

What is one thing you learned from the previous study?

Individual reflection

Recap - In small groups, work on defining the following terms below and their significance to us today:

Apostle

- Individual chosen by Jesus
- Witnessed Jesus' resurrection
- Foundational role in establishing the church. Signs of wonder for authentication of the gospel message

Saint

- Christians are all saints
- They are faithful in Christ
- Set apart as God's people (to be holy)

Grace

- Undeserved favour from God
- Not earned or anything that can be done to achieve it
- Gospel message – we didn't get what we deserved
 - Christ got what we deserved
 - We got what Christ deserved

Peace

- Peace with God through the cross. Objective reality
- Absolute rest, freedom from sin
- Proper relationship with God, reconciled to self and others

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

Eph 1:3 - 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

Addressing the saints, Paul states that we've been blessed by God the Father because we are in Christ. What does it mean to be in Christ (c.f. Phil 3:8-11; Gal 2:20; Col 2:11-12; John 15:4)?

Union with Christ. What does this mean?

Phil 3:8-11

- We are in Christ
 - His righteousness is ours by faith (our confession and dependence)
- Sharing with Christ in everything
 - Suffering, death, and resurrection
- We are inside of Christ— found in Christ
 - "In that person's shoes", we are that person -"in him"
 - Old life is counted as rubbish
 - Gained Christ at the expense of all other things

Gal 2:20

- Christ in us
- Assuming new identity because the old one has died
 - Christ empowers all that we do
- Cross is a personal expression of Christ's love for individuals
 - Individual distinctiveness is retained in the Christian
 - We are not all uniform, robots acting in the same manner

Col 2:11-12

- Share in Christ's baptism, death and resurrection

John 15:4

- Abide in Christ
- Christ abides in us
- Abide meaning remain, stay (by faith)

Intention:

- Draw out idea of Christ in us and us in Christ
 - United to him in all ways
- Righteousness that belongs to Christ is credited to us by faith

In Christ we have been blessed by God with every spiritual blessing. What do you think it means to be blessed by God? What does every spiritual blessing mean?

- Blessing = God's favour, protection
- Physical blessing, seen in the OT as livestock, big families, relief from enemies and wealth
- Spiritual blessings, relating to things of the spirit. Life in the spirit in particular

Consider Eph 1:4-14, in everyday language how would you describe the spiritual blessings we have been given?

Individual exercise – 5-10 minutes

v4–Chosen by God – speaking to justification	v5–Adoption as God's sons (children)
v6– God's grace given to us	v7-8–Redemption (bought at a price – coupon from a store being redeemed). Forgiveness. Abundant grace.
v9-10–Know and understand the “big picture”. God's purpose = summation of all in Christ	v11-12–As God's sons (heir), we have an inheritance. Predestined and stand to gain something
v13–Heard the truth and believed. Sealed with the Holy Spirit on our confession.	v14– Holy Spirit is our deposit, guarantee of the inheritance that waits the sons of God. Ex. House deposit while you wait for it to close

Spiritual blessings are everything Christians have received through God's saving act.

Moving onwards in verse 3, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Refer to the following passages; consider the references to the heavenly places and the implications:

Eph 1:20-21 –Christ is in the heavenly places. Rules with all authority in all ages (now and the one to come).

Eph 2:6–We (saints) have been raised up with Christ in the heavenly places and seated with him.

The spiritual blessings come from the heavenly places, the invisible spiritual realm where God and Christ reign. It is contrasted against our visible and tangible earth where we are currently present. For Christians on earth, we have been raised up and reside with Christ in the heavenly places. These spiritual blessings are both a present and future reality.

This is all possible because we are united in Christ; we are blessed spiritually beyond our comprehension receiving what Christ deserves (grace). This in turn is grounds for blessing God. Examine the beginning of verse 3 again; what do you think it means to bless God? How do you think this differs from God blessing his people (c.f. Acts 17:24-25)?

Blessing God = Praising God (NIV)

- Greek = Eulogetos

Blessing God involves more than lip service, it implies conviction that leads to action.

Acts 17:24-25

- Contrast between needy mankind and God who needs nothing
- Everything belongs to God and comes from him

We praise God for his blessings.

Consider 1 Kings 8:15, 56; Psa 34:1-4; Psa 103:1-5. Why is God being blessed by his people? Why is important to bless God generally (Judges 2:6-12)?

1 Kings 8:15, 56

- God is blessed/praised for keeping his word (Solomon praising God in the midst of the people of Israel)
- Fulfills his promises (gratitude of the people)
 - Implies promises were known by the people

Psalm 34:1-4

- David blesses God “at all times”
- The Lord delivered David which results in praise (gratitude)

Psalm 103:1-5

- God is blessed for all the good things he does for us (grace)
 - Reverse God as holy
 - Remember the benefits (salvation), forgiveness, heals and redeems and satisfies us

Leader’s Intention: God is being blessed not because he requires it, but because it is an outpouring of gratitude from the believer’s heart. Gratitude can’t help but lead to praise.

Judges 2:6-12

- Not an exhaustive list of reasons – tie it back to the sermon series regarding the nation of Israel
 - The generation of the people of God forgot about him and all that he had done shortly after Joshua
 - Gideon was almost murdered for taking down a false statue
 - He did not remember God’s commands to bless them if they would turn from false gods
- God must be praised and remembered verbally for all that he has done
 - For our children’s sake

- For the sake of the soul's at stake
- For accountability and sanctification

What are some ways we can bless God (c.f. Psa 105:1-5; Eph 4:1-3)? How do you bless God throughout the week?

Psa 105:1-5– Singing, worshipping God

- Remember God for all that he has done
 - Thanksgiving, worship, seeking him... etc

Eph 4:1-3 – Obeying God, walk in a manner worth of the calling

- Relate back to previous studies and the idea of a saint
- Set apart to be holy, expected to live/confirm to a live style that is pleasing and demanded by God
- Unity with one another

After truly understanding their salvation from God, believers can't help but to bless the Lord. Praise is the heartfelt proclamation of the grace that has been freely distributed to us by the work of Christ. Because we are united with Christ, we now have an abundance of blessings; gifts that are lavished upon us by God our Father.

This coming week, spend some time meditating on the blessings outlined in Eph 1 and consider reflecting in Psalms 103. Remember the work of the Lord, the salvation, the mercy, the grace and all the blessings we now have as a result of being found righteous in Christ.

In the following studies, we will come back to the passage today and re-examine each blessing in further detail that ultimately results from our union with Christ.