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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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Lavish Gifts of God's Grace Make Us Immeasurably Rich

Ephesians 1:5-10

One of the most striking things in the world is the wide chasm between the experience of the rich and the poor. The richest home I've ever seen is either Biltmore or one of the mansions in Newport, RI. Biltmore is, of course, in Asheville in our own state of North Carolina... the extravagant estate of George Washington Vanderbilt II. It is the largest privately owned home in the United States...

I have also seen poverty that can scarcely be described... the tent dwellings of Citie Soleil in Port au Prince, Haiti, contained probably the poorest dwellings I've ever seen, although the Afghan refugees that fled Afghanistan for Pakistan in 1987 were just as poor, and far more traumatized.

This gulf between the rich and the poor is very wide indeed, and a major theme in the history of the world. But it is nothing compared to the gap between those who dwell in perfect bliss in heaven and sinners who suffer outside of God's grace on earth. Apart from Christ, we are all immeasurably POOR! It was for this very reason that Jesus Christ came to earth:

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.

Okay, so all Christians are RICH! But how rich? How do we understand our wealth? Occasionally, the wealthiest people in history would have inventories made of their estates and their holdings, so they could have an accurate sense of their wealth... Ephesians 1:3-10 gives an amazing inventory of our wealth

Now, we must understand first and foremost about our wealth that it is SPIRITUAL and kept in the HEAVENLY REALMS:

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

This is a direct rebuke to the “health and wealth” false gospel, which sees wealth the same way that the Vanderbilts and Gates’s of the world do... in gold, silver, real estate, stocks, bonds, houses, yachts, etc.

I. Christians are Immeasurably Rich

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Paul began the epistle by praising God for the astonishing blessings we have in Christ

THESE HEAVENLY BLESSINGS, these SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS are the currency of our wealth in Christ... BLESSINGS!!

Our wealth is immeasurably valuable, it is spiritual, it is kept in the heavenly realms, and it is listed IN PART for us in Ephesians 1:3-10.

Last week, we focused on the first blessing we ever received... a blessing given us before the foundation of the world... our ELECTION in Christ:

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

Now, we are going to continue walking through these verses and finding the lavish treasures of grace just lying there for us to pick up, gaze at, study, cherish

Why does God want us to know how rich we are? Because it will powerfully affect the way we live in this world, the way we love and serve God, the way we love and serve others

So let’s find out just how rich we are!

II. The Source of Our Riches: God’s Delighted Grace

A. Gifts Grudgingly Given Are No Gifts At All

1. Everyone has encountered the stingy giver... the manipulator... the one who lets you know just how much all this is costing

Proverbs 23:6-8 Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; ⁷ for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. "Eat and drink," he says to you, but his heart is not with you. ⁸ You will vomit up the little you have eaten and will have wasted your compliments.

2. God isn't like that!! God truly ENJOYS giving us riches!!

Luke 12:32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

3. The cost of these amazing riches is IMMEASURABLE... all of them bought with the blood of Jesus, His only Begotten Son

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood

4. God loves a cheerful giver

2 Corinthians 9:6 God loves a cheerful giver.

5. Even better... God IS a cheerful giver!!

a. That text said "NO RELUCTANTLY or UNDER COMPULSION..."

b. God has not made us rich reluctantly, nor was He under any kind of compulsion

c. He did it FREELY

6. Many verses in this section highlight God's attitude, God's motive in making us rich... the source of our wealth was the cheerful lavish grace of God!

