

Are You Eternally Blessed in Christ?

Ephesians 1:8-14

By Randy Wages

12/12/10

Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. Introduction:

A. This morning I'm delivering the 4th and final message in a series of messages that address what it means to be "Blessed in Christ." This series is an exposition of Ephesians 1, verses 3-14, a passage that reads as if it is one long sentence that sets forth the multi-faceted blessings of salvation by God's Sovereign grace in and by the Lord Jesus Christ.

And this passage reveals how it is the triune God – Jehovah God in 3 co-equal, co-eternal Persons, (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) – all acting in perfect unison with their undivided essence of Deity to achieve God's design and purpose in the salvation of His people.

Today I'd like for you to ponder the great love of God manifested in the respective offices and work of the 3 Persons of the Godhead in showing favor to the objects of God's everlasting love: God the Father choosing and appointing (as we saw in verses 3-6), God the Son accomplishing (as we saw in verse 7), and then (as we'll see today in verses 8-14), God the Holy Spirit making known so as to make precious to the objects of His love these glorious blessings – all in Christ.

B. The Challenge:

1. As I prepared this message, it was impressed upon me how God, through the Apostle Paul's writing here, has spelled out for us in clear, unmistakable terms that which is true of each and every one of these saints who are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Now with that, I want to issue a challenge of sorts to everyone who hears this message. It stands to reason that if you're a religious person and consider yourself of the "Christian" faith, then you probably have already judged yourself to be among the number so blessed in Christ. And I pray that's an accurate assessment. But regardless, you certainly shouldn't hesitate to heed God's command, issued to the brethren in I Peter 1 to "...*give diligence to make your calling and election sure:...*" And with that, I would ask each of you to consider this important question, "Are You Eternally Blessed in Christ?" That's the title of today's message. And it is indeed important question for each of us to consider because, if answered by the standard of God's Word, it reveals whether our hope for all eternity is a valid one or not.

2. We could ask ourselves this question in several ways. E.g.: “Do I believe God’s Gospel? Do I have scriptural evidence to consider myself among the saved? Well this passage provides the descriptions or evidence whereby we might make such judgments according to God’s Word – the one and only standard of spiritual truth.

C. Scriptural Context: Now I’m going to simply walk through this passage with you and I’ll comment along the way. And then in closing, we’ll consider the clear descriptions found here concerning what is made known to everyone of those who are saved – who are eternally blessed in Christ so that you and I might accurately answer this question, “Are You (am I) Eternally Blessed in Christ?” Now once again, to capture the full context, let’s begin our reading back in verse 3 where Paul wrote,

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him <, >in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. <I.e. – in Christ> ⁷In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;”

II. Exposition of Ephesians 1:8-14: And so we pickup with our text for today in verse 8 where he continues saying, “...*according to the riches of his grace*;...

A. Verse 8: “*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence*;” Note, that it is abounding grace. As Romans 5:20b puts it, “...*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*.” And it reads that His grace so abounded toward these saints – those He saves – “...*in all wisdom and prudence*.” Prudence here speaks of the practical application of wisdom whereby these are made intelligent of something by virtue of God’s abounding grace. And verse 9 begins to tell us what is made known as it reads...

B. Verse 9: *Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself*: Both the preceding verses as well as the verses that follow make it clear what this mystery of his will is all about. This entire passage is speaking of how the triune God purposed to save and does save those the Father chose before the foundation of the world in Christ. So, we know that this is no less than the gospel itself. In Ephesians 6:19 Paul writes that the purpose of his ministry is to “...*make known the mystery of the gospel*.” The Greek word translated “mystery” in the New Testament, is not knowledge withheld (as is often the connotation as used in the English language) – but rather it is truth revealed. And this is an important distinction.

We see this elsewhere in scripture by the terms that so often accompany the word “mystery” – terms referring to this mystery as one that is “made known” (as we see here in our text). It is a mystery that is said to be “manifested,” “revealed,” and “preached.” And then as it describes those who are saved, it is a mystery they come to “understand.” And so in verse 9, having expressed his purpose to make the mystery of the gospel known, he continues to relate His purpose in verse 10 saying...

