

Blessed Beyond Measure

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[0 : 01] She made her way into the Guinness Book of World Records. She became known as America's Greatest Miser. She died in 1919, but it was told about her that she was such a miser that she never turned the heat on, and she always used cold water.

It said that she never washed her hands. She had one black dress, and she had one pair of undergarments that she wore until they were worn out, and only then would she replace them. It was said that she had her office in one of the banks where she was their largest depositor, and she would not rent her own office because she said it was a waste of money.

She never had a beautiful home. She always lived in either a flat or she lived in boarding houses. It said that she instructed her laundress to only wash the dirtiest parts of her dress, which was usually the hem which got the dirtiest, so they would save on soap.

Her son broke his leg when he was younger, and she spent so much time trying to find a free clinic that would treat him, and eventually they turned her down.

[1 : 26] Eventually, she found treatment for him, but it came to the point where after so many surgeries, they had to amputate his leg, and she lived as if she had no money.

Eccentric? Yes. A little crazy? Well, she was worth over \$100 million in the 1800s, so she was rather wealthy, and most of it came from her investments that she made.

She became known as the Witch of Wall Street, but she lived as a pauper. The reality is, Hattie Green is much like many Christians today, who have the wealth of all of heaven at their disposal, but yet live like spiritual paupers.

We're going to be delving into the book of Ephesians. We're done with the book of Philippians, and so we're going to be entering into and studying the book of Ephesians, and we're going to read the first three verses this morning and go with it from the very, very beginning.

So if we look at God's Word this morning in the book of Ephesians, chapter number 1, verses 1, 2, and 3, Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, a typical salutation, the way Paul began many of his letters to the churches.

[3 : 15] In verse number 3, he says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, in the heavenly places in Christ.

This, by the way, is another of Paul's prison letters or prison epistles written during one of those times, probably around 62 A.D., where he was imprisoned, most likely imprisoned in Rome, but probably during a time where he was allowed to rent his own home and under house arrest, and he was allowed to have his needs met by those of his friends.

Paul is most likely the author of this letter. There are very, very little of others who think it's not the Apostle Paul.

So we really believe it's Paul that wrote this letter to the churches or to the particular church in Ephesus.

And so Paul was a human author. Now, to whom is he writing? We see that in verse number 1. Paul is the apostle, apostle to the Gentiles. So he names himself as the author, and he says to the saints who are in Ephesus.

[4 : 36] So he's writing to the Ephesians, but he's not writing to dead people. He calls them saints, but they were very, very much alive.

They were not designated as holy people after they died. It's interesting, as this procedure is, there's nothing in Scripture that points to the fact that we look at someone's life after they died, if they did some miracles, or if some people were healed by them, and then they're canonized as saints.

There's nothing scriptural about that. Nothing in the Bible even remotely talks about that. Now, even in this short letter, this very, very brief letter to the Ephesians, Paul addresses his readers as saints. Nine times in this very short letter, he calls them saints. They were alive. They weren't dead, even though they had once been dead in their trespasses and their sins, as the Bible says. And it's clear that they hadn't performed any miracles, although they had experienced a miracle. They had found new life in Jesus Christ, and they experienced the miracle of the new birth, Ephesians 2, verses 4 and 10.

[5 : 52] The word saint is one of the primary terms that's used in the New Testament for those who are followers of Jesus Christ, those who have trusted Christ as their Savior.

And so it describes one who's trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior. This person is alive. They're not dead. They haven't been canonized as some special person who had special powers or was some special holy person, but they're called saints spiritually, as we see as well in chapter 2, verse number 1.

So the question that we're going to ask ourselves today is who are we in Christ? Well, first thing that we see, according to the way Paul talks about these Ephesian believers, we're saints.

Have you thought about that? Now, you don't go around telling everybody, hey, I'm a saint, because they know physically we're not. And just ask one of our family members, and they'll know that we're not a saint in that respect or in that regard.

