

INTRODUCTION

Today we begin a series of message from the wonderful book of Ephesians. We’re going to learn a lot about God’s plan for your life as we study the book of Ephesians. You don’t have to be around me very long to realize I do not believe in luck. Most people who have been around me for a while stop saying, “Good luck,” or “You were just lucky.” You never find the word *luck* in the Bible. Instead, I believe in the blessing of God. You’re not lucky to be here today, you are blessed to be here today.

A lot of Christians are like a wasp. When a wasp first comes out of the egg, it is larger at that time than at any time in its life. It continually shrinks in size until it dies. When a lot of people are first born to the kingdom of God—when they are first saved—they are so excited, it seems like they are closer to God at that moment than they are at any other time. That’s a real problem. Ephesians is a book about how to grow as a Christian, how to increase your intimacy with God. It’s not how high you jump when you get saved; it’s how straight you walk when you come down. This book is a guide book for growth.

Several years ago, John MacArthur, that great Bible preacher from the West Coast, preached through Ephesians. He said his church was totally revolutionized when he preached from Ephesians, because Christians began to wake up and understand who were in Jesus. The book of Ephesians is basically divided into two simple sections. It has six chapters. The first three chapters give us our position in Christ, who we are; the last three chapters tell us about our practice in Christ, what we should do. The first three chapters tell us what we believe; the last three chapters tell us how we ought to behave. The first three chapters deal with doctrine; the last three chapters deal with our duty.

The one thing I like about the epistles in the Bible is you don’t have to go to the end of the letter to see who wrote it. The author of the letter always gives his name first—Paul, in this case. Let me tell you a little bit about Paul in a way you might appreciate where he is coming from. Paul was raised in a very wealthy, influential family. We infer that, because his father was wealthy enough to purchase Roman citizenship, which was very expensive. Paul was sent to the finest schools in Jerusalem. He studied under the master teacher, Gamelio, and when he graduated, he was immediately employed in Judaism. You might say he worked for a company called, “Jews R Us,” or something like that. He was a rising young executive in that company, but they began to get some competition from an upstart company called, “Real Christianity.” “Real Christianity” began to grow and it was a competitor to “Jews R Us.” And so it became Paul’s job to try to subvert “Real Christianity.”

One day Paul was on a business trip to Damascus, his purpose on this business trip was to arrest and persecute some of the employees of “Real Christianity.” But, on the road to Damascus the founder, President and CEO of “Real Christianity” suddenly appeared before him. (CEO stands for “Chief Eternal Officer.”) The Lord Jesus appeared to him on the road and said, “Paul, why are you fighting me? In fact, Paul, I want to recruit you to my company, and I want you to head up a new division called, “IMG: the International Ministry to Gentiles.” I want you to go to the Gentile world and preach salvation by grace.”

So, Paul, at about age 35, made a tremendous mid-life career change. He began working for this fledgling company, “Real Christianity.” Of course, his former company hated him. In fact, they set out to put him to death. You talk about a corporate headhunter—they were really after his head. They wanted to cut it off. So for the next 20 years or so, while he was trying to get this business going, his former company was out to arrest him and to have him executed. Finally, they succeeded in having him brought before the Roman authorities, and Paul ended up in prison. We can guess he was probably about 55 years old. Some of you may be able to relate to that. A lot of us have the idea that when you are about 55, you ought to really be thinking about retirement. You feel like you probably should have arrived at a place of success. Here’s Paul in prison at the age of 55 but he was such a positive Christian, he made his prison cell his home office. From that prison cell in Rome he began to write letters to the Christians in the churches. He wrote this letter to the church at Ephesus while he was in prison. You need to know that because it is so full of joy and good things, he’s in prison when he writes it. He also wrote to the church at Philippi and the church at Colosse.

Paul begins by talking about all the blessings that are ours as Christians.

