

Blessed In Christ Jesus

Ephesians 1:1-3

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Let's read Ephesians 1:1-3. We're just going to be getting the opening salutation and the theme of the book. "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: 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed," here's the opening blessing or eulogy (is the word we get from it), "be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Her name was Hetty Green, and in 1919 she died. She went down in history as being America's greatest miser. When she died, way back in 1919, she was worth one hundred million dollars, which was a lot of money back in 1919. She lived like a pauper. It was said that she actually ate cold oatmeal daily because it was too expensive to heat it up. She had a hundred million dollars but didn't want the expense of heating up her oatmeal. One time her son actually injured his leg and she spent so much time looking for a free medical clinic that his leg had to be amputated. When she died, she had all this money but lived like a pauper.

It's to those kind of people in the spiritual realm that Paul is actually writing this book of Ephesians. He's writing to Christians that are "in Christ," which all Christians are, and they are wealthy beyond comprehension in spiritual things but they're living like spiritual paupers. They don't know the riches and the treasures that are theirs because of their position in Christ as children of God. Paul is writing to those who don't know the wealth that they have in Christ.

What will a study of the book of Ephesians do for you as a believer? By the way, there are many great Bible scholars and fathers of the Church that actually consider the epistle of Ephesians, written by Paul, and we're going to give some of the background to it, the greatest that Paul ever penned. Now, I'm not so sure I would concur in light of the glories of the book of Romans, but it's a different style of epistle. As far as its comprehensiveness and his doctrinal truths and practicalness, I think Ephesians is right up there as one of the top letters that Paul ever penned.

The New Testament commentary by William Barclay calls Ephesians the queen of the epistles. I discovered in my preparation today that John Calvin actually favored this epistle more than any other book in the New Testament; and the great reformer, John Knox, the preacher of Scotland, actually loved this book. When he was dying, he had it read to him daily, over and over and over, on his deathbed. He actually had John Calvin's sermons read to him from the book of Ephesians. He loved this epistle so much.

The book itself has I believe as its primary theme...and it's really hard to zero in on any one definite theme because there's kind of a whole group of things that come together in the book of Ephesians, but its theme is the focus of the riches that we have and possess in Christ, and it's focus is the body of Christ. The epistle was penned by Paul in prison. I want you to look at

Ephesians 3:1 read quickly for just a moment. Paul says, "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles," and then look at Ephesians 4:1, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." In Ephesians 3:1 and 4:1, Paul makes reference to his imprisonment. Look at Ephesians 6:20. It says, "For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak," the references clearly that Paul was in prison.

Paul had two basic imprisonments, and this is what is known as his first imprisonment. During his second imprisonment, Paul wrote 2 Timothy and was martyred after he wrote it. It was the last letter he wrote. In Acts 28, at the end of the book of Acts, Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem and had appealed to Caesar. He had been shipped to Caesar and was waiting his trial before Caesar Nero. It was during this time that Paul penned what are known as the prison epistles. Paul was unable to preach, but he was able to pick up his pen and took to writing the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. They are the prison epistles. The date for the writing of this epistle is about 61 A.D. Some feel that it could have been 63 or 64, but it was probably more about 61 A.D. It is one of Paul's classic prison epistles.

It's interesting that Colossians, written at the same time, probably carried by the same messenger to the churches there in that Lycus Valley, western Asia or Turkey today, that Paul wrote Colossians and Ephesians at the same time because they are very interesting in paralleling one another. Colossians focuses on Christ who is the Head of the church, and Ephesians focuses on the body of which Christ is the Head. Both are linked to Christ but focus on a different aspect. The book of Colossians focuses on the supremacy and the sufficiency of Christ, and the book of Ephesians focuses as well on Christ but that He is the Head of the church. A lot of verses that are in Ephesians also appear in the book of Colossians, so they parallel one another.

Let me give you just a brief outline of the book. Again, there is no real set law or rule as to how many divisions you create in the book. The two most clear are Ephesians 1-3, the believer's wealth, and they are doctrinal; Ephesians 4-6 are the believer's walk, and they are the believer's duty or living out the Christian life. There are two sections of three chapters each, six chapters. Ephesians 1-3 is the wealth of the believer, doctrinal truth, the riches you have in Christ. Then, Ephesians 4-6 are the walk of the believer, and you'll find that word repeated over and over, "walk worthy, walk in unity, walk in harmony, walk in victory." I like Ruth Paxson who has written a little commentary on the book of Ephesians. She divides it into three sections: the wealth, the walk, and the warfare of the believer. Ephesians 1-3 are the wealth of the believer, doctrine; Ephesians 4-6:9 would be the walk of the believer, that's his duty; and Ephesians 6:10-24 is the believer's warfare, that's the danger. That's why I said this book is so comprehensive.

