

Ephesians

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[0 : 00] If you will take your scripture sheet, we are dealing with the first chapter of Ephesians, and I just want to remind you that the bold print in each verse that you see here is the King James Version.

And then there are several additional translations that are listed under it. For instance, the TCNT simply stands for the 20th century New Testament, and W-E-Y is Weymouth's translation, and then there's Knox, and then there's Norley, and so on.

And this is a photocopy from 26 translations, and we simply utilize this because it gives us the maximum amount of exposure to other renditions of the verse that we're dealing with.

And, of course, some of you, if you prefer to just use your own Bible and fill the scripture sheet, that's entirely up to you. But one advantage of using this is that since we've got many different translations represented here, this kind of puts us all on the same page and lets everybody know exactly what we're talking about.

We've just gotten underway with this, and the last time we met, we considered verse 2 and 3. And this morning I'd like to finish verse 3, if I may, because it's talking about spiritual blessings and heavenly places in Christ.

[1 : 21] And I think we really need to try to put a handle on that because it's a very important concept. And then upcoming will be the very controversial issue that is in verse 4, having to do with our chosenness and the election, etc., and what that involves.

This is a highly controversial issue among Christendom, has been for well over a thousand years. Actually, it goes all the way back to Augustine.

So you're talking about 1,700 years that this has been controversial about the doctrines of election, predestination, etc. And personally, in my 50-plus years of being a Christian, I have occupied every position you can imagine.

Regarding that issue. Regarding that issue. And it's probably with only in the last couple of years that I've come to a settled conviction as to what my position is on it. Without any guarantees that it is absolutely right.

Because as we pointed out in times past, I don't care what your position is theologically. We all have holes in our doctrine. We all have areas of inadequacy and areas of conflict and differences.

[2 : 36] And we are subject to changing our opinions and positions regarding some things as we get new light. And that's not a bad thing because it can be a demonstration of growth and maturity and understanding.

So as we always do here, this will be open to discussion. Everybody is free to put in their two cents worth. And we would like to get as much input as we can.

I would prefer that this be more discussion than just pure lecture. Because when we get viewpoints from different ones, it helps us to solidify our thinking.

And to either dismiss items of controversy or to embrace them or whatever. So feel free to inject anything that you've got at any time. And we will be glad to stop, discuss it there.

We have no timetable. We have no parameters within which we have to operate. So we just take our time. And who knows how long it will take us to get through it. But that doesn't matter. So look at verse 3.

[3 : 37] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has, this is a past tense thing, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

And the one thing that I just want to point out before we open it up is that it is very apparent that it is the person of Christ, and it is because of Christ, that these spiritual blessings have come to us.

In other words, everything that God has to provide for us and offers to us comes to us through the person and the merits of Jesus Christ and what He accomplished on that cross.

The redemptive act that Christ accomplished when He died for our sins constitutes an incredible package.

It is a package that is so stuffed full of blessings and benefits, all accrued by that finished work of Christ, that we need to better understand what those are and how to implement them.

[4 : 55] And this is what I want you to be thinking about. What does this consist of? He has blessed us with all, not most or some, but with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

Some of the other renditions right below that. TCNT, 20th Century New Testament says, who has blessed us on high with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Weymouth translates it. Who has crowned us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. Knox, with every spiritual blessing higher than heaven itself, and Norley renders it that heaven itself enjoys.

So, what are some of these spiritual blessings? Now, the very word spiritual should, I think, remove from our thinking the idea of the physical.

It's not talking about physical blessings. It's talking about spiritual blessings. What is a spiritual blessing? And how is it that we have been blessed with this spiritual blessing?

[6 : 16] Because if we don't know what they are, how can we utilize it? So, what would you suggest, for starters? What are these spiritual blessings?

Let's keep in mind now, let's eliminate the physical. It seems to be very pointed, spiritual blessings. Now, it is only natural for all of us to think in terms of physical, material, because after all, that's a large part of what we are.

The food that we are going to eat is physical, and it's going to sustain physical bodies. But the text isn't talking about that. It's talking about spiritual blessings.

And we separate, at least in my thinking, the spiritual from the physical, by saying, there is the material, which is physical.

There is the immaterial, which is spiritual. So, let's try to think in terms of immateriality, as opposed to physicality.

[7 : 25] What do you think? Spiritual blessings. Dave. Okay. That's a good one to start with.

That's important. God has granted to us, as human beings, made in the image and likeness of God. He has granted to us, a thing called, volition.

