

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-18-21

We concluded the Sermon on the Mount last week; and just as Jesus put it, it ends with a *very* strong appeal: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith"—that's the Apostle Paul's version of it, in Second Corinthians 13:5 (NASB-1995; and throughout, unless otherwise noted). Jesus said "many" will arrive at Judgment and say, "Lord, Lord," and then start reciting the works that they've done; and He is going to say, "I never knew you; depart from Me" (Matt. 7:22-23).

That bone-chilling message is necessary; it is important to hear from time to time, especially in a culture like ours, where it's *so easy* to profess to be a disciple of Jesus Christ because it *rarely* means immediate risk of life and limb, like it does in most places in the world.

But today, I want to turn your attention to an *equally* important message from the Word of God—and probably just as often ignored in most preaching. Yes, you *should be* concerned to make sure you truly believe (2 Pet. 1:10; cf. Jn. 10:27; 1 Cor. 16:22; Titus 1:16; 1 Jn. 2:3-5). To hear your Savior say, "*Many* are going to say, 'Lord, Lord,' and I'm going to say, 'Depart from Me, I *never knew you*'"—that *should* frighten *anyone* who isn't serious about following the Lord Jesus Christ.

But you should *also* be *equally zealous* to make sure that you know about the spiritual blessings that you *have* "in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17; cf. Phil. 3:9; 4:13; Col. 1:2), so I want you to turn to the Book of Ephesians. It's a book of riches; it's a book about glory; it's a book of inheritance; it's a book about grace—all of which flow from the power of God operating in our lives.

There's a key phrase in the book, and I'll tell you more about it later; it's the phrase: "in Christ." That occurs 27 times in just these six chapters! This book also contains much of the New Testament revelation of the "mystery" of the Church (Eph. 5:32)—the "body of Christ" (Eph. 4:12; cf. Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12, 27; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:24)—that entity that He is building (Matt. 16:18), those people that the Father gave to the Son as a gift (Jn. 6:37; 17:2, 6; Acts 2:47).

Ephesians comes in two halves. I don't mean "First Ephesians" and "Second Ephesians." "Second Ephesians" is at the beginning of Revelation Chapter 2, where Jesus dictated a letter to this church as well; but that's not what we're going to look at this morning. The first three chapters of this book—the first half—major on your *position* in Christ; the second three chapters major on how to *practice* living in light of that position (cf. Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:1). The first half tells you *who you are* in Christ, and the second half tells you how to *live up to* who you are (cf. Col. 3:10).

We're not going to do an analysis of the whole book for now, but I want us to have time to zero in on *one verse*, which I would submit to you is the capsulized summary of the whole book. It's Ephesians Chapter One, Verse 3—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
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Now, put on your thinking cap. Remember "Hermeneutics"—the science and art of interpreting the Bible—and I want you to look at that verse and see if you can pick out a theme. I'll give you three clues: "Blessed," "blessed," and "blessing." *There's a theme* to that verse! There's the adjective form of it, there's the verb form of it, and there's the noun form of it—all from the same root word in the Greek. God *is* "blessed," He *has* "blessed...with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

We're just going to look at that one verse. From it, we want to extract a little Summary Of The Blessings Received by everyone who is "in Christ," and then I'd like to give you a little Stimulation To Blessings Experienced.

Verse 3 is the beginning of something. There's an introductory sentence or two that we know of as Verses 1 and 2, and this verse stands at the beginning of a linguistic phenomenon: it is a 202-word-long sentence—one single sentence in Greek, and it extends all the way through Verse 14. Now, if you scan down through your Bible, I don't think there is an English version that renders this as one sentence; it's virtually impossible to make it into one sentence in English because New Testament Greek is so much more sophisticated—you can do things with clauses and subordinates and participles and sidebars and prepositional phrases and pet hamsters; you just can't do it all in English.