Ephesians 1:1. Chapter 1, verse 1. “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

1. THE SAINTS WHO RECEIVED THE BLESSING

Notice six things about our blessings. Remember, you are not lucky if you are a child of God, you are blessed. Number one, notice the saints who received the blessing. Paul says in verse 1, “I am writing this letter to the saints.” Who are they? This is exactly what the Bible says, “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” There is a song that comes out of New Orleans that says, “When the saints go marching in...Lord, I want to be in that number.” If you are a born again child, you are in that number. You are a saint.

We have so much confusion about saints, because of the practice and doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, which determined several hundred years ago a person could achieve sainthood if they had been dead over a hundred years, and if they were still venerated—especially if they were a martyr—and if they had performed at least two miracles, then the Roman Catholic Church could officially bestow sainthood upon them. That’s why a lot of Bibles may say “St. Luke,” “St. Matthew,” “St. Mark.” That’s why some of you may wear a St. Christopher medal around your neck, because throughout history the Roman Catholic Church has said we call these dead Christians saints. The only problem with that is the Bible never teaches it. Instead, the Bible teaches we who are alive, believers, *we’re* the saints. You don’t have to die to be a saint. There are only two kinds of people on earth, the saints and the ain’ts, those who are Christians and those who aren’t. So, this promise is to you as a saint.

2. THE SOURCE OF OUR BLESSING

The second thing is the source of our blessing. Where does it come from? Verse 3 says, “God

and Father.” God, our Father, is the source of all of these blessings. You are wealthy. Let me borrow your imagination for a moment. Imagine, tomorrow you go out to your mailbox or you go down to the post office and you find a letter postmarked “New York City.” You open a certified letter and from the letterhead it was written by some New York City law firm that has more partners than you can hardly fit on a page. The letter says your great aunt (whom you barely remember from family reunions when you were a kid) has died and left you the sole heir of her estate. And, you are thinking, “That’s nice!” But, then the next paragraph says her estate is valued at more than twelve million dollars. If you received a letter like that and you were convinced it wasn’t a hoax, wouldn’t it change everything about your life? Let’s face it: It would change your lifestyle and the way you think about everything. One moment you are saying, “How am I going to pay my bills?” The next you are saying, “How am I going to invest my money?” It changes your whole outlook on life. From the time that will was probated and from the time the letter was typed until you opened it, you were a millionaire, you just didn’t know it. It was only after you read the letter that you realized, “I am an heir for 12 million dollars!” You were already a millionaire, you just discovered it.

Look at Ephesians 1:18. This is my prayer for you during this study of Ephesians. Paul says in Ephesians 1:18, “I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” Look at that phrase “the riches of his glorious inheritance,” because God is your Father, you are an heir of God. Now, you may not be acting like it, and you may not realize how rich you are spiritually. It’s like opening that letter and saying, “I’m rich!” My prayer for you is during this study you will open your eyes and you will say, “I am spiritually wealthy, because I am an heir of the Father.” Some of your eyes are closed to that. I guarantee, if you have discovered it, if you *will* discover it, if you will open your eyes to it, you will be so excited you will have to backslide to go to sleep at night. That’s how thrilled you will be about it.

When the Rockefellers die, I don’t get excited, because my name is not Rockefeller, but God is your Father if you are a Christian. I need to say that, because there is the heresy of Universalism in our world today that teaches God is the father of everybody. *The Bible does not teach that.* The Bible teaches God is the father of those who are his children who believe in Jesus. Jesus said, “As many as received him to them he gave the power to become the sons of God even to those who believe on his name.” Jesus was speaking to some very religious—but lost—people called Pharisees one time and he said, “You are of your father, the devil.” You are in one of two families: You are either in the family of God or the family of the evil one. If you are a child of God, you are an heir of the father, and it is all in the family.

