



# Every Spiritual Blessing

## Kicking It Off

What is one thing you are genuinely thankful for this week, even if it is small or silly?

## Read

Ephesians 1:1-14

## Summary

We sometimes need to realign our view of church. We show up wondering if the music is our style, if the sermon hits the right notes, if the people make us feel welcome. All fair questions, but they're the wrong starting point. Because the whole thing, gathering, singing, serving, all of it, was never about us in the first place. It's about God. And when that finally clicks, it takes a weight off your shoulders you didn't even know you were carrying.

Think about it like this. Before anything existed, before the stars or the oceans or you, God looked ahead and picked you. Not because you were impressive. Not because you figured something out. He just wanted you. Then Jesus came and paid every debt you ever racked up, moral and otherwise, and adopted you into the family. Full rights. Real son, real daughter. Not a guest who needs to earn the bed. And then the Holy Spirit comes and basically stamps the whole thing sealed, like a letter that can't be tampered with. Your inheritance is locked in.

So when life gets hard, and it will, you're not some poor kid hoping Dad doesn't kick you out for being cranky. You're family. You can tell Him you're scared. You can cling to Him in the storm. He actually loves when you do that.

And when you gather with other believers, stop worrying about whether you sing well or talk smoothly at the potluck. Sing anyway. Talk anyway. Pray with someone who doesn't know Jesus yet. You might mess it up and that doesn't matter. None of this was ever resting on your performance.

You were chosen, you were bought, and you've been sealed. So live thankful, and be brave about it.

## Discussion Questions

1. Was there anything from the sermon or the passage that stuck out to you?
2. Many people today treat church attendance as optional, believing they can get the same content online. What keeps you showing up to gather with a local body, and has that reason shifted over time?
3. Praise is meant to be an action, expressed with voice, body, and life, not simply a feeling held quietly. What is one specific way you are comfortable praising God, and what is one way that still feels awkward or unnatural to you?
4. The Father's love is described as lavished, running, even undignified in its intensity. Does picturing God that way feel comforting, unsettling, or both, and why do you think that is?
5. In the ancient world, adoption granted full legal rights with no second-class standing. Where in your life do you still find yourself trying to earn your keep with God rather than living as a fully adopted child?

## Significant Quotes from Sermon

"It's not about you. It's never been about you. It's always been about Him. It's always been about bringing praise to God."

"He lavishes you in His grace. The Father is running toward you. He isn't measured. He isn't proper. He lifts up His garments, He girds Himself, and He starts running. That's how much He loves you."

"You don't owe anything, because God has wiped your slate clean, but you should be thankful. You don't have an adopted child go into the home and say, 'All right, you adopted me, now put me to work. How do I earn my keep?' That's not why you're here."

"The seal of the Spirit is better than any human insurance plan you could possibly imagine. And so now we can truly be brave. We can live the life that God has called us to live. Be brave in your praise. Be brave in your worship."

## Sermon Notes

**Ephesians 1:1–14**

*Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,*

*To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:*

*2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*3 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, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ 10 as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.*

*11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, 12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

## Outline

1. The Father Chose Us (vv. 3–6)
  - a. Before the foundation of the world, God chose us and predestined us for adoption in love (vv. 4–5).
  - b. Our faith is not evidence of intelligence; God's sovereignty means He revealed the narrow road to us.
  - c. God loves everyone and desires all to be redeemed, but He will not force His presence on those who reject Him.
  - d. Praise must be action, not feeling: sing, dance, kneel, speak, serve. Our voices please the Father because He made them.
2. The Son Redeemed Us (vv. 7–12)
  - a. In Him we have redemption through His blood, grace lavished unmeasured upon us (vv. 7–8).
  - b. The Father is undignified in His love, running toward us rather than waiting at a distance.
  - c. Roman adoption gave full legal standing; likewise we are not second-class children but true sons and daughters.
  - d. Our moral and economic debts have been paid by Christ; we owe Him nothing and cannot earn our keep.
  - e. Service, ministry, and evangelism flow from thankfulness, never from penance or performance.
3. The Spirit Sealed Us (vv. 13–14)
  - a. The Holy Spirit is the seal guaranteeing our inheritance until we acquire full possession of it.
  - b. Ancient seals protected a message from tampering; the Spirit guarantees God's promises will arrive intact.
  - c. Christian hope is neither naive optimism nor constant gloom; the world is broken, but redemption is certain.
  - d. The martyrs endured suffering because they knew no earthly harm could separate them from eternal life.

