

## Introductory Blessings

Ephesians 1:1-2

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, September 29, 2019

We are looking at the Book of Ephesians. And as you're turning there, if you're joining us for the first time today, we're on the front end of a series on the Book of Ephesians called the "All of God" series. We started it last week and that's what we're calling it - the "All of God" series because that's what the Book of Ephesians is about. It tells us that our salvation is all of God. All the riches and blessings and treasures we have in the Christian life come from Him and not from us. He is the great provider, He is the great shepherd of our souls. And as such, God gives us all that we need so that we lack nothing. And that's what the Book of Ephesians is about. It fleshes this out for us. It tells us what this looks like in practical terms.

And as I told you last time, you can see this in several key words of the book. Words like "glory" and "riches" and "fullness" are repeated over and over again to tell us that this is what salvation provides. This is what it gives us. It makes us rich and full of God's glory.

I talk to people all the time that say they feel empty. They're so busy, life is so scattered, so many distractions, their soul just feels dry. The Book of Ephesians says it doesn't have to be that way for you. God can make you rich and full of His glory.

You also see this in the outline of the book, the way the Book of Ephesians is laid out. Because the first three chapters talk about our position in Christ. They tell us that He has predestined us (as Dwayne just read) and raised us up and seated us in the heavenlies with Christ. That's the first three chapters. And then the next three chapters tell us about the practice of that. So the next three chapters take the heavenlies down to earth, and they talk about what this looks like, what salvation looks like in our marriage, in our family, in our home.

But you have to notice the order there. The order is not you fix your marriage and your family and your home, and then you go to the heavenlies. The order is God saves you. He puts you in the heavenlies, and that impacts your marriage and your family and your home. Some commentators say this is the message of the book. Ephesians is about practicing your position in Christ. It's about living out your salvation, which is why we're studying this book as a church. We're looking at this together because we want you to do that. We want you to practice your position in Christ. We want you to live out your salvation and enjoy the blessings of that.

Again, I talk to so many Christians that are frustrated because they're not experiencing the richness and the fullness that's available to them in Christ. And we want to help you with that, which is why we're studying this book right now.

And I want to introduce our passage to you this way. For this morning, I want to get it started out like this: In the 20th century, William Randolph Hearst was considered to be one of the richest men on the planet. He had more money than almost anyone else in the world. He was a businessman, a politician and the owner of the largest newspaper in America. His net worth was \$3 billion. So he was a billionaire at a time when most people had never even heard of the word. He was a billionaire going into the great depression in the US (very interesting).

And with all that money, he liked to collect art. That was one of his hobbies. William Randolph Hearst was a passionate collector of artwork.

And one time, he sent an assistant out to look for a particular piece and the assistant couldn't find it. He just traveled all over the world, could not find this painting until a thought reached him, and he looked into his records and he found out that William Randolph Hearst already had it. It was in one of his storage facilities against the wall. In other words, Hearst was looking for something he already possessed. He was looking for a treasure that he already had. He spent weeks and weeks and weeks doing that; wasted hundreds of hours.

And I mention that story because I think a lot of Christians are doing that today in their spiritual lives. A lot of believers are doing that in the church. They're looking for something they already possess. They're looking for treasures that they already have. They're spending weeks and weeks and weeks wanting to be rich and full, and hours and hours and hours trying not to be empty when they already have the ability not to do that. They go around saying, "Lord, help me with this," or "Lord help me with that" when in fact God already has. He's already provided all they need. It's hanging on the wall. It's out in the storage shed, they just need to take it down and use it, and put it into practice.

I did this with you last week, but you can see this in the way some Christians talk today. You can see this in some of the things that people say in the church. For example, you hear people say, "I can't get victory over my sin" or "I can't change in a certain area. I try and I try and I try, and I fail. And I pray and I pray and I pray, but it does me no good. I just can't beat this lust or pride or anger. I can't get over my fears and doubts and anxieties. There's nothing I can do." Now just think about that for a moment, think about what you're saying. You can't beat sin? You don't know what to do with your depravity? Don't you know sin has been defeated at the cross? Don't you know that God has already dealt with it at Calvary? So why do you say that? You say that because you're looking for something you already possessed. You say those things because you're looking for a treasure you already have. You have everything you need to defeat sin. You have everything you need to get victory over it. You just need to take it down off the wall and use it.

