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GOD'S BLESSING BRINGS RICHES

"The blessing of Jehovah it makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." ***Proverbs 10 verse 22***

How reasonable it seems that those who become God's friends, and especially those who are adopted into his family as children, should be blessed of him in multitudinous ways, in which others of mankind, who are aliens, strangers, and foreigners to him through wicked works (Colossians 1 verse 21), should not be blessed. We look back into the past and see father Adam, while in divine favor, very rich, the possessor of the whole world, filled with bounties. We read of father Abraham, "the friend of God," very rich in cattle and goods; and Jacob, although losing all inheritance in his father's estate, was blessed of the Lord, so that he became very rich in flocks and in herds. So Israel was promised that if as a nation they would be obedient to the Lord they should be blessed in all of their temporal affairs; their land would bring forth bountifully; they would not be afflicted with drought or pests; their flocks and herds should prosper and multiply exceedingly, and even their physical health was provided for, so that God guaranteed them that abiding in his favor as a people they should not be subject to pestilences, diseases, etc., for the Lord himself would be their

physician to preserve to them health and every prosperity.

However, with the introduction of the new age, the Gospel age, came a great change not in the divine plan, but in the divine dealings; and henceforth the favored of the Lord were not promised earthly blessings and good things, nor immunity from sickness and pain and persecution; but to the contrary of this, they were assured that whoever would be received into God's family on the high plane of sonship, begotten of the spirit, and, prospectively, heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, would be required to pass through experiences of suffering more than others; of trials of faith and of patience and of character to which others would not be subjected; and they were instructed that these adversities should be accepted by them as marks of divine favor, as evidences that God was dealing with them as with sons, and by these experiences fitting and preparing them for positions of honor, and untellable blessings in the future. (Romans 8 verse 17; 2 Timothy 2 verse 12; Hebrews 12 verse 6 through 8). "Eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit." 1 Corinthians 2 verse 9 and 10.

In harmony with this change of dispensation, we find the New Testament declaration to be to the effect that

those accepted to this high honor of sonship (John 1 verse 12). should not expect earthly riches or temporal blessings or marks of divine favor, but that, quite to the contrary, the Apostle says, "Harken my beloved brethren: hath not God (as a rule). chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the Kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2 verse 5). And again, he assures us that not many great, not many rich, *not many mighty, not many wise, according to the course of this world, are to be found amongst the called and sanctified sons of God. 1 Corinthians 1 verse 26 through 29.

* Riches, while generally applied to money and physical comforts and opulence, may properly enough be applied to any valuable possession; as, for instance, one might be rich in talents of music or oratory or art; or he might be rich in mental endowment which would carry with it weight of influence amongst men.

From the foregoing Scriptures and many others we see, not only that those who become the Lord's sons are very rarely blessed with temporal riches, but we see also that the principle extends still further, and that very few who possess earthly riches in advance of hearing of the truth are very likely to attain the high calling of this Gospel age. This is not because God is opposed to riches, for he himself is rich above all others. It is rather, we might say, the outworking of a natural law or principle which has its force in the fact

that all mankind, by reason of the fall, are selfish. The possession of wealth in combination with selfishness leads to a measure of satisfaction with present circumstances and conditions unfavorable to faith in God's heavenly promises. The wealthy, selfish, satisfied soul says to itself, Eat, drink and be merry; enjoy your advantages; take your pleasure out of these, rather than speculate respecting future advantages and future riches, which are intangible, and which must be accepted by faith. It is in harmony with this that our Lord declared, "How hardly (with what difficulty). shall they that have riches enter the Kingdom of God!" Mark 10 verse 23.

By this term, the Kingdom of God, our Lord evidently did not refer to the earthly nominal church, for we are all aware that the rich men find very little difficulty in getting into it. Evidently, he referred to the real Kingdom, the glorified Kingdom which shall be established in the end of this age, the Millennial Kingdom. It will be difficult for a rich man to obtain membership in this glorified body of Christ, to which the Kingdom work will be entrusted. But why is this so?

