

## “Spiritual Blessings – Part I”

May 12, 2024

Ephesians 1:3-14

### I. Introduction

In Greek, the verses we just read (verses 3-14) make up one long sentence. They are actually a prayer that covers the past, present, and future of God’s eternal purpose for individual Christians and for the church. This run-on sentence can be divided into three sections, each focusing on a different Person of the Trinity; each ending with the phrase: “**to the praise of his glorious grace**” or “**for the praise of his glory.**” In this long sentence, Paul praised God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit as he considered the greatness and the vastness of the blessings that make up the spiritual wealth of all Christians.

In our culture, people are concerned about their identity, their self-worth, their self-acceptance, their self-esteem. It is reaching the point where “*bullying*” (one of the buzzwords of the day) means not giving a person the esteem or worth *they* feel *they* deserve. With this mindset, awarding 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> place trophies would be bullying, so 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place trophies are discouraged, instead everyone should receive a participation trophy. We can all tell stories of the negative effects of this philosophy which has grown from the “*It’s all about me*” philosophy. Even the violence that is seen on city streets is the result of this philosophy.

On the other hand, the Bible says that the only way a person can have a true sense of self-worth, meaning, or significance is to have a right relationship with his Creator. A person without Christ has no spiritual value, no standing before God, really no purpose or meaning in the world. **Turn to Psalm 1:1-6.** The wicked—those that do not obey God—are like chaff—worthless, but every Christian **has** spiritual value. They have a standing before God, they have a purpose and a meaning in the world. Each Christian is a child of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. Paul wrote this Letter to the Ephesians and to all Christians to give Christians the right understanding of all they are and have.

In the first part of this run-on sentence—verse 3—Paul gave the theme of his Letter to the Ephesians: “**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;**” The Christian’s Riches in Christ.

## **II. The Theme of Ephesians: The Christian’s riches in Christ**

**A. The source of our blessings is God.** Paul began by praising God or, as other translations say, blessing God, because He has blessed us. God is the source of our blessings. When a person is re-born or born again into God’s family, i.e., when he becomes a Christian, he is born rich—with the proverbial “*silver spoon in his mouth.*” In his letter, Paul explained what these riches are and how a Christian may draw on them for effective Christian living here on earth not just when one gets to heaven. Writing of these riches [James 1:17](#) says, “**Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.**” These blessings are going to be good since only goodness can come from God. [Romans 8:28](#) says, “**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**” God is the source of our blessings.

**B. Christians are blessed with every spiritual blessing.** When we praise God, we speak good of Him; we bless Him; we praise Him with words. But when God blesses us, He blesses us with every goodness, every good gift, every blessing. God blesses us—Christians—“**with every spiritual blessing in Christ.**” Christians are blessed with every spiritual blessing. There is no limit. In this case “**spiritual**” refers to the source not the extent of blessing, i.e., blessings come from God; from the Holy Spirit.

It is not that God will eventually give us blessings but rather He has already given us all we need. [2 Peter 1:3](#) says that “**His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.**” We are complete in Him already. There is nothing more to receive, e.g., in [John 14:27](#) Jesus said, “**Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**” In [John 15:11](#) He said, “**I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be**

complete.” We have complete peace and joy just to name a couple of our blessings. The believer’s need isn’t to **receive** something more, but to **do** something more with what he has—not to lock them away and not use them. As Christians, we have all the blessings or abilities from God that we need, but, like any child growing up, we need to develop them through training and use.

**C. The location of our blessings is the heavenly realms.** The location of these abundant, unlimited blessings from God is “**in the heavenly realms...in Christ.**” This is more than just heaven itself; “**the heavenly realms**” comprises the entire supernatural realm of God, His complete domain—heaven, earth, the universe. This is the spiritual realm all around us that we cannot see with our human eyes.

Christians have a dual citizenship. In our humanity, we are citizens of earth. But in Christ, as Christians, our primary, and infinitely more important, citizenship is in heaven—**Phil. 3:20** says, “**Our citizenship is in heaves, and we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.**” Christ is our Lord and King, and we are citizens of His realm, the heavenly realms which includes earth as well as heaven. The spiritual blessings given to Christians are to be enjoyed in this present life here on earth, for they come from what God has done in Christ in the heavenly realms—in the “Great Commission,” Jesus said in **Matt. 28:18**, “**All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me,**”

When an American citizen travels to a foreign country, he is still as much American citizen there as when he is in the United States. Whether he is in Japan or Russia or any other foreign country, he still has all the rights and privileges of an American citizen. If he has any problems, he can go to an American embassy or consulate in that foreign country for help.