B. Unconditional Love (vs. 4)

Ephesians 1:4-5 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons

1. The words "in love" in verse 4 may either be attached to the previous phrase or the following phrase

a. Either

^{KJV} Ephesians 1:4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love

In other words, that we should be CHARACTERIZED by holiness and blamelessness and love. That we should be LOVING

b. Or

Ephesians 1:4-5 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons

c. Can't choose between them... BOTH are true

d. Related in this way:

1 John 4:19 *We love because he first loved us.*

- e. But I am choosing to link the love with God's own demeanor in predestining us to be adopted
- f. God DELIGHTED in us, set His affection on us, was PLEASED with us and PREDESTINED US...
- g. He LOVED us and predestined us

Jeremiah 31:3 *The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.*

- 2. God's love is immeasurable and the source of all these blessings... it has made us incredibly rich... and it will never be taken from us

Romans 8:38-39 *For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

- 3. This DELIGHT in God is UNCONDITIONAL
- 4. This is the beauty of unconditional love... there was nothing in us that attracted God to choose us or predestine us

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 *The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery*

In other words, I have loved you because I have loved you. Not because of anything in us, but because of what was in Him

God's love for us is not DRAWN OUT FROM His heart by us, but it flows out from His heart unconditionally toward us

Actually, our status as sinners in Adam and in actuality clearly highlights this unconditional love:

Romans 5:8 *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

So much evidence for God's delight in making us rich, God's love, God's grace in this passage

C. His Pleasure and Will (vs. 5)

Ephesians 1:5 in accordance with his pleasure and will

1. God's delight and pleasure in making us rich in Christ is centrally on display
2. It brings Him so much pleasure to predestine us and adopt us
3. This is His will... what He is choosing to do from His heart

D. Glorious Grace (vs. 6)

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

1. There is a sense of the lavishness of God's grace here
2. Like making millions of people infinitely wealthy doesn't tax His resources at all, any more than a torch igniting a match doesn't weaken the blaze of the torch in the least
3. God's grace is FREELY GIVEN, LAVISHLY given
4. Grace = the settled determination in the heart of God to bless us;

Grace = merciful kindness in the heart of God; commitment to do us good, gladly to do us good! It is related in Greek literature to "sweetness" or "attractiveness"... its origin is in the heart, the very soul of God the Father... a motion of His heart to bless us

E. Riches of God's Grace (vs. 7)

Ephesians 1:7-8 in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us

1. Similar words
2. A freeness, a cheerfulness, an energy in all this generosity
3. "Riches": God is staggeringly wealthy, and He gives IN ACCORDANCE WITH the riches of His grace... in other words, gifts proportional to His resources
4. Vs. 8 "Lavished" = to abound, to overflow, to exceed all boundaries
5. There is an amazing wideness and scope to these words

F. Good Pleasure (vs. 9)

Ephesians 1:9 according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ

1. Again, the similar sense of the delight, the pleasure God derives in making us staggeringly rich!!

Picture a little girl who has knit something for her daddy... a long scarf she's worked on for months with her mommy's help; the time has come to wrap it up and give it to him. She is humming to herself as she rolls it up and ties a string around it to keep it rolled up and then smiling to herself as she wraps it; and she CAN'T WAIT to give it to him! To see the look on his face as he opens it and sees all the beautiful knitting she's done

The joy, the anticipation of a truly loving heart in giving a generous gift can hardly be captured in words

This is the delight God has in giving us these rich gifts of grace

III. A Partial Inventory of Our Riches (vs. 4-9)

Ephesians 1:4-10 *In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

Five spiritual blessings: predestination; adoption; redemption/forgiveness of sins; wisdom/understanding; revelation

A. Predestination (vs. 5)

1. Last week, we spent a great deal of time on election... God's sovereign choice of some people to be saved through Christ
2. You may ask, "Aren't election and predestination the same thing?" No... they're not
3. In election, God sovereignly identifies WHO will be saved... what are the individuals God will create and then save through Christ
4. In predestination, God sovereignly identifies aspects of that salvation, perhaps even the final destination
5. What does "predestination" mean?

