

Sermon Notes: *Great Hope and Glorious Riches (Ephesians 1:18)*.

Intro: Everything depends on the opened eye. The scene may be lovely and the light may be bright, but if the sight is gone all is in vain (cf. 2 Kngs 6:15-17). Here Paul prays that God's Spirit might open the eyes of the Ephesians' hearts wider to see beyond the visible to the invisible so that they might walk by faith and not by sight. Similarly, we must pray that we and others see...

#1: God must illumine our hearts to see our *great hope in Christ*. *What hopelessness characterizes those who live apart from Christ!* According to 2:1ff. the Ephesians had once lived in such hopelessness! They were not the recipients of the special covenant promises God had given to Abraham and his descendents. For them, life had been, at the end of the day, a hopeless concern—the future a close door beyond which no light could be seen. Their funeral services were little more than a clinging to the past and some small consolation for friendship shared and good memories. How many such services are held today and how a Christian's funeral stands as a marked contrast! Because of Christ's victory over sin and death, for the believer, there is light and hope in the midst of the sadness and pain. *What hopefulness characterizes those who live in union with Christ!* The word "hope" for many today means little more than wishful thinking and feeble optimism. The Christian's hope however is a very tangible, weighty, assurance of spiritual blessings we have not yet fully experienced. A future that will not disappoint. How can we be sure? Because the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). The Spirit has been poured into our hearts as a guarantee of our final inheritance (1:14). Here is why the Christian's hope figured so greatly in Paul's prayers! How we live the Christian life in the present is greatly determined by how great our hope is for the future. Or, God's purpose in revealing our future is to transform the way we live in the present! Our hope is based in God's "call". Every true Christian has heard God's specific call to faith in Christ in the reading, preaching, and teaching of the Bible. Every true Christian has experienced the Holy Spirit's enlightening and renewing work enabling them to understand the gospel and receive it as truth from God. Every true Christian has experienced God's call—freeing them to embrace God's forgiveness through faith in Christ's blood and follow God's will for his life (cf. 2 Thess. 2:13-14). The Christian's hope is based on what *he now possesses in Christ*—forgiveness of sins, acceptance in Christ, adoption into God's family. The Christian's hope is also based on what *he will yet possess in Christ*. Our main possession lies still in the future. Spurgeon: "The Christian's hope is that all through life, whether it be long or short (and he has not much care about the number of his years), underneath him will be the everlasting arms. He hopes that the Lord will be his shepherd, and he shall not want. He hopes that goodness and mercy will follow him all the days of his life. Hence he is not afraid to die, for then he expects to come into actual possession of his best possessions. He looks for his best things last. He believes that when it is time for him to depart, Jesus will come and meet him, and the thought of that meeting puts aside all idea of the grim terrors of the grave. His hope leaps over the grave, and lands him in a glorious resurrection" (cf. Rom 8:28ff).

#2: God must illumine our hearts to see our *glorious riches in Christ*. What does Paul mean by the phrase, "the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints"? Does he mean the inheritance God has in us or the inheritance we have in him? In the OT, God's chosen people were called his inheritance (cf. Ps 28:9; 33:12; Mal. 3:16-17). The Promised Land was in turn called the inheritance God gave them (Num. 18:26). However, OT believers saw beyond the

land to the Landlord—who was ultimately their inheritance. The land was the physical expression, before the shedding of Christ’s blood and pouring out of the Spirit, of the spiritual riches of communion with God. This was true not only of Aaron and his descendents who had no land inheritance (cf. Num 18:20) but ultimately of all the people: the Lord was their “portion” (Ps 73:26; 119:57; 142:5). Paul’s meaning could refer either to the riches we have in communion with God or remarkably to God’s regard for his people as his “treasured possession” (Mal. 3;17). Since God’s inheritance in us and our inheritance in him are really two sides of the same coin, either interpretation implies the other! Why does Paul pray that God’s Spirit would illumine hearts to recognize these twin truths? To see: the riches of our dignity in Christ. We judge the value people place on something by the cost they will pay to have it. How much God spent to save us (Jn 3:16)! As the Lord looks over all that he has made he sees nothing that has cost him suffering and death under judgment until he sees his people. Jesus knows what the saints cost him. How great our dignity! The riches of our security in Christ. A king makes his treasure secure. Our security is guaranteed by knowing that our glorious God guards securely those whom he treasures! How great our security!