Everything else that Paul says in this marvelous section—that whole sentence; and then, if you will, even the first three chapters of this book—everything he says here is a variation on the theme of spiritual blessings. "In Christ," you are super-blessed!

The first time you see the word "blessed" here, it is a translation of the Greek word *eulogetōs*—it's the adjective form. It's the form of the word from which we get our English word "eulogy." The *eu* prefix means "good," and the word *logos* means "word"; so "eulogy" is actually "saying a good word." When you say it applies to a person, you're speaking of someone who is "well spoken of."

There are two words in the New Testament that are almost always translated in English by the words "blessed" or "blessed," depending on how it needs to be pronounced in a certain context. When we began the Sermon on the Mount, we spent time studying in depth the nine occurrences of the *other* word for "blessed"—that's the word *makarios*; it means "happy" or "prosperous." It describes a status in life; this is the best way to be in life—that sense of "blessed." It describes someone who, it would be appropriate to say, is "in a good way." Heritage Bible Church is *makarios*—"blessed"—we are enjoying prosperity from the hand of God, and a sweet fellowship here.

But *this* word, in Ephesians 1:3—*eulogetōs*—is used in the New Testament, not to describe the practice of people; *this one* is used in the New Testament *only* for God—*He* is the One who is "blessed" in *this* sense; and from His own blessedness, innate to Him, He provides blessing. The other word is a blessed *situation*, which is external to some extent; this one is an innate possession or property: God's intrinsic nature—He is "blessed."

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

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Now, you and I can be happy, prosperous, blessed, *because God is by nature* blessed. We are *by nature* wrecked; we're *fallen*; we're *cursed*! We're *not* blessed. It is *not* a blessing to be "in Adam" (1 Cor. 15:22). God's innate character, though, *bestows* blessing on us when we become His adopted children.

When we relate this word to our English word "eulogize," when we "eulogize" somebody, it means we're actually extolling someone for their excellent character. When we say someone does a "eulogy" at a funeral...let's be honest—*it's not the whole truth*. If we were honest, we might say, "Well, he was 83 1/2 percent *schnook*; but let me tell you about the other 16 1/2 percent, and we'll major on that, and we'll give God glory for His grace in doing that."

But this is a *significant* statement about God. "Blessed be God"—that's a common phrase in the Old Testament; it's a very common phrase in many standard Jewish prayers. It means: "To bless God with our lips, to proclaim His goodness, because He is worthy of it by His nature." So he says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." "God" and "Father" are parallel to each other. He is the "Father," if you're speaking in terms of Trinity: "Father," "Son," "Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19); He is "God, the Almighty" One (e.g., Rev. 4:8).

Get this: God is "blessed" *within Himself*, and therefore He *confers upon us* blessedness; it's something we have as *derived* from God. So, keep looking here: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who"—now here comes the verb—"has blessed us..." In the Greek, this is an aorist participle—contain yourself with excitement about that; let me just tell you that it implies a definite and completed action. We are to continually bless God with our lips *because* of what He has done by His actions: He "has blessed us." In word and in thought, we bless God because, in deed and in action, He blessed us. He *is* "blessed," and He *makes us* "blessed."

Oh, speaking of "us," look at that little word: That's the direct object of the participle "blessed." It refers to, of course, Paul and the Ephesians—He has "blessed us," he says—but this letter, of course, is intended for *all believers* everywhere. The blessings of God that are mentioned here are the possession of every member of the Body of Christ.

So, "God," who *is* "blessed," has "blessed us with"—what? Well, look at the next one: "every spiritual blessing"—*every one*. "Every" emphasizes that *every blessing* has been conferred upon *every person* who is "in Christ"—*every blessing*! And what kind of blessings are they? Well, they are "*spiritual* blessings." "Spiritual" translates a Greek word that is always used in the New Testament for things which are given or produced by, or administered by, the Holy Spirit. Paul is not saying, "You have 'spiritual' blessings as opposed to 'physical' blessings. I know on Earth I want my children to be poor and miserable, but in *heaven* it will turn better!" He's not saying that. He's saying: "You have a heavenly status, *even now*." He isn't using "spiritual" in that way of, it's only "pie in the sky" stuff, but he means: you have things in the spiritual realm which are *impossible* for you to achieve—but you *have them*, because your heavenly Father has given them to you, and they are "spiritual" in nature.