The reason is that God, desiring to select in this Gospel age a peculiar people to be the kings and priests and judges of the world in the next age, desires to select for the rulers and teachers only such as will come up to certain tests or requirements of character and obedience. One of these requirements is sacrifice self-

sacrifice and hence all of this class now being selected are Scripturally designated a priesthood "a royal priesthood," because royalty eventually is to be added to their office, partly as a reward for their faithfulness as priests in sacrificing the present life, and partly to enable them as priests in the future the better to serve and bless all the families of the earth.

The beginning of these terms or conditions of this age was with the great Head of the Church, our Lord Jesus he must sacrifice ere he could be made the King and have the power and authority to bless. His sacrifice, as is well known, was a comprehensive one; it began with the sacrifice of his riches and ended with the sacrifice of his life. "He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might (eventually, in the Millennial Kingdom). be made rich." (2 Corinthians 8 verse 9). His wealth, consisting of heavenly glory and, subsequently, of human talents, and every kind of good possessions, was all sacrificed, including even his reputation, so that the Apostle declares, "He made himself of no reputation." His will also was sacrificed, the strongest individual thing that any being can possess; as he himself declared, he sought not his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. His life, the most precious thing to any intelligent creature, was freely laid down, a sacrifice, a sin-offering, in harmony with the divine plan, on our behalf. Philippians 2 verse 5 through 8 Diaglott.

But all these sacrifices led, under divine providence and promise, to still greater riches, greater honors and greater powers, as the Apostle, after reciting how our Lord humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross, declares, "Wherefore, (as a reward for this sacrifice). God hath highly exalted him, and hath given him a name that is above every name;" he has been exalted "far above angels, principalities and powers, and every name that is named." He has been given a name more excellent than all others, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. (Philippians 2 verse 9 through 11). It is by virtue of his sacrifice of riches and honors and will and life itself that our dear Redeemer is now the great and glorious Royal High Priest, with all power in heaven and in earth, which he soon will take to himself. (Revelation 11 verse 17). Soon he will exercise it in accomplishing the wonderful work which he already has begun, and which it is the Father's good pleasure that he shall complete; namely, of subduing all things, and bringing all sin and rebellion against divine authority into subjection, rescuing so many as desire to return to harmony with their Creator and his laws, and destroying with an everlasting destruction all who love and practice sin knowingly and willfully.

These, our dear Redeemer's experiences, are set before believers as an example; and so many as desire during this Gospel age, and under its high calling, are permitted to become his followers, and to walk in his

footsteps to have fellowship in his sufferings, sharing in his sacrifice, that ultimately they may be sharers with him in the glorious rewards. As a matter of fact, none of these followers have anything of value to sacrifice. It cannot be said of them, as of their Redeemer, that they were rich and became poor; on the contrary, they are all poor as respects everything that could be considered true riches. Even their own righteousness was as filthy rags, which needed to be replaced with the imputed robe of the Savior's righteousness (justification), ere they could be invited to be his followers.

But while none called to the under-priesthood possess any real riches, each one possesses something of some value in his own estimation; some possess a little honor amongst men; some possess a little of this world's goods, bringing measurable comforts; some possess talents capable of exercise and development; each one possesses a will, more or less weak and imperfect; and each one possesses a little fragment of life which has not yet flickered out. The invitation to each would be royal priest is, that being justified by faith through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, he should sacrifice his all and thus be reckoned a joint-sacrificer with the great Redeemer, as having fellowship with him in his sufferings, that he might also share in his glory. (Romans 8 verse 17). This is the feature of this Gospel age: it is the age of sacrifice and self-denial as respects all earthly blessings and

privileges and advantages. And the object or hope inspiring to such sacrifices of present things is, that all such shall be made partakers of far greater riches of glory, honor, immortality and eternal life, in the Kingdom. Thus, we have the key to the difference between God's dealings with his faithful ones in this present age, and his dealings with some of his faithful ones in a preceding age.