C. Verse 10: ¹⁰*That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:*

1. As Galatians 4:4-5 reads, “***But when the fulness of the time was come, <i.e. – “...in the dispensation of the fullness of times...”> God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, ⁵To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.***” You see, that’s what He did to gather together in one all things in Christ. This is speaking of what Christ accomplished at the cross as Ephesians 1:7 has shown us, redemption and the forgiveness of sins through His blood.
2. In my study of verse 10, I came across various explanations of what is meant here by the phrase which indicates that God gathered “...***together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth;***” I think it is clear that this is referring to the gathering together in Christ of both Jews and Gentiles. Similar language of “gathering together in one” is used in John 11:52 when Caiaphas, the high priest prophesied that Jesus should die, not only for those among the Jews but for the Gentile children of God as well. So this clearly refers to the gathering together in one the Jews and the Gentiles.
3. But I think verse 10 may be understood in an even broader sense. Notice the wording that speaks of gathering “***together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven*** (or as your Bible notes may show – in the heavens), ***and which are on earth: in him***” emphasizing again that it is all in Christ. I too believe that the all “things” here includes people from all nations, as in Jew and Gentiles alike – but also the reconciling of all things in the universe and all of redemptive history – all converging upon and being accomplished at the cross.
4. At the end of this chapter, in Eph.1: 19 – 23 we read, “***And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, ²⁰Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, <or the heavens as verse 10 put it> ²¹Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: ²²And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, ²³Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.***”

5. I'm sure I cannot grasp the depth of what is meant here, but we know from Col. 2:9, that it is said of Christ that **"...in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."** You see, every attribute of God is brought together in this one, unique way of salvation by God's grace in Christ. Only by salvation God's way, as described in Eph. 1 can all things be so reconciled that sinners can behold His glory as He is – as both a just God and a Savior, using the language of Isa. 45. These words describing how all things are gathered together in Christ, in God's way of salvation by Christ alone, reminds me how a new believer once described the eye opening experience of having God's gospel revealed. This person said it was as if for the first time all the puzzle parts seem to fit together. It all adds up in Christ. So, I'll leave it at that and you can ponder this further on your own.

Now back in Ephesians 1, in verse 11, he continues writing of Christ, saying...

D. Verses 11-13: ¹¹***In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*** ¹²***That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.*** ¹³***In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,***

1. I believe from the context that Paul is referring to himself and other Jewish believers (or perhaps the other Apostles who were sent out to spread the Gospel to the Gentiles) when he writes, ***"That we <meaning us Jewish believers or Apostles> should be to the praise of his glory, <i.e. – God's glory> who <i.e. – us Jewish believers or Apostles> first trusted in Christ."*** The word translated "first" there actually means "fore" as in before in time so it doesn't necessarily mean the very first. We know that God the Father from all eternity is the one who "first" trusted in Christ to be the Surety of those He chose in Him. But it seems to me that this interpretation fits better as we proceed in verse 13 with Paul saying, ***"¹³In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation:"*** – the implication being that you Gentiles trusted in the same Christ we did after you heard the same word of truth – the same gospel we heard and believed. This fits as He continues in verse 13 saying, ***"in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,"***
2. To be "sealed" here speaks of having confirmed in our minds the absolute certainty of salvation as set forth in this passage – by the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ – wherein He truly redeemed a people, meeting every condition of their salvation through His blood – by His obedience unto death. And this confirmation is the work of God the Holy Spirit upon all those that God saves whereby they have a promise of the inheritance of life everlasting.

Continuing now in verse 14, “...*that holy Spirit of promise*,...

E. Verse 14: ¹⁴*Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

1. The “earnest” mentioned here bears some similarity to our usage today of the phrase “earnest money” – referring to the money that is often required as a deposit when one enters into a sales contract to buy a house. It is money that is given to express our sincere, earnest intention to fulfill the terms we’ve agreed upon, guaranteed by the fact that legally one must forfeit their “earnest” money if they fail to follow through with the deal. And so, here too it speaks of a guarantee – but this guarantee is from a faithful and almighty God who cannot fail. So what we see here is that those that God saves are convinced by God the Holy Spirit of God’s gospel wherein they see all of the requirements for their salvation having been fully met by the doing and dying of their Substitute, with no contribution from their hand. In other words, their salvation is truly to “the praise of His glory.” And having been so convinced, having this mystery of the gospel made known unto them by the miraculous application of it to their hearts and minds by God the Holy Spirit, they have an earnest from God – a guarantee that cannot fail.

