

“Praise God!” (Part 3)

Text: Ephesians 1:10-14

Series: Ephesians [#3]

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Theme: **Praise God For Your Spiritual Blessings.**

Introduction

Today we come back for our third and final look at opening verses of Ephesians. Verses 3-14 form a great, grand chorus of praise. Its theme is simple, but also inexhaustible: *Praise God for you spiritual blessings*. Remember that verse 3 is the key verse to this section,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”

God *has* blessed *every* believer with *every* spiritual blessing in Christ. God poured out all these blessings on us when we came to faith in Christ. In addition, He continues to shower us with His grace every day.

We have already seen some examples of God’s grace —

- God has chosen each believer for Himself;
- God has redeemed us;
- God has revealed to us the “mystery” (the “*not before-known truth*”) that some day everything will come together, be summed up as it ought to be in Christ.

Today we see two more of Paul’s opening examples — that God *Values* us and that He *Keeps* us.

Paul would say the same thing to us in the 21st century as he did to those believers in the first century — “*Praise God!*” *Praise God for you spiritual blessings*.

God Values You.

The believer’s value to God is seen in the “inheritance.” Go to the end of verse 10,

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.”

Some of you may have noticed a difference in your Bible at the beginning of verse 11. Most of our English versions read “*we have obtained*” or “*received an inheritance*.” A few read, “*we were made an inheritance or heritage*.” Then, the NIV reads, “*we were chosen*.” This comes

from the editors' choice of a manuscript reading with a different word than the one most other versions accept.

The structure Paul used leaves us several possibilities. Both “*receiving*” and “*being made an inheritance*” fit the language. And both ideas are found in the Bible. In the Old Testament Israel is spoken of as:

- God’s “own possession;”
- His “inheritance;”
- His “allotment.”
- i.e., Israel is a *valuable* possession of God; He claimed it as His possession, His treasure.

Then the New Testament speaks of:

- believers having the “reward” and “promise of the eternal inheritance;”
- of believers being “heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ;”

So, while I think Paul’s main intent is that *we have been given an inheritance* by God, let’s think about both.

First, believers have *received* an inheritance from God. We know the Bible tells us that God is love and that He loves us. God loves and values each believer beyond any human measure. Here Paul tells us that the great value God has placed on believers is seen in the inheritance He has given to us, already received in part by being redeemed, accepted, having the Holy Spirit within us, having fellowship with God, being used by Him to accomplish His work.

But there is more to come! Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:3-5,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

The full realization is ready and waiting for us, to be seen and received “*in the last time,*” i.e., when Christ returns. And we are protected by God until that day. Our inheritance is “*imperishable*” — it will never wear out, never become obsolete or be taken away. It will never become “*defiled*” — no stain, weakness or sin will tarnish it. It will never “*fade away*” — the glory and beauty will always be fresh and full (*how different that is everything we have and see now!*).

While there is much we don’t know about heaven and eternity with God, we do know

that He values us so much that He has prepared and will give us a wonderful, breathtaking, perfect, eternal inheritance.

Then, let's also note something of the value God has for us seen in the fact that He has made us *His inheritance*, His chosen and prized possessions. Later in this chapter, 1:18,

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, *what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*”

Stop and think about that for a moment. *There is a wealth of glory to God in us* — in you and me. God has chosen us, He has redeemed us to be His portion or inheritance. We are His treasured possession and bring a wealth of glory to Him. There is nothing in all of God's creation, in all of the space + time realm, nothing in all of God's created things and beings, that He values as much as, and that brings Him as much glory as His people, as you and me!

Praise God for your spiritual blessings! Without doubt, *God Values You!*

Now, let's move to the basis, certainty and goal of this inheritance. The *basis* of this inheritance is *God's grace*. Verse 13 reminds us that all of this comes to us after we hear the gospel of salvation and when believe — all of which is by God's grace. Verse 6 reminds us that God has “freely bestowed” His grace on us in Christ. Verses 7-8 tells us our redemption and forgiveness are “according to the riches of [God's] grace which He lavished on us.” It is all by God's grace, not by anything we are or have become on our own, nor by anything we have done.

The *certainty* of this inheritance is *God's sovereign will*. Go back to the end of verse 10 again,

“In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His *purpose* who works all things after the counsel of His *will*.”

By His sovereign will, in line with His purposes, God chose us before time began, as we saw earlier in verse 5. And, just so we are certain, Paul reminds us that God “works all things after the counsel of His will.” Receiving the fullness of our inheritance is not dependent on our performance — *aren't you glad! I am!* Again, it is *certain* because of *God's sovereign will*.

The *goal* of this inheritance is *God's glory*. Verse 12, “to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of *His glory*.” When Paul speaks of “the first to hope in Christ” he is not thinking of different classes of believers, not of Jews and Gentiles, but simply the first in “*time*” — he and others who believed before the believers at Ephesus even heard the gospel. The next two verses go on to tie all believers together equally. All believers and all their inheritance, all of God's inheritance in them, have the goal of bringing full, rich, and great glory to God.

