

Ephesians chapter 1. We're going to go back to Ephesians chapter 1. If you were not with us this morning, we are considering the unbelievably amazing, as I call it, spiritual benefits package, as it were, that God the Father has given to us as Christians in Christ our Savior. As Paul spills forth with exuberance and abundant praise to the triune God in this one amazingly long sentence in the original Greek language from verses 3 through 14 of Ephesians 1.

Brothers and sisters, this is truly one of the richest passages in the Bible for enumerating all of the spiritual privileges and blessings that are ours in the heavenly places because we are united to Christ by faith. So remember what we talked about this morning.

The nature of these blessings is spiritual for they come from the Holy Spirit. The sphere or domain in which we enjoy these blessings is in the heavenly places. That is this new realm of spiritual realities into which every believer has been brought by the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been taken out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of the son of his love. Remember the source of all these blessings, that they are in Christ. That is the only way they come to us, in Christ and only in Him.

And finally, the means or the conduit by which these blessings come to us, and that is through faith. Faith which is itself a gift of God to us, as Ephesians 2 tells us. So as we saw this morning, the Christian life, from first to last, is all of grace. It is a life which he graciously bestows on us in the beloved, as verse six tells us here. And this morning, we saw the first two spiritual blessings for the believer that Paul lists in this passage. They being, first of all, the electing love of the Father, who chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Why? So that we would be holy and blameless in his sight. In other words, the Father of all glories set his everlasting love upon us in eternity past before we were ever born. It boggles the mind. And after choosing us, he predestined us to adoption as sons and daughters in Christ so that we may now cry, Abba, Father, at the throne of grace. We are heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ.

And so as we come to the passage tonight, we're going to look at the third and the fourth blessing that we see in this passage. But before I read the passage to us and preach upon it, let's pray and ask for God's help. Father, truly, you have blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. I pray that this night, Father God, that we would be able to rejoice in the fact that you have redeemed us through your blood. We get to the very heart of the gospel here and of Paul's message in this passage. You have redeemed us by the blood of the lamb. So we are your children and forever we are now. And the forgiveness of all of our sins comes with that.

But not only that, Father, teach us by your grace that you have given to each believer in this room the gift of the Holy Spirit, who is the earnest or the guarantee of the inheritance that will be ours in full one day. Lord, we long for that day. So we pray, come quickly, Lord Jesus, and would you come now by the power of your spirit, and would you speak to our hearts fully and forcefully and lovingly, O God? For we pray it in Jesus, precious, and holy name.

Amen. For the sake of time, I'm going to start with verse seven. Ephesians chapter one at verse seven. In him, that is 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. In other words, everything is united in Christ. Things in the heavens and things on the earth in Him. In Him, in Christ, we also have been made an inheritance, or 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.

There's that phrase again. 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 of our inheritance unto the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory. Amen. And amen. May God bless the reading and now the preaching of his word to our souls.

And so that brings us, brothers and sisters, now to the third major blessing that Paul enumerates for us in this passage, which we find starting in verses 7 through 10. And that is the redemption of believers through Jesus Christ's blood and the forgiveness of all of our sins. Notice what he says there in verse 7. In Him, in Christ, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our transgressions according to the riches of His grace, which He calls to abound to 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, things in the heavens, and things on the earth in him.

Now that is a spiritual mouthful, but here the apostle takes us to the very heart of God's plan, and he puts everything else that he says in its proper and ultimate context here. God, Paul says in verse 8, has caused his grace to abound to us in all wisdom and insight. And why is that necessary? And y'all, the answer is breathtaking.

Because in Jesus Christ, to whom he has united all believers, God has revealed, he says here, the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, as a plan for the fullness of time. And here we need to define some terms that Paul is using for clarity's sake. That word mystery. In the Bible, the word mystery does not refer to a puzzle or a conundrum waiting to be solved. No, the word mystery here refers to a secret that God will reveal to his people in his own way and time. What could this mystery be?

Well, the Old Testament scriptures give us glimpses into the early parts of God's single minded purpose, which was always to bring Jesus Christ into the world to save sinners from their iniquities. Think about it. All of the Old Testament we now know was shadowing, revealing little by little the truth about Jesus Christ and his coming and his redemption, the redemption of his people from bondage to sin and slavery under the devil. This is what the whole Bible is about.

