

GOD IS FOR US

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (verse 3) Our hearts rejoice as we meditate on what the Triune God has done for us.

God the Father... *a)* Has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and He chose us for a purpose: to be holy and without blame before Him (v. 4). *b)* Has adopted us. God has given us an "adult" standing in the household of God. We not only have full privileges, but full responsibility too (v. 5). *c)* Has accepted us. He has engraced us (literal translation) in the Beloved One. Because of God's grace in Christ, we are accepted before Him (v. 6).

God the Son... *a)* Has redeemed us. The believer is redeemed from the penalty of sin (justification), from the power of sin (sanctification), and one day, at the Rapture, from the very presence of sin (glorification) (v. 7). *b)* Has forgiven us. The word forgive means "to carry away." No accusations stand against us because our sins have been taken away (v. 7). *c)* Has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence making known the mystery of His will, giving us an inheritance in the dispensation of the fulness of times when He shall gather together in one all things in Christ (vs. 8-11).

God the Holy Spirit... *a)* Has sealed us. "After... [hearing] the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...[when] ye believed, ye were sealed with [the] Spirit" (v. 13). This speaks of a finished transaction and implies ownership (I Cor. 6:19, 20), guarantees security (John 14:16-17), and attests to the genuineness of the believer (Rom. 8:9). *b)* Has given us Himself as an earnest. This down payment guarantees more to come. We are assured that God will finish His work in us and eventually bring us to Glory.

Why has God the Father chosen us, adopted us, and accepted us? "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (v. 6). Why has God the Son redeemed us, forgiven us, revealed His will to us? "That we should be to the praise of His glory" (v. 12). Why has God the Spirit sealed us and is Himself the guarantee of our future glory? "Unto the praise of His glory" (v. 14). **He has blessed us that He might be glorified!**

John N. Baker

TAKEN AWAY

Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:37-42

In Matthew 24:37-42, we are told that conditions on the earth prior to the Lord's coming will be similar to those in Noah's day. The record in Genesis 6:5-7 states that "the thoughts of men's hearts were only evil continually" and "God repented that He had made man." An honest appraisal of present day morals must conclude that we are fast heading in the same direction.

To the Lord's people, however, it is a comforting thought that when evil has reached it's zenith, God always calls a halt. It was so in Noah's day. While the multitude of people were "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage," completely indifferent to their eternal welfare, suddenly the flood came and "took them all away." Only Noah and his family were spared because they had entered the ark. Those who were "taken" died in the flood.

"So shall the coming of the Son of Man be" said the Lord Jesus Christ. "Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken and the other left." Taken where? Not to Heaven, as is sometimes taught, but into judgment. The one who is left will go into the millennial kingdom which Christ will have come to establish.

To God's people in this age, the Apostle Paul, by revelation, tells of a secret coming of Christ (I Thessalonians 4:13-18; I Corinthians 15:51, 52). Then, instead of being "taken away," members of the Body of Christ will be "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air and "so shall we ever be with the Lord." How wonderful to have this blessed hope of being "caught up" and not "taken away"! It can be yours in Christ.

Win Johnson

Notes:

YE ARE SANCTIFIED

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 6:11

The believers at Corinth were described as carnal, with strife and divisions and other serious problems in the church, yet Paul addresses them as saints (HAGIOI - saints, holy ones). Hebrews 10:10 says that the believer is "... sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all." The word "sanctify" means set apart, showing that the believer is separated from sin and set apart to God. "Holy" and "sanctified" are translated from the Greek word HAGIOS. Closely related words are HIEROS (sacred), HAGION (sanctuary), and HAGIAZO (to sanctify).

In Leviticus 20:26, God said, "And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine." Today we read that we are the temple of the living God which temple "is holy" (I Cor. 3:16-17). Since we are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in us, we are told to be separate and "touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17).

This brings us to what is called progressive or personal sanctification. In II Cor. 6:14-18 we are told not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers, and that there is no agreement between the temple of God and idols. Paul's final appeal in this passage is in the first verse of Chapter 7, "...let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness [sanctification] in the fear of God." There are similar verses in the Word, such as I Thessalonians 4:3, "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification...." Though we have this position of being sanctified in Christ, we must be serious concerning our personal separation and dedication to God.

John Willson

Notes:

YE ARE WASHED

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 6:11

In I Cor. 6:9-10, Paul mentions the unrighteous fornicators, idolaters, thieves, drunkards, etc., and says in verse 11, "And such were some of you, but ye are washed...." The Bible has much to say about washing and cleansing from sin. Hebrews 9:10 mentions the divers washings (baptisms) of the Old Covenant. They were very important in the cleansing ceremonies of the Law. We see in Leviticus 8:6, at the consecration of the priests, that Moses brought Aaron and his sons and washed them with water. See also Leviticus 14 for the detailed instructions for the lepers' cleansing. These purifying ceremonies continued in Israel as we see in John 3:25 where there were some questions about "purifying" (water baptism). Even when Saul (Paul) was saved, Ananias told him, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins..." (Acts 22:16). So it is clear that water baptism represented cleansing of sin and is not a symbol of death, burial, and resurrection, as many teach.

It should be clear to every believer that now "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (I John 1:7). He made the one perfect sacrifice that put away sin (Hebrews 9:26). Closely associated with this is the reference in Ephesians 5:25-26, "...Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word."

We must not go back to the washing ceremonies of Israel's law. There are no commands in Paul's epistles for the believer today to be baptized in water.

JW

Notes:

YE ARE JUSTIFIED

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 6:11

The believer is not only washed and sanctified, but he is also justified. This means that God declares him to be righteous. It is God's assertion that He sees the believer as righteous now and forever. We, being in Christ, are partakers in his death and resurrection (Romans 6:3-5) and also of His righteousness. II Corinthians 5:21 says, "...we are made the righteousness of God in Him."

In his epistles, Paul often refers to justification by faith. Three times he uses an Old Testament quote from Habakkuk 2:4 which says, "...the just shall live by faith." (See Galatians 3:11, Romans 1:17, and Hebrews 10:38.) He also refers to Abraham as the great example of one counted righteous by faith saying, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness" (Romans 4:3 & Galatians 3:6).

David is also a noted example of this principle. We read in Romans 4:6, "Even as David also described the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputes righteousness without works." Paul often refers to the truth of the righteousness of Christ that is imputed (reckoned) to the believer. We have received the gift of righteousness (Romans 5:17) and because of this, we are declared to be righteous (justified) by God. We have a righteous standing before Him, and there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ. We are justified freely by His grace. (See Romans 8:1 and 3:24.)

JW

Notes:

RIGHTEOUSNESS FROM GOD

Scripture Reading: Romans 3:21, 22

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is manifested...." To Paul was given the ministry of explaining for the first time how a holy God could count ungodly sinners righteous in His sight. Our passage (Romans 3:21-22) tells us how to become right with God, and it is not something that we do. It is not a righteousness of man or from man, but the righteousness of God. It is from Him. "It is God who justifies" (Romans 8:33). He is "the God who justifies the ungodly" (Romans 4:5), and we thank Him for it because we could never have justified ourselves before a holy God and righteous Judge; but now, we don't have to!

How does God declare the ungodly to be "justified"? Paul tells us it is "apart from the law." It has nothing to do with keeping the law, or the Ten Commandments, following our conscience, or "trying our best" but by the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ who willingly took the blame for our sins and paid their penalty in full on the cross; so that today, all who simply believe in Him are "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1).

Forgiveness is wonderful. We read and rejoice that in Christ we have been forgiven for all our sins (Colossians 2:13), but righteousness is (it almost seems impossible...) even better! The "righteousness of God" means being counted by grace as having done all that God demanded, required and expected of us; so that He, not only has nothing against us, but is in every way *for* us and able to extravagantly bless us.

Dennis Kizonas

Notes:

INSTRUMENTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:13

God works through members of the Body of Christ to reach others with the message of grace. Verses 1-12 of Romans 6 give us some powerful facts concerning Christ's victory over sin and death and our being there "with Him through it all"—glorious truths to be savored and applied to our lives daily.

This is where our minds come in. God wants us, based upon the knowledge of what Christ has done for us, to "yield yourselves unto God, as those that *are* alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (verse 13). The key here is we must be under God's control for our bodies to be "instruments of righteousness."

The fact alone that Christ died for us and freed us from the power of sin will not prevent us from sinning. *Only* when the Spirit of God, dwelling within these vessels of clay, is *in control* can He bring victory over sin and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we look at our physical members and see dirt, we want to wash it away. Our glorious Head, Jesus Christ, is pure, spotless and undefiled. Why should any member of Christ's Body be a spotted instrument of *unrighteousness*? It must not be and need not be so. Christ's death provided *our* victory over sin in this life.

Verse 14 assures us that "sin shall *not* have dominion over you: for ye are *not* under the law (system), but under grace." When we know and yield to God's Spirit, based upon the Word rightly divided, our bodies will truly be instruments of righteousness for God.

Ralph F. Balog

Notes:

SERVANTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Scripture Reading: Romans 6:16-18

Did you know that slavery still exists today? No, I'm not talking about the place where you work, a condition in your home, or even some underground system from the past. Our text for today reveals that each of us is a servant or a slave. Our master is the one to whom we choose to yield ourselves. We are either a bond slave to sin or the willing slave of the Lord.

In our natural state, everyone is in bondage to sin. Just as drug addiction controls many today, sin manipulates the natural man to follow a course contrary to the Lord; but through faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Saviour, anyone can be "made free from sin" (Romans 6:7, 18, 22). This is a positional deliverance from both the penalty *and* the power of sin. In Christ, the chains of sin's eternal consequences and present control are broken, and the individual becomes free to choose whom he will serve.

However, the reality is that many believers choose to yield to the power of their old master (sin) thereby remaining a slave to its influence; but this need not be so. Paul instructed the Romans to "reckon (count) ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" (Romans 6:11), then "yield yourselves unto God" (Romans 6:13). Thankfully, many of the believers at Rome had followed this course and had not returned to sin after salvation. Instead, they chose to "obey from the heart that form of doctrine" Paul had given them. Once freed from sin positionally, they chose to fill the void that sin had left with the Word of God and things of God.

Instead of remaining the servant of sin, become the happy servant of righteousness. The choice is up to you.

John Fredericksen

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