Now to have received the earnest of the Holy Spirit is precious to God’s people. This work of the Spirit is one in which they are altogether passive. And yet these objects of mercy confirm the certainty of their being sealed (of being certain for heaven’s glory), when, from the same almighty power that raised Christ from the dead, they are enabled to trust solely in Christ for the salvation of their souls, turning in repentance from the way that before seemed right to them to God’s Gospel – the gospel of their salvation.

2. Now the saints have this earnest or guarantee of their inheritance until the inheritance itself is finally realized in heaven’s glory. That is what is meant by the phrase, “...*until the redemption of the purchased possession*,...” You may recall that in our study of verse 7, we dealt extensively with the fact that the redemption through Christ’s blood spoke of a finished work – not some mere attempt made, but a payment paid – and that in full. So there is no balance due – nothing left to be done. The payment due unto the sin debt for everyone for whom He lived and died was paid in full. But here in verse 14, it speaks of “...*the redemption of the purchased possession*,...” This simply speaks of the realization in time of that which was redeemed or purchased at the cross.

III. Are You Eternally Blessed: Well, in light of this entire passage, verses 3-14, I ask again, “Are you eternally blessed in Christ?” To help us answer that, let’s summarize what these verses teach us is true of each and every one who is eternally blessed in Christ:

A. If you are so blessed, these verses in Ephesians 1 describe you. So, that means...

1. Something has been made known or revealed to you.
2. And what is made known unto them is the mystery of the gospel, referred to in Ephesians 1:13 as “the gospel of their salvation.
3. And thirdly, if you are among the eternally blessed in Christ, then the “mystery” of the gospel has been revealed according to God’s prescribed means.
 - (a) First, it is according to the riches of His grace (vs. 7) wherein He has abounded toward you in wisdom and prudence (vs. 8) – making something known unto you by the revelation of faith.
 - (b) And as Paul described in verse 13, those who trust in Christ do so after hearing the “word of truth,” the “gospel of <their> salvation.” It is by the very means of the gospel of grace as preached to you on this very occasion. It is not by a lightning bolt while sitting upon a rock contemplating the meaning of the world. It’s not that mystical...
 - (c) And yet, this revelation of the mystery of the Gospel to all who are saved is a miraculous work. It is by the power of God the Holy Spirit. But it isn’t some mere mystical feeling or emotion that makes us “feel saved.” There is substance to that which is revealed. Look with me in the verses toward the end of Ephesians 1 where Paul, beginning in verse 17, writes of having prayed... ***“That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:¹⁸The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,¹⁹And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,”***

Well, these eternally blessed saints (1) have something revealed, and (2) that something is the very gospel of God’s grace and it is (3) by means of the gospel being preached as attended to by the power of The Holy Spirit.

B. Distinguishing Characteristics of God’s Gospel: So that brings us to the key issue. What is the substance of the gospel they are brought to hear and embrace? If you are among these eternally blessed saints, then you have embraced the very same gospel that Paul had embraced – the same gospel that these believers in Ephesus had afterward embraced.

So, does the Gospel as described in Ephesians 1 describe your gospel? Does it describe the basis of your hope for eternal life? Let's consider from this passage how God's gospel (His way of salvation) is distinguished from all other false gospels.

1. First, the gospel which sets forth how God saves sinners is the gospel of grace.

(a) As is evident by verse 6, if the adoption of children by Christ (their very salvation) is to the ***“praise of the glory of his grace,”*** then it is a grace ***“...wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”***

(b) As verse 7 tells us, we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins, not because we accepted Him as our Savior, but ***“through His blood”*** and that ***“...according to the riches of his grace.”***

(c) And as verse 11 describes that which these eternally blessed saints have obtained, it says that in Christ they have ***“...obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.”*** Have you obtained an inheritance? There is nothing you can do to earn an inheritance or even to put yourself in the position of an heir. You must be born into it or, spiritually speaking, to be born again you must be an adopted child by Jesus Christ (vs. 5).

