

Ephesians 1:3 (William (Bill) Prost) 210773

Walla Walla Conference: 2005, Spiritual Poverty ... Wealth, Ephesians 1:3, Deuteronomy 15:1-11 (1:3)

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To him who shed his blood. And cleanse our souls and gave us power to stand before His God. I've always been interested in those who wrote hymns that kind of lends a different flavor to them. This hymn was written by beloved brother George V Wigram. Well known for his ministry. They'll never forget what a man said to me one time. He wasn't particularly a godly man, although I believe he was a Christian. And he looked through our Little Flock hymn book. And it was interesting to hear his observations. He said Thomas Kelly was a scholar. He said Jan Darby was a poet. But he said GB Wigram was a genius. Rather an interesting comment. But you know, I have come to appreciate Mr. Wiggum's ministry. For what it is. And appreciate the spirit that animated that man in his own quiet way to live for the Lord, to spend his time and his energy and his money. He was a wealthy man for the things, the Lord and for Christ's interest down here. He was the author of this hymn #91. Oh, what a dead we all. For him. I have before me this afternoon a subject that has been on my heart for the last little while, and I apologize ahead of time for some of those at Morningstar camp who may have heard something of this subject while we were up there. Some of us were sharing some thoughts privately while we were up there and it was suggested that we have a meeting on this particular subject. And so I apologize if some of the things we say this afternoon are the same. But I do trust, with the help of the Spirit of God, that it will not be simply repetition of what we have had before, but rather that which is fresh and new in the sense of being the mind of the Spirit of God for the time. And what I have before me today is to talk about spiritual. Poverty and spiritual wealth. And I'd like to start off by reading a verse in Ephesians chapter one. Ephesians, chapter one. And verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who have blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. I say to my own heart, as I say to each one here in the words of another, these blessings are for every believer who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. God does not have favorites in His family. Every believer is equally blessed, and here it tells us we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. In Christ. The question is, how much do we enjoy those blessings? How much do we live and walk in the good of them? You know, we often find the truths that are presented to us in the New Testament illustrated in the Old. And I would like to turn back to the book of Deuteronomy, to a passage that I suggest brings before us in tight something of the wealth that God has given to his people and how it is to be you. Turn back, please, to Deuteronomy chapter 15. Deuteronomy chapter 15 and verse one. At the end of every seven years, thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release. Every creditor that lendeth unto his neighbor shall release it. He shall not exact it of his neighbor or of his brother, because it is called the Lorde release. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again, but that which is thine with thy brother. Thine hand shall release. Save when there shall be no poor among you, for the Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee foreign inheritance, to possess it only if thou carefully hearken under the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe, to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the Lord thy God bless thee, as he has promised thee, as he promised thee, and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow, and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee. If there be among you a poor man in one of thy brethren, within any of thy gates in thy land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother, but thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him. And shall surely lend him sufficient for his need in that which he wanteth. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart saying, The 7th year, the year of release, is at hand, and thine eye be evil against thy poor brethren. Thou giveest him not, and he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou giveth unto him. Because for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land. Therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy in thy land. We've had before us in the readings Colossians chapter 2. And we have seen how that in Colossians we are seen as dead and risen with Christ. We are seen as having crossed to the Jordan, ready to enter into the land of Canaan. And yet not having possessed it. And it was remarked that in the book of Ephesians rather we are in the land, risen and seated in heavenly places in Christ. I trust that isn't going over the heads of the young people here. And you know, if it's going over your head, may I use an illustration? I've played baseball with young people sometimes and I have noticed, and this is no slur on anyone, but if someone will say 10 or 12 years old takes up the plate.

