

Chosen *(Eph. 1:1-11)*

Imagine a group of people who have decided to start a new church.

They have gathered for a planned meeting to discuss what the launch of this new church will look like

The Leader says: Now the church has to meet people's needs so our first task is to determine what it is that people need...

So, let's talk about that ... what is it that people need ... pause

Michael: We are evangelicals and we believe the bible is the Word of God but a lot about people don't know the bible, so we need to teach the bible— so we need a 1st class Christian education program

Diane: Teaching is all good, but we don't want people to just be pew sitters, we want people actively involved and participating in the ministry—we need people off the seats and into the streets.

Milton: Both of the things are good and all but we have missed the most important thing. Love ... and he then reads from 1 Cor. 13 and says if we have a great education program, and we are involved but we don't have love it doesn't matter...

... We must emphasize warmth, love, and relationships.

After conversation they decided to try to have a church focused on these three things: teaching, involvement, and building relationships.

Now, do they have a good strategy????

If they do these three things and do them well, will that do the job of ministry?

Here is the problem:

All three of these things are necessary and important but none of them apart, or together, are sufficient.

The problem in this whole conversation is that everyone has this underlying belief that imagines that WE, in our strength ...

... can do ministry and see the church built with good teaching, involvement, and building relationships.

This kind of thinking is **founded on two errors....**

First, it greatly underestimates the difficulty of the Christian life.

If Christianity was merely the task of getting good people together, to do good things for people in need and build relationships in the process ...

- There are a lot of groups and people that do this, many of them aren't even Christian. They don't believe in God but hey, they are all about teaching, helping their fellow man, and they love each other.

The Christian life is much more demanding than that ...

What is the Christian life ... here are some descriptions

- *Love the Lord with all heart, mind, soul, and strength ...*

Take that seriously for one moment and then ask this question...

... **"have I really ever done that for one single day in my life."**

- *Be holy as I am holy ...*

Holiness is really easy for people who have never tried it ...

... But if you tried for one week to live with

- absolutely purity in all your thoughts,
- absolute honesty in all your words,
- to live with every action motivated for the glory of God and the blessings of other people

The point I'm trying to make is that the Christian life is more demanding than we think ...

... and secondly, we overestimate the human capacity to achieve it

[We actually think we have it in ourselves, in our own strength, to live lives of holiness.]

We have a deeper problem than just lack of knowledge, lack of involvement, and a lack of relationship.

This is why we are going to spend the next 13 Sunday mornings in Paul's letter to the Ephesian Christians.

Paul begins with 3 full chapters emphasizing all that **God has done for us** in Christ Jesus ...

... and Paul ends with 3 full chapters telling us all that we can **do** and **become** because of what God has done for us.

Notice the order...

There is a danger in starting with **all the "doing" stuff** before knowing **who we are** in Christ.

You may have been brought up in a church where you went away every week discouraged because all you heard was ...

... what you needed **to do more** of, and what you needed to **stop doing**.

You left every Sunday thinking, how am I going to do this ... I've been trying and I can't do it ...

Here in Ephesians in the first three chapters every verb (with only one exception) every verb is in the **indicative**...

... Paul keeps hammering home: this is who you are, this is who you are ...

... then in chapter 4-6 Paul transitions to the imperative verb **Do this, behave this way, act this way** ...

Read Ephesians 1:1-11

Notice “all spiritual blessings”

The word “Blessing” in the New Testament, doesn’t mean what we think it means today.

[We say, ‘bless your heart’.] ... more of a verbal pat on the back.

But here in the New Testament “blessing” is closer to “shalom.”

Blessing means **every delight and benefit you would ever need or long for.**

... and Paul says that if you are a Christian then you have already been blessed with every spiritual blessing.

To better understand who we are, we need to ask four questions.

- How do we get every spiritual blessing?
- What is every spiritual blessing?
- How do we get every spiritual blessing?
- How do you know you have every spiritual blessing?

1. How Do We Get Every Spiritual Blessing?

Becoming a Christian doesn’t **just mean** we

- have a king to obey (though we do)
- an example to follow (though we do)
- or even a Savior to be grateful for (and we are grateful for Jesus Christ).

It’s all those but more ...

Notice these phrases in the text:

- In Christ
- In Him
- In the Beloved
- In Him we have redemption
- In Him we have an inheritance

When you are saved, you're are put **IN HIM** so that everything He has is yours!

To be IN CHRIST is to be **united** with Christ.

This word “united” is a marital word ...

I am united ... married to Heather. All that I have is hers, and that she has is mine ...

What does it mean to be “united with Christ?”

Paul says in Romans:

⁵ For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall also be united with him in a resurrection like his (Rom 6:5)

“united in his death” ... here is what that means

When you are redeemed God then treats you as if you had hung on the cross and you had paid the full penalty for sin yourself.

... you are united with Christ in His death

Paul also says “united in his resurrection” ...

When you are redeemed God sees you a having victory of sin, death, and hell.

... We receive every spiritual blessing because we are:

- In Christ
- In Him
- In the Beloved
- In Him we have redemption
- In Him we have an inheritance

Every spiritual blessing is given to us because they belong to Christ and we are in Him.

2. Why Do We Need Every Spiritual Blessing?

Look at why and what Paul says God has done for us:

- He chose us so that we should be **holy and blameless**
- He predestined us for **adoption**
- In Him we have **redemption**

We need every spiritual blessing because we are unholy, we have shame and blame, we are fatherless, we are unredeemed

This is what the Word of God says about us.

