

All We Have in Christ

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[0:00] Sweet. So guys, thank you so much for having me in. It is an absolute gift to be here. I've never been to Boston, and now I have. And so, hold on, Boston in the fall, so I can't sing that.

I don't know if you guys are aware of the VeggieTales song, The Pirates Don't Do Anything. I can no longer sing that song in good conscience because now I have been to Boston in the fall. But I'm so excited to dive in to the book of Ephesians with you guys this morning.

Actually, you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to switch this stand. Is that okay? Sorry, musicians. I know that's the absolute worst. But there's things here that'll work the sliding. I'll just grab this one right here. Sorry, violinist.

If I remember while I'm praying, I'll switch it back for you. But yeah, you guys can go ahead and turn to the book of Ephesians. We'll be in Ephesians chapter 1. And it was so sweet seeing you guys come into the retreat this evening.

And, you know, me with seven kids, I do particularly love when the kids greet each other with joyful squeals. You guys are building something very beautiful here.

[1:08] And I think these kids are going to remember it for a long time. And I pray that you guys will as well. The title of my sermon this evening is All We Have in Christ. It'll be Ephesians chapter 1, verses 1 through 14.

I'm going to read the text, pray, and then we'll get after it. This is God's holy and authoritative word. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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 to himself 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.

[2:31] 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 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.

Oh Lord, so many truths in your word. I pray that you would fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I can serve your beloved people this evening.

[3:43] God, it doesn't matter what's written on this manuscript. It doesn't matter what's happening on the other side of this pulpit unless you breathe on it. Nothing happens. So God, would you fill me with a fire?

Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I may preach your word with joy and liberty and passion and clarity and power. So that we walk away this evening with a greater view of Christ.

With a greater view of your church. With a greater affection for the gospel of Jesus Christ. And here's the thing that's beautiful, God. I know that you love to build your church.

And I know that you love to do that through the preaching of your word. So I simply get to be here and see you do what you do. So Lord, build us this morning, this evening. Give us grace. Give us ears to hear. Transform us for your glory and for our good. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

[4:41] One thing I forgot to mention before I started. As a chocolate preacher, there are a few things that happen during the sermon, right? I'm probably going to get excited.

I'm probably going to get very sweaty up here. And what I need from you guys, I need to know that you guys are with me. All right. Now, I heard y'all singing. So I know you love theology. I know you love Christ our King. And so what needs to happen is when I say something that makes you want to shout just a little bit, I am simply giving you guys permission to agree with me with an amen.

So before we begin, we're actually going to practice. I'm going to say something and you guys are going to respond with a hearty amen. All right. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Amen. The gospel can save all sinners. Amen. Jesus Christ has transformed my life and I am dedicated to living for him.

[5:38] Amen. Okay. You guys are ready. Perfect. Wonderful. Here's the reality. Our identity matters. And oftentimes the object of our affection transforms how we see ourselves.

So I have seven kids and a family at our church graciously allowed us to stay at their like little beach house in, what's it called? Cape May, in Cape May.

And in Cape May, it's a wonderful beach town. But one of my favorite things there is that they have a peanut butter store. That's right. It is a store completely dedicated to the glory of peanut butter. You walk in and wall to wall, there's all different kinds of peanut butter. Butterscotch, peanut butter, chocolate, peanut butter, hazelnut, peanut butter, coffee, peanut butter. And they give you samples as if it's an ice cream store.

So you're just lugging up this, all this peanut butter. It's glorious. Now, the problem is we have a wonderful friend who we call Auntie Miss Ruth. She's not actually family, but she's so much a part of our family. We call her Auntie Miss Ruth.

[6:35] And my children love her dearly. And Ruth is deadly, deathly aware, allergic to peanuts. It's like, if it's in the air, she's got to go.

And so one of my daughters is like, well, dad, I can't go into this peanut butter store because I'm allergic. And I'm like, what are you talking about? You're not allergic. But in her mind, she's saying, well, I love Auntie Miss Ruth. And therefore, I too am allergic to peanut butter because that's how she operates.