People don't say anything, but they just, with one consent, move in. Why do they do that? Because they're not expecting the ball to be hit very far. But if some great big guy gets up there with a good arm and he takes up the bat, heavy hitter, move back, move back. They don't just say, ah, that ball will go over our heads anyway, forget about it. You'll never be able to catch anything he hits. Maybe they don't always catch it. But they try, and you know, if sometimes the things of the Lord seem to go over my head or your head. Let's not just give up. Let's move back. Move back a bit. You might catch it. And so I believe these things are important, but the question we want to consider this afternoon in the light of God's Word is. Spiritual wealth and spiritual poverty. And I suggest to you that the book of Deuteronomy particularly applies to Israel in the land. And this is a chapter for the wealthy. This is a chapter for creditors. There is plenty said in the Word of God about debtors. We need to pay attention to those scriptures. And if I am a debtor, and often I am, I need to pay attention to those scriptures that talk to those who are debtors and their responsibilities in that debt. But here we have creditors. There is a progression here because if you begin in the previous chapter and we don't have time to take it up, you will find that tithing for the Israelite is brought in in the 14th chapter. There was a tithe every year beginning with the first year. And in other places we find it was to be 10%. Then in the third year there was another tithe that was for the support of the Levite and others within their gates. And I would suggest that this brings before us an increasing enjoyment of the wealth that God had given his people. In the Old Testament it was material wealth, it was material things, it was the fruit of that good land that God had given them. For you and for me. It is, I suggest, in tight the increasing enjoyment of those spiritual blessings that we have in Christ. And you know, God looks for increasing enjoyment. He doesn't want us to stand still. He does not want us simply to be content with that which we already have. No, He wants us to go forward and continually enjoy more and more of all that we have in Christ. Will never reach the end of it. A brother was commenting on it to me yesterday and we were saying how that in all eternity. We will not

exhaust all of the blessings and all of the wealth that is ours in Christ. And most of all, we will not exhaust the glories of His blessed person. But here in this chapter we come to a climax, because here it's the 7th year and in the seventh year there is a display of wealth, I suggest, that surpasses all others. This time it is not merely a tithe that is given to the support of certain things in Israel. This time it is not a tithe that is given to the support of the Levites or others, but rather it takes the character of a release. A release. What did that mean? It meant that the wealthy man who had lent something to his poor brother. Was to forgive that debt. I'd like to make an application of that in spiritual things, and I hope it's all right if I get right down to nuts and bolts, so to say, in quite practical about it. We all know what it is to have contact with those that are wealthy in natural things and how easy it is for them to do something with their money, and more than that, how easy it is for them to look rather lightly on something that is owed them in material things. I don't mean that they are indifferent to the money, but they don't take account of things in the same way they forgive. Why? Oh, because they have plenty. Because they have plenty.

I knew a man back home who forgave that was owed to him. It didn't cost them anything. Why? Because he had so much that he would never miss it. And you know, here I suggest is an example for you and for me in spiritual things where you and I can use our wealth in the right way. It's definitely brother to brother here. Because if it were a stranger, it says thou mayest exact it and we're not going to talk about that or the application of that right now. The important thing is that the year of release applied to brother and brother. And you and I in the family of God, you and I, as having been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Have brothers and sisters in Christ. And the Lord says here there is to be a year of release, and you are to continue doing it as long as well. You keep on doing it until the day comes when there are no poor in the land. But isn't it striking when you get down further in the chapter as we read? What does it say here? In verse 11. For the poor shall never cease out of the land. The poor shall never cease out of the land. Again, this chapter is for the wealthy, and I am not suggesting that the children of God should remain poor so that the wealthy can give. That's not the thought. The thought is rather. The thought is rather, and if I could lay some emphasis on this, the thought is that the poor will never cease out of the land because God wants to give you and me the privilege of acting in his character. You will all remember the story of the man in the 18th of Matthew who was forgiven a debt of 10,000 talents which would be up in the millions of dollars today and yet when his fellow servant owed him 100 pence he went and grabbed them by the throat and said pay up. All God has forgiven you and me so much, and He has given you and me. He wants to give you and me the privilege of acting in his character. What are we talking about here? What kind of debts are we talking about that need to be forgiven? In my experience and observation, first of all, they tend sometimes to be little things. Maybe. I feel that I have earned a certain amount of respect, a certain amount of deference from others, and they don't accord me the respect and the deference that I feel that I ought to have. That wounds me, that hurts me. And maybe I write that down in my ledgers. That's a debt that I store away. Or maybe I show a kindness to someone. And they don't thank me for it. Maybe I send an expensive wedding present to that young couple thinking how much they'll appreciate it, and maybe I never get a thank you card in reply for it. Or maybe I do some special kindness in another way to someone and they take full advantage of it and full advantage of the fact that I'm able to give. But yet never show any gratitude for it. Shall we get right down to the bottom line? Well, maybe I shouldn't use that expression. Sometimes, in my experience and observation, there are those that come to fellowship meals and perhaps they bring two or three or four times as much as they need to. And then there are others that get in the buffet line and they take two 3-4 times as much as they're entitled to. And that bothers people sometimes. And on and on it goes. Maybe there is the care of the meeting room. And I resent the fact, perhaps, that I have to go down and mow the grass or get up on a ladder and clean out the gutters, or change the light bulbs or clean up the washrooms, or generally keep things shipshape. And nobody seems to notice and nobody seems to care and everybody just takes it for granted. And when they come to the meetings, they don't even comment on it or say thank you. Does that happen sometimes? You know very well it does. But let's carry it to a higher plane.