2. Now, the gospel according to the scriptures is according to the grace of a sovereign God. Most of Christendom will not argue with the declaration that salvation is by grace. But sadly in our day, what many call grace is anything but grace. Most of what is called grace, even in its most deceptive forms, is at best nothing more than a cleverly disguised system of works. For that reason, we often attempt to expose these false notions of “grace” by adding the qualifiers of “free” or “sovereign grace.” You know, describing “grace” as “sovereign grace” actually is redundant because there really is no such thing as grace from God except that which is sovereign because God is sovereign. And that means it is all according to His will and purpose – not determined by the presumed free will of man as is so often suggested in many churches today.

(a) As God told Moses and as repeated for us in Romans 9:15-16, He said: ***“I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. ¹⁶So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.”***

(b) Hear again the language of our passage. In Eph. 1:5 we read how God predestinated these eternally blessed saints “...*unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*”

(c) In verse 9, He said that the revelation of faith – of the mystery of the gospel is “...*according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:*”

(d) And then in verse 11, He says that these blessed saints obtain an inheritance, “...*being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*”

3. Thirdly, the Gospel that the eternally blessed embrace is not only (1) the Gospel of God’s grace, (2) God’s sovereign grace, but it is a gospel whereby (3) Christ gets all the preeminence. God the Father is said to bless these saints in Christ, God the Son. And God the Holy Spirit points sinners to Christ for all of their salvation.

(a) In a previous message, I pointed out how often this phrase, “in Christ” is repeated. Beginning in vs. 3 we saw how these are “...blessed in Christ,” (in vs. 4) “...chosen in him ...” <meaning Christ>. In vs. 5 we see these are predestinated unto adoption “...by Jesus Christ.” Then again in vs. 6 we read how they were, “made... accepted in the beloved” <meaning Christ>. And then in vs. 7, it is “In whom we have redemption... <and> the forgiveness of sins” – in Christ!

(b) As we move in our text for today, we see how the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation continues to point sinners to Christ. In verse 10 we see that what is revealed by the Spirit is that which took place in the fullness of time, by the accomplishment of Christ’s death on the cross, whereby all things are gathered together in Him.

(c) And then verse 11 speaks of the obtaining of this inheritance, that in having the mystery revealed (as is set forth in vs. 9), we then see in verse 12 that this is so that “we should be to the praise of His glory” – we who first trusted (and then in verse 13 – those who later trusted) in Christ.

4. ...Which brings me to the final distinction I’ll bring out concerning God’s gospel which all who are eternally blessed in Christ shall hear and embrace. God saves sinners in a way that redounds to the praise of His glory. Both verses 6 and verse 12 make clear God’s design in the salvation of sinners – that it is “to the praise of the glory of his grace” (as verse 6 puts it) or simply “to the praise of His glory” (as verse 12 puts it).

IV. Closing: Well, how about you? Do you find your hope in God's way of salvation? Some may say, "I'm not sure I agree with these doctrines of election or predestination, or the scriptures that declare that Christ did not die for all men." Well, to such I simply ask that you face reality – that you recognize then that these descriptions of God's saints (the saved or eternally blessed in Christ) in Ephesians chapter 1 just don't describe you – at least not yet at this time. We know that is so because such notions by necessity leave you with no other option than to imagine that your salvation is conditioned at least in some way or to some degree on you, the sinner. That is salvation by works – a way which stands in direct opposition to the gospel of God's sovereign grace which is revealed to all who are saved.

As we read, the saved have revealed unto them that theirs is an inheritance to which they were predestinated as chosen children of God in Christ. It is an inheritance Christ purchased for them and, accordingly, they must and do trust in Christ for all of their salvation. They plead the merits of His Person and work, His righteousness, and that alone for all of their salvation.

Well, that's what it is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. As the scripture teaches, those who have been so enabled to trust in Him – whosoever believeth on the Lord Jesus Christ – shall be saved. If these verses in Ephesians 1 truly describe your faith, your gospels, and your hope of eternal life, then rejoice for such are the eternally blessed in Christ who are sealed and have the earnest (the guarantee) of inheriting heaven's glory.

How about you? I pray that you too can identify with these eternally blessed saints in Christ.

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.