

**Ephesians 1:3-14(ESV)** <sup>3</sup>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup>even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us<sup>£</sup> for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, <sup>8</sup>which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>making known<sup>£</sup> to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ <sup>10</sup>as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup>In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, <sup>12</sup>so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee<sup>£</sup> of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

We are all sinners in need of a Savior. We are all sinners in need of a Rescuer. Jesus came to save us from our sins, to rescue us from our sins. Jesus paid in full on the cross the penalty for our sins redeeming us by his blood, by his very life when he died on the cross. If I could put a sign on every Christian's forehead this day it would read, "Forgiven." Yes Jesus is our Divine Rescuer. We were all sinking, drowning in the ocean of sin. Jesus stooped down to where we were and lifted us up putting us on the dry ground called forgiven. God looks at you and does not see one sin at all for Jesus took care of everything on the cross. Because Jesus rescued you, you have a bright future and an inheritance that is out of this world, and IT will last forever and ever Amen.

Let us pray. Heavenly Father thank you that you have rescued us from our sin, paying the penalty with your life blood. Please help us to accept the fact that we are a forgiven people and that you no longer hold our sins against us. Lord, we are a broken people, filled with fear, anxiety, worry, fret, and more. Please speak to us again the Good News of Jesus Christ and may that good news sink into our souls deeper and deeper and deeper driving out of us all of our fears, worries, frets and more. This we pray in the name of Jesus Amen.

Friends, you are looking at an imperfect person full of flaws. You are looking at a person who can be incredibly weak, frustrating to be around, downright disgusting, selfish and that is before 9:00 in the morning. It is so easy for me to talk about sin because I am so good at being a sinner. Pastors are no better than anyone else. We do not have an inroad to God. We are imperfect human beings, sinners to the core. Sometimes a pastor's sins will make it into the news. I am never shocked or even surprised when it happens. None of us are immune to the power of sin, no not one. We are all sinners by nature including everyone who hears this sermon or reads this sermon. The Good News is Jesus offers complete forgiveness to all who ask. The Good News is the grace of God has exactly what we need and one day God's amazing grace will lead us home. The Good News is every Christian has been blessed with every spiritual blessing but now I am getting ahead of myself.

Paul writes, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." Another word for blessed can be "praised." This verse could read, "Praised be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. From the original language the word blessed we get the word eulogy. When Paul writes Blessed or Praised be the Father, Paul is referring to the infinite goodness of God. The Bible tells us that no one is truly good but God alone (Matt. 19:17). Paul is beginning this letter with a great word of praise toward God for God is always worthy of our praise for God is good always.

The goodness of God is something that I spend a lot of time thinking about and pondering. If God is so good why do so many things around us look so bad? If God is so good how come we hear of such painful events occurring in the lives of people we dearly love? Some here are going through the most difficult time of their lives. If God is so good how can life be so hard? There are no quick and easy answers to this, but I do offer these words. God Himself is flawless. God is completely holy. God cannot make a mistake. God is incapable of doing anything wrong. That means no matter what difficulty comes your way, no matter how hard or

painful it might be, if you belong to God, God will take everything that comes your way and bring good out of it. God will bring good out of it for God is good and God can do no other. So, everything that you are facing is another opportunity to experience the goodness of God. I tend to grow anxious and fearful rather quickly. A person might say to me, Pastor you need to listen to what you preach. Friend, when our thoughts are put onto the goodness of God it actually eases our anxieties and can calm our fears for God's goodness is greater than any struggles that come our way. "God is good, all the time." "All the time God is good."

Paul tells us that God the Father has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing. Please listen to this. As Christians we live our lives in Christ for Christ's Spirit, the Holy Spirit lives in us. As Christians we are so identified with Christ that it is as if we died with Christ and were raised with Christ. As Christians we are so identified with Christ that every blessing the Father gave to Christ has also been given to us. We are fellow heirs with Christ. As Christians we are so united with Christ that the Father loves us just as much as He loves His one and only Son Jesus.

Yes, God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. **1. When God the Father saved you He gave to you every spiritual blessing.** **2. The Christian life is growing in our knowledge and experience of what has already been given to us.** For example, you have already received all of the love of God that you can receive. The Bible tells us the love of God has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5). You have already been filled with the love of God. Therefore, the more we learn of our true identity in Christ, who we are as Christians, we learn that God's perfect love is always with us, never changes, and never will change. There is not anything that you can do to make God love you more. There is not anything that you can do to make God love you less. God the Father loves you as much as He loves Jesus. He loves us all equally. I honestly believe that as we ponder this it helps our anxieties, worries, frustrations, and inner tensions to become less and less for God's love is

more powerful than what is troubling us. It is the same with God's peace and joy. As we grow in our understanding of who we are in Christ, the peace and joy of Christ becomes so much more real to us in an experiential way. On the worst day of your life, you can know God's love for you so deeply for God tells you that He is working out everything in your life for your good and for the greater glory of God.