We see pictures of this, do we not? We see pictures of this purpose, first of all, in the law. Think about in the exodus of God's people from slavery in Egypt into the promised land, but also in the sacrifices performed over and over again in the tabernacle for the remission of the sins of the people. pointing forward to what Jesus Christ would do in the ultimate sacrifice of himself. We see pictures of this purpose in the prophets and those amazing miracles and feats done by Elijah and Elisha and the other prophets of God who brought the kingdom of God near to the people of earth. And we see it also, this plan, this purpose and the captivity of God's people into Babylon and their ultimate return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple under Ezra and Nehemiah.

All of these glimpses we are getting of the work of Christ, all of these things in the Old Testament symbolize and point forward to what Christ would do when he came to the earth to redeem his people so that they could be forgiven of all of their sins. Do you remember when Jesus was walking after he was raised from the dead on the road to Emmaus with the disciples who did not know that it was Jesus at first? And it says in Luke 24, 27, then beginning with Moses and the prophets, that was the Old Testament for them, their Bible, Jesus interpreted to them the things concerning himself in all of the scriptures. All of it pointed forward to Jesus Christ, did it not? Thus the

core or the essence of this mystery of God's will that God made known to us is that God intends, look what he says in verse 10, to unite all things in Jesus Christ, all things in heaven, and all things on earth.

Interestingly, that verb right there for summing up or to unite, that verb unite in the Greek means to sum up. Paul used that verb. Think about it in Romans 13, 9, just as an example, when he says that the commandments of God in regard to how we treat our neighbor are summed up, are united by the injunction to love your neighbor as yourself. In other words, the last six commandments of the Ten Commandments are practical applications of one overall principle. Love for God who has redeemed us, and by extension, love for our neighbor who is beside us.

Jesus also demonstrated this principle in his answer to the scribe who asked him which was the greatest commandment. Jesus answered by summing up or uniting all of the law in that grand statement. Remember what he said? You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Therefore, the point I'm making here, Paul is saying that the mystery of God's plan that he has revealed to us is summed up completely in Jesus Christ and what he came to do for us. And that was and is to unite all things in heaven and on earth. But why is Christ needed to unite and restore all things in heaven and on earth?

Well, we know that it was because of the fall and its deadly consequences in the Garden of Eden. Sin and death fractured the world of man. The world thus became fragmented. disintegrating spiritually, and in it, alienation and chaos and sin begin to reign. Adam's sin plunged the whole world into utter disorder and confusion, and this world no longer added up to the perfect, harmonious universe that God created in purpose to glorify.

But through Christ, in whom all things are summed up and united, God intends to save his creation and to restore it and to transform it and all of his people into the glory of its original destiny. You see, this is what Christ came to achieve for all of us who belong to him by faith. Only this second man, Jesus, can undo what the first man, Adam, did. and subsequently fulfill the exact things that Adam failed to do. Only then will the cosmos be reintegrated and restored and built back up into the vision that God had for it from the beginning.

So do you see this breathtaking perspective that Paul has in the passage here? He's not just talking about us as individuals. He's talking about the whole creation. And what he is getting at here is that God does all of this in Jesus Christ, who unites all things in heaven and on earth for the glory of the triune God through the redemption that Jesus accomplishes for us, for us and all of the creation as well.

Y'all, this is cosmic language as well as individual restoration for the people of God. And so redemption, look at the third blessing here. Redemption is one of the terms Paul therefore uses to depict the nature of what Christ has accomplished for us in this grand restoration. And as I said, this is getting to the heart of the message of the gospel. The background for this term of redemption, think about it, it lies in the idea of the deliverance of the people of Israel and Egypt from the shackles of slavery under Pharaoh.

The mystery of Christ we see in this event in which a savior, Moses, would guide his people out of bondage in a new exodus. Again, interestingly, on the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah concerning, what does it say? Concerning his departure. That word literally means exodus, that he was soon to achieve at Jerusalem.

For Jesus would be the true Passover lamb, sacrificed for his people, that all of the Old Testament lambs who were slain pointed to. This time, with God's people, however, The slavery was not to Pharaoh, but to Satan, to sin, and to death, which held natural man captive in his sins. That's you and us.

But by his sacrifice of himself at Calvary, Christ justly bought us back for God at the cost of his own lifeblood. Jamie talked about the justice that he achieved at the cross this morning in Sunday school. God was being just in that sin had to be punished. but he was merciful in that we didn't pay it. If we believe in Christ, it is paid for all in Jesus Christ so that all of our sins may be forgiven. Through that one sacrifice, Christ has dealt with our guilt, nailing it to the cross to bring us complete pardon in the eyes of the Father. Christ is also overcome through his death and resurrection from the grave all of the spiritual forces of darkness that shackled us and that were aligned against us, dying to the reign of sin that controlled us and rising triumphantly over all of his and our enemies.

And brothers and sisters, now by the power of the spirit that raised Jesus from the dead, he guides us into the promised land of freedom from sin, fellowship with God restored, and communion with his people for whom he gave himself. And one day we will see the true and complete promised land. But let me ask this question, and I think we've addressed this before, but are we then saying in this concept of redemption that Christ has convinced the Father to do something for us that was against the Father's will or purpose, since he had to buy us back.

Absolutely not. That has been one of the outworkings of what Paul is saying in this glorious passage here in Ephesians 1. All of this was the plan of the Father. It is the Father who has blessed us with all of these blessings. It is the Father who has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is the Father who has predestined us in love to be adopted as His children. It is the Father who has redeemed us and forgiven us of all of our sins. And it is the Father who has made known the mystery of His will in Christ to us, uniting all things in heaven and on earth. All of this, and the blessings that attend our salvation, this is what we mean by the riches of His glorious grace, which He has lavished upon us, or caused to abound upon us.

Do you see that? And there's still more. God gives us this lavish or abounding love in all wisdom and insight, Paul says, showing us that along with this lavish grace, God has let us into the secret of his will. He reveals it to us and he shows us what his long term plan is for the ages in Christ. And we get to be a part of it. Thus, the love of the Father in redemption is never a reluctant love by any means, but it is rather a lavish love. And how sad that many Christians today are suspicious of God and of His love. They do not trust Him. They doubt His goodness to them. They taste very little of the sweetness of His grace.

But Paul makes it very clear in this passage and throughout his writings that God the Father lavishes His people with His grace, with the riches of His grace. Paul's whole point in this passage is that these riches are ours already in the Savior. If you are a believer in here tonight, they are already yours. So my prayer is that you would live in an ever-increasing and growing sense of the abundant, super abundant love of our God, who is always rich in mercy. But finally, note with me the last of these spiritual blessings in Christ that Paul lists here for us in Ephesians 1. And we see these in verses 11 through 14. Look there with me.

They are the inheritance that is ours in Christ, along with the down payment or the earnest or the guarantee of that inheritance. Look what he says. In him, in Christ, we have obtained an inheritance. Now, the Legacy Standard Bible, which I've loved and started using lately, says we have been made an inheritance. Now, I'm going to go back to that in a minute. But he says, 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 also were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, under the redemption of God's own possession to the praise of His glory. Again, this is another mouthful of ideas and truths here.

But y'all, Paul is stating that since we have been chosen by the Father and adopted into the family of God, and having been redeemed and bought with the precious blood of Christ, and having had all of our sins forgiven, then all things are ours in Christ. This is our inheritance. Y'all, if we have Christ, we have everything. Everything that truly matters and that will last for eternity. Whatever you are going through in this life, if you have Christ, you have all that you need. Just as there is salvation in the Son of God's love, so there is also security in Him.

For we have been predestined to this inheritance, Paul says, by the will of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. This is a direct statement of God's sovereignty here. So I want you to see that there is an ultimate invincibility about the work of God for believers. It cannot be stopped.

As Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1, verses 3 through 5, God keeps our final inheritance secure for us. And He keeps us secure for the inheritance. Let me read this. to obtain an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, having been kept in heaven for you, who are protected, you who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Did you hear that? God not only keeps our inheritance for us, he keeps us secure for the inheritance.

It is a sure fact. And Ephesians 1:11 is arguably the strongest and most comprehensive declaration of God's absolute sovereignty in the entire Bible. And the reason why this cannot fail. The father, Paul says, is the one who works all things according to the counsel of his will. This means that God works with and through all that happens in this world.

Y'all, that includes the events of history, everything that's going on in the world right now that we look at and are so concerned by, and all of the events of our own lives individually all fall under the umbrella of God's sovereign will, purpose, and providence.