And we're like, no, no, no, no, no. You're completely fine. Let's go into the store. She's like, no, no, no. I can't go in the store. Ruth can't do peanut butter. I can't do peanut butter. I love Ruth. She hates peanut butter. I hate peanut butter. We're like, no, guys, this is not how this works.

Eventually, we convinced her that she doesn't like peanut butter. She does. And we went into the store and she ate all the peanut butter. It was fantastic. But what's the point here? The point here is that the object of our affection completely transforms how we have to live our lives.

For the people in the church of Ephesus, they could not live the same way that they used to because they've been transformed by the power of the gospel. Their affections have been turned on for Jesus Christ, and therefore, they can no longer live in the ways that they used to.

[7:43] St. Clair Ferguson asked the question, are your real roots in Christ? When people look at us, they ought to think they belong somewhere else.

Ephesus was a huge metropolitan city. It was a city that was full of pagans and witches and absolute evil. And the Christians here were those who were formerly pagans.

They've been converted through the gospel of Jesus Christ. And now they're like, okay, I used to do witchcraft. I used to be a pagan. And now you're telling me I'm a Christian. How do I live? It was that group.

And then another group of Jews who were saying, we've been traditionally part of God's people from the beginning. This is how we do things. And now you're telling me that I must live with these Gentiles, these former witches, and we are supposed to be Christians together in this singular church.

How does that work? Because here's the thing. Ephesus did not like the Christians. They were in the middle of the city and they did not feel like the power of Christ was pushing back evil. They felt like evil was taking over their church.

[8:44] They did not feel like they were winning the battle against evil in Ephesus. And so they're wondering, Paul, what do we do? How do we live? This is not working. And so Paul, in his wonderful pastoral wisdom, decides to encourage them by these things, by telling them who they are in Jesus Christ, reminding them of their identity, and then telling them how to live together.

Paul solidifies their identity as saints, as Christians, as the beloved. He decides to strengthen their souls with courage by reminding them of the blessings that they've received from our triune God. You see, the infinite blessings from our union with Christ give us a new identity that is rooted in hope, that is lavish with joy, and is devoted to praise.

And we hear that and we say, and we can say yes and amen to these things. I totally agree with those. But our problem is that in our own lives, we often do not relate to God this way.

We don't see ourselves as saints. We don't see ourselves as the beloved of Christ. We can oftentimes think, especially when we weigh our sin against his holiness, we can think that God is simply just waiting to put the other foot down on us.

[10:03] But my hope for us this evening is that we would, with Paul, understand our true identity. That when we would look at ourselves, we would recognize all the blessings that are for us in Christ.

That there would be a holy confidence in the finished work of Christ. That we would live on this side of heaven with the unshakable security of the promises of Christ that are for us. And that we would know, without a shadow of a doubt, that our God delights in us.

Here's the main point for us this evening, and it is this. Am I blocking the whole thing? No. Okay.

The blessings we receive in Christ transform our identity and ignite grateful praise to God.

The blessings we receive in Christ transform our identity and ignite grateful praise to God. So what do these responses, what do these, what responses do these blessings ignite from us?

We're going to look through the text and we're going to see three responses that are ignited in us in light of all that we have in Christ. So let's jump in to response number one. We praise him for our election.

[11:08] Verses one through six. We praise him for our election. Let me read verse one here.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Fair warning, every sentence in this chapter could be an entire sermon on its own. But let's look at this pretext for a second. Paul's intro here is not simply a, hey guys, what's up?

This is who I am. Let's get to talking. He is doing a lot of theology to help them understand who they are simply in his greeting. Look at the specificity with which Paul describes himself.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus. How? By the will of God. Now, if you remember Paul, Saul of Tarsus, his previous identity was a persecutor of the church.

Likely overlooking Stephen's martyrdom with joy and pleasure as those Christians were getting taken care of. And who was Paul now? He doesn't say Paul, formerly an accuser and persecutor of the church.

[12:14] He says Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. That's who he is by the will of God. And then he says to who? To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Friends, you are saints because of what Christ has done. Not because of your performance. Not because of your diligence.

Not because of your right theology. You are saints because Christ himself has been faithful. One prominent theme in the book of Ephesians is this theme of cosmic reconciliation.

