

Blessings In Christ  
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give thanks unto the Father as in this doxology, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'



## *Blessings in Christ*

*'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ' (Eph. 1:3).*

The language of the believing soul is, 'The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.' There are other texts of Scripture, which also speak of the Christian heritage in its unity, a 'pearl of great price'; 'a kingdom that cannot be moved'; a 'portion'. But this text speaks of the heritage in its multiplicity, as made up of or branching out into a multitude of blessings. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.'

We may consider the subject under the following six heads: 1. The origin of these blessings; 2. The end, the final purpose of them; 3. The locality of these blessings; 4. The depository or treasure-house of these blessings; 5. The method, and 6. The means of participating in them. Or grouping them in pairs we have, 1. The origin and end; 2. The locality and treasure-house of these blessings; and 3. The method and means of attaining them. May this subject, by the divine blessing, be profitable to all among us who sincerely desire to be enriched with spiritual good.

1. The origin and end of these blessings. First consider the origin. What is their source? Whence do they take their rise? The context very emphatically answers the question and very steadily keeps the answer under our attention. They originate in the mere grace and good pleasure of God, his unfettered, undeserved sovereign love. In the fifth verse they are said to be 'according to the good pleasure of his will.' In the seventh verse they are said to be 'according to the riches of his grace.' In the ninth verse, 'according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.' In the eleventh verse, 'according to the purpose of him that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.'

In the second chapter of the epistle the same truth is very frequently and forcibly presented, the apostle losing no opportunity of asserting it, till the declaration that 'by grace are ye saved' becomes almost the refrain or sacred chorus of his lofty theme. In the fourth verse of that chapter these blessings are traced to their origin, namely 'his riches in mercy', and to his 'great love wherewith he loved' — so great, so free, that it embraced us even when we were dead in sins. In the fifth and sixth verses the apostle, impatient to celebrate this rich mercy as the alone fountain of our salvation, without pausing for the close of his sentence and the completion of his sentiment, interjects parenthetically a burst of gratitude and admiration: he 'hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved) and hath raised us up together' with him. In the seventh verse his expression for this infinitely precious truth becomes still more emphatic and intense and he testifies of 'the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us'. Finally, as if he never could make this truth sufficiently emphatic and impressive, he returns again to the expression and celebration of it: 'For by grace

infinitely favourable and secure, exactly as this gospel describes. That hope we find ever blessed and eternal, exactly as this gospel pledges. That home we find replenished with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, exactly as the gospel teaches us to expect. The gospel awakens our expectations. The gospel more than fulfils them.

We close with a word to two classes. 1. To you who believe not. You will not come into Christ, the home of blessings. How infatuated is your folly! How deep-rooted your alienation! How great your contempt of God! How desolate at last will be your condition! The door which your sin had closed is thrown wide open, and within are all blessings — free. You prefer a foreign land, a far country. Ah! you will one day begin to be in want and no man will give unto you. 2. To you that believe. Let me counsel you to watch the working of your faith. Has not its acting been too often expended on catching hold of your warrant and title to the treasure-house rather than searching and appropriating and enjoying its treasures? Alas, instead of quietly, progressively, patiently, as a rightful proprietor and heir, searching the fulness of Christ and daily embracing such particular blessings as your estate may need, you have been frequently and fitfully exhausting the action of faith on what is but preliminary, the appropriating of Christ himself. This too often has contented you. You have not firmly held and retained him. The obtaining of Christ is not the last step but the first. Then, Christ being yours, draw out of his fulness, search and prove his blessings. Press on and prove on. Live on by the faith of the Son of God; while in your experience and enjoyment you are ever learning more and more what riches of grace and truth are laid up in Jesus. Rejoice that they are all your own in Christ and

by the Spirit, and abiding in him, abiding as free sons in the house forever, abiding in the treasure-house and having right and title through grace to all its rich contents, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Secondly, if all spiritual blessings are gathered together in Christ Jesus and all spiritual persons are gathered together in him that they may partake of these blessings, by what means is our gathering together into him effected? In a word, it is by means of the gospel. In the eighth and ninth verses the apostle describes this gospel as the revelation in which God has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to the good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself. In similar terms, writing to the Corinthians, he denominates the gospel, 'the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory.' It is 'the wisdom of God' and 'the power of God unto salvation'. In the thirteenth verse of this chapter he calls it 'the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation', as if he would say that if in all the universe there is anything worthy to be believed, any saying faithful and worthy of all acceptance, any word of *truth*, if there be a *word* of truth in anything that was ever spoken by God or any creature, it is the gospel of your salvation. Oh! precious designation: 'the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation'. By means of this word, informed and enlightened of the Spirit by the instrumentality of the gospel, we behold Christ. In him we receive all blessings, redemption from the curse, release from condemnation, restoration to life and favour from the Lord, restoration to sonship and inheritance. We enter into him renouncing ourselves and taking up our position, our life, our home in him. That portion we find

are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.'