And perhaps a more serious one. Sometimes, sad to say, there are those that are always takers on the spiritual level and who perhaps come to the assembly meetings adding little or nothing. Never seeming to be able to mature spiritually so that they have wealth of their own to offer. Never seeming to be able to contribute very much to the meetings and yet perhaps coming there and expecting to receive and to receive and to receive. I can remember at least 45 or 50 years ago when I was very young. There was a brother in our local assembly and I can well remember. A sister commenting, and not in a mean way or in a bitter way or anything like that. She simply made this comment. She said, well, he doesn't ever seem to learn to walk. She said as long as someone picks him up and carries him then that's fine. But when they set him down, he waits for somebody to pick him up again and carry him a little further. I never forgot that. I knew that dear brother. And unfortunately the observation was bang on, if we could say that. Never seemed to have any wealth. Of His own. And sometimes I suggest to your heart and mind that there can be in our hearts of thought, Why can't He do any better? Why can't she grow? Why can't she get some wealth of her own? Or why can't He have something to offer of His own? And may I suggest that sometimes these things begin to rankle among the Saints of God? We spiritualize them. Perhaps those debts are real and there is no suggestion. Here that the debt was not right. And we say, I want righteousness. I want that. This is wrong. This is not the way it should be. Is that the way we sometimes look at things? Yes, I'm afraid we do. But what did our blessed Savior do for us? Did He demand righteousness from us? No, he didn't. No, He provided a way where mercy and truth could meet together. And righteousness and peace could kiss each other. And in this chapter, as I say again, God is looking at the wealthy, and I want to be careful how I say this because it is not always the case. But sometimes among the people of God there are these bad feelings which then somehow get spiritualized into, well, we have to defend the Lord's honor and glory, you know, and this is wrong before the Lord. When really it is I that have been wrong. It isn't so much the Lord's honor and glory. It isn't so much that which dishonors the Lord. Yes, spiritual depths in one sense do dishonor the Lord. And it was a disgrace in Israel that there were poor men when they all could have been wealthy. But what does the Lord say? Oh, he says to the wealthy man, You have a privilege of acting in my character. I'm going to tell a story that happened a few years ago, and once again I'm going to bring in my late father-in-law as Jim Hyland did in the reading. I remember well. A brother. Who was in an assembly? And I guess it was I that had occasion as a fairly young man to withstand him in the Reading meeting because he said some things that were definitely not according to scripture. And I remember a few months later, my late father-in-law, Albert Hayhoe, had occasion to speak to me. He knew that brother whom I had withstood. And he said, Bill, how do you get on with that brother? And I hesitate to say this about myself, but I'm thankful that it was every word True. I said, you know, it's wonderful. We remain very good friends. And he said, Bill, that's so good, he said, because so often I find that when trouble arises over these things, it's not so much the disagreement over the things of God that is the problem, he said. The difficulty is that those two brethren simply don't like each other. Those are his words, almost word for word, and I have to say that sometimes that's true. Well, we aren't going to dwell on that. Our time is going. The point is, in this chapter, the wealthy brother is able to make a release. What does he do? He forgives the debt.

