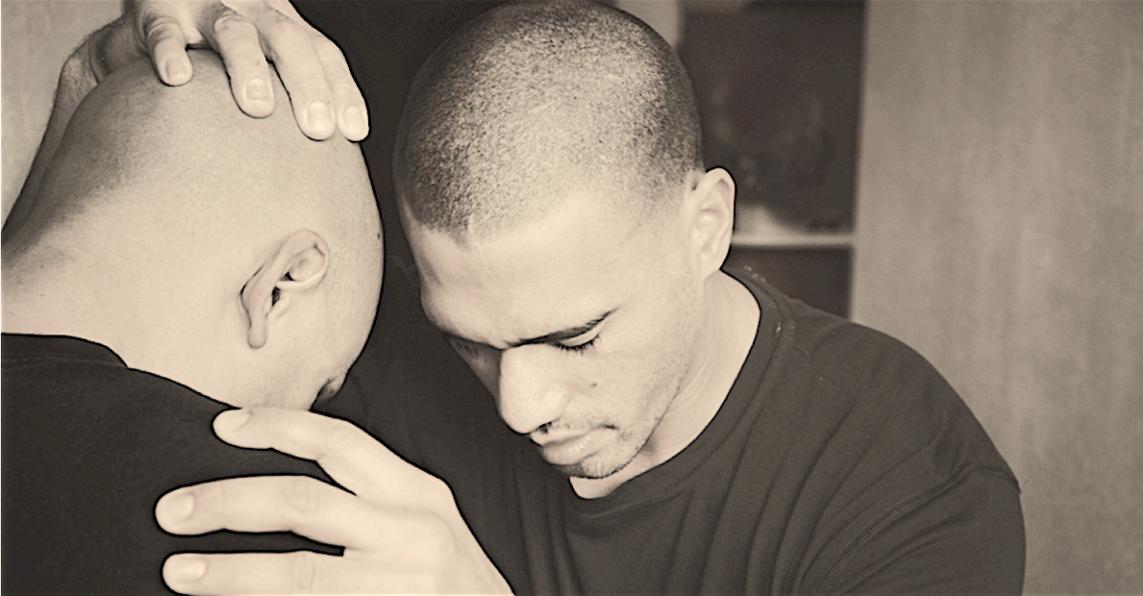


Resting In the Blessing



Did you know that the longest sentence in the Bible is like an uncontrolled explosion of praise and thanksgiving? The ESV translation has broken it up into four sentences, but it's all one sentence. It's from Ephesians 1:3-10. Take a look at it:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be [exist] to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

WOW! Blessed with EVERY spiritual blessing! Chosen in Christ BEFORE the foundation of the world to be adopted by God! Through Christ God has lavished gifts of grace and forgiveness on us and He's uniting ALL things in Christ! No wonder that's a long run on sentence that's a lot to be thankful for!

And yet . . . when we really stop and think about it . . . do we really know what it means?

I mean, "spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"? What's that? When we really think about it, we'd probably prefer something like this: "God has blessed us with a Hyundai Sonata in every garage," because if we're really honest, we think "spiritual" means, like, nothing. Maybe it means something like love or truth—just vague ideas lacking in substance. And "heavenly places" means, like, nowhere. So (in our minds) "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" seems like it means "all of nothing in nowhere."

And what is a blessing?

Well, in Greek, the word is eulogia, it comes from *eu* meaning “good” and *logos* meaning “word.” It’s where we get our word “eulogy”—a “good word.” The verb *eulogeo* translates into the Hebrew word *barak* meaning “to bless.”

The Bible is basically the story of the eulogia, the blessing. God speaks a good word, and creation happens. In Genesis 1:28, “God blessed them male and female [Adam].” Next, He blesses the seventh day, then Noah and his sons. In Genesis 12 God blesses Abraham, who is “blessed to be a blessing to all the families of the earth.” Then things really get wild as we follow the drama of this promised blessing, this promised seed. Esau despises his birthright, so Jacob steals the blessing. Along about 0, everyone wondered, “Where’s the blessing?”

But that still kind of seems intangible to us. In 1986 two psychologists, Gary Smalley and John Trent, published a great little book entitled *The Blessing*. In it they isolate five components of a Biblical blessing:

- 1) Meaningful touch, like the holy kiss
- 2) A spoken message (that is, a *logos* or word)
- 3) A word that attaches high value to the one being blessed
- 4) A word that pictures a special future of the one being blessed
- 5) A word that expresses an active commitment to fulfill the blessing

In Scripture, the blessing usually comes through the father. And Paul has just been talking about God the Father. When we think of it that way, God’s blessing begins to feel a little more important.

So Paul writes: “Blessed be God the Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ who blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.”

But again, what’s a SPIRITUAL blessing?

Is a person a spiritual blessing? How does God make a person...? Doesn’t He breathe His Spirit...into some clay?

In 1 Corinthians, Paul writes that Christ became a “life-giving Spirit.” In 1 Corinthians and Ephesians, Paul writes that Christ will “fill all things.” So, doesn’t that mean all things are or will become spiritual blessings? And are spiritual blessings just ideas lacking in substance?

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul teaches that we’ll receive a “spiritual body,” immortal rather than mortal, imperishable rather than perishable, a spiritual body like Christ’s body. And remember when Christ rose from the dead? His new body could pass through walls.

