
OUR SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST

EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Adeoye, Emmanuel (Evang.)

The **WORD SAINT MEANS** "one who has been set apart." It is related to the word *sanctified*, which means "set apart." When the sinner trusts Christ as his Savior, he is taken out of "the world" and placed "in Christ." The believer is *in* the world physically, but not of the world spiritually (John 17:14-16). Like a scuba diver, he exists in an alien environment because he possesses special equipment - in this case, the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. Every true believer possesses the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 6:19-20), and it is through the Spirit's power that the Christian is able to function in the world.

THE WORD GRACE is used twelve times in Ephesians, and refers to "the kindness of God toward undeserving people." Grace and mercy often are found together in the Bible, and they certainly belong together in the experience of salvation. *Grace* and *faith* go together, because the only way to experience grace and salvation is through faith (Eph 2:8-9). The phrase "in Christ Jesus" is used twenty-seven times in this letter! It describes the

spiritual position of the believer: he is identified with Christ, he is in Christ, and therefore is able to draw on the wealth of Christ for his own daily living.

Each book in the Bible has its own special theme and message, even though it may deal with many different topics. Genesis is the book of *beginnings*; Matthew is the book of the *kingdom*; Galatians is the book of *liberty*. Eph 1:3 states its theme: *the Christian's riches in Christ*.

THE SOURCE OF OUR BLESSINGS.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." God the Father has made us rich in Jesus Christ! When you were born again into God's family, you were born rich.

Through Christ, you share in the riches of God's grace (Eph 1:7; 2:7), God's glory (Eph 1:18; 3:16), God's mercy (Eph 2:4), and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Eph 3:8). Our Heavenly Father is not poor; He is rich - and He has made us rich in His Son.

THE SCOPE OF OUR BLESSINGS.

We have "all spiritual blessings." This can be translated "all the blessings of the Spirit," referring to the Holy Spirit of God. In the Old Testament, God promised His earthly people, Israel, material blessings as a reward for their obedience (Deut 28:1-13). Today, He promises to supply all our needs "according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil 4:19). But He does not promise to shield us from either poverty or pain. The Father has given us every blessing of the Spirit, everything we need for a successful, satisfying Christian life. *The spiritual is far more important than the material.*

The Holy Spirit is mentioned many times in this letter, because He is the one who channels our riches to us from the Father, through the Son. Not to know and depend on the Holy Spirit's provision is to live a life of spiritual poverty. No wonder Paul began his Ephesian ministry asking some professed Christians if they really knew the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). We might ask professed Christians today, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed? If the answer is no, then you are not saved." "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9).

HOW RICH YOU ARE EPHESIANS 1:4-14

BLESSINGS FROM GOD THE FATHER (EPH. 1:4-6)

HE HAS CHOSEN US (V. 4)

This is the marvelous doctrine of *election*, a doctrine that has confused some and confounded others. A seminary professor once said to me, "Try to explain election and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul!" That salvation begins with God, and not with man, all Christians will agree. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). The lost sinner, left to his own ways, does not seek God (Rom 3:10-11); God in His love seeks the sinner (Luke 19:10).

Note that God chose us even before He created the universe, so that our salvation is wholly of His grace and not on the basis of anything we ourselves have done. He chose us in Christ, not in ourselves. And He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without blame. In the Bible, election is always *unto* something. It is a privilege that carries a great responsibility.

Does the sinner respond to God's grace against his own will? No, he responds because God's grace makes him willing to respond. The mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility will never be solved in this life.

You will note that all three Persons in the Godhead are involved in our salvation (see also 1 Peter 1:3). As far as God the Father is concerned, you were saved when He chose you in Christ in eternity past. But that alone did not save you. As far as God the Son is concerned, you were saved when He died for you on the cross. As far as God the Spirit is concerned, you were saved when you yielded to His conviction and

received Christ as your Savior. What began in eternity past was fulfilled in time present, and will continue for all eternity!

HE HAS ADOPTED US (V. 5)

Here we meet that misunderstood word *predestination*. This word, as it is used in the Bible, refers *primarily* to what God does for saved people. Nowhere in the Bible are we taught that people are predestined to hell, because this word refers only to God's people. The word simply means "to ordain beforehand, to predetermine." Election seems to refer to *people*, while predestination refers to purposes. The events connected with the crucifixion of Christ were predestined (Acts 4:25-28). God has predestined our adoption (Eph 1:5), and our conformity to Christ (Rom 8:29-30), as well as our future inheritance (Eph 1:11).

ADOPTION

ADOPTION has a dual meaning, both present and future. You do not get into God's family by adoption. You get into His family by regeneration, the new birth (John 3:1-18; 1 Peter 1:22-25). Adoption is the act of God by which He gives His "born ones" an adult standing in the family. Why does He do this? So that we might *immediately* begin to claim our inheritance and enjoy our spiritual wealth! A baby cannot legally use this inheritance (Gal 4:1-7), but an adult son can - and should! This means that you do not have to wait until you are an old saint before you can claim your riches in Christ.

The *future* aspect of adoption is found in Rom 8:22-23, the glorified body we will have when Jesus returns. We already have our adult standing before God, but the world cannot see this. When Christ returns, this "private adoption" will be made public for everyone to see!

HE HAS ACCEPTED US (V. 6).

We cannot make ourselves acceptable to God; but He, by His grace, makes us accepted in Christ. This is our eternal position which will never change. Some translations read "which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved" (NASB). Or, "He has *be graced* [literal translation] us in the Beloved." The idea is the same. Because of God's grace in Christ, we are accepted before Him Paul wrote *Philemon* to encourage him to accept his runaway slave, Onesimus, using the same argument. "If he owes you anything, I will pay it

BLESSINGS FROM GOD THE SON (EPH. 1:7-12)

We should not think that each Person of the Godhead works independently, because they all worked together to make possible our salvation. But each Person has a special ministry to perform, a special "spiritual deposit" to make in our lives.

HE HAS REDEEMED US (V. 7A).

TO REDEEM MEANS "to purchase and set free by paying a price." There were 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire, and often they were bought and sold like pieces of furniture. But a man could purchase a slave and set him free, and

this is what Jesus did for us. The price was His own blood (1 Peter 1:18ff). This means that we are free from the Law (Gal 5:1), free from slavery to sin (Rom 6), as well as free from the power of Satan and the world (Gal 1:4; Col 1:13-14). If we were slaves, we would be poor, but because we are sons, we are rich!

HE HAS FORGIVEN US (V. 7B).

The word *forgive* means "to carry away." This reminds us of the ritual on the Jewish Day of Atonement when the high priest sent the scapegoat into the wilderness (Lev 16). First the priest killed one of the two goats and sprinkled its blood before God on the mercy seat. Then he confessed Israel's sins over the live goat, and had the goat taken into the wilderness to be lost. Christ died to carry away our sins so they might never again be seen (Ps 103:12; John 1:29). No written accusation stands against us because our sins have been taken away! Sin made us poor, but grace makes us rich.

HE HAS REVEALED GOD'S WILL TO US (VV. 8-10).

This letter has much to say about God's plan for His people, a plan that was not fully understood even in Paul's day. The word *mystery* has nothing to do with things eerie. It means a "sacred secret, once hidden but now revealed to God's people." We believers are a part of God's "inner circle." We are able to share in the secret that God will one day unite everything in Christ. Ever since sin came into the world, things have been falling apart. First, man was

separated from God (Gen 3). Then man was separated from man, as Cain killed Abel (Gen 4).

People tried to maintain a kind of unity by building the Tower of Babel (Gen 11), but God judged them and scattered them across the world. God called Abraham and put a difference between the Jew and the Gentile, a difference that was maintained until Christ's death on the cross. Sin is tearing everything apart, but in Christ, God will gather everything together in the culmination of the ages. We are a part of this great eternal program.

HE HAS MADE US AN INHERITANCE (VV. 11-12).

The *King James Version* reads, "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance," but "in whom also we were made an inheritance" is also a possible translation. Both are true and the one includes the other. In Christ we *have* a wonderful inheritance (1 Peter 1:1- and in Christ we *are* an inheritance. We are valuable to Him. Think of the price God paid to purchase us and make us part of His inheritance! God the Son is the Father's love gift to us; and we are the Father's love gift to His Son.

BLESSINGS FROM GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT (EPH. 1:13-14)

We move now from eternity past (Eph 1:4- and history past Eph 1:7-12), to the immediate experience of the Ephesian Christians. The Holy Spirit had worked in their lives, and they knew it.

HE HAS SEALED US (V. 13).

The entire process of salvation is given in this verse, so we had better examine it carefully. It tells how the sinner becomes a saint. First, he hears the Gospel of salvation. This is the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again (1, Cor. 15:1ff). The Ephesians were Gentiles, and the Gospel came "to the Jew first" (Rom 1:16). But Paul, a Jew, brought the Gospel to the Gentiles as he shared the Word of God with them.