When I was a child in Vacation Bible School, we recited the Pledge to the Christian flag. I wasn’t smart enough to know that pledge contained an heretical statement. We used to say, “I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands. One brotherhood, uniting all MANKIND in service and love.” That’s how I learned it and as a kid I didn’t know there was anything wrong with that, but I am glad somewhere along the line, somebody realized it was not true. For twenty years or so, it has been corrected. Now we say, “I pledge allegiance to the Christian flag and to the Savior for whose kingdom it stands. One brotherhood uniting all CHRISTIANS in service and love.” That is a very important distinction. God is the father of those who have been born again into his family. He’s the source of our

blessing.

About 12 years ago, both my parents died of cancer and I inherited what they left—including their bills. But what remained after we paid all the hospital expenses was divided between me and my older sister and my younger brother. I took what little part I had and invested it immediately in a college fund for our girls so one day when they go to college some of the money will come from my parents as part of an inheritance. Many of you understand the true meaning of an inheritance. Spiritually speaking, God the Father has already willed to you every spiritual blessing. That’s the source of it.

3. THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE BLESSING

Notice thirdly, the spirituality of it. Look at verse 3 again, “every spiritual blessing.” Some of your eyes lit up when I started talking about twelve million dollars, because that’s something you can sink your teeth into. “What would I do if I had twelve million dollars? I’d probably put it on my Sears bill as far as it would go. I like to even think about that!” I have news for you. Your blessing is even better than financial blessing. The Bible says it is a spiritual blessing. Your greatest needs are spiritual needs. You have physical needs. You have financial needs. You have emotional needs. But, your greatest needs are spiritual needs, because that’s what Jesus taught.

Do you remember when Jesus was in a house teaching and they brought a paralyzed man to him, but the house was so crowded they didn’t have room to bring him in? They went up on the roof, dug a hole in it, and lowered the man down in front of Jesus. Here was a paralyzed man, obviously sick. He had physical needs, but Jesus looked at him and saw his greatest need. The very first thing Jesus said to him wasn’t, “Rise up and walk.” He said, “Your sins be forgiven you.” Because Jesus looked at a paralyzed man and said, “Your greatest need is spiritual.” Your greatest need is not material, not financial, not emotional. Your greatest need is spiritual need. You need forgiveness. You need grace. You need inner peace and those are the things God promises. They are spiritual lessons.

Some time ago there a British mathematician set out to determine how many grains of sand are on this planet. I don’t know how he did it, but he came up with a number: 10^{28} (100,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000) a ten with 28 zeros. That is a number so large we don’t even have a name for it! Why am I telling you this? We are talking about spiritual blessings and in Psalm 139:17-18, the Bible says, “How precious to me are your thoughts, Oh God! How vast is the sum of them! Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand.” The Bible says, “God loves you so much his thoughts for you every day are more in number than ten to the twenty-eighth power.” Now, THAT’S a spiritual blessing. You cannot put a price tag on it. And the greatest needs you and I possess are spiritual needs. He says, “I’m going to bless you with every spiritual blessing.” We’re saints. God is our source. There are spiritual blessings.

4. THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE BLESSING

Number four. What about the sufficiency of the blessing? How good is it? I know some of you are saying, “I know that one of these days, bless God, when I go to Heaven when I cross that

shore then I'm going to be blessed in Heaven." Paul is not talking about something that is going to happen to you in the future. He's talking about something that has *already* happened to you. He says in verse 3, (past tense) "Praise be to God the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ who has blessed us." It has already been accomplished. It says, "*every* spiritual blessing." When you look at the fact that it is past tense and you look at the fact that it is *every* spiritual blessing that's how sufficient it is.

Somebody once asked me if I'd ever received a second blessing. I said, "I sure have. I've received a second, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth I've received every blessing from God." God doesn't give you blessings on down payment. He doesn't give you one now and say, "Later on when you grow as a Christian, you can earn that other blessing." No. Every blessing you'll ever have is available to you right now! God says, "I've already blessed you with it." You may not be appropriating it, but it's there.