But spiritually speaking, in God's eyes, we are separated unto him. And he looks at us, and he sees us as holy.

[7 : 06] So we are saints. We are saints. The word saint means one who has been set apart.

It's related to the word sanctified, just as the vessels in the Old Testament that were set apart for the use within the temple and for those temple sacrifices, they were considered sanctified.

They were set apart for that use. You couldn't use them to cook dinner on because they were only supposed to be used, and only the official sacrifice were to touch those particular vessels.

And so they were set apart. They were sanctified for God's use, just as we are. We, in Christ, are set apart for God's use and for God's use only.

But we live in this world, but we live for him. So when the sinner trusts Christ as their Savior, so before Christ, apart from Christ, we trust Christ as our Savior, what happens is we're taken out of this world and we are placed in Christ.

[8 : 18] Now, use those terms in quotes because we're not literally taken out of this world, but spiritually speaking, we're taken out of the realm of this world and we're placed into the realm of being in Christ.

Christ, and just like a fish in water, is of the water. They're not of the land. What we mean by that is that's their realm.

That's where they live. That's where they thrive because they are of the water. A scuba diver, on the other hand, is not of the water, but the only way a scuba diver can survive in the water is through the use of special equipment.

And it's only for a certain period of time. He can't last forever underwater with the scuba gear because there comes a time where he runs out of air and he has to go back into what?

Into his element. Into the realm of land and air. Just like that, as a follower of Jesus Christ, as a Christian, because we have the Holy Spirit residing within us, and when we are in Christ and no longer of this world, the only way that we can survive and be like Christ in this world is the, and I use the term special equipment loosely, but the special indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our life.

[9 : 48] And that's the only way that we can survive in this world. So now the important question is, how did the people at Ephesus become saints?

Let's take a look at verse number one. He says, Paul, he's the apostle, he's the one writing the letter to the saints who are in Ephesus and faithful in Christ Jesus.

The word faithful carries the meaning of believers in Christ, their faith that they placed in Christ. Now these people weren't saved because they lived faithful lives.

That's putting the cart before the horse. We don't get right with God, and the Holy Spirit doesn't come and indwell us just simply because we live good lives, and we get to the point where we reach sanctification, and we become, we reach this point of sinless perfection, as some call it, and God says, oh, okay, you're good enough, and you're in.

You know, it's like, you're a made person, and you're in the club now. It doesn't work that way. They didn't come into the family of God by being faithful, or by being faithful.

[10:59] It was their faith that they placed in Jesus Christ, and their faithfulness comes after they've trusted Him. Excuse me. This is clear from Ephesians 1, verses 12 through 14.

Ephesians 1, and verse number 19. So that's how they became saints. And then we go on in verse number 2. He says, grace to you and peace.

So those two words together, faith, or faithful, and grace go together. The word grace shows up 12 times in the book of Ephesians.

So faithfulness, saints, and grace is very, very important, and it refers to the kindness of God toward undeserving people.

And that's a picture of us. We don't deserve God's grace. We don't deserve forgiveness because we're sinners. We're separated from God apart from Jesus Christ. The Bible says, because of what Adam did in the Garden of Eden, we're born separated from Him.

[12:03] And it's only by what Jesus Christ did on the cross of Calvary that makes it possible for us to become a part of the family of God. And it's because of His grace that He bestows upon us through faith, the Bible says, that we're able to become a part of the family of God.

So grace and faith go together because it's the only way to experience grace, and the only way to experience grace and salvation is through faith.

Ephesians chapter 2, verses 8 and verse 9. And the phrase, in Christ, you say, well, that's, how do we understand? Well, we used that illustration one time, it's been a while back, with Rubbermaid containers, if you remember.

Because we're placed in Christ, and we're sealed until the day of redemption. And then Christ is in God.

But we're in Christ. And so, it comes to the point where we see in the illustration that we're in Christ, Christ is in us through His Holy Spirit, but Christ is in God.

