

The Christian's Great Blessings

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[0 : 00] with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Now there are many things in life that will lift your spirits.

Some, I'm sure, unexpected good news that can, you know, change the direction of your life. Or maybe when you observe excellence in so many fields, whether it's in the field of art or music or literature or technology or scientific discovery, whether you're just having a blessed time with family and friends.

All these things that happen under the common grace of God for the well-being of mankind. But, you know, we are given these things to admire, to give thanks for, to recognize God-given abilities in so many walks of life.

Well, when we come to God's Word, surely you're raised even higher, infinitely higher, because, yes, we might say your spirit is lifted even into the heavenly realms.

You're taken, and as we see here in Ephesians, you're taken into the knowledge of God's eternal love for His people. You're given that privilege to know of what God has blessed His people with, what God has blessed you with, that has brought you immeasurable joy.

[1 : 29] So, you know, if the great achievements of life can give a measure of happiness and gladness, how much more the Word of God should enrich your soul.

You know, when we read of the wonder of God's love towards His own, particularly when we even see these expressions coming out, such as the riches of God's grace, because we're seeing here and reading here of the gift of the Lord Jesus, the gift of Jesus for sinners.

And we're seeing not just a great achievement, but the greatest of achievements of excellence in the wisdom of God, even in the fulfillment, the fulfillment of the work that the Father had given His Son to do.

We're seeing that excellence in the giving of the Lord Jesus in His life for sinners. Jesus, satisfying divine justice.

Satisfying that justice when God was offended by sin and Jesus taking our place on the cross so that we might be made right with God and acceptable before Him.

[2 : 39] And when we come to this epistle here, I'm not going to go through it, obviously, in the next few weeks, it's just for this morning. Surely, even when we were reading these words, even as we're engaging again with the passage, you know, our soul should be lifted up.

You know, surely we can't fail to be enriched in our hearts, enriched in our souls. Surely we can't fail to rejoice when we see what Paul has brought before us through divine inspiration.

Somebody's written of this whole letter, in fact, as a magnificent combination of Christian doctrine and Christian duty. Christian faith, Christian life.

What God has done through Christ and what we do as a consequence. In other words, this is the gospel in life. This is what we're reading here, the gospel in life. And when, you know, we don't have time, but to consider that, you know, even the whole of the chapter, but even the first eight verses here, this first section of this letter, be focused, yes, focus on God.

Focus, yes, on the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. But focus on this magnificent doctrine concerning the gift of God the Father to us in the Lord Jesus.

[3 : 59] And, you know, think of that riches, the riches of that divine treasure, that spiritual treasure that we find here in these words, the riches that bless you as a Christian and that blessing that's made possible through the love of God for sinners.

And it's that blessing that the Lord's people are going to give and show gratitude for just in a few moments' time when the Lord's people will be at the front of this building, front of this room, to remember the Lord's death through word and through sacrament.

Because, of course, before we even take the bread and the wine, we have to be grounded in Scripture. That's why it's so important that we have the reading of God's Word, the preaching of God's Word before we take the sacrament.

Because God's Word shows us and shows us the extent of God's love for sinners. God's Word helps us to grasp the extent of that love in grace and mercy.

And we'll remember the Lord's death. We'll see the signs of that death through the bread and the wine so that we're unable to give glory to God for His great gift towards us.

[5 : 17] So, let's just focus a wee bit more then in this passage. Sometimes we forget, when we read Paul's epistles, we forget when he actually wrote them and the context he actually wrote them.

I mean, where's he writing this? He's writing this in a prison. He's in a desperately difficult place, a very bleak place that he's in.

He's actually writing different epistles, not just to the church in Ephesus. He's passed the letters that are so full of his testimony to the praise of God.

He's showing that he is content in any and every situation. Yes, he's suffering immensely, but he's pouring out this praise towards God in gratitude for his salvation.

He's not wallowing in self-pity. Yes, he's imprisoned. But here, as we read here in Ephesians, here's a testimony to the power of the living Lord Jesus, the power of God in changing this man who at one time was an enemy of Christ.

[6 : 27] But now he's gushing forth praise, praise and thanks, even in his expression of wisdom, showing the Lord Jesus a Savior.

And, you know, the centrality of the Lord Jesus, yes, the centrality of the love of God for sinners, of course, seen supremely in the cross of Christ, in Jesus' death for sinners.

