

Text: Ephesians 1:1-13; Ref: Acts 18:18-28; Acts 19:1-41; Acts 20:13-38; 3John 3; Revelation 2:1-7; Gen 12:1-4;

Theme: Our Identity in Christ

Topic: I Am Blessed! My Second name is Blessing!

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Summary of the sermon:

- i. The source of my blessing- God**
- ii. The state of my blessing- Eternal**
- iii. The quantity of my blessing- All**
- iv. The quality of my blessing- Heavenly**
- v. The qualification for my blessing- In Christ**
- vi. The attitude for my blessing- Praise**
- vii. The response for my blessing- Prayer**

Introduction:

- ✓ There have been a number of hurricanes in the USA. Many people have responded differently depending on their direct or indirect roles. The hurricanes have left a trail of destruction, death and agony in its path. One church which was involved in the whole episode was Lake Wood Church in Texas Pastored by Joel Osteen. The Church was accused of not responding immediately to provide shelter to those affected by the floods.
- ✓ How do you respond when all that you had in this world has gone under through natural calamities or human made catastrophes? What would you write to your friends while you are languishing in prison walls without any possibilities of parole or being released? Suppose you lost your job or you retired or your business just collapsed or your health has deteriorated or you lost an election, what would you write to your former colleagues? Many of us would probably spend the time writing about the unfairness of the justice system; we would be writing how we don't deserve the tough circumstances we are in; we would be writing how many of these friends have forgotten about us; we would be writing on a long list of I wish I could get the opportunity again, I would do everything differently; some of us would rather suffer quietly for fear of rejection believing that our circumstance have changed our identity.
- ✓ At the time of writing this letter, the Apostle Paul was in prison facing possible execution. He had already faced a lot of persecution and suffering. He had lost a lot of things this world could offer him. He had every reason to give a full report of his sufferings, injustices, pains and his personal loss. However, one thing stands out from the very beginning of this letter he is more heavenly and less earthly. His faith and love for Jesus Christ is intact and his zeal for the gospel of Jesus Christ is as vibrant as ever! This letter is among the letters popularly known as the prison letters, written by Paul while in prison in Rome (Philippians, Colossians, Philemon). This reminds us that even when Paul was in the dungeon, his heart, mind and soul was focused on heavenly things. He is excited, warm and sentimental about the blessings we have in Jesus Christ. He declares that God has richly blessed us with every spiritual blessing through Christ. Paul describes the magnitude of what God has done for us, and shows us that the purpose of it all is to bring praise to the glory of God.
- ✓ This is a powerful reminder that it is possible even when your circumstances are not desirable to dwell on heavenly plane and to impact on people positively. No matter what we are going through in life, we can still praise the Lord, because the God of the mountain

is still God in the valley; the God of the storms is still God of the calmness; the God of the sunshine is still God in the night; the God of the laughter is still God in mourning; the God of life is still God in death; the God of good health is still God in sickness!