And there are two points we want to make with respect to that. Let's look at them. First of all, it says at the end of verse two in our chapter of Deuteronomy 15. It is called the Lord's release. It is called the Lord's release. What does that mean? I'm going to suggest to you a thought. I

don't speak dogmatically, but I trust it's the right slant on this when it says it is the Lord's release. It is the appreciation in my heart of everything that the Lord has done for me. And then my heart, and yours too, animated with the spirit of grace, says, Oh, I can afford to grant a release to that. I am not. Don't misunderstand me suggesting for one moment that that which is a dishonor to the Lord should simply be brushed under the rug. I am not suggesting that that which touches the person and work of Christ should simply be forgotten. In the name of granting a release, That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about that which ultimately has to do with spiritual poverty and spiritual wealth. And here, most of it was an act of omission. It was a case where the poor brother just didn't have it. He had no money, he had no wealth and he has to come to his wealthier brother and say I need help. But when it's the Lord's release, it is not simply, if we could use the expression, writing the whole thing off as a bad debt and saying, well, and I'm going to put it into common language, this brother is just a total loser anyway, and there's no use trying to get blood out of a stone. So I'll just have to forget about it. Because if I take that attitude, what is going to happen? You know what is going to happen? I'm going to store that data up in my heart. And I may say with my mouth that I've forgiven. But in my heart, the debt is still there. It's still on my Ledger book. You owe me. But when it's the Lord's release, what do I do? Oh, I give it over to the Lord. I say, Lord, because of all that thou hast done, I forgive this debt because of all that I have received. I roll the debt over onto the Lord and say, Lord, this poor brother has nothing to pay. I leave it with thee and oh I don't. I don't have words to describe this, but notice what it says. And this is the second point we want to make. The middle of verse 4. For the Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance. To possess it. Oh, what is needed today are wealthy Christians. All you say, but we're poor. We're at the end of the dispensation of grace. The outward testimony of the Church is ruined. We know that. How can we be rich when there has been such failure? I suggest to you that Ephesians one and three is as true as it ever was. I suggest to you that God's riches are just as available on an individual basis as they ever were. And I suggest that even in the day in which we live, we can have those riches. You'll remember Gideon, when the Midianites came in and took all of the sustenance from the land of Israel, took everything it says. But what was he doing? Threshing wheat behind the winepress? Where did he get the wheat? I don't know, but he had it and he was going to have food. You will remember in the time of Elijah how that there was a family. Then bring meal. Where did he get? I don't know, but the Lord provided it for him. And more than that, a man came from Bail, Silesia, with special loaves of barley, the first fruits. Where did he get them in a time of famine? I don't know, but God provided them. And I suggest to everyone of us here, and if I may say to the young people, you can be a wealthy believer today. But how is that wealth demonstrated? How is that wealth used? I say primarily here. The wealth is demonstrated by our being able to forgive the debts and to give out that largest to others without any withholding. How can I do that? How can I keep giving and giving and giving?

