

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Rich in Faith and Love

(Jerry Fite)

When Jesus walked among men, “*the common people heard Him gladly*” (Mk. 12:37). Whether Paul’s statement of “*behold your calling*” points to those who proclaimed the call of the Gospel, or those who received the call, not many who were “*wise*” according to worldly standards, “*mighty*” or powerful in this world, or among the wealthy, or of “*noble*” origin defined both (1 *Corinthians* 1:26). Hearing the message of salvation was good news for all, but especially was it welcomed among the poor who were either abused or ignored.

James speaks of two qualities that are not only essential to salvation, but lead to riches not defined by gold and silver. He writes, “*Hearken, my beloved brethren, did not God choose them that are poor as to the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he promised to them that love him?*” (James 2:5). Faith in God, and love for God are the two essential qualities.

Being rich in faith could refer to the richness of one’s faith. But in this text, we have the other essential quality leading to richness that helps us understand what he means by being rich in faith.

Being “*heirs of the kingdom*” is what lies ahead for Christians “*who love God*”. Paul viewed his approaching execution as being delivered from every evil work, and a salvation unto the Lord’s “*heavenly kingdom*” (2 *Timothy* 4:18). Finishing our course in life by keeping “*the faith*” is essential. Also, the character of those who will share the crown of righteousness are “*those who have loved His appearing*” (2 *Timothy* 4:8). You do not keep the faith of the gospel without consistent faith manifested in God. You do not love the Lord’s appearing without loving Him before He appears.

Therefore, like love leads to being an heir of a heavenly kingdom, faith leads to riches of heaven. Is not heaven that for which the heart of faith yearns? Are not the followers of Christ exhorted to lay up their treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19-20)? The Christian lays up treasures in heaven by being “*rich in good works*”, helping and sharing our earthly goods with others. In doing so, Christians lay up for themselves “*a good foundation against the time to come...*” and can “*...lay hold on the life which is life indeed*” (1 *Timothy* 6:18-19).

One way faith overcomes the world is to break one’s tie to worldly treasures. It enables one to see the true treasures of heaven which are unlike any treasure on earth, for they are eternal (1 *John* 5:4; 2 *Corinthians* 4:18). But no one loves God, or has eternal life who does not love others. “*How does the love of God abide*” in those who shut up their compassion and worldly goods from those in need (1 *John* 3:17)? “*We know we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren*” (1 *John* 3:14).

James reminds us that those poor in this world’s goods have been chosen by God to be eternally rich in the world to come as they live by faith. Why then should we make distinctions between the rich and poor, giving preference to the rich? Why should we make evil judgments based upon the quality of apparel, giving preference to well dressed? It should never be!

Being truly rich in this world is not about abundance in a bank account. It has everything to do with faith and love. Those begotten of God overcome the world by faith, and manifest love to God by loving others.