

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



# THE LENEXA EDIFIER



John 8:32

*"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"*

APRIL 16, 2017

## *The riches we have in Christ Jesus*

*Jim Stauffer*

*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7).* From souls buried in spiritual poverty, the very sin that has separated us from God, we receive such rich blessings as a result of the death of our Savior on the cross. God has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (vs 3).*

In the subsequent verses Paul says God made known to the apostles the mystery in order for them to make it known among men (**vs 9; Eph. 3:1-5**).

The ultimate point he makes early on in this book is the Ephesians have a hope of an eternal inheritance because they have heard the word of truth, which he says is the gospel of salvation and have believed it. He further equates this eternal inheritance with God's redemption of His own possession.

Let us understand what it means to be God's own possession. When the first converts to the gospel were announced in **Acts 2**, it was said that *they that gladly receive his word were baptized.....the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Ac. 2:41,47).*

Paul tells the elders of Ephesus in his final meeting with them at Miletus, **Acts 20:28** *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.* Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. Those who are saved are added to that same church. He has purchased the souls of men with his blood (**Mat. 20:28**).

We then become God's own possession. As His possession, we inherit the blessings spoken of by Paul in this first chapter of Ephesians.

It is imperative we understand what it means to be His possession. Paul explains it this way to Titus, *who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds. (Titus 2:14).* Prior to this verse he says these very people deny ungodliness and worldly desires. There is a change that

takes place when we become God's possession. Peter describes it this way, *But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; (1 Pet. 2:9).*

There are rich blessings in Christ Jesus no doubt. We have been redeemed from sin and given the hope of an eternal inheritance. All this because He died for our sins and made us righteous again in the sight of God (**2 Cor. 5:14; Rom. 3:24,25**).

Not only then do we live here on earth in harmony with the God Who created us, but we have the hope of living with Him eternally when this life is over.

This day is determined to represent the day Jesus was raised from the grave. Because of His victory over death (**Heb. 2:14,15**) all fear of death is removed for the one who has become God's own possession.

We must view this subject soberly and with clear objectivity. The world has a very fuzzy view of the resurrection and the heavenly reward. We see and hear people every day claim heaven as the destination of loved ones who have died.

I have yet to hear an officiant at a funeral indicate the soul of the departed is serious danger of eternal condemnation. But that is exactly what awaits those who do not acknowledge the Son of God in faith. Those who reject the gospel of salvation and regard it as a crutch of weak men who are fearful of death, will come face to face with Christ in the judgment. And when they do it will not be as children of God, those of His own possession. It will be as those who, without Christ, must give an account of the things done in the body (**2 Cor. 5:10**).

Jesus says of that day, *"Do not marvel at this; for an hour is coming, in which all who are in the tombs will hear His voice, and will come forth; those who did the good deeds to a resurrection of life, those who committed the evil deeds to a resurrection of judgment.*

It is important we prepare for that meeting.

## FASTING

*"Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matt. 6:16-18).*

Evidently, fasting was common among the Jews in the OT. *"But as for me, when they were sick, My clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting; And my prayer would return to my own heart. I paced about as though he were my friend or brother; I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother" (Psa. 35:13-14; see, too, Neh. 1:4; Est. 4:3).* Fasting occurred during times of need: worship, distress, sickness—these and more might instinctively draw people closer to God. Fasting and other spiritual activities were indications of one's need for God; close communion with God seems to be the idea. Some of the Jews fasted in Jesus' day. The religious Pharisee said: *"I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:12).* Ancient Jewish writings said that the Jews fasted on Mondays and Thursdays. John's disciples fasted; in fact, they wondered why the disciples of Jesus didn't fast as did the Pharisees. Jesus fasted prior to his public ministry (**Matthew 4:2**).