You also hear people say this - this is a common thing Christians say - they say, "My life is so bad right now. I feel so low, I am so discouraged that I don't even think God loves me anymore. I don't even think that He cares." Think about that for a moment. If God doesn't care, then what was the cross about? Why did He send Jesus? See, we say those things because we're looking for treasures we already have. The New Testament Commentator H. A. Ironside said, "What is the theme of the Book of Ephesians?" He says, "It is said in the prophecy of Obadiah that when the Lord returns and His kingdom is established, that the people of Israel shall possess their possessions." That's what it says: "They shall possess their possessions. They shall take over land that they already possess." And that is what the Book of Ephesians is about. Do you possess your spiritual possessions? Are you taking ownership of what the Lord has already given you, or are your heavenly estates like castles in the air that you dream about but never really own?

I was talking with a young man several years ago who was struggling with lust. It was really taking hold of him. He just couldn't get over it, he couldn't get victory. And so I just said the first thing that popped into my mind - I said, "Did you know that Jesus died for that sin?" I kind of caught him off guard. He kind of gave me a puzzled expression and I said, "Well, if you're a Christian, then Jesus already died for that sin on the cross, which means He already

paid for it. Which means it's already dead, it's in the grave, and you just need to learn how to leave it there. You need to learn how to stop digging it out of the ground.” To say it another way, I could have told this man, “You need to lay hold of His promises. You need to learn how to trust all the things God has told you in His word.”

Charles Spurgeon once wrote a little pamphlet on this called “The Chequebook at the Bank of Faith” in which he gave a promise for every day of the year. And he said, “Each of these promises is like money in the bank for a Christian. It's like change in your pocket, so that all you need to do is take hold of it through faith. All you need to do is ask God for it and it is yours, and He will give it to you.” Which is what this book is about. Ephesians has been called the “believer’s bank” and the “Christian’s chequebook” for this reason, because it reminds you what God has given you in Christ. This book gives you promise after promise, treasure after treasure and says, “This is all yours in Him.” All you need to do is take hold of it through faith. It's been called the “Grand Canyon of Scripture” and the “Himalayas of blessing” for the same reason. To show you that you can never get to the end of this. No matter how hard you try, you can never get to the bottom of your blessings. You can pray every day to be blessed by God, and if you're a Christian, He will answer that prayer. It may not be the way that you expected, but He will help you. Which is what I want to talk to you about this morning because this morning in the first few verses of Ephesians, I want us to look at the beginning of these blessings. I want us to see where the treasure begins. There's so many riches in here we can't get to them all today. We're just going to scratch the surface.

But if you're taking notes, in the first few verses of Ephesians, I want us to see three introductory blessings to this book. So if you're taking notes in Ephesians 1:1-2, I want us to see three introductory blessings to this book. I would say we would all want to leave this morning with a blessing, amen? We would all want to leave this morning with some extra spiritual riches. And this is how Paul begins the list in Ephesians.

And the first one is this (this is the first blessing we see in here), and that is that God has made you saints. That's where it all begins. If you are in Christ, if you have believed in Him, trusted in His name, God has made you saints. Which is a very interesting word in our day and age. It's very misunderstood, and we'll talk about that in a moment. But Paul begins by saying, “Through Christ's work on the cross and His death and resurrection, God has made every Christian a saint.” And he says it this way if you look in verse 1. It starts out, it says, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus.”

I've told you before that the word “Ephesians” doesn't appear in the earliest manuscripts of the New Testament. So the verse could read, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus.” So the key word here is really “saint.” It kind of jumps out of the page of the original manuscripts. But also in those earliest documents, we have the word, “to the Ephesians” at the top of the page. So what scholars have concluded is that the letter was sent to Ephesus. It went to this town, but it was spread out from there. It went to several churches. Which would make sense just to give you some more background, remind you of this.

Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor. So if you wanted to pick a city to send out a letter from, this was it. It was a very important place. Just like Canada has done, the Romans divided their empire up into provinces, and Asia Minor was the province located between Rome and Babylon. So it was like a gateway between East and West. If you were traveling from the two major cities in the ancient world, you would pass right through this territory.