We are not, as W.E. Henley once famously remarked, the masters of our fates, nor are we the captains of our souls. And that is a hard truth for many prideful people to accept. But in the end, there's only one person on the throne, and that is our God. But when we at last confess God to be God, we come to the realization that His sovereign plans Even in the harsh providences of life that cause us pain and distress, those sovereign plans of our God are for our ultimate good and His glory. What does Romans 8, 28 say?

That we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose. In fact, God does all things to the praise of His glory. And this glory of His is not incompatible with our good. if we are believers in Christ. In fact, it works for our ultimate good as believers. Sinclair Ferguson said this, God pursues his own glory in such a way that he simultaneously brings his people the most blessing.

See, he is not only committed to his own glory as he should be. because he is God, but he is also committed to the very best for his dear people for whom he died and whose names are engraven on the palms of his hands. In this regard, though, let's look at the two aspects of this glory and good for God's people.

We see it in the terms inheritance and pledge, that word pledge being an earnest or guarantee. Look at the word inheritance. Paul's use of this word inheritance here means not only massive blessing for us as Christians, blessings that we are looking forward to, but also the fulfillment of all the covenant blessings that God has promised throughout the Old Testament. Remember this.

God had promised his ancient people Israel. What did he promise them? A land flowing with milk and honey as he led them out of Egypt in slavery by the hand of Moses. God's covenant with Abraham had promised that through Abraham's seed, God would bless all of the nations of the world.

Now that seed, capital S, Jesus Christ, has come and all of the promises of God now find their fulfillment. completely in the Savior. And in our inheritance, we have a heavenly place, a city with foundations waiting for us in Christ, whose builder and maker is God. Jesus said, remember, in the Gospel of John, that He would go to prepare a place, a dwelling for us. And if it were not so, He would not have told us so.

I do want to make this statement, though. because I think it's beautiful. And I'm not sure if it exactly works. But if you read verse 11 to say that, as the Legacy Standard Bible translates the verse, in him, not just we have obtained an inheritance, because the Greek here is in the passive, but that we also have been made an inheritance. And I want you to think about, if this is true, what this is saying.

Not only have we obtained or will obtain or gain an inheritance in which God will glorify us one day in the new heavens and the new earth, But as God's people, the church, we have been made an inheritance or the inheritance for Christ in regard to his mission and God's plan for all times. In other words, what the Father has done for us in Christ by the power of the Spirit is ultimately to present us holy. and blameless to the Savior himself as a pure and spotless bride, the church, for the bridegroom himself.

That gift or inheritance promised to Christ who loved us and gave himself for us. Remember what it says in Hebrews 12 too, for the joy that was set before Christ. Christ endured the cross, scorning the shame. What was that joy? I've mentioned this before in other sermons. That joy that was set before Jesus was to be able to have and enjoy a people set apart for himself, a people for whom he would give himself, for whom he gave up all to redeem all for all eternity.

We are Christ's reward or inheritance for what He has done for us in salvation. That is, Christ's joy is fulfilled or completed in the church's perfection. It is a mutual gifting in the end. We receive an inheritance from God that is unfading, but God makes us the inheritance for Jesus Christ in regard to His mission. It's almost as if Paul is saying this, that not only are we fulfilled completely in Christ as his body and glory in this inheritance, but also that we are the inheritance that when perfected brings ultimate joy and fulfillment to Christ regarding his mission that had been planned from before the foundation of the world.

This is the mutual gifting. This is the summing up of all things in Christ. Things in the heavens and things on the earth. The very thing that all of creation and time have been moving towards. It reminds me so much of that picture of the ladder that Jacob saw in Genesis 28. The united heaven and earth with the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Who was that ladder? But Jesus Christ. who connects earth and heaven.

And think about in Romans 8, where he talks about the revealing of the sons of God and the liberation of creation that Paul speaks of in Romans 8, that everything is moving towards, that the creation is groaning for to see come about. And then he adds here in verse 12, all to the end, that we who first have hoped in Christ would be to the praise of his glory. Everything receives its fulfillment at the end of time and space, that mission of Christ for which God sent him into the world, that all would be summed up and fulfilled in him for believers.