## Notes

There is a question worth asking at the start of every Sunday, and it has nothing to do with the music selection or the length of the message. The question is this: why are we here at all? Many in our culture, and even in our churches, have begun to wonder whether gathering still matters. Sermons stream freely online. Worship playlists are a thumb-tap away. If the content is available everywhere, what makes the gathering of a local body worth the effort? The answer requires a shift in perspective that cuts against nearly every instinct we have been trained to follow. It is not about us. It has never been about us. It has always been about Him.

This is the tough love the church needs to hear, because the enemy, whether we name him as our flesh, the devil, or the world, has a consistent strategy. He wants us looking at ourselves. He wants our achievements magnified, our preferences centered, our opinions enshrined. Opinions are not the problem. We all have them, and we should. The problem comes when our opinions about style, music, or preaching become the reason we show up. If that is why we gather, we have missed the point entirely. Worship is not a service catered to our tastes. It is a response to the One who is worthy.

Paul understood this, and he opens his letter to the Ephesians with what reads almost like a song. It is a three-stanza poem, thoroughly trinitarian, overflowing with thanksgiving. Look at what the Father has done. Look at what the Son has done. Look at what the Spirit has done. Each movement ends the same way, with praise directed not to man, not to our institutions, not to our accomplishments, but to God alone.

The first stanza belongs to the Father. Before the foundation of the world, He chose us. He predestined us for adoption in love. This doctrine opens a can of worms for many, but the point is not to start an argument about who is in and who is out. The point is to shift our gaze toward the sovereignty of God. Our faith is not evidence of our intelligence. None of us stumbled onto this narrow road through our own cleverness. He revealed it, and He drew us in. God loves everyone, and His desire is for everyone to be redeemed. Yet some reject Him, and He will not force His presence on those who refuse it. But if you wonder whether He chose you, the answer is yes. He has loved you since before anything was made. The only question left is whether you will love Him back.

Loving Him back is not a feeling held quietly in the heart. Praise must be an action. Sing, even if you cannot sing. Dance, even if you cannot dance. Kneel in prayer. Speak of Him to others. Find some way to respond with your body, your voice, your life. When we assume God only deserves our praise if we do it well, we have slipped back into making it about ourselves. Your Father made your voice, and He loves hearing it.

The second stanza belongs to the Son. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, which He

lavished upon us. That word, lavished, should stop us in our tracks. It means unmeasured. If we are honest, most of us think grace must be rationed carefully, doled out in small cups because each drop of the blood of Christ is so precious. But Paul insists on the opposite. The Father runs toward us. He does not stand on dignity. He lifts His garments and sprints to meet us. It is an undignified love, a crazy, passionate love that should unsettle us as much as it comforts us.

And through that love we are adopted. In the Roman world, adoption carried full legal weight. An adopted son had every right of a biological one. No second-class status, no permanent record of his former name. He was simply family. This is what Paul wants the Ephesians, and us, to grasp. We are not visitors in God's house. We are children. We did not earn our way in, and we cannot earn our keep now that we are here. The debt we owed, both moral and economic, has been paid in full through the blood of Christ. We owe Him nothing.

That last sentence is uncomfortable. It feels wrong, because we suspect we owe God a great deal. But the entire point of grace is that He has wiped the slate clean. An adopted child does not walk into the home asking how to pay for the bed. Neither do we. The church does people a disservice when it suggests otherwise, when service becomes penance, when ministry becomes the way we keep our standing. That thinking has to go. What remains, when the debt is gone, is thankfulness. And thankfulness is the proper fuel for everything we do together, from feeding the poor to hosting small groups to greeting a stranger at the door.