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

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Date: 4-18-21

And, notice that last little series of words: "in the heavenly places." That phrase is literally "in the heavenlies"; the King James Version translates it that way. Now, that's not to say that these blessings are, as I said, *only* present in Heaven. "The heavenlies" describes the spiritual realm of things, the things that have to do with the immaterial part of you—your soul, your spirit, your heart, your mind, your will; that part of you that is at the core.

Remember that I noted that "blessed" is in that aorist tense, meaning: this is a one-time, completed action. This means that all of these blessings—how many of them? *Every single one*, every one of them—is yours *now* "in Christ"! When it comes to blessings in the spiritual realm—when it comes to things the Holy Spirit bestows and the things that He does for you—if you are a Christian, *you have it all!* You have *all* of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is not a "force," He is not just an inanimate thing. He does not come in doses or measures or portions (Jn. 3:34). He is a Person (Lk. 12:10; Jn. 14:26), and a person is either present or not present. If He's present with you, you have the whole thing. You have *all the power* of the Holy Spirit available to you *now*, "in Christ," because you are united with Him. "Spiritual blessings in heavenly places"—*that's just profound!*

You are a citizen of a "heavenly kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:18) by virtue of being "in Christ." That's accomplished by the work of His Spirit (1 Cor. 12:3b, 13; cf. Jn. 3:5; Titus 3:5). And if that isn't *dominating* how you think about living in this world—that you have been "transferred" from the "domain of darkness" to "the kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13)—if that isn't *dominating* how you think about living in this world, where you are therefore a "stranger" and an "alien" (see 1 Pet. 2:11; cf. Phil. 3:20), well...you came to the right place! We want to help you with your perspective.

It might be helpful for you to see the four other places in Ephesians where Paul uses this phrase: "in the heavenly places." Let me show them to you:

Ephesians Chapter 1, Verse 20, looking just down the page, continuing with the subject that he begins here in Verse 3; it says this is "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand *in the heavenly places.*" Our blessings are "in Christ." Where is He seated? "In the heavenly places."

Go down to Ephesians Chapter 2, Verse 6—"And raised us up with Him, and seated us *with Him in the heavenly places* in Christ Jesus." You say, "Wait a minute! I'm seated at Heritage Bible Church, and you're telling me I'm seated with Jesus in Heaven?" Yeah—because that's your spiritual position.

Ephesians Chapter 3, Verse 10—"So that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities *in the heavenly places.*" "Rulers and authorities" refers to angelic beings—to angels (Col. 1:16), and also to demons (Col. 2:15). That says that God is manifesting His wisdom to the angels by showing off what He can do with people who are "in Christ" (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). Have you ever heard the phrase "trophy of His grace"? It kind of comes from Ephesians Chapter 3, Verse 10. God is *showing you off* as what He can do by His grace (Jb. 1:8; 1 Tim. 1:16).

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-18-21

And the final of these other four uses: Ephesians 6:12—"For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness *in the heavenly places.*"

In other words, "in the heavenly places" talks about the spiritual realm, the realm of the reality of who you are in your identity with Jesus Christ.

Put it together: You are "seated" with Christ "in the heavenly places." You have "every spiritual blessing" of your position with Him—intact, all the time. And while you are there with Him, you are also waging war with the forces of Satan as a demonstration of the wisdom of God to His angels and to demons. *That is astounding stuff!*

Satan wants you to think: "I don't *feel* very adequate. I'm just a nobody. I don't really matter. God won't use me; I know He uses some people, but God *can't* use me." And every time you think something like that, stop and realize: You are *insulting* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because *you disagree* with His description of who you are.

Now, it's true: in your sin, you are a—what's that Greek word we use in counseling?—*mess*. You're a mess! (Rom. 7:18) But, "in Christ," you have "every spiritual blessing" available!

I'm sorry—I can't *list* for you "every spiritual blessing," or we'd be here until Thursday afternoon...which wouldn't be terrible, but you'd get hungry. Here's *a few* of those "spiritual blessings" that you have "in Christ":

Romans Chapter 8, Verses 8 through 10: You are *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit—you actually *possess* the Holy Spirit within you.

First Corinthians 12:4-7: You have been given a unique *spiritual gift* from the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians Chapter 12, Verse 13: You've been *baptized* by the Holy Spirit. And by the way: that verse goes on to reiterate that you have been indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians Chapter 1, Verse 13: This is not the only place that says it, but it says you are "sealed" by the Holy Spirit. I just got something in the mail the other day, and it was a good illustration—it was *sealed*; that little bugger was hard to get *unsealed*, and I have the little cut on my finger from where I stabbed myself when I was trying to get it unsealed. I *did* get *that one* unsealed, but you know what? When *God* seals you in Christ, *nobody* opens that package! (Rev. 3:7; cf. 1 Jn. 5:18b) You're safe in His "hand" (Jn. 10:27). *No one* can take you from Him! (Jn. 6:39)

Ephesians Chapter 5, Verse 18: The Holy Spirit is willing and desirous to "fill" you—that's a metaphor for controlling you (cf. Ezek. 36:27; Phil. 2:13); He wants to overflow through you to others, and do His work to others: compassion and grace and lovingkindness and generosity and spreading the Gospel; He wants to do that *through you*.

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

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Date: 4-18-21

So, back to our verse. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"—and here's that key phrase—"in Christ." That is connected grammatically with "has blessed us"—we are "blessed...in Christ."

I pointed out to you: there was a theme in Verse 3, where you have "Blessed," "blessed," and "blessing"—adjective, noun, and verb in one verse—that's a pretty good indication of a theme. Well, I would suggest to you that, when a phrase like "in Christ" is used 27 *times* in just a little six-chapter book, *that's pretty much the theme!* You've got to understand being "in Christ."

Are you a Christian? That means you know and confess that you are a sinner (1 Jn. 1:9), that you need and want a Savior (Lk. 18:13), and you trust in Christ and Him alone to save you by grace alone through faith alone (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5), because you trust in what He did in sending His Son to the Cross: He "died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3-4)—*you trust that*. Now, if that's you, you are "in Christ." You have *every single* "spiritual blessing" there is from Heaven that is available. *Don't let anyone tell you that they have one more blessing "in Christ" than you have!* Now, somebody could be more mature and adept at *living* in light of their blessings—that's a matter of spiritual growth and maturity—but *no one* has one more blessing "in Christ" than you have! *No one!*

Now, there are people who will tell you that, "Oh, you guys—you *don't have* the 'full gospel!'" Oh, yeah, you do! You have the *only* Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Others will tell you, "Well, I'm happy for you that you've heard the Gospel and you've believed, but you're missing the 'second blessing.'" Well, if there *is* such a thing as a "second blessing," I would think it's included in the "every" category, wouldn't you? *Every single* "spiritual blessing"—*there's not one more to get!*

Others have the audacity to tell you that you haven't received the "baptism of the Holy Spirit." *They flagrantly disagree* with First Corinthians 12:13 (and Rom. 8:9), but there are people who say that, and that you have to *seek it out*.

Others will tell you that you are actually *still* in bondage to Satan, *even though you've believed in Christ*, because you haven't prayed the right ritual prayers to be free of the demons that are attached to you like barnacles to a ship! (contra 1 Jn. 5:18b)

Others will tell you that you have to *pray* for the Holy Spirit to come into your life; or, you have to be baptized in order for the Holy Spirit to come into your life; or, you need to ask Him again, every time you sin, to come *back* into your life.