As citizens of God’s heavenly realm, Christians hold all the rights and privileges that that citizenship grants, even while living in this “foreign” and sometimes hostile land of earth. Our true life is in the supernatural, the heavenly realms. Our Father is there, our Savior is there, our family and loved ones are there, our name is there, and our eternal home is there. The key to living as a heavenly citizen while living in an unheavenly situation is walking by the Spirit. In **Galatians 5:16**, Paul wrote, “**So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.**”

### III. Blessings from God the Father

Paul then got specific as he named a few of the blessings that make up a Christian's spiritual wealth. He began with blessings from God the Father. First, Paul said that "**God chose us.**"

**A. God chose us.** In verse 4 we find what some call the doctrine of election. God chose us. Salvation begins with God and not with man. In [John 15:16](#) Jesus said, "**You did not choose me, but I chose you.**" In [Luke 19:10](#) He said, "**For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.**" In [John 6:44](#) Jesus said, "**No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day.**"

Paul added that God chose us even "**before the creation of the world.**" This means that our salvation is wholly of God's grace and not on the basis of anything we ourselves have done. He chose us in Christ, completely apart from any merit or deserving any person could have. He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without blame. In the Bible *election or choosing* is always *unto* something, i.e., for some purpose. It is a privilege that carries a great responsibility. For example, God chose the Israelites to be his holy people to tell others about the one true God. God chose the tribe of Levi to be His priests. They were to teach the Israelites about God and lead them in worship. God chose Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles. God chooses men and women, boys and girls to be Christians to be holy and blameless; to model His love and grace and mercy as they carry out the "**Great Commission.**"

This "**choosing**," or "**election**" doesn't mean that one must respond to God's grace against his own free will! Man has the ability to choose. In [John 3:16](#), Jesus said that "**whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.**" In [John 11:26](#) Jesus said, "**Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.**" [2 Peter 3:9](#) says that God "**is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.**" But every person has the right, the will, the ability to choose to follow Jesus or not to follow Jesus. **Turn to John 7:37-38.**

These 2 options in following Jesus: divine sovereignty (or election) and human responsibility (or free will) seem to be on the opposite ends of a spectrum—from our limited human thinking they are

opposite and contradictory. This is a mystery or a paradox that will never be solved in this life. Both are taught by Jesus in one verse in John—[turn to John 6:37](#). In God's thinking both election and free-will, God's calling and man's choosing, are both possible and essential. Only the infinite mind of God knows how they can possibly operate together but they do. As a friend of mine says, "*This is a God-thing.*"

**B. God adopted us.** Paul went on to say that another blessing from God is that He adopted us. He wrote that "**in love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons.**" [John 15:13](#) says, "**Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends.**" In the ultimate act of agape love, sacrificial love, God determined before the foundation of the earth that He would give His only Son to save us. *Predestine* simply means "*to decide beforehand, to predetermine.*" The word "**predestined**" is used in the Bible primarily in terms of what God does for **saved** people, i.e., those who belong to Him. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught that people are predestined to hell; the word "**predestined**" refers only to Christians. Election seems to refer to people, while predestined refers to purposes. The events connected with the crucifixion of Christ were predestined or decided before hand—we can find many fulfilled prophesies from the Old Testament. [Turn to Acts 4:25-28](#). The crucifixion of Christ was predestined. In sacrificial love, God has predestined or decided before hand to show us His love and grace. He has predestined us or predetermined that Christians would be adopted as sons; not some second- or third-rate servant. God predestined or decided beforehand our adoption.

Adoption is the act of God by which He gives those who believe in Jesus an adult standing in the family. This way each Christian can immediately begin to claim his inheritance and enjoy his spiritual wealth—or blessings. A baby cannot legally use this inheritance, but an adult can and should. [Turn to Galatians 4:1-7](#). A person doesn't have to wait until he is an old saint before he can claim his riches in Christ—they are all his the instant he is saved.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

If Jesus is your Lord and Savior, you are a VIP. God the Father chose you, adopted you, and has blessed you with all spiritual blessings. This was His plan, His predestined plan, before the creation of

the world. But why would He do that? [Verse 6](#) says “[to the praise of his glorious grace.](#)” In [Luke 12:32](#) Jesus said, “[Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.](#)” In His agape love, God delighted in His grace and mercy to call people to become part of His family.

God chose and predestined the church before the foundation of the world in order that no human being could boast or take glory for himself, but that all the glory might be God’s. Salvation is not partly God and partly man, but entirely God. To guarantee that, every detail and plan of salvation was accomplished before any human being was born or before a planet was formed. God’s main purpose for this plan of salvation is that He might be glorified. There is nothing any one of us can do to deserve or earn the spiritual riches we have been given; we receive them by grace through faith.

If someone were to receive a promotion or an extremely expensive or elegant gift, what would be the logical response? If he kept it quiet, telling no one, what would you think? If nothing else, he isn’t very appreciative and maybe he doesn’t even deserve it. If you are a Christian, you have received a promotion—you have been adopted into God’s family, you are a “[co-heir with Jesus Christ](#)” ([Rom. 8:17](#)). If you are a Christian, you have received a priceless gift—eternal life in heaven. If you are a Christian, you have been given every spiritual blessing including a “[peace that passeth understanding](#)” ([Phil. 4:7](#)). And what is your response? Do you praise God? [1 Peter 3:15](#) says, “[But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.](#)” Do you share the good news of God’s love to those around you? Do you bring praise to God through your life? [1 Corinthians 10:31](#) says, “[So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God?](#)” How appreciative of God’s love and grace are you?