

Spiritual Blessings

by Tim Conway

The sermon emphasizes the importance of recognizing the source of blessings, which is God, and the necessity of being delivered from the curse and brought into a place of blessing through Christ.

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Scripture: Ephesians 1:5

Topics: "Spiritual Blessings", "Union With Christ"

Description

This sermon delves into the concept of Spiritual Blessings in the Heavenly Places as outlined in Ephesians. The speaker highlights the source, necessity, position, recipient, kind, examples, and heavenliness of these blessings. Emphasizing the union with Christ, the sermon underscores the blessings bestowed upon believers to reflect God's glory and the praiseworthiness of God for His salvation plan. It challenges listeners to recognize their heavenly citizenship and the spiritual blessings they possess in Christ.

Transcript

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, we read in Ephesians 1.1, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We're going to be in v. 3 today once again. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

The title of my message this morning is Spiritual Blessings in the Heavenly Places. I've got seven points. I want to deal with these spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.

I've got seven points. The source of the blessing, the necessity of the blessing, the position of blessing, the recipient of the blessing, the kind of blessing, examples of these blessings, and the heavenliness of these blessings. Seven points.

Notice, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Blessed be the God who has blessed us. My first point is this.

Think, brethren, this book of Ephesians is the epistle of the praise of God for God's eternal purpose. We're going to see this idea of eternal purpose, this idea of the plan, the plan of the mystery, this plan of the mystery of Christ. This book is about the plan of salvation.

It's about God's eternal purpose of salvation. It's a book about the blessings that God bestows upon sinners in this plan of salvation. But that is not the primary thing.

The primary thing is that in our union with Christ, we have these blessings, and what it's meant to do is reflect back to God as to His glory. This is a book about the praiseworthiness of God for the things He has bestowed upon us because of the union He has put us in with Jesus Christ. And Paul sweeps us up into all manner of high and exalted views of God because of what God has given to us as Christians.

We do need to stop and think about this. I mean, we need to stop in our tracks. The epistle to the Ephesians is not primarily an apostolic letter about the blessings that we have in our union with Christ.

It's primarily about the praiseworthy God who has devised this way of salvation. Listen, this is critical. Because what it says to us, as Paul again and again says, he points out according to His glory, according to His purpose, he prays to His grace, he keeps coming back to God again and again and again.

What we need to recognize is the source of these blessings. If we don't do that, we've missed it. We must not run to the blessings first, but to the source of the blessings.

We've got to keep that in mind as we go through this. And this is going to be, I recognize, it's going to be largely my responsibility. You guys are listening.

I'm the one speaking. And so your hearing typically is going to follow wherever I take you. And I'm asking the Lord for grace that through this letter, we can so constantly keep our focus on what every one of these blessings means to us with regards to God's character and beauty.

See, the thing is, each one of these individual blessings that get bestowed upon us, and He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, but it's for the sake of praising God. What we have to do is not just look at the character, the quality, the nature of each one of these blessings. We need to ask ourselves this question.

What does this teach me about the God Who gave this? Because everything He gives us, it declares. I mean, that always happens. If I give a gift to somebody, it says a lot about me.

And that's what we find here. May God help us to show the tremendous character and beauty of Himself throughout this. But the source of blessing is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Let's think about the second thing. The necessity of blessing. The Apostle begins the main body of this epistle three times in v. 3. He uses this term, blessing or blessed.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Think with me here. Jesus Christ starts His well-known Sermon on the Mount with many blessings.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. The Scriptures end with blessing. Revelation 22, blessed are those who wash their robes so that they may have right to the tree of life that they may enter the city by the gates.

You know what? This doesn't really surprise us. It doesn't really shock us. We heard about self-pity in the first hour.

By nature, the way we're wired is to be self-absorbed. We are so wired in a way that we expect God's blessings. I mean, it's amazing.

It doesn't shock anybody in this world that Jesus Christ, the very Son of God Himself, the Word of God from eternity, with all of the glory that He had with the Father, that He should step down and humble Himself, become a man and become a servant and actually suffer death and shed His blood for those who are the bitterest of enemies to He and His Father. That doesn't shock man because man basically is self-absorbed. He's humanistic and he expects that God... this is why people complain so much.

This is why they feel self-pity so much. This is why they grumble so much. Why? Because they feel entitled.

Man feels he is entitled to get blessings from God. The very fact that this should start out by saying, blessed be God, because He's blessed us with blessings, it doesn't really shock us. But it ought to.