Surely it argues the deep depravity of the human heart that this doctrine should have been so frequently and so fiercely assailed. Do you dislike the sovereignty, the free unfettered sovereignty of God in salvation? Would you fain find some other origin for spiritual saving blessings than the good pleasure, the rich mercy, the free, royal, sovereign love of God? Would you have more hope of them and better liking to them, and greater readiness to repair to and partake of them, if their fountain-head were other than the good pleasure and the free love of God? Oh, can you fail to see what base ingratitude, what black suspicion towards God, this state of mind implies? Can you shut your eyes to the clear demonstration of your haughty independence and unsubdued pride which such feelings afford? You cannot brook the overwhelming dependence on God to which this doctrine summons you; the overwhelming obligation to his matchless love under which this doctrine would put you. Then, let it be the means now of revealing to you your dislike of God, your proud opposition to his supremacy. Let it lay the finger on the very plague-spot of your corruption. Let it show you your natural face as in a glass. Surely you may willingly submit to this when it will also show you a salvation which makes a proposal from God to love you notwithstanding all your corruption, with a sovereignty of love that freely loves, that prevails to love still against all your enmity, and a sovereignty of purpose and power that provides for curing it.

Ah, if you knew aright your just condemnation and your entire depravity, you would object no more to God's righteous sovereignty. If you knew the cruel dominion of sin you would rejoice in the free supremacy of grace. Were

But this applies with special emphasis to the redeemed from among men. We are gathered together in one in Christ. This is the very feature and divine characteristic of the days in which we live. This is the leading purport and design of the times now passing over us. This is the special economy of the fulness of the time. It is an economy, a dispensation of ingathering. This full Christ, come in the full time, is that Shiloh of whom it was of old said, 'To him shall the gathering of the people be.' Emmanuel, throughout the gospel age, is giving the command, 'Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice' — those that have redemption through my blood, even the forgiveness of sins. And the Father gives the promise, 'Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered.'

This gathering is the special work of the Holy Spirit arresting, convincing, enlightening and renewing the soul to see and embrace in Jesus Christ an all-sufficient portion, an altogether suitable righteousness to the guilty, life to the dead, a Redeemer to the lost, an Advocate with God through whom a sinner may return and be received in love. It is descriptive of this very gathering into Christ when the apostle in the second chapter speaks of our being quickened, raised up, made to sit in heavenly places with Christ (verses 5-6); of our being made the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works (verse 10); of our being made nigh by the blood of Christ (verse 13); reconciled in perfect peace unto God, permitted and enabled to have access to him as a Father; made fellow-citizens with the saints, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, framed together into a living shrine of the Godhead, builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit (verses 16-22).

Thus gathered together in one into Christ, living in him

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you but convinced that sin reigned in and over you unto death, you would hail it as the herald of hope that grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ. Yes! by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, according to the good pleasure of his will.

Second, the blessings thus originating — to what do they ultimately tend? What is their end or final purpose? To this the answer is, they aim, they tend, they are designed to promote the manifestation of the glory of God and especially of his grace. This is the end that God has in view in blessing us with all spiritual blessings. His glory shall thereby be made great. The apostle in the context keeps this distinctly in sight. In the sixth verse of this chapter he says we are made partakers of these blessings 'to the praise of the glory of his grace.' In the twelfth verse he says in like manner that the inheritance is conferred upon us 'that we should be to the praise of his glory.' In the fourteenth verse he states the same doctrine in the same terms when he says that we are sealed with the Spirit which is the earnest of our inheritance 'unto the praise of his glory.'

Such is the Lord's ultimate object in saving us. He designs thereby to make his own glory manifest, to make it resplendent and conspicuous. He proposes to give an eternal exhibition of the greatness and glory of his grace, 'that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.' He means to give a revelation to angels of his wisdom, 'to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.' Thus there is glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will toward men. 'All the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.'

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he raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. The riches of the glory of the inheritance are just the 'all things' that are put under his feet. And the hope of his calling is the sum of what may be hoped for from membership with him who by his own fulness filleth all in all. Thus, having election in the Elect, sonship in the Son, acceptance in the Beloved, redemption in the Redeemer, inheritance in the Heir and the Spirit in the Christ, you have all in him who is all in all.