... and we subconsciously we know it ...

... I mean **unless you are a sociopath** you know you aren't always the smartest person in the room.

... you know you aren't what you **should** be ... **ought** to be.

On some level everyone of us knows that we are lacking ...

... we know we are insufficient ...

But what do we do?

We try to **compensate**. We try to **reassure** ourselves that we are complete ...

So, we work are at trying:

- to be beautiful
- Smart
- Powerful
- A good parent
- A devout religious person

We realize we are lacking, and so we set out on the task of trying to fix ourselves ... and we turn to all these other things ...

... we try to achieve in all these things (instead of Christ)

... and these things don't satisfy, they beat us down, they enslave us.

In ministry I've observed ministers and noticed:

- Usually if a minister will be **sad** if he isn't doing well ...
- If there is some person hindering his ministry—he will get **mad**
- If the minister feels that his ministry is being threatened, he will become **anxious**

These are the ordinary common emotions for anyone to have in those difficult situations ...

... but if the minister is **devastated** when things aren't going well, or gets **furious or enraged** when someone is hindering the ministry or **paralyzed with fear** when threatened ...

That's an "over the top" "out of control" reaction

This is usually indicative that the minister is trying to use ministry as a way of **covering** himself ... **compensating, reassuring, fixing** himself ...

That easily translates over into everyone's life.

- If things are going well and you are devastated on an emotional rollercoaster ...
- If you feel that someone is hindering your path and there are moments, you become enraged by it—you just flip out.
- Or if you feel threatened and paralyzed with fear

You aren't serving God ... you are trying to cover yourself

... you are trying to assure yourself, in your own strength, that you are OK

Truth

If you love anything more than God then that thing is your real God and it will **dominate** you, it will **wear you out**, it will **drive you into** the ground ...

Here is why this happens ... you need to be redeemed ...

You need every spiritual blessing, because when you have every spiritual blessing ...

... you will so look to Christ for significance and meaning ... not yourself or your earthly achievements.

3. How Do We Receive Every Spiritual Blessing?

Notice these words in the text:

- Chose
- Predestined
- Blessed
- Lavished upon

Now, notice the pronoun that follows every one of those words; **us**

US ... that is very important.

If I see Jesus forgiving, loving, serving, dying only for others ... that crushes me.

... but if I see Jesus forgiving, loving, serving, and dying FOR ME ... IN MY PLACE ...

... that means that Jesus has taken away FROM ME the penalty for what's wrong with me ...

... that means that Jesus has come FOR ME –and I am accepted

I am:

- Chosen ... and loved.
- Predestined ... because I'm loved
- I am loved and Blessed
- I am so loved that these spiritual blessings are Lavished upon ME

My sin and shame are forever gone therefore I don't need to be the smartest person in the room.

- I don't have to make myself significant,
- I don't need to find comfort in power
- I don't need to find reassurance in achievement

I am chosen, I am predestined, I am blessed, God has lavished upon me his blessings ... **I am loved by God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

And when I am eternally loved by God, I am forever free!

4. How Do We Know We Have Received Every Spiritual Blessing?

There is this wonderful phrase in verse 6.

6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Eph 1:6)

That phrase, it is also found in verses 12 and 14.

How do we know we have received every spiritual blessing ...?

... you don't just believe it in your head ... it is glorious to you.

That's how you know you have redemption... It is glorious to you; it captures your heart ...

... you want to sing about it

... you rejoice in it.

But this *“praise of His glorious grace”* is not just the way we know we have received every spiritual blessing ...

... this is how those spiritual blessings work their way into our lives.

The story of redemption is the story of one (Jesus) who gave his life to save others.

This idea of someone giving their life to save someone else is powerful ...

We find this theme in history, in books, and even in life

... and—it's powerful.

... it's powerful because this is exactly what Jesus Christ has done

Back in January 1982, Air Florida flight 90 was leaving the DC airport when it hit the 14th street bridge and plunged into the icy waters of the Potomac river ...

By the time the rescue helicopters arrived the tail was the only thing still out of the water and the only person in the water that was moving, and alert was a man named Arlin Williams.

... They dropped the cable stretcher down to him, but instead of him getting on he dove down inot the water and pulled someone up and put them on the stretcher.

... He did this five times

... when the dropped the stretcher the six-time Arlin was nowhere to be seen ... he had drowned.

The only survivors from that crash was those five people.

There is no more powerful narrative ... no greater moral beauty that the story of someone giving their life to save someone else ...

... That's even in Harry Potter ...

Harry asked Dumbledore why Voldemort couldn't touch him, and Dumbledore said, "Because your mother gave her life for you."

There is no more powerful narrative ... no greater moral beauty that the story of someone giving their life to save someone, or free someone else...

And even further not to just read about somebody doing that for somebody else ...

...To know that Jesus Christ came to earth and has done that for you so that you will have eternal glory and love ...

When you realize that Jesus has come for you, that He has died to save you ... that will change the very center of your life and heart.

... and when you embrace that the things that you used to find captivating will no longer **drive you** and **capture you**

... I said, His glorious grace will capture you!

... and when that happens YOU WILL CHANGE!

(Eph 1:3-6) ³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

That is powerful!

Pause ...

Give your heart to Him.