And so, I do want to spend, you know, just to focus a little more on the words that we have before us. And see the first thing that we look here, and this whole general aspect of faithful saints in Jesus.

Faithful saints in Jesus. But before we, you know, it would be very easy just to jump straight down to verse 3 without just looking at verses 1 and 2, which I think we have to do, again, to get the context of what we're reading here about the blessings that God gives to believers.

The culture of the day, the custom of the day when you're writing a letter was to introduce yourself.

But notice, notice how Paul introduces himself. Calls himself an apostle.

[7 : 42] You know, somebody who had a particular meeting with the Lord Jesus, who'd seen the risen Lord Jesus, and therefore given authority to declare God's Word.

So, here's Paul with this, the highest office of the church. There no longer is, of course, an office of apostles, whatever you read elsewhere. No, there are no apostles in the church. It was for the lifetime of these men and these men only.

But as an apostle who's been commissioned by the Lord Jesus to witness to the truth of the crucified Saviour, he's been given this message to give to, not just to the church at the time, but to all who are in Christ.

He's coming then, not with words he's made up himself, but what we read here in this passage are words directly given to Paul the apostle from God.

So, if that's the case, then we have to listen and listen carefully. Even as some of us were here last night, you know, when we were reading the words Behold, in Isaiah 52, Behold my servant.

[8 : 50] Well, again, this is the message. Behold. Take time. Pay attention to what we have before us because this is the very word of God. So, what do we find in this part of God's word?

We're told here of God's people. First part of that verse there, in verse 1, middle of verse 1, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

The saints. In other words, the holy ones. One, people who are set apart by God to be his own.

That's what every Christian is.

That's what you are if you're a Christian. You're a saint. And it's got nothing to do with any kind of, you know, special designation of some kind of unusual holiness and a particular person. It's got absolutely nothing to do with the superstition or that some of a person is, if two verified miracles can be attributed to the prayers of an individual, that makes that person a saint absolutely rubbish, nonsense.

Every Christian is a saint because every Christian has been set apart by God's grace to be his and to do his will. And you who will be at the, well, what we call the communion table, the area set aside

for the Lord's people to remember the Lord's death, you who will be in that particular area, you are included in that designation as a saint.

[10 : 15] And it's not because of any miracles that have been, you know, attributed to you, but it is by a miracle. It's the miracle of God's grace. That grace that's blessed you and saved you. That grace gifted to you through the work of the Lord Jesus.

You are a saint and therefore set apart not just for this earth, not just for this part of your life, but for all eternity. But yes, that's the case, but still a saint to be set apart for the work that God has given you to do where God sends you and places you.

So you who are the Lord's people will be sitting in these chairs in a few moments time. Well, you are saints we might say in your Ephesus for God has placed you to serve him.

That may change, you may, you know, locations change, but the fact of you being a saint doesn't change. You're a saint on earth and a saint in glory. Why?

Because of the love of God, because of the love of God the Father in sending his Son for you. And all because of the love of Jesus and his offering up of himself on the cross for you.

[11 : 31] And it's all because of the drawing power of the Holy Spirit who convicted you of your sin, who drew you to see the Lord Jesus having died for you on the cross.

So, you're a saint. But that's not all that Paul tells of the blessing of the Christian. There's this other aspect, or we might say associated aspect.

you're the faithful in Christ Jesus. In other words, your faith is rooted in the Saviour. And if you, when you go to the table, remember, yes, you've been set apart, set aside to do the work that God has given you to do, to follow him.

But you're also someone who is of the faithful, who believes in the Lord Jesus as Saviour. And that faithfulness seen in your following your Lord and Saviour, I notice, I don't know if you noticed when we were reading that passage, how often Paul speaks of the Christian as being in Christ Jesus.

We looked at this particular aspect some months ago in our prayer meeting, our midweek meeting, but that is what defines a Christian, someone who's in Christ, united to Christ.

[12 : 44] Remember the analogy that Jesus gave where he said, I am the vine, you are the branches. Again, you know, you are the branches having your, as it were, your life sourced in the Lord Jesus.

You are in him. You are saints, a saint, and you are a faithful one. And yet, because of that relationship that you have with the Lord Jesus.

