



# THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: “Who Do You Think You Are?” (The Book of Ephesians)

This Week’s Theme and Scriptural Focus: “I Am Blessed.” Text(s): *Ephesians 1.3-14*.

This Week’s Mark(s) of Discipleship: **Peace** (I am free from anxiety because I am reconciled in Christ, find my identity in Christ, and seek healthy relationships with others).

☐ **Day #1—Monday, April 15<sup>th</sup>. Read: Ephesians 1.3-4. —Encounter: God’s Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?**

Ancient letters would often include prayers, blessings, and sometimes thanksgivings. As Paul begins his letter to the Ephesians, he makes sure that God is and remains the focus of this letter; specifically, His *blessings*. The Greek word translated “blessing(s)” is εὐλογητός (*eulogētos*), defined as “To be praised,” “Worthy of commendation.” We derive our word “Eulogy” from this Greek word. When we say a blessing, we are giving a word of praise, speaking well of someone. When we receive a blessing, we are the recipients of an act or word from someone. These verses convey both ideas. Commenting on these verses, Darrell Bock notes:

We praise God for what he has done and we are the recipients of those actions. It is the *God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* who is praised. He is the initiator of the plan. All things flow from him. He is the one who *has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing*. We have received all heaven has to offer in salvation, a blessing rooted in eternity past, participated in now and connected with an eternal future that remains for those who share in it. It also is a blessing that comes from beyond, a transcendent form of life that God supplies to those who trust him.<sup>1</sup>

Notice how often in v.3 the word *bless/blessings/blessed* is used...We *bless* God from whom all *blessings* flow; God is a *blessing* God who has *blessed* us with spiritual *blessings*! *Spiritual blessings* are those that impact the deepest part of who we are—our spirit! These blessings are also *spiritual* because they come from and through the Holy Spirit. Paul points out that these blessings come from heaven (from God) and are found *in Christ*. As we looked at last week, being *in Christ* is the foundation for all of the blessings we receive!

Verse 4 makes the point that these blessings are not random, conditional blessings; they are from eternity past coming from God’s decision made in Christ for us to be holy and blameless. Again, Bock is helpful here:

God the Father chose those who belong to him from *before the foundation of the world*. This was a program designed from before the creation, rooted in the mind and character of God. An array of terms in these verses shows God’s initiation and direction of his plan: ‘predestining’, ‘pleasure’ and ‘will’ in verse 5; ‘will’, ‘good pleasure’ and ‘set forth’ in verse 9; and ‘claimed’, ‘predestined’, ‘purpose’ and ‘will’ in verse 11. God’s directive action is in view throughout this call to praise...There is no entitlement in grace. It is a gift graciously given, undeserved.<sup>2</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “Blessed be’... A prayer based on the Jewish Berakah “Blessed” pattern...In Hebrew, the same word is used for our blessing (praising) God and His blessing us (giving us good gifts)...Paul naturally begins this way, since he has spent three years worshiping with the Ephesians as their pastor. This Trinitarian prayer invokes the blessings of the Father (Eph 1:3–6), Son (vv 7–12), and Holy Spirit (vv 13–14)”.<sup>3</sup>

☐ **Day #2—Tuesday, April 16<sup>th</sup>. Read: Ephesians 1.5-6. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

Paul continues to emphasize that the believers blessedness is the result of God’s sovereign choice. Depending on what Bible you have, you may notice that the words “in love” come between vs.4 and 5. Textually, it adds emphasis to the understanding of God’s sovereignty and what His blessings accomplishes. For example:

If the phrase “in love” is attached to what precedes (as it is in the Greek text...then it adds a specific quality to holiness and blamelessness: the consummation of holiness is perfect love. The preposition is best understood as having

1 D.L. Bock. *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Inter-Varsity Press, 2019).

2 Ibid.

3 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

“comitative” force: the purpose of God is that his people should be marked by holiness and blamelessness, coupled with love. If, on the other hand, the phrase “in love” is attached to what follows (as it is in the RSV and the NIV), it expresses God’s attitude to his people when he foreordained them for adoption into his family... The fulfillment of this purpose is the “adoption” confidently expected by those “who have the first fruits of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23).<sup>4</sup>

The bottom line is this: God’s election and foreordaining of His people are “according to the good purpose of His will.” The Christian life, from beginning to end, is a result of *God’s initiative*, His unmerited grace toward us. Our only, rightful response is gratitude to God and glorifying Him through our faithful obedience.

