

## **Immeasurably Blessed**

Eph. 1:1-14

Series “Ephesians”

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I am PUMPED about this series...it’s going to take us all the way into the summer – 12 weeks with a small break for Easter, and coming out of our *RESET* series, I’ve got to tell you this is my favorite kind of preaching right here.

- I enjoy the topical like we just did...
- I enjoy preaching great themes in the Bible and great doctrines of the Bible...
- I enjoy preaching character studies and going in depth on a given subject...

BUT...my favorite kind of preaching is what we are going to do in this series and that is simply take large portions of scripture in a given book and teach them passage by passage...verse by verse.

And outside of the book of Romans which we will FOR SURE one day tackle, I don’t know of a greater book to give our time to than the book of Ephesians.

Now, to kick this series off, it’s important to do a little context work. I want to share with you how the church in Ephesus got started and fill in some blanks as it relates to the relationship that the Apostle Paul had with this church because their connection to one another was deep.

Then, I want to give a broad stroke of the book of Ephesians...just kind of a general overview of where we are headed and then we’ll dig into the first 14 verses today. Sound good?

I’m calling the message today: **Immeasurably Blessed**

Did you know that if you are a Christian...if you are a true follower of Jesus, then you are immeasurably blessed!

- Doesn’t matter if you feel like it...
- Doesn’t matter if the circumstances you’re in are pointing in a different way...

IF you are a believer, you are **IMMEASURABLY BLESSED**, and the text we are looking at today is going to prove it!

Now, before reading our passage let’s give some context. Ephesus was the capital city of the Roman province of Asia at the time. It’s located in what we know as modern-day Turkey.

Okay, this has HUGE relevance for us Houstonians because this is where the Rocket’s Alperen Sengun is from!

At the time of Paul...this city was a pretty significant. It was the largest city in Asia Minor at the time, the fourth largest city in the world, boasting of a population of about a quarter of a million people.

It was a commercial port, so a lot of business and trade took place in the city because it was easily accessed by land and sea. It was referred to as “the Gateway of Asia” because there were three roads that led into Ephesus from which you could get anywhere in the known world at the time.

Let me show you this map and as you are looking at it, one more fun fact about the city of Ephesus. It was an arts and entertainment district as well. In fact, Commentator, William Barclay referred to it as the “Vanity Fair of the Ancient World.”

It was home to one of the “Seven Wonders of the Ancient World” – the temple built to and dedicated to the goddess of Artemis (in Greek) or Diana (in Latin) ...and this thing was impressive! It actually took them 220 years to build.

Here’s a picture of what it would have looked like – you can travel and see the ruins today.

Not only did it have this temple, but it also boasted of a two-story teaching hospital, had a massive library and talk about loving its entertainment, it had an outside theater that held closed to 25,000 people.

This city was an uber important city at the time of the New Testament. We know that Paul visited this city on his second missionary journey.

He didn’t stay there long – taught in the synagogue and ultimately left after a very short time. Now, he left Priscilla and Aquila there (Acts 18) and they combine their efforts with what is described as an “eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures”. This is a Jewish man named, Apollos and from all we know this is where the church in Ephesus gets its start!

Paul leaves, goes to Jerusalem to share what God did with the church leaders there, and then he heads back to Antioch to give report back to the church that originally “sent him” out.

**illus. HCPN** – 400 pastors “sending” – 1<sup>st</sup> Sat. Prayer we pray for church planters! Important because Paul will be sent out on a third missionary journey by the church in Antioch, and it’s on this journey that Paul goes back to check on the church that was planted in Ephesus.

You can read all about this in (Acts 19-20). It’s an amazing time in Paul’s life. He spends nearly three years in Ephesus...that’s how important this city and church was to him. From Ephesus:

- Paul planted churches in Laodicea, Colossae, and Hierapolis...
- He wrote the book of 1 Corinthians from here...
- His teaching causes a riot because the idol-making business are being negatively affected...

And just listen to: **Acts 19:10** – “**This continued for two years (Paul’s teaching and preaching ministry), so that all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.**”

THEN after nearly three years of ministry, Paul makes the decision to leave Ephesus - he wants to check on these other churches he has planted in Macedonia and Corinth, but his ultimate goal is to get to Rome and in his view get the gospel to the rest of the world.

