

Sermon 1: Blessed with Every Spiritual Blessing in Christ: Ephesians 1:1-6

Text: Ephesians 1:1-6 "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved..."

Summary: Since we have been united to Christ, we must understand the rich implications of that position and then live consistently with that position by God's gracious enabling.

Interrogative: How can we do this?

Part 1: Background: The letter's fascinating history

- **Ephesus was an unlikely place for a vibrant, influential church:**
 - It was a declining city.
 - Its economy shifted from traditional trade to producing and selling religious icons.
 - It was filled with idolatry.
 - Its Jewish community intensely opposed Paul.
 - His initial plan to go to Ephesus was disrupted in **Acts 16**.
- **Paul ministry success threw the city into an uproar:**
 - In **Acts 19:11-18** seven Jewish exorcists attempted to imitate his ministry.
 - They were humiliated and Paul's ministry was validated.
 - Many people were converted and their lives dramatically transformed: **Acts 19:19-20** "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver... So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed..."
 - The value of these materials would have been staggering.
 - A piece of silver is a day's wage, so a modern equivalent could be about 8 million dollars.
 - For the sake of perspective: If 200 people participated, the total value of the materials destroyed would have been the equivalent of a full year's work for each person.

- This would have been the essential value of Mary's ointment when she anointed Christ before His crucifixion.
- **This wonderful transformation brought a disruption to the city: Acts 19:23-29** "The same time there arose no small stir about that way...a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen...called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods...not only this our craft is in danger...but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth...the whole city was filled with confusion..."
- **Now, about ten years after its founding, he wrote the following epistle:**

Part 2: Distinctives: The letter's unique features

- **Its Basic Structure:** Two parts
 - **Position: 1:1-3:21**
 - **Ephesians 1:3** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ..."
 - **Ephesians 3:21** "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen..."
 - **Practice: 4:1-6:24**
 - **Ephesians 4:1** "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called..."
 - **Ephesians 6:10-11** "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil..."
- **Its Emphasis on Prayer:**
 - **Opening Prayer: 1:16-18** I do not "Cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints..."

- **Transitional Prayer: 3:14-19** "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God..."
- **Closing Prayer: 6:18-20** "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak..."
- **Its Rich theology:**
 - **Fact 1: Paul spent significant time in Ephesus:**
 - **Three years: Acts 20:31** "Remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears..."
 - **Corinth: Acts 18:11** "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them..."
 - **Rome (under house arrest): Acts 28:30** "And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him..."
 - **Antioch:**
 - **Fact 2: Despite this long stretch, there are virtually no personal references or problems addressed:**
 - **Fact 3: His focus is theological rather than personal:**
 - **Fact 4: This epistle was likely a "circular" letter which gave a basic theological summary of his teaching ministry.**
 - **Acts 19:9-10** "When divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years..."
 - **1 Timothy 1:3** "I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus...that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine..."

- **1 Timothy 4:16** "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee..."
- **2 Timothy 3:10** "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience..."

Part 3: Tone: The letter's doxological focus: **1:1-14**

- **The Father's work: 1:3-6** "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ..."
- **The Son's work: 1:7-12** "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace..."
- **The Spirit's work: 1:13-14** "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory..."

Part 4: Fountainhead: The letter's emphasis on our union with Christ

- **Our union with Christ is addressed directly or indirectly between 30 and 40 times:**
- **Some examples:**
 - **Every spiritual blessing: 1:3** "Blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ..."
 - **Chosen in Him to be holy and without blame: 1:4** "He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love..."
 - **Redeemed and forgiven: 1:7** "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins..."
 - **Sealed as His possession: 1:13** "In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise..."
 - **Regenerated: 2:5-6** "He hath quickened us together with Christ, by grace ye are saved...And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."
 - **Objects of Grace: 2:7** "In the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus..."
 - **Reconciled to God by Christ's blood: 2:13** "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ..."
 - **Built up together as His dwelling place: 2:22** "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit..."
- **Why it matters:**

- We have a new identity.
- Every spiritual blessing we enjoy is found in Him.
- We are called to live like the people that we are.
- We have been empowered in the position to walk as we are called.

Part 5: Application: The letter's theological and practical end

- **Perspective:** Do not doubt what God is able to do through the gospel.
 - All scripture is written within a story, and this story is one of God's grace and power.
 - He raised up a godly church in a spiritually broken community.
 - This church became an example of what churches should be.
- **Practice:** Find the health balance between doctrine and practice.
 - God calls us to learn before He calls us to work.
 - It does not end with idle hands.
 - This work comes out of a position and Divine enabling.
- **Prayer:** Live the Christian with a humble dependence upon Him.
 - Prayer should be a central feature in every aspect of our Christian experience.
 - Our growth in knowledge should come with an open Bible on our knees.
 - Likewise, our work should start with an open Bible on our knees.
- **Praise:** Live each day as an expression of gratitude for God's grace.
 - We are redeemed by grace alone to God.
 - As redeemed sinners, we should praise the Father for His gracious plan for our redemption.
 - As redeemed sinners, we should praise the Son for His gracious sacrifice to secure our redemption.
 - As redeemed sinners, we should praise the Spirit for His gracious work to keep us until the full realization of our redemption.
- **Position:** Live like you believe you are who scripture says you are.
 - Our union with Christ is everything.
 - It gives us new identity.
 - Every spiritual blessing we enjoy is found in Him.
 - We are called to live like the people that we are.
 - We have been empowered in the position to walk as we are called.