It ought to shock us because the truth is that here we are. You think about who we are. You think about what we have done.

And you can relate to this. I can relate to this. Because when we were lost, this accurately describes us lost.

And it describes some of you in here. Man just thinks that he can go through life. He expects that he can sin against God.

He can trample on the blood of God's Son. He can despise God's ways. He can fight with God.

He can curse God. He can defy God. He can love God's gifts rather than God Himself.

And then he expects that God's going to pour out blessings on him and not send him to hell. No problem. When anything goes wrong, we feel self-pity.

Oh, why don't I have that? They have that. I deserve that. You know what? We've got a world of people walking around with an entitlement mindset.

We hear about all the people that feel entitled to health care and they feel entitled to have their college paid for and they feel entitled to all this. That ought not to shock us. That's us by nature.

We feel like after all we've done to God, it's no big deal. We minimize it. We fall short of the glory of God day in, day out, minute by minute, our whole lives.

We trample on His glory. We despise the glory. We spit in His face.

We would be right there with those who mock Christ and spit in His face. And then we cry, pout, and complain when we don't get what we think we deserve. We are so deluded by nature.

So absolutely deceived. Brethren, hell is an absolute shock. I'm certain.

It just blows people away. They are so stunned. They are so shocked to end up in hell.

I mean, the way you hear people and all the ways they complain and the things they feel entitled to, they think God owes them every blessing. I tell you, hell is going to be a rude awakening for most of the people

in this world. Beloved, when we come across the term blessing, we ought to stop in our tracks and think about the opposite.

It ought to make us think about cursing. It ought to make us think about what man's condition before God really is. It ought to remind us that as fallen humans in the likeness of our first father Adam and the likeness of his fallenness and depravity, we are a cursed race.

Brethren, you see people walk by this window? I mean, people from this neighborhood that know not God. You watch these pigeons out here? You watch these sparrows that build nests out here? You can look at those little sparrows. They're not cursed.

They're suffering the consequences of the curse, but they're not cursed. But you watch these people drive back and forth out here? Branded on their forehead, if you could see it. Cursed.

Cursed. Cursed. We don't think so.

So, when you were lost, you did not think so. You didn't think so. You thought it was no big deal the things you'd done.

You thought, hey, when I stand before God, I'll be able to stand on my own merits. I haven't been that bad. We are cursed.

Every year about the last several years, probably some of you have seen this. Right about where I get on 281 North, off to the left, Sea World likes to put their Halloween deal up there. Somebody with a horrified, deranged face, and it says, cursed.

So, I just think about some of that. Somebody in an advertising department is thinking, well, how can we advertise Sea World's Halloween show? Somebody came up with, yeah, cursed. What does that mean to people? Most of the time when we think about curses, we think about hexes and spells and witches and things.

Typically, when mankind thinks about God, they think about what they can get from God. They think about blessings. But you know what mankind needs to do? They need to take God and curse and put it together.

Because mankind is cursed by God. You know what it means to curse somebody? When the witch doctors curse somebody in the South Sea Islands, it means you're calling on a supernatural power to bring harm to somebody. God doesn't need to call on any supernatural power outside Himself.

Scripture says that if you do not keep everything written in the book of the Law and do it, you are cursed. And you're not cursed by a witch doctor, you're cursed by God Himself. You know what that says? That is God putting you directly in His sights and saying, I have purpose to do you harm.

And that's reality. You say, that's not the God I know. You better read Scripture.

What Scripture says is sinners are presently under the condemnation of God. If you know not the Lord Jesus Christ, you are in trouble. You are under curse.

You are under God's condemnation. You are under God's vengeance for having broken His law. I just wonder, I often wonder when I see that cursed billboard out there, how many people driving by even take note of it, even wonder what a curse really is.

And I'm certain, it doesn't even cross the faintest shadow of people's minds that that word may be one of the most complete characterizations of their own selves that could be written in words. Cursed. Brethren, when we come across the term blessed, the fact that sinners could be blessed, it ought to blow us away.

I mean, when you read that, I hope you put your eyes back there and say, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there should be such a thing as this. Ah, salvation, salvation. What can we say? Glory.

That last day, Jesus says to the multitudes, Depart from Me, you cursed. You think God means to do them harm? Where does He throw them? He casts them into the lake of fire that was prepared for the devil and his angels. You think God means to do sinners harm? Not too long ago, driving back from Las Cruces, I was listening to some Catholic woman on the radio saying she's become convinced God doesn't put anybody in hell finally.