As kingdom citizens we need to constantly reevaluate our ambitions before the Lord and before the world. While we are to be different from the world we live in (salt and light), we must resist the temptation to show off to others in our praying and fasting and giving alms. Jesus did not say to fast; He said, when you fast. Again, He is saying: "I need to get your attention. I need for you to listen to Me." If you are going to call upon God as your Father, then you must not call attention to self, regardless of what the activity might be.

**Isaiah 58** contains perhaps the best known and greatest passage of all on the subject of fasting in the OT. The prophet calls upon God's people to repent. The people were religious but found no pleasure in their religion. *"Why have we fasted, they say, and You have not seen? Why have we afflicted our souls, and You take no notice?" In fact, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. Indeed you fast for strife and debate, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. You will not fast as you do this day, To make your voice heard on high" (Isaiah 58:3-4).* The Jews said: Hey, look at what we are doing. We expect the Lord to act because of what we are doing. Instead, they should have been concerned about pleasing and honoring God. *"Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isa. 58:14).*

If you want to fast, go ahead. Fasting can be a time

of greater dedication, consecration, and self-discipline. Fasting says: I am serious about focusing on the Lord. But when you fast, you don't have to tell the Lord what you are doing. He already knows. And those around you don't need to know.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## The Conversion of a "Tough Guy"

The 'popular' conception of many in the world is that only the weak become Christians and that those men who have the ability to "stand on their own two feet" don't need to do so. The problem is this view just doesn't hold up under scrutiny. Any examination of the Armed Forces of the United States will show that a very significant number have strong religious convictions. Are we going to say that they aren't tough? Not I. But even in the Bible we see men who are as tough as any we know today who became Christians because they understood well their own shortcomings.

Consider the Philippian jailor of **Acts 16:23-40**. This man had a job where he was in serious physical danger and the wrong mistake with the wrong inmate could cost his life. After all, allowing a prisoner to escape was a capital crime, **vs 27**. Yet this man, nobody's fool, asked the most important question, *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"* and then yielded with cheerful obedience to the answer.

Consider Cornelius, the first full blooded Gentile to obey the Gospel. Read about him in **Acts 10:1f**. Not many folks about can have that said about them but the Holy Spirit says that about Cornelius. Yet, as good as he was he still wasn't saved. He was told to, *"Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house."* (**Acts 11:13f**) Cornelius and his household cheerfully obeyed Peter's commands, we read.

Consider also Peter and Paul. Neither was to be pitied on account of a lack of manhood. They were tough and tenacious. May the same be said of us!

**Cleveland Reddinger**

## The Firstfruits by Ethan R. Longhenry

*"But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ's, at his coming" (I Corinthians 15:23).*

Despair turned to excitement on that first day of the week so long ago when Jesus arose from the dead (**John 20:1-31, etc.**). In the midst of all the excitement, however, there was one theological conundrum that needed to be addressed.

The idea of resurrection was not foreign to the Jews; the Pharisees believed in the resurrection (**Acts 23:8**),

and no doubt many other Jews did also. But "the resurrection" in which they believed was the resurrection on the last day. That is what **Daniel 12:2** seemed to indicate. It certainly was the expectation of Martha when Lazarus died (**cf. John 11:24**).

But someone rising from the dead in the resurrection before the end? This was not something you would automatically take away from a reading of the Old Testament, nor was it something immediately obvious to Pharisees and others. Perhaps this was part of the challenge the disciples faced in not understanding Jesus' predictions of the event (**Mark 9:30-32, etc.**). How could it be that One could rise from the dead before everyone was raised from the dead?

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, would make this understandable. Jesus was the firstfruits of the resurrection!

The idea of the firstfruits comes from passages like **Deuteronomy 18:4**: *"The first-fruits of thy grain, of thy new wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him."*

The firstfruits were the first part of a harvest-- the first wheat or barley harvested, the first wine processed, the first of the fleece shorn, and so on and so forth. The Israelites were to devote the firstfruits to God (**Exodus 23:19**), and God gave them to the Levites for sustenance (**Deuteronomy 18:4**). After the firstfruits had been offered, the rest of the harvest belonged to the people for their own consumption and use.

The firstfruits image, therefore, helps us understand the relationship between Jesus' resurrection and the resurrection on the final day. Jesus is the firstfruits-- the first to rise from the dead, never to die again (**I Corinthians 15:20**). He had been given as an offering to God to atone for the people (**II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:1-15**). He paves the way for the resurrection to come, the resurrection of which we all take part (**John 5:28-29; I Corinthians 15:12-57**)!

There is something obvious about the firstfruits that is important for the resurrection. The firstfruits are not different in kind or type from the harvest that comes later. The firstfruits of wheat are wheat just as the "second fruits" or "third fruits" would be; the same goes for barley, wine, fleece, and the like. So it is with the resurrection: we should not believe that our resurrection will be something different from Christ's resurrection (**I Corinthians 15:23**). The difference involves time, not type or kind. As Jesus died in the flesh but remained alive in the spirit (**II Peter 3:18**), and was then raised bodily from the dead, the tomb being empty, and His flesh being transformed for immortality (**Luke 24:1-49**), so it goes with those who serve Him. All who have died, and those who will be dead before His coming, remain alive in the spirit, but will then be raised bodily and transformed for immortality (**I Corinthians 15:35-57; Philippians 1:21-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**)!

In reality, the resurrection is a challenging concept, for one of the few "guarantees" in the physical realm is

that once one dies, one is always dead. We do not see people rising from the dead, never to die again.

Yet that is precisely the hope by which the Christian must live (**cf. Romans 8:20-25**). And we have confidence in that hope because of Jesus the firstfruits. We do not have to wonder whether God can or will raise the dead, for we know He raised Jesus from the dead. If He is able to raise Jesus from the dead, He is able to raise us from the dead also, and He has promised to do so (**Romans 8:11**)!

The last enemy, indeed, is death (**I Corinthians 15:26**). Through Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and lordship, believers now can have confidence in their spiritual regeneration in this life (**Romans 6:1-23, 8:1-9**). The believer is able to be a new creature in Christ (**II Corinthians 5:17**), yet we are all still cursed with physical death.

But death will be abolished. The day will dawn when we all will have the victory over not just sin but also death through Jesus Christ our Lord, and on that day the rest of the harvest will be brought in to the praise and glory of God in Christ (**I Corinthians 15:53-57; II Peter 1:6-7**). We can have complete confidence in this because Jesus gained the victory over sin on the cross and over death in the resurrection, and He is the firstfruits! Let us all serve God so that we may attain to the resurrection of life (**cf. Philippians 3:11-13**)!

**Gary R. Habermas & J.P. Moreland, *Immortality - The Other Side of Death*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992, p. 245.**

Well over three hundred verses are concerned with the subject of Jesus' resurrection in the New Testament. We are told that this event is a sign for unbelievers (**Matthew 12:38-40**); **cf. John 20:24-29**) as well as the answer for the believer's doubt (**Luke 24:38-43**). It serves as the guarantee that Jesus' teachings are true (**Acts 2:22-24; 1 Corinthians 15:12-20**) and is the center of the gospel itself (**Romans 4:24-25, 10:9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4**). Further, the resurrection is the impetus for evangelism (**Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 10:39-43**), the key indication of the believer's daily power to live the Christian life (**Rom. 6:4-14, 8:9-11; Phil. 3:10**) and the reason for the total commitment of our lives (**Rom. 7:4; 1 Cor. 15:57-58**). The resurrection even addresses the fear of death (**John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:54-58; cf. Hebrews 2:14-15**) and is related to the second coming of Jesus (**Acts 1:11; Revelation 1:7**). Lastly, this event is a model of the Christian's resurrection from the dead (**Acts 4:2; 1 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**) and provides a foretaste of heaven for the believer (**Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Peter 1:3-5**).

**Eph. 2:19** *So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;*

**1Pet. 2:9** *But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:*

**Psa. 1:1** *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

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## ***What Must I Do To Be Saved?***

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10