Anybody who was anybody went to Asia Minor. If you remember, the seven churches of the Book of Revelation were here. Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira - all those are in Asia Minor. This is where they're from. Paul's hometown of Tarsus was here too. So Paul was a native of this territory. The ancient city of Troy was there, but the capital of all of this was Ephesus. Ephesus was the center of the region.

Which means it was rough like most cities in the ancient world. It had a bad reputation because of all the riff raff and traffic that went through there. One ancient historian named Heraclitus said that the Ephesians were fit to be drowned. That's what he thought about them. He said, "You should just drown them all because they were not fit to live." He also said that the Ephesians lived in the darkness of vileness and their morals were lower than the animals. So Heraclitus said you could not get lower than an Ephesian.

Which makes this very interesting here (this is the reason I bring all this up), because if you notice in verse 1, what does Paul call them? He calls them "saints." "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus." Paul begins his letter by bragging about their standing before God. And we read this and don't think anything about it. We don't really hesitate, but anyone in the first century would have dropped their scroll because you didn't say this about Ephesus. You didn't say this about many ancient cities in the first century. Saints don't come from places like this.

Just a little background on the word, the word "saint" is *hagios* in Greek, which means "holy ones" or "separate ones." It's related to the word "sanctify," which means to "set something apart for God and put it aside for His use." You guys are familiar with the process of sanctification. But the process of sanctification is the idea that the Lord is setting you apart from sin. That's where this word comes from. And Paul says that God did that for the Ephesians. When they were saved, He set them apart. There is a progressive sanctification where you're continually being set apart from sin, and there's also an immediate sanctification where the moment you're saved, your position in God has changed and He has set you apart. That's what this is referring to. They're still tempted to sin, but God has set them apart from that. They battle with sin, they wrestle with it (the letter's going to talk about that) but they have made a break from their former way of life. The Reformers had a phrase for this in Latin that went like this, *simul justus et peccator*, which means "at the same time just and sinner, at that same time sinner and saint." And it means that at the same time we struggle with sin, we battle with it, but God has set us apart from that. There has been a break from our former way of life. This word is used nine times in this letter to remind the Ephesians of this. You're going to see it over and over again because Paul does not want them to forget this. God has made them different. They don't have to become different, they already are different. They don't have to become saints, they already are saints. They just need to live like it now. They need to practice their position in Christ.

We'll say a little more about this in a moment, about the sins of Ephesus and why this is so important. But let me just say here, this is something we all need to hear today, isn't it? This is something we all need to be reminded of. God has made us saints. If you are in Christ, He has made you different. You don't need to become that way, you already are that way. You don't need to become different through your works, you already are different if you've trusted in Him. Now you just need to live it out. The break with your former life has already been made. God has done that. You just need to live like it now. James Montgomery Boyce says this, he says,

Every Christian is a saint and every saint is a Christian. Moreover, every true Christian is in some sense separated from the world. It does not mean that we're taken out of the world (that's not the way God operates), but it does mean that we're removed from it in the sense of not really belonging to it any longer. If we are truly Christ's, then we have a new nature, a new set of loyalties and a new agenda, we belong to a different kingdom now.

And this is important to remember because this is the first blessing in the list. This is where it all begins - by reminding the Ephesians that they're different. They belong to a different kingdom now. They're in a bad city, they're in a place where the inhabitants are fit to be drowned, but they're not really from there now. And you can say it this way, not only do they have a new kingdom, but they have a new set of riches, they have a new set of values. The things that they used to live for, they don't live for anymore. I mean, just think about your own life and every Christian in the room would have to say that your priorities, your values changed the moment you became a Christian, amen? You became a different person.

I remember when I was saved, I used to live for sports. My first two syllable word was "football." And as my dad had me in his lap saying, "Say 'football' son, say 'football' like daddy" - and I ended up playing tennis. It just broke his heart. Those two sports could not be any different. And like every person in my hometown, I lived to get a college scholarship to play sports somewhere. That's what my life was all about. I graduated with 92 students in my senior class. Nine of us had college scholarships to play sports. All I wanted to do was play, play, play, hit the ball against the wall, practice my serve. And when I got saved, all that changed for me. My priorities were different now. Someone asked me years later, they said, "How did you walk with the Lord, honour the Lord and be a good tennis player?" I said, "My tennis game stunk after I got saved." It didn't matter. All I wanted to do was serve the Lord. He changed my values, He changed my riches, He changed my priorities.