The Ephesians "heard the Gospel" and discovered it was for them - "your salvation" (Eph 1:13). Even though the Bible teaches election, it also announces, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). A soul-winner does not discuss election with unsaved people, because it is a family secret that belongs to the saints.

Having heard the Word, the Ephesians believed; and it is this faith that brought salvation (Eph 2:8-9). This pattern follows what Paul writes in Rom 10:13-15, so read that passage carefully. It is God's plan for evangelism. When the Ephesians believed, they were "sealed with the Spirit." "After that ye believed" should read "*when* ye believed." You receive the Spirit immediately on trusting Christ. This is not an experience subsequent to conversion. (Read Acts 10:34-48.)

What is the significance of this sealing of the Holy Spirit? For one thing, it speaks of a finished *transaction*. Even today when important legal documents are processed, they are stamped with the official seal to signify the

completion of the transaction. This sealing also implies *ownership*: God has put his seal on us because He has purchased us to be His own (1 Cor 6:19-20). It also means *security and protection*.

The Roman seal on the tomb of Jesus carried this meaning (Matt 27:62). So, the believer belongs to God, and is safe and protected because he is a part of a finished transaction. According to John 14:16-17, the Holy Spirit abides with the believer forever. It is possible for us to grieve the Spirit and thereby lose the blessings of His ministry (Eph 4:30). But He doesn't leave us. Another use for the seal is as a mark of *authenticity*. Just as a signature on a letter attests to the genuineness of the document, so the presence of the Spirit proves the believer is genuine.

HE HAS GIVEN US AN EARNEST (V. 14).

Earnest is a fascinating word! In Paul's day, it meant "the down payment to guarantee the final purchase of some commodity or piece of property." Even today you will hear a real estate agent talk about earnest money. The Holy Spirit is God's first installment to guarantee to His children that He will finish His work and eventually bring them to glory. The "redemption of the purchased possession" refers to the redemption of the body at the return of Christ (Rom 8:18-23; 1 John 3:1-3). "Redemption" is experienced in three stages:

* *We have been redeemed* through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:7).

* *We are being redeemed* as the Spirit works in our lives to make us more like Christ (Rom 8:14).

* *We shall be redeemed* when Christ returns and we become like Him.

But the word translated *earnest* also means "engagement ring." In Greece today you would find this word being used that way. But, after all, isn't an engagement ring an assurance - a guarantee - that the promises made will be kept? Our relationship to God through Christ is not simply a *commercial* one, but also a personal experience of love. He is the Bridegroom and His church is the bride. We know that He will come and claim His bride because He has given us His promise and His Spirit as the "engagement ring." What greater assurance could we want?

We have examined a number of basic Bible doctrines in this chapter, all on the theme of our riches in Christ. It would be profitable for us to review what these verses teach us. Another use for the seal is as a mark of *authenticity*. Just as a signature on a letter attests to the genuineness of the document, so the presence of the Spirit proves the believer is genuine. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom 8:9). It is not simply our lip profession, our religious activity, or our good works, but the witness of the Spirit that makes our profession authentic.

TRUE RICHES COME FROM GOD.

It is a source of great encouragement to know that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all working on my behalf to make me rich. God not only gives us "richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim 6:17), but He gives us *eternal riches* without which all other wealth is valueless.

2. ALL OF THESE RICHES COME BY GODS GRACE AND FOR GODS GLORY.

Did you notice that after each of the main sections in Eph 1:4-14, Paul has added the purpose behind these gifts? Why has God the Father chosen us, adopted us, and accepted us? "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph 1:6). Why has the Son redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed God's will to us, and made us part of God's inheritance? "That we should be to the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:12). Why has God the Spirit sealed us and become the guarantee of our future blessing? "Unto the praise of His glory" (Eph 1:14).

We often have the idea that God saves sinners mainly because He pities them, or wants to rescue them from eternal judgment, but God's main purpose is that He might be glorified. His creation reveals His wisdom and power, but His church reveals His love and grace. You cannot deserve or earn these spiritual riches; you can only receive them by grace, through faith.

3. THESE RICHES ARE ONLY THE BEGINNING!

There is always more spiritual wealth to claim from the Lord as we walk with Him. The Bible is our guidebook; the

Holy Spirit is our Teacher. As we search the Word of God, we discover more and more of the riches we have in Christ. These riches were planned by the

Father, purchased by the Son, and presented by the Spirit. There is really no need for us to live in poverty when all of God's wealth is at our disposal!

CONCLUSION

WE MUST APPRECIATE WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST AND SEE SELF AS A KING

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