The third stanza belongs to the Spirit. When we heard the Word of truth and believed, we were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, the guarantee of our inheritance. In the ancient world, a seal meant that a message could be trusted. If the seal was intact, the contents were safe from tampering. The Spirit is that seal on us. He guarantees that what God has promised will arrive intact. This is why following Christ is neither naive optimism nor constant gloom. The world is broken. We should not pretend otherwise. But the Spirit reminds us, day by day, that God will redeem all things, and nothing in this world can separate us from the eternal life He has secured for us. The martyrs knew this. They walked into fire and toward lions because their lives were already sealed.

So what does this mean for how we live? It means we can be brave. The insurance of the Spirit is greater than anything this world can offer, which frees us to praise without fear. Sing, even if your voice trembles. Lift your hands. Talk to someone at the potluck. Encourage a brother or sister. Pray with someone who does not yet know the Father. You might fail. It does not matter. Our salvation does not rest on our performance, and that is exactly what makes the bravery possible.

And when someone you know comes to faith, we will not throw a party in your honor. We will not name you the evangelist of the year. We will come back together on Sunday and give thanks to Jesus, because He is the one who opens blind eyes and softens hard hearts. He did the work. We simply had the joy of being part of it.

Every spiritual blessing has been given to us, and the blessings all point in the same direction. Not inward, toward our comfort or our preferences, but upward, toward the praise of His glory. The Father chose us. The Son redeemed us. The Spirit sealed us. The right response is not to negotiate the terms of our discipleship but to fall on our knees in thanksgiving and then get up and live like people who have been loved beyond measure. That is what the church is for. That is why we gather. And that is why, when the storms come, and they will come, we can cling to our Father and know that we are not alone in them. He is more powerful than the storm, and He has already won.

## Blog

Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians with one of the most theologically dense sentences ever written. In the original Greek, Ephesians 1:3–14 is a single, unbroken sentence. It moves from one truth to the next without pausing for breath, piling blessing upon blessing until we are buried under the weight of what God has done. The sentence is structured around the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and each section ends with the same refrain: "to the praise of His glory." The repetition is purposeful. It tells us where the whole passage is headed. Everything God has done for us exists for a purpose larger than us.

Before Paul gets to any of that, though, he drops a thesis statement in verse 3 that governs everything that follows. God "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Three words in that sentence deserve careful attention. First, "has blessed" is in the past tense. God's blessing has already been bestowed upon us. Second, "every," not some spiritual blessings and not most of them. Every one. If you are in Christ, there is no blessing left on the shelf with your name still waiting to be claimed. Third, "spiritual." This doesn't mean immaterial or otherworldly, as if these blessings only matter after you die. "Spiritual" here means "of the Spirit," produced and mediated by the Holy Spirit. These are real, substantive realities that the Spirit brings into the life of the believer right now. Paul spends the next eleven verses unpacking what those blessings are, and he organizes them around the three persons of the Trinity.

The first movement belongs to the Father (verses 4–6). "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him." The verb "chose" is active and purposeful. God selected a people for Himself before the first atom existed, before the first star ignited, before anything in the created order had a chance to recommend itself to Him. "Before the foundation of the world" means that God's choice of us preceded us entirely and wasn't because we did or didn't do something. And the purpose of that choice is not merely rescue. God didn't choose us just to save us from judgment. He chose us "that we should be holy and blameless before Him." Election aims at transformation. God chose a people and then set about making them into the kind of people who could stand in His presence without shame.

