

Ephesians chapter one. I got a little ahead of myself as I considered what I was going to be able to cover when I thought that I was going to be able to cover all of chapter one of Ephesians in morning and evening worship. And I was very sadly mistaken by that.

Because the more you get into it, the riches of what are ours in the Lord Jesus Christ is so overwhelming. And I pray that this morning that you would have a glimpse into what Christ has called you to and the blessings that are yours as a child of God. Before we do that, before I read the scripture passage, let's pray to our God. Father, it is overwhelming when we look at the words of Ephesians 1 to see the spiritual blessings that are ours in the Lord Jesus Christ. Lord, to think, as we were told in Sunday school this morning, if we truly know the depths of our sin and the horror of what lies within us, Lord God, how can we not be amazed at the salvation and the privileges that are ours in the Lord Jesus Christ now, to think what Christ suffered and gave up for us, that we would be able to know the things that are listed in this chapter, oh God. They are beyond comprehension.

And I pray that you would overwhelm me and all who hear this word this day, Lord God, with joy at the blessings that you have poured out upon us in the heavenly places. These things that are true of us because you set your love upon us before eternity, before anything ever was, oh God. Lord God, your love is utterly amazing and I pray that your name and that love would be exalted this day in the preaching of your word. For I ask it in Jesus' powerful, holy name. Amen. Let me just start with verse one. I know it says we're gonna start at verse three, but let's just start at verse one. Hear the word of the Lord.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus, and who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before him in love by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he graciously bestowed on us in the beloved. In him, in Christ, we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions, according to the riches of his grace, which he caused to abound to us or which he lavished on us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in him for an administration of the fullness of the times.

That is the summing up of all things in Christ. Or some of your versions say to unite all things in Christ. Things in the heavens and things on the earth in him. In him we also have been made an inheritance. So 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. to the end that we who first have hoped in Christ would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, after listening to the word 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 or guarantee of our inheritance under the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of his glory. Amen and amen. May God bless the preaching of his word and the reading of it to our souls.

Now, as most of you know, the words in Ephesians 1 from verses 3 through 14 right here, they form one long sentence. in the original Greek language. We have it divided up into many sentences, but in the Greek language, it is one long glorious ascription of honor to our God by the Apostle Paul. And at the very outset of writing this masterful epistle, Paul is so consumed with praising the Father for what He has done for believers in Christ that Paul cannot even contain himself shouting forth in doxology to the great God who has redeemed His people and

brought them to Himself for all eternity. It's almost as if Paul is in a vehicle of praise, a roller coaster if you will, that has no brakes to stop itself and that must move forcefully to its final destination in verse 14 before he can draw a breath for air. Look at verse three again. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us.

Interestingly, that word blessed right there in verse three that begins this super lengthy sentence comes from the same Greek word as the word for eulogy, which most of you in here means a speech that is given in praise or honor of someone in which you speak well of that person.

And what Paul is saying here is that we are to speak well of our God and Father because He has spoken well of us right here. And as we all know from the catechism, this is the supreme duty of all creatures everywhere on the earth. We are to praise or to glorify or speak exceedingly well of our God and to enjoy Him forever. And Paul tells us exactly why we are to do so. In this verse and in the verses that follow, I want you to see this, that because God is perpetual and unchanging blessedness, He issues a perpetual and unchanging claim upon the adoration of His creatures.

You see here, Paul is praising and blessing the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ here, because the Father has blessed us. Verse 3 tells us. Sinclair Ferguson says this, we are to speak well of or to bless the Lord because in Christ the living word, God has spoken well of or blessed us. And how has he blessed us or spoken well of us according to this passage? Well, look at the verse here.

In his providential grace, God has already given to each one of us who are believers Every spiritual blessing that we could possibly imagine or need for this life and for the life to come. Such beneficence to us on God's part. Therefore elicits Paul's excitement and gratitude and it spills forth from his spirit here as it should from ours when we consider exactly what God has done for us in Christ.

It's like Jamie said this morning, if the bells do not ring in your heart for what Christ has done for you, then what are you understanding? What are you hearing? What God has done for us in Christ should make us cry out. What was the word you used? Laud this morning. It should make us want to laud and shout and praise to our God for what he has done for us.

