

"LIFE AT ITS BEST"

by Rom A. Pegram (4/14/17 – GOOD FRIDAY)

Have you ever been shopping and bought something you already had? Or, even worse than that, have you ever gone on a long drawn-out search for something that *you just had to have*, such as a certain book, or tool, or CD, or a particular food item or gadget and so forth ... only to discover after purchasing it that YOU ALREADY HAD ONE?

Warren Wiersbe tells the story of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, who invested a fortune collecting art from all around the world. One day Hearst found a description of some valuable items that *he just had to own*, so he sent one of his assistants all over the world to collect them. After months of searching, Hearst's assistant reported that the works of art that he had been sent to look for had finally been found. Do you know where they were? In Hearst's own warehouse! Hearst had searched frantically for treasures he already possessed. *Had he read the catalog of the valuables he already owned, he would have saved himself a great deal of money and trouble...*

Paul desired that the believers at Ephesus, who we'll read about in our scripture lesson for today, learn to experience life at its best. How? By realizing what *they* already had. Let's listen to Paul's words today—about life at its best (Ephesians 1:15-23, NLT)...

Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere, ¹⁶ I have not stopped thanking God for you. I pray for you constantly, ¹⁷ asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. ¹⁸ I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance. ¹⁹ I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰ that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. ²¹ Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. ²² God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. ²³ And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself. – Ephesians 1:15-23 (NLT)

Folks, what Paul is talking about here ... is true for ALL believers—even US! When the Church sees *the 'Unseen Christ,'* believers will *celebrate God's gift of life at its best*. This passage, from the Apostle Paul, teaches us that we can truly celebrate 'life at its best' when our eyes are opened to all the *unseen* spiritual resources we possess in Christ...

- Paul prayed that the believers in Ephesus might open their spiritual eyes to the spiritual realities *already* in their lives...
- And, my prayer today is that all of us—believers in Christ—might have the

eyes of our hearts opened to finally see the spiritual realities that exist in our lives, too!

- Why? Because *these* realities are what will allow us to live and celebrate life at its *very best*, just the way God intended for us...

Folks, here's the reality we need to start with today: ***We'll experience life at its best when we grasp what we already have—the riches of God's inheritance (1:18)!*** So, what is this *inheritance*? Paul tells us in this section of scripture. *Here's what we get with our inheritance in Christ.* First, you get...

THE HOPE TO WHICH (GOD) HAS CALLED YOU (1:18b). What 'hope' is Paul talking about here? We see it in these verses: In Chapter 1, Verse 4, the hope is described in this way: "...to be holy and blameless before him." Also in Romans 8:29: "Become conformed to the likeness of his Son." The hope Paul is talking about in both of these situations is this: *To know that one day we will be as Jesus is—holy and blameless before God, a great hope that brings comfort, assurance, and motivation to live as Jesus lived.* There is our hope ... *that we'll someday be like Jesus and have a relationship with God that reflects that—one that will last forever!* It's kind of like the hope I had as a teenager—to be on the good side of my father; if we were ever 'on the outs,' I didn't sleep as good as I did when things were right between us! So, having a good, solid relationship was a good thing; that's our hope in Christ, too... And what else do we get with this inheritance?

THE GREATNESS OF GOD'S POWER (1:19). Did you know we have the power available to us—within our inheritance—to accomplish all the things we've been talking about throughout this season? Seeing the 'Unseen Christ' means being able to tap into the same Power that raised Jesus from the dead!

- We can *worship* the way God intended us to, with a new enthusiasm.
- We can share God's *love* with others in very special ways, like through anonymous gifts or acts of kindness.
- We can come to a point in our lives where things that are *righteous* mean more to us than things that are not.
- We can begin to use our God-given gifts in *serving* God ... and *with* a grateful attitude to boot.
- We can surrender our very lives to the truths found in *God's Word*, being obedient to all we hear or read.
- We can finally come to experience *authentic prayer* in our lives in a real way.

You have the Power to do ALL of these things ... once you realize that 'resurrection power' is a part of your inheritance in Christ!

