

Title: Ephesians, Part 2 Blessings of being 'In Christ'

Speaker: Charles Stone

Passage: Ephesians 1.3-14

Big idea: God's multiple blessings of our being 'in Christ' (6 in this passage) should motivate us to respond in 2 tangible ways.



<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/ephesians/> Video from 0-2.39

Have you ever heard somebody or even yourself say this phrase, "I am blessed."

What does that really mean?

- Well, it could mean that ...
 - Their current circumstances are going their way.
 - Something good just happened to them.
 - They just got a surprise tax refund.
 - They just got a great deal on a new car.
 - Their kids are doing great in school.
 - Or maybe they just enjoyed a great meal probably a Chinese food buffet
 - Or it could mean something much deeper than circumstances because an eternal perspective of blessings prompted them to say that.

Today is part 2 of our series on Ephesians and we are going to look at that very subject, God's blessings.

Here's today's big idea.

Big idea: God's multiple blessings of our being 'in Christ' (5 in this passage) should prompt us to respond in 2 tangible ways.

A quick review from last week.



I gave you three major take-aways.



I gave an overview of the book.



I also gave you a sticky learning key called **active learning**.



Read means to read the upcoming Sunday's Bible passage each day.

To help your reading, we have a download on our web page on Ephesians something called the **RIPE Reading Guide** which is an ancient way to read and reflect over God's word.

Record by taking notes. The research tells us that when you take notes learning gets imbedded more deeply. Even doodling about what you hear enhances learning.

Review. Reviewing is the number one way to retain what you hear from a sermon or message. We have some tools to help.

Also, we have this little **business card** with a QR code that you can get as you come in or as you leave and scan it with your phone and it will take you right to the Ephesians page with these resources I just mentioned, plus...

- videos of prior messages
- an electronic copy of today's notes for notetaking
- full transcripts of the sermons
- other recommended resources and downloads.



The code is the same each week so don't need a new card each week but feel free to take one each week if you want one. So, when you come in, you can get the card, scan the QR code with your phone and even download that Sunday's sermon notes if you want to take notes on your phone or ipad with some PDF markup app.

Finally, we also are selling some message notes binders: you can purchase one of these at the welcome center on the cheap. We three hole punch the notes so you can keep them in the notebook plus there are a few more goodies in the notebook as well.

Now let's read Eph 1.3-14

Eph. 1:3 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. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. ⁹ And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you 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, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Paul is caught up in this amazing reality of knowing God and verses 3-14 in the original Greek are one long sentence. We see the work of all three persons in the Trinity. Paul uses a tool in rhetoric (the art of persuasiveness) at that time which used these long sentences and repeated ideas in them.

In this one long sentence he repeats some ideas like praise be to God and in Christ. The purpose of this style of communication was to get the audience caught up in the love, wonder and praise of God and evoking deep affection and emotion for the Lord as they thought about what he has done for them, and for us to. And in this long sentence, punctuation like a comma was placed where a person would have to stop and take a breath. And the piling up of all these phrases gave a sense of rhythm that the audience could get caught up in and anticipate.

So, Paul is caught up in the incredible generosity of God as he writes about blessing after blessing.

Eph. 1:3 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.

'Heavenly realms' means fitted to prepare us for heaven or the immaterial realm, the unseen universe. Although we temporarily live on earth, spiritually we live in this heavenly realm.

In the OT the blessings were primarily material like flocks, crops, and influence. In the NT, however, the new covenant, Jesus does take care of us materially, but the overwhelming blessings and promises are spiritual in nature, he enriches our souls. These spiritual blessings have their source in God.

And he enumerates these blessings that follow, these benefits or enrichments as a result of our being in Christ.

In Christ is so pervasive to our being it's like the air that we breath. We breathe it. It is necessary for life. And we live in it as well.

Verses 4-14 amplify verse 3. He begins with past blessings.

⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us

Before the creation of the world, God had determined that all who believed on his Son should be saved. This plan was no after-thought or an arbitrary choice by God, not some celestial dice throwing or a heavenly roulette wheel. In fact, it was based on his perfect love. The focus is not so much on the who, but to what is one predestined.

Hang on a moment until I share the complementary truth of free will.

God's plan of choosing was a perfectly thought-out plan, a perfect design coming from a perfect God. *Us* is every person throughout eternity who has repented and placed their faith in Jesus. There is no indication of any dislike toward those not chosen. It was the plan God chose to maximize the number of people who go to heaven after they die.

Chose is a word that means to select something. It has the idea of kindness or favor involved, imparting benefits on the ones chosen.

Predestination

PREDESTINATION

1. Calvinism
2. Arminianism

John 7.17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Bible believing, God loving people differ in their views on such things as the end times and the sovereignty of God (election, predestination) vs man's free will to choose or reject God.

I want to give you a **brief** overview of these two streams of belief, God's sovereignty and man's freedom.

Scholars generally use these two labels to describe these two somewhat contrasting belief systems.

In general, **Calvinism** or reformed theology emphasizes the sovereignty of God. John Calvin was a French theologian who lived in the mid 1500's is the most well-known biblical scholar. This view was, as you figured out, named after him. We just read a verse and there are a couple more in this passage about predestination, God's choosing, his sovereignty.

Arminianism emphasizes man's free will to choose or reject God and was named after Jacobus Arminius a Dutch theologian who lived in the late 1500's. John Wesley, the founder of Methodism in the 1800's would be the most well-known Arminian.

Here is a key verse about man's free will to choose.

John 7.17 If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own.

Here are two verses that show the contrast, both the words of Jesus.

John 6.44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him,

This speaks to God's sovereignty of drawing people to Himself.

[John 5.40](#) yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

This one speaks of man's refusal of that.

Each emphasizes one over the other. The Bible tell us that God is sovereign, he chose, and at the same time man must choose and can refuse to follow Jesus. How can the two exist together? These two contrasting, true beliefs are what is called an antinomy, an apparent contradiction. Both views attempt to explain their particular viewpoint.

One scholar, John Stott says,

"Why do people not come to Jesus?

Is it that they cannot?

Or is it that they will not?

The only answer which is compatible with His own teaching is,

'Both, even though we cannot reconcile them.'"

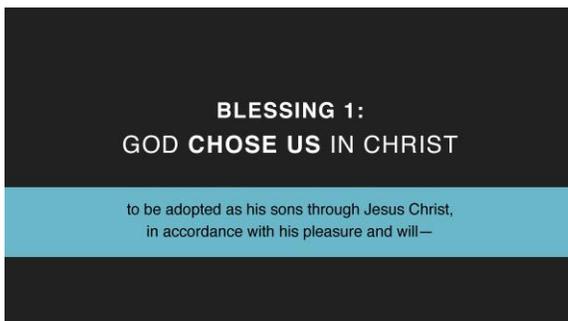
Calvinism places the emphasis on God's sovereign choice. We see that biblical idea in these verses today.

Arminianism places the emphasis on our decision to choose or reject God that we see in other bible passages.

So, no matter your view, remember that nobody has the corner on these ideas and guard against labeling others or having extreme, unhealthy view of these ideas.

So, [Blessing 1: God chose us in Christ](#) because of His love, grace, and mercy.

[to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—](#)



What comes to your mind when you think of adoption? It is a beautiful thing.

When a child is adopted, they do nothing to get adopted. 100% of the work, effort, and cost is born by the parents who want to adopt that child. The orphan does not earn adoption nor perform to get it or pay for the privilege of it. The power and the reason for adoption are all bound up in the heart of the parents to be.

Our adoption is all bound up in the gracious heart of a loving heavenly father.

Every person who places their faith in Jesus is adopted into his family. God wanted you. And if you are far from God now, God wants you to be in his family. You come into His family through repentance and faith in Jesus' work on the cross and his resurrection.

How special it is for an adopted child, as they get older, to understand what adoption meant, that someone loved them so much that they someone else paid a great price to bring them into their family with all the rights and privileges that a natural born child would have.

In Roman days, when the NT was written, a wealthy person would pick someone if he didn't have an heir and when he adopted him or her, they

- instantly became an heir to his riches,
- all the adoptee's debts were paid,
- they were given a new name
- and the newly adopted child had an obligation to honor and please their new father.

Today parents will literally go to the end of the earth to adopt. Why? Out of love.

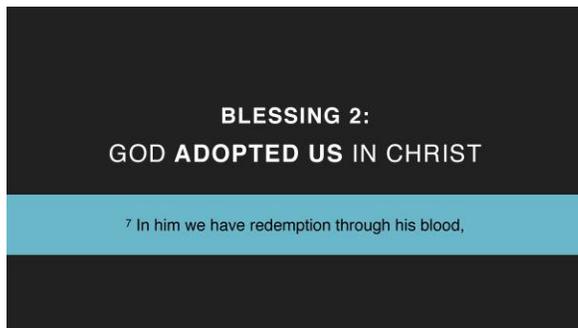
By the same token on a much large scale, God went to the unfathomable length of sending his son Jesus to earth to go to a cross to pay for our sins and then to be raised from the dead to give us life eternal. Our adoption is a very **costly** thing.

If you are a Christian, God picked you. He adopted you.

I used to play this game with my kids, and I said, like with Josh say, if I lined up all the little boys in the whole world and I could only pick one, who would I pick. Josh would say, Me!

Blessing 2: God adopted us in Christ into His forever family.

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood,



The key concept is redemption with three attendant blessings: forgiveness, lavish grace, and spiritual discernment. Redemption is the cause and these three are the results.

Redemption comes from the word ransom. It was used to describe ransoming someone who was say a prisoner of war or a slave or freeing someone from the penalty of death. In every case of a ransom, the person being ransomed was powerless to liberate themselves. They did not have within themselves the ability to pay whatever was required.

Jesus did this for us. We were helpless to deal with our bondage to sin and the penalty of it which was eternal separation from God. He liberated us, redeemed us by the ultimate price, his life.

Blessing 3: God redeemed us in Christ.

the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace



Forgiveness is the idea of losing someone from what binds him and includes the idea of sending it away, like what happened in the sacrificial system of the OT.

Leviticus 16:20 "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites—all their sins—and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.

This is where we get the word scapegoat. Jesus took upon himself all our sins and if we place our faith in him, he forgives us of all sin. How much?

Psalm 103.12 He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west.

How far is the east from the west? The distance is so great it is incomprehensible. Your and mind deepest, grossest, harshest, despicable, little, or big sins have been forgiven that much because God's grace is limitless.

Blessing 4: God forgave us in Christ.

⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding

BLESSING 4: GOD FORGAVE US IN CHRIST

⁸ that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding

I don't believe that wisdom and understanding refer to God's wisdom, although some bible scholars believe that. I believe it refers to another blessing. Wisdom is the knowledge to be able to see into the heart of things, see things as they really are.

Understanding is the insight that leads to right action, practical knowledge. So together, God has given us in Christ, through redemption, the ability to know what is right and true and to act upon it correctly, insight into life and spiritual realities and the understanding on how to wisely live out that insight.

One of these crucial pieces of knowledge is how things will turn out in the end, which we have seen in our study of Revelation.

¹⁰ when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Jesus wins. He restores God's creation through a new heaven and new earth. He vanquishes evil and satan. Everything will be made whole and be ordered under the headship of Jesus as king of kings and Lord of Lords. All the redeemed and everything material and spiritual will be united in Christ.

So, in Christ we have wisdom and knowledge and insight into what really matters and wisdom for day to day living.

Blessing 5: God gave us spiritual insight in Christ.

This one relates to blessing 6.

¹³ ... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

BLESSING 5: GOD GAVE US SPIRITUAL INSIGHT IN CHRIST

¹³ ... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

None of these blessings could happen without the work of the Holy Spirit who brings about our union in Christ and inclusion into His Body and wisdom into all truth.

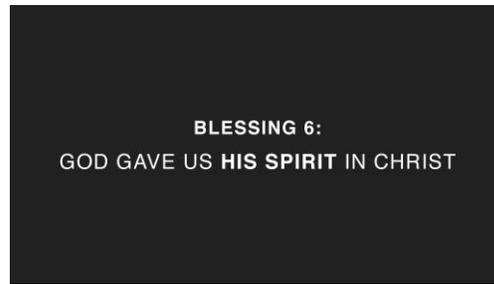
I've shared before that a seal was placed on a document to indicate its authenticity and ownership. Paul adds a component by calling the Holy Spirit a deposit. In this culture the term was a commercial one meaning a first installment.

A businessperson would make a deposit assuring the vendor that they would pay the full amount in the future. So, Paul sees the Holy Spirit as the first installment of the blessings we will receive.

If the Holy Spirit and the power and the peace and the strength and the comfort and wisdom He gives us is just a down payment, a first installment of the eternal blessings we will receive, how great they must be. So, the life in the spirit now is just a foretaste of what it will like in heaven.

In heaven the treasures we will experience are beyond imagination. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the assurance of our salvation and the assurance that heaven will be our ultimate home. The Holy Spirit applies to our lives all the work that God has done Christ to our lives so that we receive all these spiritual blessings

Blessing 6: God gave us His Spirit in Christ.



So, 6 blessings



Notice 'in Christ' is common for them all. It's a crucial concept in the book of Ephesians.

What does 'in Christ' mean (Hughes)

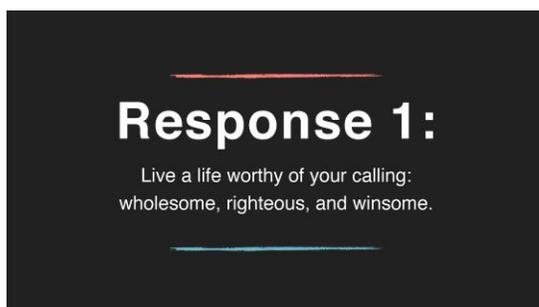
1. Radical transformation. We are fundamentally new, alive in a different way, radically reoriented to internal righteous verses the worlds standard of external righteousness which radically changes our conduct.
2. Dynamic of unity of every believer with the Body of Christ. There is a profound oneness with Jesus and every other believer. Our oneness with him is even described as our being seated with Him in the heavenly realms.

What should we do in light of these incredible blessings?

Remember the **Big idea: God's multiple blessings of our being 'in Christ' (6 in this passage) should motivate us to respond in 2 tangible ways**

This passage gives us the clues.

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



Response 1. Live a life worthy of your calling: wholesome, righteous, and winsome.

To be holy means to be set apart for God to reflect his purity in our attitudes and actions.

It means a believer is different from other people, not in a prideful or an elite, "I'm holy so I'm better than you." Rather is it a distinctiveness about our spirit, or words, our actions that should set us apart.

Blameless is a word used for sacrificial animals in the Jewish sacrificial system. If any blemish was found that animal could not be used as a sacrifice. Only the best was fit for God. So blameless for us means that we offer our best to God in every area of life, work, relationships, use of our money, our home and family life. God gets our best.

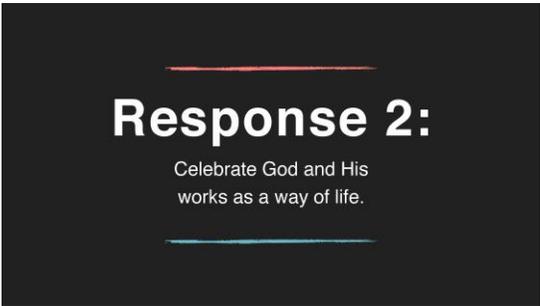
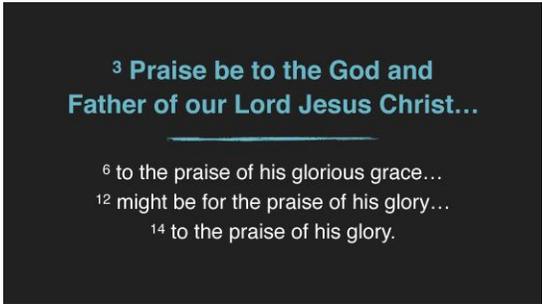
These two words are like two sides of a coin. Holy reflects positive attitudes and actions we do. Blameless reflects some attitudes and actions we don't do.

Holy and blameless describes the process of sanctification progressively over time becoming more like Jesus as the Holy Spirit changes you.

God's plan of salvation is not just so you get a pass to heaven. Rather it also includes living in a different way from those who don't know Christ. The last half of Ephesians is all about living this holy life.

The second response to these blessings? Again, the scripture gives us clues. See if you can pick the common theme in these verses.

What's the common theme? Praise of God. Praise is the idea of giving someone, in this case God himself, significance, importance, and weightiness.



Response 2: Celebrate God and His works as a way of life.

These amazing blessing from God in Christ should evoke in us a life of unlimited, perpetual gratitude and praise through our words and actions.

He begins and ends this section with praise. He wants us to celebrate Him and his goodness for what He has done, what He is doing, and for what He will do in Christ Jesus

We must celebrate God often. I believe one of the clearest indicators of your spiritual growth is that you think about God more and more and

more and that as you do that, you perpetually celebrate Him.

Here's a thought for this coming week.