So before we delve into what this beneficence entails, I want you to stop and ponder then for a second this. And I want to ask this of myself as well. Do you daily remember to thank the God of your salvation for all of his numberless blessings upon you in Christ? Because if you are not doing that every morning you wake up, you are robbing yourself of the great joy that should be ours as believers in Christ.

And so let's discuss. I want to take sort of an aerial view, an overview of this whole passage before we get into the specific blessings. But I want to discuss the characteristics of these blessings that are ours as we look at the passage as a whole. To begin, look at the nature of these blessings.

Paul says right here, he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. These are called spiritual blessings here. Because they are produced by or belong to the Holy Spirit Applied by him to our souls the only reason That we have salvation applied to us today is because of the power of the Holy Spirit. They are spiritual blessings here I Love what the commentator John Edie says right here When he defines Christianity he calls it It is the dispensation of the Spirit. If you're a Christian in here, you've been given the Holy Spirit. And as Christianity's graces are wrought by the Spirit, they are all named spiritual after Him. Every blessing you have in Jesus Christ is spiritual because it comes from the Holy Spirit who applies these things to us.

Note also the sphere or the domain in which we as believers enjoy these blessings. Look what he says here. According to the apostle, he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. The Greek here literally renders that phrase in the heavenlies, a phrase that occurs often in the book of Ephesians. We see it in chapter one, verse 20. Chapter 2, verse 6. Chapter 3, verse 10. Chapter 6, verse 12. And that great passage on the armor of God. We have been given these blessings in the heavenly places. And what does that mean? This phrase here refers to the realm of God's complete heavenly domain.

This is a new realm of spiritual realities into which the Father has brought believers. In other words, brothers and sisters, When you become a Christian, God the Father removes us from one realm of realities that were typical of us as unbelievers. And he now places us into a completely new realm of realities that are typical of us now in Christ. Ephesians and Colossians share language that is very similar to one another.

And that phrasing should remind you of Paul's language In Colossians 1.13, do you remember what he says there? The apostle says that God has rescued us from the authority or the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the son of his love in whom we have redemption. the forgiveness of our sins. Do you see what he's saying there?

As Christians, we therefore have a new standing in a new realm of spiritual realities under a new master and king, even the Lord Jesus Christ, who replaces Satan as our king and as our Lord. But also see that Paul identifies and repeatedly proclaims the source of all these blessings. Where do they come from? That is, they are all in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. How many times do you see this expression in this passage?

In Christ, or through him, or before him, or in Jesus Christ. That expression occurs over and over again in these verses that we are considering. at least 13 times by my count, as well as throughout Paul's writings. Isn't it interesting that Paul, when he defines a Christian, do you know that he never uses the word Christian to describe a believer? For Paul, a Christian is simply one who is in Christ. If you are a Christian in here, you are in Christ Jesus.

You are joined with him and union with him. That is the exciting part of this. And in the verses that follow up through verse 14, I want you to see then specifically what Paul says these spiritual blessings consist of for the Christian. When you get a job, many times there is a benefits package that goes with that job. Now if you work at Manchester like me, I think the benefit is you get to eat in the cafeteria And I don't even do that. Okay. So, you know, Debbie and Betty, y'all can all attest to that. Okay. But most jobs, you get a benefits package, do you not?

And Paul is listing for us what makes up the spiritual benefits package. And I'm not trying to be crass, as it were, that includes all of these things for the Christian that belong to the Christian that is found in Christ and in union with him. They include things like forgiveness, new life, new hope, righteousness. But before we get specifically into what those are, please understand this, Christian, that the greatest thing you receive in this spiritual benefits package is Christ himself.

For we, if we are believers, we are united to Him by His Spirit in such a way, and get this, that all that is His and all that He achieved for us through His life, death, and resurrection, those things become ours for all eternity. In this sense, if you were in union with Him, you died with Christ. You were buried and raised with him. You ascended with him. You reign with him now, and you will be with him one day when he returns in glory.

So in the following verses that we're going to look at, verses 4 through 14, Paul, in this monumental sentence of glory, surveys the superabundance of blessings that permeate the soul of every believer in Christ. And I want you to realize that every one of these spiritual blessings becomes yours the moment you believe in Him. You know, Jamie talked about this morning. Yes, you are elected from all eternity. But there is a time in life where you are brought to the Savior and justified by faith, right?

