

The Floral Heights Informer

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Blessed, Blessed, Blessed Are We

By J.S. Smith

“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” (Eph. 1:3).

Just as the rich and powerful do not always feel blessed, in spite of their gifts, so the children of God do not always acknowledge their blessings in a way that drives them toward contentment. That, however, does not alter the fact that blessed, blessed, blessed are we. Coming to grips with that vital fact is of paramount importance as we strive to gain perspective on the material blessings we lack and persevere on our way toward Heaven.

The Ephesian writer enumerates just a few of those blessings in his first chapter. Perhaps his list begins with holiness, for God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world” that we should be holy and blameless (4). Holiness and blamelessness seem like unattainable goals and impossibilities to those who cannot comprehend the power of the gospel. Blessed are we that a message of hope, sobriety and reform can sink into open hearts like a seed and blossom in godly conduct (1 Peter 1:13-16). Sinners, addicts and criminals have all seen their lives changed by the power of God’s love, mercy and message (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Ephesians 1:5-6 describes our adoption by faith into the family God; John comments, “Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1)! Carnal folks spend hours wondering why they could not have been born a Rockefeller or a Hilton. All the while, the opportunity to be born again of water and the Spirit into the brotherhood of Christ and family of the Creator awaits. Blessed are we regardless of our surnames or bank balances, for we are God’s offspring.

“In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). When you doubt your value and begin to wallow in loneliness and self-pity, recall that the son of God died on the cross for you -- so that your sins might be taken away and that you might be made fit to dwell in Heaven rather than Hell. You meant enough to God that he spent his son to buy you back from the devil (Rom. 6:17, Acts 20:28).

Local News:

Welcome to all our visitors. We pray that you will be edified by our service and that you will ask questions if things are not as you are accustomed to seeing. Please come back at your every opportunity.

Rita York was released from the Kell West Hospital Friday evening after suffering a blood clot in her leg. She will be monitored at home for a while and kept on medication. Please remember her in your prayers.

Verlon Powell had a setback this past week. She had another stroke and spent some time in the hospital. She is now back at Rolling Meadows care facility room 31.

Check out our **live chat line on Monday evenings at 8:00 PM!**
<http://www.floralheightschurchofchrist.org/chat/>

Although the chat line is designed to preach to the lost members of the church are encouraged to log on and participate in Bible discussion too.

Continue to pray for our shut-ins:

Stella Davidson
696-1030 (Home)

Verlon Powell
Rolling Meadows Health Care Room 31

Calvin York:
692-0489 (Home).

Bessie Murphy
4600 Taft Blvd, Apt. 538

Ephesians 1 continues the litany of blessing with mention of our knowledge of God's will (9-10). Children sometimes struggle to understand what their parents want, but our Heavenly Father has preserved a timeless record of his will for you. "When you read, you may understand" it, even if there are some things hard to understand (Eph. 3:4, 2 Peter 3:17). God did not orphan his children without guidance, sending the Holy Spirit to instruct the apostles and inspiring them to memorialize the word of the Lord forever. Blessed are we to know what the Lord expects of us and how he will assess our lives when the day of judgment dawns (John 12:48).

"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance," (Eph. 1:11) yet our treasure is greater blessing than silver and gold or anything that perishes with use. No, instead, blessed are we to hope for heaven and to reap the investment we made there through faithful living (Matt. 6:20). What greater blessing can be discovered than to be "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17) according to the promise of a benefactor who holds eternity in his hands (Titus 3:7)?

"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" (Eph. 1:13-14). Paul says that God's people are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," words pleasantly similar to those of Peter on the day of Pentecost when he invited his audience to repent and be baptized, that their sins might be forgiven and that they might receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:38-39).

That seal is God's mark of ownership, for "the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal, 'The Lord knows those who are his,' and 'Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity'" (2 Tim. 2:19). The evidence of the Holy Spirit's effectiveness in our lives is in our changed outlook and corrected behavior. The blessing is in strengthening weaknesses, overcoming addictions, correcting flaws, It is not that we become sinlessly perfect in every thought, word and deed, but that we learn how to confront our shortcomings and seek improvement.

The Spirit swings his sharp, two-edged sword into our hearts, piercing all their pretenses and defenses so that we are laid bare before God's word and will for us. God's children cause that word to be written upon their hearts, where their passions and hopes reside, so that a blessed and more abundant life becomes evident and attainable. It is not that the Spirit compels reformation, but that he invites and illuminates it, and when our lives bear his fruit, the seal and blessing of discipleship become nothing short of obvious (Gal. 5:16-26). Blessed, blessed, blessed are we!

Does God Demand that I Obey Him in Perfect Obedience?

YES!

Consider the fact that the apostle Paul writes, “*for the law worketh wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there transgression*” (Rom. 4:15). Again, Paul writes, “*for apart from the law sin is dead*” (Rom. 7:8b). The apostle John illustrates perfect agreement with Paul when stating, “*Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness*” (I Jn. 3:4). Sin is a violation of law. What part of the law is one ready to set aside to claim no sin when violating it? If God did not demand that we keep all of His laws then there are certainly areas of life where one may cross over the line of law (into the area of sin) and remain ok with God.

I. What about areas where there is a “lack of clarity?”

- A. If the Bible lacks clarity in some areas how can I be held responsible for perfection?
- B. Does the Bible lack clarity (areas that are not clear)? If so, what areas?
- C. Does one’s perceived good character and honesty determine whether or not he stands just or condemned by God? Consider the fact that the Jews misunderstood prophecy regarding the seed of Abraham being the means by which a man is saved; however, this did not save them (cf. Jn. 8:33ff).
- D. Jesus and the words He spoke represent truth (Jn. 14:6-7), to believe in Jesus is to know truth (Jn. 8:21), Jesus promised the spirit of truth to the apostles (Jn. 16:13-15), the apostles took these truths and delivered them (Eph. 3:3-4).

II. What about areas of sin where one has not violated his conscience?

- A. What about those who have not come to the level of knowledge of others and yet they are good and honest people in their character.
- B. Did Nadab and Abihu, Uzza, King Saul, Saul of Tarsus, or the condemning Jews of Romans 2 violate their conscience when in sin?
- C. One has aptly said, “The greatest of all sins is to be conscience of none.”

III. Are you saying that a man must be perfect?

- A. The word of God demands every one to be perfect (Matt. 5:48).
- B. The standard of NT Truth sets man free from sin and brings him to perfection (Heb. 7:18).

IV. How can I ever be recognized as righteous when God demands sinless perfection?

- A. To be righteous is to be sanctified and to be sanctified is to be free from sin (cf. Rom. 6:16-23). To be free from sin is to be perfect (see above).
- B. I loose my state of sanctification, righteousness, and perfection when I sin (I Jn. 3:4).
- C. How can I regain this state?

Conclusion:

Consider a multitude of passages that indicate that God expects His disciples to be obedient (II Thess. 1:8; 3:14). What is it that the Lord’s disciples are to obey? The word of God! Yet if I cannot understand truth how is it that God is just in demanding that I obey something that I personally cannot understand? God had demanded that I obey; however, I cannot conscientiously do some of his commands (such as withdrawing and not giving some the right hand of fellowship, or not greeting others in the name of the Lord). The more one studies God’s word the more we will understand that it is not my will that will save me by the Lord’s will.