

<p>1. God's great blessings are heavenly blessings</p>	<p>I. THE ETERNAL PLAN OF GOD FOR THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER, 1:3-23</p> <p>A. The Blessings of God (Part 1), 1:3-7</p> <p>3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:</p>	<p>holy and without blame before him in love:</p> <p>5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,</p> <p>6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.</p>	<p>love</p> <p>3. God has adopted us as His sons</p> <p>a. Predestinated—foreordained, planned—to adopt believers: Was His will</p> <p>b. How: By Christ</p> <p>c. Why: To praise His grace</p>
<p>2. God has chosen us to be holy & blameless</p> <p>a. How: In Christ</p> <p>b. Purpose: To live before Him in</p>	<p>4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be</p>	<p>7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;</p>	<p>4. God has redeemed us—forgiven our sins</p> <p>a. How: By Christ's blood</p> <p>b. Source: His grace</p>

Section I
THE ETERNAL PLAN OF GOD FOR THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER,
Ephesians 1:3-23

Study 1: THE BLESSINGS OF GOD (Part One)

Text: Ephesians 1:3-7

Aim: To lay hold of the spiritual blessings of God.

Memory Verse:

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

INTRODUCTION:

Have you ever heard about a person who did not trust banks, so he hid his money some place in his house? Story after story is told about large sums of money being found in mattresses or hidden under floors. More than once, we have heard of people who went lacking in meeting their basic needs during their life. After their death, fortunes were found that had never been touched.

Do you own treasures that you do not use? Many Christian believers do. Many believers live in spiritual poverty when God intended them to live like royalty.

And this brings us to the point of this Scripture: before we met the Lord, He had already invested an eternity of spiritual blessings for the Christian believer. This Scripture deals with God's plan for the world, His eternal plan; it deals with the great blessings of God which He pours out upon those who trust His Son, Jesus Christ, as their Savior.

OUTLINE:

1. The power that exalted Christ as the Supreme Head of the church (v.3).
2. God has chosen us to be holy and blameless (v.4).
3. God has adopted us as His sons (vv.5-6).
4. God has redeemed us—forgiven our sins (v.7).

1. GOD'S GREAT BLESSINGS ARE HEAVENLY BLESSINGS (v.3).

Throughout history God has used two methods of blessings to deal with man. Before Christ, God dealt with man by blessing him with material blessings. He promised Abraham and Israel land and wealth and fame. But Israel misused and hoarded the material blessings. Instead of sharing its blessings with other nations, Israel isolated itself and claimed superiority and God-given rights over other nations of the earth. However, since Christ, God deals with man spiritually, blessing him with spiritual blessings.

Five things should be noted about this.

1. Spiritual blessings *are of the Spirit*. It is the Spirit that controls man and the circumstances that surround him. A man may feel bad; he may be down, depressed and oppressed; but if his spirit is strong, he arises and conquers his feelings. He controls and overcomes the oppressing circumstances, and he lives a victorious day. But if his spirit is weak, whether at work or at play, he often wallows around in self-pity, grumbling and griping and living a defeated day. And too often the days stretch into weeks and months until a person's life is down more than it is up—all because the spirit is too weak to conquer. Thus, the major blessings of God are bound to be blessings that are spiritual—that enable a person to control his life.

2. Spiritual blessings are the very opposite of temporal blessings. They are the *blessings of the inner man*, the blessings of the immortal. But of all blessings, they are the most glorious and satisfying. They are the blessings that erase the loneliness, alienation, and purposelessness of man. They are the blessings that give man an abundance of life.

3. Spiritual blessings are vastly superior to material blessings. They are *permanent and perfect and eternal*, lasting forever. They are of the very same nature as God Himself. Spiritual blessings exist and can be experienced both upon earth (the physical dimension of being) and in heaven (the spiritual dimension of being).

4. Spiritual blessings are found only *in Christ*. Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead and exalted to the right hand of God the Father. He is in heaven, surrounded by all the heavenly atmosphere and blessings. All heavenly blessings are His; therefore, if a person is to experience the spiritual blessings, he must be *in Christ*. If a person is *in Christ*, then he sits *in heaven* with Christ. How is this possible? In God's mind, *faith in Christ* makes a person just like Christ: holy and righteous and acceptable for heaven. Therefore, when a person believes in Christ, God's mind sees the person in Christ; God sees the person identified with Christ, seated in heaven. And being seated in heaven, the person can experience all the blessings of heaven.

