

EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING

Imagine that a dear friend left a large package on your doorstep. The heavy box, which was beautifully wrapped, was topped with a note written in your friend's hand.

Absolutely everything you will ever need is in this box. I give it to you freely, with much love.

What would you do? Would you bring it inside, open it and use the contents or would you simply talk about it and admire the wrapping? Most of us would begin to excitedly rip off the paper while we were dragging it inside! Then we would call our friend and profusely thank him for the indescribable gift. Next we would pull it all out of the box and begin to use it!

God has blessed us with everything we need to live an abundant life of faith in Christ. This is Paul's focus in the first chapter of Ephesians.

“He has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (1:3, NIV).

But before we explore what this incredible promise means, let's begin our study of the book of Ephesians at the beginning of the book!

Read Ephesians 1:1-2. Who wrote the letter? To who was the letter sent?

The first two verses of Ephesians is a conventional first-century address. Typically, the writer identified himself, addressed the recipients, and offered a traditional greeting. As mentioned last week in the introductory lesson, this letter was also likely distributed among all the churches in the Roman province of Asia. This is probably one of the reasons that the letter doesn't seem to address a specific problem or issue. Although the content is more general in nature, it is full of deep truth about the working of God's grace in our lives.

Read Ephesians 1:3-14.

The verses you just read are all one long sentence in the Greek. Once Paul started praising God he didn't stop to take a breath for twelve verses! It reminds me of an excited young child who wants so much to tell you everything; she doesn't even slow down enough to breathe. I can see Paul, hunched over the papyrus, writing with excitement and joy over what God has done.

Read 2 Peter 1:3 and compare it to Ephesians 1:3. This verse in 1 Peter helps us understand what “every spiritual blessing in Christ” means. Using the information in these two verses, describe the nature and purpose of what God has blessed us with. (For instance, are these blessings material or something else? Why does God give us these blessings?)

God has not promised us physical health or worldly wealth. His promises are spiritual in nature and eternal in scope. The blessings He lavishes on us are exactly what we need to deepen our relationship with God, grow to Christ-likeness, and fulfill God's purposes for our lives.

Contemplating this glorious truth moved Paul to praise. Paul's praise includes a long list (though not exhaustive) of some of the many ways God has indeed “blessed us in the heavenly realms,” centering on what the Father has done for us in Christ.

Work your way back through verses 4-14. Make a list of all the blessings we have “in Christ.”

Look back at your list. This is why Paul got so excited. Don't you just want to shout out loud? Or jump up and down?! We are chosen, adopted, redeemed, and forgiven! God has lavished His grace on us (love this!) and sealed us with the Holy Spirit until we receive our eternal inheritance as His beloved daughters! Amen and amen!

Verses 4-14 are a beautiful description of what God does when He saves us. Before salvation, we are separated from God because of our sin. But then God intervenes! Paul's description shows how each member of the Trinity works in our salvation. Let's consider the vital role of each.

Describe the role God the Father has in our salvation:

Describe the role Jesus has in our salvation:

Describe the role the Holy Spirit has in our salvation:

Our salvation is based solely on the character and action of God. The Father initiates our salvation. He chooses us in love and calls us to hope in Christ. Jesus makes our salvation possible by satisfying the requirements that God's justice demands. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Jesus paid our debt with His own blood. The Holy Spirit applies God's saving work to our lives. He restores our spiritual life. The Spirit's presence with every believer is God's promise that we belong to Him. The Spirit protects us and guarantees our eternal life to come!

God's spiritual blessings for us proceed from the Father, are made possible by the Son, and are activated in our lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We've seen what God has blessed us with and how we receive His blessings. Now let's consider "why."

Why did God choose to "bless us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ?" Make a list below of all the reasons you can find in verses 3-14.

You may have really had to dig to answer that last question because there are so many treasures hidden in that passage. So, to summarize, God saved us and lavished His blessings on us because:

- He wants to make us holy and blameless (vs 4)
- It pleased Him and He wanted to (vs 5)
- Our salvation will bring Him praise (vs 6)
- He is loving and full of grace (vs 6-7)
- To carry out His plans and purposes in Christ (9-11)

Oh, there is so much more in these verses we could dig out! But we must finish up for today or I am afraid you won't come back! But, before we go, let's make some personal application.

Think about your current life circumstances – physical, relational, and spiritual. Even though God's blessings to us are spiritual in nature, they powerfully apply to every single thing God has allowed into our lives. What circumstance in your life needs to be affected by His blessings today? How can the “riches of God's grace” work in this circumstance to bring Him praise?

Contemplate the blessings of God today and respond with praise!

Please respond to any of today's questions in the comment section of this post. Share insights, ask questions, or simply praise our God.

Weekly Challenge

(Each week, in addition to the weekly lesson, I will provide an opportunity – for those who have the time and desire – to go a little deeper. If you are unable to do this, please don't worry, but if you can, take the plunge!)

This week I challenge you to memorize Ephesians 1:3. I've been working on 1:3-6 for a couple of weeks now, so I know you can do it!