People are so foolish. They're so foolish. We are cursed.

We are a cursed race by nature. And as such, death must feed upon us. And sin and the devil will have power over us because we're cursed.

Don't you understand this is a statement of our doom? Mankind's doomed. People like to say, Oh, you know, look at those children, they're so innocent. Those children are doomed.

Unless God have mercy, parents, plead God, save your children. Unless God saves them, they are cursed and they are doomed. They are not sweet.

They are not innocent. Not in the courtroom of God. They may look sweet.

They may look cute. I don't deny that at all. He designed them that way.

He knows they look that way. But I'll tell you, seething inside them is the very thing that fueled Hitler. You know it's true.

We are cursed by nature. Cursed. Brethren, how beautiful, how glorious, to hear the Apostle say what he says here.

That there are blessings. There are blessings for us. If we're in Christ.

Blessings. He alone is the fountainhead, the source of these blessings. And see, the thing is, He invites all of mankind.

Don't stay there. Don't stay there. Don't stay where you are cursed.

Come to My Son. Come to My Son. Isn't it amazing? I mean, man would rather defy God and stay cursed that he might enjoy his sin than to know the unspeakable riches, unspeakable joy that's to be found.

The third thing. So the first is the source. It's the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second thing is the necessity of blessing. And we as a race, we desperately need to be delivered from the curse and to be brought into a place of blessing. The third thing is the position of blessing.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us. This point focuses on these two words. In Christ.

In Christ, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He says, beloved brethren, I have worked on memorizing the whole book of Ephesians. I did it years ago, and now that I'm preaching through it, I'm coming back and trying to resurrect it all in my mind.

Do you know the first time through chapter 1? I kept leaving out in Christ in verse 3. And I think some of it has to do with just the KJV was in my mind and it puts it at the end. And because of the two different locations, something happened in my own mind where I was leaving it out altogether. And at some point, I kept rehearsing it and I was leaving it out and I wasn't looking back at Scripture to correct myself.

And when I saw that I was leaving it out, I really rebuked myself and said, I am not forgetting that. I am making a mental note to never leave that out ever again. If you leave in Christ out, brethren, we have no blessings at all.

There are no blessings anywhere except in Christ. We don't want to forget that. If you've ever left that out, rebuke yourself like I rebuked myself.

You simply cannot separate God's Son from God's blessings. Not at all. You can't.

If you get Christ, you get the blessings. Brethren, if you get Christ, He is the blessing. He's the heart.

He's the soul. He's the cheapest of all. This is what the epistle of Ephesians is all about.

The union with Christ by which it is possible for a poor, destitute, bankrupt, sinful wretch like us to be filled with all the fullness of God. Brethren, in this epistle, look at chapter 3. Verse 19. I mean, these blessings come at us and every one of them should stagger us.

But it's like He builds, He builds, He builds one upon another to where He's sweeping us into glory. Showing us what God has done. 3.19 To know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Just take that one home with you today. I know most of you have read that. Sometimes we don't really think about what we read.

Sometimes we need to stop in our tracks and really think. All the fullness of God. Brethren, what we find here is our poor, pathetic emptiness.

It finds its infinite abundance here. The fullness. All we have received of His fullness.

Grace upon grace. It's from Him. These unsearchable riches of Christ.

It's like you take this poor, destitute, empty sinner and it's in Christ and suddenly there's a fullness. The fullness of God. What is the fullness of God? All the fullness of God dwells in Christ bodily.

I mean, what is this even saying? Brethren, this is not theoretical. This is not something that simply is like a legal reality. I mean, for one, it's not just in theory.

Two, it's not just something that's legal that yes, in God's courtroom it's recognized. We're talking about us, ourselves. There's a fullness of God.

The life of God. There's something of His glory. That comes into us.

We actually are indwelt by the Spirit of God. Christ dwells in us by faith. Because all the fullness is in Christ and Christ dwells in us, all the fullness comes into us.

This is something experiential. This is something glorious. Brethren, this is the heart and soul of Christianity.