5. God dealt with man in material blessings first because man had to learn several things.

- a. *An earthly inheritance does not last*. It is subject to being lost or stolen. We either watch our material possessions deteriorate or else we leave our material possessions behind for others.
- b. *An earthly nation and material inheritance cannot bring peace and security*. Peace and security are of the spirit. Earthly nations and material things are of the earth, of a corruptible nature. Thus nations and material things do not solve the spiritual struggle that man senses within his own being. Neither can nations and material things erase the spiritual divisions between men and between man and God.

- c. *Man has within his inner being a basic selfishness and greed.* Man finds a tendency, an unregulated urge, that desires and seeks the material and hoards the corruptible to the neglect of the spiritual.
- d. *Man must undergo a basic change of character to be freed of this urge,* this tendency that causes so much bondage, disruption, and division within one's self and between men. Man must be *born again*, made into a *new creation*, created into a *new man*—spiritually, permanently, perfectly, eternally. And such a spiritual creation must be performed by Someone much greater than himself. Man must be recreated by the hand of God Himself.

APPLICATION:

There are no spiritual blessings outside of Christ and heavenly places. In practical terms this means that there is nothing apart from Christ that can satisfy those who love Jesus. Any passion that does not end with Jesus Christ as the destination is simply a counterfeit distraction.

“Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Ps.16:11).

If we can not find what we need at His right hand, we have no need of it at all.

ILLUSTRATION:

Will your blessings be there when you need them? Warren Wiersbe shares this humorous illustration with us:

One of the funniest cartoons I ever saw showed a pompous lawyer reading a client's last will and testament to a group of greedy relatives. The caption read: “I, John Jones, being of sound mind and body, spent it all!”

When Jesus Christ wrote His last will and testament for His church, He made it possible for us to share His spiritual riches. Instead of spending it all, Jesus Christ paid it all...He wrote us into His will, then He died so the will would be in force. Then He arose again that He might become the heavenly Advocate (lawyer) to make sure the terms of the will were correctly followed!¹

QUESTIONS:

1. What are some of the material things of this world that men strive for? Do Christian believers get caught up in this also?
2. How can we turn from our basic desire to satisfy our material desires and urges?
3. Do you believe that you have access to all of God's spiritual blessings? How is that possible?
4. Who or what is the source of all spiritual blessings?

2. GOD HAS CHOSEN US TO BE HOLY AND BLAMELESS (v.4).

Just imagine! God determined before the world was ever created that He would have a people...

- who would be “in Him,” that is, in His Son, Jesus Christ
- who would be “holy and without blame”
- who would live “before Him in love”—forever and ever

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe. *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, Vol.2. (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1989), p.10.

This means a most wonderful thing: God wants us to be with Him. God does not want us separated from Him, gripped by sin and shame, sorrow and pain, death and hell. God wants us to live forever and ever with Him. In fact, note that God has determined that some will live with Him and Christ. He has “chosen us”—chosen believers—to live with Him. No amount of rebellion and rejection, cursing and denial of Him will stop His purpose and plan. God will have a people who will live with Him, and He will continue to choose us until He has the number He has intended.

Now, note the great blessing of God: that we should be holy and without blame before Him.

1. The word “holy” means to be set apart and consecrated to God. It is the same word that is used for “saint” in verse one.

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Co.7:1).

2. The word “blameless” means to be free from sin, dirt, and filth; to be above reproach and without blemish; to be without fault and defilement.

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Ph.2:15).

God has chosen the believer to be perfect. But note: the believer’s perfection is *in Christ and in Christ alone*. No man—not even a believer—can live a perfect and sinless life. No man is righteous or ever will be. Jesus Christ is the only Person who has ever lived a sinless and perfect life; therefore, He is the only Person who has the right to live with God. Our only hope of ever living with God is to *believe in Jesus Christ*—believe so much that God will take our faith and count it as the righteousness of Christ.

