

Our Spiritual Abundance

Scripture Reading: **Ephesians 1:2-4**

“GRACE **be** TO YOU, AND PEACE, FROM GOD OUR FATHER, AND **from** THE LORD JESUS 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: 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.”

Introduction - Our Focus?

When someone asks us about our blessings or talks about their blessings; what do we think about or we talk about most often? Do we talk about our material possessions, our jobs and livelihood, our husbands or wives, our children and/or grandchildren, our health or something related to our lives in this world? That God does and has blessed us greatly, there is no doubt.

We find in the beginning that God set the forces of nature in place that will provide for mankind until the end of time. Because the scripture tells us:

“WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH, SEEDTIME AND HARVEST, AND COLD AND HEAT, AND SUMMER AND WINTER, AND DAY AND NIGHT SHALL NOT CEASE.” **Genesis 8:22**

God made this promise to the people that he chose and set aside to carry out his plan for the redemption for mankind:

“IF YE WALK IN MY STATUTES, AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS, AND DO THEM; THEN I WILL GIVE YOU RAIN IN DUE SEASON, AND THE LAND SHALL YIELD HER INCREASE, AND THE TREES OF THE FIELD SHALL YIELD THEIR FRUIT. AND YOUR THRESHING SHALL REACH UNTO THE VINTAGE, AND THE VINTAGE SHALL REACH UNTO THE SOWING TIME: AND YE SHALL EAT YOUR BREAD TO THE FULL, AND DWELL IN YOUR LAND SAFELY.” **Leviticus 26:3-5**

God still cares for and provides for his people. While we may not have everything that we want, though sometimes we may have to scratch and scrimp to make ends meet our true needs are fulfilled. King David wrote by the inspiration of God many years ago in:

Psalms 37:25 “I HAVE BEEN YOUNG AND **now** AM OLD; YET HAVE I NOT SEEN THE RIGHTEOUS FORSAKEN, NOR HIS SEED BEGGING BREAD.”

Our Spiritual Abundance

After the Apostle Paul thanked the church at Philippi for the "GIFT", the support that he received from them wrote:

"BUT MY GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEED ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY BY CHRIST JESUS." Philippians 4:19

But the blessings that I want us to think about this evening. The blessings I want us to meditate upon and thank our generous God for every day of our lives; are those that are far more valuable than those required to sustain and bring comfort to our physical lives. I want us to consider the tremendous spiritual abundance that our God has given us and continues to give us every day. I want us to consider the blessing of His grace, the blessing of spiritual life, the joy that it brings and will bring in heaven, the power with which he shelters us from the storms of life and finally the rich promises of eternal blessings that he will give us for eternity as his faithful children.

Our Spiritual Abundance

Abundant Grace and Mercy

When we turn to a current Merriam-Webster dictionary we can still find these definitions of the word grace:

- 9.a "the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God"
- 9.c "a virtue or excellence of divine origin"
- 9.d "the condition of being in God's favor or one of the elect"

First of all God's grace and mercy was freely given. We can find no greater example than that described by the Apostle John:

"FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE." John 3:16

Men will never understand the power of that little two letter word, "SO". I think of that little tow-headed, blue-eyed boy that we brought into this world. I contemplate what it would have meant if we had had to know that he would die the most heinous death that man could devise for those who were his enemies. Then that gives me a little bit of a glimpse into the depths of the love of God. But it is still fully beyond my ability to understand that God "SO LOVED" you and I that he allowed his only Son to die this horrendous death to redeem our souls. The Apostle Paul tells us:

Our Spiritual Abundance

Romans 5:7-8 “FOR SCARCELY FOR A RIGHTEOUS MAN WILL ONE DIE: YET PERADVENTURE FOR A GOOD MAN SOME WOULD EVEN DARE TO DIE. BUT GOD COMMENDETH HIS LOVE TOWARD US, IN THAT, WHILE WE WERE YET SINNERS, CHRIST DIED FOR US.”

God loved us when “WE WERE YET SINNERS”, we were His enemies, we were vile; we were in a condition that He could not even look upon us. As the prophet writes God cannot even look upon evil:

Habakkuk 1:13 “*Thou art* OF PURER EYES THAN TO BEHOLD EVIL, AND CANST NOT LOOK ON INIQUITY...”

Yet while we were this condition; God allowed his “ONLY BEGOTTEN SON” to die in our stead.

Secondly it is through the grace of God that we are empowered to do His will, to serve in His kingdom. The Apostle Paul wrote:

I Corinthians 15:10 “BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM: AND HIS GRACE WHICH **was bestowed** UPON ME WAS NOT IN VAIN; BUT I LABORED MORE ABUNDANTLY THAN THEY ALL: YET NOT I, BUT THE GRACE OF GOD WHICH WAS WITH ME.”

Why was the abundance of the spiritual blessing of the grace of God so important to the Apostle Paul? Because he knew where he came from, he knew what he had been. He remembered those things he had done, the days that he fought against God. And I’m sure that he remembered them with tremendous pain. He describes those days to the young preacher Timothy in these words:

I Timothy 1:12-14 “AND I THANK CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD, WHO HATH ENABLED ME, FOR THAT HE COUNTED ME FAITHFUL, PUTTING ME INTO THE MINISTRY; WHO WAS BEFORE A BLASPHEMER, AND A PERSECUTOR, AND INJURIOUS: BUT I OBTAINED MERCY, BECAUSE I DID *it* IGNORANTLY IN UNBELIEF. AND THE GRACE OF OUR LORD WAS EXCEEDING ABUNDANT WITH FAITH AND LOVE WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.”

It was through God’s grace that he was chosen, allowed to repent and become the Apostle Paul, prolific in his teaching, God’s apostle to the Gentiles (**Romans 11:13**).

Thirdly the grace of God allows us to lead the simple life. Paul again tells us one of the reasons that he rejoiced:

Our Spiritual Abundance

II Corinthians 1:12 “FOR OUR REJOICING IS THIS, THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE, THAT IN SIMPLICITY [holiness] AND GODLY SINCERITY [sincerity of God], NOT WITH FLESHLY WISDOM, BUT THEY THE GRACE OF GOD, WE HAVE HAD OUR CONVERSATION [manner of living] IN THE WORLD, AND MORE ABUNDANTLY TO YOUWARD.”

Paul in his preaching and teaching lived a simple life of “HOLINESS” (ASV). Though he was probably the best educated of the apostles yet he declared to these same brethren at Corinth:

I Corinthians 2:1-2 “AND I, BRETHERN, WHEN I CAME TO YOU, CAME NOT WITH EXCELLENCY OF SPEECH OR OF WISDOM, DECLARING UNTO YOU THE TESTIMONY OF GOD. FOR I DETERMINED NOT TO KNOW ANY THING AMONG YOU, SAVE JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED.”

All preachers who pursue education with the view of becoming somebody, of elevating themselves in the world of academia need to take note and repent. All of us should thank God daily for his grace and mercy.

Life

When God created mankind and put him on the face of this earth. He breathed life into a pile of dust from the ground.

Genesis 2:7 “AND THE LORD GOD FORMED MAN *of* THE DUST OF THE GROUND, AND BREATHED INTO HIS NOSTRILS THE BREATH OF LIFE; AND MAN BECAME A LIVING SOUL.”

God gave us a “LIVING SOUL”! God gave us a spirit; that one attribute that separates us from the rest of God’s creation. All of the other creatures on the earth live, but only man has a spirit, only man has a soul. A truth that made the friend of Job named Elihu declare:

Job 32:8 “BUT *there is* A SPIRIT IN MAN: AND THE INSPIRATION OF THE ALMIGHTY GIVETH THEM UNDERSTANDING.”

And when we die that spirit does what? The Holy Spirit records for us through the wise man Solomon:

Ecclesiastes 12:7 “THEN SHALL THE DUST RETURN TO THE EARTH AS IT WAS: AND THE SPIRIT SHALL RETURN TO GOD WHO GAVE IT.”

Our Spiritual Abundance

And someone might say when our spirit leaves this body it returns to God's care and keeping but that's not necessarily so. The spirit can die too. Death of the spirit is defined by scripture as separation from God. When Jesus Christ, the Son of God returns to this earth:

"IN FLAMING FIRE TAKING VENGEANCE ON THEM THAT KNOW NOT GOD, AND THAT OBEY NOT THE GOSPEL OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: WHO SHALL BE PUNISHED WITH EVERLASTING DESTRUCTION FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, AND FROM THE GLORY OF HIS POWER;"

II Thessalonians 1:8-9

The Apostle is talking about our spirits, our souls, that part of man that does not die, but lives for eternity. So what is it that separates it from God? Sin! What is sin? John writes in **I John 5:17** that "ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS IS SIN" and the Apostle Paul tells us that we "ALL SIN" **Romans 3:23**

But God has given us the abundant blessing of life; life for our spirits, life for our souls that will endure in the world that is to come.

John 3:14-16 "AND AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS, EVEN SO MUST THE SON OF MAN BE LIFTED UP: THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE. FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, THAT WHOSOEVER BELIEVETH IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE EVERLASTING LIFE."