[13:14] And these are all biblical terms that we use. And so, it's, the sphere or the realm of our existence is in the family of God, and our dwelling is in Christ.

Just like a fish, their dwelling is in water, and that's how they live, that's how they survive, that's how they thrive. How we thrive as a Christian, how we thrive as a follower of Jesus Christ, is within the realm of Jesus, within the realm of the, the spiritual presence of God in our life.

So, what else does it mean for us? So, we're saints. But as saints, we're rich. And you say, well, pastor, have you seen my bank account lately?

Well, I'm not talking about a physical bank account. Now, Hedy Green had a lot of money. She had a ton of money. But the way she lived as a pauper wasn't commensurate with her bank account. And the way many of us as followers of Jesus Christ live is we live like spiritual paupers. We live like we have no power. We live like, well, it depends upon me to, well, you know what, I have to, I have to be very, very careful with how I use prayer or how I use this because if I use too much of it, then I'm going to go bankrupt.

[14:43] Well, we can't go bankrupt spiritually once we're in Christ because we have at our disposal according to Scripture that we're going to see, notice, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has what?

Blessed us with what? every spiritual blessings where? In the heavenly places or literally in the Greek word in the heavenlies.

You see that word places is in italics. It's not in the Greek. In the heavenlies where? In Christ.

There's another, there's one of those occurrences of that phrase in Christ.

So, as a follower of Jesus, as saints, we've been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

Wow. So, when we have a need and we go to our heavenly father, is he able to provide? Yes, he is.

[15:46] Over and abundantly above all that we can even ask or think. Isn't that awesome? So, whether we are experiencing a physical difficulty or experiencing a financial difficulty or a relational difficulty, the Bible never promises that we are going to be rich physically, financially, but he does promise that we're rich spiritually.

He never promises us that we're going to have excellent health, but he does promise us that he's with us in no matter what situation that we're in.

And so, we're blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. Now, every book of the Bible has its own special theme. The writer who was inspired by the Holy Spirit, every book of the Bible has a particular theme.

They were writing to a particular audience and God wanted that particular audience to get a particular idea. So, Genesis is, the theme is beginnings.

We look in Matthew. Matthew is about the kingdom. Galatians is about our liberty in Christ and Ephesians is about the Christians or the follower of Jesus Christ's riches in Christ.

[17:13] So, that's going to be our running thread throughout Ephesians. There were so many that would go back to their old religion and it was bankrupt.

So, Paul was saying, why go back to a bankrupt religion when everything that is available is available to us where? In Christ.

So, he says, you have everything in Christ. So, we're saints and we're rich what is the source? What's the source of those blessings? From where does it come? Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So, who blessed us? Jesus Christ. Jesus is submissive to Heavenly Father. Now, we know God is one person. There are no three individual persons physically, but we don't understand the Trinity, but in God's essence, He exists as Father, Son, Holy Spirit.

[18:20] We don't understand that and I don't even presume to understand how that works. But blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies or in the heavenly places in Christ.

So, God the Father has made us rich in Christ Jesus. When we're born into the family of God, we're born rich. We're born rich spiritually.

So, through Christ, we share in His riches in glory, in the unsearchable riches of Christ. Ephesians chapter 3 verse number 8.

And our heavenly Father is not poor. He's rich. So, we might say, well, so what? Well, we don't have to go through life poor spiritually or thinking that, you know, there's no purpose in life and there is no hope because there is hope in Jesus Christ and our existence or our realm of existence might be in this world for a period of time, but that's not our final destination.

Our final destination is heaven. You know, one of the richest men in the world during his time was J. Paul Getty, worth over 1.3 billion, with a B, dollars.

[19:40] And, you know, many of the oil sheiks, they rake in millions every week, but yet, spiritually, they may be poor unless they have Jesus Christ in their life.