The easiest way to tell if you've got an imitation of the real thing is just to ask yourself, do you know anything about this? Obviously, we cannot experience the fullness of this here in this life, even though if you look at Paul's verb tenses in 3.19, he's saying you've got it now! I mean, what these blessings are, brethren, the vast majority of the blessings that you find here in this letter, yes, they're going to go off into eternity, but Paul is making the assumption you have these things now! The unsearchable riches of Christ are yours now! You have possession now! And you attempt to get to God and get to His blessings any other way than through Christ. Total insult to Christ. It's a delusion.

And here's the thing, if you seek to go to God any other way, it will ultimately leave you blessing-less. That's what hell really is. That's what the outer darkness is all about.

It's not that you cease to exist. It's that you cease to experience any blessing whatsoever. You try to go to God by way of Mary, or Mohammed, or baptism, or Joseph Smith, or Ellen White, or Buddha, or Vishnu.

Brethren, the Scriptures teach us that all the fullness, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are to be found in Christ. You seek to go to God any other way, there's no blessing. They are yours in Christ and in Christ alone.

Don't try to manufacture your own salvation. It's all found in Him. Don't do that.

Don't be like the church at Sardis who hides behind a name. Remember, they had a name if they were alive, but they were really dead. Don't hide behind a name.

Hide in Christ. That's the only hiding place. In Christ.

So that's the third point. The position of our blessing. Number four, the recipient of the blessing.

Notice, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us. Us! Notice that. Blessed us in Christ.

Remember who He's addressing? The saints. Those who are full of faith. Those who are in Christ.

That's who He's addressing. He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Think with me here.

These blessings are ours personally. He has blessed us. You know how people always are liking to quote from the Old Testament? Well, if God's people will, you know, humble themselves and if they'll pray, and there's this, God will come and heal our land.

He'll heal our country. This does not say, God bless America. This is very specifically for us who are in Christ and are saints.

And it doesn't come on a country generically. It is for individuals. Don't you hear Paul? The Son of God who loved me.

Me! And gave Himself for me. Me! These blessings are for us as individuals. Personal.

Individual appropriation and application to the individual. Scripture says, Blessed is the man who trusts the Lord. The man.

The individual. Blessings are for individuals. We come to Christ as individuals.

We receive the blessings as individuals. The us. First person.

Plural. Pronoun. It's for us.

That's the fourth thing. The recipient of the blessing. The fifth thing.

Let's look at the kind of blessing. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every... what's the word? Spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. These are spiritual blessings.

Let's get that perfectly sprayed. Spiritual blessings are to be contrasted. I know, I know.

One of the sisters was telling me earlier she's been listening to all Martyn Lloyd-Jones messages on this. And he makes an adamant case. Spiritual here means the Spirit of God.

That these are blessings that flow through the Spirit of God. I don't think he's right. And the reason I don't think he's right because the very first thing that Paul says is that God chose us before the foundation of the world.

That's never ascribed to the Spirit. I'm not going to knock that the Spirit of God is involved in our lives in vast majority. I just don't think that's what Paul means.

And the reason I don't is because when you search the New Testament, what you find is Paul himself repeatedly sets spiritual blessings over against material blessings. Don't turn to it, but let me give you one example. Romans 15.26 For Macedonia, now somebody might say, well, wait, if it's a spiritual blessing, doesn't it automatically include the Spirit? I'm just saying, I don't think Paul is so much wanting to bring our attention to the fact that these are mediated by way of the Spirit.

I think what he's wanting to do is bring mainly to our attention that these things are not material blessings. And I think the fact that he says spiritual and then he comes back and hits us within the heavenly places, is what he's wanting to do is show us they're not of this temporal realm. And you see this comparison in Paul in Romans 15.26. Macedonia and Achaia had been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.

For they're pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings exactly the same thing. They ought also to be of service to them in material blessings.

Because the Gentiles have received the spiritual blessings, the Gentiles ought to give of their material blessings. You see the comparison there. I think that's exactly the way that Paul is using that here.

Hear me. Listen. There are two things you definitely want to take note of that this text does not say.

When it says that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, what you want to notice, what you want to take real careful attention to is this. God is not promising every spiritual blessing for everyone without exception. We've kind of talked about that.

It's not for the land, it's not for the country, it's not God bless America. He is not promising this for everybody. It is very exclusive.

It is limited. It is for God's people. The us here is not... People like to come along and read Scripture as though it's just for them indiscriminately.

It is not. We look at the letter. We notice who it's being addressed to.

It is not being addressed to all the pagans at Ephesus. It's not being addressed to all the Diana worshipers at Ephesus. It's not being addressed to those who say they're Jews and claim to be Jews who really are not, who are at Ephesus.