Things between us and God were not good. We were estranged from him. We hated him. We wanted nothing to do with him. And yet he saw our hatred towards him and he came towards us in love and said, you are mine.

When I know the thoughts I've had against God and I think about the way he has rescued me, it's hard not to get affected because I know my sin.

[13:18] I know my heart and God knows it even better. And yet he still pursued us in love. Verse 3, he says, blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

Well, what is every spiritual blessing? Every spiritual blessing is every spiritual blessing. It is all the promises of God that are confirmed in Jesus Christ.

That all the promises of God find their yes and amen in Jesus. The hope that we would hope to have. The redemption that we seek. The forgiveness from our sins are all found from Jesus Christ. I'll try not to do that too much for effect. I did like it though. Friends, what we can experience is the lavishness of the grace of God.

Election. He chose us before the foundation of the world. Adoption. He doesn't save us and just leave us to the side and allows us to tag along.

[14:33] He brings us into his very own family. Sanctification. He doesn't leave us where we are. He sees us where we are. He loves us and sanctifies us and transforms us and then transforms us from one degree of glory to another.

Holier and holier and holier. More and more into the image of the sun. And grace. All of this is received as a free gift. Every spiritual blessing is ours.

And so to my friend here who feels battered and beaten in their battle against sin. Who finds yourself unable to attain whatever level of purity or holiness against your flesh as you've tried to set a standard of that you can't attain to.

Before the foundation of the world. You were set apart to be blameless. And Ephesians 5 says that Christ is going to present you before the Father without any spot or blemish or wrinkle or any such thing.

Do we recognize what these spiritual blessings are in Christ? Can we comprehend the reality of that?

[16:00] All the sin that I have done will do and am doing right now. Even in my desire to impress you guys. It's wicked and it's sinful and I hate it.

I want you guys to walk away and say, man, that JT can preach. And it's so... Why would I want anything to blot out the beauty and the glory of Christ and his gospel?

It's evil.

Christ, not you. And yes, we strive and we fight for holiness because that's the type of life that the gospel calls us to. And it is one of the ways that we express gratitude and praise to him.

But our security is not in our performance. It is in the spiritual blessings, which are ours in Christ Jesus. H.B. Charles Jr. says it like this. He says, I submit to you that every person who is united to Christ by faith is already richly blessed.

[17:20] Notice that this verse does not promise that God will bless us. And it does not announce that God is in the process of blessing us right now. It declares that God has already blessed us.

It is a done deal, a settled reality and an unimpeachable position. If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, you are sovereignly, abundantly, and eternally blessed.

And you were chosen to be blessed in this way before the foundation of the world. Peter O'Brien helps us and he says this. To say that election took place before creation indicates that God's choice was due to his own free decision and love, which were not dependent on circumstances or human merit.

The reasons for his election were rooted in the depths of his gracious, sovereign nature. To affirm this is to give Christians the assurance that God's purposes for them are of the highest good.

And the appropriate response from those who are chosen in Christ from all eternity is to praise him who has so richly blessed us. And these blessings have come to us all according to God's plan.

[18:32] It's not like there was some wild conspiracy where the son tricked the father or the father tricked the son into dying on the cross for our sins.

No, no, no. The only conspiracy that happened is the father, son, and Holy Spirit are deciding that out of an overflow of their love, they would decide to concoct this beautiful and glorious plan that would take sinners and rebels like us and rescue us and bring us into the family.

The father says, We would fail in every single same way that Adam did.

And he knew that. So he sent the second Adam for us. And we received the benefits of this glorious grace that has been given to us simply out of an overflow of his love.

And that is what verse 5 tells us. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glory.

[20:00] We sing about this all the time. This love is a love that we do not deserve. Why should I gain from his reward? I cannot give an answer. And if we don't know this or understand this or

recognize this, we will live with the sneaking suspicion that we'll be found out, right?

You'll think that your favor with God is dependent on how faithful you are. You will operate in a way in which love from God hinges on whether or not you do fill in the blank.

Is there not something innate within us that just desires a little bit? Not all of it. We want Christ to do most of the work. But part of us wants to say, I get up at 5 every day and I study my Bible and I pray.

And that's what keeps me in the fold of God. We want just a little credit. Friends, if it was up to you, you would not make it.