God does that for everyone who believes, especially as it relates to sin, especially as it relates to the flesh. You still sin, but it's different now, isn't it? You still battle with flesh, but it's a different battle. Because when you fail, there is conviction. And with that conviction, comes repentance. And with that repentance comes victory. Why? Because God has changed you. The things you used to live for, you don't live for anymore. Some of you would say, "Yeah, there's been victory. I mean, I've seen that, but my sin still bothers me. My flesh still drives me crazy because I'm not perfect." But that proves my point - it drives you crazy because you're a changed person. You're a saint. This is because of Him, it's not because of you. This is His doing, it's not yours. God is the one who can take credit for it. But this is one of the ways that He blesses you, by setting you apart from sin. One commentator said, a Christian is not sinless, but he does sin less and less and less throughout his life. He grows in holiness. They say, the closer you get to the son, the more you see your faults, and the closer you get to Christ, the more you see your sin. But as you do that, you repent more and more and you grow. But it's all because of His grace. It's all because of His mercy.

A missionary was once visiting his home and he came across a friend that he went to high school with. And the friend said to him, he said, "You're doing so well. God is blessing you so much because your family loves you and your wife loves you and you have a good reputation." And the friend said, "I would give up anything for that, I would give up the world to have what you have." And the missionary said, "But that is what I gave up. I had to give up the world for Christ." Friends, that's what a saint does, that's what a Christian does. He gives up the world, he gives up everything he has because God has already set him apart

for that. God has made him different. That's the first blessing in here. It's the first treasure in the list, and they all flow out of this one.

I want to say a quick word about this. The Roman Catholic Church has really abused the word "saint," they've really distorted it. Because they teach there are two types of Christians. There's the saints, and then there's the rest of us. And there are two types of people: the super Christians and then the nobodies. And to get to the super list, for one thing, you've got to die. You can be a saint after you die. And you also have to perform some kind of special miracle. But if you notice in verse 1, these people aren't dead yet. And there's no mentioning of some crazy miracle that they've done. The term is used for every Christian. Writing to Christians in Ephesus, a really rough city, Paul says, "God has made you saints."

Which leads us to the next point we want to look at this morning. It leads us to the next blessing in this list. The first one is that we are saints. God has set us apart. We could put the word "Chilliwack" in here. "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at [Chilliwack]." He would say the same thing to us. God has made us holy through the work of Christ on the cross so that our treasures have changed.

Bringing us to a second blessing in the list (this is the next one that builds off of that), the Lord has made us faithful. Not only has He made us saints or holy ones, but the Lord has made us faithful in that. He's enabled us to stick with it. That's another blessing that we see in the Christian life, is a blessing of perseverance. Not only does God make you saints, but He allows you to stay saints. You guys understand that sin is so powerful and the pull of the world is so strong, if it were not for the grace of God, we would all fall away, amen? But the Lord allows us to stay faithful. And if you read in verse 1, it says, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus."

The word "faithful" here is the Greek word *pistos*, which means "one who believes" or "one who is faithful." It can refer to those who have trusted in Christ or it can refer to those who demonstrate their trust with their lives. And here it probably refers to both. You see both ideas here. The idea is that the Ephesians have trusted in Christ, they have believed in His name, and as a result, they are faithful. These people don't just talk the talk, but they walk the walk. God has given them the ability to do that. From the God-ward side, God has made them saints, He has made them different. And from the man-ward side, the way that shows itself is in their faithfulness. You can't physically see who's a saint. You guys didn't all walk in the room with a big "S" on your chest. (That could mean "Superman," but it could mean "saint.") You didn't do that. But the way you see that in someone's life is faithfulness.

A saint has an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ. They struggle with sin, they fight it. But that's the point - they fight it. And they keep fighting and they keep fighting and they keep fighting. You're going to see at the very end of the Book of Ephesians where to put on the armour of God, right? Why do you put on the armour of God? Because you're supposed to fight. You're supposed to be faithful.

One of the Puritans said, the one virtue you can't fake is perseverance. No matter how hard you try, you can't make a counterfeit of that, because only the Spirit of God can give you faithfulness, eternal life. The thing about eternal life is that it is eternal. It goes on and on and on. Which is something the Ephesians needed to hear. There's a reason why Paul starts off

with this one, because again, they lived in a bad place. They lived in a city where faithfulness would be tested. There'd be a pull to go back to their former way of life.

I said a few words about this earlier, but just a few examples of the things they would've struggled with. We have our struggles in our world, they had their struggles in theirs. But one of the seven wonders of the ancient world was in Ephesus, the great temple of Diana or Artemis, the goddess of hunting. So that everywhere you went in the city, it kind of hovered over you. You sat under its shadow. Ephesus was even called the "temple warden" because of its connection to the temple. The temple and the city were one and the same in the minds of most people. And all kinds of evil things were committed there. We think of temples, we often think of holy places, but pagan temples were anything but that. Sexual sin was rampant in the temple. They had temple prostitutes that would lead in the worship of Diana. Prostitution was one of the ways that the pagans worshiped their gods. Talk about a messed up society. The city also had several bathhouses where evil things were done. It had a massive theater which showed lewd plays. We could go on and on, but the people lived among all that. They lived right in the heart of this city, and so Paul reminds them at the start of this letter to be faithful. If you were writing a letter to Los Angeles or Las Vegas, at the first part of the letter, a Christian letter, you would have to remind the people to be faithful. They were serving God in the middle of hell.

And it's interesting, Paul doesn't say, "You need to be faithful." He could've said that, and he does say that in other ways in the letter. But he starts off by saying, "To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus." In other words, "God has already made you this way too. You're saints because God has made you that way, He has set you apart, and you're faithful because God has made you that way too. You just need to live like it now. You need to practice your position. God has thought of everything, He's given you all the resources you need to stand against sin." Which is also something the church today needs to hear. This is something we need to be reminded of. Just like the church in Ephesus, our churches today need to be reminded that God has made us faithful. Faithfulness is part of our calling, faithfulness is who we are. God has given us everything we need to withstand sin, He's given us everything we need to defeat temptation, we just need to live like it now.

The one thing about a Christian is he'll be a Christian today and he'll be a Christian 20 years from now. He'll persevere. And we need to remember this, because faithful Christians seem to be disappearing today. Faithful churches are disappearing.

I think I was told at one time, Chilliwack was one of the most churchied cities - was it in the world? Is that what I heard? Or in Canada anyway? But drive around Chilliwack today and what do you see? You see churches closing their doors, right? Church after church, after church. Or drive around town, and talk to your average person and you'll see Christian after Christian, after Christian professing Christian, living just like the world as if they've never changed. You can't tell the difference between them and the lost oftentimes. You wouldn't know they're a Christian unless they actually said it. Because they've forgotten this. They've forgotten that they need to be faithful.

And you see this in so many areas. You can see this in the area of sin, you see this in the area of temptation. You also see this in the area of doctrine. You see it in the way a lot of people look at the Bible itself.

The Gospel Coalition recently put out an article on this called “Ten Things You Should Know about Religion in Canada.” It was published in 2018. And they said that 100% of the churches that they polled that are dying in Canada said they disagreed with the statement that the Bible is the actual Word of God. 100% of the churches that were dying disagreed that the Bible is God's Word. Now what’s the connection? The connection is they're not faithful anymore, and God is not honouring that. They're abandoning the faith and God is abandoning the blessing. He’s shutting them down. The Gospel Coalition also found that the ones that were growing, of the churches that were doing well, at least the ones they were polled, just about 100% of them agreed with that statement - that the Bible is the Word of God.

But the point is that God blesses our faithfulness. There's a direct connection in the Bible between faithfulness and blessing, between perseverance and experiencing the kindness of God. Jesus told the church in Revelation that, “If you're not faithful, I will take away your lampstand.” That's another way of saying, “I will snuff you out.” “But if you are faithful,” He said, “I will grant to eat of the tree of life.”

And to say this another way, not only should we be faithful to God because that is our calling, that's who we are - we are faithful, we should also be faithful because God has been faithful to us, amen? God is the picture of faithfulness. I talk with people often who say, “I can't get victory over my sin. I try and I try and I try and I pray and I pray and I pray, and I can't do it. I just can't defeat the flesh. What do I do?” Well, the answer is always the same - you cry out to God because He is faithful. He will never let you down. He has given you the resources to defeat it. You just need to take them down off the wall and use them.

In the story Pilgrim's Progress, the main character, a Christian, he gets stuck in a dungeon called “doubting castle” with a giant called “despair.” Some of you remember that story. You've read Pilgrim's Progress before. And he spends all night in doubting castle just doubting and worrying and fretting about how he's going to get out. And when the morning comes, he realizes something, he starts laughing because he says this, he says, “What a fool I am to stay here in a dungeon when I could just as easily walk away, because in my coat next to my heart, I have a key called ‘promise’ which will unlock any lock in doubting castle.” Ain’t that good? Some of you need to remember that today. Some of you need to hear that. God has given you a key called “promise.” God has given you an answer to all of your struggles. You just need to open up your Bible and see what it is. You need to take it down off the wall, take it out of your heart and use it. God has made you faithful. Just live it out and remember that He is faithful to you.

Which leads to one more point we're going to consider this morning, one more blessing in our list. The first one is that God has made you saints. Paul says that God has blessed the Ephesians by making them holy or set apart from sin. They just need to live like that now. The second blessing is God has made them faithful. Not only has He made them saints, but the Lord has made them faithful in this. He's given them the ability to persevere in the faith and withstand the challenges of the enemy. Bringing us to one more point to consider, one more blessing in our list, and that is this - they are in Christ. God has made us saints, He has made us faithful because ultimately, He has put us in Christ.

I'm going to explain that here in a minute, but that's a locative term, which means it's a term of location. God has taken them from the world and put them in Jesus Christ. And if you read in verse 1, it says, “Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus.” Just a few thoughts on this, but some have said



that this may be the key phrase of the book. It may be the most important thing we're going to read in here because it's repeated the most. This phrase "in Christ" is seen 19 times in this letter. So over and over and over again Paul reminds the Ephesians that they are in Christ. It's like he couldn't say it enough. Their location has changed. They have gone from one sphere of existence to another. As James Montgomery Boyce said, they belong to a different kingdom now.

I'm going to show you this a little bit in the book here in a moment. But just to give you a practical illustration of this, many of you have come to Canada from another country. Either you moved here or your parents or grandparents moved here from another place, and there came a day when you left South Africa or the Netherlands. There came a day when you left Haiti or the United States and you came here. And when you did that, your location changed. You left one sphere of existence and came into another with a whole new set of rules, laws, and blessings. Most of you came here like I did because there were opportunities here that were not in your home country.

I remember when I first came to Canada, moved here, I was in the Vancouver Airport. (I am one with the Vancouver Airport. I know that place like the back of my hand. I've been there so many times.) And I was sitting next to...when I first came in, going through customs - you guys know what this is like. You get off the plane and you sit in the line and you just stare at the border guard for like hours, right? And then you finally move one seat down after 45 minutes...But I was sitting next to a man from Italy. And it was an interesting conversation because he said, "Why are you coming to Canada? You come from the land of opportunity." So he said, "United States - land of opportunity." I said, "Yes, but my opportunity is on this side of the border. The church is calling me here." But many of you understand what that means. You came here because there were blessings in this country you didn't have in your home country; change of location, change of blessings. Paul says, it's the same way when you become a Christian. You come in Christ, and as you do, you get blessings in Christ that you never got in the world. The world couldn't help you defeat sin, right? I mean, me come on, how's the world going to do that? The world couldn't give you peace and hope and joy, not like this. The world couldn't give you the family of God. All of these things come from you changing countries, so to speak, crossing the border. I got to tell you guys this story too. I come from Tennessee where barbecue means barbecue and baked beans and coleslaw and all this kind of stuff. Well, my son's school had a barbecue the other day. We got a hot dog and a cup of cold water. I'm still getting used to the country. And so we were leaving and all these people were standing in line in the rain and I wanted to say, "It's a lie, don't stand in the rain. Don't do it." But maybe they knew what to expect, I don't know. But you guys understand the change of location, right? We're in Christ now. Locations change.