Now, I want to read you one more passage of scripture, just so you can see the relationship that Paul had with this church in Ephesus. I would make the argument that there was no church closer to his heart...no church that he loved more (maybe Antioch) ...and you can see the depth of this love and gratitude when they part ways.

**Acts 20:28-38** – “**Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.<sup>29</sup> I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;<sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.<sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears.<sup>32</sup> And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.<sup>33</sup> I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.<sup>34</sup> You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me.<sup>35</sup> In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”<sup>36</sup> And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.<sup>37</sup> And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him,<sup>38</sup> being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship.”**

The next time the church in Ephesus would ever hear from Paul (that we know of) is when he writes to them from prison some 7 or so (give or take) years later. THIS is the letter to the Ephesians.

The first half is theological in nature. The second half is very practical in nature. I have a book in my library called, *The Wealth, Walk and Warfare of the Christian*. It’s essentially an outline of the book of Ephesians. In it we see:

- Our wealth as believers (Ch. 1-3)
- Our walk as believers (Ch. 4-5)
- Our warfare as believers (Ch. 6)

In this letter, heaven and earth collide! We’ll talk about what’s going on in the heavenlies and how that reality effects what we do here on earth.

**John Stott – “The whole letter is thus a magnificent combination of Christian doctrine and Christian duty, Christian faith and Christian life, what God has done through Christ and what we must do as a result.”**

So, now you have the context and overall content of what Ephesians is all about. Let’s dive into these first 14 verses and discover how we are “immeasurably blessed”.

And we start with a quick introduction: **Eph. 1:1-2 – “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Now, as we continue, I think it’s important for you to know...nearly all commentators will point this out. (v. 3-14) is one long sentence in the Greek – 202 words. It’s been called a sentence that theologians love and that English teachers hate!

In this sentence, Paul gets super excited about what he is writing about! It seems he’s so excited that he just decided to throw grammar out the window! He’s not stopping to take a breath, and what we see that he’s excited over is what he refers to as “blessings”.

Recall the title of this message: “Immeasurably Blessed”!

Now, we are about to list out six blessings that Paul mentions, that he wants to ensure that the believers in Ephesus are aware of them and thus walking in them.

Before we do that though, let’s just emphasize something here...a bit of application.

Paul is writing this letter from prison! And as he writes; he is captured by this idea of the abundant blessings of God in a Christian’s life.

In fact, we are about to read the phrase “in Christ” or “in him” or “to him” – we’ll read it 11 times in these 14 verses. Paul has an incredibly high view of Jesus and here at the start of this letter he is focusing on the spiritual blessings we have because of Jesus.

Just note that! He is physically in prison and yet his mindset is on praising! He is in bondage and chains, yet his thoughts are on the blessings of all that he has “in Christ” and because of Christ.

What a beautiful lesson for us...what an incredible example! I’m just telling you if I was in prison, my letter would go something like this: “Pastor Jarrett, to the believers in Champion Forest, please pool your resources, leverage your influence and get me out of this prison!”

That’s how I’d start my letter! I’d be thinking about self-preservation...but NOT Paul! He’s thinking about the blessings that he has “in Christ” – it’s a GREAT lesson. That no matter what we are going through or what we are up against, if we will put our mind on Christ and all that we have in him, we too will burst forth in praise!

When we put our mind on Christ and ALL that we have “in him” and because of him, we like Paul can rise above and even in the midst of trial and adversity get fired up over the blessings of God in our life.

What are these blessings? There are six of them. Let’s look at them very briefly. I’ll begin with the first two:

1. **We are chosen**
2. **We are adopted**

**Eph. 1:3-6 – “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 for adoption to himself as sons 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.”**

If you are a Christian, God chose you to be a part of this new community he is building called, “the Church”. This “choosing” ...this divine election is not something we should run from, but instead it something we should readily embrace.

Now, admittedly, some struggle with what these words “chosen” “predestined” “adopted” mean and the implication that comes along with them.

- What does it mean that God chose us as believers? Does that means he did not choose others?
- What does it mean that we have been predestined? Does that mean that we did not have a say in our salvation?

If you have been in church for any amount of time and read the New Testament especially, you have probably asked yourselves these questions at one time or another and reflected on what these words mean.

If you haven’t, just make your way to the nearest Bible College or seminary and go to the place where students are hanging out and just eavesdrop. I can promise you this will be a subject they are discussing and debating.