I know many of you have read Ephesians many times. We've all read Scriptures from it, Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast." A lot of famous verses come from the book of Ephesians. It's a marvelous book that lays down first the doctrine, then the duty. This is always in that order in Pauline epistles. You first have to know who you are in Christ before

you can live who you are in Christ. You can't enjoy what you don't know that you have.

I have a little habit sometimes. I don't carry a lot of cash, but sometimes I'll accumulate a little cash. I'm famous for having no money in my wallet, but I guess today a lot of people are cashless the way they live. Sometimes I'll stick cash in a sock drawer and I'll forget about it. Then, there are those times where it's like, "Oh, I could use a little money. I don't have any money right now," and I'll be all frustrated. Months later, I'll open a sock drawer or pull out a sock and there'll be some money in there. I'll think, Man, I forgot where I put my money. I didn't know that I even had it. It's kind of a bummer when you're rich and you don't know it, right? What good does it do? When you have money...and that's not to imply that I have a lot of money in my sock drawer, by the way. When you have something and you don't know, you can't enjoy or use it.

Some of you guys are real tool guys. I'm not a real tool guy, but I have a few tools. Sometimes you're doing a project and you think of a tool that would be perfect for your project. You forget that you have the tools, so you run to Home Depot and buy the tool. You come back and open your tool drawer, and you just bought what you already had. There's probably three of them in your drawer, and you just bought one for the fourth time!

Not so much lately, but I used to go book shopping. Every time I'd go book shopping I'd find a book and say, "Oh, great! I got a new book," and sure enough I'd come to my library and notice that I already had two or three copies and I bought another one of the same, but I'd give it to somebody else. Other people become the beneficiary of my bad memory, I guess.

As a Christian, you need to understand, and we're going to hone in on this theme tonight, your blessings that you have because of your position in Christ Jesus. It's so very important. That's one of the main themes of the book of Ephesians, the idea that we are in Christ Jesus.

I want you to note three things in this opening salutation, which is actually verses 1-2. Let's go back and read verses 1-2. "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: 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." Notice first of all the author is Paul the "apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." There's about thirteen times in this book where Paul makes reference to his name throughout the book. The book is obviously written by Paul the Apostle.

Paul had two names: Saul and Paul. When we first find him in the Bible, he is Saul of Tarsus—he is not a Christian, but he was persecuting Christians. He was going to Damascus from Jerusalem to arrest Christians, and there in Acts 9 we have his famous conversion. It's kind of synonymous with what we call a radical conversion. It's called the Damascus Road conversion where he was converted to Christ, his eyes were opened later as Ananias laid his hands on him, and he became a believer in Jesus Christ. When God called him to become an apostle, he was sent primarily to the Gentiles, so he took and adopted his second name, which was the name Paul. Paul is a Greek name which means little. Saul means asked for. It was a Hebrew

name, and he was probably named after King Saul, the first king of Israel. They were both, by the way, from the tribe of Benjamin, so it was Saul of Tarsus as well as Saul the king of Israel. He adopted the name Paul and used it primarily as he ministered among the Gentiles.

Notice that Paul was “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” I don’t believe that there are any apostles in the world today. There are people with apostolic-type ministries in that they’re sent out to represent Christ, but in the primary sense of the apostles chosen by God, given authority to write Scripture, seeing the risen Christ (which was one of the qualifications and Saul saw Him on the road to Damascus), that there are no longer any apostles. Sometimes pastors, preachers, or ministers like to use the title “Apostle.” I don’t know why. I don’t believe it should be used by them because there are just the twelve apostles and then Paul the Apostle who came later, born out of due time. They had the authority to write down Scripture, and they had apostolic authority to give us the doctrines that we have today. They are the foundation for the church, and I believe they passed off the scene.