You wouldn't make it. It is not up to you to keep yourself in the fold of God. And that's a gift. It's a gift. He will keep you forever.

[21 : 23] So what do we do? We do what Paul commands to him. We bless God. We praise him. We cultivate a gratitude for what God has done.

You see, one thing that I love about our theology is that it helps us. But we have to crash a little bit before we can exalt in joy. Right? We cannot be rescued from something if we do not realize that we have a problem.

We have a problem. We are perpetual sinners who do not care about God. We are selfish and self-centered. We give in to our lustful thoughts all the time.

We desire things that ought not to be desired. We are harsh with our words and impatience and desire to be in control. We think God should adjust a few things because I've got a pretty good idea of how this should work out.

None of that works, friends. What we need is a joyful surrender to the sovereignty of God. And so we praise him.

[22 : 25] We say, thank you, God. We bless you, God, for the spiritual blessings. Do you want deeper fellowship with him? Do you want to build your relationship with God? Then acknowledge what he's done and worship and praise him for all the gifts that he has lavished upon you.

We have to take hold of the promises of God. There's so many that are in this book. We have to know this book.

We have to delight in this book. Not so that we can say we did it, but so that we can hear from God himself. God speaks to you. Are you kidding me?

The God who right now is holding the atoms that are holding this music stand together so they don't burst apart by the word of his power. That God speaks to us through his word. And he listens to us. He hears our prayers. God is for me. God listens to me. He knows the number of hairs on my head. Are you kidding me? I can't even guess what that would be.

[23 : 26] I got a lot of hair. But he knows you and he loves you. Listen to Charles Spurgeon, the homie, Charles Spurgeon. He says, whenever you read your Bible and see a great promise, do not hesitate to claim it.

He hath given us all spiritual blessings in Christ. I'm afraid, says one, that I should be presuming if I took some of the promises. He hath given us all spiritual blessings in Christ.

You are in your father's house. You cannot steal. For your father says, help yourself to what you like. He has made over his whole estate of spiritual wealth to every believing child of his.

Therefore, take freely and you will by doing so glorify God. He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ. Response number two.

Man, this is crazy. We praise him for our redemption. Verses seven through ten. 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.

[24 : 56] What is our redemption? Our redemption was costly. So the God that I was just screaming about earlier, who created all things and is sustaining all things and is over all things, the one who was omniscient and all powerful, all knowing, omnipresent, that God died for us.

The son, the eternal son, clothed himself in weakness.

Our redemption was costly. He clothed himself in weakness, driven by love. Hebrews said that it was for the joy that was set before him, that he adored the cross.

He wasn't some psycho who was thinking that it was going to be joyful to receive all the wrath of the father. He wasn't excited to be crucified and mocked and murdered and hung naked on a tree.

See, the joy that was before him was you and I on the other side of his resurrection, being brought into the family of God. And this is the only way that we could be saved.

[26 : 15] And he did it and he did it with joy because he was driven by love and obedience to the father. If we make light of or downplay the cost and significance of our redemption, we will not be grateful.

I love being in a gospel centered church, but one thing we have to make sure we do not do is get so used to the gospel that it stops affecting us. Jesus died for us.

Jesus rose from the grave and he conquered death and he is reigning and ruling with the father right now. And what that means is that we have an inheritance, right?

We've been adopted, right? So we're into this family and then there's an inheritance that is kept in heaven for us. It is imperishable. It is unfading and it is glorious. And it is going to be ours at the end because of what Christ has done.

Because as he hung on the cross, he declared it is finished. Not I hope this works. Guys, he did it. You are saved.

[27 : 21] You cannot be condemned. You will wake up tomorrow no matter what happens tonight. If you are in Christ, tomorrow you will wake up with this banner over your head. No condemnation cannot be condemned.

Your sin cannot put Christ back in the grave. It is a settled reality. Christ has done it. This is our gospel. We who hated him now love him in return.

We who were identified as sinners are now identified as saints. We who were under the judgment of God waiting for righteous wrath to consume us are now lavished with his grace and a continual forgiveness that covers all of our sins.

So remember grace. Let it bolster your soul and speak to your life. We have to preach this gospel to ourselves.