It's not to them. It's to believers and those who are in Christ alone. Now look, that is not to say that the lost do not enjoy material blessings from God.

They most certainly do. Does Scripture not say when it comes to the evil and to the unjust? What does God do to them? Rain, sun. God's kindnesses are definitely manifest to the lost world in a material way.

He shows those kindnesses in order that they might fall down before Him. Repent. Come to Him.

Trust Him for the spiritual blessing that is to be had in Christ. That's the first thing you want to notice. This is not every spiritual blessing for everybody without exception.

The second thing that you want to notice is that this is not a promise to Christians that you will get any and every temporal blessing. It is a promise of every spiritual blessing if you're in Christ. Spiritual.

You all see that, right? It does not say temporal. It does not say material blessings. We Christians are to look for our blessings beyond the world that we can see.

Our blessings are outside this world in heavenly places. That's the kind of thing that we hear here. They're spiritual.

God blesses us with every spiritual blessing. Look, that's not to say that there aren't many temporal, material blessings that come our way. In fact, that isn't even to look out on this world and say, you know what? I read in my Bible that God created marriage and created food especially for the sake of believers to be received by us with thanksgiving.

Especially for us. God gives us many temporal blessings, but this is no promise of all of them. In fact, you know what the reality is? Every single one of us in this room, we can all raise our hand and say we do not have all the temporal blessings that we want.

Every one of us can say that. Every one of us know that the reality is that we do not have every material blessing. Nor is there any promise of that in Scripture despite what the health, wealth, prosperity people want to tell us.

The truth is that God has taken temporal things away from every one of us. And we felt it. The truth is, I mean, which one of us? You don't have to be looking at Christianity for gain to admit that there's been times in your life as Christians where you wished you had more money or better health, greater physical ability, more dependable car, an iPhone.

I mean, there's none of us. We all recognize that we don't have all the material and temporal blessings that we could wish we had. And actually that in itself is a spiritual blessing that God withholds from us.

One thing's for certain. All things work together for our good. And you can be certain that the reason that Christianity is basically described as not being noble, not being powerful, not being wise, not being noble, I mean, basically we're looked at as weak, as foolish.

There's good reason for that. Because it's healthy. God wants us in that kind of situation because it's for our greatest good.

Why? Because if we had everything that we wanted, it would be a distraction. It would slow us down. And I'll tell you what, God keeping us needy is a good thing.

That's healthy for your prayer life. You know what? When you become fat, Rod and Craig were reminding me recently that when I worked up in Michigan, I had a cutout from a magazine on my wall there that said America's a sick, fat, godless nation. And I'll tell you this, God doesn't want His people sick, fat, and godless.

Because what happens is if you have too much, you forget God. If God leaves us in a place where we're not needy anymore, we have such a tendency to independence. And you know it if you know your heart at all.

God doesn't want to kill our prayer lives. But I'll tell you this, when it comes to spiritual blessings, you've got them all. If you're a child of God, you've got them all.

All of them! Anybody disappointed? It's like, ah! That's not what I wanted. Well, let's go to number six. Let's hit some examples of these blessings.

In case you were minded to say, well, yeah, but some of the temporal blessings sound pretty good to me. You're telling me about every spiritual blessing, but just saying it like that, it's like, well, what is it? Yeah, Paul doesn't just tell us spiritual blessings and then leave us without some definition about what they are. Let's hit some of the examples of what they are.

Ephesians 1. You follow with me. Let's just do a real fast skim through here and just grab hold of some of these. Come with me.

Notice them. You have it in v. 5. Adoption. You see it there.

Drop down to v. 7. Redemption through His blood. Again, the forgiveness of our trespasses. How about you go down further? 1.9 Making known to us the mystery of His will.

We have knowledge. We basically have a knowledge that 1 Corinthians 2 says that the world doesn't have. They can't comprehend it.

And we have it. We have the mind of Christ. We have a knowledge the world doesn't have.

You keep going down. V. 11 In Him we've obtained an inheritance. We have an inheritance.

You keep going down. V. 13 We are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. You keep going.

So we have the Spirit of God. One of the things that ought to jump out in this book, and I hope it will, v. 19 What is the immeasurable greatness of the power toward us who believe? There is a power that pulsates in us. When you read texts like sin will no longer have dominion over you.