Years ago, a man saved his money and sold all his possessions to buy passage on a steamship from Europe to the United States. He spent all his money on the ticket and he didn't have any money for food. So, for the entire voyage he walked around with a bit of bread and cheese he had brought with him, but the bread became moldy and the cheese grew old and he was starving. About a day before they were to dock in New York City, he finally went up to a ship steward and said, "Please, I just have to have something to eat. I'm about to starve to death!" The steward said, "Let me see your ticket," and the man showed him his ticket. The steward said, "Listen, friend. This ticket entitled you to every meal that has been served on this ship all the way over." The man just didn't know it. When God gave you salvation, when you were born again, he said, "Here. Every spiritual blessing that you will ever receive is available to you right now. Pull your chair up to the table and start eating it." Every spiritual blessing—not one thing that love can give has been withheld from you.

Let me give you an example. Turn to Romans 8:32. I want you to understand what blessings are available to you as a believer. "He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us *all things*?" God is saying, "I have already given you the most precious possession I have ever had. I've given you my Son, Jesus. And because I have given you the most precious possession I have, anything after that is a small matter." Friend, God has already blessed you by giving you his Son to die for you and so he says, "Anything else you need is just icing on the cake. That's simple."

Twenty-two years ago I saved my money for two or three months and I went down to a jewelry store in downtown Birmingham, Alabama to buy a half-carat engagement ring for my bride-to-be. I finally paid for it, put it in one of these little fuzzy boxes and on a Friday night gave it to my girlfriend. I said, "Wilt thou?" and she said, "Yes!" And I wilted right there. I gave her the ring and she took it and put it on and said, "Yes, I'll marry you." Now, wouldn't it have been stupid if I had said to her at that moment "Now, Cindy, you can have that ring, but you can't have that little fuzzy box. I want it back." Wouldn't that have been foolish? Of course, I didn't say that. If I had paid for the diamond, surely you could have the box. That's what Romans, 8:32 is all about. God said, "I've already given you the diamond of my Son and anything else that you want, anything else you need it's just the fuzzy box that the diamond came in. I'll give you every spiritual blessing." That's the sufficiency of it.

5. THE SPHERE OF THE BLESSING

Let’s look at number five. What about the sphere of the blessing? Where does it take place? What is the location of it? What’s the sphere of our blessing? I know there are still some of you who are not convinced and you are saying, “If I am blessed, I am sure not enjoying it. Where can I go to find these blessings? Because I don’t feel all that blessed.” Frankly, some of you don’t look all that blessed. But, those blessings are available to you. You just have to know where to find them. The Bible says in Ephesians 1:3, “He has blessed us in heavenly realms.” That’s not talking about Heaven. It’s the word “heavenlies.” Paul uses that phrase in Ephesians three times. Ephesians 2:6. If you want to know where you are spiritually he says, “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the *heavenly realms*.” That’s not something that’s GOING to happen. It is in the past tense. Right now you are seated with Christ in the “heavenly realms.” The other time Paul uses this phrase is in Ephesians 6:12 when he talks about spiritual warfare. “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against wickedness in the heavenly realms.” That’s the third time he uses it. What in the world? (I use that term intentionally) is the “heavenly realms?” I’m not talking about going to Heaven when you die. Some people think when they die and go to Heaven, all their needs will be met. The truth is when you die and go to Heaven, you won’t have any needs. But, right now your needs will be met in the “heavenly realms.” There is an invisible, spiritual dimension that exists around us right now. This invisible, spiritual dimension is superimposed upon our physical dimension we are looking at right now. When I taught on angels I went into this a bit, but these “heavenly realms,” these “heavenlies” are where angels and demons operate. You can’t always see it with your physical eye, but it’s there. And, if you don’t believe it, let me use an illustration from electronics.