Paul adds another layer in verse 5: God "predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ." The word "predestined" means to determine beforehand, to mark out in advance. The destination He marked out is adoption. In the Roman world, adoption was a legal act with permanent consequences. An adopted child received the full rights of a natural-born son, including the right to inherit. And Roman adoption was irrevocable. Once you were adopted, you couldn't be un-adopted. Paul chose that word deliberately. It communicates belonging, security, and inheritance all at once. The

motivation behind all of this, Paul says, is love (v. 5), and the ground of it is "the purpose of His will." God didn't look down the corridor of time and see something in us worth choosing. He chose us according to the good pleasure of His own will. The first refrain lands in verse 6: "to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved." The Father's election exists to make us praise the grace that chose us.

The second movement belongs to the Son (vv. 7-12). "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses." "Redemption" is a word drawn from the marketplace and the slave trade. It refers to the price paid to release a captive. Paul identifies the price is blood. The forgiveness of sins was not free. It cost the life of the Son, and the grace that funded this transaction was not measured out carefully. Paul says God "lavished" it upon us (v. 8). The word means to overflow, to give in superabundance. God is not stingy with grace. He pours it out with an extravagance that should stagger us.

But Paul doesn't stop at individual forgiveness. He pushes the scope of redemption out to its full horizon in verses 9-10. God has made known "the mystery of His will," a plan "for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth." The word translated "unite" means to bring everything under one head, to gather what has been scattered and place it under a single authority. This is the biggest claim in the passage. The goal of redemption is not just forgiven individuals. It is a reunified cosmos. Everything that sin fractured, everything that the fall tore apart, Christ is gathering back together under His headship. We tend to shrink the gospel down to a personal transaction: Jesus died for my sins so I can go to heaven. That's true, but it's not big enough. The Son's work is aimed at nothing less than the restoration of all things. The second refrain arrives in verse 12, as those who have hoped in Christ exist "to the praise of His glory."

The third movement belongs to the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14). Paul shifts his pronouns here from "we" to "you," addressing the Gentile believers directly. "In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." The sequence is hearing, then believing, then being sealed. The Spirit's work follows the proclaimed Word. No one is sealed apart from the gospel. And the seal itself carried three meanings in the ancient world. A seal marked ownership (you belong to God), guaranteed authenticity (you are the genuine article), and secured contents for safe delivery (you are protected until you arrive at your destination). The Holy Spirit Himself is the seal. He is God's stamp of ownership pressed into the life of every believer.

Paul then calls the Spirit "the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it" (v. 14). The word "guarantee" is a commercial term. It referred to a

down payment, the first installment of a purchase that legally obligated the buyer to complete the transaction. The Spirit is not just a promise that something better is coming. He is the first taste of it. Every moment of conviction, every experience of worship, every instance of the Spirit's comfort or correction in your life is a sample of the inheritance that is waiting for you. What we have now is real, but it is partial. The full payment is coming. The third and final refrain closes the passage: "to the praise of His glory."

Step back and look at the whole sentence. The Father chose us before time. The Son redeemed us in the middle of history. The Spirit sealed us in the present moment. All three persons of the Trinity are at work, and all three movements land in the same place - the praise of God's glory. We are not the center of this story. We are the beneficiaries of it, and the beneficiaries exist to point back to the Benefactor. That's what Paul means when he says we were chosen "to the praise of His glorious grace." The proper response to Ephesians 1:3-14 is not a theological debate about election. It's not a careful filing of doctrinal categories. It's worship. Paul wrote this sentence as a man overwhelmed by what he had seen, and his only response was to bless the God who had blessed him.

There's a practical edge to all of this that we shouldn't miss. If God chose you before the foundation of the world, your standing with Him doesn't fluctuate based on your performance this week. If the Son's blood redeemed you, your debt is not partially paid. It's cancelled. If the Spirit sealed you, you are not holding on to God by the strength of your grip. God is holding on to you. The security of the believer is not grounded in the believer's effort. It is grounded in the Triune God's completed work. That's not an invitation to passivity (Paul will spend chapters 4-6 making that clear). But it is an invitation to stop performing for acceptance you already have. You've been chosen, redeemed, and sealed. The only thing left to do is what the passage says three times over: live to the praise of His glory.