Because here's the reality, right? Like if we stop right now, we'd be like rah, rah, rah, go Jesus. And then you go back to the real world and you get smacked in the face with suffering again.

[28 : 24] With fatigue and exhaustion and those co-workers. So we must preach the gospel to ourselves, meaning that we must recognize the reality of who we are and where we will end up because of what Jesus has done.

It means taking that cancer diagnosis or those physical ailments or that miscarriage or that broken friendship, failed relationship, a fall to pornography, a day filled with anxiety instead of trust.

Another moment of weakness and fatigue where you are harsh with your children or your wife or your roommate. And you take those situations and you scream the glories of our redemptive gospel at it, declaring that it is finished.

Our sins are many, but his mercy is more. We must understand in these situations that we are saints and we are faithful and we are holy and we are blameless and are petty.

Little sins cannot overpower the grace of the gospel. Now, Titus 2 tells us that grace that we receive from the gospel empowers us to fight for holiness. So let's not get it twisted, right?

[29 : 34] It doesn't mean we just say, well, if there's grace, let me do what I want. No, no, no, no, no, no. That grace gives us strength to live holy lives. And when we fail at living those holy lives, that grace covers those sins.

The purpose of our redemption. He's made known to us the mystery of his will, which is set forth in Christ, which is to redeem and ransom and rescue and save those who reject him. Reconciling all things to himself, right?

Right now we are groaning with all creation. That's what Roman tells us. Trees are like, man, why are we dying? This isn't right. Get us back to the garden. And one day all these things are going to be reconciled in the new heaven and the new earth.

And it's going to be glorious. It's going to be beautiful. And that's what this redemption is leading us towards. Peter O'Brien says that God's grace reflects his glory. He decides to be glorified by being gracious.

You see, our union with Christ does not make us invulnerable to temptation. And by the way, union with Christ, I'm just meaning that witness with Christ, right? Anytime Paul says in Christ, in Christ, in Christ, which he says all the time in this letter, he's referencing that beautiful union that we have, that Christ's works are credited to us.

[30:43] Can we just pause and just be amazed at that promise for a minute? We are united to Christ. When the Father looks at us, he's going to see the works of the Son.

As I have seven kids, parenting is so hard and it's so joyful at the same time. It is a confusing paradox. And I am not a perfect father by any means.

But I know that when God looks at my works in parenting, it will be covered by the profession of Jesus.

When I'm finished, he's going to say, well done, good, faithful servant. How is that possible?

It is possible because of our union with Christ. He's done it. And he did it perfectly. So take whatever your current sin is that you're just like, I am botching this.

[31:59] I am messing this up. I cannot get out of this. Why does this keep happening? Take the person and work of Jesus Christ and cover that.

Because that's what the gospel does. And here's the other thing, real quick. We preach this gospel over and over again about the perfection that Christ brings to us, the forgiveness we have.

And then we like to act when we're in community groups or small groups as if things are going just fine. We say, how are you doing, brother? It's like, man, I am blessed and highly favored is what a lot of people say.

How are things going? Father, going better than I deserve. It's like, bro, you just screamed at your whole family and then ran out the door and you felt conviction. You don't know what to do with that. Bring your sin into the light.

It doesn't make sense to preach this gospel of forgiveness where all your sins are covered and then cover your sin because you're ashamed of it. That's where sin grows. That's where sin delights to be is hidden and in the dark.

[33:01] But you get that in the light, then we get to put the gospel to work. It covers all of our sins. And there's no like, listen, I'm talking about sexual sin.

I'm talking about lust of the eyes. Right? Sometimes some people are, I just hear this confession of people all the time and I'm glad they're confessing, but they're like, what happened again? I was up late on Instagram and I started scrolling and then all of a sudden I was looking at things I shouldn't be.

It's like, okay, tell that to people. Don't keep that hidden. Don't dismiss that. Get that into the light. If you are struggling with doubts and you're saying, I don't know if I believe what is in here.

Get that in the light because you know what you're going to hear? You're not going to hear people say, I have never had doubts. Read through the Psalms.

David is like, God, I don't even know if you're there. Do you even hear me? Will you forget me forever? Bring it to the light. Because that's where sin goes to die.

