

## God's ATM Machine

**Sunday Morning, November 13, 2016**

My children use to think that the Bank's ATM machine was an endless supply of money for us. If they wanted something, they would just ask us if we could get it for them. We would have to stop and explain that there was not enough money for us to be able to buy what they wanted right then. They would then say, "Can't you just go to the ATM and get some money for it?" Then we would have to explain that we have to put the money in the bank first, before it can come out of the ATM. Thankfully, we never face that dilemma when it comes to meeting spiritual needs. God has an ATM machine all set up in Heaven for us, where we can have access to His riches with no limits.

In Ephesians 1: 3 – 14 Paul tells us that our future is secure by the promise of the Father, we have salvation by the work of the Son, and as a guarantee, we have a sealing, or a deposit in the form of the Holy Spirit. These are three of the spiritual riches we have in Jesus Christ.

But what are we suppose to do with these spiritual riches? God has given us material and spiritual possessions so that we might use what we have for Him.

The first purpose is mentioned three times in this passage in verses 6, 12, & 14. "for the praise of His glory".

When God blesses us with spiritual possessions, or spiritual gifts—or even worldly blessings and gifts—they are NEVER to be used for our own glory or recognition. The things God gives us—whether spiritual or physical—are for His praise and His glory.

Let's read **(Ephesians 1: 15 - 19)** to discover the second purpose of these spiritual riches.

15 Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,

16 do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

The second purpose, as found in these verses, is for believers to gain knowledge of God.

Paul heard about their faith in the Lord Jesus. This is not just the initial faith that brings eternal life, but an ongoing faithfulness and obedience to Jesus Christ. Remember, Paul is not talking in Ephesians about how to receive eternal life; He is writing to Christians about how to live out the life in Christ they already have. He points out here that it is lived out by faith.

When you come before God to pray, what do you pray for? Do you pray for more knowledge of Him? Too often, our prayers go something like this:

*“Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray my Cuisenart to keep.  
I pray my stocks are on the rise,  
And that my analyst is wise.  
That all the wine I sip is white  
And that my hot tub’s watertight,  
That racquetball won’t get too tough,  
That all my sushi’s fresh enough.  
I pray that my cell phone still works,  
That my career won’t lose its perks,  
My microwave won’t radiate,  
My condo won’t depreciate.  
I pray my health club doesn’t close  
And that my money market grows.  
And if I go broke before I wake,  
I pray my Mercedes they won’t take.  
Amen.”*

So you get the idea how many people pray. But is that what Paul prays for here? Does he pray for us to be healthy and wealthy? No. When we look at the verses more carefully, we see that he has one main prayer request with three specific items. Let’s look at the verses more carefully.

**(Ephesians 1:17)**

17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

Paul says, I keep asking. This is the continual, unceasing, fervent prayer of Paul for his brothers and sisters in Christ. Incidentally, it is my prayer for you as well. What does he ask for? Well, look what Ephesians 1:17 says. He prays to God that they may gain the spirit of wisdom and revelation. In the NIV, the word Spirit is capitalized. This means that the translators thought that Paul was referring here to the wisdom and revelation that comes with the Holy Spirit. John 16:13 does say that when the Spirit comes, He will guide you into all truth. So if this is how Paul meant it, he is praying that the Holy Spirit would guide them into wisdom and revelation. On the other hand, some of your translations might not have it capitalized. In this case, they take spirit to mean more like the character or nature of a person. We use spirit this way all the time. When we say “That person has spirit!” or “What a loving spirit he has” we don’t mean the Holy Spirit, but are talking about the person’s character or nature which makes them who they are.

Wisdom is knowledge of the true nature of things. It is spiritual depth perception. It is applied knowledge.

Why does Paul want us to gain wisdom and knowledge? So that you may know Him better. The spiritual possessions we have in Christ have been given to us so that we will first, give glory to God and second, gain knowledge of God.

The only way to know anything for sure about God is to have Him tell us about Himself. And that is exactly what He has done in Scripture, and especially in Jesus Christ. The blessings we have in Jesus Christ guide us into knowledge of God and the wisdom for how to live life.

Paul, in **(Ephesians 1:18-19)**, lists three things specifically that he desires—that he prays—for his readers to gain knowledge of. Look at these verses with me.

18 the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

19 and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power

Paul prays that his readers would gain spiritual knowledge and understanding in three ways.

First, that they would know hope, second, that they would know their riches, and third, that they would know God's power.

Our hope is a certain hope. Hope in Scripture is the absolute certainty of our victory in God. When God makes a promise, faith believes it, hope anticipates it, and patience quietly awaits it.

So the second purpose of our spiritual possessions is to gain knowledge of God, and we do this first by learning of the hope that is ours in Christ.

Secondly, though, Paul wants us to gain knowledge of God by learning about our riches. He says in verse 18, “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints”. I hope you understand that the riches that belong to us in Christ—the inheritance that is ours in Christ—is partly for our use right now. And Paul says here that for many of them, we can know them now! I should point out here that the word “know” often means more than just a simple knowledge of something. Being at the ocean ... swimming in the ocean ... smelling the salt in the air and tasting the salt on your tongue, hearing the cry of the seagulls ... is much different than reading about the ocean in a book. One is simply mental knowledge; the other is experiential knowledge.

The knowledge that Paul wants us to have here of our hope and riches in Jesus Christ is an intimate, experiential kind of knowledge. Here, he wants us to know the riches that we have in Christ by using them. One of these riches that we have are spiritual gifts. Every believer has a spiritual gift. God wants us to discover what they are, and then put them into practice—use them. I would encourage those of you who have not yet taken the spiritual gift inventory to do so as soon as possible, so that you may know some of the riches that are yours.

So finally,  
In the first part of verse 19, Paul prays for his readers to know his mighty power for us who believe.

The world wants power today, doesn't it? Those who are of the world believe that money and prestige and position, will get them power. Well, let me tell you, the power that is ours in Christ is beyond comprehension. Paul says it is incomparably great! That means there is no comparison between this power and any other power in the world! In fact, the Greek word for power is dunamis, from which we get our word dynamite. It is power like dynamite that we have in Christ.

This power is only for those of us who believe.

Have you believed in Christ? I would invite you today, if you have not, to make sure of your eternal destiny. Believe in Jesus so that you may be for the praise of God's glory, and so that you may know God, the hope to which we are called, the riches of his inheritance, and the power for us who believe. These things cannot be yours in any other way.