From this point of view earthly riches of every kind, opulence of money, of influence, of talent, should not be despised by the Lord's people, but, on the contrary, should be appreciated not after the worldly manner of appreciation, for selfish interests and purposes, but because those who possess riches of any kind, have that much more than they otherwise would have to offer upon the Lord's altar as a sacrifice in his service, to glorify his name, to advance his truth, to bless his people. But the consecrated should keep ever in mind that this is the only value of any kind of riches to them: they are not to seek to keep these riches, but to seek opportunities for using them wisely, spending them all to the very last farthing.

There are some who are rich in talents, and who could, if they would, turn those talents into the service of the Lord and the Truth; and they make a great mistake and lose a precious opportunity if they hold them for themselves in any selfish manner or degree. There are those who have more or less of the money talent,

earthly riches, and they make a great mistake if they hoard these; for their only value as respects the Kingdom, its glories, its riches and its honors, is in using them, now. If they hold and hoard their earthly riches they are burying their talent, their opportunity, instead of using it; and such will demonstrate to themselves eventually the meaning of our Lord's words, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye* than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom." (Luke 18 verse 25). He cannot get into the Kingdom at all except as he strips himself of his riches, sacrifices them, devotes them to the Lord.

However, the stripping of oneself of riches, sacrificing riches, does not signify the reckless and wasteful disposition of them; rather, all riches of every kind should be considered consecrated to the Lord at the time their possessor consecrates himself and his all to God's service; and thenceforth those riches should be used, not as his own, but as the Lord's riches, the Lord's talents, to be used according to the steward's understanding of the divine will. But certainly, no steward is faithful who hoards and accumulates to hand down selfishly to his own posterity. We are not here opposing a reasonable provision being made for the steward's household, as the Apostle enjoins (1 Timothy 5 verse 8; Romans 12 verse 17), but we are opposing the thought that God has ever authorized his stewards to avoid using their stewardship, and to

attempt to pass that stewardship onward at their death, to others.

This is one of the fallacies with which many deceive themselves, for, as the Scriptures declare, the natural mind (heart). is exceedingly deceitful and at times misleads the new creature, the new will, the new heart. (Jeremiah 17 verse 9). It is for this reason that God in his Word gives us in so many ways line upon line, precept upon precept, that we may know the terms of our calling, that they are terms of sacrifice and not of acquisitiveness as respects earthly things, that knowing this we may make our calling and our election sure by conformity thereto, by becoming copies of God's dear Son, "who was rich (in every sense of the word, far beyond our comprehension), but who for our sakes became poor (sacrificing it all)."

The Apostle speaks of the deceitfulness of riches; and on every hand we may witness this deceitfulness: we see how often earthly wealth deceives and misleads and corrupts the reasoning powers and turns aside the force of God's Word to those who possess it. We see the same in respect to the wealth of influence, how those who possess this wealth frequently deceive themselves, and hoard it, and refuse to sacrifice it for the truth, for the Lord, for his cause. We see the same deception operating powerfully in those who possess a wealth of talent in any direction; they feel like keeping all of it for self, and if not all, the larger and choicer

parts; they are deceived into thinking this is the right course, notwithstanding the Scriptures so plainly declare that our privileges in connection with these is that of sacrifice. Then, we daily witness, as the Scriptures declare, that those who possess any kind of riches, wealth, talent or influence, are rarely amongst the sacrificers. We might almost say, Blessed are those who are poor in this world's goods, and in talents and in influence, for they having practically nothing to sacrifice to the Lord but their wills, find it easier to comply with the conditions, and we presume that the larger proportion of those who will through faith inherit the Kingdom will consequently be of this poor class, rich in faith only. James 2 verse 5.

