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Ephesians 1

Scripture: Ephesians 1

Summary: Pastor Doug expounds on Ephesians chapter 1, emphasizing five spiritual blessings believers receive from Christ, and the importance of praying for other believers.

Turn with me to Ephesians 1. The next six weeks we are going to be in the book of Ephesians. There are six chapters, and we're going to take a chapter a week. I got chapter 1, and as I was reading chapter 1, I discovered that we could probably do six weeks in chapter 1, so I'm going to turn on my northern voice. I was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and my northern voice goes about this speed and so you that are southern will just have to get it online and turn it down a little bit so you can understand me, because I'm going to fly through the chapter today and talk to you about some things that God spoke to me through this week as I prepared this message.

Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul. He was under house arrest in Rome at this time, waiting to come before Caesar. Paul had planted this church; he had established this church during his second missionary journey; however, on his third missionary journey—don't you kind of think of journeys as like we're going to take a week or two-week journey? Well on his third missionary journey, he spent three years with this church. Now either he liked them a lot or they had a lot of problems.

Now from reading chapter 1—you're going to like chapter 1—I think he stayed there because he really liked these folks. He says a lot of really nice things about these folks, these believers, and I hope that this is a message that really encourages Thomas Road Church today and all of you who are listening to us from wherever you might be today. Let me just give you the focal points of the chapter, and then we're going to divide into two sections. But the focal points are this, so you can kind of track with me: God planned for the redemption of the Church. Christ purchased the redemption of the Church. The Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, preserved the redemption of the Church, and Paul prays for those that are redeemed.

I'm going to divide this chapter into two sections this morning. Verses 3 to 14 is one long sentence. Paul just got carried away, and verses 3 to 14 are one humongous section and we'll land on that, then finish with verses 15 to 20, which is the prayer that Paul prays. So our first point, verses 3 through 14, is that we are going to give praise today for all the of the spiritual blessings we have received, and I'm going to slow down enough to point out five of them that I've pulled out. I had a list of ten or twelve and I knew I couldn't do that in twenty or thirty minutes, so I've brought it down to the five that spoke so much to me. Let's read verses 3 to 14 together from the New King James version,

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Interesting statement—and I'm not going to preach this part, that's why I throw it out now, because it's not in my outline and the only way I can do it is to act like it's part of the reading—but did you notice that he said, "According to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace"? We are to be to the praise of His glory. Hang onto that thought because it comes up over and over again.

Verse 7,

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

There is that phrase again, that as believers we are to be to the praise of His glory. That is, our lives should reflect the glory of God in our daily walk. Interesting thought, isn't it?

Verse 13,

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

Three times in these verses he talks about the praise of His glory, and if you miss everything else, hang on to that. As believers, we should be reflecting the glory of God as we give praise back to Him.

Five praises that I'm going to point us to this morning. One, verses 3 to 7 I want you to notice that He has chosen us to be among the redeemed. Now listen to what I just said. He has chosen us to be among the redeemed. Isn't that a great thought? You that are believers were chosen before the foundation of the world to be among the redeemed. Look at the words here in verses 3 through 7. It says, verse 4, He chose us; verse 5, He predestined us; verse 5, He adopted us, which resulted in verse 7, He redeemed us. We were chosen predestined, adopted to be what? Redeemed.

Here is what that means, very simply: Romans 8:29 says, "To whom He foreknew, He predestined to be conformed to His image." You see, God is omniscient; nothing surprises God, so when you received Jesus Christ into your life, God wasn't like, "Can you believe it?" No. He knew. He had to know from the foundation of the earth that you would choose to invite Him into your life.

Now for anybody who is a little bit confused and says, "Who has He chosen?" according to Paul in the book of Romans, anyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Do you understand that? Anybody who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How do I know I'm one of the chosen? In 1954, as a 10-year-old boy going to a Nazarene youth camp, I stood up at a campfire and invited Jesus Christ into my heart. I called upon the name of the Lord and I am one of the chosen ones to be among the redeemed, as are most of you here today. That's worth rejoicing over, isn't it folks? That's pretty good. We could land this message now and we'd have some good stuff to chew on today, wouldn't we? We really would. I really enjoy knowing that He was aware before I ever came along that I would choose Him to be my Savior.

Secondly, I love this thought, not only are we redeemed, but part of that redemption is that we were forgiven of our sins. We are a forgiven people. If you know the model prayer, it says, "Lord, forgive us our trespasses." The assumption is that all of us, from the best to the worst, have trespassed against God Almighty. All of us. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are trespassers, my friend, and as trespassers, God says when He redeemed us He forgave us; He wiped us clean. He forgave us of our trespasses, and we can be even forgiven today.