Again we see the blessing of life in the words of Jesus given in answer to the concerns of Martha, sister of Lazarus:

John 11:25-26 "...I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE: AND WHOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE..."

And oh what a life that will be! It will be in that place prepared by our savior:

John 14:2-3 "IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS: IF *it were* NOT SO, I WOULD HAVE TOLD YOU. I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU. AND IF I GO AND PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU, I WILL COME AGAIN, AND RECEIVE YOU UNTO MYSELF; THAT WHERE I AM, *there* YE MAY BE ALSO."

Our Spiritual Abundance

The Apostle Paul had carried out the mission that God gave him, so he looked forward to and even yearned to reach that wonderful place where he would be with God. He writes to Timothy:

II Timothy 4:8 "HENCEFORH IS LAID UP FOR ME A CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD, THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE, SHALL GIVE ME IN THAT DAY: AND NOT TO ME ONLY, BUT UNTO ALL THEM ALSO THAT LOVE HIS APPEARANCE."

And the same Apostle John who recorded the promise of Jesus to provide that place with many mansions was allowed to get a glimpse of that wonderful place that is called heaven, that wonderful place and the life that we will have for eternity:

Revelation 21:4 "AND GOD SHALL WIPE AWAY ALL TEARS FROM THEIR EYES; AND THERE SHALL BE NO MORE DEATH, NEITHER SORROW, NOR THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY."

For this blessing we should be eternally thankful!

Joy

Can you imagine the joy that we will have when we are in that wonderful place? And that is the third of our spiritual blessings that I want us to consider. We have a measure of that joy with us today. Joy in the fact of our salvation! Even the prophets spoke of it:

Isaiah 61:10 "I WILL GREATLY REJOICE IN THE LORD, MY SOUL SHALL BE JOYFUL IN MY GOD; FOR HE HATH CLOTHED ME WITH THE GARMENTS OF SALVATION, HE HATH COVERED ME WITH THE ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, AS A BRIDGEGROOM DECKETH *himself* WITH ORNAMENTS, AND AS A BRIDE ADORNETH *herself* WITH HER JEWELS."

Under the Mosaic Covenant there was no salvation, there was no redemption, but in the death of our Redeemer, all who are faithful are provided the means for salvation. For those of old under the Law of God that prevailed at the time they lived, for us through the Law of Christ. It is no wonder then that Luke records for us the reaction of the Samaritan people when they received the "GOOD NEWS", the "GOSPEL" They "GAVE HEED" to the things that Philip spake (**Acts 8:6**), there was "GREAT JOY" in the city of Samaria (**Acts 8:8**), they believed "THEY WERE BAPTIZED BOTH MEN AND WOMEN" (**Acts 8:12**).

Our Spiritual Abundance

The Ethiopian treasurer was baptized and “WENT ON HIS WAY REJOICING” (**Acts 8:39**). The Philippian Jailor at his baptism “REJOICED, BELIEVING IN GOD WITH ALL HIS HOUSE.” (**Acts 16:34**) And we could go on.

David recorded much in his psalms about joy because he was a man of God. David speaking of the blessing of forgiveness of sins:

Psalms 32:11 “BE GLAD IN THE LORD, AND REJOICE, YE RIGHTEOUS; AND SHOUT FOR JOY, ALL *ye that are* UPRIGHT IN HEART.”

David speaking of the blessing of being delivered from our enemies, the greatest of whom is Satan:

Psalms 68:3 “BUT LET THE RIGHTEOUS BE GLAD; LET THEM REJOICE BEFORE GOD; YEA, LET THEM EXCEEDINGLY REJOICE.”

And the greatest joy of all. The joy that is brought to us because we are God’s children, because we are God’s “ROYAL PRIESTHOOD” (**I Peter 2:9**), because of our faith in God, His mercy and the appearing of his Son:

I Peter 1:8-9 “WHOM HAVING NOT SEEN, YE LOVE; IN WHOM, THOUGH NOW YE SEE *him* NOT, YET BELIEVING, YE REJOICE WITH JOY UNSPEAKABLE AND FULL OF GLORY: RECEIVING THE END OF YOUR FAITH, *even* THE SALVATION OF YOUR SOULS.”

We do indeed have “UNSPEAKABLE JOY” in the Lord.

Power

That the God of heaven is all powerful is something that we understand and accept. We need but read the first few verses of scripture to see that when “GOD SAID” the universe and all of its attributes came in to existence.

“AND GOD SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT” **Genesis 1:3**

This power is manifested all the way down through the creation, including the point where “AND GOD SAID, LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE, AFTER OUR LIKENESS:...” (**Genesis 1:26**).

That power is a tremendous blessing to us. The Apostle Paul tells the church at Corinth:

Our Spiritual Abundance

II Corinthians 13:4 “FOR THOUGH HE WAS CRUCIFIED THROUGH WEAKNESS, YET HE LIVETH BY THE POWER OF GOD. FOR WE ALSO ARE WEAK IN HIM, BUT WE SHALL LIVE WITH HIM BY THE POWER OF GOD.”

David in repentance of his sin, and from the depth of his sorrow: prayed to God with these words:

Psalm 51:12 “RESTORE UNTO ME THE JOY OF THY SALVATION; AND UPHOLD ME *with thy* FREE SPIRIT.”

And indeed God has the power to restore unto us salvation, remove sin from our souls and uphold us through the strength of his Spirit: In another place Paul also writes:

Romans 8:38-39 “FOR I AM PRESUADED THAT NEITHER DEATH, NOR LIFE, NOR ANGELS, NOR PRINCIPALITIES, NOR POWERS, NOR THINGS PRESENT, NOR THINGS TO COME, NOR HEIGHT, NOR DEPTH, NOR ANY OTHER CREATURE, SHALL BE ABLE TO SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS OUR LORD.”

That power is found in his Word, for it is his Word that is “THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION”, **Romans 1:16**. It is through that power that we are given:

“...ALL THINGS THAT *pertain* UNTO LIFE AND GODLINESS, THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM THAT HATH CALLED US TO GLORY AND VIRTURE:”

II Peter 1:3

As his children we rejoice in the knowledge of the power of God.

Eternal Blessings

The abundance of these spiritual blessings that we enjoy are eternal. They will exist beyond time, they are without end, never to be taken away from those who are and remain his faithful children. The Son of God made this declaration:

Luke 18:29-30 “...VERILY, I SAY UNTO YOU, THERE IS NO MAN THAT HATH LEFT HOUSE, OR PARENTS, OR BRETHREN, OR WIFE, OR CHILDREN, FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD’S SAKE, WHO SHALL NOT RECEIVE MANIFOLD MORE IN THIS PRESENT TIME, AND IN THE WORLD TO COME EVERLASTING LIFE.”

As Jesus taught the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well:

Our Spiritual Abundance

John 4:14 “BUT WHOSOEVER, DRINKETH OF THE WATER THAT I SHALL GIVE HIM SHALL NEVER THIRST; BUT THE WATER THAT I GIVE HIM SHALL BE IN HIM A WELL OF WATER SPRINGING UP INTO EVERLASTING LIFE.”

And as he taught the Jews in the court of the temple:

John 5:24 “VERILY, VERILY I SAY UNTO YOU, HE THAT HEARETH MY WORD, AND BELIEVETH ON HIM THAT SENT, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE, AND SHALL NOT COME INTO CONDEMNATION; BUT IS PASSED FROM DEATH UNTO LIFE.”

And to the Jews again on Solomon’s porch:

John 10:27-29 “MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE, AND I KNOW THEM, AND THEY FOLLOW ME: AND I GIVE UNTO THEM ETERNAL LIFE; AND THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH, NEITHER SHALL ANY *man* PLUCK THEM OUT OF MY HAND. MY FATHER, WHICH GAVE *them* ME, IS GREATER THAN ALL; AND NO *man* IS ABLE TO PLUCK *them* OUT OF MY FATHER’S HAND.”

Invitation

But these blessings can be ours only if we are “IN CHRIST”. Observe again, if you will, Paul’s greeting to the church at Ephesus:

Ephesians 1:3-4 “BLESSED be THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO HATH BLESSED US WITH ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN HEAVENLY *places* IN CHRIST: 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.”

We must be “IN CHRIST”, “HOLY”, and “WITHOUT BLAME” and there is only one way, one avenue that puts us “IN CHRIST”.

Galatians 1:26-27 “FOR YE ARE ALL THE CHILDREN OF GOD BY FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS. FOR AS MANY OF YOU AS HAVE BEEN BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST HAVE PUT ON CHRIST.”

That baptism must be preceded with belief, repentance and confession that we believe that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God. For those that are already “IN CHRIST” there is also only one way for us to remain “HOLY” and “WITHOUT BLAME”. When we commit sin, we must repent and pray God just as Simon was told by Peter in Samaria:

Our Spiritual Abundance

Acts 8:22 “REPENT THEREFORE OF THIS THY WICKEDNESS, AND PRAY GOD, IF PERHAPS THE THOUGHT OF THINE HEART MAY BE FORGIVEN THEE.”

This means of seeking repentance is confirmed further by the Holy Spirit through the record written by James in **James 5:15-16**