Footnote for the October 29th Manna, 2 Corinthians 4 verse 8 through 9

When we would see a noble example, like that of our Lord, who was rich in everything, and who gave all, we rejoice in it and realize that as his sacrifice was so great his reward also is proportionately great. When we see the noble example of the Apostle Paul, who possessing some considerable wealth of ability, talent and influence, and possibly of financial means also, laid these all, a willing, a glad sacrifice, at the feet of the Lord, laying them all down with joy in God's service, in the service of the truth, in the service of the brethren, it causes our hearts to rejoice, and we feel sure that one so rich, and who spent his riches so faithfully, will

be one to shine very brightly in the Kingdom, when it is set up and manifested. And so, undoubtedly, it will be with all the royal priesthood, in proportion as they have sacrificed their possessions. Those who joyfully endure for the Lord's sake, the truth's sake, the greatest shame, the greatest ignominy, the greatest trials, the greatest persecutions in this present life, and thus have experiences most like those of the Master and Pattern, we may be sure will in proportion to their faithfulness manifested in such sacrifices, have a future great reward; as the Apostle has declared, "star differs from star in glory." 1 Corinthians 15 verse 40 through 44.

* A small gate in the walls of ancient cities, for the convenience of belated travelers after sundown, after the main city gates were closed. These needle-eyes were so low that camels could enter them only upon their knees and after being stripped of their burdens.

HEAVENLY VERSUS EARTHLY RICHES

We have said that the heavenly riches are to be attained in the resurrection, when the Millennial Kingdom shall be inaugurated, and the faithful overcomers, by their resurrection change, shall be richly endowed with all the good things which God hath in reservation for them that love him, and who prove their love by present time devotions, sacrifices, etc. But, we should notice that there is a foretaste of these heavenly blessings granted to the faithful in this

present life; these heavenly riches granted us now the Apostle speaks of as "riches of grace" (Ephesians 1 verse 7 and 18), and these grace riches include faith, hope, and joy in the holy spirit and an ability to see and appreciate with the eye of faith things actually not seen as yet. The Apostle declares that these treasures of wisdom and grace knowledge of divine good things in reservation, and the fellowship with God which permits us to anticipate and enjoy those blessings in a measure now, are all hidden in Christ, "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Colossians 2 verse 3). We must come into Christ, as members of his body, the true Church, by sacrifice, before we can have the opportunity of even searching for these hidden treasures, or of finding any of them. And then, as we progress faithfully in our sacrificial service, as priests, walking in the footsteps of the great High Priest, we find more of these true "riches of grace" day by day, and year by year, as we progress.

Moreover, another kind of riches comes to the royal priesthood, faithful in performing their self-sacrifices. These are riches of the holy spirit. They find as they sacrifice the selfish interests, earthly aims, earthly projects, etc., in the service of the Lord and the Truth, that they grow more and more in likeness to their heavenly Father and to their Lord, and that the fruits of the holy spirit abound in them more and more meekness, patience, gentleness, brotherly kindness, love.

Furthermore, they find a peace and a joy to which formerly they were strangers, and which the world can neither give nor take away. This peace and joy come through a realization that having given their all to the Lord, all of his exceeding great and precious promises belong to them. Now their faith can firmly grasp these promises as their own; they can realize that as their justification and call were not of themselves, but of the Lord, so all their course of sacrifice, in harmony with that call, is under divine supervision and care, and sure to work out blessings; and that to whatever extent they shall work out earthly hardships, trials and sufferings, God will proportionately make them to work out a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory in the Kingdom. 2 Corinthians 4 verse 17.

With this peace of God and confidence in his leading and care, they can apply to themselves the prophetic statement, "All the steps of a righteous man are ordered of the Lord, and he (the righteous man). delights in his way." (Psalm 37 verse 23). They can delight in this way, be it ever so thorny and narrow and rugged, because of their confidence in God's love and wisdom, and that he who began a good work in them is thus completing it and blessing them with experiences which divine wisdom sees will be to their profit eventually. Thus, the Lord's blessing is upon this class; and they realize indeed that, "The blessing of the Lord it makes rich." How rich it makes their hearts in the present time rich in noble sentiments, rich in faith,

rich in love, rich in good works to all men as they have opportunity, especially toward the household of faith; and very rich in God's blessing and under his providential care, which, if rightly accepted, will ultimately make these members of the Royal Priesthood heirs of God, joint-heirs with Jesus Christ their Lord, in an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for them. 1 Peter 1 verse 4.