- a. To determine ahead of time what will happen; to decree; to foreordain; to decide beforehand
- b. Greek: the word literally means to set the boundaries ahead of time for someone's life

Greek: "pro" (beforehand) "proidzo" = to mark out the boundaries or limits (of any place or thing), from which we get the word "horizon"

- c. Vivid picture in the Old Testament: boundary lines for Jews' inheritance in the Promised Land
- d. The lot was cast, and how it "came up", that was someone's "allotted" inheritance

Psalm 16:6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.

God chooses our "boundary lines" for us ahead of time

- 6. Long debates over predestination
 - a. People struggle with the idea that God chooses our boundary lines before the foundation of the world
 - b. They wonder, "Where is freedom of choice?" "Doesn't this make God the author of evil?" and many such questions
 - c. When it comes to salvation, people balk because it makes it seem like we're robots, or that God is unjust in sending anyone to hell if He's just predestined everything
 - d. Whatever we think about it, though, every Bible-believing Christian MUST believe in predestination... for the simple reason that it's taught here in this passage and others
 - e. I do not believe for a moment that predestination makes us robots... if God had wanted us to be robots, He could easily have done that! God created us in His image to make choice, to exercise our wills... to love and to hate and to yearn and to choose... just that His loving and hating and yearning and choosing COME FIRST
- 7. Predestination is essential to the sovereign plan and power of God
 - a. God is a King and He makes decrees
 - b. He is not reacting to human history; He decrees whatever comes to pass, that His final ends may be established and guaranteed

8. What is predestined here?

Ephesians 1:4-5 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ

9. What is predestined elsewhere?

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

a. Absolute guarantee of final salvation!!

Romans 8:30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

B. Adoption (vs. 5)

Ephesians 1:4-6 In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

1. Paul borrows an idea from the Roman world and applies it by analogy to what God does for us in Christ
 - a. In the Roman world, a wealthy noble-man could take a slave or friend into his home and, for whatever reasons seemed good to him, make him legally a son
 - b. It was a matter of LEGAL STATUS... of rights and privileges
 - c. The adopted son could inherit this wealthy man's property, sign documents in his name, have access to the man himself, etc.
 - d. It was all a matter of a standing in the sight of the law
2. We Christians are the "adopted" sons and daughters of the living God
3. Jesus is the "only begotten" Son of God... we are adopted

John 3:16 ¶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

LEGAL POSITION as sons vs. NATURE as sons

4. In Ephesians 1:5, we are predestined to be adopted as God's Sons... we will be heirs of God in eternity; this is a matter of standing, of status in the eyes of the universe... unlike natural born sons, adopted do not share in the NATURE of the adoptive father

5. In Romans 8, we are predestined to be CONFORMED to Christ's nature

Romans 8:29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

6. In John 1, we become children of God by faith in Christ

John 1:12-13 But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name, ¹³ who were born, not of blood, or of the will of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of God.

7. In Romans 8, we have intimacy with the Father as adopted children

Romans 8:15-16 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

8. In Hebrews 12, we are disciplined by the Father to share in His holiness

Hebrews 12:7-8 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? ⁸ If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

Hebrews 12:10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.

9. In John 8, we have security, assurance

John 8:35 Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever.

10. As sons and daughters, we have FREE ACCESS to God our Father

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Ephesians 3:12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.

Tim Keller in Twitter:

The only person who dares wake up a king at 3:00 AM for a glass of water is a child. We have that kind of access.

11. Conclusion of our adoption is resurrection:

Romans 8:23 we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

12. Summary: before the foundation of the world, God chose us in Christ and in love predestined that we should be adopted as his sons, and conformed to Christ in his nature, and finally perfect in resurrection bodies!

C. Redemption, Forgiveness of Sins (vs. 7)

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us

1. In order for God to delight in us, He must deal with our sins... God loves us in Christ but hates the wickedness of our sins
2. So, essential to the riches God lavishes on us is redemption, which Paul defines as the forgiveness of sins
3. Redemption = the buying of slaves out of bondage
 - a. Image powerfully established in OT with the deliverance of Israel from slavery in Egypt

Exodus 6:6-7 "Therefore, say to the Israelites: 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians. I will free you from being slaves to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. ⁷ I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.

