



“Praise God from whom all blessings flow....”

Ephesians 1:3-14

Main Idea: As saints, we praise God for giving us all spiritual blessings in Christ.

Reasons why we should praise God:

In Christ, we have been made holy and blameless before God (1:3-4).

In the Greek, Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long sentence of 202 words. Its main command is stated in the very beginning when Paul emphatically wrote, “Blessed (Praised) be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul then laid out some of the spiritual blessings that God blessed his saints with, in and through Christ. Mixed in among those blessings – three times – Paul reminded his readers of the main command by using some variation of the phrase “to the praise of his (God’s) glory.” In many modern translations, the first part of this long Greek sentence is made into a sentence that includes the first reason we should praise God: *In Christ, we have been made holy and blameless before God.* To emphasize the surety of this status and the certainty of it not being based on anything we could do, Paul set it in the context of God’s eternal and sovereign nature by stating that he chose us, in Christ, before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him. This means that long before sin entered the world and our relationship with God was broken, God already established the means, in Christ, to restore that relationship. So despite our fallen sin nature, through what Christ did for us on the cross, we are seen by God as holy or set apart from the sinful, fallen world. We are saints and not sinners, viewed as blameless before God only because it is in Christ’s precious, shed blood that we have been made white as snow. What an awesome reason to praise God.

1. Read and discuss verses 3-4. What does it mean to be made holy and blameless before God?
2. Why is it comforting to know that it was, in Christ, before the foundation of the world that we were chosen to have this blessing?
3. How can praising God for blessings help us live more as saints and less as sinners?

In Christ, we have been adopted into the family of God (1:5-6).

To be adopted is a wonderful change of status for so many unfortunate children in today’s world. And this was just as true during the times that Paul wrote his letters. That could be why he used it as a picture of our relationship to God so often. There are so many parallels. One of the more important of those parallels is that adoption of babies is only possible because

of the predetermined will and action of the adopting parents. The baby is incapable of contributing to the change of his or her status in becoming the legal child of the adopting parents. This is all the more true in our relationship to God. That is one of the reasons that Paul emphasized God's will in his predestination of us for adoption to himself. The two go hand-in-hand; what God has willed is predestined to happen and what is predestined to happen is because God has willed it. Many times in our lives, this reality of God's sovereignty is difficult for us to fully understand from our limited perspectives, and ultimately must be accepted on faith. However, in the case of our adoption into the family of God, it should be readily viewed as the reassuring certainty of this great unmerited change in our status. The new position as sons and daughters of God is, as Paul writes, one "with which he has blessed us, in the Beloved." That is why we can call out to God as "Abba! Father!" What a wonderful, secured blessing from God. What a great reason to praise God.

1. Read and discuss verses 5-6. What do these verses reveal to you about God?
2. Do you have an adoption story to share that helps in better understanding the blessing of being adopted as a child of God?
3. Discuss how predestination and God's will, in the case of adoption, adds to the security you have as a child of God.

In Christ, we have been redeemed (1:7-10).

The word redeem means "to buy out." At the time of Paul's writings, the term was used specifically in reference to the purchase of a slave's freedom. So to apply this term to us in the spiritual sense means that we were in a condition of slavery from which we had to "be bought out of." A price had to be paid to purchase our freedom, a freedom which we had no ability to obtain ourselves. Through Christ's shed blood and death on the cross, God has purchased our freedom, and we are, positionally, no longer in bondage to sin or to the Old Testament law. Paul links this redemption to the fact that our trespasses or sins have been forgiven. Both of these are "according to the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us" (v8). This costly freedom purchased with Christ's blood and according to the unmerited favor or grace of God is another reason we continually lift up praises to God.

1. Read and discuss verses 7-10. How do they increase your appreciation for the costly freedom that is yours because of the redeeming work of Christ through his shed blood?
2. In this passage, our redemption is spoken of as an event that has already taken place. Read Col 1:13-14, and discuss how this passage supports that understanding. What does it add to the understanding of our new position in Christ?
3. How would you explain to a non-Christian what Christ did to accomplish your redemption?

In Christ, we have obtained an inheritance (1:11-12).

The phrase “we have obtained an inheritance” is one compound word in Greek. Paul speaks of something in the future that is sure to happen. It can be translated as “we are God’s possession” or “through Christ we have received a glorious inheritance.” Both are great options and are according to God’s sovereign purposes as Paul states in verse 11. This makes our responsibility to “hope in Christ” a forward looking aspect of faith to “the praise of God’s glory.” So what is the inheritance that we have obtained in Christ? In a word, it is heaven. It is the sum total of all God promised us in salvation. It is another sure reason to praise God as he continues to work all things according to the counsel of his will.

1. Read and discuss verses 11-12. Does it make you more or less sure of your inheritance that has been obtained in Christ? Why, or why not?
2. How does knowing that God works all things according to the counsel of His will affect you? Why do we need to reflect on this truth?

In Christ, we have been sealed with the Spirit (1:13-14).

The Holy Spirit is God’s seal on His people, His mark on us as His very own. Because God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit, we are assured of our salvation. No one can break the seal of God. So it is through the Holy Spirit and His teaching and guiding power that we are sealed and confirmed until the day of redemption. Along with the security of being sealed with the Holy Spirit comes the tangible presence of the Holy Spirit that is a guarantee of our future and final inheritance. It has been said that the Holy Spirit’s presence in us brings the future into the present so we may taste what the future is like. We can thus live joyfully, confident of our sure place in a future that holds unimaginable glories. We can agree with Paul that this is to the praise of God’s glory.

1. Read and discuss verses 13-14. How should this passage build your confidence in your relationship to God through the work of the Holy Spirit?
2. After reviewing the many reasons for praising God that Paul has given us in these passages, what are some ways you can better “Praise God from whom all blessings flow...?”
3. How does praising God for our spiritual blessings change our attitudes and actions toward fellow saints? Toward non-saints? What can you do this week to make those changes more of a habit in your life?
4. Close in a prayer of praise to God for his many spiritual and physical blessings.