a hope that does not put us to shame. Never put your hope in a person. Girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife.

Only you really loved and trusted, only defined that they've let you down. Never put your hope or confidence in a situation, a circumstance in life, hoping that it would turn out and be in your favor, only to discover that it's let you down. To your hope in technology, then and again it lets us down. Jesus Christ, put your hope in him. Never, ever, ever will he let you down. When your hope is rooted and anchored in him, who came into this world to save us from the consequences of our sins so that we could be in a relationship, he promises that he will come back one day to so that we can spend the rest of eternity with him. Are we a people of hope? Is there anything in your life that certifies to you that you have a hope? I think that the reason why we often don't live as people of hope is because we're just like Mr. Hearse. We possess a great treasure and yet our tendency is to store it away in the storehouse of our heart. We fail to take the time to appreciate what we possess in the gospel. And so I want us to hear Paul's prayer for us tonight. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be able to see the hope you possess in the gospel.

If I was just to make that a bit more practical for this year as we stand at the outset of 2014, do you have hope for this city? Hope that the gospel that is able and powerful to save can save the people that we work with, our neighbors, those who we come into contact on a daily basis? Do you have hope for that rebellious teenager, son and daughter, nephew, granddaughter, grandson? Do you have hope for that unbelieving spouse? Do you have hope that God is mighty to save and He will save and He will come again for His people? Do you have hope for that private struggle with sin, that habitual sin that you never seem to overcome?

Do you have hope for that tongue that always seems to say the wrong thing? Do you have hope because it's tritied and anchored in Christ and He is able this year to help us and to lead us and make us more like Himself? Let's take this great treasure of hope out of the storehouse of our hearts and let us see it, know it and love it. In one sense, that could be enough. Paul could finish there and say, I just want to remind you of the hope that you have in the gospel, but he doesn't. He goes on and now he says, I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, that you may know the riches of His glorious inheritance. He prays that we would know the riches of His glorious inheritance and the question is, what is the riches that we possess in the gospel? In verse 8, I think it is, he tells us, in accordance with the riches of God's grace, the riches that we possess in the gospel is His grace. He goes on in verse 8 and says, the riches of this grace,

He has lavished upon us. In other words, He is poured upon us, He is bestowed upon us the riches of His grace. Though He were rich, for our sake, He became poor so that through His poverty, we might become rich, said Paul. This time of year, we remember that great miracle of incarnation, how the Son of God lived in eternity and all glory. We sang earlier on the angels adore Him. He left that, came into this world. Born as a refugee and a sturdy, stinking manger, grew up, lived no fame, never loved, went to Calvary's Cross, obedient to death, even death on a cross, so that we might know the riches of His grace, which just means the riches of His undeserved favour, that we may know His favour and His love. Here,

[14 : 58] Paul says, I pray that these Christians that we too today would know this treasure that we possess in the gospel. I want to ask is, have we taken that truth as well and stored it away in the cupboard of our hearts? Have we failed to appreciate what we possess in the gospel? Because on, it's like Paul, when he's praying this, he layers words upon words and he says, the riches of His glorious inheritance.

Read in an article just this last week that baby George, son of Kate and Will, great grandson of Queen Elizabeth, is set to inherit about \$1 billion in assets and in money through all the things that he gets by birthright. He'll inherit lots of money that was left for him by different people. He'll inherit all the states that the royal family have.

In one sense, you could look on and be really jealous that he would get all of that by birthright. He has this great inheritance. At the beginning, I read that passage from Peter and it says in that, that we have an inheritance that will never spoil, that will never fade, that will never perish. Who George could inherit by moral, but it's the king and deteriorating.

Who George could inherit all the money of this world and yet in the gospel, we're given an inheritance that never ever spoils, fades or perishes. We have the riches of His glorious inheritance and again, to the eyes of our hearts, see what we possess in the gospel.

What is an offer to us in Jesus Christ is the riches of His grace. If that weren't enough, we've got hope, we've got riches. And Paul says, I pray also that the eyes of their hearts would see His incomparably great power for us who believe. Now, you praise for an incomparably.

[17 : 29] Doesn't compare to anything. Great power for us who believe. In chapter three, Paul tells us that this power is a power that is at work within us. He tells us that it's a power that comes from the Spirit of God. And just in chapter one in verse 13, he's told us that the Spirit of God now lives in His people. So get this, the Holy Spirit of God, the power of God lives inside of you and me if we believe in Jesus Christ. You're trying to get your mind around that. It's mind boggling the God of all glory, all power lives inside you and me. And Paul just to illustrate his point goes on to say in verse 19, he says, you know this power that is the working of His mighty strength. He says, this is the same power that was used to exert Christ when He raised him from the dead. The same power that lives inside of you and me is the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. It's also the same power as he goes on to say that lifted him not just from the dead, but is now seated him at the right hand of God and high. That great place and position of power. And so that now Jesus, the Son of God stands far above all rule, authority, power and dominion.