Am I going to get empty? The Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land, whither thou shalt go into possess it. You know, in the early days of Israel. And the verses were read to us in the readings. Joshua conquered all the land. But then it says a few chapters further on, that there remaineth very much land to be possessed. Possessed. And we want to lay some emphasis on that, because what is it to be spiritually wealthy? Is it to know my Bible backwards and forwards? That's part of it. And I want you to read the Word of God. I want to read the Word of God myself. Is it to know our written ministry so well that I can quote from our various good writers? That's good too. And I want each one of us to be diligent in reading the helps and the ministry that God has given us. Is it to be able to go to many conferences and hear the truth of God ministered? That's part of it, and I want each one of us to do that. As much as God gives us the opportunity. Is it to be going to the assembly meetings and learning the things of God? Indeed it is. But it's more than that. Excuse me? It's more than that, and to illustrate it, I'd like to turn to another verse in Deuteronomy in the 7th chapter. Deuteronomy 7. Verse 22. Deuteronomy 7/22 And the Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little. Thou mayest not consume them at once. Lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. May I suggest most of all to my own heart? That there is a grave danger among those gathered to the Lord's name of the beasts of the field increasing upon us. What does that mean? In Luke's Gospel, and it's repeated this verse more than once, perhaps at least five, maybe six times in the Gospels with variations. We get these words. To him that hath shall be given, but unto him that hath not. Even shall be taken away from him that which he seemeth to have. What does that mean? I believe that ties in with this verse in Deuteronomy. Because if I have truth, that is up here. But I do not live and walk in the good of it. It is going to be like land that I have conquered but not really possessed. It was like some of the children of Israel where there was a danger of going out and conquering so much land that they could not cultivate it and use it in the right way, and then they were enjoying the fruits of that land. They just had land. And having the truth of God without walking in it is like having the land without cultivating it. And what is going to happen? The beasts of the field are going to increase. I suggest the beasts of the field practically are the attacks of Satan that come in because of the discrepancy between what we know and what we walk in practically. And you know, there was no use for an Israelite pretending to be rich if he wasn't. And there is no use in you or I pretending to be rich spiritually if we aren't. We have all seen people in this world who pretended to be rich and they still do. How do they do it? They Max out their credit cards on someone else's wealth and they may appear to be throwing their money around and they may appear to be very wealthy. But you know and I know that sooner or later A reckoning time has to come and the debt has to be paid. And then they find out that they are not creditors as they would like to pretend to be. They are debtors.

So that we cannot pretend to have spiritual wealth. But I suggest to you and to me that real spiritual wealth is something to be desired. There is no discrepancy between this chapter and Exodus 21. Exodus 21 has the emphasis on the debtor. Deuteronomy 15 has the emphasis on the creditor, and when the creditor is in question, he acts in all of the largess, all of the blessing, all of the grace, and all of the love of God Himself. And practically, may I say. What is needed, perhaps, in the context in which we are talking our more brethren with wealth. And again I say it is a matter of walking in it. I'm going to reminisce a little bit if I may be allowed to do this. I can remember sitting in a Bible conference. Back in 1958. A long time ago, isn't it? And I remember another brother in that meeting, and he reminisced. That was Harry Hagel. And he said, you know, I can remember being at the Saint Louis Conference in 1905. And he said, I could tell you today what Walter Potter ministered on at that conference. But then he remained. He made a remark that I never forgot. He said. I have learned much from those dear brother and I have been impressed with their gift and their knowledge of Scripture. But he said what impressed me far more than all of that was their godliness, and that is what lent weight to their words. Real spiritual wealth. Has to do not so much with knowledge as with godliness. William Kelly made a remark one time that I repeated to someone here. I think it was either yesterday or early this morning. And he used the imagery of sailing vessels. He said. You know, we often want more power. And he said we'd like to have more sales so that we'd have more power. But he went on to say that if we had more power, we probably wouldn't know what to do with it or how to use it effectively. And rather, what we need is more ballast to carry the truth that we already have. I think he hit the nail on the head. Well, let's go on in this chapter here because there are a couple of more thoughts we want to bring out. Back to Deuteronomy 15. Deuteronomy 15 and verse 9. Beware. That there be not a thought in thy wicked heart saying the 7th year, the year of release is at hand. And thine I be evil against thy poor brother. And they'll give us him not. And he cry unto the Lord against thee, and it be sin unto thee. The Darby, if you'll

