

The Blessings Of Belonging To Jesus

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Date: 02 June 2019

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[0 : 0 0] Like we said last week, God willing, over the next few weeks we'll be looking at the first few chapters in Ephesians, the weeks flying in already, so we'll see how far we get, but let's turn back for a short time to that chapter we read, Ephesians 1.

For a very short time today we can look at verses 1 down to verse 14. Just as we're saying last week in the evening looking at Micah, there's so much in these chapters and in these verses we can't even hope to cover half of it or less of it even than that, but each week we can look at a small part of these verses and I encourage you to go home afterwards and to study them yourselves and there's so much wonderful, incredible, glorious things we found in these verses. But for a short time today we can take a brief look at verses 1 down to verse 14, looking at the blessings we have in Jesus and we're looking at four blessings mentioned in these verses. First of all, we are adopted, secondly we are forgiven, thirdly we're given an inheritance, and fourthly, lastly we are sealed.

Adopted, forgiven, given an inheritance and sealed. As children we spend our first few years hopefully enjoying the love and tender care of our parents. At an early stage we know they love us, we know they care for us, we know they provide for us. As we get older we realise there's more to mum or dad than just mum or dad. They are people in their own right, they have their own lives, they have their own pleasures, their own joys, their own concerns. There's more to them than perhaps we ever first thought. And I guess it's the same for us as Christians as we study our Saviour those here this morning as afternoon who are Christians. We know that when we first believed we know that our Saviour loves us, that he cares for us. He has done this amazing thing for us.

As we get older and grow in our faith we expand that knowledge, never forgetting these first overarching things but digging more and more and seeing more and more about who he is and what he has done for us. Perhaps we've never taken that time to study much into who Jesus really is, having taken the time to look into what are the wonderful benefits, blessings of being joined with him, of being part of his family. It's very clear that we understand in these first 14 verses that we're not seeing something that's extra. It's not believing Jesus and also get these things.

It's believing Jesus and in knowing him and in him being your Lord and in him being your Saviour and in you then being in him as we have here and again these things are also through. This is not Jesus plus these extra blessings. All these blessings are found in him and in him alone. We don't go looking for these things outside of Jesus. We seek to know him better, to serve him better, to love him better and in doing that these blessings also become more apparent. They are part of who he is and what he has done.

[4 : 1 2] As we look at these verses we should more and more find more reason to praise our Saviour, to see that he hasn't just saved us from the wrath that we deserve, the wrath that's due to us, but on top of that and with that he has lavished us with the later on with his mercy, with his grace, with blessings that are so beyond our understanding in many, many ways.

We should probably say at the start of this series we can say Ephesians. I know I'm sure I think it was Thomas who was doing Ephesians with these before so you're probably well acquainted with these chapters, with these books like that. A quick summary and we can get on. Of course Ephesians written by Paul, it was written from prison, we know that again and again in the book he lets us know he's writing from prison, he's writing from chains. Now exactly which imprisonment, at which time imprisonment this was, there's much debate, but either way Paul's in prison and he's writing this letter.

But we do know that even from prison Paul is praising Jesus. Even from prison in a cell that must be just, must have been just awful. We have some idea of the Roman prison system and it's not pleasant at all.

So Paul is here in prison and yet in this awful situation he's managing to write these wonderful, beautiful words about his saviour. For around three years Paul had Ephesus as his base, as his HQ, his headquarters and his travels around the Roman province. This part of Asia.

Paul has planted a strong church here in Ephesus but it's a church of all strong that still needs, as we do today, this constant reminder of who they are, of who their saviour is.

[6 : 21] This constant reminder of there's so much more to him. He's so much more incredible, so much more wonderful, he's so much more beautiful than we can even begin to understand.

So again and again he brings it more and more to them about their saviour. And if you noticed that during reading the first chapter of Ephesians, it's quite a hard chapter to read because in reality Ephesians chapter 1 verses roughly 3 verse down to 14, it's one long sentence, at least in the Greek. On the other hand the day we had to start doing translation on it in class and it was just incredible. One long sentence from verse 3 to verse 14, Paul is just speaking.

He's speaking and he's speaking. He can't contain himself. He just has to get it all out. He's saying it all, that's one long train of thought, one long sentence.

And the same again actually, roughly speaking from verses 15 to the end of the chapter, again an ever long, one singular, long sentence of Paul is speaking and showing just how overwhelmed he is with his love for his saviour.

As we look at these blessings, we see in verses 3 down to verse 14 as we delve for a short time into what these blessings are, what we have in Jesus. It's important we see that phrase, it's all in Christ. See that mistart, in verse 3, blessed be the God and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ.

[8 : 01] It's important we have it in our minds. All these things are in Jesus, are through Jesus. If he is our head, if we are covered by his righteousness, then all these blessings are ours also.

These blessings are fully ours. We're not ours in some half measure, we're not ours in some part way. If we are in Jesus this day, then all these blessings are also ours to our fullest extent.

So first of all, we have a first blessing, we could say, being mentioned in verses 4 down to verse 6. In verses 4, over the end of verse 4 down to verse 6, we see that in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has blessed us and the beloved.

So the last two words of verse 4, then we're the unstrained of the reasons that the commentators can't seem to understand, they've placed verse 5 two words in. It's a bit of that complication in the Greek by the way.

The last two words of verse 4 go with the rest of verse 5. In love he has predestined us for adoption.

- [9 : 39] See in verse 4 we see that he has chose us in him before the foundation of the world.
- And the question we have to ask ourselves is, when did God first know you? When did God first know who you are, who you would be? When did God first love you?
- If you're here today as someone who loves Jesus, who knows Jesus, when did he first love you?
- Was it when he came into the world? Was it when he was on the cross? Was it the first time he showed his love to you? Was it the first time he knew about you?
- Of course we know that's not true. These few verses and Ephesians along with plenty of other chapters we can look at, show us that we were chosen in him, in Jesus, before the foundation of the world as we have in verse 4.
- [10 : 51] This is not just for some unknown reason. This is not just some random thing that's happening. It shows us in him before the foundation of the world.
- As we hope we get a clear night tonight and look into the stars and see the stars and we can see perhaps the planets if we're lucky, we see that the beauty of creation around us, just think that before creation, before God made our wonderful universe we live in, before time and reality itself, that he knew you.
- Not in some general sense, not in some vague sense, but he knew his people and he chose his people.
- Why? Well we find it in verse 5. This choosing, this predestination is for adoption, to make, through Jesus, to make us sons and daughters.
- John Piper has a very short, he's remember a quote here, he says, adoption is greater than the universe. Before all this, God chose his people, he knew his people, and he set his love on his people.
- [12 : 25] Like we said, we're delving into huge things here. And God willing, in chapter 2 we come back round to this and if he spares us in chapter 2 we can delve more and more into this wonderful reality.
- This is, if we're honest, many of us get caught up in debates and in thoughts about election predestination, but it's not just some drive theology. The confession of faith makes that clear to us.
- It's not just something we would discuss just to sound smart or to sound good. God reveals these things to us, to encourages people.
- Not to, if we can boast that, oh yes, I am special for God, God has saved me, though. Before you were born, God knew you.
- Nothing to do with us, nothing at all of any worth in us. Also for a purpose. Also we could be adopted as sons and daughters, through and in Jesus Christ.
- [13 : 40] We are part of God's eternal and perfect plan. So that's the first blessing we have here. That this morning we stay as we stand before God.
- If we love Jesus, if we know Jesus, then we can know for certain and for sure that he has saved us to make us sons.
- Saved us to make us sons and daughters. Saved us so that Jesus would have us as brothers and sisters. This is more than just plain new birth.
- This embraces all the privileges of responsibilities that comes with being a child of God. We're so used to hearing that phrase, oh yes, we are children of God, but what does that actually mean?
- That's incredible thought. That we who have wandered so far away from God, we've done our own thing so much that God has said before the world itself, I will have him, I will have her to be my child.

[14 : 46] Galatians 3 and verse 26 we see, So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God. You see that, it's all in Christ, it's all through him. So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith.

For all of you who are baptized in Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There's neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male and female, if you're all one in Christ Jesus.

Because of the work of our Saviour, his perfect life obedience, that necessary death, his resurrection, his ascension, we can know today, despite all other things.

First blessing we have here in verse 5, we've been adopted into the family of God. He has called us his own.

Never to let us go, never to forget us. And yes, many of us here, I'm true, all of us, if we're honest, we wonder from time to time, we wonder away, we find ourselves lost perhaps, find ourselves doing and saying and engaging things, we know but are not right, we wonder does God still care for me?

[16 : 15] I've been such a rubbish Christian this week, this month, this year, does God still really care for me? But you're in his family, you've been adopted here as sons and daughters.

According to his will, his eternal, unchangeable, perfect will, you are here and you know and you love your Saviour.

And why? Verse 6, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in, we will love it.

Again, it's never for our praise, never for our glory, it's all things go back to his glorious grace. First of all, you see, we have a blessing here, in love, in Jesus, we have been adopted to the family of God.

Secondly now, moving on in verse 7, in Jesus, in him, we have redemption through his blood. We've been adopted and we've been redeemed, forgiven.

[17 : 31] We have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses. Of course, that redemption word, that word we know, has that connotations of being bought, of being redeemed.

We redeem, we get back, Jesus has bought us. The word in this time, we've been used in terms of slaves.

Slaves being redeemed, being bought with a price. Jesus has bought us to the Father, to himself, with a price.

And what is the price of our redemption? What is the price of our Saviour buying us? What is the price of this blessing we have of being bought?

The price we see here is his blood. The cost of our redemption is the precious blood of our Saviour.

[18 : 40] Immeasurable price. Perfection was a price. A perfect life was a price.

A sinless life was a price. The precious blood of our incarnate Lord was the price of our redemption.

He bought us. He has made us right with the Father and paid for it with his blood. His wonderful words and Romans 3, all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

Being justified freely by his grace through redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness through the mission of sins at our past.

In him, in his blood, we have redemption. With that, we have forgiveness. We have been bought.

[19 : 55] We have been forgiven. Our sins have been forgiven as Christians here today. I know we know this but do we actually understand as a plight to our lives?

This is a blessing. Not part of our sins have been forgiven. Not the we sins, not the ones that we don't think much of. In Jesus, we have full redemption and full forgiveness for all our trespasses.

All according to riches of his grace. Friends, your Savior loved you this much.

If he is yours this day, never forget this wonderful truth. But our Savior was not forced into anything. Out of obedience to the Father, out of his love for the Father, his love for us, his people.

He came, he lived, he suffered, he died. Taking on his shoulders for wrath due to us and buying us with his blood.

[21 : 18] Doing all that, why? He completes in verse 9, making known to us a mystery of his will according to his purpose.

But he set forth in Christ. Verse 9 of verse 10, we saw Micah last week and again, God willing, tonight and Micah, we see God slowly unfolding, slowly showing his plan of salvation.

While in Jesus that plan is made perfectly clear. All the way through the Old Testament, who is Messiah? How is God going to save us? How is God going to save his people?

There's no hope for us, we're lost. Our sins are too great. Then in Jesus we see this mystery being revealed.

Verse 10, there's a plan of the fullness of time to unite all things in him, in Jesus, things in heaven and things on earth.

[22 : 21] Jesus has come to make us sons and daughters in adoption. Then he has redeemed us, he has bought us with his precious blood.

Thirdly, moving on thirdly, we see from verse 11, if you look with me please, in verse 11 we see in him we have obtained an inheritance.

We can go to 1 Peter to find out more about what that inheritance is. 1 Peter tells us that, pray is be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his great mercy, he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. And into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. This inheritance kept in heaven for you.

[23 : 36] Brethren sisters, this is for you. This is the inheritance we have in verse 11, it's yours. The inheritance comes through death and our Saviour has died and rose again.

And from that we can sit confidently and knowing that right now this inheritance is ours. It's dependent on the lives we lead, not dependent on how many times we may fail and fail again.

It's dependent on our Saviour, it all goes back to him again and again and again.

Here again we have this sense of having been predestined according to the purpose of him, that he works all things according to the counsel of his will.

Again, this is not just something that's been decided on all of a sudden. This goes back and back and back to eternity itself.

[24 : 45] That we would be given an inheritance. Today we know we will leave this place and go on and join with our Lord in heaven.

Never to leave him ever again. So in Jesus we are adopted, we are forgiven, we're given an inheritance.

And the final blessing we have here is in verse 13 down to verse 14, we are sealed.

If you look with me please to your Bibles, we see that in him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of salvation and believed in him, were sealed with the Holy Spirit.

In him, in comma, and the end of that sentence really is, in him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. And the bit in between that telling us of how it took place.

[25 : 53] So in him, in Jesus, when we heard the gospel and believed the gospel, we believed the good news was for us, we are sealed with the promise of the Spirit.

Who is the guarantee of the inheritance we just talked about. Heaven is not for me. I love Jesus, I really do.

But I can't believe that he'll want me with him forever. I care about Jesus, I really do. I trust in him as my Lord, I trust in him as my savior, but I just don't quite believe that he will truly never let me go.

I still quite believe that he truly will never take me into his kingdom forever. And so on and so on. We have here, for all our doubts and all our worries, we have the Holy Spirit as a seal with the promise.

And the seal of the Spirit is the ultimate seal of approval. Not of our efforts, but of the efforts of the perfect life and death and work of our saving.

[27 : 09] Second Corinthians are told that he also has put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Second Corinthians 5 verse 5. He who has prepared us to this very thing as God who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. And again and again we see the same phrase being used for Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian.

It's our guarantee. That he is our guarantee. That as a Holy Spirit, as he works in our lives and as he works in us and works through us.

But everything else he does, he acts as a guarantee. As that sure reminder that despite ourselves, despite our shortcomings, despite our failings and everything else.

That we are sealed by him. That Jesus has promised us his inheritance.

[28 : 13] That Jesus has told us that we've been adopted into a family. That Jesus has truly forgiven us. So often we base our thoughts and our feelings.

I'm sure even this morning our feelings and our mind has changed a thousand times. Waking up this morning, do we really feel the same way we feel right now?

Our thoughts, always minding of me, our mind can change so quickly. But if we base the reality of our salvation not on our changing thoughts. If we base it on the reality that the Gospel truth and we have here in his last few verses.

That wonderful assurance that in Jesus we have been given the Holy Spirit. And as he works in us, as the Spirit works in our lives.

As we slowly but surely become more and more like Jesus. We understand more and more all these things are true. We deserve none of it.

[29 : 22] But still he has given us all of it. Finally Paul puts a full stop to his sentence here.

He's holding up these words to the church nephesis. As we read it here today, he's holding up these words to us and he's saying, Look church, look brothers and sisters in harmony.

Look at this, look at the blessings of knowing and loving your Saviour. Look at the blessings you have in being in Jesus. You're part of the family of God. Incredible.

You've been forgiven for all your sins. Incredible. You have a sure and certain hope of an eternity to come with your Lord and Saviour.

An eternity without tears, without worries, without mourning. And then just to make sure it's all stuck quite well in our minds.

[30 : 32] In Jesus we have a Holy Spirit. As we live our lives, as He leads us, as He guides us, as He opens up the word to us, as He slowly sanctifies us, as we become more and more like our Saviour.

We always sing that we should become even more beautiful and wonderful to us. Now if we are on our side of that coin, we have to address.

If you're here this morning without knowing Jesus, if you're here this morning, this afternoon now, and you don't serve Jesus, He isn't your Lord, then you're not part of the family of God.

That forgiveness is not yours. The guilt of your sin still hangs over you.

You have, as it stands, no future heavenly inheritance to look forward to. Only a lost turn to. The Holy Spirit is not in you. He is not leading you. He is not guiding you.

[31 : 46] You are not sealed by Him. We never say these things to somehow frighten or anything.

We say it because it's true. All this is through the Christian, and it's all untrue of those who are not yet Christians. And that was the end of the story then. What a hopeless morning this would be for us all.

But it doesn't have to stay that way. Don't come to Jesus and try and impress Him. There's no special song, no special hand trick to be done, no ceremonies, no singing and dancing.

Come and believe, come and trust in the One who has done all the work for you. The Christians here today, we fail and we fail again and again, but we know our Savior.

Are we experiencing His blessings? He has purchased for us. And my genuine, honest plea is come and believe in this Jesus.

[33 : 03] Come and make this Jesus, we talked about it for a short time, make Him yours. Cry out to Him. Again, we say this last time, I say it again, we would become so comfortable on our patterns, so comfortable in our suits, so comfortable coming to church, so comfortable coming and going, coming and going.

This is real. This is serious. This is truly life and death stuff.

You can take my words and do what you want with them, but you cannot ignore the Word of God as it speaks to you this morning. We have a short time discussing the wonderful privileges of the Christians here, that we know we are loved by our Savior.

He keeps us safe. We are part of a worldwide family of God. He looks at us and He sees us as clean and perfect through His Son.

Our prayer and my prayer is that you would come to know that Jesus. Come to serve Him, come to love Him. Even timing is as well perfect as we are coming up to a time where as a body we will share together in the remembrance of the death and resurrection of our Savior.

[34 : 30] We share it in a wine, we share in the bread. The Lord act for reality. We are part of His family.

Remembering Him until He comes again. Please come and join this family. Come and know what it is to have this eternal heavenly inheritance.

Come and know what it is to have brothers and sisters in Christ. Come and know what it is to be forgiven by the one who has done all the work.

There is nothing else you can do but come and cry out to Him for forgiveness. Let's bear a head in our word for the day. Our Lord God, we do come before you this day and we thank you and give you praise.

Or thank you that you inspired your servant Paul many years ago to write that wonderful passage. We see you being glorified and exalted.

[35 : 34] We see just how incredible it is, how much a privilege it is to worship you, to have you as our Lord. I would ask that for any here who has not yet known you, that you would open your eyes.

We thank you very much for being here to listen to you and to hear about you. To hear about your perfect plan, about the perfect saviour that came from you.

Lord, that you would open their eyes and change their hearts of stone to hearts of flesh. Even this day, they would come to cry out, cry that they would be saved.

What would help us as we go through our lives to rely on these blessings, to rely on the truths and reality of them. To always remember who we are in you, in you we are secure, in you we have that inheritance, in you we have that true sense of adoption of being part of your family, in you we know our sins have been forgiven.

Cast, never do we sin again to the depths of the sea. As we come to sing our final item of praise for this afternoon Lord, he would open our hearts and open our minds.

[36 : 51] Help us sing with one voice together as we lift up our voices to you in praise. Let's call these things in Christ's precious name.

We can conclude by singing, sing Psalms in Psalm 96, A verses 1 down to verse 9. I'll sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day.

I'll sing a new song to the Lord, sing praises to his name and his salvation day by day.

And his salvation day by day, let all the earth proclaim his glory and his mighty deeds to every land he claim.

How great a lawful is the Lord, with him no gods compare for other gods, a wood and stone, the Lord makes heaven's height.

[38 : 48] O power and majesty of his, he dwells in glorious life.

All nations to the Lord ascribe the glory that is due, glory and strength ascribe to God.

Unpraises his name on you and on his courts with joy and great, unoffering with you, worship the Lord in holy fear, all earth before him.

Let's close in prayer. Please help us to keep our minds and our hearts focused on you.

Take us to give it again this evening. Open up your word again to us. it's the great and wonderful things you are saying to us. Thank you, you are a God who speaks, you are a God who promises to never let his people go. You are a God who is true in all you see and all you do. Let's go all these things, Christ bless you. Amen.