

**THE BIG IDEA:** The blessings of grace produce hearts filled with praise.

### The Take-Off

This morning, we're continuing our series in Ephesians called "ONE" and let's remember kind of what we said last week is the overarching theme of the series: Everything we need comes from One.

If you remember from last week, we talked about how there really is only one choice, and that is that we need to choose Jesus, because HE IS THE ONE! Everything we need comes from what we've chosen to do with Him.

Over 30 times in Ephesians, Paul talks about being in Christ, with Christ. Someone has counted as many as 216 times in NT where the authors used that language compared to only 3 times the term "Christian" is used.

Obviously, the relationship is much more important than the label we've all chosen to describe that relationship.

Lots of people would say they're a Christian, but an examination of their lives might reveal that they aren't really living the close relationship that the phrases "in Christ" and "With Christ" would imply.

Remember - everything we read about in this letter that Paul wrote to the believers in Ephesus was written to those who were in Christ.

This morning, we'll be reading about a ton of blessings that are yours - in Christ.

And being in Christ - while it sounds really religious - is a relationship of total dependence, like a branch is to a tree.

So if we're attached to the tree, we're in Christ, and that means that everything the tree has is coming our way, and when the tree feeds the branch, that is called a blessing, especially for the branch!

We're going to read about a lot of blessings over the next 12 verses, and so to kind of get us thinking about blessings, I want you to take a few minutes and kind of make a top 5 list of blessings in your life, just right there in your seat, or at home as you're watching this online.

What are some that you came up with?

It's interesting to hear the blessings, and as I was preparing this week, my guess was that I might not hear people say a lot of the blessings that we're getting ready to read about.

What I mean is that we typically here "blessing" and think of things like money, family, possessions, opportunities. But as I read this passage, you're not going to hear any of those words. Listen for the blessings Paul mentions as I read.

There's a lot in there, isn't there? To help us kind of navigate through it, we're going to lump a lot of the blessings into one of 3 broader blessings, kind of like blessing buckets to help us not lose any of them.

Just to kind of keep any of us from getting more lost, let me just set the stage with some general observations about what we just read and then we'll dig down a little deeper.

First, we have it all - EVERY spiritual blessing (v. 3)

Second, we find these blessings in a place and a person (v. 3)

- in heavenly realms and in Christ
- that's pretty critical, because we usually look at earthly stuff to gauge how blessed we are and we look to ourselves to act more appreciative, be more happy, etc.
- but we'll never find these blessings thinking like the world or looking at ourselves
- look up, see Jesus, and be blessed

Third, here is a quick list of the blessings we have: in Christ, we've been chosen, destined, adopted, and we've been given grace, redemption, forgiveness, revelation, a guarantee and an inheritance.

We are blessed.

So let's start walking through 3 pretty big buckets of blessings:

### 1. We've been selected by the Father

- a. Sometimes we shy away from what we perceive to be very difficult truths, but we miss so much when we do.
- b. These 4 verses are the perfect example of that.
- c. There are some pretty big theological concepts in here - election and predestination - and it's way too easy to get caught up in terms and miss truth.
- d. Let's try not to do that.
- e. Some would say that you and I have no choice in salvation while others would say that you and I have a choice.
- f. I think the greater truth in this passage is that God had a choice
  - One, he chose us

- Two, he chose us for a purpose (to be holy and blameless)
- g. If you've ever been the last one picked - or the one not even really picked but taken by default - God isn't like that.
- h. He didn't get stuck with you during the selection process - he chose you.
- i. Why are marriages so fantastic? Because 2 people have chosen each other out of everybody they know.
- j. What else does God selected us mean for us?
- k. He chose us to be adopted as sons (v. 5)
- l. Actually, the text reads that he predestined us to be adopted, and again, here's where people can really miss the powerful truth because they're debating terms
- m. God is 100% against Christians just barely getting by.
- n. He didn't choose you so that you could attend church and participate in cold religious works.
- o. He chose you so that he could know you.
- p. In Christ, you are predestined to live in a father-son or father-daughter relationship with God.
- q. Apart from what we've done - actually, in spite of what we've done - we have been selected by the Father!
- r. He has walked into the orphanage where you and I have sat for years without hope and without family and he has changed our lives forever with 3 words: "You are mine."
- s. Our response to being selected by the Father? PRAISE! (v. 6)

