

## Notes: *Riches and Wisdom* (Ephesians 3:7-13)

**Intro:** The Christian has been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of God's Son (Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20). The great privileges of heavenly citizenship (Col 1:13) which God kept secret throughout human history (cf. "mystery"), he revealed when Christ appeared. Only slowly did a full appreciation of those privileges come to Paul. Only slowly do they come to all God's people. But understanding and grasping these privileges is necessary for living as God's people in this world. Paul describes two more privileges of our citizenship here.

**#1: We have received riches in Christ (7-8).** Paul was a prisoner in Rome but he did not consider himself a prisoner of the Emperor! He believed that a sovereign God reigns in the affairs of men (1:11). So convinced was he that his whole life, including his imprisonment, was under the lordship of Christ that he thought of himself as Christ's prisoner not Nero's. Here is a basic principle! What we make of our difficulties depends largely on our perspective. Do we see ourselves as heirs of God's riches in Christ? Trying situations make us dig these riches up by faith. Christ's riches are sufficient for our every need (Phil 4:19). Have we realized this? Paul has painted different pictures of our communion with Jesus Christ in this letter: a branch joined to the trunk, a member joined to the body, a brick joined to a foundation. Here Christ is a treasure chest overflowing with wealth which is ours because we are heirs of God (1:11, 14). There is mighty treasure of mercy, grace, and love laid in Christ for both believing Jews and Gentiles. God will make two things of those who have received it by faith. Grateful heirs of Christ's riches. Paul literally thought of himself as "the lesser least of all saints." He saw himself at the bottom of the heap. He considered himself a very unworthy heir of God and it made him generous toward others. We live in a never-ending cycle in which conscious of our own sin and weakness and dependent upon the grace of Christ which has made us God's children we see ourselves as servants rather than masters of others. Grateful for the riches of God's grace and kindness we kneel in service to others. Enabled by the gifts of his grace (whatever they may be) we say, "The Lord has given me this gift to express his love for you." What are the riches God's heirs are so grateful to him for? Paul itemized the gold and silver in chapter 1, here we only summarize. On the cross, Jesus gave himself up to God's judgment for our sins to give us in return all the rights and privileges which are now his. The glorious consequences of his death for us are the riches we possess in communion with him. He rose, ascended, and entered glory but not for himself alone since it is written: "Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf" (Heb 6:20). Jesus appears in the presence of God. But again the Scriptures assure us that he does so for us (Heb 9:24). Consider this! Your riches lie in the consequences of Christ's obedient life and death for you. If you are pardoned, it is by his blood (1:7). If justified, it is because of his righteousness (Rom 3:26; 2 Cor 5:21). If God's son, it is by his Spirit (Rom 8:15). If you will persevere to glory, it is because he persevered for you (Heb 12:2). If you will be made perfect, it is because he was raised from the dead and glorified in heaven for you (2:5-6). What is the fruit of such knowledge? Grateful thankful hearts despite our trying circumstances (2 Cor 4:17). Grateful heralds of Christ's riches. Paul knows that people whose minds are darkened by sin can never discover these riches by human effort or insight. He knew these riches in Christ may only be gotten by divine revelation and illumination (1 Cor 2:11ff.). How did he enjoy these riches? He heralded them to others. He prayerfully proclaimed them to others. Do we have a similar burden to herald God's riches in Christ by our life and words?

**#2: We reveal the wisdom of God (10).** The church, this new community of God's Spirit built on the foundation of the apostles with Christ as the cornerstone, this divine edifice reveals God's wisdom to those with eyes to see it. The wisdom of God is seen: In Christ's incarnation (Gal 4:4; Jn 1:14). The Son of God who was in the form of God took the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men. He did not cease to be God. He became God plus all the elements of humanity except sin (Phil 2:6-7). The baby in the manger was God made man (the wisdom of the incarnation is unfathomable). In Christ's crucifixion. He who had always been God did not cling to his divine rights but agreed to become a slave and was born as a man. And having done so, he died in our place on the cross to purchase our salvation. Here the wisdom of God deepens immeasurably. The incarnation is a wonder of nature. But he did so to impoverish himself under God's judgment to save us—that is a marvel of grace. In Christ's new community. Fallen humanity was scattered at Babel (Gen 11:9), the people of the new humanity are united by their common cleansing by Christ's blood and new life by his resurrection. Diverse community of people from every conceivable background (1 Cor 1:27). Of sinners saved from every conceivable sin (1 Cor 6:9ff). All persevere by bold access to God in Christ (12)! In its life, the church tutors the angels in God's wisdom (10, 1Pt 1:12)!