And as we go through these verses, I want you to notice how Paul weaves throughout them the triune operation of the triune God. It is the Father who bestows these blessings and planned all of this. It is the Son in whom the Father accomplishes these blessings, and it is the Spirit who applies these blessings to our hearts and our lives. Understand that triune working of God himself here.

But before we dive into all of that, consider for a moment how God's blessings, how do these blessings come to us in Christ? Paul tells us in verse 13 that they come to us by faith. Look at verse 13, in him you also, after listening to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, yes, you believed in Christ, when through the operation of God's spirit and God's word, you demonstrated faith in his person and work for you. However, as Paul will go on to say in the very next chapter of Ephesians, even that faith, that you demonstrated when you believed on the Lord Jesus Christ is a gift from Him.

And why is that the case? Because we were dead in our transgressions and sins and the spiritually dead, as we all once were, are incapable of demonstrating life and thus are incapable of believing by faith on the only Savior. We literally do not have the ability to do something that we are powerless to do by nature. Our new life in Christ must therefore be the result of God's action, of God's purpose, and of God's will for us.

That faith, Ephesians 2.8 confirms for us, is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one may boast. As much as you and I would like to take some type of credit for some part of our salvation, and our pride always wants to do that, we must finally admit that even the faith that we demonstrated when we first believed on Christ for salvation, it is an undeserved gift from the Father above. Salvation is truly all of grace from first to last. We believe in the Lord Jesus for salvation by God's grace alone, and we will only finally reach glory by that same grace of God alone. So therefore, in outlining all the blessings that are ours as believers, Paul begins at the very beginning with God's purposes and plan, which are all we see here from all eternity, from before the dawn of time.

And the first blessing I want you to see that accompanies your spiritual benefits package in Christ, if I may call it that, we see in verse four. Look at it with me. It is the electing love of the Father. Look at what he says here. Just as God, he, the Father, chose us in him, in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Please understand then that salvation comes to you and to me only because God, Paul says in verse four, chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. And so we enter into that blessed doctrine of God's eternal election of his people. In other words, what does that mean? That means that God set his love upon you in eternity past before you were ever born, even before he created the world.

One of my favorite verses in Jeremiah is that one that begins the very book. What did God tell Jeremiah when he called him to his service? Before I formed you in the innermost parts, I knew you. And before you came out from the womb, I set you apart. I have given you as a prophet to the nations. God set Jeremiah apart before he was ever born. Even while he was being formed in his mother's womb, God chose him, made him his own.

God lovingly predestines all of his people who are to be his. Look at verses four and part of verse five here. He chose us in him before the foundation of the world by predestining us. You know as much as many people in this world today rail against the truth of God's election and predestination, this passage is one of the clearest scripture proofs of God's eternal election of his people. The natural question to follow for many of us is why? Why did God choose whom he chose? Why did he choose you? Or why did he choose me?

Jamie brought this out so well last week. The only answer is because he loved you and me. You know, we may try to go back further than that and say, but why did he decide to love you and me from eternity? That's why I picked that hymn a moment ago that I know is so precious to this church. Why was I made to hear your voice and enter while there's room when thousands make a wretched choice and rather starve than come? But you see, again, the only answer can ultimately be only because he loved you and he planned to bring glory to himself in and through you in Jesus Christ.

You mean there's no other reason? Wasn't there something that he saw in you or me that we would do or say in time that persuaded the Father to love us? Did God see that you or I was the type of person who would trust and love him? There's an emphatic note of that. We know that. In fact, the type of people that you and I were were people who were dead in sins, without hope and without God in the world, at enmity with him. unable to choose the Savior because the eyes of our hearts were blind to the truth and had been blinded by the God of this world, Satan. There is nothing in you or me that makes or obligates God to love us.

The reason for His love, for His marvelous electing and predestining love, lies only and finally in Himself. The secret things belong to God, do they not? Our salvation, then, is thus grace from start to finish, nothing but sheer grace. It is the marvelous grace of our loving Lord that we sang of just a moment ago.