QUESTIONS:

1. How does it make you feel to know that God chose you?
2. Are you choosing God by separating yourself from the sins of the world and drawing closer to Him?
3. What is your obligation to God in light of all that He has done (according to verse 4)?
4. What is the ultimate goal of being holy and blameless?
5. What kinds of barriers keep you from living a life of holiness?

3. GOD HAS ADOPTED US AS HIS SONS (vv.5-6).

Note: our adoption was predestinated, that is, foreordained. This is most striking when we consider how sinful and depraved we are and how much we have cursed, rejected, and rebelled against God. The fact that God wills and finds pleasure in adopting us and that He counts it as good is too much to believe. Yet, this is exactly what He says. Now note two significant things.

1. The word “foreordained” does not mean that God chooses some persons for salvation and everyone else for eternal punishment. Scripture teaches the exact opposite.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn.3:16).

The word “predestination” means to destine or appoint before, to foreordain, to predetermine. The basic Greek word means to *mark off or to set off* the boundaries of something. The idea is a glorious picture of what God is doing for the *believer*. The boundary is marked and set off for the believer: the boundary of being adopted as a child of God. The believer shall be adopted, made just like Christ and conformed to His very likeness and image. Nothing can stop God’s purpose for the believer. The believer may struggle and suffer through the sin and shame of this world; he may even stumble and fall or become discouraged and down-hearted. But if he is a genuine child of God, he will not be defeated, not totally. He will soon arise from his fall and begin to follow Christ again. He is predestinated to be a brother of Christ, to worship and serve Christ throughout all eternity.

“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ep.1:11).

2. The word “adoption” means to *place as a son*.

3. Adoption is by Jesus Christ and by Him alone. God accepts us because we believe and trust His Son Jesus Christ. He tells us plainly that He wants His Son to have many brothers and sisters who will love, worship, and serve Him both now and forever. Therefore, when a person wants to live for Jesus Christ—wants to live for Him so much that he *entrusts all he is and has to Christ*—God takes that person’s trust and adopts him, makes him a brother or sister to Jesus Christ.

“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Ro.8:15).

4. God’s purpose in adoption is that we might live forever—live to the praise of the glory of His grace.

“That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ep.2:7; see Ep.1:18).

ILLUSTRATION:

Have you ever known children who were orphans? They did not have a family, a home? In most cases, they are destined to a childhood without loving parents to care for them and to love them. It surely has to be one of the most lonely feelings known to man.

How many of us had our hearts broken for the orphans of a foreign country in misery? Some adults have been so moved by the need that they have packed suitcases and flown to other nations seeking to adopt a needy child. What kind of child did they adopt? A child who was not in their normal circle of influence. A child who could not care for himself. A child who was drained of love. A child who had no hope at all.

And yet, these adults wanted to make a difference and share their love with children who did not even speak the same language. These loving adults took the initiative and gave, and they continue to give to these children whom they have now legally adopted.

And so it is with our heavenly Father. When we were separated from Him due to our sin, separated because we were out of His will, we became orphans with

eternal needs. We were drained of love until we met Love. And we were orphaned children with no hope until we met God the Father. But He sent us His Son to care for our every need.

God, our Father, took the initiative and came to us and adopted us just because He loved us and because He wanted to “according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ep.1:5).

QUESTIONS:

1. What qualities did God pick out in your life that forced Him to adopt you? (Hint. The answer is zero. Why is this so?)
2. How meaningful is the fact that you have been adopted by your heavenly Father?
3. As you think about adoption, can you think of someone that you would like to join the family of God? What steps can you take to lead that person into the family of God?

4. GOD HAS REDEEMED US—FORGIVEN OUR SINS (v.7).

The word “redemption” is one of the great words of the Bible. It conveys the idea of deliverance or setting a man free by paying a ransom. For example, a prisoner of war or a kidnapped person is ransomed or redeemed, or a convicted criminal is freed from the penalty of death. In every case the man is powerless to free himself. He cannot pay the penalty demanded to liberate himself from his situation or bondage. Note several significant facts.