I read a story of God's goodness that moved me. You may have read this story at one time too. A first-grade little boy was sitting at his desk at school. He looked at the floor under his desk and there was a puddle of water. The poor boy was horrified for he knew where that water came from, he had an accident. He froze in fear not knowing what to do. He knew what would happen to him if people found out and how ostracized he would be. The teacher from the front of the room began to walk down his aisle. He knew he was in big trouble. What he did not see was a sweet little girl in his class carrying the fishbowl up the aisle behind him to change the water in the bowl. She arrived at his desk before the teacher did. The little girl slipped and fell onto the floor with all of the water spilling out of the fishbowl. Yes, that water mixed with his little accident, and it all got cleaned up together. When school was over the little boy spoke to the girl on the bus. He said to her, "You did that on purpose, didn't you? That wasn't an accident, was it?" "No," she said, "it wasn't an accident." "Why did you do that?" She smiled and said, "It happened to me once." Those two little children sat there together and became very good friends that day. (Story from Steve Brown, "Three Free Sins, God's Not Mad At You." Pg. 82). When I read this story, I saw the goodness of God all over the place. God took a disgraceful situation and poured out his grace and God does that all the time for God is good, always worthy of being praised.

I cannot talk about every spiritual blessing that we have from the heavenly places, but I will mention five biggies. Each blessing will be given in summary form. Each one could be a

sermon in itself. This is the core teaching of my preaching and teaching ministry. For the confirmation students this will be a review.

The first spiritual blessing is regeneration. Regeneration means at one time you were spiritually dead and lived in spiritual darkness not knowing God. The Holy Spirit convinced you of who Jesus is and that you need Jesus and the forgiveness that he brings. **3. Regeneration is the Holy Spirit moving inside of you causing you to be born again, born anew, born from above, reborn, and made inheritors of eternal life.** Regeneration is the Holy Spirit giving to you new life in Christ, abundant and free. You were spiritually dead and now you are spiritually alive for the Holy Spirit moved into your soul and made you alive in Christ. Regeneration is one of the spiritual blessings every Christian has within.

The second spiritual blessing I wish to speak of even as Paul does in this passage is the blessing of Redemption. **4. Redemption simply means that our gift of salvation was paid for in full through Jesus' blood shed on the cross.** We were all slaves to sin, held in sin's power. Christ's death on the cross was the payment so we could be redeemed from the power of sin and given over to the power of Christ. We no longer live for sin, we live for Christ and Jesus paid the entire penalty. Redemption means our sins are gone forever for Jesus bore them on the cross. Please do not keep rehearsing all of your former sins late into the night. To be redeemed is to be forgiven.

The third spiritual blessing I wish to mention is Justification. Justification is a legal term. On the cross Jesus bore all of your sins and gave to you his righteousness. Justification means God has declared you righteous because of Jesus' finished work on the cross bearing the guilt and shame of your sins. **5. Justification means God looks at you and sees you as if you never sinned.** In other words, all of your sins are gone, and God sees you without sin for Jesus took care of everything on the cross. Luther saw this as one of the most important doctrines and blessings for the church. Please never think that you have to do good things for God in

order to earn God's approval. None of your good works add anything to the work that Jesus did for you on the cross. He paid the price, and we get all the benefits.

The fourth spiritual blessing that I will mention is Sanctification. **6. Sanctification is the Holy Spirit working inside of you changing you and forming you more and more into the image of Jesus.** This is a lifelong process and will not be completed until Jesus comes again.

And finally, the last blessing I am speaking of is called Glorification. **7. When Jesus comes again you will receive a brand-new body, a perfect body that will live in the fullness of God's Holy Presence.** Your new body will never know any sickness, disease, suffering, evil, sin, or death. You will be absolutely perfect in every way. The Bible says we will be like Jesus for we shall see Him as He is. Yes, one day God will give to you a glorified body. All of these blessings are guaranteed to every believer in Christ. Regeneration, the Holy Spirit making you alive in Christ. Redemption, Jesus paying the full price for your salvation. Justification, God declaring you fully righteous because of the work of Jesus on the cross. Sanctification, the Holy Spirit changing you and transforming you to be more like Jesus. Glorification, God giving to you a brand-new glorified body that will live forever with God and all the believers in Christ.

Yes, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. I close with these truths about God and God's goodness. God is for you and not against you. God is not angry toward you. God is not out to get you and embarrass you or harm you in any way. God no longer wants you to carry the baggage of guilt and shame for your sins for Jesus has taken care of everything. I honestly believe as we grow in our understanding of how we have already been blessed our levels of worry, anxiety, panic, and fear will be less and less because we know more and more of what it means to be blessed with every spiritual blessing. Amen and Amen.