And for those who would complain that such grace is not just, it's not fair that God would choose some and not others, we have to stop immediately and remember that if God were truly just, He would condemn all of us to hell and damnation for eternity for our sins.

Y'all all know that I'm a high school English teacher in here and how much I love Shakespeare. One of my favorite plays of his is The Merchant of Venice. And as the character Portia in Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice realized so clearly and said in her famous quality of mercy speech from that play, listen to what she said. Though justice be thy plea, consider this, that in the course of justice, none of us should see salvation.

Therefore, we do pray for mercy. You see, she got it. And so it is with all of us in our natural state as unbelievers. God would have shown perfect justice and condemning us all to hell immediately for our sins, which are committed against an infinite being and therefore they are of infinite value and sinfulness. We can't pay that debt. I know I keep going back to your Sunday school lesson, Jamie, but it's so good. We have a debt that we cannot pay. It is only God's mercy to choose to save any of us, even any of us in this room here today and left to ourselves.

We would all have chosen the way of destruction and continued in it just as the Apostle Paul himself was doing when he was seeking to destroy the church before his conversion to the truth. Only when God sovereignly intervened in Paul's life on the Damascus Road with blinding light and saving grace, was Paul's life utterly changed. Only the loving will and mercy of God could save Paul from himself. And that intervention, Paul is saying, God planned from before the foundation of the world. And what was true of Paul was also true of each of us.

God had to intervene in our lives to save us from our own destructively sinful tendencies. But brothers and sisters, how wonderful and amazing on the other hand to realize that God loved you and me before we ever loved him, before we ever trusted in Christ for salvation. Even before the foundation of the world, he loved you and me. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

And Sinclair Ferguson asked this question, he says, can God's love for you and me truly be that big, that long, that high, that deep? Yes, it can. For he says, if that love for you and me is rooted in eternity, which it is, it will also last for eternity. God's love for you is rooted in eternity and it will last for all of eternity.

God always puts the finishing touches. to the work that he has begun. What does Paul say in Philippians 1-6? I know whom I have believed. I am persuaded, convinced that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him until that day. Is that your confidence this morning? Is that your joy this morning?

Praise God that his love for us is not rooted in us. We who change often and inconsistently, it is rooted in his very character from all eternity and thus it is for all eternity for it will never change. But I want you to notice something that we often fail to take into account in considering the doctrine of election and that is the reasoning and the result of this electing love of the father, the reasoning and the result of this electing love of the father in regard to reasoning Many people try to twist this doctrine of election to say this. Well, if we truly believe in eternal election and all of its implications, we would then live any way that we pleased because we would know that we were, quote, spiritually safe for all eternity. And it would not then matter how we lived for the rest of our lives, would it? It would as a result encourage lawlessness and immorality.

But look at what Paul is saying here. Paul is saying that the very reason that God set His love, His electing love on us in eternity past and then saved us in time and space was so that, look at the rest of verse four, so that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love. Do you see?

God does not choose us because we are holy. That should be obvious. God chooses us in order that we might become holy in our present lives on earth, preparing us for the glory that is to come. If you're not a holy individual by the end of your life in that sense, would you ever really truly enjoy heaven above with God worshipping and praising the holy being of all the universe? God is making us holy to prepare us for glory.

Do you see the logic of this love? As Sinclair Ferguson puts it, such a radical love on God's part, a love that sacrificed and waited for us in eternity past, a love that has been unbelievably patient with us over and over again, this passionate love of the Father, once received by us, if you've really received it, It never leaves us unchanged. In fact, it cannot and it will not leave us unchanged in our lives and it will not leave us unchanged in our sins. We are new creations now in Christ. It is impossible to be a merciful recipient of such unbelievable love from God the Father and then remain the same in your thoughts and words and actions.

The old is gone, the new has come, affecting even our very deepest desires, causing us to yearn for holiness and righteousness in our lives, desiring above all things to be like our father in heaven and like the son of his love whom he gave for us. Do you yearn to be holy now? If you've experienced the love of God, do you yearn to be like him in all things? You should. And so that leads us to the second, and I'm not going to spend much time on it, so don't worry, that leads us to the second amazing benefit in the spiritual benefits package in Christ.