Brethren, there is an unleashing of such power into the lives of Christians. It's almighty. It's according to the mighty power of God.

We are strengthened by the Spirit in our inner man that we might survive and that we might have the ability to comprehend the things that God wants us to comprehend. Brethren, recognize what you have. Power.

If you keep going down through here, what else do you get? You get in v. 5 We've been made alive together with Christ. We have life. If you keep going to v. 10 We have good works.

We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. God makes us good. If you keep going, what do you have? v. 13 We have nearness.

Now Christ Jesus, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near. Oh, we have access. We have nearness to God.

You keep going. v. 14 He's our peace. We have peace.

v. 16 We're reconciled to God. v. 18 There's the access. We both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

You recognize the world can't just run into His presence like the child, the prince, the son of the king can just run into the king's presence. He's not going to be thrown in prison. He's not going to be chided and turned away.

We have access. We're no longer strangers. We have citizenship.

We have membership in the household of God. We are the dwelling place. v. 22 We are the dwelling place for God.

If you go to v. 36, we're partakers of the promises. The promise in Christ Jesus. And like I showed you before, brethren, v. 19 Filled with all the fullness of God.

You just think about this. Brethren, can I show you that Islam is totally carnal? Do you know what Islam promises? Do you know what its blessings are? What's the first one that everybody knows about? How many? Seventy-two virgins. Right.

You can look this up. You can look up. You can see from the Muslims themselves what they promise.

Seventy-two virgins. Milk. Honey.

Pure water. Wine. Soft couches.

Silken clothes. Golden goblets. Lots of trees for shade.

And where most Muslims come from, that's probably a big deal. But I'll tell you what, every one of them is temporal material. Do you know what the carnal man wants? The carnal man does not cherish what I just read to you out of Ephesians.

That was just a quick survey. That wasn't all of them. Brethren, think! Adoption! We get people that come into the church and they feel like, I'm not loved enough.

I'm not included in enough things. Kind of the self-pity thing that James was hitting on. Are you kidding me? Are you in Christ? You are included and you are loved.

You're adopted into the family of God Himself. How about redemption? You know what redemption is? It's about purchase. We've been purchased.

Look, God singled you out of all mankind and spent the price of the blood of His Son, the precious blood of Jesus Christ was spilled in your behalf. Do you recognize? You can go back there to Hosea. You remember Gomer? His whole life? She's on the slave blocks.

That's a picture. Christ came and bought you off those slave blocks. Forgiveness.

We sang about it. My sin, not in part, but the whole. He's taken them all.

He's thrown them into the sea of His forgetfulness. Have you ever read what it says? He has taken your sin and instead of staring them in His eyes where He sees them, Scripture says He's cast those things behind His back, on the ground, and trampled on them with the bottoms of His feet. Your sin is erased.

It's gone. Nearness! Nearness! God has taken foul, wretched things like us. Cursed things like us.

It's like Jesus bringing that leper so close to Him and actually reaching out His hand. He's stunk. Many of you heard Paul Washer when he preaches about the leper.

He says you smell them before you see them. Rotting flesh. Rotting stink and stench.

And look at Christ. He let the leper come near. And He touched him.

See, we don't get it when we drive by that billboard and it says, Cursed. There is no access. We are the ones that should shout, Unclean! Unclean! And keep our distance.

But by the blood of Christ, you who are far off have been brought near. Near to God. That you might know His smile, no longer His frown, no longer His disapproval, but we are accepted in the Beloved.

You know what the Muslims don't recognize? Those 72 virgins? That's the shadow. Men and women coming together in intimacy is but the shadow of what we have in Christ. Spiritual blessings.

And He goes, He takes us all the way to filled with the very fullness of God. This is the pinnacle. This is the pinnacle.

Jonathan Edwards hits on it. How do you fill us with all the fullness of God? It's like these cups that God is just going to fill to overflowing. And through all eternity, we are going to experience more and more.

Because we are always finite. We always have limits to our ability to contain. We are always containers of a certain size.

God is just going to fill every one of us to overflowing and throughout all eternity, we will come to know His love. Think about it. Brethren, this text says that through all the coming ages, He's going to show the immeasurable greatness, the immeasurable lavishness, the immeasurable glory of His grace and kindness toward us who are in Christ Jesus.

Most of us can have that. What you have in Christ, you do not want it. Look, when you have to serve by yourself, like Mary, you don't want to grumble, you don't want to complain.