Now, you know, this is, this is wonder upon wonders. This is, this is the marvel of grace that you can be called a saint and a faithful one. But having that privilege means that you have a responsibility to exercise that faith to show that you truly are set apart in the Lord.

Now, none of us are faithful in our own strength. What did Paul tell us elsewhere? We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. How does he strengthen you?

Well, again, look at what Paul says there in verse 2. Grace and peace. That's the strengthening that God gives you. You are nothing. I am nothing without the grace of God.

[13 : 53] I am nothing without the undeserved favour of God. You who are a Christian, you are blessed through the sending of the Son for you.

So that you are now a new creature and you have been given that saving grace as that new creature and will serve him graciously serve him in grace and serve him as a saint in all faithfulness.

You have been given grace to serve, grace that saved you but grace, you have been continually given grace to serve. But again, we are nothing without the peace of God.

That peace that has made you whole, that has reconciled God to you and you to God. That peace that passes understanding, that peace that has made you right with God. peace. Then when we speak of God, of course, peace with God.

We mean peace with God the Father, peace with God the Son, peace through God the Holy Spirit. You are the saints in him. You are the faithful ones.

[15 : 00] None of us deserve, none of us have deserved the grace of God or the peace of God. But remember, you have an eternal relationship with God that can never be severed. Yes, we know we sin.

Not even our sins can separate us from the love of God. Not even our times of unfaithfulness when we wander and drift, that cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

You remember that, that you are his eternally because of the love of God for sinners. And that really takes us on to our next point, really just to follow on, to dwell on the blessings of the saints.

So remember, Paul's there in that Roman jail. I mean, humanly speaking, if someone saw Paul there in that tiny cell in Rome, they would say, what's happening?

I mean, here's a man in a deplorable condition, but he's not looking at his circumstances. No, his perspective is heavenwards.

[16:04] He's looking up, he's looked up and seen the glory of God. And so everything else pales into insignificance. So that's when, you know, we see here at the very start of verse 3, he's praising God.

Bless me, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who's blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. There's Paul in that desperate prison cell giving glory to God.

And he's wanting those who read this letter, he's wanting you, me, wanting everyone who reads this to adore God through praise. Whatever our circumstances are, we still bless God.

We still attribute to God all that is good in God. We bless him when we speak well of him. We say that, you know, as we've already said a letter this morning, God is good and he's given you his goodness.

And so you bless God who blesses you. And, you know, we just do have to take a little time to reflect on who that our God is, the one true God.

[17:12] And when we realise that, as Paul gives us that expression of God here, we will be filled and are filled with wonder, love, and praise.

When we see as God, Paul telling us, who has been instrumental in our salvation? God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, the three person God, triune God.

And that's given to encourage you. Let's think, first of all, of God the Father. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father, God the Father, God the Father, the source of all our blessings.

As we're seeing here in verse 3, He has blessed us. Verse 4, we'll come to in a moment, but He chose us. Verse 5, He predestined us. Verse 6, He's blessed us in the Beloved.

Verse 8, He's lavished the riches of His grace upon us. This is our Heavenly Father. You owe, I owe, that eternal debt to God the Father. Without His blessing, we're lost.

[18:17] We think of the Father's love for His children. You know, at a time of communion, I think we often forget God the Father. Yes, it's absolutely right that we focus on the Lord Jesus and what He's done for us and His giving of Himself for us on the cross.

But, you know, we must never forget God the Father when we remember the Lord's death. Never forget God the Father and His love for you and His sending, His one and only Son.

This word, you know, we read there, He blessed us in the Beloved, God the Father, blessing His people in the Lord Jesus. So, dwell in the love of God the Father as you remember the death of God the Son for you.

But then, of course, as we've said, we have to focus on the Lord Jesus. And as we said, you know, Paul is so fixed in Jesus. You know, even when we read these first 14 verses, the number of times you read the name of Jesus there and read that name in love, in gratitude.

It grieved me yesterday when so many times I heard the name of Jesus spoken in blasphemy. It hurt me to the core. But for Paul here, he's uttering the name of Jesus with gratitude and with love.

[19:42] Why? Because he knows that he, Paul, was saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus. Paul knows he's in prison because of Jesus.

He knows that he's there because he's witness to the Lord Jesus. But Paul's got no regrets. It's the Lord, the Lord Jesus who saved Paul, Paul on that Damascus road.