[34:03] And that's where people will come around you and say, actually, me too. Let me show you how God has walked me through this. Listen, our gospel is really good at what it does. It's really good at saving sinners.

I promise you, if you put the gospel to the test against your sin, your sin will not win. Your community will not abandon you and say, none of that. That makes no sense. We preach that this gospel unites us and saves us.

So put it to work. Real quick, H.P. Charles talks about real worship. He says, real worship is not about who you are, what you have, or how you feel.

It's about who God is and what God has done for you through Jesus Christ. So, when our worship begins to lapse, we really cannot blame the preacher, the music, or the atmosphere.

When you find it difficult to worship God, it only means that we have forgotten what God has done for us through Jesus Christ. If you consider the spiritual blessings that are yours in Christ, you can praise God no matter what.

[35:06] No matter what you are walking through in life, whether it is financial distress or a job loss or a marriage that seems to barely be holding on by a thread or when your sins are flagrant and public and humiliating, or you simply feel like you're alone and this community does not have a place for you, does not want you or understand you, each of these problems are answered by a spiritual blessing that we have in Christ.

There is a comfort for you, an adjustment for your soul, something to cling to in the midst of it all. And the greatest one is that redemption that we have.

In him, you have redemption. Response number three. This, by the way, this chapter is insane.

It's just like, Paul could have stopped so long ago and we would have been able to praise God for eternity. And yet, he keeps on going. There is actually more. Verses 11 through 14.

This is insane. 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, Jews, might be to the praise of his glory.

[36 : 27] In him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel, the Gentiles here, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who was the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory.

Now, I got too excited in point number two when I talked a little bit about this, but let's keep on going. Here's the reality. Our future grace that is guaranteed from what Christ has done gives us hope for right now.

That inheritance that I talked about gives us hope for today because that day is surely coming, and this day is surely coming to an end. All right?

All of our suffering has an expiration date, and our joy and realizing our new life in the new heavens and new earth is coming. We are one day, one moment closer to heaven.

It's glorious. It's beautiful. I heard someone say once that this life right here is the closest the Christian will ever get to hell. That's it. This is the closest we'll ever get.

[37 : 30] And every moment we're getting closer and closer to that new glorious heavenly reality. John Piper says, when we look back to the death and resurrection of Christ, God shows us in the present the enormity of his love for us, and thus warrants all our confidence in future grace.

That hope that we hold on to allows us to praise him right now. Right? Right? Sometimes a lot of us just need to pause. Nothing in our society is helping us slow down and meditate on the truth of scripture and remember the promises of God.

So we have to fight for these things. Slowing down never feels convenient, but it is an absolute necessity. We have to recalibrate our hearts to remember what God has done.

It might be my favorite hymn. Come thou fount of every blessing. Tune my heart to sing thy grace. Why do you have to tune your heart? Because in the same way as you're beating up a guitar with a pick and you're strumming and strumming, it gets worn and tattered and torn and it starts to sing the song out of tune.

It doesn't sound the way it's supposed to. And in that same way, our hearts must be adjusted through life to remind ourselves what we ought to be singing. We must sing his grace, but we must be reminded of these things.

[38 : 44] So we pray, God, tune my heart to sing your grace. You can always find a reason to rejoice, but it is warfare and you have to fight.

John Piper has said that every morning, he says he wakes up and he feels like the devil is sitting on his face. He's like, well, it's time to go to war. The devil is after me and I need to reorient my mind and my heart to the promises of God that are found in Christ Jesus.

We have assurance. We have security of his love. But it doesn't stop the reality of life smacking us in the face.

John Piper again says this, he says, when something drops into your life that seems to threaten your future, remember this. The first shockwaves of the bomb are not sin. The real danger is yielding to them.

Giving in, putting up no spiritual fight. And the root of that surrender is unbelief. A failure to fight for faith in future grace. A failure to cherish all that God promises to be for us in Jesus.

[39 : 54] Now, hear it again. The first reaction to those, that text message you receive that drops your heart into your gut. That news that you never thought would come your way when it finally hits.