In verse 22, Paul just so that we can have a picture in our eyes says, in God placed all things under His feet. The picture is that Jesus Christ is above all things. And Paul wants us to know the power that we possess in the gospel. He wants us to know this power that enables us to become more like Jesus Christ. Each day, sin will greet us, it will tempt us to do things that we shouldn't do. Maybe they click on the computer onto a website, we shouldn't be on it. Maybe they look to another person of the opposite sex or of the same sex that we probably shouldn't be doing. It may also be that tendency to tell lies so that we make ourselves look better than others or that tendency to speak critically of others just so that we can make ourselves feel good. And Paul here says, look, you've got a power that is at work inside of you. He works in you to make you more like Jesus

Christ. Each day we fall and we fail and Satan would trick us to believe that we are powerless and in one sense he's utterly right. We are powerless, powerless to change your lives.

But there's that great reminder that when we are weak, he is strong. It's in our powerlessness that God's power is made perfect. I wonder if we take in this great truth, this great treasure of the power of God and if we tucked it away in the corner of our hearts. We forgotten the hope, the riches and the power that we possess as sons and daughters of the living God. Sign of a way that I could bring all of these things together so you would know what it is to live as a person of hope, riches and power.

It's another old, an old story but it's quite an interesting story in the early 1900s or maybe the late 1800s there was a young guy who grew up in Kilmocombe which is in the west side near Glasgow, Renfrewshire and he got converted when he went to a free church and heard preaching and gave his life to the Lord. And then as a result of that he became a street preacher and a field preacher back in the day and would stand down fields and tell people about the gospel. Then he got married and he left the free church and joined the Baptist church and they had a young girl and all things were going smoothly. And then his wife died. In 1912 he got a letter, he was a minister at this time and this letter said it was a request from Moody Church in New York for this young guy, John Harper, to travel across the Atlantic and to go to America so that he would preach with a view of becoming the minister in New York. John Harper was and his young daughter at six years old were on board the maiden voyage of the Titanic and so they got on the ship and they began their journey across. And as we all know that night, that night in April the ship crashed into the iceberg. And as the ship began to sink John Harper was head shouting, all women, children and non-believing men, get on the lifeboats because we're going up and she's going down. He was a man who lived with hope. Anyway, as the ship went up and began to plunge into the sea, John Harper then found himself in the icy cold water and he was heard by many observers, many of those who were in the lifeboats and in the water, he was heard preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. He had a lifejacket on and there was a young man who was swimming next to him and was beginning to drown because he didn't have a lifejacket. So John Harper took off his lifejacket, he was holding on to some bit of debris that was lying in the water and he handed it over to this other guy. So in that sense John Harper saved this young guy's life. But anyway, he said to this young guy, you believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ as your saviour. The guy said, I could never believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't know what I've done. And John Harper said, believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved. At night John Harper, soon after that he sunk to his death. A man who was full of hope, able to offer the gospel riches, able to proclaim the gospel and the power of the Spirit of God. Four years later, there was a reunion of all the survivors in Ontario, Canada. Those who had been aboard the ship that night. The young guy stood up and said, I am the last convert of John Harper.

[24 : 18] He saved me twice. That night when I was sinking and about to drown, he gave me his lifejacket. And that night he told me, believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

That's because John Harper knew the treasures he possessed in the gospel. Now we, like William Hearst, have taken these treasures and we have stored them away, failed to appreciate them. Perhaps we can begin 2014 living, enjoying and appreciating the treasures that we possess in the gospel. So we close, I want us in the quietness of our hearts to commit this year ahead to him. Let's just all pray silently in our hearts and maybe you're a Christian and last year's been a difficult year. Remind yourself, open the eyes of your hearts to the hope that you have, the riches of his grace and the power. Maybe you're not a Christian and you've heard all this tonight and you're thinking, wow, riches, hope, power, well maybe in the silence of your heart you could ask God to show you them, to open the eyes of your hearts to see what you can know and experience in a relationship with Jesus Christ. So let's just bow our heads and let's just pray.

Father, we come to you who are able to do immeasurably more than anything we ever could dream or imagine. We pray that tonight as we begin this new year we would begin it with a deep seated confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We thank you Father for the living hope that we have in our relationship with you. We pray that this year we would live as people of hope, people who have a future in Christ but people who also can now enjoy and experience the abundant life in Him. We pray that we live as people who know the unsearchable riches in Christ, that we would know the riches of his grace, that we would know the blessing of our inheritance which has been kept for us in heaven. We pray

Lord that we would live ever aware of the power of God living inside of us. Father, we commit this year that lies ahead that we would be a people who don't store away the gospel but we'd be a people who live out the gospel and who live enjoying it and with the eyes of our hearts wide open to the treasures that you've lavished upon us in the gospel. Father, forgive us for ever minimizing these truths, forgive us for ever neglecting these truths and enable us to see you more clearly, to love you more dearly and to walk with you more nearly. All these things we pray in your Son's name and for his glory. Amen.