He, Jesus, is the reason for Paul's hope, for Paul's faith, for Paul's love for the Saviour and for the praise that Paul is uttering here in this chapter. So, just as Paul sees Jesus and praises him for his love towards him, so for you, see Jesus, give him the glory for his love because of his love for you. Picture your eyes in Jesus and do so with praise and admiration. He died for you. Remember, you know, we sometimes regard this almost in a kind of blasey sense, but no, he died for you and he's risen for you and he's ascended to the right hand for you.

So, bless the Lord Jesus. Yes, now before you go to the table, bless him when you're at the table because of the eternal blessings that are yours through Jesus, the Lamb who was slain for you.

[21 : 05] Bless him. Don't ever come to the table without your heart having gazed on the Lord Jesus because remember without his sacrifice you'd be lost eternally.

Without his giving of himself in death you'd have no life. You have Jesus who's yours and you're his. So rejoice in him. Bless him.

Bless the Lord Jesus who blesses you. He's blessed you in his faithfulness. You return thanks by your faithfulness in serving him. The Father, the Son.

But then, as we see in verse 3 again, we see I think the reference to the Holy Spirit because Paul at the end of verse 3 speaks of every spiritual blessing in Christ.

In other words, every blessing that you receive as a Christian is made effective by the Holy Spirit. you enjoy the blessings of God. You receive God's blessings by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[22 : 12] You are a spiritual creature. And because you're a spiritual creature you're able to receive the things of God. And you know as we've said, unless the Spirit worked that work of calling in your life, where would you be?

You'd be nowhere without the power, the drawing power of the Holy Spirit. So, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, one God through whom all blessings flow.

That is cause enough to give thanks to God even at this time of communion. Because, as we've seen again in verse 3, your blessings are in the heavenly realms, the heavenly places.

It surely tells us that your ultimate blessing isn't primarily on earth, although you would receive much blessing, of course, on earth. But the blessings that the Christian enjoys, these blessings are from heaven and off heaven.

They're far, far above the riches of the world because they're spiritual blessings. And even as you know, many of you are even now preparing, contemplating, preparing, to take.

[23 : 24] I don't know how many times you've taken. I don't know how many times I've taken the communion, taken the bread and wine. But remember, this is a renewed opportunity to give thanks to God for the Lord Jesus.

And this is a renewed opportunity to receive these heavenly blessings from God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Give thanks, yes, give thanks to God for your salvation.

And know that these blessings that you're given have a source in the past for you in the present and have an eternal future. And we can't really go into all that this morning, but let's just focus on two aspects, the past blessings of the Christian and the present blessings that you see there in verse 4 to 6, where, yes, it can seem difficult to follow, but the blessing of what's called here election, past blessing, blessing rooted in the past, and then present blessing, the blessing that you are a child of God by adoption into the family of God.

And if we'd had time, we'd look at the future blessings of the Christian that Paul tells us in verse 9 and 10 when he speaks of the fullness of time. But anyway, let's look at verses 4 to 6, the past blessing of election.

Look at verse 4 again. Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

[24 : 58] What's Paul doing? He's reaching back into the realms of eternity. He's going into that timeless eternity when God chose a people for himself, a people from every tribe and nation and language.

people from all eternity. You who are Christ were known by God before time began. You were known of him in the depths of eternity.

God said to Jeremiah, before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And that's a spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. God knew you before time itself was created.

God chose you. Look at the language Paul uses here. Paul speaks of God choosing us in him. The ones chosen, you and Christ. You see that eternal connection? He chose you in him.

[26 : 04] a few short, simple words with the most profound depth of meaning and grace. Before the world was made, before man sinned in Adam, before Christ came to earth, before the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, God chose us in him.

You are eternally connected with the Lord Jesus. and yes, we defected through the redeeming work of Christ on the cross. And with Paul, we echo Paul's words written on another occasion, Romans 11, oh the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God, how inscrutable are his judgments, how inscrutable are his ways.

In other words, you can't plumb the depths of that mystery. You know, why God should choose anyone? I'm sure the question has to be asked, why, you know, how could God possibly choose any of us, you know, given our sinfulness?

Because wisdom, perfect wisdom, it's his sovereign choice, yes, to elect some. Now, let's not get into not, let's not start getting, you know, wrestling with the whole subject of election.