It's the human will. It is the capacity, the ability, to make decisions, to engage in, moral consideration of issues, and to make decisions, between, right and wrong, which of course implies, that there has to be a standard in place, in order for right to be right, and wrong to be wrong.

And this volition, this will that we are given, is that which enables us, to make decisions, to make choices. And, it is on the basis, of the volition that we have, that our accountability, that our accountability, is fastened.

God, holds us, accountable, because, we have a volition, which makes us responsible, and there will be, as we've seen in the past, there will be a time of reckoning, as to what we have done, with that volition.

[8 : 58] And we talked about that, in connection with, the beam of seat, the award throne, for believers, 1 Corinthians 3, and we contrasted that, with the great white throne judgment, for unbelievers, in Revelation 20, both of those, are areas of accountability, for believers, and for unbelievers.

So that volition, and that's a spiritual thing. Has anybody ever seen a volition? No. You've never seen a human will either. We see what volition does, we see actions, that volition takes, but nobody's ever seen volition.

And this is one of the things, that makes it, a spiritual reality. It is a blessing God has given. In other words, he hasn't made us puppets, or automatons, that don't have a will, that we're programmed, to just do, what he wants us to do.

No, no. No, no. He's given us volition. And he's given angels volition too. And when man uses that volition, he can use it in a way, that is contrary, to God's will, as Lucifer did, the angel, and as Adam and Eve did.

They used it, in a negative way, contrary to that. So, that's a great start. Any other thoughts, about volition, or another spiritual blessing? Dan. What about the peace, that passes all understanding?

[10 : 22] Okay. That's in the previous verse. Verse 2. Grace to you, and peace. And we talked a little bit about that. Therefore, being justified by faith, Paul wrote to the Romans, we have peace, with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that too, guys, that is, a spiritual blessing. That's an immateriality thing. It is something that resides, within our human spirit.

The peace. That's, that's another important spirit. Yes. John. He's given us his word, that will, shape and mold our will, and, make us conform.

Okay. Okay. The word. He's given us his revelation. And Jesus is the word. Yeah. Okay. And, and the, the first I'm thinking of now, Christ said, the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

And, they are a spiritual blessing. Yeah. Good. Okay. Ken. Yeah. The peace with God, because he's not dealt with us according to our iniquities, and the peace of God, that keeps our hearts and minds stabilized, when we're in the midst of trouble of people.

[11 : 48] Okay. Yeah. Absolutely. That's, that's, that's a big item. That's a spiritual. But, we have, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. we have the peace of God, and then, I think the writer of Hebrews talks about, the God of peace.

So, we've got all three of those. Peace of God, peace with God, and the God of peace. We are loaded up with peace, aren't we? Don. Don. With Jesus, you've got a pathway to glory. I'm sorry?

With Jesus, you have a pathway to glory. All right. There is, there is a way that is provided. This is tied in with what Christ said about being the way, the truth, and the life. We have a pathway to glory.

Has anybody ever seen that pathway? No. No. But, is it real? Absolutely. It is, it is the part that is the way, the truth, and the life.

That's a spiritual blessing. Pat? The gift of the Holy Spirit inside us. All right. Great. That's, that's another spiritual blessing. Has anybody ever seen this Holy Spirit? Well, how do you know he even exists?

[12 : 56] And how do you know he dwells within you? Because what John just said about the word, the word, we are the temple of the spirit of God, which we have of God.

We are not our own. We're bought with a price. That's another spiritual blessing. Absolutely. Hey, this thing is growing leaps and bounds. Can you think of something else? Roger?

We have absolute security of our spirit in Christ. Security in Christ. And that ties in with the peace. These things are all interrelated. They're all part of a package.

They all belong together. And that's part of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. That's great. Something else? Anybody? I think that I think this list could go on, on, you know, into who knows how long.

All of these are important. And they're all very much a reality of what it means to be in Christ. And this, by the way, this phrase in Christ is a term that the apostle Paul is going to use over and over and over again in his epistles.

[14 : 08] And it is a concept that was before Paul came on the scene, virtually unthought of, except for one passage that the Lord mentioned about when the spirit of truth comes, he will be with you and he will be in you.

That's mentioned in the gospels. But Paul specifically uses this phrase, in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, time and time and time again. And it conveys the idea that when you believed on Jesus Christ as your Savior, the spirit of God, there's that immateriality again, the spirit of God baptized you.

This is not water. This is a spirit baptism of Romans 6 and 1 Corinthians 12. The spirit of God baptized you into the spiritual body of Christ.

And you became one in union with Christ, which he is the head. This is referred to by Paul as a mystery.

And that means this is a concept that was never revealed before. This is not prophesied in the Old Testament. It is something that is brand new, unthought of, unavailable, until the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

[15 : 38] And now Paul is saying, we are in union with Christ, so that as far as God is concerned, we were crucified with Christ.

When Christ was on that cross, you were there on that cross. When he was buried, you were buried. When he was raised from the dead, you were raised from the dead.

And when he was seated by the right hand of the Father in the heavenlies, you were seated there. That's the way God views this. It's a done deal.

This is the one who calls things that are not as though they are, you know, as though they were. And from God's perspective, those who are in Christ are already seated with him in the heavenly places.

And that too is a spiritual blessing. Joe? All that Christ is going to inherit, we will. We are now children of God, right along with Christ. Amen. Thank you for that.

[16 : 36] That means we are, we are heirs of God, and join heirs with Christ. That all he has coming, we have coming. This is an incredible concept.

I mean, this is, this is amazing. This is, this involves the richness that we have in Christ. And it is bottomless.

It is just mind-boggling. Others? Anybody? Okay. Frank? The translation from Weyman says, found us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms.

Mm-hmm. Is that, does he talk of the future? He's not talking of the earth. Why didn't he say earthly also? Well, I think he's, I think, let me just say, I think he's probably looking at the big picture, and this blessing in the heavenly realms means that this, from God's perspective, this is, this is a completed action.

This is a, this is a done thing. This is what has already been provided for us. Now, our realization of that is a different thing. Even our believing that is a different thing.

[17 : 51] But, but keep this in mind, fellas. This is what God has provided for all believers, even if you don't believe it. Even if you don't know it, or understand it.

God has provided so much for us, that we have never begun to appreciate or understand, but it's there. And, and, and as time goes on, I think we draw more and more from it.

And, the time is coming when this will all come to fruition, and it will be in part with our glorified body, and our being raised in newness of life, and all the rest of it. But, I think he's making a, a, a contrast here.

He's, he's, he's trying, he's trying to get these people at Ephesus to understand how incredibly privileged and rich they are in Christ.

And this is, this is, as we pointed out when we introduced Ephesians in our very first session. Remember the three little words we gave you, an outline that somebody, I think it was Watchman Nee that suggested for the outline of Ephesians, and, and it's, it's, it's really great.

[19 : 01] Three words, remember, sit, walk, stand. The first two chapters, Paul deals with, exclusively, our position in Christ.

We are seated with him in the heavenlies. And we say, no, I'm not. I'm seated here in Collier's restaurant. No, not as far as God is concerned. As far as God is concerned, we are seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

That is our, that is our position. That's, that's where we are. That's the sit. When he says sit, it means, understand what your true position is.

You are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. And then, the walk is, how we are to conduct our lives, how we are to live our lives, standards and values and attitudes and actions, here on earth.

That's our walk. That's our daily living. And then, the stand, means, you're going to have to be firm, and solid, and rigid, and uncompromising, and unyielding, unyielding, to maintain that position that you have.

[20 : 11] And that is a frame of mind. And that is what it means to be rooted and grounded in him. So, Paul, and it's a beautiful thing, because, the Spirit of God speaking through Paul, doesn't make any demands on you, as regards your behavior, until he reveals to you, the capacity and the abilities, that God has given you, to be, what he wants you to be.

In other words, he's not, a demanding being. God is not a hard taskmaster. He does not expect anything from you, that he has not, already equipped you, to do and to be.

And that's the walk part. So, our position, and what is provided for us, leads with the first two chapters, then how we are to walk, and live in it, these, with the second two chapters, chapters three and four, and then five and six, deals with the standing, and that involves the armor of God, and all that goes with it.

Joe? Talking about the heavenly realms, when God, when Christ returns, won't it be like, almost like heaven on earth, over the millennium, that period when he's here, really, won't it be, almost like heaven on earth, during that time?

I mean, the way things are going to be, you know, lions, led by sheep, and all this. Yeah, well, you're right, that will be, in large part, what the millennium will be like, the earthly reign of Christ.

[21 : 44] And then, by the way, then, and only then, will what people commonly call, the Lord's Prayer, which the Bible doesn't call it, the Lord's Prayer, but it's a, it's a model disciples prayer, really.

But then, it will be fulfilled, because part, part of that prayer, in Matthew 6, is, is, thy kingdom come, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven.

That prayer will be fulfilled then. But, we all know, it's not being fulfilled now, for sure. Because now, we have, we have, the God of this age, who is the prince, the power of the air, he is ruling this world, and he blinds the minds, of those who believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, whose image of God should shine.

This is, this is the adversary. And, he's calling the shots, on this earth now. And, it is true, that, God is sovereign, and God is in control, and I've often liken, I've often liken, Satan to a mad dog, on a long leash, and God is holding the end of the leash, and the mad dog, cannot go any further, than what, God is willing to let him go.

But, he's got a lot of leeway. Satan is, well at work, in our world today. Other thoughts, anybody? Well, I'm sure there's a great deal more, that can be said about, these spiritual blessings.

[23 : 16] But, they are based on, and in accordance with, verse 4, according, as he has chosen us, in him, before, the foundation of the world.

That, this is a purpose clause, in the Greek, and it means, to the end that. To the end that, we should be, holy, which literally means, separated, or sanctified.

And, without blame, before him, in love. And, later on, he's going to be talking about, Christ having made us, accepted, in the beloved.

And, fellas, what all of this boils down to, and we're going to see it, come to surface, again, and again, and again. And, that is, the incredible, depth, and breadth, and height, of all, that God has provided for us, simply because, of who Jesus Christ was, and what he did, on that cross.

This thing has got no bottom to it. I mean, it is just, incredible, what is wrapped up in Christ. This is, this is just, as we go through Ephesians, it's going to become, even more amazing, and more, mind-boggling.

[24 : 39] I want to leave you with this, because this is probably all, we'll have time for this morning, but, I want you to think about, verse 4, about, as he has chosen us, in him, before the foundation, of the world.

There are, at least two, primary positions, regarding this, chosenness, and sometimes referred to, as election, predestination, etc.

And I'm not sure, I'm not sure, Pastor Brian, maybe you can, enlighten us a little bit, on this too, but, it seems to me, from my experience, as being a believer, for the years that I have, there are few issues, of theology, over which believers, sincere believers, who know and love the Lord, differ more, than this issue, that we are going to be talking about.

And it has to do with, election, predestination, etc. And, what it means, to be elect, or to be chosen, in Christ. And, I'll just briefly, I'll just briefly, explain the two positions, I probably won't do justice, to either one of them.

But, the traditional, Calvinist position, and this was espoused, probably not originally, but at least, he's probably given, more credit for it, than anybody, and that is, Augustine.

[26 : 12] and he was, referred to, as one of the church fathers, in some respects, probably the principal, church father. Fourth century, Augustine, was one, who really, sought to, extol, all the virtues, of the sovereignty, of God.

And, he took, a course, that made God, absolutely sovereign, in everything, including, including, those who are going, to be saved, and those who are not.

That, for people who think, they made a decision, to accept Christ, as their savior, the Calvinist, would say, in actuality, that's wrong.

You didn't make a decision, to accept Christ. God made a decision, to accept you. and that, he is the originator, of this. And, well, let me put it this way.

Probably, the easiest way, to distinguish, between the Calvinist, and what's commonly, referred to, as the Arminian point of view, is the Calvinist, believes, that the Christian, is one, who was, made alive, spiritually, before, he believed.

[27 : 27] And, it was because, he was made alive, spiritually, quickened by the spirit of God, that, that's what enabled him, to believe.

That he did not, and could not, believe on his own, because, his will, is in bondage, to evil, and he could not, make a decision, for Christ.

So, God made the decision, for him. And, God, selectively, chose individuals, who were to be saved. And, on what basis, he chose them, we don't know, because that isn't revealed, but it's just part, of the sovereignty of God, and he is sovereign, even in that.

So, salvation, comes, before, believing, in the Calvinist, point of view. The opposite, of that is, salvation, comes, as a result, of believing.

You believe, first, and then, you are saved. And, that's the major distinction, as to whether, when you receive, spiritual life.

[28 : 30] And, there are, of course, other things involved, and maybe we'll take a few minutes, and look at the tulip, which has to do with, total depravity, and, what's the second one?

T, the U is, L is, limited atonement, I is, irresistible grace, and the P is, perseverance of the saints.

Unconditional election, yeah, unconditional election, is the second. So, the T-U-L-I-P, is the famous, acrostic, vertically, that is given, to describe Calvinism, is called the tulip, and the T, means total depravity, and the U, means, unconditional election, which means, God elected you, without you having, anything to do with it.

And then, the L stands for, limited atonement, which says, Christ did not die, for everyone, he died only for those, who were, the elect.

And the I stands for, irresistible grace, which means that, the grace of God, is kind of, imposed upon you, and even though you might, want to resist it, and say no to Christ, if you're one of the elect, you can't, because grace is irresistible, and then P is for the, perseverance of the saints, which is kind of, tantamount to, eternal security, that you are secure in Christ.

[29 : 57] So, those are the, those are the basic, talking points, about Calvinism, Arminianism, and, and, I'm here to tell you, I've occupied, both of those positions, over the years.

So, it's something that, we can kick around, next time, and, everybody will be able, to put their two cents worth in, and, we will, we'll have a good discussion, about it.

And the thing, that's important, to remember is this, I don't care, whether you're a Calvinist, or an Arminian, or, something else, I don't know, what the something else might be, but, nobody has this thing, altogether.

Nobody has, anything called, a flawless theology, because, our humanity, will not permit that. The only one, with flawless theology, is the originator, of theology, is God himself.

He's the only one, who really has it, all together. The rest of us, are struggling, and growing, and developing, and maturing, and so on, but none of us, has arrived.

[31 : 06] None of us, has arrived. None of us, is a finished product. Time's coming, when we will be, but for now, the jury's still out, on a lot of things. So, what we do, is we get together, on occasions like this, and sometimes, sometimes we're just, pooling our ignorance, because, we can put it all together, but we still, don't have it all together.

And yet, this is the stuff, out of which, spiritual growth comes, and maturity comes. And as we, put our ideas, and thoughts together, and our agreements, and disagreements, it is an occasion, for iron, to sharpen iron.

And we get, other perspectives, and other ideas, and other viewpoints. And, there is, a certain amount, of error, involved, in all these things, we're going to be talking about.

But there's also, a certain amount of truth. And what spiritual growth, and development, is all about, is, engaging in a process, that enables us, to distinguish, truth, from error.

And, this is what it means, guys, to develop, discernment. And, when you develop, discernment, we become, more and more like, what Paul will be talking about, later in Ephesians.

[32 : 25] And, he says that, those who don't, those who don't, understand these things, or appreciate them, are like those, who are tossed, to and fro, by every wind, of doctrine.

They are unsettled, they are unstable, they are insecure, they don't know, who they are, or where they are, in Christ, they are, they are subject, to everything, that comes down the pike.

Every new idea, every new theology, every new this, or that, they don't know, how to discern, or weigh, or evaluate, so they become, a prey, to, what is out there.

And currently, it's new age stuff, and all of it goes along, with that. So, anything, any other thoughts, the food's here, and I'm about to quit, but we'll entertain, any questions, or comments. Frank? I can remember, maybe, maybe I haven't grown enough, I don't know, but I can remember, all the way back, to Blessed Hope, and there was, a speaker, it had even been you, I can remember the one, talking about, the same thing, and he said, what kept him was, he was imagining, a big gate, with a portal, with a sign on it, that says, whosoever will, which means, you can exercise, your own volition, to go through, but if you see, you're trying to look back up, and it's going to say, predestined on the other side of it.

Yeah, yeah, I think it was, oh, what was his name, Colbert? Pardon? Colbert? No, it was, somebody, no, it was, it was somebody, that taught at Moody, for like, 50 years, I don't, I can't think of who it was now.

[34 : 09] His name escapes me. But I heard him use that illustration. He says, when you get, when you get to the portals of heaven, there will be a big sign on the outside, that says, whosoever will may come.

And you get on the inside, and you look back at it, on the other side, and it says, the elect of God. So, part of what we're talking about, is with a human mind, trying to put together, the thinking, and the conclusions, of the almighty, and coordinate them, and make them mesh.

And I'm not sure, that we can do that, in our humanity, because you've got the sovereignty, of God on one hand, and God is truly sovereign, God truly calls the shots, because if he isn't in charge, who is?

He is sovereign, and we, are responsible. And the ability, to make those mesh, rather than clash, is an ability, that we humans, do not have.

But it's part of God's, job description. And he can handle it, and he does handle it, and we can be glad. And hey guys, thank you so much, for being here this morning. Enjoy your breakfast, and the day ahead.

[35 : 28] Anything on conclusion? Anybody? Yeah, Brian? You think the word in, in these passages, of this evening one, I think you'll find a lot, of the spiritual blessings, that Paul is talking about.

In love, in the various words, if you just circle the word in. Okay, yeah, right. You'll see a lot, of the spiritual blessings, that Paul is referring to. Yeah, thank you. What this means is, we are on, the end.

Yeah. We are on, the end. It is in Christ, in heavenly place, all of these things, they all come together. Good thought, good thought to end on. I appreciate that.

Thank you.