## 2. We've been set free by the Son

- a. God has taken great steps to set us free
- b. I think it's fair to say that the Father doesn't want his kids in prison
- c. Now, I don't have any kids in prison, but if I did I can tell you 2 things:
  - One, they would still be my children
  - Two, our relationship would suffer
- d. How sad would it be if we were God's children but he only had visitation rights?
- e. And yet so many of us have lived that, haven't we?
- f. Anytime we try to earn our redemption - and usually we do that by trying to prove that God made a great choice when he selected us - we run the risk of getting stuck
- g. And that's a shame, because look at all that God has done to set us free:
  - He paid a high price - we're redeemed by his blood (v. 7)
  - He didn't count the cost - he lavished us with his grace (v. 8)
  - He did it on purpose - you and I may wonder if he knew what he was doing, but he didn't (all wisdom and understanding in v. 8)
- h. We've been set free from our sin, but also from confusion about what happens next
- i. Verse 9 says that he's made known to us the mystery of his will, and verse 11 says that we can know that everything is going to work out in keeping with his will
- j. Jesus can seem like a mystery, but he isn't mysterious
- k. He wants to be known, and makes himself known
- l. We're set free to know him, not just on occasion when he visits us in our prison, but always as heirs with Jesus (v. 11 says that in Jesus we were made co-heirs)
- m. Our response to being set free by the Son? PRAISE! (v. 12)

## 3. We've been sealed by the Spirit

- a. We're selected by the Father and set free by the Son, and finally we're sealed by the Spirit
- b. To really understand the seal, you've got to understand what seals meant back in the day when Paul wrote this
  - Seals were a sign of the genuineness of a document
  - When goods were transported, seals identified their owner and protected them from theft
- c. Look at the blessings that the Spirit's seals gives us
  - It acts as a guarantee, like earnest money that holds a house until it can be purchased later
  - God has made a down payment now for something you and I will receive later - an inheritance!
- d. Something wonderful happens when we are set free by the Son - we're sealed by the Spirit
- e. Basically, we are sealed - marked - by the Spirit as the rightful heirs of all that God has given us in Christ

- f. Every blessing - being chosen, destined, adopted, and being given grace, redemption, forgiveness, revelation, a guarantee - it's all ours in Christ and the Holy Spirit working in us guarantees it
- g. This is critical, not so we can pound our fists into some table and demand our inheritance, but so that we won't walk away from our inheritance
- h. The Holy Spirit seals us and protects us from us
- i. God wants us and so he seals us so that he will have us
- j. In 1758, a man named Robert Robinson wrote the hymn Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing which contained this 4th verse:

**O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love;  
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,  
Seal it for Thy courts above.**

- k. And our response to being sealed - marked - by the Spirit? Again, PRAISE! (v. 14)

#### The Landing

Have you noticed the common theme throughout this section of Scripture? It's ALL GOD!!

God the Father selects, God the Son sets free, God the Spirit seals.

And the only natural response to his grace in our lives that would work like that is PRAISE!

Today's Big Idea sums that up: The blessings of grace produce hearts filled with praise.

As we wrap up this second week in the ONE series, remember that everything we need comes from ONE.

Every blessing we just read about is found in Jesus, and practically that means that all the blessings we wrote down earlier - our Top 5 list - come from one of these buckets of blessings.

Being selected, set free, and sealed allows me to live with praise in every situation because the blessings of grace produce hearts filled with praise.

So let's wrap this morning up in prayer, giving God praise for blessing us beyond measure.