Our Westminster Confession tells us, yes, it's a doctrine that's got to be handled with special care, but what do we do in response? We praise God, praise God for his choosing us in him.

[27 : 33] And notice, there's that purpose in that choosing, to be holy and blameless before him. I mean, we've already seen that Paul's addressed the Christians there in Ephesus as the saints, as the holy ones, and now he's speaking of their standing, you're standing before a holy God, holy not for anything in us, but all because of the righteousness of Christ.

And we know it, we'll say it again, and we have to say it every time, I think, at a communion time, that Christ took our sins upon himself when he gave us his righteousness, that divine exchange, you credited with his righteousness when Jesus took your sins upon himself.

Yes, this is a mystery, but it's the mystery of that great transaction through the electing decree in Christ. So bless God, you who know him for his choosing you.

Come before him in reverence. When you come to this table, this Lord's table, don't have any inkling of pride in your heart. Come in humility.

Come with the spirit of the great 19th century Saint Robert Murray McChain when he wrote, chosen not for good in me. Will you come before God, even come to the table acknowledging that there was nothing good in you that brought you to this point in your life?

[29 : 01] No, it's because of the blood of Christ shed on the cross that you have that salvation sprinkled with that cleansing power of grace. And rejoice, rejoice.

Yes, as that humble servant rejoice in that love of God towards sinners. We're nearly finished. Look at verse 5 and 6.

I'll leave in the end of verse 4. In love, he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he's blessed us in the beloved.

You who are chosen are chosen in love. And it's perfect love. It's love that's got the stamp of eternity on it. We said it's the love of the Father for us in sending the Son.

It's the love of Jesus in dying for us. It's the love of the Holy Spirit in drawing us to God, the Father, through the Son. It's love, the great love of God.

[30 : 05] And that love that so enabled you to become a child of God, adopted into the family of God. That's the grace of God choosing you, adopting you into his family.

And notice how Paul describes the love of God here. Look at the beginning of what it says. It was love. Just very, very end of verse 4. It was love that predestined us.

Love that chose you to be a child of God through the Holy Spirit, through the Lord Jesus. Adopted as his children in the one the Father loves in Jesus.

You're loved in the Beloved. You're not loved apart from God's love for the Son. You're loved in Christ Jesus.

You're an adopted child of God. the other day I was reading an amazing story of adoption of a young Vietnamese girl. You might have read it yourselves.

[31 : 05] Adopted by an American couple. The couple who'd learned of the tragedy of this girl's up to then very tragic life. The girl's parents had committed suicide by an explosive device.

that little girl had meant to die with them but miraculously she was saved although she was severely injured as a result. She was you know the intention was she said I wasn't supposed to live but there she was adopted into this loving caring family in Missouri.

But for the Christian for the Christian who knows that adoption into the family of God well without the love of God you wouldn't live you wouldn't be supposed to live without the love of God.

But God's great rescue mission that rescue mission has saved you. And you're under his loving care in that loving family.

So give thanks even now prepare to give thanks through the sacrament for the rescue that God has given you through Jesus. uniting you with Christ with your elder brother the Lord our Saviour.

[32 : 23] And so you have a privilege. Remember that. You have a privilege that surpasses anything that the world can give. We mentioned earlier this whole aspect of riches.

We see there in verse 7 we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace. He lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight. The riches of his grace the redemption the being bought back you're no longer a slave to sin you've been bought with a price the price the blood of the Lord Jesus and that is through the riches of his grace.

That's something I want to say a wee bit more on when we come to the table. But remember you're no longer a slave you're no longer a slave to sin you've been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus that was the purchase price for your freedom for your salvation for your redemption from the slavery of sin you remember have been set free forgiven and made right with God all because of God's love for you that he lavished on you to the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for you.

So let's come together in prayer now let us pray. Lord have mercy upon us we who are sinners we can say nothing else before you a holy God but Lord be merciful to us who are sinners sinners who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus be with them your people as shortly they gather together in your name to remember the Lord's death and be Lord with those who will be watching on that they in the fullness of time through your electing love that they might too know Jesus as their saviour so be with us Lord as we come to this particular part of the service and that you will have the glory and everything that is done even in these next few minutes we pray these things in Jesus name

[34 : 41] Amen Amen happy new amazing consistently veterinarian periods him all actually in their cominic about Mary people might pause hyper has any time ven anything you have to humor people Bun as