All this wealth is worth pennies compared to the spiritual wealth that you and I have in Jesus Christ. Now, Paul is explaining to these Ephesians in his letter what these riches are and how they can draw on them in their Christian living.

So, there's our source. Our source, God, through Jesus Christ, blessed us with all of this. So, what's the breadth, what's the scope of those blessings?

Well, let's look again. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Where? Where's the realm? In the heavenlies, in the heavenly places, in Christ, Christ Jesus.

So, these are all spiritual blessings. There are some groups that would say that God has promised us wealth, health, and happiness on planet earth.

[20:53] He's promised us his presence, he's promised us his power, and he's promised us victory on earth, but nowhere do we see that it's specifically tied to monetary gain.

doesn't mean that we're going to be rich, because what about all the believers across the world who are living on pennies a day, who literally are paupers, but they're rich in Christ, and they're happier than so many, even than probably most Americans, who are literally rich in comparison to the rest of the world.

financial gain is really not, to pardon the vernacular, is not where it's at, because I have heard of so many people, and even using us as an example, some of the times we've been the happiest was when we had the least, because it was us.

We had enough to eat, most of the time, but the Lord never let us go hunger for more than a day or two, but yet we were happy because that's what we had, and we had each other, and we had Jesus Christ, and then we're like Paul, we've had plenty, and we've had little, but like Paul, we need to learn, and we learned in Philippians, to be content in whatever state that we're in.

Don't look for things of this world to make us happy, but trust God that we have all that we need in Christ, and Christ will never let us go hungry, because we belong to him, as long as we're putting our faith and trust in him, and as long as we're putting his kingdom first.

[22 : 49] The Bible promises us in the book of Matthew. He doesn't promise to shield us from poverty, or from pain, but the Father has given us all the blessings in Christ Jesus.

So the Holy Spirit is mentioned a lot of times in this letter to the Ephesians. He's the one who channels those riches to us from the Heavenly Father in our life, and he's the one that allows us to live a life of plenty spiritually.

No wonder Paul began his ministry by asking some of them, have you received the Holy Spirit when you believed? Because if we don't have the Holy Spirit, the Bible says we don't have Christ in our life.

If we don't have the Holy Spirit, we're not one of his. The Bible promises that when we trust Jesus Christ as our Savior, he gives to us his Holy Spirit, his Holy Spirit seals us until the day of redemption.

So unless we have the witness of the Spirit, Romans chapter 5, we can't draw on the wealth of the Spirit. So the sphere of our blessings, let's take a look at where those are.

[24 : 05] Again, blessed be the God and Father, but he's blessed us with every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, or in the heavenlies, literally is the Greek translation.

The person without Christ is primarily interested in what? The earthlies, and that's a literal term that Paul is using.

He's interested in earthly things, bigger house, better house, better job, all these things that have to do with earthly existence.

He says that person without Christ is more concerned about the earthlies, because that's where he lives. Just like the fish is concerned about the things in the water, because that's where he lives.

That's the realm of his existence. But he says the person who is in Christ is more concerned in the heavenlies, or that which is to come, or our existence, or our relationship in heaven, because our citizenship is in heaven.

[25 : 16] Philippians 3 and verse number 20. Our names are written where? In heaven, in the Lamb's Book of Life, Luke 10, verse number 20.

Where's our heavenly Father? In heaven. Where's the Lord Jesus Christ? Seated at the right hand of God the Father? In heaven. And so our attention and our affection ought to be focused there.

Now, evangelist Dwight L. Moody used to say, some people were so heavenly minded they were of no earthly good. That's not what Paul's talking about. About all we do is go around every day and thinking about heaven, and we just kind of float through the day and not work for a living and not save up for a rainy day, just like in the Old Testament.

He said, you sluggard, go to the ant and see how it saves in this time so it has it when it needs it. No, that's not what Paul's talking about.

But he says that our focus ought to be on where our existence, our spiritual existence truly is, and that's in the heavenlies in Christ.