First John 1:9 says if we confess our sins, He forgives us of all. We are forgiven. Here is the practical application for you today: To the measure with which you have been forgiven, you should and shall forgive others. This is where we get hung up. Do you know what forgiven people do? Forgiven people forgive. Did you know that? Forgiven people forgive. If you follow along in the model prayer, it says, "Forgive us our trespasses," and "if you do not forgive you shall not be forgiven." Wow.

Now look guys, I've lived quite a few years and I will tell you I have been in ministry pretty much my entire life and I cannot tell you how many fellow believers I have met over the years that refuse to forgive others. "Oh, I can't forgive him. If you only knew what he did. I can't forgive her. What she said? No way. I can't forgive that offense. If you only knew the offense they did, there is no worse offense. I can't forgive that." You have been forgiven. We give forgiveness to others.

Let me tell you about giving forgiveness. This doesn't mean we approve what they did, nor does forgiving others mean that we need to be best buddies with whoever it is. Forgiveness frees us and it puts it all between that person and God. The person that was the offender may never ask God for forgiveness; that's not my issue, that's their issue with God. My issue with God is do I give forgiveness, because when I give forgiveness I free my soul from hanging onto an offense and I open my heart up totally free to reap the spiritual blessings that God wants to pour out according to Ephesians chapter 1. Some of you need to go today and forgive someone that

you've been holding something against for maybe days or weeks or years. It's time for you to give it up and give it to God.

Third, not only were we chosen, forgiven, but we were forgiven according to the riches of His grace. The riches of His grace. Whoop-de-doo. Now let's all go home. If we don't stop on this one for a while and understand what the riches of His grace is about, shame on us. We were forgiven by the riches of His grace, but I can tell you what: We receive daily benefits from the riches of God's grace.

How much grace do you think God has? Let's just presume that everybody in this room today is a believer, so to be a believer you received God's grace, so did God pretty much run out of grace by giving grace to all these individuals? Of course not. This is the neat thing about God's grace. It is inexhaustible, so when He gives grace to you, and He gives grace to you, and He gives grace to you, He didn't lose any grace. He is still loaded. His bucket is full. That's how rich His grace is, beyond your comprehension.

Did you know that grace represents everything that God does for you and everything that God does in you that you don't deserve as a result of God's grace? Did you hear that? Everything that happens for you or He does in you is a result of God's grace, that which we do not deserve. Everything I have, I don't deserve any of it. Some of you here can relate. Is there someone here that by all medical rationale you shouldn't be here today, you should be gone from the face of the earth, and yet God in His grace came back and said, "Not now. Hang in there, my friend"? We pray for people like that, don't we, and the grace of God comes upon them and they are restored to health and they can't fully explain it.

We've been in recession in our country what seems like a half a lifetime now, doesn't it? Is it ever going to end? But some of you, on paper there is no reason you can be here and still surviving, except by the grace of God. Somehow you keep going back to the cupboard and the jar still has some food in it, still has some oil in it. There is still some milk there and you're like, "How is this happening?" God's grace.

Some of you have a mate—purely God's grace. I mean you are miserable, you're mean, you're ugly, you're not kind, and she walks up to you and says, "Oh sweetheart, you are the greatest man in the world." "What have you been drinking?" God's grace. Is this not true? Forty-seven years a lady has walked alongside me and I still wonder why. She loves me just as I am. She came by the back room this morning and knocked on the door and looked inside and said, "You want me to sit beside you this morning?" She was here at the earlier service. And in typical fashion I said, "Nah," and then it hit me. I ran out of that room and said, "I would love for you to sit beside me." Why? Because I wanted to experience some more of that grace that God gave me.

Folks, I pinch myself daily to think that I have the awesome privilege of being on the ministry staff of Thomas Road Baptist Church. If you only knew me, how ordinary I am and what I don't bring to the game. Please don't tell the deacons! I get to do this, be part of this team. It's God's grace. Have you not received the riches of God's grace? Hello! You have, haven't you? Time and time and time again. Before this day is over, you will experience the grace of God. I said grace is the result of redemption that is demonstrated to us through God's blessings. It is the

result of redemption, but it is demonstrated through the blessings that God gives us. See a blessing, see grace.