If there are truly apostles in that primary sense today in the church, then they would have the authority to add to the Scriptures. The Bible says in Jude that we “...should earnestly contend for the faith which,” is the body of truth that we believe, “was once,” and for all, “delivered unto the saints,” so there’s no new revelation coming along by some apostle that got some new understanding or new revelation—If it’s new, it’s not true; and if it’s true, it’s not new. We’re understanding the doctrines that the apostles gave us as they wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Notice also that Paul was “an apostle...by the will of God.” He wasn’t bragging or boasting, he was just making it clear that it was a sense of God being gracious to him and saving him. I think it was a misstatement made out of humility that he was basically saying, “This is not an apostleship of self appointment,” which does not exist, “this is an apostleship where God has called me by His Grace.” I believe that every one of us has been called by God to a particular task, to a particular ministry, to a particular purpose and plan for our lives. We may not be apostles, but we all are to represent Jesus Christ. An apostle would be one who would be an ambassador for Jesus Christ, that’s the sense that we are His ambassadors. We represent Him, and when we speak His Word, we speak with His authority. But we’re not apostles in the primary sense of having authority to write Scripture or establish new doctrinal truth.

Paul’s appointment was by God’s will. He was chosen by God’s grace, which is fitting in the epistle to the Ephesians because it’s all about the grace of God. Right off the bat, Paul starts talking about some of the themes that are so common. A lot of the background and themes of the book of Ephesians I’m going to develop as we go through in the context of the verses that we’re dealing with each night.

Secondly, notice the recipients, the congregation that it was sent to in verse 1. It says, “...to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Paul identifies the Christians in four ways. I want you to note them. First, he calls them “saints.” We have a great misunderstanding today about the title “saints.” Unfortunately, the Catholic Church had the idea

that a saint is somebody who lived a devoted, godly life, died, and after they die someone prays to them and gets a miracle in their name and they have miracles to their record. Then, they get together and canonize that saint and establish the fact that this person was a saint. The New Testament clearly teaches that it is a title for all Christians. If you are a Christian, you are a saint. Now you say, "No, I ain't." This is where you need to understand positional truth. We're not talking about living like saints, that's sanctification; we're talking about positional truth, which is justification, being declared righteous before Holy God.

The word "saint," the word "sanctify," and the word "holy," all come from the same root word in the Bible which literally means to be set apart. It basically means to be set apart. It doesn't mean that intrinsically, in and of yourself, that you're necessarily holy, but it means that God sets you apart for His holy purposes. It has the concept of what we're going to see being "in Christ," being set apart.

The goal of the Christian life, and we'll get there in Ephesians 4, is to bring your walk up to your position. Walking worthy means that your life weigh the same as your position. Whether you believe it or not, or understand it or not, if you have been born again, you are a saint as far as God is concerned. It's one of the titles, and there are many different titles for God's people and we're going to see some of them in Ephesians, that God gives us in His Word, that we are saints. That's your position before God.

They also were at Ephesus. This is where they lived on earth. They had a position in Christ as saints, but they practice living out their position in the world in the city of Ephesus. Ephesus was one of the chief cities of what was known as Asia Minor. Today it's western Turkey. If you have a map of the seven churches of Revelation, and you looked at the seven churches, because we remember in Revelation 2 that the first church of the seven churches is the church at Ephesus, you will see Ephesus right there next to Colossae, Laodicea, and all the different... Pergamum and Smyrna. They're all clustered together in that area of Asia.

The church was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey. At the very end of the second missionary journey (if you want to make a note and look it up, it's at the end of Acts 18; we can't get too diverted there in Acts), Paul goes into Ephesus and a church is born. From Ephesus, it's believed, the gospel went out to all those other seven churches that are mentioned in the book of Revelation. The church at Ephesus had a great history of pastors and spiritual leaders. Paul was the founder of the church. How'd you like to have Paul the Apostle, the founder of your church? When he left, he left Priscilla and Aquila, that husband-wife team, to be there to minister to the believers in Ephesus. Apollos, the great preacher, came along and was preaching there at Ephesus as well. Years later, and this really is cool to me, the apostle John, John the beloved, the one who wrote the gospel of John and Revelation, also spent time pastoring there in the city of Ephesus. They had a rich heritage of great preachers, but by the time John wrote to them, exiled from the island of Patmos in Revelation, they had left their first love—their love for God had grown cold—so we know that they are one of the seven churches there in Asia.

On the third missionary journey, Paul then went back to Ephesus, and you can read about it in Acts 19. He spent longer in Ephesus than any other place preaching, teaching, and pastoring this church. He spent three years there in the city of Ephesus pouring into these people.