The Old Testament declares that God “predestined” or (literally) “chose” Israel in Abraham to be his covenant people and adopted them as his children, but that his people often fell short of the covenant. Paul explains that in a practical sense one becomes a member of God’s covenant by Christ, not by one’s background. One reason God chose Israel was for them to bring him glory (Is 60:21; 61:3; Jer 13:11); so central was revealing his glory that even his acts of judgment were meant to turn people to him (Ex 7:5; Amos 4:6), the real source of life (Jer 2:13).<sup>5</sup>

Once again, in v.6, Paul points out that our blessings are in and through Christ, described in v.6 as “the *Beloved*.” This reflects the words used by God at Jesus Baptism (*Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22*) and the transfiguration (*Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7*). “In the One He loves stresses the manifestation of God’s love to His Son (cf. “the Son He loves,” Col. 1:13). This reference to Christ also furnishes the transition to the second Person of the Trinity discussed in Ephesians 1:7–12. God the Father loves His Son; and believers, being in the Son, are also the object of God’s love.”<sup>6</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** Consider *your blessings* from God today. Thank God for each one. Ask God to use you this week to *bless others*.

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, April 17<sup>th</sup>. Read: Ephesians 1.7-10. –Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Paul continues to describe the blessings from Christ... Here, redemption. The idea of redemption in the New Testament echoed the slave trade in the first century, as well as the Biblical history of Israel being freed (redeemed) from captivity in Egypt. Believers in Christ have been redeemed from sin, Satan, and death through Jesus! As F.F. Bruce describes:

Those who were chosen in Christ before the world’s foundation have been redeemed in him in the course of time... The blood of Christ, that is, his sacrificial death, is the means by which his people’s redemption has been procured... “Trespases” and “sins” are used as synonyms by Paul and other NT writers.<sup>7</sup>

Paul goes out of his way to use words that describe the profound nature of God’s love and grace! These divine “riches” have been “lavished” upon us! According to Saint Paul, all of these blessings in Christ were...

...not merely some intermediate objective but the ultimate purpose for our existence. The fact that Paul states this three times in this paragraph emphasizes the importance of God’s purpose in Ephesians... God does nothing thoughtlessly or indifferently. *The mystery of his will* (v. 9) introduces into Ephesians a concept that is found elsewhere in Paul’s writings, as well as in other biblical and nonbiblical literature. The word *mystery* was used to convey the wise counsel and purposes of God, which he made known stage by stage.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, God’s blessings in Christ are not only for the individual believer; they are the culmination of God’s salvific plan to heal this broken world! As mentioned above, Paul tells us that this divine plan was a *mystery* (Greek: μυστήριον (*mysterion*)). Biblically, this word does not reflect a secret, something that must be found out or discovered. In The New Testament, it is used to describe God’s great plan as it is revealed stage-by-stage throughout history. Here in Ephesians, “mystery” (*mysterion*) “refers to God’s plan of including Jews and Gentiles together in one body... it refers to the gospel of Christ... It refers to something God is planning for a future climactic point in history, *when the times will have reached their fulfillment* (v. 10, literally ‘fullness of times’).”<sup>9</sup> God’s plan for the salvation of the world, this *mystery*, has been finally and ultimately fulfilled through Jesus! Jesus has “summed up” human history and salvation! As C.E. Arnold summarizes:

There has been a significant rupture in God’s creation. Angels in heaven have rebelled against the Lord. Sin has emerged as a power that not only enslaves God’s creation, but also causes people to revolt against him and his purposes. Paul declares here that this condition will not continue forever. All of creation—both heavenly principalities and every person—will someday be forced to submit to the righteous and all-powerful reign of the Messiah. All will be brought

4 F.F. Bruce. *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1984).

5 C.S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1993).

6 J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

7 Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*.