Others will tell you that you have to pray for a physical manifestation of certain gifts. That denies the reality that God gives them to you "according to His own will" (Heb. 2:4; cf. 1 Cor. 12:11).

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-18-21

And what's the current "wind of doctrine" that is blowing into the Church? "Well, I'm glad you're a Christian; but now, you need to be 'woke'! You need to change your whole perspective! You need to realize that you've *never really understood the fullness of the Gospel!*" Friends, that is in *total opposition* to this verse, which is *not ambiguous!*

One of the *worst* corruptions of this wonderful truth comes from those who say you can lose the Holy Spirit, or you can lose your relationship with Christ—you can lose your salvation when you sin (contra 1 Jn. 2:1). But Ephesians Chapter 4, Verse 30, says you are "sealed for the day of redemption." If you're going to lose this package that includes "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," there has to be somebody who can *undo* what God seals! And that doesn't exist! (see Is. 43:13b; Dan. 4:35)

Or, you can read just after this verse, continuing on in Ephesians, and you can see that your salvation is a matter of God's sovereign choice (cf. Jn. 6:37, 44, 65; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9)—so you are saved until God changes His mind! When does that happen? Never! (Num. 23:19; Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8) You are *safe* "in Christ"! (Phil. 1:6)

And if you are saved today, you have "every spiritual blessing" possible, by virtue of *the character of God Himself*, and His promise; and you will *continue* to have those blessings unless and until God changes His mind.

Or, we could look at how you're "protected by the power of God" (1 Pet. 1:5; cf. Ps. 37:28; Jude 1, 24). God either has to change His mind or have a power failure for you to lose your salvation! *Not* going to happen! (Ps. 62:11; cf. Rom. 1:20—"eternal power")

Now, it's true, as I said last week: If you are *not* "in Christ," the message is different! (see Jn. 3:36; 8:24; Rom. 2:5; 2 Thess. 1:7-8; Heb. 10:26-27) We said, like Second Corinthians Chapter 5, Verse 20: "We *beg* you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." If you profess Christ, we say, as Paul did in Second Corinthians 13:5: "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!" Because if you are not "in Christ"—I love you, but *I can't help you!* What I can do is help you tap in to what you have "in Christ."

I want you to get *one point* loud and clear today: As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are blessed to the fullest possible extent, *right now!* There's not *one ounce more* of spiritual blessing that you can get from God, and don't let *anyone* tell you that *any* of those blessings that you have are in jeopardy! They're *yours permanently, guaranteed by God!*

As a Christian, you have "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," and your blessings are as secure as Christ Himself is secure in the plan of God! (1 Pet. 1:20) We just need to *stand* on that truth, and *live* by that truth (1 Pet. 5:12), and "rejoice always" in that truth (1 Thess. 5:16).

I think we also need to point out the *inverse*. If you are *not* a Christian—believing that you are "saved" by "grace" through faith in "Jesus" alone (Acts 15:11), we can make the inverse statement: You are *unblessed* with *no* spiritual blessings *anywhere!* That means *you're on your own!* (Matt. 10:32-33; Lk. 9:26)

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

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Date: 4-18-21

One of those dopey songs from when I was a kid—the ones you wish you could flush out of your head—"Is that all there is? If *that's* all there is, my friends, then let's keep dancing!" ("Is That All There Is?" 1969, Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller) Or, as Isaiah says: "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die" (Is. 22:13; cf. Ecc. 2:24; 1 Cor. 15:32). If *this* is all you have, you "in Adam" (1 Cor. 15:22)—*not* "in Christ"—there's *nothing* that's going to get any better than this...and then, it's going to get *spectacularly worse* for eternity! (2 Thess. 1:9; cf. Matt. 25:41; Lk. 16:24; Rev. 20:10, 15).

There are clear warnings in the New Testament (e.g., Jn. 3:18; Acts 17:30-31); and we saw one of the loudest ones last week, in the end of the Sermon on the Mount. It needs to be *changed* if you're not "in Christ"! You need to "turn" (Acts 3:26), "believe" in Him (Acts 16:31), and "receive" Him as your Savior (1 Cor. 15:1), "walk" with Him by faith (Col. 2:6)—oh, and you can see the day-by-day unfolding of "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" in Him!

That's a little Summary Of The Blessings Received, as described in Ephesians Chapter 1, Verse 3. Now, I want to give you a little Stimulation To Blessings Experienced. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."

Think back to those two different words—they have overlapping meanings, but they have distinct meanings as well—those two words for "blessed": *eulogetōs*, the one that is used here, means blessed in the inner-character sense; and therefore, when that is bestowed upon you, it is granted to you directly from God, and there's no other way to get it. It's based on who He is, and what He has done for you in Christ. That other word for "blessed"—*makarios*—means blessed in the sense of an experiential blessing in your daily life. That's why it's closer to the idea of "happy" or "prospering." We are "blessed" because God has imparted to us blessings which flow from His character.

Now, maybe you're thinking that you are blessed in this *spiritual* sense—but, when it comes down to real life, you just don't have those blessings in practical ways in your life. Well, let me show you what will turn that on for you, that will cause you to *continually* be tapping into this wellspring of "every spiritual blessing."

I decided to preach on Ephesians Chapter 1, Verse 3—thought of it during the first service last Sunday, that I wanted to do this to connect this with the end of the Sermon on the Mount. The end of the Sermon on the Mount—that's the great place for hellfire and brimstone, because it's got hellfire and brimstone in it (Matt. 7:27). But this is the way to say: "In Christ." When Jesus says, "I will give you...rest for your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29), I wanted to talk to you about the part of being a Christian that *isn't* "Stay away from the hellfire and brimstone"; it's the part where you say, "Ah! I'm at rest! Now, what can God do through me?"

So, I'd like to take you back to the *other* end of the Sermon on the Mount; and you'll see how you can take these blessings that are intrinsic to your salvation—that flow from the character of God—and you can turn them into daily blessings.

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

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Date: 4-18-21

Look, when you take someone who is "dead" in sin (Eph. 2:1), separated from God (Eph. 2:12; cf. Is. 59:2), "alienated" (Col. 1:21); and you make them "reconciled" (Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18), "joined" (Is. 56:3; 1 Cor. 6:17), and "alive" (Eph. 2:5; Col. 2:13)—*there is going to be a change!* That is a *radical* transformation! (Deut. 30:6; Jer. 31:33; Rom. 6:2; 7:22; 1 Jn. 3:9) You are "a new creature...in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17).

I wanted to help you learn how to practice your "New-creatureliness," so come with me to the passage that is famous for describing blessings: "Blessed are..."—we call them "The Beatitudes." We lingered there and took every single Beatitude, one at a time. But just think back through these. And I want to suggest to you: This is what you *practice*; this is what you aim for; this is how you want to live in the world.

I had a friend years ago who was working his way through the Book of Philippians; and he was actually writing a book—it turned into a simple little commentary and devotionals on the Book of Philippians. And he said, "Okay, how do I approach this? Do I say, 'This is *who* you are in Christ,' or do I say, 'This is how you *should live* in Christ'? What should be my theme here?" And I said, "Both! They're *inseparable!*" And he said, "Well, if I'm telling people how to live, aren't I, in essence, saying 'Fake it till you make it'? 'Just *pretend* that you are this, and maybe you'll *become* that?'"

Well, as long as you don't think: "Live this way, and you might *become* a Christian"—that's *not* what it means—but there *is* a sense in which you say, "I *know* who I am in Christ; I *know* His will for me in this world; so *I'm going to live that way*, whether I feel like it or not!" *That's the point!* (cf. Rom. 6:11)

And so, if you want to—on this Earth—*experience* the unfolding of "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ," and you want to *be* a blessing to other people...well, here's what to do:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). Recognize that you are *spiritually bankrupt* (Rom. 8:8). You're not going to unfold the "spiritual blessings in the heavenlies" if you think you still have to *work for them!* You can work all you want—you *won't get them!* They're *only* given as part of the package, which is "the free gift of God," which is "eternal life in Christ" (Rom. 6:23).

