

A Spiritual Reality

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[0:00] What we're going to see this morning is a clear picture of the gospel, which is always more than fully sufficient.

! And so I'm just excited to get into that. So I'm going to read verses 3 through 10, and then we're going to get started. Paul writes,

And I think what we see through this is that in God's economy, he places value and worth on different treasures than we place value and worth on.

I think that the greatest treasure in God's economy are all the spiritual blessings in the heavens that we receive through Christ. And then also, I think it just kind of implied here is that simply that heaven is a reality.

And I know that that is something that we should all be looking forward to as believers. You know, it is important, though, that Paul notes that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

[3:45] Because, again, in God's economy and man's economy, there's this tension, this juxtaposition between the spiritual and the physical. Because, you know, what are physical blessings? I'm sure everybody knows what physical blessings are, whether it be to have wealth, to have resources, food, a house.

Good health is a physical blessing. But what's interesting is just because you have an abundance of physical blessings, that is not necessarily proof that you have a relationship with Christ and God is directly pleased with you.

And God is kind of a one-on-one relationship blessing you with physical blessings because he's pleased with your spiritual life. Because, you know, we read in the book of James that every good and perfect gift is from above, from our Father.

But we also know, as kind of complete evidence of God's grace to all mankind, Jesus talks about on the Sermon of the Mount, he says, For God causes his Son, the sun in the sky, God causes his Son to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

And both the sun and the rain are physical blessings because in a society that was so reliant either on raising crops or reliant on being shepherds, right?

[5:04] Their flock had to eat grass. Their flock had to eat what grew. And really an abundance of sun and an abundance of rain equals or results in physical wealth, physical resources and blessings.

But, so God gives physical blessings to everyone, even to those who do not deserve it. You know, and you guys don't have to answer out loud, but maybe think in your head.

Think of a percentage. You know, what percentage of people do deserve God's physical blessing or don't deserve God's physical blessing? I asked this question just recently and I had some people shout out 50-50 or 60-40.

But I think what the kicker is, is it's 0-100 because we are all unworthy of God's, even God's physical blessings. We're all unworthy, we're all undeserved of the sun to rise and the rain to bless our crops.

Because before we were saved, before we were in Christ Jesus, each and every one of us were at one point enemies of God. The psalmist cries out because the wicked prosper.

[6:14] And we can think about the persecuted church, the church largely around the world, largely outside of America. The church at large today, you know, they're largely either imprisoned or beaten or ostracized from their community or not allowed to graduate high school.

But they are, to some degree, because the government, right, and we know this, but because the government cannot withhold spiritual blessings from believers, these governments overseas will do their best to withhold every physical blessing from these faithful believers.

So, if this blessing that Paul is talking about, if it's certainly not physical, then it's obviously, as Paul was very clear to point out, it was a spiritual blessing.

And verse 3 tells us that these blessings are in Christ. Because if we're saved, we're blessed in Christ, with every spiritual blessing, but by no one else, and through no one else, and for no one else.

And how? Like, what is the mechanism for receiving these blessings? It tells us that God chose us in Christ, God the Father in the Trinity. He chose, it says, He chooses His Son's bride.

[7:31] He chooses the church. He chooses us in Christ. So God, God doesn't roll the lottery wheel. God isn't playing cosmic bingo. But rather, we're saved in Christ for a purpose.

Because God the Father has a perfect relationship with Christ the Son. They're one, they're in perfect unity, and God chose the bride with full intentionality for the Son.

We're also blessed in love. I think, yes, certainly we're blessed in love for us, but we are blessed because of God's perfect love for the Son. You know, parents in Israel time, in the first century, whenever Jesus would be alive, they would often influence who their children were wed to.

Either just an extreme cultural influence, maybe all the way to an arranged marriage. I think in this manner, like I alluded to a second ago, the Father perfectly brings broken people to the church. He, with full intentionality, brings broken people to be a part of the bride of Christ. Because God perfectly loves His Son in full intentionality, chooses His Son's bride, we are blessed through that perfect love between the Trinity.

[8:47] See, we're not called to be Christians because we're perfect, but on the flip side, we're called to be Christians. We're called to be a part of the bride because we are broken.

You know, I read a quote just recently that says, God is the one who knows the absolute worst about us and the one that loves us most fully.

You know, we may have the appearance of blessings, we may have the appearance of wealth, resources, of physical blessings, but before we were called to Christ, before we were part of the bride, part of the church, we were spiritually bankrupt, spiritually broken.

And it was for this reason specifically that God perfectly chooses us and calls us to unite with His Son so that we can have the guarantee of these spiritual blessings. So, going back again, what are these spiritual blessings?

Like we said, we're chosen in God. We're called to be holy and blameless in His sight. Now, that doesn't sound, I don't know about you, but to me, just first impressions, that sounds almost burdensome, right?

[9:53] If I said, good news, you have to be absolutely perfect. Isn't that great? Good news, you have to be absolutely perfect before God and you should feel not burdened by that or something.