So, was His body less real than the walls or more real than the walls? Are spiritual blessings, like Truth and Love, less real or more real than this world? According to Scripture, the Truth is Jesus, and God is Love. There can be nothing more real than God, and God created all things with His good Word, that is, Jesus, the Truth. All substance is continually dependent on God’s Love.

So Paul writes, “You HAVE BEEN [not will be] blessed in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

And in Ephesians 2:6: “You have been seated in the heavenly places with Christ.” So, when and where are the heavenly places?

Do you remember what Jesus came preaching? “The kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” In Greek that means... here and now. So check this out: All things are created by God’s good Word, His Blessing. And all things are filled with—or are being filled with—that Word, that Blessing...Jesus.

We are created by God's Blessing, and we are—or are being—filled with that Blessing. The life of that Blessing, the wine of the Kingdom, is Jesus. So, “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” is definitely not nothing in nowhere, but more like everything in everywhere...filling my nothing and my nowhere.

“Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” is all things filled with love and radiating truth; all things saturated with a shared eternal life, saturated with grace, the wine of the Kingdom, the blood of Christ. You HAVE BEEN (not will be) blessed in Christ with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.”

This raises a rather obvious question: If I have all these blessings, how come I don't always feel blessed?

Maybe we're like ghosts in a ghost story inside the real story. Maybe we're experiencing a curse inside of a blessing, experiencing a curse for the sake of a blessing, consigned to disobedience for the sake of mercy.

Well, whatever the case, we think Heaven is a change in our circumstances, and certainly there's something to that. But maybe more than a change in my circumstances, Heaven is a change in ME.

Maybe I'm surrounded by Love, upheld by Love—a Kingdom of Love, and yet I don't have a capacity for Love because I take Love, and use Love, and think I've earned Love, and therefore own Love, and so cannot perceive Love.

A spoiled child desires his father's blessings more than the blessing that is his father. He desires his father's things more than he desires his father's heart, and so he must suffer the loss of all things in order to learn to love his father's heart. He must suffer the loss of everything in order to receive anything with a new heart.

When Saint Paul wrote that sentence, he was in a Roman prison cell—having suffered the loss of all things, and he couldn't contain himself as he told the Ephesians of his Father's heart—Jesus. Jesus “from the bosom of the Father” is the Father's heart. Jesus is the eulogia, the blessing of the Father, the Word of the Father. In Romans, Paul writes, “He has given us his own son. Will he not also give us all things with him?” He's given us His heart. Will He not also give us all things with Him?

Of course, you can't change your own heart.

Of course, you can't change your own will. What would you will the change with?

Of course, you can't change your own desires. What would you desire the change with?

Of course, you can't! But God and His Word of blessing can and will.

I'm trying to say that maybe God really has—already has—“blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places” and can now with His Word create in us a new heart so we can see it, receive it, and delight in it.

Clearly, Paul is trying to describe a reality for which human words and phrases and sentence structures fail him—as if he'd been caught up to the third heaven.

So what CAN you do?

Sabbath. All sin, at its root, is an effort to seize the blessing...like pirates seize gold and like Adam and Eve took the fruit. So stop—rest!

But how do we stop?

About 18 years ago, a single mother came to my church. She had the cutest little boy. She was dating a guy, but everyone could tell that he wasn't the boy's father. He was white, and she was white, and Jarek (the boy) was chocolate brown. And I think he felt it. I think he felt that he was illegitimate. And I remember that Jarek just could not sit still. He was always looking for trouble.

He could not stop. He could not rest. He could not Sabbath. He could not enjoy that blessed Seventh Day.

Deep down inside we're all terrified that we're illegitimate.

Well, Andy and Janielle decided to get married. I performed the wedding, and Jarek was the ring bearer. During the ceremony, Jarek walked down the aisle with the ring, but then he started looking for trouble. I bet his heart was telling him, "You got no daddy, and now this guy's taken your mommy."

By the time we got to the vows, someone else was holding the ring and Jarek was quarantined between two relatives holding him down in the front row. Janielle said her vows; Andy said his vows. Jarek was squirming in his seat. I was starting the ring ceremony when suddenly Andy stopped me. And in front of everyone, he turned around, fixed his gaze on Jarek, and said, "Jarek!" And Jarek froze; everybody froze. Then Andy said: "Jarek, I love you with all my heart. And I will always be your daddy. And you will always be my son."

Jarek Conelly did not move the rest of the service.

It was the power of the blessing.

I think the letter to the Ephesians is like that blessing. Certainly, the communion table is the presence of that blessing. If you think, "Gosh, I wish I had Jarek's blessing," don't you see that you have more than Jarek's blessing?

Receiving the blessing changes you. And maybe God arranges all things (even blessing deprivation) so that at the right moment in the right place you would hear His blessing, receive His blessing, and bless Him in return.

May you receive the blessing and may you truly know, deep down, that God in Christ Jesus really already has "blessed you with every spiritual blessing!"

This devotional was prepared by Kimberly Weynen, Peter Hiett's assistant. It is based on a much larger sermon titled "God Blessed You and You Didn't Even Sneeze", which you can read, watch or listen to in its entirety at [Relentless-Love.org](http://relentless-love.org). Simply copy and paste this link: <http://relentless-love.org/sermons/god-blessed-you-and-you-didnt-even-sneeze/>