[26 : 27] He described the place where Jesus Christ is right now, and the battles we fight, the Bible says they're not against what? We think, you know what? Our problem is government. You know what?

We think, you know, our problem is all the evil in this world, evil people. No, the Bible says our problem is what? The battles we fight are not with flesh and blood, because they're empowered or they're moved by evil, invisible forces, Satan and his realm.

He's the one that's pulling the strings. And so Scripture says our fight, our battle is not with flesh and blood, but with satanic powers in the heavenlies, Ephesians chapter 6 and verse number 12.

Now, the Christian really, we really operate in two spheres. We're like the scuba diver. You know, we, our existence is in the air and on land, but he can survive or she can survive for a while underwater in that realm.

So it's like a diver who does that professionally, and they're in it all the time. So really, literally, you kind of live in two realms. You couldn't, they couldn't live in one without the other, and like a follower of Jesus Christ, we couldn't survive here and be like Jesus Christ without our connection to our heavenly Father and to our spiritual existence.

[27 : 58] So physically, we're on the earth in a human body, but spiritually, we're seated with Christ in heaven. Think about the President of the United States, whether good or bad. the President, and it's called the seat of power.

Only the President, technically, has the authority or should be sitting in that executive chair behind the great desk in the Oval Office.

But when the President gets up out of the chair, does he leave his power in the chair? No. He could be anywhere in the world, but he's still what?

He's still the President of the United States. And just like that, as a follower of Jesus Christ, our strength, our who we are, is not dependent upon where we are.

So we might be on the earth for 70, 80, 90, however many years, but as a part of the family of God, we're really seated with Jesus in the heavenlies, with God our Heavenly Father.

[29 : 13] So no matter where we are, we're still who we are, just like the President of the United States of America. When she was young, Victoria was not told that she would be queen one day, until when she got a little older, her teacher finally let her discover for herself that she would be one day queen of England.

When Victoria figured that out, her response was, well then, I'll be good. Because she realized that in order to rule England, it took a person that was good.

And so what she did was, she determined that because of her position, she decided that she would be good. She would be a good leader. And so, by reason of who we are in Christ, that's how we're expected to live.

We're expected to live like Christ because of our position in Christ. Now, I find it interesting, as we wind this down to a close, that Paul was writing about wealth to the Ephesian believers.

Well, the thing is, Ephesus was pretty much the bank of the known world, or that portion of the known world at the time.

[30 : 34] They were considered the bank of Asia. They were one of the seven wonders of the world with the temple of Diana. It was in Ephesus, and it was not only a center of idolatrous worship, but it was a depository of wealth for that known world.

Some of the greatest art treasures of their day was there, and housed in that magnificent, beautiful building. And Paul's comparing the riches that the followers of Jesus Christ have to a temple that would explain the wealth that they had.

And so Paul is using these words, riches, and I believe that the Ephesian believers would have been considering, well, you know what? We see all this wealth all around us, and you're saying that we are wealthy.

So Paul was making that connection. There are a lot of financial terms that Paul used in this book of Ephesians. We're going to get to those as we go through this particular book.

He's already used the term riches. He uses the term inheritance a little bit later. Ephesians 1, 11, 14, 18, chapter 5, verse number 5.

[31 : 49] He talks about fullness or being filled in other verses as well. So Paul is saying to us, as followers of Jesus Christ, you're rich in Christ.

Now live like it. We're not spiritual paupers. Let's pray. Our Lord and God and Heavenly Father, we thank you that in Christ we're rich, that we have been blessed with all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, with every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.

And Father, we thank you that no matter what we come up against in this life, in this world, that we have at our disposal the power of heaven. And all we need to do is come to you and ask.

Father, we thank you that you hear our prayer. Father, we thank you that you have the resources at your disposal to take care of whatever need we have. And Father, we pray that we would live according to our position in this world today as salt and as light and as citizens of heaven.

Let us represent heaven while we're on earth. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.