There’s another world right up here on this platform and I won’t have trouble convincing you of it. Can you see it? There are three tired, old ex-quarterbacks talking about the ballgame tonight, “Who’s going to win?” Over here are Andy Griffith, Barney and Opie, do you see them? Over here there is a cartoon. Do you see that? Over here is Robert Schuller preaching. Do you see that? You say, “No I can’t see it but I know how I could see it—all I have to do is get a television and tune it in because those waves are right here.” The same is true with radio waves—there are all kinds of different music up here right now. All you need is a radio to tune it in. I hope none of you are tuned in to a radio right now, but if you had one you could tune it in. That doesn’t sound fantastic to you at all, does it? Of course not. But if I could go back in history and bring Mark Twain here and told him what I just told you about an invisible electronic world, he would think I was crazy. Right? He couldn’t relate to it. The same is true spiritually. There is an invisible dimension around us, and only when you tune in to JESUS can you really understand our blessings are in the “heavenlies.”

The problem is a lot of people are so plugged in to the “earthlies,” to this physical world, they never get to live in the “heavenlies.” But it’s there and that’s where God operates. You say, “Now, is that taught elsewhere in the Bible” It’s taught throughout the Bible. One example is from the Old Testament, when Elijah was standing there with his servant facing the Syrian army at Dothan. Elijah said, “Don’t be afraid. They that be with us are more than they that be with them.” And the servant said, “You’re crazy, Elijah. There are just two of us and there are thousands of soldiers.” Elijah knew that there were the “heavenly realms” and he could see it but

his servant couldn't so he prayed a prayer like this, "Lord, open his eyes." The Bible says, "Suddenly, the servant's eyes were opened and he could see that the mountain was filled with horses and chariots of fire. The Lord's angelic army was there." Where? In the "heavenlies." One moment he couldn't see it and the next moment he could. My friend, if God were to open your eyes right now to the "heavenlies" to the "heavenly realms" you would see amazing things. And, the Bible says, "That's where your blessings are in heavenly realms."

6. THE SECURITY OF OUR BLESSINGS

What about the security of the blessing? How secure are your blessings? It's interesting for those of you who have ever invested, you might get a statement that lists all of your securities. I chuckle every time I see that, because our real security is not in investments; it's not in T-bills; it's not in stocks; it's not in bonds...Our security according to this verse is in Christ. That's the last part of verse 3, "spiritual blessing in Christ." There are a lot of people who are not secure in their salvation. I am so glad we are secure in our salvation. There are a lot of people who don't know whether they are going to heaven or not. I think some of them are going to jump into Heaven and are going to slam the door and say, "Whew! I made it. Thank God!" Their security is in Heaven. Don't put your security in Heaven. The angels fell from Heaven. My security is not in Heaven. My security is in Christ. Paul uses that phrase, "in Christ" 140 times. That means the blessings we receive are secure only in Jesus.

CONCLUSION

Miss Bertha Smith was a long time Southern Baptist missionary in China. She taught and preached until she was almost 100 years old. Everybody called her "Miss Bertha." I saw a video with her teaching once that really blessed me. She was talking about being "in Christ." And, she quoted John 14:20, where Jesus said, "I am in the Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." Miss Bertha had a simple way of teaching. She used object lessons and a flannel board. In this case she had a big box with a top on it. The box had a sign on the side reading, "God, the Father." She opened up the box and brought out a smaller box. On smaller box it read, "Jesus Christ." But, then she opened that box and pulled out an even smaller box that read, "Me." She was illustrating that I am in Christ and Christ is in God, and she said, "The only way you'll ever get me out of Christ is to get Christ out of God, which is utterly impossible. I was already blessed. Then she did something that really lit my fire—she took the box that said, "Me" and took the top off and lifted out a smaller box which read, "Jesus Christ," "Because," she said, "Christ is in you; you are in Christ; and Christ is in God." That's what I call *security*!

You are rich! You are an heir of God and I want you to walk out of here today acting like a blood-bought, royal child of God because of your spiritual blessings!

OUTLINE

The blessings that are ours as Christians:

1. We become saints
2. God is the source
3. Our spiritual needs are met
4. They are sufficient
5. They are in the sphere around us
6. They are secure in Christ



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes