

## Sermon Notes: *Our Blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)*

**Intro:** Here we see that prayer or—more than that—praise is at the heart of the Christian life. God delivers us in answer to our prayer and we give God the glory with praise! Christian truth rightly understood must lead to doxology. Paul thought so! Most of his letters include a hymn of praise near the beginning. Examine them and see how they break down into two basic parts: doctrine and duty or “faith and life.” Before Paul gets to our duty, however, he reverences God for all he has done for us in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1 is the outstanding example. Verses 3-14 are one long sentence of praise in the Greek NT. This chapter resists a tidy outline but a general Trinitarian framework may be seen: God the Father is the origin of our blessings, God the Son the place of our blessings, and God the Holy Spirit the means of our blessings. Verse 3 summarizes all. *Why must we praise God?*

**#1: Our Father’s Love.** Don’t move too quickly! Unwrap this verse slowly like a much anticipated Christmas gift savoring each tear of the paper! Note! The Lord Jesus Christ is “ours” and God has blessed us “in Christ.” Paul is writing to believers who have Christ with the empty hand of faith so that he is in them and they in him (cf. Col. 1:27:3:3). A living intimate union exists between Christ and his saints. They are in him as the branches are in the vine; they are members of the body of which he is the head. When we become Christians we do not simply receive a “benefits package” (forgiveness, etc.). We receive Christ. We are united to him by the Spirit. This union guarantees that God is our Father just as certainly as he is Christ’s. God contemplates us in his Son, embraces us in his Son, loves us in his Son! No greater blessing exists! Let us unpack this further: Consider who it is who loves us. It is the love of God who is all-sufficient and infinitely satisfied with himself and all his glorious perfections (Acts 17:25). God had no need to make himself happy by loving us. Yet he created us and joined us to Jesus so that he might seek not merely his but our happiness—and supremely so! Consider what kind of love is the Father’s love. It is *eternal* given to us in Christ before the world. It is *free*. God loves us only because he chose to do so not because he had to because of anything in us. It is *unchangeable* and fixed and thus the Father shows his people infinite patience and forbearance. God loves us as he loves his Son to whom we are joined. This is one facet of the “grace and peace” of vs. 2. Cast your cares on him because he cares for you (1 Pet 5:7).

**#2: Our Spiritual Blessings.** Our Father has blessed us with “every spiritual blessing.” “Blessed” is past tense to assure every Christian that he is already in possession of all the unspeakable blessings which Christ his Savior bought for him by his blood and righteousness! Let’s unwrap these blessings further with two questions: What are spiritual blessings? They are spiritual in contrast to material. They are spiritual because they are enjoyed by the indwelling Spirit whose presence Christ purchased by his obedient suffering and death. God gives much needed material blessings (Phil 4:19/shelter, food, health, safety, etc.). But these are temporal whereas our spiritual blessings are eternal, which makes them greater. The material blessings believers enjoy vary but every believer (young/old etc.) has every spiritual blessing in Christ. What are our spiritual blessings? 3-14 itemizes important ones and we will examine them however we may list three briefly: *Election.* God selected out of the human race, foreseen as fallen, specific sinners and decreed to send Jesus to die for their sins and to send the Holy Spirit to work faith in them and join them to Jesus (cf. Jn 6:37-38; 10:11-15; Eph 2:8). How great is God’s grace to us in Jesus! *Adoption.* Each and every sinner who seeks salvation from God’s judgment through simple faith in Jesus’ blood shed for sins (Rom 3:23-25) may be assured that

God has given him the right to be called his child (Jn 1:12). We may present our requests to God knowing he receives us just as tenderly as he did Jesus (cf. Mk. 14:36; Rom. 8:15).

*Redemption.* It is one thing to receive forgiveness from another person and another from God through the payment of Christ's blood. Here is "peace" of mind no amount of money can buy! Let us take these gems and study them and marvel at them regularly (Ps 103:2).

**#3: Our Heavenly Blessings.** This phrase is important to Paul since he uses it 5x in this letter (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). He says that following his death for sins, Jesus was raised and seated in the heavenly places (1:20) but also that believers have been similarly raised with Jesus (2:6; cf. Col 3:1-3). Note well! Paul refers not simply to a future consummation but also a present reality! Jesus' heavenly life is in us now. We live in two realms: the kingdoms of this world and heaven. The heavenly reality is not seen but known within through the indwelling Spirit as we walk by faith in what God says he has made us in Christ. This inner life is secure and it strengthens us for trials here. We live in two places: in the world and in Christ. Christ has been raised to glory but so have we in him. Our blessings are secure. Are you in Christ? Acknowledge your need and be reconciled to God by faith in his blood. But also walk in him by faith. We are citizens of heaven and God's children.