But really, again, Paul, you know, the spirit writing, and influencing through Paul, just writes this in the absolute perfect way that God wants to communicate His truth.

And we're called to be, in verse 4, to be holy and blameless in His sight. Holy and blameless in the sight of God.

What's interesting then about the sight of God, we read that in the Old Testament, Israel, they were not a perfect people. They obviously did not live blamelessly. We have the entire Old Testament bears witness to that.

But that's why they sacrificed animals. That's why they sacrificed lambs. That's why once a year, the chief priest would go into the most holy place and would sacrifice the lamb on behalf of the sins of all of Israel.

[10:54] And what would happen is when this innocent lamb's blood, this literal animal, this literal lamb, when he was slain and his blood was spilled on the altar by the high priest, God would look down on Israel.

And when God would look down on Israel, he would see the altar, he would see the blood, and in his sight, God viewed Israel through the lens, through the blood that was spilled from this lamb.

So in God's sight, when he looked on a broken and imperfect people, there was actually something in between God and the people, and it was the blood of the lamb.

So in the sight of God, Israel was, in some sense, holy and blameless in God's sight. But they would have to do this year after year.

They would have to do this over and over and over because a literal, physical, animal lamb was not a truly sufficient sacrifice. It could only cover the sins of Israel.

[11:53] It could only cover the sins of God's people. But it did nothing to take their sins away, and it did nothing to make Israel truly holy and blameless.

See, what's better news for us is that today, not only is Jesus the priest, the priest that went between God's people and God, the priest that administered the sacrifice, but Jesus, likewise, played the role of the perfect lamb, played the role of that sacrifice.

See, Jesus, he was not overpowered by Roman gods, but rather, possessing the full power of God, he fully, completely, willingly, he allowed himself to be led to the cross, and he voluntarily spilled his blood for his people.

This is good news because now we are holy and blameless in God's sight. Whenever God looks on us as Christians, whenever God views the bride of Christ, whenever God looks at us who are part of the church, he sees us covered by the perfect and cleansing blood of his son.

And the good news is we are now holy and blameless in God's sight if we have the covering of Christ's blood. Jesus was both, like I said, the perfect lamb and the perfect priest, and this allows God to look down on us as he chooses us to be holy and blameless in his sight.

[13:15] You know, another spiritual blessing, we read further that we are predestined in love to be adopted through Christ Jesus. What does it mean to be adopted? What is this picture of adoption? There's a number of families that I know back in Arkansas, and they've all adopted children.

They've all gone through that adoption process, and I've kind of been able to see, maybe not close up, but maybe one person removed. I've been able to see families in my community go through that adoption process and what that looks like.

And while the adoption process today can most certainly be a picture of this adoption process that Paul is alluding to, I think it's also important that we recognize the weight and the severity of the adoption process in the first century when Paul would be writing this.

What would happen is, in families in the first century, if they had more than one child, the oldest boy, the oldest male, he would receive a double portion of the inheritance because he was expected to take care of his parents' estate.

So the inheritance would be divided equally among all the children, and then whoever was the oldest, they would take a little off the top, take a little off the top, take a little off the top, and give the oldest double that portion of inheritance.

[14:35] So, you know, if you guys think about it, how many of you have older brothers? Or maybe how many of you are older brothers? How would you like it if some young kid was adopted, and, you know, you're fully grown adults, you're waiting to receive that double portion of your parents' inheritance, of your parents' estate, you have both the blessing of the double inheritance and the responsibility to care for the estate, and all of a sudden they adopt some young child into your family.

Oh, and what's this? This child jumps the line. The adopted child jumps the line in receiving the inheritance, and the adopted child receives double inheritance over the firstborn male child of the family, regardless of everyone's ages.

You know, another benefit of being adopted is there's no way to be unadopted in that society.

Legally, in their wills, when they were passing on, when they were passing down tracts of land or heirlooms that have been in the family, if there was a falling out, a fight between family members, between parents and children, there was a legal mechanism to write out their children.

They could write their children out of their will. They can disinherit, they can tell their children, you get nothing. You're no longer part of this family. We disown you. You forfeit any right that you have to an inheritance.

However, once a child went through the legal adoption process in the first century, there is absolutely no way, there's no mechanism for that child to become unadopted.

[16:17] Adoption, in some sense, was more permanent than the blood relationship of kinship. The adoption process was so permanent, so absolute, so weighty, so severe, that the adopted child had more rights in the first century than the firstborn child.

As a family, they went through this process of adopting someone, then that child cannot and will not ever lose their inheritance. You could say it's set in stone or written in blood, perhaps.

Who is it then that typically gets adopted? Here in the States, I think the average age is seven years old. I know that many of us, we've been saved when we were young.

I know in my life, I came to Christ at a younger age, but what we see in Rome often is that adults were often adopted. We see this when Paul was arrested and about to be beaten by the Roman jailer.

The jailer, Paul thinks, oh, I know how to get out of this beating. I can tell him I am a Roman citizen. And the jailer says, well, I'm a citizen too. I'm of the house of Caesar, the emperor.