Too many times, when we think about Easter, we simply think about the physical events that took place on that Holy weekend, long, long ago—Jesus journey to the cross, from

Palm Sunday forward, his Last Supper with the disciples on Thursday, his crucifixion on Friday, his time in the grave on Saturday, and the empty tomb on Sunday. But, have you ever taken the time to think about what was going on in the spiritual realm? What was happening in the spiritual world at that time? Let me take just a moment to share with you what I think may have been happening on that first Easter weekend...

On that first Easter weekend, I don't believe there was *anyone* in this world who was tempted by the devil. Have I got your attention? What I'm talking about is this: I believe Satan gathered ALL of his cronies—all his spiritual forces—in Jerusalem! No one else in the rest of the world was tempted on that first Easter weekend, because Satan and *his* army had their hands full! They had a BIG problem! He didn't have anyone to spare to be out tempting others in this world. On that first Easter weekend, he concentrated all his forces in Jerusalem. He concentrated all the energies he could muster in keeping Jesus' body in the grave! Why? If they could stop this resurrection, folks, they would stop God's master plan!

Guess what? He couldn't do it! Against all the spiritual forces Satan could pull together that day—all the power *he* had, Jesus was still resurrected. God stuck his tongue out at Satan on that day, breathed resurrection life into Jesus' body, and the world has never been the same!

Folks, know this: *we have the same power that raised Jesus from the dead available to us!* Just as in Jesus' case, we don't have anything to fear either! Just be on your toes! Know that Satan is the great liar and lies to you. Know that and DON'T BELIEVE HIM! But know this too: there's no way he **can** defeat you! Why? Because you have resurrection power available to you! I know this is GOOD FRIDAY, but folks, this is what Good Friday was really all about too! We are the "Resurrection People!" That's our inheritance! And another part of our inheritance is this...

THE MAGNIFICENCE OF CHRIST'S PERSON (1:20-23). He was raised from the dead (v. 20), seated at the right hand of the Father, above all other rule, authority, power, and dominion (v. 21), a name that is above all other names—past, present, and future, all things in subjection to him (v. 22), the head of the Church, his body, the fullness of him which manifests his glory, AND his presence permeates and fills everything everywhere (v. 23). So, DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU'RE RELATED TO? Talk about 'name dropping?' This is better than just 'name dropping,' because *Jesus really is related to us and us to him* through faith, just as the scriptures promise. Folks, we're related to **ROYALTY**; get used to it!

Albert E. Day once said, "It is a tragic life that becomes conscious of God only in those events that shatter its habitual thoughts and dreams and compel it to recognize his presence and activity. What makes life splendid is the *constant* awareness of God."

For this entire season of Lent, that's what we've been focusing on—*seeing the 'Unseen*

Christ' and realizing what a difference it will make in our lives, year 'round, when we learn to 'practice his presence' every day of the week. So, how 'bout it? Are you more aware of Christ's presence now than you've ever been? Will your life ever be the same after this Holy season of Lent ... and this experience we've had together? Have you learned *TODAY* about *the reality of your inheritance* in Christ? Let me leave you today with this thought...

Once there was an undernourished boy who was found on a city street and taken to the hospital. After the nurses had bathed and dressed him, he was put to bed and served a dinner tray. Conspicuous on that tray was a large glass of milk. The boy's eyes lit up as he reached for the glass, but then he paused. Looking at the nurses, he asked a question that nearly broke their hearts: "Can I drink *all* of it?" he said.

As believers, today—on this GOOD FRIDAY, you need to know that *you can drink all of it* ... and it won't be 'skim!' That's why Jesus went to the cross for us! He died on that cross, went through that agonizing crucifixion ... we could drink all of it! All the fantastic spiritual blessings that make up God's gift of life at its best are ours in the 'Unseen Christ.' And, folks, when we learn to drink of the gift of life that we already possess ... we will see Him! We don't have to leave the glass full. The answer is, "Yes! We can drink all of it!" Your inheritance is waiting. That's the GOOD NEWS on this GOOD FRIDAY!