So, let me try to do the impossible here and in two minutes attempt to explain what Paul is plainly teaching. Salvation through Christ was in the heart of God from the very beginning – it was not God’s plan B.

Hear this: Anyone who has placed their faith in Christ down through the ages has done so because God by his grace initiated his work in their life as he planned - what Paul says here:

“before the foundation of the world”. It’s what Luke referred to in (Acts 2:23) “the divine plan and foreknowledge of God” –

Election teaches that there is not a single person that goes looking for God before God first goes looking for him. We call this “prevenient grace”. To quote my favorite author of all time:

**A.W. Tozer – “Christian theology teaches the doctrine of prevenient grace, which briefly stated means this, that before a man can seek God, God must first have sought the man. Before a sinful man can think a right thought of God, there must have been a work of enlightenment done within him; imperfect it may be, but a true work nonetheless, and the secret cause of all desiring and seeking and praying which may follow. We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to the pursuit.”**

I’ll do you one better than Tozer though. How about we quote Jesus himself. **John 6:44a – “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him...”**

This doctrine shouldn’t discourage you...instead it should fuel praise and your worship! What a blessing that in love God has chosen us, predestined us and adopted us as sons and daughters of God – he brought us in before the foundation of the world!

Now, some of you may be thinking, I don’t know that that’s fair - “Chosen before the foundation of the world.” I like what **Charles Spurgeon – “If he hadn’t chose me before the foundation of the world, he wouldn’t choose me now.”**

Listen, God’s choosing doesn’t absolve or eliminate human responsibility. God’s choosing is not flippant or capricious. Again, we are chosen “in Christ” and predestined “in love”.

Theologian, J.I. Packer referred to divine sovereignty and human responsibility as two sides of the track the train runs on – you have both and they never meet!

To quote Spurgeon again, he was asked how do you reconcile these two things: divine sovereignty (God’s election) and human responsibility (man responding freely to God) – Spurgeon answered, “I wouldn’t try; I never reconcile friends.”

What we see is that the more we are intentional in sharing the gospel, the more we will see God calling to himself those he has chosen and predestined from the foundation of the world.

I’ve heard some preachers say this regarding the salvation of God in our lives – that when we get to heaven the front of the gates will read, “Whosoever will, let him come.” And then once we enter and turn around the back of that very same gate will read, “Blessed are you who were chosen before the foundation of the world.”

We are chosen...we are adopted...we have been because of Christ brought into the family of God.

**Illus. Couple adopting – Life 624 ministry**

What a blessing that God has chosen and adopted us into his forever family.

**William Barclay – “When the adoption was complete it was complete indeed. The person who had been adopted had all the rights of a legitimate son in his new family and completely lost all rights of his old family. In the eyes of the law, he was a new person. So new was he that even all debts and obligations connected with his previous family were abolished as if they never existed.”**

Because of Jesus, we are no longer a son of Adam, but instead we are children of God! All rights and privileges are ours! We’ll get there in a moment, but first, let me share with you a third blessing.

### **3. We are redeemed**

**Eph. 1:7-8 – “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...”**

This is so rich right here...talk about “immeasurably blessed”. The word “redemption” is first used in the book of Exodus. The people of Israel were redeemed from the bondage and slavery of Egypt by the blood of the Passover Lamb.

To be “redeemed” is to be purchased...and what the scripture is teaching here is that we have been redeemed...we have been bought back by the blood of the “lamb” – the Lord Jesus Christ.

This blood secures our “forgiveness” ...it releases our sin. Incredible picture here. I could take you to Lev. 16 concerning the Day of Atonement.

Two goats are presented before the Lord and the High Priest places his hands on each goat. He confesses the sins of the people of Israel on one, and then slaughters it and sprinkles its blood on the altar of the mercy seat inside the Holy of Holies - that goat’s blood served as an atonement/a covering of sin for the people of Israel.

The other goat is sent into or “released” into the wilderness. It is known as “the scapegoat” and sending it/releasing it into the wilderness was a picture of the sins of the people being carried away. We know this as the doctrine of expiation – sins are “sent away” – i.e. forgiven.

ALL of this happens because of the blood of Jesus! Again, it’s a beautiful picture that Paul is drawing for these believers in Ephesus, showing them just how blessed they are!