LAODICEA'S COUNTERFEIT RICHES

We have been considering the true riches, present and future, provided for the true Israel, the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, and whose Head is Christ. But the Scriptures draw to our attention the fact that the nominal church of this present time, symbolical Laodicea (Revelation 3 verse 17 and 18), claims also to be very rich. "Thou sayest, I am rich and increased in goods and have need of nothing." Alas! This seems to be the prevalent condition of nominal churchianity on every hand. Only the few in her who are Israelites indeed, and who have not yet heard and obeyed the voice speaking in this harvest-time, and saying, "Come out of her my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues" only these very few know of the true riches; the remainder are deceiving themselves with a counterfeit wealth. They look with pride upon their numbers, and count them by millions: they rejoice in

this wealth of numbers, not realizing that nearly all are "tares," not begotten by the good Word of the Kingdom; indeed very few of them know anything about the Kingdom at all, not being begotten of the Truth, but begotten of error.

Laodiceans look upon their material prosperity, and the numbers of wealthy people associated with their confederating denominations, and count their money and their donations by millions, and say, we are rich as never before. Alas! that they do not realize that these are earthly riches of the kind which our Lord declares are no evidence of his favor during this Gospel age, but rather to the contrary. And they see not the true riches which the Lord admires, and which are the foretaste of his favor and the coming Kingdom wealth.

And so the Lord declares to Laodicea, "Thou knows not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked." She is poor, in that she has so little of the Master's spirit, so little of the Truth and the spirit of the Truth. The only riches which God can recognize are those which he promised to and bestows upon his people in this present time. Laodicea is blind, in that the god of this world hath blinded her perceptions of God's character and plan and is leading her further and further away from confidence in his Word, under the guidance of her chosen and well paid lords and masters, the clergy, who under the name of Higher Criticism and Evolution are rapidly taking away from

her every good possession and thing which would be estimable in the sight of the Lord, and who are thus denuding her, making her naked, taking from her the robe of Christ's righteousness, and leading her to trust, not in the precious blood of the redemption, the death of the Redeemer, but to trust in an evolutionary process which needs no Savior, which denies an atonement for sin, yea, denies that there is, or has been any sin to make atonement for; and claims, on the contrary that humanity has ground for pride in its own progress, which will be quite sufficient eventually to bring to them every desired blessing, without any Savior and without his Kingdom, which God has promised as the hope of the groaning creation. Romans 8 verse 19 through 23.

Laodicea is indeed counseled to buy the true gold, the true riches of the Lord, and to use eye salve that she may see, and to put on the garment of Christ's righteousness, that she may not be put to shame; but we have no intimation in the Scripture that she will give any heed to this counsel; on the contrary, the intimation is that more and more she will become a Babel of confusion, and that she will go down with the political and financial systems of this present age, in the great time of trouble with which this age will terminate, and which will fit and prepare mankind for the Kingdom of God's dear Son, and its reign of righteousness. "When the judgments of the Lord are abroad in the earth, the

inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." Isaiah 26 verse 9.

Then, with the new Millennial age, will come a new order of things, and no longer will the blessing of the Lord entail sacrifice and self-denials, as at the present time; because the sacrificing priesthood will all have been found and proven and glorified. Then the blessing of the Lord will come, as to the Jews, in earthly favors and earthly blessings, in proportion as they shall be obedient to the laws of the Kingdom and to the spirit of those laws. "In that day the righteous shall flourish" flourish in all temporal prosperity, and in mental, physical and moral growth, upward and still upward in the highway of holiness; in that day the evil-doer will receive the stripes, and be at the disadvantage; and, if he continue in evil-doing, ultimately he will be cut off from amongst the people, in the Second Death. Isaiah 35 verse 8; Psalm 37 verse 9; Acts 3 verse 23.

"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God who gives us (all his people). all things (needful). to their rich enjoyment, that they do good; that they be rich in good works, liberal, ready to bestow; treasuring up for themselves a good preparation for the real life." 1 Timothy 6 verse 17 through 19.