But how does he confirm these promises to us? He does this by sealing his people with the blessed Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit who is the guarantee, the pledge, the earnest of that coming inheritance. until we gain full possession of it. You know, I love that word guarantee, don't you? For not many things in this life are sure, are guaranteed to us. Certain products we buy promise to do amazing things for us, for our health, for our skin, for our mental state, for our finances, but we have learned through bitter experience that nothing is truly sure or complete or firm here in a sinful, and deceitful world. However, beloved, there is one thing that you can bet the farm on completely in this life and ultimately win big on. And that is on the promises of a God who cannot and will not lie to you in regard to the sureness and the certainty of his great salvation and the inheritance that awaits you and me who are his people in glory, if we are truly his.

What does it mean to be sealed with the Holy Spirit, according to Paul? Think about that word. In the ancient world, a seal, especially one given by a monarch or supreme ruler, it provided security and also a confirmation of authenticity and ownership. Therefore, for a Christian to be sealed with the Holy Spirit means that there is both the security of forgiveness, that is what we get in the redemption, the forgiveness of all of our sins, past, present, and future, but also the assurance of belonging to God in Christ. And all of it is promised to us by the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit to us in our hearts. What does Paul say in Romans? The Spirit Himself testifies to our spirits that we do belong to Him. He gives us the assurance of our salvation.

Paul will later tell his readers in Ephesians 4.30 not to grieve the Holy Spirit by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. When God gives us the Holy Spirit, he is showing us that we are truly meant for glory and that one day he will take us there forevermore.

Is this sealing something that the Holy Spirit confers upon us? Or is it the Holy Spirit who is the seal himself? Well, I think Paul's very language here seems to intimate that the spirit himself is the seal, since God calls the spirit

himself the guarantee, the pledge, the down payment of the inheritance we will soon have in Christ. If you are Christian in here, the Holy Spirit dwells within you and he is the guarantee that that inheritance is coming.

His very presence in our hearts and lives is itself God's assurance that all spiritual blessings are ours in Christ. It is the first installment, as it were, of the final consummation of all the blessings that we will know and experience in the resurrection on the last day.

You know, as we close tonight, all of these blessings that we have been discussing this morning and this evening result in one thing in the end. They are all, Paul says, to the praise of God's glory, as verse 14 tells us. And this is the third time in which Paul has made this refrain in this passage. You see it also in verse 6 and in verse 12, to the praise of His glory, to the praise of His glorious grace. And as we mentioned at the beginning of the sermon this morning, so I want to conclude. I want you to observe how this threefold refrain, to the praise of God's glory, brilliantly underscores the Trinitarian nature and source of the blessings we've been studying.

Because they, first of all, have their origin in the eternal plan of the Father. Their accomplishment comes through the work of the Son. And the application of these blessings and their outworking in our hearts and lives comes through the Holy Spirit, by whom we were sealed for the day of redemption. Thus, we need the activity of all three persons of the Trinity to redeem us. It is this salvation and the blessings that attend it that calls forth Paul's extraordinary declaration of praise and doxology in these 11 verses. Paul glories exuberantly in the whole Godhead who have brought us to us the blessings of grace that have been lavished upon us for all eternity. Each divine person, father, son, and spirit, is absolutely necessary to our possession and enjoyment of these privileges.

And each person in the Trinity is united in purpose and will with the other two to bring us to glory. And again, brothers and sisters, if God is for us like this, who can really be against us? Who or what will be able to stop this process that God has begun in us and will certainly bring to completion. No one, no one can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus.

No wonder Paul gushes into song and praise here. The question is, do we? Do we have such a firm grasp on these realities as believers that we rise every day of our lives and praise the God who has redeemed us for glory, living in the power that works so mightily toward us who believe. Let's pray. Father, your word is amazing. Your word speaks truth. Would you sanctify us in this truth?

Would you encourage our hearts this evening? Would you show us, Father, that we have not only been elected by the Father from before the beginning of time, we have been predestined to be adopted as your sons and daughters, we have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb so that all of our sins are forgiven, and we have been given the precious and powerful Holy Spirit who lives inside us now as the guarantee of what is to come when all of the church, who has been made perfect For the bridegroom will one day praise him with all of its heart, face to face with the Savior. Oh, Lord, would you hasten that day? Would you hasten that day of glory? But until then, Father, would you keep us faithful to yourself, joyfully living in the power and the knowledge of what is ours now in Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.