If you are one of the people of God and you've been given the privilege to mop that floor over there, mow that lawn over there, even if it's all by yourself, and to do it for Christ, you've just got to remember who you are and what you have by who you are. And the God that you have caught the attention of and that He has done such things for you and what He has done, brethren, I just want to ask you, do you know these things? Because this, like I said before, this isn't just legal. This is the heart and soul of our Christianity.

Even things like adoption. You say, isn't adoption legal? Yeah. But I'll tell you what Scripture says.

The Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God. Isn't forgiveness legal? Yeah, you better believe it is. But I'll tell you what Scripture says.

It says that our consciences have been purified by the blood of Christ. All of these things, nearness, access, the power of God, the immeasurable greatness of the power of God. Do you know these things? If you don't know these things, you're not a Christian.

Because these are the blessings that God bestows. And I just have one more. And it's the heavenliness.

Paul uses such terminology in this letter to the Ephesians. In the heavenly places. It's found five times here.

It's not found anywhere else. That prepositional phrase, is not found anywhere else in our Bibles. But it's found five times here.

We can be sure of this. The Apostle does not keep repeating something unless it has some real significance to it. Let me just give you a quick survey here.

Ephesians 1.19 Where it speaks about God making known to us what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe. According to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. Notice this.

And seated Christ at His right hand, where? Where? Scripture will say He's seated with Him on His throne. Here Paul says He has ascended into the heavenly places. Where are the heavenly places? Because remember, He has blessed us with... it's just really an interesting thing.

He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. But He doesn't just stop right there. He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

It's like the blessings are where? They're in the heavenly places. Why does He say they come from the heavenly places? It's like the blessings are there. Not just that they're derived from there or come from

there.

This is where Christ is. It's the next usage that I think really... You take this. Heavenly places is where Christ is.

And then take the next usage which is found in Ephesians 2.6. Notice this. That we are raised up with Christ and God has seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. Now listen, you've got to capture your verb here.

This does not say this is future. This does not say that we are going to be in the future seated with Christ in the heavenly places. It says, Christian, you are seated there now.

Now see, I think this really begins to give us some idea about how this works to help define our spiritual blessings. But let's look at the other two usages as well. Ephesians 3.10 God who created all the world, He's revealed this plan of the mystery in Christ.

And we see in Ephesians 3.10 through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. Now the rulers and authorities here, because there's no reason for us to necessarily take these as the same rulers and authorities in chapter 6, which are specifically defined as being evil, wicked. It is generally assumed that these are probably the same angels that desire to look into our salvation.

God is doing this. He's saving us and blessing us in the sight. You remember the portion of Scripture where Paul's dealing with the head coverings.

He says the angels are watching. Woman ought to have authority on her head. Why? Because of the angels.

Angels. Think about that one for a while. Excuse me.

So basically, if this is referring to the holy angels, then basically the heavenly places would be where Christ is. It's where we're seated with Him. It's also where the holy angels dwell.

Well, I think the last use here stretches the terminology. Let's look at it. Ephesians 6.12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness.

This ought to give us a good feel. You've got rulers and authorities over in chapter 3. Probably the holy angels. You've got the fallen angels here.

I think the idea here is, brethren, what Paul is doing is again, he's taking us outside of this temporal material realm. Our blessings are not of this earth. They're not of this realm.

Just notice. The authorities against the cosmic powers over this present darkness. Against the spiritual forces.

Now this is interesting, because our blessings are spiritual and they are spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. These rulers and authorities are spiritual and they likewise are in the heavenly places. Very interesting that the two descriptive elements of our blessings are also used to describe demons.

I mean, seriously, when you're studying this and you're trying to stand before the church and say, what does this mean that our spiritual blessings are in the heavenly places? This kind of challenges how you're going to present what this means. It's startling to see spiritual and heavenly places used to describe demons and used to describe our blessings that we have in Christ. Wouldn't you agree? But I mean, it's God's Word, so we wrestle not just with principalities and powers, we wrestle with Scripture.

We wrestle with God to figure out God's meanings in things. And it seems in this same letter, if you think about it, how is the devil described? Can you think of maybe Ephesians 2 maybe? How he's described? He's described as the prince of what? The power of the air. Isn't that interesting? You ever just stop and think about that? He's the prince of the power of the air.

Like what? He's king of the air? Like what? The air we breathe? Well, I think the idea is the air up there. The atmosphere. The out there.