Grief and sorrow are perfectly fine and good and godly to have. And then, at some point, we have to grab hold of the promises of God to steady us.

Look at the pattern of so many of the laments in scripture. David is saying, how long, O Lord, will you forget me forever? But then I went to the sanctuary. I returned to the house of the Lord. I will praise you for as long as I live because you have always been my help.

In Psalm 119, he says, I would have perished in my affliction were it not for your law. We have to look to what's coming. We have to be reminded of the promises that are for us in this word of truth.

The gospel sustains us. We are kept and we are sealed by the promised Holy Spirit. HB is wonderfully helpful. He says, if you belong to Jesus Christ, you are richly blessed beyond measure.

[41:00] Now, I did not say that you will always feel blessed. The fact is that there will be times when you will feel abandoned, frustrated, hurt, neglected, and overwhelmed.

Anything but blessed. But your changing feelings have absolutely no effect on the reality, prosperity, and security of your blessed position in Christ.

And when you know this, friends, your life looks like one of perpetual gratitude. I'm not talking about plastering on a fake smile and saying everything is fine because the gospel is true. I'm saying that in the midst of sorrow and in the midst of suffering, there is a peace that surpasses understanding. But when that happens, you don't even know how it's happening. I had a friend. Her name is Linda Redrup. Alan, her husband, planted the church with Bill 40-some years ago.

And Alan was dying of a very slow and severe cancer that was painful. And this giant man of God was wasting away to nothing. Linda was saying, I feel so bad because I can't help but simply be grateful.

[42:08] She's like, that's how Alan has trained us to think. Grateful for all the times that we've had together. You know what she did during that time? She read through Providence twice. The book was like 800-some pages.

And when I went and visited Alan at his home in a hospital bed as he's actively dying, first he made fun of Jim Donahue for his big forehead.

And then he went on to talk about how he's enjoying this new commentary on Genesis and how all of the beauty of the garden is going to be present in the new heavens and the new earth.

And he was so excited to get there. Wheezing in between breaths because he can't even breathe.

And in between wheezes, he's exalting Christ, glorifying God.

How does that happen? You hold on to the promises of God. They're real. And they're for you. It is a peace that surpasses understanding.

[43:08] We have to look to what's coming. The spirit will not break his promise. We are going to be kept as we hope in Christ. And this results in praise.

So what do we do? We study the Bible together. We confess our sins to one another. We confess our doubts and our fears. And we bring others in to our weakness. Because the beauty of all of this is that Paul just doesn't leave us with this wonderful theology.

Right? The first three chapters, he hits heavy on this is who you are in Christ. This is what Christ has done. And then therefore, there's that beautiful term. It's like, therefore, live this way. And it points to the beauty of the church.

God knew that we needed people. And so he gave us the church. It's always been a people for his own possession. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. Not because marriage is awesome, though it is.

But because you need a people. You need a people. And God knew that. So he's given you one another. To love each other and remind each other of the truths that are here.

[44:08] So that when suffering comes, you can grab your suffering by the scruff of the neck. And point it at the promises of God that are in Christ. And the joy of our union with him. I'm finishing up here.

All of the grace that we've received in Christ. And all that we are in Christ. Encapsulate all of these spiritual blessings that are for us. And so we praise him. We bless God.

It is good to actively glorify him for the things that are in his word. And we're going to end with, again, the homie Charles Spurgeon. And he says this. This is our response to all that we have received.

He says, sit in your seats and keep on blessing God from the first word of the sermon to the last. And then go on blessing God to the last hour of life and enter into heaven.

Into the eternal glory. Still blessing God. It should be our life to bless him who gave us our life. It should be our delight to bless him who gave us all our delights.

[45:10] So says the text. And so let us do. Blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Oh God, you are worthy to be praised.

You are glorious and you are mighty. And you love us. You love us and you lavish your blessings and your grace upon us.

In ways that we can't often comprehend. So Lord, by the power of your spirit, help us to comprehend with a fresh joy the blessings that we have received in Christ. We want to give the glory and the honor and the praise that is due to your name.

You are owed praise because of who you are. So Lord, by the power of your spirit, help us to do that. May the words of our mouth and the meditations of our heart be pleasing to you.
Oh Lord, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.