notice, is even more explicit in this verse. When it says A thought in thy wicked heart, the Darby, I believe reads, or at least it's in a footnote as I recall, A thought of Belial or Belial, a satanic thought. Oh, a satanic thought in my heart against my brethren. Yes, the Lord lays His finger on the origin of those thoughts. There can be the thought in my heart. I am wealthy. I am spiritually wealthy, but I had to get it by hard digging. I had to get it by really applying myself in the Lord's presence. I had to do a lot of reading. I had to apply myself when others were, well, wasting time perhaps on that. And now do they have a right to come to me and have a claim on my spiritual wealth when they have been so lazy? No way. And that's the thought that is advanced here. No way. Go get your own wealth. Go get your own things. I'm tired of always being on the giving end. Brethren, the Lord says that's a thought of Satan. The thought of Satan. Now again this chapter is for wealthy people.

Does the debtor have something to think about? Yes, he does. Should he be coming cap in hand to someone else when he ought to have the spiritual energy to get his own wealth? Of course not. He should not have to come that way. But the Word of God has plenty to say to the debtor. The point we are going at is on the positive side and I would like to encourage you. There's no reason why you can't be spiritually wealthy. The verse was quoted to us from Ephesians. Let him that stole steal no more. But what does God say? Let him labor with his hand the thing that is good, that he may be able to provide for his own needs. It's not what it says that he may have to give to him that needeth. And you know, there's a wonderful blessing for those that are willing to be givers and givers and givers because ultimately that is the heart of God. And I suggest today, and I don't want to hammer this point too much, but what is needed among the Saints of God are individuals who are ready to go out and to say. I want that land. I want the things of Christ. And again, I emphasize it is not merely a body of knowledge. That's not what we are talking about. It is rather in order that we might have that land, all those things that Christ has given us, But to what end? That we may enjoy him the more because those spiritual blessings. Are in heavenly places in Christ and the essence of spiritual wealth is learning more of that Blessed One and walking with him. I believe our brother Dave Newbie had that in his heart when he was speaking yesterday. And if this sounds like a double whammy, well so be it. But I want to emphasize that to each one of our hearts that spiritual wealth is there. And you know if I can say it. When you have assemblies where there are spiritually wealthy people, you don't have so many problems. I don't mean there are no problems because the devil is going to come in and do his best to spoil anything that honors the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the best of circumstances he is going to bring in difficulties or attempt to do so. But, and it's a big but, it is not so much the difficulties that cause the problem, but how we meet them and when the difficulties are met by those who have spiritual wealth. Oh, what a difference it makes. Yes, the Lord's glory may have to be stood up for. Bad doctrine may have to be spoken against. There may have to be those that stand up and say we cannot before the Lord go on with this. But at the same time it will not be mixed up with things that have to do with self. There will be a forgiving of those things. So that as a dear brother said many years ago, where love exists. There is never any difficulty. Sometimes it's hard, isn't it? Because sometimes. It gets to be a tiresome thing that there's always those poor in the land, doesn't it? It gets to be a tiresome thing that those poor just keep coming. And coming and coming. And if it were only my own resources that I was dipping into over and over again, I might well get discouraged and say, Lord, I'm going to hit the bottom of the barrel pretty soon. But what am I going to find when I dip into that barrel? I'm going to find, as Elijah did, that the barrel of meal wasted not neither did the crews of oil fail. Not only is there going to be more in the barrel every time I come, I am going to get richer and richer and richer. Now, we don't do it for that reason. That's not the thought. But you ask a believer that is spiritually wealthy and that continues to give. If he gets poor by it, oh, I can tell you, he'll say no, no, no. I get richer and richer all the time. And you a brother once who got a little tired of things one time. And his wife got a little tired of them too, I guess. And in their talking together, they were saying something about it. And how it was hard always to be handing things out.