### 3. The method and the means of attaining the blessings.

First, as to the method of our participation with Christ in these blessings. Manifestly, if they are all concentrated in him our participation in them depends on our being united to him. This is indicated very gloriously in the tenth verse of this chapter, where the apostle, explaining the purpose which God purposed in himself, asserts its object and aim to be, 'that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in him.' Doubtless this implies that even the holy angels themselves are brought into a certain subordinate union with Christ and secured thereby from ever falling away as vast numbers of their companions fell away. It is in worshipping the Son of God in our flesh that the angels find themselves confirmed in eternal security in their holy and blessed estate. For even *all things*, not excepting those in heaven – those most permanently heavenly and holy, which need no purging from sin and no redemption from the curse – those things which are in heaven as well as those that are on earth are headed up for their eternal permanence and blessedness in the Word made flesh.

Can anything be more encouraging? Can anything be more engaging or constraining? Waking up to think at last of the authority and claims of God, and dimly seeing a very little of his majesty and glory, I ask, can it possibly consist with the honour, the infinite dignity, the glory of God that I should be forgiven, accepted, adopted, renewed, sanctified and made an heir of glory? Ah, says the gospel, it may not only consist with the glory of God but may promote it, illustrate it, advance it, make it real. Do I really understand this? Do I understand that God provides for it and proposes to take occasion in me of glorifying his great name? Of claiming and of calling forth from the principalities and powers in heavenly places, and all throughout the ages to come, adoring exclamations of wonder, joy, surprise and praise? In *me* as the object of his redeeming love and purpose, the subject of his regenerating grace and power? And does not this constrain my wonder, joy, surprise and praise, that I should be called not only to receive freely an infinite, sovereign, undeserved love, but that my reception of it should be the means of throwing light, to the angelic beings, during the eternal ages, on the glorious character and perfections of God? Oh, let the Spirit but teach me this, let him subdue and mould my heart to it and constrain me to acquiesce in a proposal so marvellous. Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my father's house that thou hast brought me hitherto? Who am I, O Lord God, that thou shouldst propose to wash and justify and sanctify me freely, without money and without price, and that with such traces and signatures and implications of thy glory as that thou shalt challenge in me and in thy handiwork in me the holy surprise and admiration of all the heavenly hosts through all the unending ages? And now, O Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief. Be it unto me according to thy Word. O Lord, do as thou hast said.

2. We may consider now the locality of the blessings, where the apostle places them, the heavenly places. Now, this same expression occurs other four times in this epistle. In the twentieth verse of this chapter it is identified as the locality of the risen Redeemer. The Father has raised him from the dead and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places. In the sixth verse of the second chapter it is assigned to believers also, as equally their home, they being risen with Christ: he 'hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places.' In the third chapter and the tenth verse it is described as the habitation of the holy angels, the name given to those glorious hosts of light who are called 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places'. And finally in the sixth chapter and the twelfth verse the apostle says, 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (or heavenly) places.' From these words we learn that into this spiritual and holy place the believer is pursued by the powers of darkness that fight against his salvation. We have an instance of this in the case of Job, when the sons of God came before the Lord and Satan came also.

The heavenly places, then, are the seat of the risen Christ and of believers in him where he dwells bodily and they by faith, the home also of the holy angels, the arena of the good fight of faith where even the wicked spirits have access. In one word, it is the true holy of holies, where the Advocate sits at God's right hand; where he sits bodily and in the name of his clients, and where his clients, spiritually and in faith, sit and worship with him; where the angelic hosts surround the throne and study God's wisdom in the church, finding it a school for heavenly knowledge; and where the hosts of darkness being suffered for the exercise

is the heir. 'In whom', says Paul, mentioning this fifth blessing and finding it, as all the others, in Christ, 'In whom also we have obtained an inheritance' (verse 11).

vi. And finally we find in him the anointing and the seal of the Spirit, for he is himself the anointed one whom the Father has sealed. In him alone the Spirit dwells without measure. Hence the apostle says, 'In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory' (verses 13-14).

How rich and glorious, then, is Christ, considered as the treasure-house of all spiritual blessings; and what an import may the spiritually taught soul learn more and more to find in that promise, 'My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus', or that other declaration, 'And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.' He is the Elect, the Son, the Beloved, the Redeemer, the Heir, the Anointed and Sealed of the Spirit. In him we find laid up for us election, adoption, acceptance, redemption, inheritance, the Spirit's unction, seal and earnest. We are elect in Christ the Elect One, sons in Christ the Son, accepted in the Beloved, redeemed in the Redeemer, heirs in the Elder Brother, anointed and sealed in the Christ. This same principle, thus copiously illustrated and applied in the context, pervades all the chapter to the end, for, while Paul speaks of the hope of his calling, of the riches of the glory of his inheritance, of the exceeding greatness of the power of grace working in them that believe, he makes it apparent that all these are in Christ and that it is only in Christ that they can be found. The greatness of the power is that very power which the Father wrought in him when

according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.

