

The Blessings of Being a Follower of Christ  
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Allen Power

Ephesians 1:1-14

Warm-up discussion questions:

- First, how would you fill in the blank on this: I am blessed because \_\_\_\_\_.
- Think about a time when someone really made you feel SPECIAL. They really treated you “like a king or a queen.” It might have been on a special day or at a special event. Can anyone share an example?

Big Idea: If you were adopted into a royal family, it would change the way you were treated by others; it would change how you feel about yourself; it might change how you act or conduct yourself. If you’re a follower of Christ, you HAVE been adopted into the REAL royal family. You are God’s PRIDE AND JOY, His TROPHY of grace. You have every SPIRITUAL BLESSING of a member of God’s royal family. You’ve been guaranteed blessings NOW and an inheritance to come. You don’t have to earn it...you couldn’t if you tried! But you should live your life with that inheritance in mind.

Quick review about this letter:

**Who wrote it? To whom did he write it? Where was he when he wrote it? How was it delivered? Bonus for those who were here last week: Only six chapters. How long does it take to read the whole thing (though you should go slower)? The first three chapters are about (what?); the last three about (what?)**

Ephesians 4:1 (NLT) gives us Paul’s purpose in writing this letter:

<sup>1</sup>Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.

Let’s look at verses one through fourteen. Answering the three questions of Bible study:

- What does it say? (Observation)
- What does it mean? (Interpretation)
- How should it change me this week? (Application)

Ephesians 1:1–2 (NLT)

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus.

I am writing to God’s holy people in Ephesus, who are faithful followers of Christ Jesus.

<sup>2</sup>May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

- Paul knew the Christians in Ephesus very well. He had lived there and he helped them start this church in this center of commerce, politics, and pagan religion.
- Verse one: **How does he describe them? Is it different in your translation?**
- In describing his readers, your translation may say, “in Christ Jesus.” “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.”<sup>i</sup> These blessings are for believers.
- Verse two: **What does he pray for them?**

<sup>3</sup> All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.

- Verse three: **What did God do for us? Why are we entitled to this?**
- When we say God has blessed us it's important that we don't slip into a "prosperity gospel" mindset that God is going to make us materially rich.
- One commentator writes: 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.*<sup>ii</sup>
- Verse three begins with "all praise to God." When you study the Bible you need to look for themes/repetition. Look through all fourteen verses for the word "praise." What about "glory" or "glorify?" If you look in the NKJV or ESV you see:
  - Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)  
<sup>6</sup>to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.
  - Ephesians 1:12 (NKJV)  
<sup>12</sup>that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.
  - Ephesians 1:14 (NKJV)  
<sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.
- **Based on that repeated phrase, what is the real purpose of God doing all these wonderful things for us?**
- If you grew up in a reformed tradition you would have learned the Westminster Shorter Catechism (1647). The first question: "What is the chief end of man? Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."<sup>iii</sup>
- This passage says that glorifying God is also God's purpose in saving us!
- He has "blessed us with every Spiritual blessing." Let's identify all the things God does for followers of Christ, shown in verses four through twelve.
  - Verse 4: He \_\_\_\_\_ us in Christ.
  - Verse 5: ...decided in advance to \_\_\_\_\_
  - Verse 6: poured out his \_\_\_\_\_ (What is that?)
  - Verse 7: He \_\_\_\_\_ with the blood of His son
  - Verse 8: He showered us with \_\_\_\_\_, and all \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_
  - Verse 9: God has \_\_\_\_\_ to us His \_\_\_\_\_ regarding \_\_\_\_\_
  - Verse 11: We have received \_\_\_\_\_ for He \_\_\_\_\_ us
  - Verse 12: When you believed in Christ, He \_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you feel blessed? Do you feel special? If you've trusted Christ you SHOULD!
- Let's go deeper. Look at verses four and five:

<sup>4</sup> Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. <sup>5</sup> God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

- Verse four: **When did God choose you to be His child?**
- Verse five in the NLT says "decided in advance." How is it in your translation?