Paul says this, that the Father predestinated us before the foundation of the world with his electing love so that, look at verse five, so that we might be adopted as his sons and daughters in Christ by predestining us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself. Brothers and sisters, if you're a believer in here, you are a child of the King now. And as His adopted children now, we who once belonged body and soul to the devil, we have the privilege now of being a child of the King and being able to cry out, Abba, Father, Daddy, He has adopted us, it says, according to the good pleasure of His will, with the ultimate goal that like earthly children who long to imitate their fathers whom they love, so we as sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father would long and would finally reflect God fully in His glory. And it shows you, it goes back to verse 4, you can't stay the same in your sins Your whole being has been changed. Your whole orientation and desires are different now.

You long to be like him and to reflect his glory as a child of the king. So that we, as he says right here, and he repeats this over and over, and we'll bring this out later tonight, that we would be to the praise of the glory of his grace. That we would praise his glorious grace in our lives. That glory for which God made us, and to which we are surely heading. Brothers and sisters, in that shining future, we will mercifully and gloriously reflect perfectly the family likeness as true children of the Heavenly King. I always go back to this verse because it overwhelms me in 1 John 3, 2.

What does he promise us so wondrously? When we see him ultimately, we shall be like him. For we shall see him just as he is in all of his glory. And why will we be like him? Because we will be fully reflecting and displaying and mirroring that glory fully of God as we worship and delight in the Savior face to face in the new heavens and the new earth.

Don't you long for that day, brothers and sisters? That's why we cry, come quickly, Lord Jesus. Aren't you tired of the sin that so easily clings? We must fix our eyes on Jesus. As Jamie says, we must remember Jesus Christ. So as I end here today, what difference do and should these truths that we've gone over today make in our lives presently? I want to apply them here. They should make every difference imaginable to us. First thing I want you to see. the electing and adopting love of God the Father and Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit should make you humble beyond belief.

To know and realize that eternal love has staked its claim upon you and branded you His very own. Every morning you wake up by God's grace and experience another day of life, you may go forth recognizing that you are a child of the King and nothing can ever change that fact. Nothing can ever take away that reality. No matter what you go through in this life, you are the king's child.

Secondly, such knowledge should give us new dignity now. Knowing God has loved us like this, as I've said before, we should desire now to live holy lives of dignity now before him in love. So I have to ask you, Do you therefore hate the sin that made Jesus Christ mourn so that you could have eternal life? And hating it, do you really truly strive more and more in your heart and life to put it to death in your everyday living? Thirdly, such truths and the confident knowledge of them anchor us in a deep, unshakable security, just like we talked about with question and answer one in the Heidelberg Catechism this security that is ours now.

God's grip on you goes back to before the foundation of the world. And he has you firmly in that same grip now. Jesus said, nothing can take them out of my hand. If God is for you, brothers and sisters, who can be against you ultimately? Nothing and no one can separate you from the love of God in Christ.

Finally, and most importantly, such knowledge of these truths should make us want to praise God and sing the doxology in joy all of our days, just as Paul does here in Ephesians 1, and it is why he does it, as he gushes forth over the joys and the privileges that are ours in Christ.

Does that bell ring, that joyful bell ring in your heart that I belong to him, he is mine and I am his forevermore? Praise God from whom all blessings flow. Our lives, just as they were for Paul's, should be lives and trophies of praise unto the King of kings and Lord of lords is yours. Let's pray.

Father, we are overwhelmed and amazed when we think of things, the secret things of God, which we many times cannot explain and are overwhelmed by, Lord God, and yet the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever. And the things that you have revealed to us, Father, are beyond amazing. Father, to think that you would love, with a love like this, such people as us.

May we remember Christ all of our days. May we rejoice in the fact that he has set his love on us from eternity past and has adopted us as his own sons and daughters in the Lord, that we might be holy and blameless in his sight to the praise of his glorious grace. May others around us see the difference in us, Lord God, and praise our father who is in heaven because they know he is real by the way that we love one another. If we have experienced your love to this degree, May we love others as you have loved us, O God. And I pray, Father, that with all of our hearts we would go forth from this place rejoicing in what is ours in Christ. In whose blessed name I pray, amen.