It just seems like the idea here is that this is his way of saying otherworldly. It's outside of this world. There are things that are happening that our eyes can't see.

These blessings really are of a realm that are outside where my eyes can see. And I don't think we need to get so hung up with this. Yes, there's a realm out there where demonic warfare takes place.

It's beyond our eyesight. But I think the thing you really want to focus in on is this. The real emphasis as we're looking at spiritual blessings is that it is where Christ is.

It is where we are seated presently with Him. Brethren, our spiritual blessings are there. You know, let me tell you something.

Christian, we literally are seated literally, hear that word, we are literally seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly places right now. Literally. Now hear me.

I'm not saying physically. Physically, you're seated or standing in this room on Hedges Street in San Antonio. I recognize that.

But what Paul is saying to us is literally we spiritually are right now positionally where Christ is. We are in union with Him. And where He is, we are by our union with Him.

Our spiritual blessings are in the heavenly places because our Savior is in the heavenly places. This is the idea. We are joined to Him.

We have a part in Him. Brethren, in our connection, in our vital union with Him, in the Beloved, what that makes us is partakers and participants with Him in what He has and what is true of Him. We become sharers and participants in His life.

We are so bound to Christ by faith in Him, being in Him, that where He is, we are. Our blessings are in these heavenly places. In our vital union with Him, there is a literal reality.

We have to recognize what we are. You see, this idea that the Arminians have that you can basically be saved one day and lost the next day, they just don't go deep enough. They don't recognize what God is actually saying to us in His Word.

You are in such a position and in such a place, nobody can pluck you out of His hand. You are connected to Jesus Christ and nothing can separate you from that. Nothing can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Nothing. It's permanent. This is where He is.

We look for our blessings beyond this world. We look for them in Heaven. Spiritual blessings are heavenly things.

Brethren, you've got to recognize who you are. Your citizenship is not of this place. Your citizenship is in Heaven.

We are pilgrims. We are passing through. What Paul does constantly in this letter and its sister letter, Colossians, is he wants our minds set on things above.

Brethren, he wants to take you away from here. He wants you to get your eyes. That doesn't mean we don't recognize that we're in the world, but we recognize it for what it is.

Yes, it's our Father's world. Yes, He gives us things like marriage and things like food here to be received by us with thanksgiving. Yes, I can look at a sunset.

I can look at the stars. They declare His glory. But brethren, we have to remember this world for what it is.

It is a fallen place. It is under the power of the evil one. There are dangers here.

He doesn't give us every temporal blessing because they can be a snare. Brethren, this is not our lodging place. One time way back I preached a message on the absolute foolishness that it would be if you went to a hotel room and you began to decorate it and you began to put up new drapes and you began to put furniture and buy stuff.

And why? You don't do that in a hotel room. You know why you don't? Because you're just passing through. And if you've got a right way to look, Peter says it.

How ought you to live in light of the fact that all this is going to burn up? How should we live? We are strangers. We are aliens. Our citizenship is of another place.

We're looking for a city with foundations, not one in this world. We're looking for a city with a capital C. Another place. We're going through.

Get your eyes in the right place. You are already seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Do you hear some security in that? You are there! It's not like you're going to get there.

And hopefully, if you're in Christ already, it's not like, well, you know, I've got to be real careful because if I sin too much, or I do all this, you know, that place that's there in reserve for me, I might be cut off from it. Brethren, don't you recognize if you're in Christ, He's going to see it. He's going to see you through.

You start to stray. He puts His fear in you that you not depart. You start to stray.

He's going to come with you with the rod. He's going to discipline you. He doesn't let His children go away and stray away and fall ultimately.

Brethren, these blessings, they are spiritual blessings. They come from heaven. They lead to heaven.

They have a heavenly nature about them. They are such blessings as we're going to enjoy in heaven forever. Brethren, we have to recognize Christians are in this, we have this very strange and wonderful position.

You walk among the crowds out there at Walmart. You're not like them. Brethren, you have the name of God on you.

You're otherworldly. You're aliens. You don't have tentacles hanging off and look like some Martian.

You're more different than that. You are alive and they're dead. You're blessed and they're cursed.

You're on your way to heaven. They're on their way to hell. You are children of the King and you are washed with the blood and you bear not a single sin to your account.

You're the forgiven. You're the free. You're the blessed.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Look what He's done for us. To God be all the glory.

You're dismissed.

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