I'm a baseball fanatic, have been my entire life. In 1965 the Los Angeles Dodgers won the World Series, and in the final, deciding game a fellow on their team that most of you don't know—his name was Lou Johnson—hit the deciding hit that clinched the title for the Los Angeles Dodgers, so he got the World Series ring. He's famous. He has the uniform, the bat and the ball that made all the difference in the world. Six years later, in 1971, he became a victim of drugs and alcohol and he lost his World Series ring to a drug dealer, and as he tried to turn his life around, not making it very well for thirty years, he searched for that ring, thinking, "What was wrong with me?"

Thirty years later, the president of the Los Angeles Dodgers saw Lou Johnson's ring being advertised on the Internet for an auction and he called the auction house and said, "Don't you put it up for auction. I will pay you whatever you want for that ring." And he paid several thousands of dollars to buy that ring back and he took it to a Lou Johnson whose life had been broken and battered and did not deserve that ring, and he gave him that ring as a sign of earthly grace.

How many times has God, over and over and over, bought back blessing for us and give it to us as His undeserving people? But today I'm saying, "God, we sit here and collectively say 'Thank you'." Am I not right?

Fourth, it says here in verse 8, "And He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudent speech." He gave us wisdom and prudence, or the word for us today would be *understanding*. He gave us wisdom and understanding. You're like, "That sounds pretty good. Oh no, it's better than pretty good, because through wisdom and understanding we are enabled to make right decisions. How many of you know all about making lousy decisions? Yeah, we all know that. But can't you point to times when you look back and you know that you know that you know that you made a right decision? You see God's wisdom and understanding allows you to make right decisions. It is that wisdom and understanding that help you to understand what is really important in life. It helps you to understand your priorities, to not get them out of focus, and to help you to understand God's values. It is where we draw the line in the sand and we know "Thus sayeth the Word of God and this is a value that we will hang onto." That is wisdom and understanding.

Look at the world. The world is made up of men and women, primarily, that run our governments that do not have the wisdom of God. Our values are changing daily. It almost feels like the Supreme Court votes in a new value weekly. I was raised as a young fellow in the 50s. If I look back at the values we held as a nation in the 50s, we would all be horrified at the values that we hold in 2013. Why? Because we have been run by too many people that do not hold fast to the wisdom and understanding of God that holds onto the unchangeable values of the Word of God, and that's what you get when you get wisdom and understanding. Isn't that kind of neat that you know what you don't budge on?

One of the things here that remember I said I found a dozen things and I got it down to five? Well, I had to sneak an extra one in here, but I put it under wisdom and understanding. You

know how wisdom and understanding helped us? We now understand, according to verses 8 and 9 here, the mystery of the will of God. That's an interesting statement, isn't it? What am I talking about? In the Old Testament, there is a mystery of the will of God, but it wasn't complete. They understood that there was something to come—a Messiah—but they weren't sure when or how it would happen, and for many, they have missed it completely. But in the New Testament, in the Word of God, He has revealed that mystery. The answer to the mystery is one word, one person. It starts with the letter *J*. It is the person of Jesus. He is the answer to the mystery. That is what you understand, you who have been chosen and have chosen to invite Christ into your life, you understand because of the Word of God that Jesus is the answer to the mystery.

It is interesting that everyone could understand that mystery if they embraced the New Testament, but Paul says in Corinthians that Satan blinded the eyes of them that believe not, and there are so many blind today. You can be thankful that you understand the mystery of the will of God.

Then the last one, fifth, we were sealed for eternity by His Spirit, verses 13 and 14. Sealed. We don't use seals a whole lot today. Primarily we have notary publics that use seals. About three weeks ago my wife felt impressed to give my car to my son in Florida. Little bit of grace there out of our riches. We just decided that was what God wanted us to do, so I filled out all of the paperwork, signed everything, bill of sale and all that, and he takes it to the DMV and that quick they reject it. Had to have a seal on it, a notary public, so we had to do it all over again. The seal of that notary public designated that Douglas Randlett and Jane Randlett owned that vehicle, and the things that we were saying about that vehicle were true, and the signatures guaranteeing that was true were the signatures of Douglas and Jane Randlett. So we get the seal, send it back to Florida, and they walk in the DMV and it's done. Completed transaction.

Now let me tell you what the seal of the Holy Spirit did for you. Signed sealed and delivered, it designated that you are now owned by a higher power. You are owned by God Himself because you were bought with a price and that price was the blood of Jesus, and so when they look at that seal there is blood on that seal because it was signed in blood and that seal says that you are owned by the Spirit of God and the transaction is complete. Signed, sealed and delivered. You don't have to do any more. Is this amazing or what?

