

## 1 Blessings

How blessed are we really?

## 2 Scripture

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will — to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

## 3 Scripture

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ,

to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment —

to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

## 4 Scripture

In him we (Jews) were also chosen,

having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will,

in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

## 5 Scripture

And you (Gentiles) also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

Having believed,

you were marked in him with a seal,

the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession — to the praise of his glory.

## 6 Introduction

I don't know if you know this or not but for the past 18 months, many people have become kind of grumpy, frustrated, and unsettled.

I know that this doesn't apply to anyone in our church, but you might know someone who is running out of patience.

## 7 Introduction

It's no wonder, why we wouldn't be a little miffed not being able to travel, celebrate holidays, or even eat at our favorite restaurants.

You cooperated with the lockdowns, you participated in social distancing, wore a mask, and then perhaps got vaccinated.

Now only to find out that another variant of the virus is on its way and new mandates are to follow and perhaps a new booster shot as well.

## 8 Introduction

On top of all of this we're told by "Woke Culture," that we were born a racist and we can't help ourselves from being white supremacist.

In fact, all the riots (peaceful protests) of last year were our fault and we must undergo diversity training and apologize for the color of our skin.

Even if we're "people of color" we are in trouble too and must become woke or else.

## 9 Introduction

---

Moreover, woe unto you if you misgender someone or imply that only women can have babies or that men shouldn't compete in women's sports.

All these kinds of things are now forbidden by "Cancel Culture" and since there is a new sheriff in town, we better get use to it.

## 10 Introduction

However, in my humble opinion things couldn't be better!

No, I'm not crazy or haven't I lost my mind or am in denial.

Why? Because God has lavished on us believers of Jesus Christ, blessing after blessing, after blessings.

As it says, in Ephesians, [God] has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

## 11 Count Your Blessings

This is what our reading Ephesians 1:3-14 is all about.

We uncover one blessing, only to find another.

As the hymn, "Count Your Blessings," encourages us to do,

When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.

Count your blessings, name them one by one.  
Count your blessings, see what God hath done.  
Count your blessings, name them one by one.  
Count your many blessings, see what God hath done.

## 12 Count Your Blessings

According to our text tonight,

God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world (v. 4) [To be] adopted as his children (v. 5).

In Christ Jesus . . .

we have redemption through his blood (v. 7). ... the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (v. 7).

[And] obtained a glorious inheritance among God's elect. (v. 11).

[And] In him you also ... were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit (v. 13).

### **13 Counting the Wrong Things**

However, people have a tendency to focus on things besides our blessings and all the good things that God has given us in Christ.

In fact, we're more apt to count,

Our failures and disappointments,

Personal insults, wrongs, and offenses,

The sins or failures of other people, and strangest of all . . .

Other people's blessings.

### **14 Historical Comparison**

No doubt it is hard to feel blessed these days.

2020 and 2021 have not been easy.

The three-headed troll of Politics, Racism and Pandemic — has been a fire breathing monster.

Unfortunately, many Christians might have more in common with ancient Israel wandering around in the wilderness complaining and grumbling than we do living the Spirit-filled life.

### **15 Blessings Given**

In the Old Testament, blessings generally refer to material possessions, children, good crops, good health, peace, and long life.

Perhaps the most famous blessing in the Hebrew Bible is the Aaronic blessing of Numbers 6:24-26:

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

## 16 Blessings Given

When God blessed Job after his horrifying ordeal, the Bible says that "the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had

fourteen thousand sheep,  
six thousand camels,  
a thousand yoke of oxen, and  
a thousand donkeys.

He also had seven sons and three daughters. ... In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters ... After this Job lived for one hundred and forty years. ... And Job died, old and full of days"

## 17 Blessings Given - Spiritual

In the New Testament, however, blessings mostly refer to spiritual benefits.

The text before us is an example of this, of course, but there are other well-known passages, too.

Perhaps the most famous of these are the Beatitudes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

## 18 Blessings Given - Spiritual

In the Beatitudes, traditional notions of what it means to be blessed take on a new meaning.

People, exposed to the Scriptures through the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees, generally believed that:

---

The rich were blessed, but Jesus said that those who recognized their spiritual poverty were blessed.

In some cases people in mourning (over loss) were viewed as cursed or punished for their sins, but Jesus said that those mourning over their sins were blessed and would be comforted.

## **19 Blessings Given - Spiritual**

In ancient Israel, the strong and mighty are the blessed ones, but Jesus said the meek (those who yield to God) would be blessed and inherit the earth.

There were also those who supposed that if you have plenty to eat and drink you were blessed, but Jesus said that those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" will be filled and are the truly blessed ones.

There were some who believe hard times was something that should be avoided, but according to Jesus blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, and are insulted, or falsely attacked for His name sake.

In fact, Jesus said that their reward would be great!

Furthermore, if they are merciful they will be blessed with mercy and if they are pure in their motives they will be blessed and see God.

## **20 Blessings Given - Spiritual**

Again, in Ephesians 1, and here we have blessings galore.

Our plan of redemption was formulated before the natural world came into being!

God thinks of us as divine children.

Our sins and transgressions have been forgiven through the blood of Christ.

And — this is interesting — there is an "inheritance" awaiting for each of us who are in Christ!

## **21 The Acts of the Blessed!**

So then, what do people do who are blessed by the Lord so abundantly?

People who are blessed do not curse (see James 3:9-10).

---

People who are blessed do not listen to complainers and naysayers (see Psalm 1).

People who are blessed do not feel entitled; they feel grateful.

People who are blessed tend to pay their blessings forward; in other words, they are generous.

People who are blessed are vividly aware of their blessedness and are humbled by it.

People who are blessed see the sacred and holy in every aspect of their lives.

## **22 Daniel**

When Darius the Mede issued a decree saying that all prayers must be directed to him, Daniel refused.

In fact, Daniel went home to his upstairs room and opened the windows toward Jerusalem and prayed.

However, he didn't pray for just anything.

Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. (Daniel 6:10)

The point, you don't pray three times a day giving thanks to God, unless you're counting your blessings.

## **23 We're Always in a state of Blessedness**

The Apostle Paul had some incredible adventures that included shipwrecks, floggings, imprisonment, false accusations, the misunderstanding of colleagues, and illness.

But Paul always regarded himself as blessed.

He wasn't blessed on some days but not on others.

He lived and breathed in the blessings of God!

## **24 We're Always in a state of Blessedness**

While Paul did have a "thorn" given to him and he prayed three times for the Lord to remove it. He nevertheless submitted to God's will as the thorn served a purpose to keep Paul humble.

---

Yet with the thorn, God's grace and blessings were present and sufficient to keep Paul going.

That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

## **25 We're Always in a state of Blessedness**

So then, we're always in a state of blessedness.

Good times and bad!

Abundance or in want!

Persecution or at peace!

God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:5–6)

## **26 Conclusion**

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38–39)

So what should we do and say when bad times come?

Count our blessings, and say,

"The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid [or complain]. What can man [or viruses] do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6)