

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
December 2, 2012

Spiritual Blessings in Jesus Christ

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

Key verses: “God destined us to be his adopted children through Jesus Christ because of his love. This was according to his goodwill and plan and to honor his glorious grace that he has given to us freely through the Son whom he loves” (Ephesians 1:5-6).

During the Thanksgiving season, many people stop to count their blessings. Food, family, country, health—these are some of the gifts for which we ought to give thanks. But here in Ephesians 1, the focus is on our *spiritual blessings* in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:3 thanks God who has “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven.” The following verses tell of the great spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ.

1. In Christ, we are blessed with a great salvation. “We have been ransomed through his Son’s blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace” (Eph. 1:7)

Through Jesus’ death on the cross, we have been “ransomed” and we have “forgiveness”:

We have been “ransomed.” In the first century, slavery was still a common practice. “Ransom” was the price paid to gain freedom for a slave. Paul uses this idea to say that, through Jesus’ death, he paid the ransom price to free us from the slavery of sin. What a blessing!

The story is told of a pastor of a church in Boston who met a young boy in front of the sanctuary carrying a rusty cage in which several birds fluttered nervously. The pastor asked, “Son, where did you get those birds?”

“I trapped them out in the field,” the boy answered.

“What are you going to do with them?”

“I’m going to play with them, and then I guess I’ll just feed them to an old cat we have at home.”

When the pastor offered to buy them, the boy said, “Mister, you don’t want them, they’re just little old wild birds and can’t sing very well.”

The pastor replied, “I’ll give you ten dollars for the cage and the birds.”

“OK, it’s a deal, but you’re making a bad bargain.”

The exchange was made, and the boy went away whistling, happy with his sale. The pastor walked around to the back of the church property, opened the door of the small wire cage, and let the struggling creatures soar into the blue.

The next Sunday he took the empty cage into the pulpit and used it to illustrate how Christ paid the ransom price for us who were—like the birds—held captive and destined for destruction. The difference is that Christ purchased our freedom with his own life.

We have “forgiveness.” I love what the great Christian survivor of Nazi imprisonment during World War II, Corrie Ten Boom, said about forgiveness in Christ. She said when God forgives us, he drops our sins into the deepest part of the ocean. Then he puts up a sign there that says, “No fishing allowed!”

When we consider how God has “blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing,” we can start with a great salvation: “We have been ransomed through his Son’s blood, and we have forgiveness for our failures based on his overflowing grace.”

2. In Christ, we are blessed with a great purpose for living. “We are called to be an honor to God’s glory” (Eph. 1:12).

Some years ago a popular bumper sticker proclaimed: “He who dies with the most toys wins.” Whether one lives for material acquisition, power, pleasure, or something else, all these temporal goals fall short. But when we surrender our lives to Jesus Christ, he gives us a great purpose for living. We live our lives with the purpose of bringing honor and glory to our God!

In his classic book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren explains: “If there was no God, we would all be ‘accidents,’ the result of astronomical random chance in the universe....life would have no purpose or meaning or significance. There would be no right or wrong, and no hope beyond your brief years here on earth. But there is a God who made you for a reason, and your life has profound meaning! We discover that meaning and purpose only when we make God the reference point of our lives. The Message paraphrase of Romans 12:3 says, ‘The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us.’”

In Christ, we have been blessed with a great purpose for living. What a blessing!

3. In Christ, we are blessed with a glorious eternity. “This is what God planned for the climax of all times: to bring all things together in Christ, the things in heaven along with the things on earth” (Eph. 1:10).

In Christ, God is working toward the climax of his great eternal plan.

John, the writer of the Book of Revelation, received a vision in which Jesus said, “See, I am making all things new!” (Rev. 21:5). John heard a loud voice

saying: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4).

In Christ we are blessed with a great salvation—ransomed from sin and forgiven by God! In Christ we are blessed with a great purpose for living—to honor and glorify our God! In Christ we are blessed with a glorious eternity to which, by God’s grace, we are headed!

So, let’s “Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing that comes from heaven.”

Thanks be to God.

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