[17 : 25] And what would happen is the jailer and Paul went back and forth and had this probably awkward discussion about citizenship as Paul's probably chained up and the jailer has the whip. And, well, you know, we find out that the jailer says, I had to pay a large sum for my adoption.

What would happen in Roman times is that an adult would often, they would save up a lot of money and then they would pay, then as an adult, they would pay a Roman family to adopt them.

So they would essentially cover their inheritance so that way no other child was missing out on anything else. But then this fully grown adult would be adopted into a Roman family.

Then they would be granted full rights of Roman citizenship. But it often, like I said, it came at a great cost, especially this jailer says, I'm part of the house of Caesar and part of the house of the emperor.

As Christians, our adoption came at a great price. You know, that price was, it was not paid by us. There's no amount of spiritual merit we could have saved up.

[18 : 31] to ever deserve it or to ever buy it. But it was only by Christ, God's eternal son, he's the one that pays the price for our adoption into his family.

But likewise, Paul also said that he was born into Roman citizenship. Well, not only was a great price paid for our adoption, but we are also born again into God's family.

I think sometimes being born again can be a Christian buzzword, but if we look at it like this, we were once out of God's family with absolutely no hope of an inheritance.

But Christ's work on the cross accomplished our salvation in these two ways. He paid the price for us as broken, lost sinners to be adopted into God's family to receive this priceless inheritance.

And on the other hand, Christ allowed us to be born again to be a part of God's family to receive this priceless inheritance. So you guys see how this applies to us as Christians, this applies to us as believers.

[19 : 34] You know, it's not just a history lesson, it has a very real application for us today. If we're adopted through Christ Jesus, there's absolutely no way we can ever be unadopted, we can never lose our standing in the sight of God.

We will receive a huge inheritance, but like we talked about in God's economy, it's not money or gold, it's a spiritual inheritance, and it's eternal life with God in heaven and full union with Christ and all the joy that comes with that.

God cannot and does not simply get mad and change his mind and cast believers out of his family, but rather, if we're brought in through Christ's blood, and there's nothing more powerful than the blood of Christ, then we can rest assured of our standing in God's eyes.

We also read, according to his favor and will. Since God's favor and will is to draw us to Christ, to receive this irrevocable spiritual inheritance and love, then God's favor and will for us must overall be good.

It must have an intrinsic goodness to it. You know, I know there's lots of books out there, and one of the big things that we ask each other is, what is God's will for me?

[20 : 48] What is God's will for my life? And while the Bible may not tell us in 2016 the absolute specific next step to take this job and don't take this job, it does tell us what God's will for your life is.

God's will for your life is to be in Christ. God's will for our lives is to be in Christ. It's to be united with his Son, to be united by Jesus' blood, to be viewed holy and blameless in his sight.

These aren't rules and laws and burdensome things we have to follow, but it's freedom. It's freedom and it's good news. You know, like I said, there's books out there, What is God's will for my life?

book, probably authors A through Z on that topic.

But if any other author points you to anything besides Christ and besides Christ's blood that was spilled on the cross, then you're really wasting your money and you're wasting your time, there are good resources that can help you discern in full wisdom and discern biblically kind of what God's will is for our lives.

But if it's not anchored and centered in Jesus, if it's not anchored and centered around the completed work on the cross, then we're missing the mark. You know, another spiritual blessing

right in this passage is redemption.

[22:05] You know, we read that this is the salvation that we talked about through the blood of the Lamb. The redemption is what directly gives us forgiveness. Without forgiveness, we are enemies of God.

And if we've already established that God is good and merciful, then we rebel against God. Then when we rebel against God, we're not a whimsical band of rebels trying to overthrow some objectively evil dictator, right?

But we were once all rebels against the intrinsically good and just God of the universe. Without forgiveness, by God's own nature of goodness, then we would, by default, we would have to be the object of his punishment.

But praise God that his son Jesus, with great joy and for great joy, he interceded for us. He intercepted on our behalf this punishment for those of us who believe in him.

You know, this is because God has chosen to lavish us with his grace. And Paul continues and he says that God also possesses all wisdom and insight. God knows what he's doing when he offers his mercy to rebels.

[23:19] It's not a spontaneous act of naive charity, but an offer of goodness and grace on a cosmic scale that the God of the universe, in all wisdom, knowing how broken we all are, still chooses to offer us grace, redemption, and forgiveness.

You know, like we said at the beginning, that the spiritual realm is absolutely a reality. And in the spiritual realm, we have God's economy. Like we said, God's economy is not like our economy. God's blessings, God's goodness is seen through spiritual blessings that we have access to in Christ and not physical blessings. Because we have been adopted in Christ, because of our status, both as being born again to the family of God and our status in being adopted into the family of God, our status as sons and daughters, you know, adopted, we have an irrevocable inheritance. And this is the most valuable treasure that we can ever have and will ever have. I would just like to leave you with, you guys should have full confidence and full hope in our standing in Christ because it is an irrevocable treasure.

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