- ✓ The book of Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul primarily to the Church of Ephesus but also for circulation to the Churches in Asia Minor including the Seven Churches in Revelation. (Eph 1:1; Rev 1:20-3:22). Ephesians was not the first and only letter written to the Church of Ephesus. Paul refers to a previous shorter epistle (Eph 3:1-3)
- ✓ Historically, the Church of Ephesus began with the ministry of Paul's second missionary journey while accompanied by Priscilla and Aquillas (Acts 18:18-28). Apollos later continued with the ministry in the absence of Paul while being instructed by Priscilla and Aquillas. While it is the primary responsibility of Pastors and Missionaries to be involved in missions, ordinary believers also have a great responsibility to be involved in missions. Ordinary believers also have a responsibility to mentor others in the ministry just as Aquillas and Priscilla mentored Apollos.
- ✓ Paul returned to Ephesus where he spent about three years teaching and preaching the gospel (Acts 18:23). Paul later on met with the Elders of the Church of Ephesus at Miletus on his way to Jerusalem. (Acts 20:17-38)
- ✓ **Positive practices in Ephesus:** The Church of Ephesus was known for a number of strong positive practices such as hard work, perseverance and endurance in suffering for Christ's sake, testing false prophets and intolerance to wicked people- (Revelation 2:1-7) Today more than ever, the Church of Jesus Christ is being called upon to stand up for the gospel; the Church of Jesus Christ is being called upon to stand up to false prophets; the Church of Jesus Christ is being called upon to stand up to wickedness and wicked people; the Church of Jesus Christ is being called upon to call evil for what it is; let us stand up to injustices; let us stand up to tribalism; let us stand up to hatred; let us stand up to corruption.
- ✓ **Negative practices in Ephesus:** Ephesus was known for magical practices such as sorcery, witchcraft, divination and the worship of goddess Artemis. When Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus, the gospel impacted powerfully on the people transforming their attitudes, behaviors and lifestyles. There is enough evidence in Acts 19 & 20 of the transformative power of the gospel such as:
 - ✓ Miracles of healing of the sick were performed through handkerchiefs and aprons.
 - ✓ People were delivered from demonic possession and oppression and those who tried to imitate Paul like the sons of Sceva were flogged by evil spirits.
 - ✓ People who accepted Jesus Christ brought out and burned their scrolls for sorcery, witchcraft and magic.
 - ✓ Many people turned from the worship of the goddess Artemis. This affected their socio-economic status leading a riot led by Demetrius.(Acts 19:11-20)
 - ✓ The gospel of Jesus Christ is still transformative even today. You can be set free from the yoke of demonic oppression, bad dreams and suicidal tendencies; you can be healed of all kinds of diseases and sickness because by his stripes we are healed; if you made any soulsh covenants, vows or you have in your possession any articles of sorcery, magic or divination such as charms, fetishes, hirisi, bangles, any sown beads, any mirrors I ask you to renounce them and bring them forwarding for burning. It is only until you burn any articles of demons in your possession shall you be free!

i. The source of my blessings- God

- A blessing, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, is “the act or words of one that blesses,” or “a thing conducive to happiness or welfare.” Specifically enjoying the bliss of heaven. It carries the idea of that which brings pleasure, contentment and good fortune. It is the state of being all that we want to enjoy. In the Bible, there are several words that are usually translated as “blessing” or “bless.” The Hebrew word most often translated “bless” is *barak*, which can mean to praise, congratulate, or salute, and is even used to mean a curse. Gen 1:22 is the first occurrence, when God blessed the sea creatures and birds, telling them to be fruitful and multiply in the earth. Likewise, in verse 28, God gave the similar blessing to Adam and Eve, adding that they were to exercise dominion over creation. When God called Abram to go to the Promised Land (Gen 12:1-3), He promised to bless him, make his name great, and through him, to bless all the families of the earth. The blessings here are plainly associated with happiness and welfare, both for Abram and others. In Gen 22:16-18, God again blesses Abram, and adds that blessing is due to his obedience to God's commands.
- Another Hebrew word for blessing is *esher*, which is also translated as happiness. Job 5:17 declares “Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty.” This blessing is connected to the knowledge that God is at work to direct us in the right path. God's chastisement is actually a display of His love for us, like a parent who disciplines a child who plays in the middle of the street. Psalm 1:1-3 carries that theme further when it states, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.
- In the New Testament, there are two primary Greek words translated as “blessing.” *Makarios* carries the meaning of happiness that we just looked at. The Beatitudes of Mathew 5 and Luke 6 describe the happy state of those who find their purpose and fulfillment in God. As in the Psalms, the best life is available for those who love and fear God and order their lives according to His Word. Romans 4:6-8 ties this happy blessing to those whose sins are forgiven, for they know the relationship to God has been restored. *Eulogeo* focuses more on good words or the good report that others give of someone and also describes the blessing that we say over our food (Mathew 26:26). This word is where we get our English word “eulogy,” in which we speak well of one who has passed away. Ephesians 1:3 blesses God for all the blessings that He gives us in Christ, and 1 Peter 3:9 instructs us to bless those who mistreat us, because we were called to receive a blessing from God.
- Bringing these threads together, we see that a blessing is a statement of good will and happiness that is said about another, as well as the condition that fulfills those good words. God's original design in creation was for His creatures, including mankind, to experience prosperity, peace, and fulfillment, but that design was ruined when sin entered the world. Statements of blessing are a wish for God to restore His favor on others or a declaration of His inherent goodness. The ultimate blessing that God has given is the new life and forgiveness that comes through faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. The material blessings we enjoy from day to day are temporary, but the spiritual

blessings available to us in Jesus Christ encompass time and eternity, as well as material and immaterial things. As the Psalmist said, “Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God” (Psalm 146:5). J. I Packer, *Knowing God*

- Among the most desired blessings is good health, material provisions, a good home, good jobs with promotions and good social standing. However these physical and material blessings are temporary in nature. They will pass away at some point.
- What we need to understand and appreciate is that the real blessings of the Lord are spiritual in nature. These spiritual blessings will never be taken away from us! Even when everything physical and material around us is gone or has broken down or has deteriorated, we will still possess the best of God’s blessings!
- These spiritual blessings are from the Lord himself. God is the unlimited, unceasing and unstoppable source of blessings. When you find God, you find blessings. God is a rewarder of all who seek for him. All blessing originate comes from God. Have you ever heard the devil bless you? Can you imagine Satan wanting anything good for you? If he ever says anything like that, you can be sure it’s a lie. He’s trying to trick you into thinking he has your best interests in mind, so that you’ll fall into his trap. God is the source of all blessing and when He blesses, you’re enriched and you get no sorrow with it! Happiness, health, and prosperity are things that God wants for all of us. When God blesses you, no one can take away your blessing. When God blesses you, take away his blessings.
- Many people who desire blessings are looking for those blessings in the wrong places from the wrong people. Some people are looking for blessings from some personalities called “Spiritual Sages-Waombaji”; some people are looking for these blessings from specific “shrines-madhabahu”; some people are looking for these blessings through planting of “seeds-mbegu”. No wonder such so called blessings often come with a big price tag on them such as spending huge amounts of money; sacrificing people; corruption and manipulation; killing of people; selling of our souls to demons; committing wicked acts such as having sexual relations with corpses. There is no other who can bring bless except God-When you have God, you have everything you need. Your blessing is not only on the way, you are already blessed! Just confess your status! Just believe in your status! Your status changed the moment you believed in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, You are blessed!

ii. The state of my blessings- Eternal

- How long are these blessings supposed to last? What impact are they supposed to have on us? This verse states that our Heavenly Father "*hath blessed us*". It is important to notice that these words are in the Greek text are in the **aorist tense**, which is equivalent to the English past tense, but their impact are experienced presently and futuristically. At some definite point in the past historically, God blessed us! God blessed us when Jesus Christ died for us! God has pronounced a blessing on each of His children through promises in His word!
- Not only are they past tense, but they are also in the **active voice**. This means that those blessings that we received at some definite point in the past historically, continue this evening and will continue on into the future. In other words, I have been blessed in the past, I am being blessed now and I will be blessed in the future! I am eternally blessed! I

am a walking blessing! I am a testimony of blessings! It may not feel like it, I may not look like it, but I take God at his word, I am blessed! Many circumstance in my life may seem contradictory to this fact-sicknesses may come in; death may knock on my door; unemployment may be my situation; retrenchment and retirement may be my situation now; loss may take a toll of my life; but I am what God says I am, I am blessed! I am not what people say I am; I am not what circumstances say I am; I am not what my mind tells me I am; I am not my emotions tells me I am; I am not what the denomination says I am; I am not what the politicians say I am; I am not what some Pastor/bishop/ Apostle say I am; I am what God says I am, I am blessed!

iii. The Quantity of my the blessings- All

- What is the amount of blessings we are given? Is there a limit to the blessings we can receive? Are there some blessings that belong to some people but not to others? The quantity of these spiritual blessings can be summed up in one little word found in verse 3. It is the word "**ALL**". The other synonyms are: inclusive; embracing; encompassing; comprehensive; extensive; everything; broad in content; global, that is how much blessings we have. It is innumerable, uncountable and unlimited! Every single blessing promised is ours for possessing! Every single blessing yet to be promised is ours for the possessing! Every single blessing imaginable or unimaginable is ours for the taking! Child of God you should not limit yourself by what you can read or imagine as a blessing! You should not limit yourself by what some preachers says you can get or not get! You have all and every blessing at your disposal!
- But why has God blessed us so? Well, before we can figure out why God has blessed us, let's try to get some sense of just what God has blessed us with. Three times the text says, "Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." What does that mean? Everything spiritual. Every spiritual blessing, he has given us. This is not a promise; this is a declaration of an existing fact. A promise is something you will get in the future. But this is a declaration of something we already have. And even though right now, we are here on earth, we have in our possession right now, heavenly riches. We have a place in heaven.
- You see, God has held nothing back from His children. When He saved us, He gave us everything we needed to serve Him. Stop living a life of **limitation**; stop living a life of **defeat**; stop living a life of **worry**; stop living a life of **fear**; stop living a life of **sadness**; stop living a life of **insignificance**; stop living a life of **self-pity**; stop living a life of **poverty**. We have everything we need right now to be **content**, to be **alive**, to be **successful**, to be **prosperous**, to be **obedient**, to be **useful**, to be **victorious**, to be **significant**; to be **strong** and to be **happy in Jesus**! When you and I got saved, we got everything Jesus had to offer us! We got it at that very moment, there is nothing else!

iv. The Quality of my blessings- Heavenly

- These blessings are described as "**blessings in heavenly places.**" This literally means that these blessings are things that originated in heaven. They are not earthly blessings, but they are heavenly blessings! In the most literal sense, they are "**Heavenly Things!**" Many believers are living desperate lives because they are focused on earthly things. Earthly things are eaten by moth and rust and as we have heard recently, earthly things change-

“vindu vichenganga”. Your position will change! Your status will change! Your strength will change! Your socio-economic status will change! Your health will change! Your wealth will change! The Apostle gives specific blessings in the heavenly places in verses 4-14.

- **Foreknowledge (Verse 4)** - This verse deals with the matter of election. For some reason, God, in His wisdom, chose me before the world was formed. He knew me before He formed me in my mother's womb and He had already determined that I would be in His family. I cannot explain election and all the ramifications of it, but I am still going to rejoice in it! One of the greatest spiritual blessings we enjoy as saved people is the fact that we were chosen in Christ by the grace of God, **Rom. 8:28-31**. He loved me even though He knew all about me. What a blessing! God didn't wait for me to be good enough to love me; God didn't wait for me to be reformed to love me! People may not know us, but God knows me! God knows me by name! God knows me all the time! God knows me in every situation and circumstance in life! God knows my pain! God knows my gain! God knows my worries! God knows my joys! God knows me while am near or far! God knows me in the night and in the day!
- **Family (Verse 5)** - This verse tells us that we were adopted into the family of God. That is, at the moment of salvation, you and I became the children of God, **1 John 3:2**. We are His sons and daughters with all the rights and privileges that come to any child born in to the family, **Rom. 8:17**. The Father brought me into His family and made me His child. We have a great family we belong to! A great family which should carry each other's burden! What a blessing! Let us be there for each other at all times! Times of celebration as well as the times of great need! Times of laughter as well as times of sadness! Times of success as well as times of failure! You are my family, I have no other family! Others are just related to me by father, mother or language, but you are divinely connected to me! Hold my hands! Pull me up when I fall! Cry with me when I cry! Help me carry the burden which is pulling me down! Laugh with me when I laugh! Don't hate me if I have I different political view!
- **Favor (Verse 6)** - This verse reminds us that we are "**accepted**" by the Father! When we received Jesus, we were reconciled to the Lord! There was a time when we were outcasts and aliens, **Eph. 2:12**, but now, in Jesus, we are **approved** by the Father! We have been brought near to Him by the blood of Jesus, **Eph. 2:13**. We used to be in God's black list as enemies, but now, we are on His list of favorites as friends! This means that God is literally pleased with us! A lot of Christians waste a lot of time trying to do what Jesus did when He died on the cross - please the Father! The Father is pleased with me, because I wear the righteousness of Christ. What a blessing! I have favor with God! Like Jesus Christ, (Luke 2:52) I have favor with people!
- **Freedom (Verse 7a)** - This verse tells us that we have been "**redeemed**". There are three Greek words in the New Testament that are translated "redeemed." This particular one means to "release a captive after the payment of a ransom price." It carries the idea of purchasing a slave and then immediately turning that slave loose. Changing the status of the slave into a free person. This is what Jesus did for us! He paid the price, **1 Pet. 1:18-19; John 19:30**, and then He set us free, **Luke 4:18**! We are no longer slaves to sin and unrighteousness but we are free to righteousness! Jesus died for me, saved me by His grace and delivered me from the captivity of sin. I am now free! Free from the bondage of sin! Free from the fear of death! Free from the power of sin! What a blessing!

- **Forgiveness (Verse 7b)** - This verse goes on to tell us that we have received forgiveness of our sins. I don't know about you, but that means something to me! I was a wretched man when Jesus saved me, but at the instant of salvation, every single sin in my past, my present and in my future was forever forgiven! **Psa. 103:12; Isa. 38:17; Isa. 43:25; Jer. 50:20; Micah 7:19; Col. 2:13-14; 1 John 1:7)** He has removed my sin as far as the East is from the West! He no longer remembers my sin! He has taken away my condemnation! He has taken away my guilt!
- **Future (Verse 11-14)** - Verse 11-14 speak of three more spiritual blessings that manifest themselves as we go through life into the future.
- ✓ **Our Destination (Verse 11)** - This verse speaks of our heavenly home! Every child of God has a home awaiting them in Heaven, John 14:1-3. This home is glorious beyond compare, Rev. 21:4; 1 Pet. 1:4. We have a home in glory land! We have mansions built for us! We have a place where there is no death, there is no sorrow, there is no sadness, there is no pain, there is no suffering, there is no decay, there is no tiredness, there is no sickness, and there is no sin! What a blessing!
- ✓ **Our Consecration (Verse 12)** - This verse refers to the new manner in which we are to live our lives after we come to know the Lord Jesus as our Savior. The fact is, we are changed by salvation, 2 Cor. 5:17. An experience that does not produce change, both inwardly and outwardly, is not a valid salvation experience. When He saves us, He begins the process of making us more like Him! More holy! More complete! More righteous! More like God! He gives us life and enables us to live a new life! What a blessing!
- ✓ **Our Preservation (Verse 13-14)** - These verses remind us that when we were saved, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit, **Eph. 4:30**. He is the "earnest money". This means that He is the down payment that secures us for eternity. The Holy Spirit is the Lord's promise that what He began at the moment of salvation, He will continue until we are home in Heaven, Phil. 1:6; 2Tim. 1:12. If you are saved, you are sealed! If you are sealed, you are secure, John 10:28; 1 Pet. 1:5. If you are secure, then you can rest and rejoice in that truth. Thank God, in Jesus we are saved to the "uttermost" - Heb. 7:25! What a blessing!

v. **The Qualifications for my blessings- In Christ**

- How do we gain access to these wonderful blessings? How do we attain the status of being blessed? The last two words of verse 3 tell us what a person must do to enjoy all of these spiritual blessings. That one thing is to be "**in Christ**"!
- Paul writes in Phil 3:20, "**For our citizenship is in heaven**" We have access to those blessings right now, **through Christ**. In fact, the words "in Christ" and "in Him" appear at least 6 times in these verses, showing how Christ connects us to our blessings. It says:
 - ✓ Verse 3: God blessed us **in Christ**
 - ✓ Verse 4: Chose us **in Him** before the foundation of the world.
 - ✓ Verse 7: **In Him** we have redemption through his blood
 - ✓ Verse 9: God lavished upon us all wisdom and insight according to his purpose which he set forth **in Christ**.
 - ✓ Verse 11: **In Him** we have an inheritance
 - ✓ Verse 13: **In Him** we were sealed with the Holy Spirit

- All these refer to Christ. So it is through Christ and because of Christ that we have access to these rich spiritual blessings.
- The only way for anyone to enjoy the spiritual blessings of the Lord is for that person to be saved by the grace of God. At the moment of conversion, you are placed into the body of Christ, **1 Cor. 12:13**. You get "in Christ"! When this happens, you are made a partaker of all the spiritual blessings of the Lord.
- The only way to continually enjoy your status of being blessed is to abide in Christ through obedience and fellowship (John 15:3-5)
- Are you in Jesus this day? You ask, "How can I know preacher?" The answer is found in **1 John 5:1-2; 13**. Does this describe you? If so, then rejoice, for you are blessed with "all spiritual blessings in Christ." If not, you can be saved by coming to Jesus by faith and by receiving Him into your heart and life. Then, you can begin to enjoy all the Lord has to offer.

vi. The Attitude for my blessings- Praise

- Why does God grant us all these rich spiritual blessings? What's the purpose of it all? What is the purpose of the church? What is the meaning of life? What is God's plan for you and me for all time? It begins with a note of praise for the Lord! All these questions are answered here in this passage. And they all have the same answer.
- Paul exalts the Lord for his greatness. The apostle Paul wrote these words to the church at Ephesus, and the point was to show them how wonderful blessed they are. And to show them how the blessings flow into the church, and to show them what God's plan for the church is, and how it should function in order to achieve its purpose.
- And so he starts out by saying "Blessed be the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ". He's calling attention to the fact that we owe all our blessings to God.
- God is the source of it all, and because of that, we are grateful and thankful and we acknowledge God. And in fact we bless God for what he has done for us. This is a declaration of God's goodness to us. God alone is worthy of our praise! We give back to God his great blessings that he has poured onto us.
- Why did God bless us with these spiritual blessings? He did it for the praise of his glory. What is the purpose of the church? To bring praise to the glory of God. What is the meaning of life? To bring praise to the glory of God. What is God's plan for you and me for all time? That we should bring praise to His glory. And that really is the message of the entire Bible. That God through his glorious grace has redeemed us.

vii. The Response to my blessings-Prayer

- When I read the prayer of Paul to the Ephesians, sometimes I get ashamed at our prayer life and prayer points. Many of us would pray for God's provision or protection or for healing or for a struggling relationship! Our prayer lives often center on what we desire God to do for us or for our families!
- Paul's prayer raises the bar for what prayer should and can be! He demonstrates that we can go deeper and wider and higher in prayer. He shows that prayer can draw us closer to God and knowing him better, experiencing the richness of His goodness, being rooted in the depth of His love, being transformed by His power and possessing his promises for our lives!
- Paul prayed for three specific issues as a response to the blessings in Jesus Christ:

- ✓ Wisdom and Revelation-Coming from personal acquaintance and intimacy
- ✓ Hope –Coming from our personal salvific relationship with Christ-because He lives I can face tomorrow!
- ✓ Knowledge of Inheritance-we are Co-Heirs with Christ; Inherit eternal life;
- ✓ The power of Christ-resurrection power; Enthronement/Exaltation power; Authority/Dominion power
- ✓ Let us bath our spiritual blessings in God-Centered prayer daily. In this way, we will not only grow in our relationship with God but we will also grow in our knowledge and possession of our spiritual blessings! Let us grow out of simple prayers! Let us outgrow bedside prayers for protection! Let us outgrow the routine prayers of healing! Let us outgrow our Self-Centered prayers! Let us expand our prayers upwards and outwards! Towards God and on behalf of others!

Conclusion:

God has richly blessed us with every spiritual blessing through Christ. Paul describes the magnitude of what God has done for us, and shows us that the purpose of it all is to bring praise to the glory of God. Amen. God bless you.