And if you want to see a few examples of this in the book, if you look in chapter 1:3, here's a couple of ways Paul uses this to show you what he's talking about. Verse 3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing (there's the phrase there) in Christ." We'll see this next week, but what this means is that Jesus is in heaven. He is seated in the heavenlies. And since you are in Him, you are there too. Since you are in Christ, God treats you as if you're already in heaven. Your salvation is that secure, your eternal life is that sure. He treats you spiritually as if you're already sitting there with His Son.

Then in chapter 2:13, this is another way this word is used. Chapter 2:13, it says, "But now in Christ Jesus (there's that phrase again) you who formerly were far off have been brought near

by the blood of Christ.” Now, Paul says that, “You were once far off. You were aliens and foreigners from God. You were strangers to the promise, but God has brought you near through the blood of Christ.”

Some of us say this, we all say this at times: “I don't feel near to God.” Let me tell you something, if you're a Christian, your feelings are wrong because you are near to God, because Christ is near to God and you are in Him. You couldn't get any closer to God if you tried, not in a positional sense. Because you're in Christ. Nothing is closer to the Father than the Son, and you're in Him.

Ephesians 4:32 also tells us this phrase (just one more example of this). “Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” Now he says, “God has forgiven you in Christ. He has pardoned all your sins because you're in Him, so you should do the same for others. You should treat them the way God has treated you.”

And all this is to say, that these are all introductory blessings to the Book of Ephesians. This is what this book is going to be about. It tells you over and over and over again what it means to be a saint, and what it means to be faithful, and what it means to be in Christ. It tells you how to practice your position, how to live out your salvation. It tells you how to take the treasure down off the wall and use it. The rest of this book, Paul is going to unravel what these first few verses is about.

But it leads me to ask you this question this morning, do you get all this today? Are you doing this? Are you taking your treasures down off the wall and using them? Do you feel like you're living out your salvation? Are you making withdrawals from the believer's bank? Are you taking advantage of the Christian's chequebook or are you leaving those things in there to rot? Are you remembering God has given you all that you need? Going back to these blessings, do you understand that you already are a saint? You don't have to become one. If you're in Christ, you already are one. Do you understand that you are faithful? God has made you all of these things in Him. So are you putting this to practice? Are you living this out?

If you are, I want to encourage you to excel still more. We're going to learn more about what that means in this book. I told you last time, you have not gotten enough of his blessings. You haven't enjoyed these enough. There are more blessings for you to have. If you're not, I would encourage you not to be discouraged, because we're going to talk about that in this series. We're going to talk about what it means to experience the blessing of God in this way. We could all use a few more blessings, amen? We could all use some more good news, and this book is full of it.

I mentioned H. A. Ironside to you earlier, but in one of his books on this, Ironside tells a story of a man in Montana who drew attention to himself when a wealthy relative died, leaving him a fortune - left him millions of dollars. But the problem was the authorities couldn't find him. He was so far out in the woods in Montana. He was so far off the grid that nobody knew where he was. But the interesting thing is that when they did find him, the man did not say, “I like the way I'm living with no running water and no electricity and no healthcare. You can keep your money. I like being poor.” He didn't say that. He jumped at the chance to enjoy his wealth. And the point of the Book of Ephesians is that you should do the same thing today. Paul says, you should jump at the chance for all of these things. The wealth is there for you to

enjoy. God has provided it for you, and let's pray that the Lord will help us take this book to heart in the weeks ahead.

Father, we thank you, Lord, for the treasures in this book, and I thank you for all that You've revealed in Your Word that we've talked about this morning. And Lord, I pray for our congregation today. I don't know where everyone's at, but I'm sure some are struggling with some of the things we're talking about. They may feel far from God, they may feel like they're not able to defeat their sin, but Lord, I pray this book would be an encouragement to them. I pray it would be a breath of fresh air. That they would see what all You have done, what all Christ has done, and they would be thrilled to experience this. For those who are in Christ this morning, I pray they would walk out of here with hearts full of the love of God, and the riches and treasures that we have in Him.

And Lord, for those who have not trusted in Christ, I pray this would be a sobering reminder of what they're missing. I pray they would come running to the Saviour so that He would save them.

Lord, thank you for making us saints. Thank you for making us faithful and putting us in Christ. And You did not have to do this for us. You did not have to do anything for us, and yet in Your mercy, You have provided salvation full and free. Would we go out and enjoy that today. We pray in Christ's name and for His glory, amen.