ii. We find sonship in him: for he is the Son. The adopted sons have this privilege in the eternal Son. To bring saved men into a filial relation to God required a Saviour standing in that relation himself. Hence when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son that we might obtain the adoption of sons. 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' This, accordingly, is the second of the spiritual blessings which Paul specifies: 'Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself' (*Eph. 1:5*).

iii. We find acceptance in him, for he is the accepted, the beloved. He is himself infinitely acceptable to the Father. His person is beloved and his work admired of God. In him the Father is well pleased. Oh! how unutterably is it true that he finds grace in his sight. In him therefore we have justification, acquittal, acceptance, the approbation and favour of God. Paul says, mentioning this third blessing, 'he hath made us accepted in the beloved' (verse 6).

iv. We find redemption in him, for he is the redeemer, and his blood is the ransom, and the forgiveness of sins is its direct immediate result. This is that redemption of which, in another place, Paul testifies so emphatically that it is in Christ, 'Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.' Or as Paul here states the blessing, 'In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins' (verse 7).

v. We find heirship and the inheritance in him: for he

and trial of the godly, find an arena in which to show their malignity, but where, unlike in their own proper kingdom, they may always be repelled successfully and do always come off with loss. This same locality is described by the single word 'above'. When writing to the Colossians, Paul says, 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.' It is the secret of the Lord's presence, it is his special pavilion, the region of the spiritual life, the new world into which the new birth ushers us, where we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen and eternal, where all old things are passed away and all things are become new. Yes, it is a holy home into which, by faith, the believer enters as soon as he is reconciled to God and transformed in the renewing of his mind. 'For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me.' 'Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.' In that region of the new life the believing soul is with Christ already by faith at the right hand of God, the ward and the admiration of the unfallen angels, the envy and the target of evil ones. Such is the home in which the children of the kingdom dwell and in which they are enriched with all spiritual blessings.

In the second place consider the depository, the treasure-house, the trustee of all these blessings. It is Christ. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. They are all deposited and treasured up in Christ. Hear what Jesus himself says: 'All things are delivered unto me of my Father.' 'All that the Father hath is mine.' 'The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.' Christ is the heir of all things. The blessings in all their fulness are in him. The



Father has kept back nothing from him. As it is said in another place, 'In that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.' So, in that God the Father made him the heir of all things, there is no blessing that is not made over to him. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has blessed HIM with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. It has pleased the Father that in him all the fulness of the blessings should dwell.

'How then', says unbelief – jealous, querulous, discontented, isolated unbelief – standing apart on its own and proudly standing its ground against grace and Christ and the Lord's salvation, 'how can he bless me with them if he has given them all to another, to Christ? I cannot see how they can be to me when they are all given to him. If they are all his I must be poor indeed.' 'But', says humble faith with a mind exactly the reverse, 'it is enough if he has given them all to Christ. He has not thereby given them past me but given them unto me. He has given them all to me if he has given them all to Christ. He has given them all to me because he has given them all to Christ, for the Christ who contains them all, him has he given to me freely.' Lowly-hearted, full-contented faith, loyal to her bridegroom and embracing her husband's estate as her own says, 'The Father hath blessed me with all spiritual blessings in giving them all to my husband. My beloved is mine and I am his. All things are mine, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come, all are mine for I am Christ's and Christ is God's. They are all mine because they are his.'

Yes, if God had gathered up all his love and all its fruits and gifts and bestowed them in all their fulness on Christ, and then withheld from us this rich and all-embracing Christ, we were indeed left destitute and empty. But

Christ himself is God's great and unspeakable gift. 'And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' This is his record, that he has given us all spiritual blessings, and these blessings are in his Son. If he gives you the treasure-house, he gives you all its contents.

Let us go then into this great store-house of blessing, this living depository, the trustee himself being ours by the gift of God! Whatsoever we find in him is our own.

i. First of all, we find election in him for he is the elect of God. 'Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.' Where, then, shall the believer find and read his election of God, if it be not in Christ who is the elect of God? Oh, why should anyone wander amidst insoluble perplexities in the region of the hidden purposes of God? Go not to the secret decree of election but go to the revealed elect one, Christ. Embrace him! Make your calling sure by embracing him. Make your calling and election sure by making sure of Christ. All the sovereign, distinguishing, electing love of God is yours in him for the taking. Every difficulty of the humble, sin-sick, earnest soul may be removed. The obstacles that the proud raise disingenuously, no gospel of any kind ever would remove. But look thou to Christ. He is the chosen one of God. In him there is no mystery at all about election. Nor in him is election that cold, arbitrary, repulsive thing it often seems to many. It is the Father's warm loving choice, alighting first on the Son of his love. And in Christ, you also, on receiving him, are gathered by the Father into the same embrace. So you find that you have not chosen him but that he has chosen you. Such is the first of the spiritual blessings which Paul enumerates. He 'hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: