

In Christ

Ephesians 1:3 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,

Blessed be the God. We saw that the word *blessed* is used of Deity in the New Testament. But, the astute question “what about Mary being said to be *blessed* in Luke 1:42?” **blessed are you among women.** The Greek word used here is a different word than used in Ephesians 1:3. Here in Luke 1:42 the verb blessed in the *participial* form means blessing *received by one* while in Ephesian 1:3 the Greek word refers to blessing due to one.

Blessed be the God even Father of the Lord of us Jesus Christ. We ended our last study on the importance of God being the Father of our savior Jesus Christ and how this impacts our prayer life. But this phrase “God the Father of the Lord of us Jesus Christ” is so important, for this is The Key to the entire Plan of God. You will recall that in our last study this sentence presents the entire Plan of God: **according to His Purpose who works all things after the counsel of His Will.** And Jesus is the focal point of the Plan and Will of God the Father for all history. Now in early Church history this was the subject of a great deal of debate. Does this mean that Jesus Christ is less than God? That He is not Deity? Does this mean that God the Father is superior to the Son?

These were some of the major issues in the early Church.

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Church Councils were called and leaders of the early church, pastors, theologians were asked to come and state and defend various theological views in an attempt to arrive at an ‘orthodox’ set of beliefs for Christianity. In the process ‘creeds’ were developed for use in the churches. At one time ‘orthodox’ was the desire of those who studied the Scriptures.

The first Church Council was the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. (located in modern day Turkey). The issue at this Council was the relationship of Jesus Christ, the Son, to God the Father. Was Christ of the same essence and nature as God? It came to an orthodox decision that Christ is eternal and of the same essence as God the Father, although distinct in his humanity. While this was the decision in 325 A.D., this doctrine is still debated by many people who do not believe that Jesus Christ is God and man in one person.

Today it is ‘fundamental.’ ‘Orthodox’ refers to that which is right according to a recognized standard and is commonly believed. Fundamental refers to belief in basic truths of God’s Word. Fundamentalism came about as a reaction to liberal church teaching in the 1800’s. In the late 1800’s and early 20th century fundamentalists came forward with basic truths of God’s Word.

“Fundamentalism, in the narrowest meaning of the term, was a movement that began in the late 19th- and early 20th-century within American Protestant circles to defend the "fundamentals of belief" against the corrosive effects of liberalism that had grown within the ranks of Protestantism itself.” Source: <https://teachinghistory.org/history-content/ask-a-historian/24092>

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It was begun by men like James G. Machen and Lewis Sperry Chaffer.

Five basic beliefs of Fundamentalism

1. Man's sinfulness and inability to save himself.
2. The Deity of Christ.
3. Salvation by grace through faith alone.
4. Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ as the basis of atonement and regeneration.
5. Sole Authority of Scripture.

As to the person of Jesus Christ, His deity is denied by a multitude of people and religions like the Islamic religion and the Jewish religion. He is to be understood as 'undiminished Deity and true humanity in one person without the loss of either identity'(R.B. Thieme Jr.). In His total person He is equal to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. In His humanity, He is under God His Father. Jesus Christ as a member of the Godhead, chose to become a member of the human race so that the human race would know God and to provide a way to a relationship with God the Father. **"I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father but through me."** (John 14:6) The religious leaders at the time of Jesus understood that He claimed to be deity.

John 5:18 For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

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The designation *Father* refers to the function of one member of the Trinity, it has nothing to do with superiority in character or nature. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit exist equal in character and essence, but the Son and Holy Spirit are subordinate in function to the Father.

We are in the section of this sentence which deals with God. First, we noted His relationship with Jesus Christ: **Blessed be the God even Father of the Lord of us Jesus Christ.**

Now we come to His relationship with all believers. 1:3b-6.

Ephesians 1:3 ...who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. What in the world does this mean? Or better, what out of this world does this mean?

First, let's identify the subject. Who is the one doing the blessing? It is God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The one doing the blessing is the only one worthy to be praised. And here He is bestowing blessings.

Now, let's see what He is doing. The *aorist participle*, *blessed* is different than the word *blessed* that was used to describe God. The word used to describe God refers to the Father who is worthy to be praised, while the one used here refers to one who has received blessing. Subject: God, verb: **having blessed**. Now, upon whom does He bless? The personal pronoun translated **us** refers to every single individual who believes in Jesus as their personal Savior. And the verb is an *Aorist Active Participle* and should be translated **having blessed us**. And the *aorist participle* is a *gnomic* which means this is regarded as an absolute throughout all the Church Age. And the clearest way of translating this

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verb is ‘*to provide a benefit,*’ here, spiritual benefits. Throughout all the Church Age, God provides grace benefits to everyone who believes in His Son as Savior. This is not something we anticipate receiving. It is something that has already happened to us. This is not something we earn; it is freely given to every believer by the grace of God. And it is given the moment you believe in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

Having blessed us or provided us with every spiritual blessing or spiritual benefit. We have identified the *aorist tense* as *gnomic aorist* stating an absolute throughout the Church Age. But this could also be a *culminative aorist*. Here we have a culmination of all spiritual blessings that come to us in our Christian lives, not just those we receive at salvation. This is an *aorist participle* and the action of the *aorist participle* comes before the action of the main verb. The main verb is coming up in verse 4, **He has chosen us in Him.** Here is the wonder of the Grace of God. First, He provided every spiritual blessing that He would give to everyone who believes in His Son. He did this in Eternity Past. Then, He chose His Son. Then He made the decision to choose everyone who was in His Son by faith. He provided spiritual benefits, then He chose us. Please notice which came first: The blessing came before the person. Before we were chosen we were blessed. How about that! Being chosen is the doctrine of election which we will note in verse 4, but please stay away from Calvinism. The Election takes place in Christ not outside of Christ. In other words, we were chosen or elected once we believed in Jesus as our Savior. We are not elected or predestined before we believe in Jesus as our Savior. God does not predestine anyone to the eternal Lake of Fire. What kind of God is that? We choose where we wish to spend eternity. In heaven with God or in

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the Lake of Fire separated from God. Then we shared the election of Jesus Christ, His son. Before we were chosen we were blessed. Therefore, this depends on His perfect essence. This is how much importance God places on His providing each one of us with these Spiritual benefits. People, believers, you are perfectly provided for by God. Which comes first, your election or your blessing? You might think, well, first I have to be elected and then I am blessed. Wrong, God provides the blessing, then you are elected. And learn about God, this is the way God always does things. First, He created the world, then He placed angels on it. They polluted it, so God froze it and restoration begins in Genesis 1:2 which correctly reads

Genesis 1:2 The earth became formless and void (We know that He did not create it this way.)

Isaiah 45:18 For thus says the Lord, who created the heavens (He is the God who formed the earth and made it, He established it *and* did not create it a waste place, *but* formed it to be inhabited),

where the Hebrew word *not create* is the same word used in Genesis 1:1 *God created*. Then, here it says *did not create it a waste place*. This is the same Hebrew word used in Genesis 1:2, *formless*. So, He did not create it as it is described in Genesis 1:2 formless. It became formless after the angelic rebellion. Then, God restored it and prepared it for mankind. Once it was ready, then God brought man on the scene. God always

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prepares things before He brings the believer on the scene. This is God. This is likened unto a groom who prepares a place to take his new bride.

And people do not speed read past that adjective *every*. There is not one single believer in Jesus Christ who is lacking in anything or in any way to fulfill God's plan. The believer has everything he/she needs to fulfill his/her destiny in Christ. Not IQ, not abilities, not physical assets, mental assets etc. nothing! Here we learn more about God. Here is your God. He designed a plan to make every believer happier than he/she could ever dream he/she could be in their souls. Elizabeth Barrett Browning worded it this way: "God's gifts puts man's best dreams to shame." It is amazing how believers will take drugs or alcohol and think that is happiness. Or engage in all kinds of activities, even sins, because they think that is happiness. Well, they are not! God the Father desires to make you perfectly happy and He is qualified to do it. He provided everything we will need for true inner happiness, in Eternity past. The only reason that believers do not enjoy this happiness is because they make decisions from their volition not to.

We know just enough about God from creation. But, to know Him, we must know His Son who came to earth to reveal Him to us. So, to arrive at this perfect happiness, the trail goes something like this: empowerment of **the Holy Spirit**, so that we can learn from **the Word of God** which takes us to **Jesus Christ** who takes us to **God the Father**.

Then we have another *adjective, spiritual*. The Greek is *pneumatikos* an adjective from *pneuma* Spirit or spiritual. Why are these benefits described as spiritual? First, blessings in the Old Testament were often in the material realm. Paul is making a distinction between the Age of Israel

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and the Church Age. This is why understanding dispensations is so important. Failure of properly understanding dispensations is why such false teaching of ‘Replacement Theology’ is so acceptable. Failure of correctly understanding end times has to do with a failure in grasping dispensations. Simply stated a ‘dispensation is an era of time during which man is tested in respect to obedience to some definite revelation of God’s will.’ Or as Ryrie states in his book *Dispensationalism Today*: “A dispensation is a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.” There are several different ways of wording or identifying the various dispensations, but for simplicity we will note the following. **Innocence** (Adam and Eve in the Garden). Then dispensation of **Gentiles** (begins with Adam and Eve out of the garden to the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) (beginning period of Conscience-and accountability). In this period, the divine structure was the family with the husband, father as the spiritual head. Then the Dispensation of **Israel** or Jews under the structure of priesthood. This period started with the calling out of the Jews under Abraham, Isaac, Jacob to the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The Day of Pentecost began the dispensation of the **Church**. This period will extend from the day of Pentecost to the Rapture of the Church. In this period every believer is in full time Christian service, indwelt by the third member of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. But, the Pastor-Teacher is responsible for the teaching of the Word of God. After the Rapture or the taking out of all believers, is a **seven year period** which is call the Tribulation but is in fact the last seven years promised by God to Israel. After their return from the Babylonian Captivity God promised Israel 390 years, which they experienced 383 years then rejected Jesus as their Messiah leaving seven

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years to be yet fulfilled. These seven years, promised by God, will take place under the designation of the Tribulation. The Seven years will be terminated by the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and will introduce the last dispensation, being the Millennial rule of Jesus Christ. At the end of the thousand year rule will come the Great White Throne Judgment of all unbelievers. They will be at this judgment, not because of sins, which were taken care of on the cross by Jesus Christ, but because they refused to believe in Jesus as the Savior sent by God the Father.

So here we learn more about God. He has a Divine plan. He provides everything necessary to fulfill His plan. This is grace. This is thoughtfulness. This is the love of God.

**Ephesians 1:3 ...Having blessed us or
provided us with every spiritual blessing or
spiritual benefit.**

So, the first reason these are called *spiritual blessings* is to make a distinction between the historical period of the Jews and the beginning of the Church Age. In the period of the Jews, most of the blessings were material, like land blessings.

The second reason is to draw attention to their immediate source being from the Holy Spirit. These spiritual blessings are given by God the Father but they are administered to us by God the Holy Spirit, therefore *spiritual blessings*. Much as the reason we study *spiritual love*. We call this spiritual love, for it can come only through a New Spiritual creation—born again believer and only by the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is vital that you know how to be empowered by the Holy

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Spirit. And this of course is by grace through faith in the Holy Spirit. The Greek word *pneumatikos* occurs some 26 times in the New Testament and almost every time it refers to some function of the Holy Spirit.

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I hope that by now you are starting to think a lot more of and about God the Father than maybe you have before we came to verse 3.

In the heavenly *places* in Christ. What does this mean?

First, you will note that *places* is in italics, which you know means this is not in the original manuscripts. This expression is used some five times in the book of Ephesians. It is a beautiful Biblical and Theological term. Grammatically, this is preceded by the *definite article*. It is a *noun* used as a *descriptive adjective* in the plural, of the *noun* made up of the prefix *epi* meaning upon or in; plus, the Greek word for heaven. Therefore, *heavenlies or heavenly places*. It refers to what pertains to or is in heaven. Another word would be *celestial*. We must be a little careful and not make this refer solely to the residence of God, for this word is used in Ephesians 6:12 “our struggle is against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.” In John 3:12, Jesus contrasted heavenly things with earthly things. The best way to start to grasp this phrase which occurs five times in Ephesians is to relate to our position in Jesus Christ. Jesus, as God, came to earth in the form of man, then died spiritually and physically on the cross, was buried, was raised, and ascended to heaven

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and is now seated at the right hand of God the Father. At salvation, we are placed in union with Christ, where He is seated, and therefore we are seated with Him, in heaven.

Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus,

Each of the five occurrences of this phrase describes the effect of our being in Christ in the heavens at the right hand of God the Father.

1. We are the recipients of spiritual blessings 1:3.
2. We are the recipients of spiritual power 1:19-20.
3. We are the recipients of eternal blessings 2:6-7.
4. We are the recipients of God's display of His Divine Wisdom 3:10.
5. We are the recipients of being in the spiritual battle 6:12.

We will examine the blessing of being the recipients of these blessings as we come to them in our study.

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God even Father of the Lord of us Jesus Christ. Having blessed us or provided us with every spiritual blessing or spiritual benefit in the heavenly *places*

And now we come to the most wonderful blessing of all, **in Christ**. What does this mean? There is no definite article here and the absence of the definite article emphasizes the quality, and the quality here is perfect, Christ. His humanity is in the place of highest honor and glorification.

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His deity always possesses glorification. As the God-man seated at the right hand of the Father in hypostatic union, He is in the highest position of honor.

**Hebrews 1:13 But to which of the angels has
He ever said, Sit at my Right Hand.**

None! And remember we are seated there with Him. We, you, are seated above angels. This is what the book of Ephesians is all about...*in Christ*. Sometimes it is what we have received *in Christ*; sometimes it is what we are *in Christ*; sometimes it is what God has done *in Christ*.

Our position in Christ is soundly called by Robert B. Thieme, Jr., Positional Truth.

Positioned in Christ

1. Positioned in Christ is unique to the Church Age believer. In no other dispensation is there such a place as being *in Christ*. The moment one believes in Jesus Christ as Savior—he does not become a member of the race or nation of Israel—God the Holy Spirit enters him into union with Christ forever. You cannot lose your position in Jesus Christ. You did nothing to put yourself into Christ, you can do nothing to take yourself out of union with Christ. It is eternally yours...due to the Faithfulness of God.
2. Means of Positioned in Christ: Non-meritorious faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

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3. Mechanics: Position in Christ is by the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Acts 1:5; John 17:21-22;14:20 and chapter 15; 1 Cor. 12:13.
4. Characteristics of Position in Christ:
 - a. Not an experience, or emotional, nor ecstatic.
 - b. Not progressive—cannot be improved.
 - c. Not related to human merit or works or any performance, it is by grace.
 - d. Eternal in nature; neither God nor angels nor man can change it.
 - e. Obtained in total at the point of belief in Jesus as Savior.
5. Our Position in Christ explains election and predestination; two doctrines that many believers are so confused about, and we will study them in Ephesians chapter 1. Both are defined and understood by the believer's position in Christ. Believers are elected and predestined *in Christ*. No one is elected or predestined outside of Jesus Christ. Every believer shares the election of Jesus Christ. When you are put in Christ, then you share the election of Christ and share the predestination of Jesus Christ.
6. Positioned in Christ also clarifies sanctification. Ephesians 1:3-6.
7. (one that legalists resent) Every believer—carnal, sinful, or spiritual is positioned in Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2 and 30. Here, in Christ, is true equality of all believers.

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8. Our being imputed with perfect Righteousness is from our Position in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Corinthians 1:30.
9. Our being in Christ protects every believer from Divine Judgment in eternity: Romans 8:1—no, your sins will not find you out! You are in Christ. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as Savior is imputed with perfect Righteousness which means no believer will be at the Last Judgment.
10. Being in Christ qualifies every believer to live with God forever. 1 John 5:11-12. Therefore, this guarantees Eternal Security Romans 8:38-39.
11. Because you are in Christ, every believer shares many things with Christ.
 - a. We share the life of Christ: eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12.
 - b. We share the perfect righteousness of Christ.
2 Corinthians 5:21.
 - c. We share the election of Christ. Ephesians 1:4.
 - d. We share the destiny of Jesus Christ. Ephesians 1:5.
 - e. We share the heritage of Christ. 1 Peter 1:4-5.
 - f. We share the sanctification of Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:2; John 17:17-19 and Hebrews 10:14.
 - g. We share the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. I am so sorry that this is not all that important to believers — that we share the Priesthood of Christ. If you were of Jewish background this would be a major issue with you, that you are a priest after the

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order of Jesus Christ which is above the Priesthood order of the Levites. There is just so much involved in your sharing the Priesthood of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4-9.

- h. Christ is the Son of God and being in Christ means we share His Sonship.
 - i. Christ is King and therefore we share His kingdom. 2 Peter 1:11.
12. Many aspects of our lives today here on earth are from our position in Christ.
- a. Our Christian liberty is founded on our being in Christ. Galatians chapter 2.
 - b. Blessings in time are not dependent on our performance but are dependent upon our position in Christ. Ephesians 1:3.
13. We are identified with Jesus Christ in His death. Colossians 2:12.
14. We are identified with Christ in His Resurrection. Colossians 2:12.

Being identified with Jesus Christ in His death means that in our daily lives we do not have to be under the power and control of our Inherited Sin Nature...dead to us. Every time we sin, we resurrect this dead sin nature.

Being identified with Jesus Christ in His Resurrection defines our Spiritual life, Spiritual freedom, and Spiritual liberty!

15. Positional Truth is not known experientially, it is known only through the Word of God.

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16. And never forget, all these blessings were prepared by God in Eternity Past and were obtained in total at the moment of salvation.

Summarizing:

At the point of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, God the Father gave you 34 blessings and one of them is that God the Holy Spirit baptizes or places you *in Christ*.

This means you are a new creation in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17. This establishes Eternal Fellowship with Jesus Christ and God the Father.

Your eternal position in Christ establishes eternal fellowship, which is the pattern of your temporal fellowship with the Godhead and with One Another.

Every born again believer has the same equal spiritual privileges as any other believer. Christ in you and you in Christ. John 14:20.

Add to this that the Holy Spirit indwells every one of you! And every one of you are your own Priest—this means you represent yourselves before God the Father—in prayer, worship. And every believer in Christ has the same purpose: to glorify God the Father and His Son Jesus the Christ in the Holy Spirit.

To be a witness of Jesus Christ during your time here on earth, to be an Ambassador for Christ.

Think about each one of these and give thanks to God for them daily.