It's interesting that Paul knew the Ephesians quite well, but the epistle isn't really personal. It's a lot different than the book of Galatians. It's more doctrinal, theological, and more practical. Even Rome, when he wrote the book of Romans, he had never been to Rome but said hi to sixteen people in the church. When he wrote to the Ephesians, there's no personal greeting or personal issues that are taking place other than he mentions, "I'm a prisoner of the Lord." During that time, Paul was under what's called house arrest. The first imprisonment of Paul, recorded when he was in prison in Acts 28, was actually house arrest—he had his own house that he rented but had chains on his wrists and he was able to write and have friends come visit him. The second imprisonment, when he was rearrested as a political prisoner and was then executed, he was in a dungeon in Rome. It was called the Mamertine Prison. It was a real pit of a prison as he wrote his last letter to Timothy and talked about, "...the time of my departure is at hand. I finished the race. There's a crown laid up for me," those beautiful last words of Paul in 2 Timothy. Paul is writing from Rome under house arrest, and the background for that is Acts 19, but he's writing to the Ephesians.

Now, I don't want to spend too much time on the city. I wish I could've put it together...maybe introduce them as I go along, but I've been to Ephesus twice. The ancient ruins of Ephesus are marvelous. It's one of the best restored ancient cities in the world. You can walk right down the original street of Ephesus. You can see the library and all the buildings that are there. You can spend hours looking at Ephesus. Like I said, today it's in western Turkey, so just a little short 10-15 minute drive off the Mediterranean. The ancient world had a harbor that went into it. It's all filled up. It had a little river that went up to it, but it's a beautiful place. I've got pictures. I'll show you some. It was a very large center. It was the chief city of that area there in Asia Minor, western Turkey or western Asia. They had what was known as the Temple of Diana. It was called Diana by the Romans. She was the goddess of fertility. The Greeks called Diana, Artemis, but it was a very magnificent, giant temple of this pagan god that they felt came down from heaven.

Remember when Paul was there in Ephesus...and Ephesus had a theatre that was the largest in the Roman world. It held twenty-five thousand people. We gathered and had a Bible study in that theater that's been unearthed, and you can gather there. It's a real cool experience. The silversmiths, that had their little silver shrines to the goddess Diana, were all upset because people were getting saved in their city and weren't buying their little statues of Diana anymore, so they caused a riot and chased Paul out of the city. You can read all about that ministry there in the book of Ephesus. When they were converted as well, that's where they had the magic books and had a bonfire and burned them all because of the revival that took place there in the city of Ephesus.

They had a position in Christ as saints. They had the position in the world, so we are saints in a dark world. We're saints in a pagan world. The culture we live in today is not much different

than the culture of Ephesus where they worshiped Diana. The temple was full of sacred so-called prostitutes, and it was part of their acts of worship. It was also the bank of Asia where they deposited all the money in Asia in that temple, which is interesting in light of Ephesians and its theme of our wealth and riches that we have in Christ. But we live in a dark, pagan world. God doesn't just save us and then take us out of the world, He wants to keep us in the world. He doesn't want us to live in isolation, He wants us to permeate the darkness with the light. Don't be afraid to go out into the world, not being of the world or like the world, but being a light to the world.

Thirdly, notice they're also called "faithful," in verse 1, "...faithful in Christ Jesus." We would just read that and kind of pass over it. It's interesting how much information is there in that title "faithful." It seems that it has two implications. First, it's another phrase or term for Christians—not only are we called "saints," but we're called the "faithful." It's because we are saved by putting our faith and trust in Jesus Christ—we're saved by grace through faith. Faith is necessary for your salvation. It means that you trust in Him, you put your faith in Him, so we're faithful. It has a second idea, that is, application, that we live faithfully. We trust in Christ for salvation by faith, but then it manifests in our lives by living faithfully in trusting Him and living a life of dependence upon Him.

Fourthly, they're described in verse 1 as, "in Christ Jesus." I wish I had the ability to convey the importance of this phrase, "in Christ Jesus." As long as I've been preaching the Bible, it's one of my great frustrations. I guess I should try to do a topical series on the doctrine of "in Christ." This is Paul's favorite term to use for the believer or Christian, "in Christ Jesus." It's used about 90 times in this book of Ephesians. It's used in these first few verses 12 times, I'll point some of them out in a minute, it's used 164 times by Paul in his letters, and that is because basically everything about the Christian life hinges on this doctrinal truth that we are "in Christ," that's the doctrine of identification with Christ. Therefore, God the Father treats you and relates to you as He does His own Son, so all the blessings that we have—salvation, and the benefits of our salvation—come to us not because we pray, go to church, or we wear certain clothes, fast, or do certain things, it's all because I'm "In Christ." That's why in Colossians he says, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power."

The moment you are saved, and I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself, you are taken out of Adam and placed in Christ. Every human being (you've got to understand this) is either in Adam positionally before God, with all of the sin, death, and condemnation that is there, or you are in Christ. All of humanity is in one of those two federal heads—in Adam or in Christ. Every human being is born in Adam. The only way to get out of Adam is by being born again, thus being transferred from Adam into Christ. This is really Paul's central theme in his doctrinal epistles talking to believers about the fact that they are "in Christ."

I grew up in a church that never taught this, never explained this, never made it clear. I thought I was saved because I chose Him, He didn't choose me; and I thought I had to stay saved, and keep myself saved, by being a good person, living a holy life, and hanging on as tight as I could. Then, I realized that He saved me by His grace—He chose me, I didn't choose Him—

and He took me out of Adam when I was saved and placed me into Christ by the work of His Holy Spirit, something I could not do, something I cannot undo. The implications are staggering. Again, this is why I have such a difficult time teaching this stuff because my mind is going a thousand miles an hour. It's all these doctrines are connected to this truth. Everything that I have as a Christian is because of this one truth: I am in Christ. I'm going to break it down a little bit more about what it means to be in Christ, but it's positional truth, I'm in Christ.

I happen to believe that once you're in Christ, you're always in Christ. Now, I know that some Christians will disagree with that, that's fine, you can be wrong if you want. I don't care, I still love you. You can't be saved without being in Christ. You can't put yourself in Christ. You can't get yourself out of Christ—once in Christ, always in Christ. Does that mean you can live however you want? No. Ephesians 4-6, the goal of the Christian life is to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you were called in all holiness and godliness. That's called sanctification. Don't get sanctification confused with justification—the act of God where He declares the believing sinner righteous based on the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. We're often beating ourselves up and condemning ourselves because we're not perfect. We do stumble and fall in sin, we forget that we're in Christ, and in Christ there's no separation and no defeat. The doctrine is just staggering.

Read Romans 8:1 where it says, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," period, right there. That's where that verse stops. There's no condemnation, there's no separation, and there's no defeat to those who are in Christ Jesus. So, they're saints living in a dark world, they're faithful, and they are in Christ Jesus. This is the big theme.

I want you to notice some of the references. In verse 3, Paul actually says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," and notice as well in verse 4 he says, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Notice in verse 6, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." Then, notice in verse 7, "In whom," and again in verse 10, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ...which are on earth; even in him." Notice also, verse 11, where it talks about, "In whom," and again in verse 12, we have a reference to, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." In verse 13 the phrase, "In whom," and again in verse 20, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead." Again, that's just a little sample of the first part of the first chapter.

We jump into the doctrine in verse 4, next Sunday, where we see the blessings that are ours in the Father, in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. By the way, not only does the book of Ephesians focus on ecclesiology, the church, but it focuses on pneumatology, the Holy Spirit. This epistle is full of doctrinal truth about the Holy Spirit.

They are in Christ, and I want you to note in the greeting, verse 2, we haven't gotten yet to verse 4, Paul opens with, "Grace be to you," this is a typical way that they would write letters in those days, "and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." The fact that

Paul couples the name of God the Father with our Lord Jesus Christ as both being the same source of grace and peace means that Jesus Christ is equal to God the Father. This implies the deity of Christ.

Paul uses the Greek greeting charis. The normal greeting for the Greeks when they wrote letters was a little variation of this word charis, and it actually meant the word "rejoice." They would actually open with the word "rejoice," so Paul tweaks it a little bit because the theme of Ephesians is God's grace in forming the body of Christ; and then he wishes them peace, the Hebrew form of greeting which is shalom, peace. It means all the blessings of God. Paul then goes on to say they come "...from God our Father," as the source, "and from the Lord Jesus Christ." All God's blessings come to us by God's grace. God's blessings are for Gentiles and Jews, "Grace...and peace," which is the theme in the book of Ephesians, that the two become one in Christ, and we are saved by grace. We all know Ephesians 2:8, and we have His peace, Ephesians 2:14, "For he is our peace...and hath broken down the middle wall of partition," and we have one, in Christ, in the body of Christ, the church. Grace and peace are for living in the midst of the storms, the trials, and the difficulties of life.

I want you to notice our last verse tonight, verse 3. We have here the theme of Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," or in the heavenlies, in Christ. Paul blesses God. In this opening greeting, he has a benediction, or a eulogy in this case, "Blessed," or praise be to God. This is a worship statement. He's praising God. He's worshipping God. Paul is singing praise to God from whom all blessings flow. We sing the Doxology, Praise God, it's hard for me to quote it without starting to sing it, and I don't want to start singing it for you. Praise God, from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We're going to see all these blessings come from the Father, from the Son, and from the Holy Spirit because of our position in Christ. I actually believe, and I don't think this is hyperbole, that this is one of the greatest verses in the New Testament. If you haven't dug into it, meditated on it, studied it, understood it, you're missing a great blessing. Praise God who has blessed us with all the blessings that are spiritual in our position in Christ which is in heavenly places, and he refers to it as being, again, in Christ Jesus.

Each book of the Bible has a special theme. Genesis is the book of beginnings. Matthew is the book of the Kingdom. The gospel of John is the book of the deity of Christ. Galatians, we just finished studying, is the book of Christian liberty. In Ephesians 1:3, we have the theme that we have been blessed by God the Father in our position in Christ with all the blessings of the Spirit.

I want to try my best to wrap this up, but there are three things about the blessing I want you to take note. First, the source of our blessings. By the way, what we're reading is true for all Christians. When I opened the study tonight and talked about having wealth that you're not aware of, that you can't enjoy, this is wealth that you have if you're a Christian. This isn't for the super saints. This isn't for just the "Deeper Life Club," this is for Christians, period. The source of those blessings is "...the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," that's why we sing Praise God, from whom all blessings flow.

Write down James 1:17, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,” so all the blessings of the Spirit are yours in your position in Christ. Notice it’s in the past tense. He has already blessed us, so you don’t have to beg or plead for God to bless you. He has blessed you in Christ. In this truth and all these verses (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 8), the initiative is always God’s—He chose us, He forgave us, He adopted us, He sealed us. It’s not things that we get on our own merits or our own attempts, God takes the initiative and takes the action.

Notice the second thing about these blessings in verse 3, the substance of these blessings are spiritual, “...with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places,” literally, all the blessings of the Spirit in the heavenlies. Contrary to some who teach that as a Christian you are a King’s kid, which I cannot disagree with, they think that that means guaranteed health, wealth, and prosperity. Nothing could be further from the truth in the epistles of Paul or the New Testament. That’s not what Paul is saying. There’s no mention of a new donkey. There’s not mention of a house. There’s no mention of a Rolex watch. There’s no mention of wealth or health. It’s spiritual blessings. You may not have a nice big house or a lot of money in the bank, you may not have a fancy car or the finest clothes; but if you’re a Christian, you’re a child of the King. Did you know that? You’re rich...in Christ by God’s grace, so don’t go bragging, don’t go boasting, and don’t think you’re hot stuff. Don’t go walking around, “I’m rich!” Humbly be thankful that God, by His grace, has saved you and that He treats you as your position being in Christ. They are spiritual blessings, not material blessings. They are in heavenly places. God has promised to take care of our material needs if we seek first the Kingdom of God, but He hasn’t guaranteed that we won’t suffer or experience loss or difficulties or trials in this life.

Notice in verse 3, “...all spiritual blessings.” The word “all” there in the Greek literally means all, I looked it up. I actually discovered today, after all these years of preaching Ephesians, that the word “all” appears fifty times in the book of Ephesians, so it’s not like some or a few blessings, and if you’re lucky maybe He’ll throw a few your way. All the blessings that God has for you are yours at your disposal as a believer in Christ. That’s a marvelous truth! The principle is this: As Christians, we grow by appropriation not addition. Now, I don’t usually tell you to write things down, but you should write that down. It’s not original. It’s not a John Miller original. I’m not sure exactly where I got it, but it can transform your life.

As a Christian, your growth comes from appropriation not addition. Why am I so adamant about that? Because there are segments of Christianity where people are telling other Christians that you need something. You need to pray for it, ask for it, seek it. You need to have this experience because you don’t have the fullness of the Spirit, you don’t have the power of the Spirit, you don’t have all of the Spirit in your life. That’s not what the Bible teaches. The Bible teaches it’s yours, it’s available, it’s at your disposal; but you, by faith, must appropriate it. It’s not that you have to get it added, you just appropriate it. When a baby is born, it may not have hair. Our kids were all bald when they were born, and some of them were bald for the first couple years. We had to tape bows on our daughter’s heads so people knew that it was a girl not a bald-headed boy. We didn’t have to go buy a wig, the hair would come, the teeth would come, everything was there. All they needed was nutrition, and then the body would

appropriate what was already built into the system.

It's the same way in the spiritual realm. All you need is to feed on the Word of God, learn what is yours in Christ, and surrender by faith and appropriate what is Christ's as already provided for you. Don't let anyone deceive you into thinking that you need something more. That's why I love that Colossians passage which says, "And ye are complete in him." It's a nautical term which means shipshape, full-rigged, ready to sail. It happens the moment you are born again because that's when you are placed in Christ—all the blessings, not some of them.

Christian growth is by appropriation not by addition. We will spend the next several weeks learning about our blessings that we need to appropriate by faith in Christ. In verse 4, the blessing of being elected or chosen by God the Father; in verse 5, the blessing of being adopted by God the Father; in verse 6, the blessing of being accepted by God the Father; in verse 7, we were blessed by being redeemed in God the Son, and God the Son forgave us of all of our sins; in verses 8-9, we were blessed in that He made known to us His will, He revealed His will to us in His Word; and in verse 13, we were sealed by the Holy Spirit, all of us. There is no Christian who has not been sealed. You don't have to pray, "God, seal me with Your Holy Spirit," it's already yours. You just need to appropriate it by faith and thank Him for it. Then, in verse 14, we are all indwelt by the Holy Spirit. That's only a couple references to the doctrine. I'm going to actually single out (I've never done this before) all the references to the Holy Spirit in Ephesians, and we're going to look at them as a group. That's a marvelous study to do.

In closing, I want you to notice the sphere of our blessings in Christ, verse 3. Now, I've already talked about it, so I won't dwell too much on it, but we're "Blessed," by "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." William MacDonald said that this is what he called the pyramid of God's grace. First it starts with blessing, verse 3, then spiritual blessings, then he adds every spiritual blessing, then he adds every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, then he adds every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. He lavishes on the blessings that are ours, but they're all ours because we are in Christ, the foundation for everything.

What does it mean to be in Christ? It means that you are in union with Christ, that you are in fellowship with Christ, that you are now living in the sphere of Christ. It means to be united with Him. It means a new environment. It means you're no longer in Adam, you're now in Christ and have all the blessings that are yours in Christ. If you are not in Christ, you have no hope. Look at Ephesians 2:12, "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," so in our unsaved state, we were without Christ and were without hope. Jesus, by His death on the cross and His resurrection, procured or secured for us spiritual blessings. Look at Ephesians 2:13, "But now," here's that term, "in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." It's talking about our unsaved state far off. I kind of think of the old hippie term "far out," when I read that. A lot of us were far outside of Christ. We were "far out," alright. We were outside of Christ, and when we were

saved, we were brought nigh to Christ and were united with Christ. Romans 6 is a whole teaching on this subject as well, that we died with Christ, we're baptized in Christ, and we're risen with Christ.

Now, how do we get into Christ? Simple. We realize that we're sinners and condemned in Adam. We repent of our sins. Thirdly, we receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and we are born again. Write down 1 Corinthians 12:13. I really want you to write this down, and I want you to go home tonight and read it, look at it, think about all that I taught in light of this verse. I'm going to read it. Paul says, "For by one Spirit are we all," there's that word I pointed out, "baptized into one body...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." There's no one in Christ who is excluded from this work of the Holy Spirit of taking you out of Adam and placing you into Christ.

We know 2 Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Write down Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." At the end of Romans 8, Paul says, "...we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." It's almost that you can't even exhaust this theme of being in Christ Jesus. How wonderful! As the bird is in the air, that's the element he flies in; as the fish swims in the sea, that's the element he flies in. We are in Christ. All of our lives, all of our blessings, all the goodness of God comes to us because of our position in Christ Jesus. Amen?