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). You need to learn to have the perspective to mourn over your sinfulness (Ps. 38:18; Ezek. 20:43). You say, "Well, I'd be mourning every day!" *Yeah!* Right! "If we confess our sins"—present tense; if we are in the habit of constantly confessing our sins, saying what God says about our sins—"He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9). Confess that you are grieved by your sin, as God is grieved by your sin (Ezek. 6:9).

Next, Jesus said: "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5). Allow God to turn your pride into His "gentleness" (Ps. 18:25). His "meekness" is the other way that that word often gets translated in English.

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-18-21

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6). Do you want to unfold the "spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ" that are yours? Develop a hunger, an appetite for the Word of God (1 Pet. 2:2), so that you will know "righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). How do you develop an appetite for it? Eat it (Ps. 119:38, NASB). Find out that it's "good" for you (Prov. 16:20), and eat it some more, and *eat it some more*. And finally, you'll feel deprived if you go a day and *don't eat anything* (Prov. 8:34).

Then Jesus said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt. 5:7). Seek to God to be merciful. You can't do that on your own, because your flesh will scream, "I want vengeance!" Ah, but God wants to grant mercy (Jn. 3:17; cf. Lk. 9:56), *as you have received mercy* (Titus 3:2-3). He wants to grant forgiveness, *as you have been forgiven* (Eph. 4:32). So, agree to be His conduit, by His grace (Lk. 6:35-36).

And then, He says: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). Keep your heart open to God (Prov. 23:26; Acts 13:22). Learn to desire what He desires for you (Ps. 97:10; Prov. 11:23; Jn. 7:17). You know there is rottenness in your heart (Rom. 7:18); and every time you uncover a piece of it, bring it to the Lord (Prov. 28:13); know that "Christ died" *for you*, because of that (1 Pet. 3:18; cf. Gal. 2:20b).

Then, Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). When you're in a situation where there isn't peace, seek to be the solution (Rom. 12:18; 1 Pet. 3:11b), instead of furthering the problem (Prov. 15:1; 19:11; 20:3).

And then—oh, the one you *have to love*—"Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10). If you're going to live as a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven, *in "the domain of darkness"* (Col. 1:13), all the blows that are dealt out by a Christ-hating world—that can't get to Christ—are going to land on those who look the most like Him (Jn. 15:18-19; 17:14), and that's His people (2 Tim. 3:12; cf. 2 Cor. 1:5; 1 Jn. 5:19; Rev. 12:17). Remember: that "narrow gate" (Matt. 7:14) leads to the "hard" way (see Acts 14:22; 1 Pet. 4:18a).

You noticed that all of those have a formula: "Blessed are those who," and then, "for theirs is," or, "for they will." When we went through the Sermon on the Mount, I pointed out to you that there's an *emphatic* pronoun there: "*they and they alone* will inherit the kingdom of Heaven; *they and they alone* will see the light—*they and they alone*." And so I said, back in those days: If this doesn't describe you, *you can't say you're a Christian!* And somebody told me, "Well, then, you're preaching salvation-by-works! I have to do all these things in order to be saved!" No, that's *the opposite* of what I said! You *can't* do all these things! You can't do *any* of these things, to *any* significant effect at all, *unless* you are *changed*—because you have to tap into what is from God, and God alone (Jn. 15:5): "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies."

Now, you can get *that far* in the Beatitudes and you can say, "Yeah, boy, bless those people who have been persecuted, you know—sic 'em!" And then, He gets personal: "Blessed are *you*"—"Blessed are *you* when people insult *you* and persecute *you*, and

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-18-21

falsely say all kinds of evil against *you* because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt. 5:11-12).