So the basis, certainty and goal of the inheritance also show how *valuable* each and every

believer is to God.

God Keeps You.

The Holy Spirit has sealed you for God. Look at verse 13, (13-14; 13 READ)

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise.”

You were sealed “*in Him*” — in Christ. All of our blessings are “*in Christ*.” Remember, as we stated in the first week, this truth is stated in one way or another at least eleven times in 1:1-14. Forgiveness of sins, everlasting life — all of God’s blessings are wrapped up in Jesus. “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:12).

We have been *sealed*. This word was used in a variety of ways in Paul’s time. At least three common uses and pictures would instantly come to mind when the Ephesians read this.

First, being sealed, meaning to be marked as *genuine*. They used wax seals to mark papers as genuine, much as we do today. The seal marked something as *the real thing*. In 1891 an inventor came up with an automatic lubrication device for heavy machinery. Up til then big machines had to be stopped frequently and oiled manually. That meant delays, *and cost money!* The inventor formed his own company, *Elijah McCoy Mfg. Co.* Other companies quickly came out with similar devices. McCoy’s sales staff coined the phrase “*the real McCoy*” to emphasize that people were getting the *genuine article* when they bought this product. If Jesus is your Savior, you have the Holy Spirit in you to guide, instruct, correct, challenge, give wisdom, to strengthen, and to protect you. *And*, His presence in you is a *mark*, an evidence that you are “*the real thing*,” that you truly are a child of God.

Secondly, the term *sealed* was used to indicate a mark of *ownership*. Marks or brands were put on animals and property to identify who owned them, just as we do today. As well, a king’s officials and soldiers had insignia on their garments or uniforms that marked them. The Holy Spirit’s presence in you is a mark that you have been redeemed, purchased from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of Christ (Colossians 1:13). You belong to God.

And then, thirdly, the term sealed was used to indicate the mark of *protection*. Bearing the mark told others, both literally and figuratively, “*Don’t touch! Don’t harm! This one belongs to me. Touch him and you have to deal with me!*” The Holy Spirit’s presence within you is a mark indicating God’s care and protection of you. God’s power is *sufficient* for your greatest threats, needs, and disasters. God’s power is *efficient* to keep you, to protect you for Himself, and bring you safely into His presence in heaven.

Yes, “God Keeps You!” “The Holy Spirit has sealed you for God.” *Praise God For This Spiritual Blessing!*

The Holy Spirit is the pledge of your inheritance. Let’s start at verse 13 again,

“In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.” (13-14)

He is the pledge, the guarantee, the deposit of our inheritance. This term refers to the first payment which guarantees that the rest will be paid in full.

What does that mean specifically, practically? The Holy Spirit being within you is part of God’s first, great, miraculous work of making you what you will be when you are with Him in heaven. The Holy Spirit is God’s pledge, His guarantee that He will complete what He started in you when you received Christ. He will do that when you see Christ face to face. And so it was with confidence that Paul told the believers at Philippi, “... I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (1:6).

Make no mistake about this, if you are a believer,

- no matter what you think about yourself;
- no matter what others think about you;
- no matter what lies Satan’s forces whisper or shout to you,

God is keeping and will keep you! Remember Jesus’ words,

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30)

Yes, God is keeping and will keep you!

Conclusion.

“*Praise God!*” Praise God for your spiritual blessings! God in His grace *has* blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. He has:

- chosen us for Himself, to be His children;

- He has redeemed us from sin and death to holiness & life;
- He has revealed to us that all things will be summed up, be brought together as they ought to be, in Christ;
- He has given us an inheritance and made us His inheritance;
- He has sealed us with the Holy Spirit.
- He has done all this ... and so much more.

Question: Have you received Christ and this great, forever transforming outpouring of God's grace? If not, *why not?*

If you have, my question is: Are you living in light of this great grace which God has and is showering upon you? Curly was a farmer in Australia. If you asked people what he was like, most would have politely told you, "He's different." *Different* in that he never washed — himself or his clothes. But he *was* friendly — he was always glad to see people; his front door was always open (now, it was open because it was broken and he never got around to fixing it— but his door and heart were always open!). His house had a dirt floor — which was much more *dirty* than most dirt floors. Chickens and other critters wandered in and out and stayed a while. Everyone considered him poor, "*different,*" or "*eccentric.*" When he died, the rest of the story came out. He actually was a very wealthy man. A very wealthy man *living well below his means for no apparent reason.*

Sadly, some Christians live spiritually like Curly did physically, in spite of having been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. They live *well below their means for no apparent reason.*

In the next few quiet moments you spend with God,

- Thank Him that He values you beyond all measure and keeps you through all dangers.
- Thank God for His rich and complete spiritual blessings.
- Thank God that He "will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)
- Determine and commit yourself to live *according to your means*, according to "[God's] riches in glory in Christ Jesus," and so, to bring God glory.

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