- b. We were slaves to sin, deeply in debt, and could not free ourselves
- c. We owed the Law our own deaths, for the wages of sin is death
- d. So God REDEEMED US by the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ
- e. Blood = life poured out in sacrifice

Hebrews 9:22 without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

1 Peter 1:18-19 For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Isaiah 53:5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

4. Forgiveness of sins is an immeasurably rich blessing from God
 - a. The record of our sins was long;

Matthew 12:36 But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

- b. God's holy eyes saw every action, every thought, every inclination of the heart
- c. On Judgment Day, the court will be seated and the books opened, and everyone not redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ will be condemned by the record of the sins in the books
- d. How incredibly precious are these words:

Psalm 103:12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

- 5. And as we've said, God forgives LAVISHLY and CHEERFULLY!! With great joy!!

Ephesians 1:7-8 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us

- a. God is not begrudging in His forgiveness; not sluggish or reluctant
- b. He actually celebrates with incredible joy before the angels in heaven every time a sinner repents on earth

D. Wisdom and Understanding (vs. 8)

Ephesians 1:7-8 in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

- 1. God actually transforms our minds in Christ by the Spirit to understand God's thoughts, God's word, God's plans, God's motives, God's actions
- 2. The transformed mind is of the essence of our salvation
 - a. Our former darkness

Titus 3:3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another.

Ephesians 4:17-18 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

- b. Our transformation

Ephesians 4:23-24 made new in the attitude of your minds; ²⁴ and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

3. God gives us the indwelling Holy Spirit and clears our minds so that now we are characterized by WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING
 - a. The greatest wisdom is to flee to Christ for salvation

2 Timothy 3:15 you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.

- b. But all the other truths of the Bible come with it as well
- c. The Bible is no longer a dark and confusing book; the ways of God are no longer bizarre and incomprehensible; more and more we are given WISDOM and UNDERSTANDING
- d. Paul prays for this as an ongoing issue for the Ephesians

Ephesians 1:17 I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

E. Revelation (vs. 9)

Ephesians 1:9-10 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

1. The word “mystery” in Paul’s epistles does not mean something that we have to solve based on clues... like a Sherlock Holmes case
2. Neither does it mean something that soars so far above our human minds that it is impossible for any human being to comprehend it
3. What it does mean is something that was KEPT HIDDEN IN THE MIND OF GOD for the right time to be revealed; and that human beings could not have discerned it or reasoned it out ahead of time by our natural abilities... God had to reveal it
4. And so this is a lavish gift of grace... revelation to understand God’s overall purpose in this incredible salvation plan
5. Verse 9 said he “made known to us” the mystery of his will...
6. It has now been revealed by the Spirit and we CAN understand it

IV. God's Mysterious Goal for the Universe: Unity (vs. 9-10)

Ephesians 1:9-10 *And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.*

- A. Here is Unveiled God's Overall PURPOSE for the UNIVERSE
- B. It says it is the "mystery of His will" which He PURPOSED IN CHRIST
 - 1. Before the foundation of the world, God planned this ultimate end in Christ
 - 2. "In Christ" = Christ's redemptive work was central to what He would do in the universe
- C. Timing: this plan would be put into effect when the "times will have reached their fulfillment"
 - 1. Literally:

^{NAS} ***Ephesians 1:10*** *with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times*

- a. Administration = management, oversight... a plan that requires navigation and unfolding
- b. The view was looking ahead to the FULLNESS OF THE TIMES
- c. Or the consummation of human history
- d. The end of the ages began with the first coming of Christ

Hebrews 1:2 *in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.*

1 Peter 1:20 *He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.*

- 2. God's plan was to unfold all the way to the end of time... everything was considered and put into place
- 3. Not until the end of time would every aspect of this plan come to fruition
- D. Bringing All Things Together Under One Head... Christ
 - 1. As we mentioned a few weeks ago, sin has had a devastating effect in the universe