But the thing I like next is it says that you have the guarantee of the Spirit. The word *guarantee* means a deposit, a down payment, so even though we have all of these spiritual blessings right now, there is more to come! Do you read my lips? There is more. This is just the down payment, the deposit. All this that we have, health, understanding, relationships, peace that passes understanding, joy, a relationship with Him, with others, it's just the tip of the ice berg.

My brother David Paul Randlett, since October 15, 2010, is experiencing the more, the so much more. One day we will experience the so much more when we move into eternity and God takes us to be with Himself. I don't know what all that looks like. This is pretty good, isn't it? You enjoying it? There is more to come, and I'm getting to be that age—some of you that are getting a little older like me, aren't you getting to be the age that you pay attention, when I read those words “so much more” it's like, “Oh really?” When you're younger you're like, “Oh yeah, someday.” Well, that someday is getting closer for me. Aren't you kind of getting excited about

the so much more? That's what we have in Christ. That's the spiritual blessings that Paul is talking about here.

Well, he turns the page from spiritual blessings to praying, so if you will, point number two, I'm going to encourage us that we believers need to be praying for other believers. We need to pray for other believers. What did Paul do? I want you to read verses 15 to 20 with me. It says, "Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you." Look what He gave thanks for: that they had faith in the Lord and they loved each other. Did you hear that? He is presuming, because he's been in the church in Ephesus, that they actually do love each other. Let's not shoot our own wounded. Life is too difficult for that. Let's love our wounded. Love the brothers.

Notice what he says here,

I give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers: that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

He is praying for us to receive blessing. Why do we need to pray for other believers? God has laid out a banquet table of spiritual blessings for us to have here in Ephesians chapter 1, but we reel those blessings in through prayer. Did you hear that? We reel them in through prayer, so we pray for one another. Who among us, the best among us, do not find ourselves at times refusing to submit to God, even though we know that it robs us of our joy? We are so human, aren't we? And at times we allow ourselves to not submit to God. Who among us, at times, do not allow the fleshly distractions of this world to rob us of the power that God has for us, and yet who among us would not be better off if we didn't pray for one another, with one another, for ourselves that we would access the power that is God's, that we might experience all of these spiritual blessings.

Paul is saying, categorically, that we need to be praying for each other because the devil will do everything he can to distract us from the blessings that we have been rejoicing in here today. I love what Paul says here in verses 18 to 20 where he says, "I pray that the eyes of your understanding would be enlightened, that you might know His great power, the power that He used to raise Jesus from the dead." His great power is the power that because you are a believer, you are sealed in the Spirit; it is the power that you have access to today. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the same power we can access to experience the blessings of God, but it's going to demand that we pray for one another, pray for God's protection, pray for safety, pray that we be rescued from the evil one.

And so I ask you as we close: Are you feeling a little out of sorts? These blessings, we're rejoicing in them but you're missing some of them because you're just a little bit off-kilter. There is something, some holy unrest in your soul. There is still a longing in your soul. You

know what it is? It's just what I mentioned. It's the distractions of the world. It's the unwillingness to fully submit. And today I am going to ask you as a believer, as a follower of Christ, that you renew your spirit this morning before we walk out of here. If you have never received Christ into your life and say, "I want those blessings! I don't have any of those blessings," whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. You can invite Him in today.

Let's all stand together and pray and ask God to do what only He can do for you. I trust this has been an encouraging message to you, but at the same time, it could be a message where you are missing out on so much that God has for you because you need to take this moment and make this time your own personal altar with the Lord.

[Praying] Father in heaven, I pray right now that we would open our hearts to what Paul has been teaching us here in Ephesians 1, that if we're missing something in our lives and we're missing these blessings and we're out of fellowship with you that this would be a time that we would access the praying that Paul encouraged us to do, that we would come back to you today, Lord. That it would be a time of confessing and pressing on, that whatever is not right that we would confess, and Lord that we might have our eyes enlightened, not eyes of the flesh but eyes of the Spirit, to see and embrace all that you have for us.

(Singing: "Lord, I Give You My Heart")

I trust that is all our prayer today, that we would ask the Lord to have His way in us. And I ask you this question: Has God taken Ephesians 1, and as a believer and follower of Christ used that to encourage you in your walk with the Lord? Amen. Amen. I want to encourage you to read Ephesians 1 at least one time this week and see what blessing God wants to use in your life this very week that you can rejoice in and you can praise Him for. Go with God.

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