My friends, this world is not the end (Matt. 25:46). The "gate" is here; choose the right gate! The "way" begins here; choose the right way—and it's the "narrow way" (Matt. 7:14), it's the constricted way. But, understand: *This* isn't where you get the payoff! (see 1 Cor. 15:19) Leave it to God to vindicate you. It may or may not have anything to do with this world, but count it a blessing to "suffer" for Him (Acts 5:41; Phil. 1:29).

Now, it probably strikes you that, *that's kind of hard to do!* Yeah, it sure is! As a matter of fact, it's *impossible* for you to do it! The only way you could ever do it is if *God does it through you* by the power of the Holy Spirit who is resident *in you*, who is able to make you do "far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think." And yes, that phrase comes from Ephesians: Chapter 3, Verse 20.

He wants to take the blessings that are yours in Christ (Eph. 1:17-19), and make them living realities in your life and in your experience (Heb. 13:20-21)—to make you live in such a way that when you tell people: "Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures, He was buried, He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures—Will you be reconciled to God?"—they can look at your life and say, "Wow! If He can do for me what He did for *you*..." *Especially* the ones who used to know you before you were saved, and they say, "Wow! What happened to *you*?" *That's the point!*

My friends, our failures as believers—and, frankly, they are "many" (Jas. 3:2); I know that—they are *never* due to a lack of resources! They are due to a lack of *willingness* to tap the resources that we have in Christ (Ps. 119:32; Eph. 5:8; Col. 2:6).

So if you are failing and flailing in your walk with Christ because you don't know your spiritual resources, I want to commend to you the first three chapters of Ephesians—at least the *first page* of Ephesians. If you read over those three chapters every day for a month or so, I think your perspective will change. And if you're failing and flailing in your walk with the Lord, not because you don't know it but because of your stubborn will and your personal rebellion—and, yeah, I know you have that too; we all do—I commend to you, not only the first half of Ephesians, but the second half as well.

In other words: Remember, I said so often in the Sermon on the Mount series, my Dad would say, "I just want to live by the Sermon on the Mount"—I had no clue what he meant by that. But if you want to live by the way that Jesus *wants* you to live, why not saturate your brain and your heart in this great book?

As I said: as I was thinking about wrapping up the Sermon on the Mount with that strong appeal to come to God or you're going to hell, I thought, "Let's go back to Ephesians 1:3, and let's explain that *it's worth it!*" It's worth it to come to Him. Well, now today, I'm thinking, "Why don't we just do the Book of Ephesians?"

Sermon Title: Every Spiritual Blessing
Scripture Text: Eph. 1:3 (Ephesians #2)

Speaker: Jim Harris
Date: 4-18-21

My friends, the *most important question* is: Are you "in Christ"? (Phil. 3:9) Examine yourself. Test yourself. Are you "in the faith"? Are you trusting in Him and Him alone? If you don't live to see tomorrow morning, and you suddenly stand before the Lord, and He says, "Why should I allow you into My Heaven?"—*What are you going to say?* If it starts with anything like, "Well, I did..."—you're wrong. "Well, I'm a fairly good person!" No, you're not (Rom. 3:10); you're wrong. It *has* to be: "I'm trusting in Jesus Christ, and Him alone. He took Your wrath for me, that I deserve." (Is. 53:5-12; 2 Cor. 5:21)

Are you "in Christ"? Well, if you are, you have "every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies" *right now!*

So, Father, I pray for my fellow believers, who understand the free gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus. And Lord, if there is still yet anyone who, not until today, has realized that they are not in Christ, please draw them, bring them; bring them to life, as only You can. And we will rejoice at Your great grace, poured out yet again. And Father, we understand this constant gap between who we are in our beloved Christ, and how we sometimes live in this world. By Your grace, give us wisdom that we might, by Your grace, live for Your glory. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.