2. God made everything in heaven and earth in perfect unity, perfect harmony with each other
3. Everything had its place, its ordained sphere, its place in the cosmos
4. Satan rebelled against God: he desired to take God's throne from him; he led a rebellion of some angels against God, but he lost and was thrown from heaven to earth
5. Satan then led Adam into rebellion, and through Adam, the entire human race
6. As a result, the heavenly realms were in conflict, in warfare; the earth below also in conflict through strife, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, dissensions, factions, envy
 - a. Broken relationships... brother killing brother; kingdoms rising up to wage war against each other
 - b. Broken marriages... husbands and wives in conflict with each other
 - c. Broken families... fathers abusing children, children disobeying parents
 - d. Society in abject disarray
 - e. SO ALSO the earth itself... groaning in bondage to decay
 - f. Terrible disunity... like a fragmentation grenade
7. God's plan for the consummation of the ages is to bring all things back under one head, Christ... total unity between heaven and earth; the ground no longer cursed, our bodies no longer cursed, our souls no longer in rebellion
8. Everything in perfect unity, harmony with one another UNDER ONE HEAD, CHRIST!
 - a. This does not mean every human being will be saved
 - b. We know that there are many passages of scripture that make plain there will be sheep and goats, wheat and weeds... believers and unbelievers
 - c. But all who are redeemed will be in perfect unity with God, and with each other, and with nature

V. God's Ultimate Purpose for Making Us Rich: Worship

Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

- A. This Amazing Section of Scripture Shows How Rich We Are in Christ!

B. God's Reason for this Grace: Ultimately is the Praise of His Glory

C. That We Would Spend Eternity in Heaven Praising How Lavishly Generous He Was with Sinners Like Us!!!

VI. Applications

A. Worship Him... NOW!!!

1. How can we not just praise God the Father for all these amazing things?
2. How can we not just melt in adoration to the Savior, Jesus Christ, whose blood has purchased every one of these blessings?
3. Let's offer thanks and praise to Him day after day!!!
4. He did all this "for the praise of His glorious grace"... we don't need to wait till we get to heaven to praise Him

B. Salvation: Come to Christ NOW!!

1. There is no other Savior... no other way that our sins can be forgiven than by the blood of Christ!
2. How can I know I'm not saved? These things up till now have held no interest for me, they make no sense, there's no attraction for me... if that's still the case, you're on the outside looking in
3. But if you are drawn in by all these things, if you find them attractive, if they're making sense to you, then God is drawing you to Christ
4. Call on His name today for forgiveness of sins
5. Look to the cross of Christ for that forgiveness

C. Riches

1. Christian: go over this inventory of your spiritual blessings on a daily basis
2. See and know how rich you are in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus
3. Chase away anxiety and complaining... fill your mouth with thankfulness
 - a. John Newton's illustration

Suppose a man was going to New York to take possession of a large estate, and his [carriage] should break down a mile before he got to the city, which obliged him to walk the rest of the way; what a fool we should think him,

if we saw him ringing his hands, and blubbering out all the remaining mile, "My [carriage] is broken! My [carriage] is broken!"

D. God's Cheerful Generosity

1. We made much today of the absolute JOY God has in giving
2. God is a CHEERFUL GIVER in ways we can scarcely imagine
3. Let's imitate him... let's give to missions and to mercy ministries with a cheerful and faith-filled joy

E. Don't Stumble Over Predestination... Delight in It... and Let it Give You Security

F. Look Forward to the Day when All Things Will Be United in Christ

1. Let this mystery of our final destination give you HOPE
2. All things in this universe of strife and discord will one day be set to rights and brought to peaceful harmony
3. Long for it, pray for it, expect it, and be HOPEFUL!!