Finally, the brother looked at his wife. I understand. And he said something like this. He said, Well dear, which one of those poor brethren would you like to trade places with? Which one of those poverty stricken brethren would you like to trade places with, or would you rather be the one that is wealthy? Oh, there's always going to be the poor in the land, but God wants to give you and me that spiritual wealth to be able to dispense and to grant the year of release. But I want to say this and then we'll go on to, we only have a few minutes left. I want to say this. You have to live in the land for seven years before you can grant a release, and that doesn't mean an actual period of time. It means that you have conquered the land little by little. It means that you have cultivated it and enjoyed the fruits of it. It does not come all at once. And no doubt it was not easy for the Israelite to go out, first of all to conquer with his sword and get that land, then to be diligent in cultivating it in order to enjoy the fruits. But then the time came when he could enjoy them, and I would suggest that the 7th year, the year of release, coincided with what we might call the Sabbatical year of Israel. It was a sabbatical. We know that Israel was to till their fields for six years. And then in the seventh year, they were to let it lie foul, and they were to enjoy a year with no work. And you know, spiritually, the Lord often gives us that if we work hard, if we are diligent in His things, He gives us a chance to enjoy all that we have in Christ. I don't mean that we take a year off. That's not the thought. But there is a time of enjoyment, and it coincided with the year of release. Why? Oh, because how could I enjoy the things of Christ? Pardon me. How can I enjoy the? How can I enjoy the things of Christ? If I'm storing up a debt in my heart, how can I enjoy the things of the Lord and their fullness if all the time my heart is rankling and sour because, well, you didn't pull your weight, you didn't do your share, you're not helping out the way you should. Oh no, I can't do it in the right way. What I need to do is grant a release. Do you know if I'm if I don't grant that release, what is going to happen? We don't have time to turn to the Scriptures, but you know, and I know that about the time of David. They evidently stopped. Letting the land life follow every 7th year. They didn't give the land its rest and for about 500 years. They just went on tilling the land every year. And we know what happened. There were other reasons why they went into captivity, but one reason was because they had not given the land its rest. They had not granted that release, and so the Lord sends them into captivity for 70 years. To make up for the 70 years of sabbatical that they had not kept for 490 years, they had not given the land its rest. And God says, I will give it its rest, and you will go into captivity for 70 years. And I suggest to your brethren on the spiritual level that if you and I are not prepared as wealthy sons of God to grant a release, we're going to go into captivity. We're going to suffer under the government of God because we have not acted in God's character. Have not acted in his ways. We have not granted that release. But again, I can't grant that release unless I am in the full enjoyment of the wealth that God has given. In the few minutes that are left, let's look at the last part of the chapter. Well, not the last part, but verses 12 to 18. And if thy brother and Hebrew man, or in Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee. And served these six years. Then in the seventh year thou shalt let them go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty. Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress of that wherewith the Lord thy God have blessed thee. Thou shalt give unto him, and thou shalt remember that thou hast abandonment in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee. Therefore I command thee this thing today.

And it shall be, if you say unto thee, I will not go away from thee. Because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee, then thou shalt take an all and thrust it through his ear under the door, and he shall be thy servant forever. And also unto thy maidservant shalt