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*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.<sup>iv</sup>*

- We're not going to tackle election and predestination today. Just know, if you have followed Christ you were chosen before God "made the world."
- Verse four: **For what purpose are believers chosen? What part of that is within our control and what part of it is OUT of our control?**
- Verse five: **How does God feel about having you adopted in His family?**

<sup>6</sup> So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. <sup>7</sup> He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. <sup>8</sup> He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.

- Verse seven says God loved you so much he purchased your eternal freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave your sins!
- This same Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:20 (ESV) : "<sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." We have a responsibility for how we live.
- Verse seven: Salvation by faith through grace is all we need. But God's not through showering us with blessings! He gives us the wisdom and the understanding we need to live the Christian life. A lot of it is in chapters four through six of this letter!
- The first knowledge He gives us is the understanding of how He saves us.

<sup>9</sup> God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. <sup>10</sup> And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth.

<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, because we are united with Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan.

- God's "mysterious plan" in verse nine isn't strange or eerie. Mysterious means it only makes sense once the Holy Spirit has opened our spiritual eyes to the reality of our need for a Savior. The plan is a "family secret."
- Verse ten gives us the plan: When the time is right, God will bring everything under the authority of Christ.
- End of verse nine: **Why did God design this plan to save us?**

The Bible Knowledge Commentary:

*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.<sup>v</sup>*

- Here is how people like you and me fit into this plan, verse twelve:

<sup>12</sup> God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. <sup>13</sup> And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own\* by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. <sup>14</sup> The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

- Verse eleven says we've received an inheritance. Verse fourteen says it's guaranteed. **How does verse fourteen say has God guaranteed it?**
- The Greek word there is: **ἀρραβών arrabōn**; of Heb. or. [6162]; *an earnest* (a part payment in advance for security):—given as a pledge(1), pledge(2).<sup>vi</sup>
- Now this is very cool! We're told in modern Greek language the word arrabona also means "engagement ring."<sup>vii</sup>
- **Why would God give you and me an "engagement ring?" Why would a guy give a girl an engagement ring?**
- Based on everything you've read in this passage. **If you're a follower of Christ, how does God feel about you?**
- As verse five says: "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." God is CRAZY about you!
- I heard Louie Giglio use a great illustration on this passage. Louie said: *"You are a trophy of the goodness and the grace of God. You're going on God's mantle! You will sit on the mantle of God as a trophy of the grace of Jesus. For all of eternity He is going to show you off as proof of His mercy and greatness. [He'll say,] 'You want to know what kind of God I am...look at her...look at him...I take the shattered pieces and I make beauty out of them.'"*<sup>viii</sup>

So, What's the Takeaway?

- If you're a follower of Christ you can be excited about the fact that God chose you before he even made the world. You are an adopted member of His family.
- He purchased you at an unbelievably high price: The blood of Jesus.
- He has guaranteed your eternal inheritance by giving you His own Spirit to live in you. The Holy Spirit is the seal on the document that says the transaction is final. The Spirit is your "engagement ring" to signify the promises of God for you.
- Finally, God is CRAZY about you!
- How does all that make you feel? How should it change how you live this week?
- Maybe you aren't in "the family" yet. Maybe you haven't totally and completely trusted Christ as your Savior and Lord. Maybe you haven't made Him the boss of your life. If not, today is the day and this passage has given you great reason to do so. If you hear a voice tugging at your heart...it's Him.

Five D-Group Questions on This Passage:

1. How does it make you feel to know God chose you and is crazy about you? What does this passage say about your purpose in life?
2. Though we can't earn our inheritance (salvation), in what ways has this passage convicted you to "up your game" in living like an "heir" in God's family?
3. How would you describe the spiritual blessings God has given you to an unbeliever?
4. Why does this passage tell you God did all these things for you?
5. Are you CERTAIN you are a part of the "royal family?"

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<sup>i</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>ii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 9). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.reformed.org/documents/WSC.html>

<sup>iv</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 11). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>v</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 13). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>vi</sup> Thomas, R. L. (1998). *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition*. Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.

<sup>vii</sup> Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Vol. 2, p. 13). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

<sup>viii</sup> Louie Giglio message, You Are God's Inheritance:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AyTFAh7Mpuo>