8 W.L. Liefeld. *Ephesians* (InterVarsity Press, 1997).

9 Ibid.

under the universal “headship” of Jesus. The initial realization of this plan has already taken place in Jesus’ incarnation, proclamation of the kingdom, death, and exaltation to the right hand of God. Believers now await the complete fulfillment.<sup>10</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “The Greek and Roman world generally thought of time as unending. The world will continue on and on. The Old Testament, by contrast, is clear that time is measured and fixed (see Dan. 9:24–27). At some point in time history as we know it will be drawn to a conclusion. This period of fulfillment will represent the climax of God’s redemptive plan.”<sup>11</sup>

□ **Day #4--Thursday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. Read: Ephesians 1.11-12. — Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Paul now describe the consequences of the spiritual blessings that flow from the mystery of God’s plan through Christ—specifically, the inclusion of both Jews and Gentiles as being chosen by God. “Though both Jews and Gentiles participate in God’s blessings, the Jews were called first (cf. Acts 3:26; Rom. 1:16).”<sup>12</sup> Believers can be sure, particularly (in the immediate context), Jewish converts to Christianity, that they (like all believers), were “predestined” by God. The Greek word translated “predestined” is προοριζω (*proorizō*), meaning “To decide before hand.” Commenting on this text, Walvoord and Zuck note;

Jewish believers were chosen because they were predestined. But this predestination is not a matter of whim or caprice on God’s part; it is according to the plan (*prothesin*, “purpose”; cf. Rom. 8:28; 9:11; Eph. 3:11) of God, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose (*boulēn*, “counsel or deliberation”) of His will (*theleματος*; cf. 1:5, 9). The combination of these words—*prothesin*, *boulēn*, *theleματος*—gives a forceful emphasis of God’s sovereignty for including the Jewish believers in the church, which is headed up by Christ. The purpose of God’s choice of the Jewish believers is that they might be for the praise of His glory, which parallels verse 6...Christ has set the sinner free from his sin and has revealed His will that all things will be headed up in Christ at the end of the ages, including the Jewish believers who first trusted in Him.<sup>13</sup>

The Israelite tribes received the Promised Land as their allotment from God; Christians receive God’s kingdom, eternal life, and heaven (Mt 25:34; Col 1:12; 1Pt 1:4). As we are God’s children, this can be called an inheritance (Eph 1:14, 18)...“In Him we are to seek the eternal election of the Father, who has determined in His eternal divine counsel [Ephesians 1:11–12] that He would save no one except those who know His Son Christ and truly believe in Him. Other thoughts are to be entirely banished. . . . We know assuredly that out of pure grace, without any merit of our own, we have been elected in Christ to eternal life” (Formula of Concord Ep XI 13).<sup>14</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “God not only paid the price for man’s redemption, he also graciously made it known (1:8–9). The “secret plan” (1:9) is the full gospel of Christ...A divine mystery is something not previously revealed and therefore unknown apart from divine revelation...The content of the mystery is the unity that can come through Christ and his gospel (1:10). Christ is the sum of all; he defines all thought, action, and rule. The corresponding result of the mystery is the redemption of all those who believe (1:11–12).”<sup>15</sup>

□ **Day #5— Friday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. Read: Ephesians 1.13-14. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

In this final part of our text, Paul highlights and affirms the believers’ participation in all of the blessings offered through Jesus. A believer *in Christ* (again, one of Paul’s most used phrases), having received the Gospel is now “sealed” by the Holy Spirit! The biblical idea of “sealing” reflected the practice of indicating on a document or possession it’s *ownership*. “The word was used for a wax seal on a scroll (Jn 3:33; Rv 5:1–5...); also for a brand on an animal or a tattoo on a slave or soldier.”<sup>16</sup>

The *seal* used to mark them was nothing less than the promised gift of the Spirit. As at Acts 2, the promise in question is principally that of Joel 2:28–29, but understood in a distinctively Christian way. Through this gift they received wisdom and illumination to perceive the implications of the gospel (1:17–20; cf. 3:5); inner strengthening in the gospel (3:16; cf. 6:17); access to, and the indwelling presence of, God and of Christ (2:18, 22; 3:16–17); the beginnings of the promised cosmic unity (4:3–4); inspiration to godly living and thankful worship (4:30; 5:18–20) and help in prayer (6:18). All these activities are what marks believers as God’s people and are indispensable to ongoing Christian existence.<sup>17</sup>

One core concept that Paul points out here, and that is repeated throughout the New Testament is: *Faith comes through hearing the*

10 C.E. Arnold. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan, 2002).

11 Ibid.

12 Walvoord, Zuck Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

13 Ibid.

14 Quoted in, *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

15 R.B. Hughes and J.C. Laney. *Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* (Tyndale House Publishers, 2001).

16 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

17 D.A. Carson, R.T. France, J.A. Motyer, and G.J. Wenham (Eds.). *New Bible Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994).

*Gospel.* It is hearing and responding to the Gospel (the story of God’s salvific plan fulfilled through Christ) that creates faith and leads to the blessings Paul has articulated in this text. And, all of this is done through the power and agency of the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit in believers’ lives is the undeniable mark of God’s work in and for them. He is also the means by whom Christians can be kept ‘intact’ till the day of the Lord. (It should be noticed that the contexts here and in 4:30 and in 2 Cor. 1:21–22, where the ‘seal’ is spoken of, all point forward to the full possession of God’s blessings in the end.)...we have the *guarantee* now and we will have full possession later.<sup>18</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “God the Father is pictured as the One who devised the plan of salvation (vv. 3–6). God the Son carried out the plan, shedding His blood to win us redemption and forgiveness (vv. 7–13). And God the Holy Spirit “included us in Christ” when we believed and remains in us as the guarantee of our complete redemption (vv. 14–15).”<sup>19</sup>

□ **Day #6-Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>. Read: Psalm 4. —Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.**

Today we use the Daily Order of Prayers from *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read and mediate on Psalm 4 and:

“[M]ake the sign of the Holy Cross and say: In the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Then, kneeling or standing, repeat the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer:

*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; one holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.*

*Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

(Depending on the time of day, pray the prayers below):

(Morning) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

(Afternoon/Evening) I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.<sup>20</sup>

**Consider/Reflect:** “David complains that his enemies are speaking ill of him as king in an attempt to shame him. He reminds them that God sets apart the godly from those who behave in such a manner. How often do we find ourselves speaking ill of people in positions of authority? of colleagues and peers? God’s Word condemns unjust complaints. Through David, God encourages us to turn from our sinful ways and “trust in the LORD” (v 5). Such trust brings peace of mind and eternal peace. [Pray]: You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Teach me to judge rightly and dwell in peace. Amen.”<sup>21</sup>

**Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...**

**Message Title: “I Am A Saint.”**

***Scripture Texts:***

***Psalm 34.1-9***

***Ephesians 1.15-23***

***John 10.11-18***

18 F. Foulkes. *Ephesians: an introduction and commentary* (Vol. 10, pp. 63–66). InterVarsity Press, 1989).

19 L.O. Richards. *The Bible Reader’s Companion* (Victor Books, 1991).

20 Martin Luther. “Luther’s Small Catechism.” Taken from, *The Lutheran Study Bible*. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

21 *The Lutheran Study Bible*