thou do likewise. It shall not seem hard unto thee when thou sendest him away free from thee, for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee in serving thee six years. And the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest. In this case. Things went a little further. It was not merely a death in this case. This time, the brother had gotten into such dire straits. That instead of merely being in debt. He had had to be sold and had to serve the one to whom he was indebted for six years. I want to be careful about making an application to this, but sometimes in the spiritual realm, things go beyond, shall we say, a mere death. It is not merely a matter of someone's not contributing what they ought to, either in the material sense or in the spiritual sense, but perhaps something that goes beyond that, where there has been a serious mistake made, Where there? Shall we say has been a sin committed. And thus I become a debtor to. To my brother in a more serious way. And I'm sold for a period of time. The time here is figurative, it's not exact. But in Israel it was to be six years. But then the time came. When that brother could go free again, I don't suggest a direct application, but I do suggest that it could even mean unhappily. That the individual in question had to become the object of discipline by the assembly. I don't think that's reaching out of the passage here to suggest that as a possible application. But even falling short of that, there can be a situation where we are in a position that we are in more serious debt to our brethren and we're sold for a period of time. But then the time comes when we're going to go free, and what is the wealthy brother to do? What is the wealthy sister to do? Let that brother go free, yes, but let him go with the label of a criminal with on him all his life. Now don't get me wrong, I am not suggesting that the government of God may not sometimes have far reaching effects even after my heart is fully restored to the Lord. That's not what we're talking about. But let's remember that the government of God is just that. It's not the government of the assembly or the government of man. It's the government of God. And if God chooses in His government to lay His hand on me, that's one thing. But let me be very careful that I don't lay my hand on my brother. And then call it the government of God because I may be mistaken. But the point is here. How do the wealthy act towards that poor brother? Oh, they furnish him liberally. They furnish him liberally. Why? Oh, because the thought is, let's set him back on his feet. Let's enable him once more to try and go forward. And not get into that fix again, not get into that situation again. We want this brother to have wealth. We want this brother to prosper. I can say it publicly that there are those sitting right here who have done that for me, who reached out their hand with their wealth and gave it when I needed it. And I'll never forget it. I'm thankful for brethren that had enough wealth to be able to do that and to hand it out and say, here it is. Wonderful the privilege of doing that because God wants all his children to be wealthy and he doesn't want the poor man to stay poor. He says you that are wealthy, oh you reach out to him, give him some capital. If we could talk in the current terminology, he hasn't got any capital because if he'd had any spiritual wealth, he wouldn't have gotten into this situation in the 1st place. Give him some capital so that he can get a fresh start and go on.

Wonderful to have that privilege as a wealthy son of God. But then what happens? Oh, there might be a situation and it says so here, where the brother says, but I don't want to do that. I don't feel capable. I want to stay with you. You are wealthy. You have been kind to me. I want to stay with you. There's no conflict here between Exodus 21, I say, and Deuteronomy 15 and Exodus 21. The emphasis on the type brings before us the Lord Jesus as the perfect servant who says, I love my master, my wife. And my children, I will not go out free. And he becomes a servant forever. But here the emphasis is on the wealthy Israelite being able to take his poor brother and help them. And maybe the poor brother says, I don't think I'm capable. I just don't. Think that I can use that capital wisely. I'm content to stay here with you. Is anything lost by that? No. Why? Oh, because the love that he has enjoyed from his wealthy brother, the care that has been taken of him, the way he has been treated when he is a servant leads him to look up to that one. Yes, he was a servant and he couldn't get out from under that. And he had no doubt to obey orders at times and to do things that were a bit of drudgery to him. All of that was true. But such was the heart of the wealthy ones exercised under those circumstances that when the time comes for that poor brother to go out free, instead of wanting to walk away and saying, oh, boy, glad that's over. Oh, no, he says, I want to remain with you. I want to enjoy more of your wealth. I will work for you. I will be a servant. If only you will let me live under your roof, under your direction, under your protection, and enjoy your wealth. What a privilege that is. Well, we've crammed a lot into an hour that I'd suggest gives our heart something to think about. But I suggest to your heart and mind that God once again is looking. For wealthy sons and daughters today, it's possible to have it. It's all still there. We won't turn to the Scripture. You can look it up. I think it's in Second Chronicles, where way down in the time of Hezekiah, long after that land hadn't been entered into and conquered and possessed, there were those that had spiritual energy to go out and conquer some more land because they took hold of the promises of God. And said we want to have what God has given us. And I believe the same challenge can be thrown out to each one of us today. It is not an easy day. We're not living in Apostolic times. But the wealth is all still there, mainly because the wealth is in Christ and all that he is. Let's close with another hymn. And I'd like to sing one that we can sing almost without the hymn book. #23. How good? Is the God we adore our faithful, unchangeable friend? Then verse two tis Jesus, the 1st and the last, whose spirit shall guide us safe home. Praise Him for all that is passed, and trust Him for all that's to come. If you look in the back of your book, you'll see this hymn was written by a man by the name of Joseph.

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