That “in Christ” because of his death on the cross, they have been redeemed...they have been forgiven...their sins have been released and they are no longer held against them!

**Illus. Redeemed, How I Love to Proclaim It** – 1882, Fanny Crosby, favorite hymn (9,000) to describe her conversion experience:

**Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,  
His child, and forever, I am.**

**Redeemed, redeemed,  
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;  
Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!  
His child, and forever, I am.**

Let's look at this next blessing:

#### **4. We are enlightened**

**Eph. 1:9-10 – “making known 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.”**

You know what this means? It means we can see spiritually! God “in Christ” has removed the blindfold from our eyes and we can now see the plan of God as it relates to the redemption of the world through Christ.

The word “mystery” here does not mean that it's something secret, but instead it's hidden...it's veiled...and to those that don't know Christ – God reconciling to himself all things “in Christ” via his death on a cross and uniting all things to Christ via his resurrection – to those of us who are chosen, adopted, redeemed...we get it!

What a blessing that that which is hidden to the world has been made known to us.

In other words, why do we get it, and others don't?! It's NOT because we are all that...it's only by the grace of a loving God – it's a spiritual blessing that is ours “in Christ”.

Look, if God has revealed his eternal plan for us, don't you know we can trust him to reveal his daily will for our lives...and he will reveal it as we walk with him! A fifth blessing:

#### **5. We have an inheritance**

**Eph. 1:11-12 – “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.”**

Think about what this word, “inheritance” entails. Land was so important to the Jewish people...always has been! My goodness, just watch the news and what's playing out between Israel and Gaza – the tension is over land...that land was given via an inheritance.



When we trust the Lord – at the moment of salvation, we receive an inheritance. In one way, our inheritance is Christ himself – that’s the heart of our inheritance. It’s more than land, it’s a person– and because of Christ...being in him...all that his becomes ours.

Paul calls this being a “co-heir” (Rom. 8:17). While, our inheritance is a person, in some ways it’s also land...because that’s what heaven is – (Rev. 21-22) – God creates a new heaven and earth that we will live in forever and ever.

This land inheritance is ours! It’s a promise...and we can know this because of the sixth and final blessing:

## **6. We are sealed**

**Eph. 1:13-14 – “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 of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”**

To be sealed is to be preserved...it’s to be marked with authenticity. There is an element of ownership and authenticity in this. Kings would take a letter they wrote and seal it with their signet ring – this is what God, the Holy Spirit does for us at salvation.

He seals us securing our salvation forever and ever. I’m going to bring this message to a close with two points of application, but before I do, let me show you something I think is worth highlighting in this passage...I think it makes the blessings that much more rich – again, immeasurably blessed!

Note the work of the Trinity in this passage of scripture. What we have seen in (v. 3-14) is:

- God, the Father initiates the work of salvation (v. 3-6)
- God, the Son secures the gift of salvation (v. 7-12)
- God, the Spirit seals the hope of salvation (v. 13-14)

The blessings of God come through the fullness of the Godhead. It makes me want to burst forth in singing the doxology! Sing it with me!

**Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;  
Praise Him, all creatures here below;  
Praise Him above, ye heav’nly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**

THIS is the application. What are we to do with these blessings? What is our response? Well, first:

## **1. We are to wake up!**

This passage is Paul, waking us up to the reality of WHO we are and all that we have in Christ!

We'll see this next week, but if you read ahead (v. 18) teaches that it's possible to have these spiritual blessings and not even be aware of it OR be deadened to it! And Paul wants us to wake up and realize all that is ours in Christ.

How different would your day be tomorrow if you wake up and read and pray in these six blessings – they are actual realities of being a follower of Jesus!

### **illus. Count your blessings!**

So, we are to wake up, but then secondly:

#### **2. We are to worship**

That's why we sang the doxology...that's what Paul is doing as he writes this one long sentence out...he's so fired up he HAS to get it all out!

Our response to the immeasurable blessings of God...of all that it means to be “in Christ” is to worship! This is what Paul writes in:

**Eph. 1:3 – “Blessed (it's a call to and word of worship!) be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places...”**

The response to the blessings of God is worship and what I say is if you are having worship problems, what you are really having is memory problems! You have forgotten all that you have “in Christ”!

So, Paul writes a reminder...so what are we to do? How are we to respond to the blessings of God? We are to wake up and worship!

Let's pray.

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Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.