

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

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Date: 27 May 2021

Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We are going to begin our service this evening with a singing in Gaelic of Psalm 100.
Psalm 100.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. Hymns said with mirth his praise foretell. Come ye before him and rejoice.

Know that the Lord is God indeed. Without our aid he did us make. We are his flock he doth us feed. For his sheep he doth us take. O enter then his gates with praise.

Approach with joy his courts unto. Praise Lord and bless his name always. For it is seemly so to do. For why?

The Lord our God is good. His mercy is forever sure. His truth at all times. Firmly stood. And shall from age to age endure.

[1 : 00] To the Lord our God is good. To the Lord our God is good. To the Lord our God is good.

O God is good. O God is good. O God is good.

O God is good. To the Lord has good. I am good.

Or Butler spricht from A Way Thank you.

Thank you.

[3 : 05] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[5 : 35] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

interest in your own creation took a different dimension, took a different direction, in that it so pleased you to reveal to us your purposes from all eternity. And that itself is a mystery, a mystery that we can but contemplate with awe, thankful that there is a God who is sovereign in all things, who governs this world and all in it, any that are out of it that we know nothing of.

[8 : 41] We pray that you would encourage us to put our trust wholeheartedly in such a God, that we may rest upon the provision that you have made for us in our fallenness, and that we may receive the mercy that you have set before us in the gospel that comes to us through Christ.

We pray that you would bless our homes, our families, all we bring before you as we plead their cause, thankful that we do so in the name of another, that we cannot come believing that you are willing to receive us on grounds of anything that is true of ourselves. Our best works are shoddy, and they bring upon us shame rather than anything that would bring to us the praise of a God who is holy, holy, holy. We ask that you would remember us this evening in our worship as individuals and collectively. May we be aware of others worshipping with us, not only in this place, but in the congregation that we form part of, the congregations that form part of our presbytery, presbyteries that form part of our denomination, the churches that form part of the wider church throughout the world. There may be many at rest, many in their beds asleep, oblivious to all that is going on around them, but no doubt there are some who are awake, and as they wake they bring their cares and concerns to the God who slumbers not nor sleeps. We bless you and thank you for this psalmist who talks about such a God, such a God, the God of Israel, God whose eye is never closed, but your attention is upon all the children of men. You desire good for them, and we bless you for that. We remember in your presence the needy of this world, those that we know of that are unwell. We pray for their healing, for their recovery of health, and we bless you for the means at your disposal by which that is secured. We remember those who are suffering, being cared for in their homes or in hospitals or care homes. We give thanks for those whose duty it is to minister to them in whatever capacity. Remember those who work within our communities, going to homes of the elderly and ministering to their needs in these places. We pray for those who are suffering at the present because of the ravages of COVID-19. We may have enjoyed a measure of relief from it, but we know that this can change. But we pray in your hands that you would sanctify every dealing that you have with us even through this medium that has been so destructive. Bless the world we are in, all who are suffering because of it throughout the world. We pray for medicines to be found, vaccines that are effective and that are active in preventing further developments of this virus. We pray for any other ailment that is in the world and there are many.

various cancers and illnesses that are without a cure. Perhaps we may not know anything about them, but in parts of the world there are ailments that are a devastating influence on the lives of men and women, young and old.

we pray for wisdom to be an exercise that these things may be dealt with. But you are the great physician and to that end we trust ourselves. We pray that you would remember us as we suffer the blight of sin.

Sin entered into the world and has affected all in it. And there is no cure for it except the cure that you have brought to our attention through the gospel. That any and all who would come to Christ and seek at his hand the cleansing that his shed blood affords.

[13 : 16] That all who would look to him would find themselves delivered from all its effects. Remember Lord those who grieved.

Death entered into the world when sin came into the experience of our first parents. The death that is trifold. We saw how spiritual death entered.

Temporal death entered. And eternal death was in the offering. And there is only one remedy that you presented to us and that is the Christ of the gospel who has come to enter into the place where sin was dealt with in the ugliness of Calvary.

We pray Lord that you would highlight Christ to lift him up to our mind's eye that we may look upon him, gaze upon his face and seek at his hand the salvation that he has to offer.

May we look nowhere else and may we wait on none else but him. So hear our petitions. Bless the prayers of your people. Bless all who are in need this night. We pray for those who are heart heavy because of death and we pray that you would remember all forms of it as it has visited itself and intruded itself into the darkness of this world.

[14 : 38] Only the light of your countenance can stand before it. And may that be so. So go before us now, blessing your word as we read it, cleansing from sin.

In Jesus name we ask it. Amen. Go and read some verses from the New Testament scriptures and Paul's epistle to the Romans. Romans chapter 8 And we're reading from verse 18 to the end of the chapter.

Romans chapter 8 and verse 18 For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groveth and travelleth in pain together until now.

[15 : 54] And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit. Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of our body.

For we are saved by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope. For what a man seeth, why doth he get hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities. For we know not what we should pray for, as we ought. But the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.

And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. For we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

[17 : 10] Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

What shall we then say to these things, if God be for us? Who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril of sword?

As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long. We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

[18 : 25] For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor powers nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen, and may the Lord at his blessing to this reading of his word and to his name be the praise.

I want us to turn now to some words that we find in the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians in chapter 1. I'd like us to read from verse 3.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

And so on, may the Lord bless that reading of his word. Last week we began our study of the first chapter of Ephesians with a few general comments about the author and what is described as his introduction or salutation.

[20 : 20] Today I want us to consider the words of verses 3 to 6. It's not my intention to do a verse by verse study, although I find that some commentators do like to use verse 3 as a foundational statement for what follows.

While that may indeed be the case, it will suit our purposes better to include it with the following three verses. I am sure you will have noticed that even in English the apostle is finding it hard to draw breath.

In the original Greek verses 3 to 14 is one long sentence. William Hendrickson, the commentator, compares it to a snowball rolling down a steep hill, gathering pace as it goes.

Let's begin with Paul's doxology in verse 3. And secondly the doctrine of election succinctly stated.

Thirdly it is described as an election to sonship. And fourthly it has the ultimate aim of God's glory.

[21 : 37] Doxology as we have it in verse 3. The formal meaning of the word doxology is a liturgical formula of praise to God.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

The apostle engages in an outpouring of praise to God, and by implication there is an invitation for others to join with him, in particular the recipients of the letter, because they collectively have good reason to bless and praise God, because he has blessed them.

There is at the heart of this the recognition that God is the God of all grace, and that he is the source of every good and perfect gift.

As the apostle James identifies the source to be the Father of lights, who of his own will begat us with the word of truth.

[22 : 55] What more is needed to stimulate a spirit of thanksgiving? We bless God because he first blessed us. It's not an equal transaction.

He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. By recognizing and acknowledging that we are blessing him. Paul could have used a different word, but he does not, because in a sense what we do can only be done in response to what he has done, what he is doing, what he has yet to do.

The sinner is blessed according to the psalmist, because they have received forgiveness for sin. Those whose debt is cancelled in God's grace.

The very first Psalm tells us the nature of the blessedness. They enjoy not the reason for it. That man has perfect blessedness who walketh not astray.

In counsel of ungodly mad men, nor stands in sinners way. There can be no greater spiritual blessing surely. Sam Gordon makes the distinction.

[24 : 13] Our blessing is a declaration. His blessing, our deeds, our deeds. We pronounce him blessed. He makes us blessed.

Paul seems to indicate that the source of blessedness is in the heavens above. However, what he has in mind is that the believer has access to that heavenly blessedness, even here on earth.

As the commentator Charles Hodge has it, the meaning is that these blessings pertain to that heavenly state into which the believer is introduced, here on earth already, in heavenly places, already a citizen of heaven.

These blessings connected with this heavenly state are conferred upon believers in Christ. It is as they are in him.

And in virtue of that union, that they are partakers of these benefits. This is also highlighted by Martin Lloyd-Jones building upon the theology of the older schoolmen, who divided up the work of salvation in this way.

[25 : 33] The father has planned it. The son has put the plan into operation. And the Holy Spirit applies it. The son has put the plan into the world. The son has put the plan into the world.

But I want us to move on to a statement we have in verse 4. As you can read, According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

What can be considered a succinct statement concerning the doctrine of election, which reminds us that the blessings referred to are accounted for because of the divine election.

Warren Wearsby begins his comments on this verse with the words of advice given to himself. Try to explain election, and you may lose your mind.

But try to explain it away, and you may lose your soul. What could be plainer? God has chosen us, that is the believer, in him, that is Christ, before the foundation of the world, before the world was created.

[27 : 00] Paul is not using the royal we. By us he most certainly means all believers, whoever they are, wherever they live, whenever they live.

You remember the opening words of Peter's first epistle. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.

Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied, and so on. The doctrine of election is not just Pauline. It is biblical. It is a statement of divine choice, not based upon good that God foresees, but good that God foreordains, of which he alone is the principal author.

Many introduce the idea of fairness into their consideration of what election means. Is it fair for God to elect some to everlasting life, and not all?

[28 : 20] If you ask the question, do all want to be holy and without blame before God? The answer to that question is the very idea is apparent to some.

It is the last thing they want. I know for certain that some expressed fear that they would be converted because it would deprive them of carnal pleasures that they would put before anything else.

Here Paul says God chose, God predestinated, before the foundation of the world. There was only God.

In the Old Testament the same truth was declared. Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. And the Lord has chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

Of course there is mystery surrounding this point. The whole point. The whole doctrine, if you like. There is mystery surrounding the point at which the choice was made.

[29 : 35] In the mists of eternity, much is hidden from our eyes and all we can see is what God chooses to reveal. B.B. Warfield maintains that the action of God choosing was an eternal act.

There was not a point when the choice was not made. In many ways that does not explain anything, it just mystifies. But the choice is in Christ.

And the choice is with the express purpose of sanctifying the believer and justifying the believer, which is what free from blame suggests.

Two separate things, but both essential in the experience of the believer. Both certain in order to be holy. God has set us apart as believers to be recipients of the blessings.

Cleansing by the application of the blood of sacrifice in the hand of the Holy Spirit. Later on he goes on to say. Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

[30 : 52] That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Predestinated into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ.

Having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will. John Stott writes, this doctrine is an incentive to holiness, not an excuse for sin.

A stimulus to humility, not a ground for boasting. This is what you become Christians for. This is God's will for you.

I've been reading recently a biography of Adolf Sefer. The name may be familiar to some of you.

[31 : 55] There was a time just before the disruption of 1843 when a deputation of ministers from the church in Scotland went to preach in Hungary.

One of them was Rabbi Duncan who had an interest in a Christian witness to Israel, to the Jews. And as a result or partly as a result of his influence and mainly because of an outpouring of the Spirit, a group of people were converted in a place called Pesh in Hungary.

The family of Adolf Sefer was amongst them, his father and mother and siblings. And in the telling of his story, he bears testimony to his brother Philip, who died at a very young age.

He was only 26 when he suffered an illness from which he couldn't recover. And virtually on his deathbed or a short while before it, he wrote the following.

And remember, this is someone who had been raised within the Jewish faith. I am a Christian, he says. I know it.

[33 : 21] And the Lord knows it. I do not merely say I try to be a Christian. God makes us his children by his grace through the merits of Christ.

Every Christian has this adoption. I, as much as Moses, Paul or Peter, it is God's gift. But the full appropriation of God's gift, the sanctification of the soul, is different, indifferent individual and complete only in heaven.

He went on to state and remember, at the time he was quite seriously ill and shortly after that he was going to enter into the joy of his Lord.

A child of God, he says, is and remains a child of God. In good days and evil days, in bright days and dark days, in their lively and under dull feelings, in the storm and stress of temptation, yea, even in his fall, winds, waves, mist, will not rob him of his faith.

I am a child of God. This belief would be tested, no doubt. But what he was saying is true of those who are adopted into the family of God.

[34 : 45] You can no sooner separate yourself from your own physical family than you can from the spiritual family of God. Having predestined us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ in himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

This is what's important. This is what's important. It's not whether we choose or whether we are willing. It is he who has made us willing in a day of his power.

And this is what is at the heart of it. To the praise of his glory, or the glory of his grace wherein he made us accepted in the beloved.

I've often said, and I think it is quite true, that God's glory is so indissolubly tied in with the fullness and the completing of the work that he has begun in every Christian, that his glory would be tarnished if one such, one of them would be lost.

One of them would be failed to achieve what God had purposed for them. May God encourage us to remember the awesome nature of the Christian life, its origin, its inception, its conclusion.

[36 : 14] And all to the glory of God. May God encourage us with these thoughts. Let us pray. May God help us to understand and remember that you are indeed a God who has done all things well.

And that you have brought into the experience of your people the knowledge of Christ. And that your choice of them in him is what ensures and makes sure that the salvation that is his is going to be complete and fulfilled to the glory of your name.

As you practice.

And I pray for him for not all that gift comes, for all that gift comes, for every one and for a great, every one, and congratulations for our second-stagerets. Amen. Amen. Honour try now, pray, and love you. Thank you so much for giving, thank you, there God is a part which does not have drawn ever before, 5000 WWT. You will they have brought its vision, he will be given me, and so on with God. In the light as you do not have the same idea, all of them said PETE.VOL river, we can never him through far away and share questions. Lord try also dream, for if you may write more money away and that we would serve and with our ws.

orem.