1. Man has been captivated or kidnapped by several forces.
 - a. *The force of sin.* All men sin and cannot help but sin. Man is sold under sin. Sin has captivated him (Ro.3:23; 7:14).
 - b. *The force of corruption and death.* The whole creation is corrupt (Ro.8:21). Everything wastes away; it deteriorates, decays, ages, and eventually dies. Corruption and death have captivated man. (See 1 Co.15:42, 50; Ga.6:8; 2 Pe.1:4; 2:12, 19.)
 - c. *The force of Satan.* All unbelievers are under the power and influence of Satan. He has blinded their minds to the gospel (2 Co.4:4). He works in the children of disobedience (Ep.2:2). They are captivated by him (1 Jn.5:19).
2. Three key ideas are included in the concept of redemption.
 - a. *Man needs to be liberated, delivered, and set free.*
 - b. *Man is unable to liberate himself.* He has no energy, no power, no ability to free himself.
 - c. *God has redeemed man by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ.* God Himself has paid the ransom for man’s release—the ransom of a life for a life. God gave His own Son so that man might be set free. This is extremely important to note: when a man *truly* calls upon the Lord to save him, God buys him right out of the marketplace of this corruptible life (Ro.10:13). God redeems him once for all, purchases and removes him from further sale. He is redeemed eternally (see Ga.3:13; 4:5; Co.4:5).
3. God redeems man because of the riches of His grace. He loves man with an unbelievable love—a love so great that it spurs Him to do whatever is necessary to save man.

“Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mt.20:28).

A CLOSER LOOK:

(1:7) **Forgiveness:** the word “forgiveness” means to send off, to send away, to release, to let go. The word for “sin” means transgression, trespass, a falling by the way, or deviating from the way. All men...

- have transgressed the law of God
- have deviated from God
- have fallen from the way of God

Therefore, all men stand guilty of breaking the law of God, and the penalty for breaking the law is death. However, the blood of Jesus Christ brings forgiveness to men. How? Jesus Christ died for man. He took the penalty of sins and bore the punishment Himself. He was able to do this because He was the Perfect and Ideal Man, and as the Ideal Man, He could stand for and represent all men. When He died, He died as the Ideal Man, as the Representative for all men. Any person who really believes that Jesus Christ died for him is forgiven of his sins.

**“Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins”
(Ac.5:31).**

ILLUSTRATION:

Do you think you are worth the price that God paid to ransom you? The Bible says that you did not come cheap. For example:

Suppose you are standing outside of a great auction room...and you hear a clerk say, “He paid \$25.00 for a picture, another man paid \$600,000.00 for one.” You know quite a lot about the two pictures: The twenty-five dollar picture may be any one of 10,000 little dogs done by amateur artists who paint...hoping to get paid for them. The six hundred thousand dollar picture—was it a Gainsborough, Rembrandt, Reubens?... You can judge the painting by the price that is paid for it.

We can judge ourselves by the price Christ paid for us...when I form conclusions that are justified from other portions of the Scripture—how great was my sinfulness, the depths of my nature and the height of His love.²

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you believe that God’s grace is sufficient to forgive even your worst sin? Why or why not?
2. According to Scripture, how does redemption come to the Christian?
3. What price did God pay to redeem you from sin’s bondage? What price did you pay? Who paid the greater price?
4. Can you tell a person how he can have his sins forgiven, how he can be redeemed? What is the value of being able to do so?

² Donald Grey Barnhouse. *Let Me Illustrate*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H. Revell, 1967), p.262.

SUMMARY:

It humbles us to know that we had absolutely nothing to contribute to our salvation: Jesus paid it all. God chose us. We are blessed because of God's love that loved us before we even knew Him. In light of this great news, we need to remember:

1. God's great blessings are heavenly blessings.
2. God has chosen us to be holy and blameless.
3. God has adopted us as His sons.
4. God has redeemed us—He has forgiven our sins.

(THE BLESSINGS OF GOD continues in the next passage.)

**PERSONAL JOURNAL NOTES
(Reflection & Response)**

1. The most important thing that I learned from this lesson was:

2. The area that I need to work on the most is:

3. I can apply this lesson to my life by:

4. Closing Statement of Commitment: