

Ephesians – The One Body of Christ “In Christ” Ephesians 1:3-14

Before our prayer of illumination. I would like to (without embarrassing them) let you know my immediate family is visiting. My parents, Scott and Donna Redd are here with us this morning, as is my brother Adam Redd and my older sister Anne Chamberlain who all decided to be here for my installation. I am thrilled to have you and I'm also glad to welcome Rachel and Ric Canada, who will also be participating in this service this evening. Thank you for being here. I know this is a big day for Briarwood. It's also a big day for our family. And we're so glad to be having this event with you. Let us now pray to the Lord to help us as we go to His Word.

Heavenly Father, we do lift up this time to you as the prophet Ezekiel shows us in Ezekiel 37. Your word is good, and it does a work in our lives, but your spirit is what gives us life. So, we pray, spirit, that you would attend to the reading of your word. As we sit at the feet of the King, let us hear what he has to say to us this morning in Christ's name, Amen.

Now, as the children are dismissed to children's worship, I'd invite you to open up and your Bibles to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. We are going to be reading chapter one, verses three through 14. We're continuing on Paul, who just greeted the church of Ephesus by saying, *Grace and peace* and now moves on in his blessing. He's not just blessing the church, but he now turns his attention to the Lord to provide a benediction to the Lord God Himself. So turn with me to chapter one, verse three through 14 as Paul turns his attention to the Lord –

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 in which he has, with which he has blessed us in the beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be the praise of his glory, 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.

This is the word of the Lord. Please be seated.

Well, as my family has continued to get to know the regions around Birmingham, we found ourselves yesterday morning at Oak Mountain Park, where we had gone and taken three of my daughters to go mountain biking, and we had pulled into the parking lot. And that's where we learned through partly just being busy and a little bit of dad's poor planning, we learned that we did not have a map to Oak Mountain Park. We had planned on downloading one, but now that we were deep in the park and we didn't have a cell connection. And so we got out of the car and we were sort of looking around and trying to figure out what to do next. And right then, Briarwood member and Elder Todd Carlisle walked up out of the woods. I'm not kidding. Todd will confirm this for you. He walked out of the woods and said, hey, how can I help? I said, Todd, you're going a little above and beyond in terms of helping out the lead pastor as he's figuring things out, but we said, Todd, we don't have a map. What are we going to do? And he said, don't worry, the trails are well-marked. There's good signs on each one of the trails, and you just head off in that direction and you will be fine.

And that got me thinking. You know, there are times when having the map is what you need, right? What does the map do? It shows you where you've been, where you're going. It gives you the context of the whole park. You can kind of see, okay, where am I operating? What do I need to know to get where I'm going? But it's the best case scenario to have a map and then to have trails that are well-marked, isn't it? And every once in a while, the Lord will just send you a Todd Carlisle who will come out of the woods and explain things to you.

So Paul is about to expound in his letter a bunch of different signposts. He's going to be giving advice to the Ephesians on how they can deal with the situation in which they find themselves now. But it's interesting that he starts with the passage that we're reading this morning. He starts with a passage that really is kind of a map. It's sort of situates the church in Ephesus in the midst of everything that's come before them and everything that's come after them. It provides them with rich context, out of which the apostle can then give them the specific instructions that he will be giving them over the course of the rest of the letter. So this section, verses three through 14, are a map, but they're a dense map.

If you heard Rob Loopers' excellent sermon last Sunday, he mentioned this passage that we're reading today. And he said, it's like baklava. It's dense, but it's sweet. This passage is dense, but it's sweet. And actually, having lived in the Middle East and eaten quite a bit of baklava myself, I can say it's not just dense and sweet, it's multiple layered like baklava. There are multiple layers going on here that we have to weed through. And that's because Paul does not want to miss a

chance to give the Ephesians a great map as to who they are, where they've been, and where they're going, particularly in light of the fact that they are, and this is Paul's language in Christ. This Greek term is *Cristo* Paul uses this a whole lot over the course of his letters. And we're going to come back to that in just a minute. But I want to point out, notice what he says here. He says ***this blessing that I'm giving to God concerns us, all of us who are in Christ Jesus***. So I want to draw our attention first before we go to in Christ. I just want to highlight Paul's use of pronouns here.

Notice how he's using the first-person plural pronoun he's talking about us. He's talking about us as a group. And it's to remind us that God is not merely saving us individually, though he is -- what many of us read the book of Ephesians -- and we've put parts of it to memory because it's got so many great verses. And yet as we're reading it, we're thinking of it being something that's for us personally. And it is. I don't want to say that that's not true. That's definitely true. And yet, notice how Paul, in this passage and throughout, will be noting pronouns as we go throughout the whole of the letter, more often than not is using plural pronouns. He's saying God is not merely interested in saving individuals, he is interested in that, but he's not merely interested in that - Rather, God is about the work of calling up, of creating by the word, of the gospel, of enlivening, by the power of the spirit The people. He's calling out the people and us. If your idea of the Christian walk or the Christian faith or your life journey and it does not involve you being a loving and contributing member of the body of Jesus Christ that is the US who are in him, then you are missing out on God's purposes and plans to save this world because according to Paul, if you have faith, then you are a part of this whole body called Briarwood Presbyterian Church. We are in Christ. This whole body is.

Now I also want to note something else before we dive into the *in Christ* part of this. Notice how Paul starts. He's using pronouns. He's saying, this is all for us. Notice what he says. Like many of the apostles, when they talk about the blessings that we have in Jesus, when they talk about Jesus himself, notice how there's no caveat. They don't have any exceptions. When they talk about the blessings that we have in Jesus, they don't come and say, well, you get a little bit, you get some of this, you get a part of that. More often than not, they have no exceptions, no qualifications, no caveats to the blessings that we have if we are in Christ and the blessings that we have in Christ. And notice how Paul says it here, he says, ***if you are in Christ, then every blessing in the heavenlies is yours***. Every blessing in the throne room of God is yours. If you were to go into the heavenly assembly, it's called the Assembly of God, the heavenly council in the heavens where you walk in and you're in the throne room and you're surrounded by the cherubim and Seraphim who are worshiping and ministering to the Lord, and the angels who are bringing their reports before the Lord. If you were to go there and you were to see the blessings there, Paul says, ***every single one of those blessings would be yours in Christ Jesus***. There's nothing left out. There's nothing that's kept apart from you. There's no exception.

There's no caveat, there's no outlier. We have all of the spiritual blessings in Christ. So I just want to start with that.

First, notice he's talking about us as a group. He's talking about the church of Ephesus as a group. And he's saying, and if you are in Christ, then you have every spiritual blessings, and you can pass every spiritual blessing that you can possibly imagine in the heavenlies, and it is yours in Christ. And then what he does is he goes on to lay out four of these blessings, four of the things that you can do, enjoy if you are in Christ. And this is not an exhaustive list that he provides us with here. This is drawn to Paul's attention in this part of the letter, and it will be informed by what he writes elsewhere in the letter. But we go to other parts in other writings of Paul, and he'll given us a different list of things. But this is an important constitutive list. It makes up what we have in Christ. But this is a part of every one of those spiritual blessings that we enjoy. So now let's notice this as well. The list that he gives us of these four things are organized around the idea of being in Christ. It's a matter of fact. If we go through this passage verses 3 through 14, you see, he keeps saying *in him, in him, in him, in him* you have your adoption, *in him* you have your redemption. *In him* you have your inheritance. *In him* you have your assurance. And this idea of being in Christ is not just Bible language to say that we're associated with Christ or something like that. But Paul is using this very specifically as a specific thing in mind. It's what we call the *doctrine of our union with Christ* being united with Christ, something Paul didn't come up with. We actually see Jesus himself on the night that he is betrayed, and he offers up that high priestly prayer in John 17. Do you remember how he ends the prayer?

After praying for the disciples and praying for those around him? He ends the prayer by saying this to the father and think about this. This is profound. The second person of the Trinity, praying to the first person of the Trinity, says, ***Father, just as I am in you and you are in me, let them also be in us.*** You see that? You see Jesus himself saw his work in part as uniting us to him and as a result, uniting us, making us partakers. Participants. Though it sounds almost heretical to say, but this is orthodox Christian faith, making us participants in the fellowship of the Trinity. What a beautiful thing.

You see, being in Christ reminds us that we're not getting just a ticket to a party that we hadn't been left out of before. Well, we're not just getting keys to a kingdom that previously had had the gates closed before us, though. That is true. Those are all true things. When we are saved, when we are redeemed, when we are made alive in Christ, it's important to remember that we are in him. We are reunited with the God in whose image we have been made. Our union with Christ means that we are reunited. We are reconciled. We are brought back together with the God in whose image we have been made. It means that that deep longing that all humans have, because all humans are made in the image of God. And yet, because of the tragedy of the fall,

that relationship, that umbilical, has been severed. The God who we image has been alienated from us by our own rebellion. And therefore, while we long to be in him, we fail and fall short because of our rebellion and our sin. That's why our salvation in Christ is so sweet. Because it's not just a ticket back into the party. It's not just a key to get into the gate, but it is actually gaining the status of Christ himself, who was, as the apostles call, ***the exact embodiment of the Godhead***. We get to put his status upon us. What a privilege. And as a result, we finally, we finally find the object of that lifelong longing that we have had as image bearers, severed from the God whose image we bear. So Paul is saying, all of us, Ephesus, are in Christ. We've now been reconciled to God. Therefore we get to enjoy every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies. Because when we walk into the heavenlies, it's as if Christ is walking into the heavenlies. And when the father receives us, we'll come back to this in just a second, he says. If it's as if he's receiving Christ himself.

So let's turn our attention then, to the ways, the four ways that Paul chooses to highlight these blessings that we have because of our being in Christ, because of our union in Christ. So look again at verses 3 through 14, and I want to point out, notice as he goes through each one of these blessings, saying in him we have this, in him we have this in him.

We have this notice at each point he doesn't just say in him we have our adoption. But what he does instead is he draws our attention not just to having our adoption, but he draws our attention to the scope in which we have our adoption. I know that sounds strange. What do I mean by that? Paul draws our attention to when was our adoption decided for us? And from what? What source is the source out of which that decision, that establishing of our adoption, that establishing of our blessing came to us? What's the context in which our blessings were initiated?

Do you notice how he does this? Look in verse four -- he's talking about how we've been chosen to be adopted in verse four. And he says this. ***He chose us in him being in Christ, when before the foundations of the earth necessarily puts that in there***. Notice that your adoption didn't just start last week. Okay. It's been decided for you from back before the foundations of the earth. Look at verse nine. ***He's making known to us the mystery of his will, talking about God's eternal divine will as a plan for the fullness of time***.

Look at verse 11, ***having been predestined in him according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will***. Listen, Paul wants us to know what if we're going to know anything about our salvation? He wants us to know this, that it is God who is saving us, and that God is saving us because he wants to save us. That's all these references to his will and to his desire and to his purpose. He's saving us because he wants to save us. And that will that exists with God in all of eternity.

Notice what Paul is saying here. God saving us is not from like a specific moment in time, even if your salvation is a recent thing. So you came to faith a few years ago, or if you ten years ago, a few decades ago, you came to faith. Paul is letting you know. I just want to be clear, your establishment as one who would come to faith and be in Christ, that is grounded in a time and a will and a desire that predates the creation of the cosmos. Paul is saying that God, determined to save you out of his own eternal, perfect will. In other words, there was never a time when God had not already set you apart in his mind, both individually and collectively, as a church to serve him. There has never been a time when your salvation was in question in the cosmic sense.

Now, why does Paul say this? He's saying this to give us hope. He's giving us hope. He's saying, I know you had a whole process that you went through to become a Christian. But just so you know, I had already set you aside.

As a matter of fact, the Dutch theologian Gerhart as Voss, who taught in Princeton in the early 20th century, he's wonderful. If you ever read Vos, you'll benefit much from him. He's quite technical, so I'll warn you in that regard. But he's very confessional, faithful biblical Old Testament scholar. But in one of his more practical moments, one of his more understandable moments, he said this.

The best proof that God will never cease loving us. He'll never stop loving us, is that he never started loving us. His love for us comes out of his own eternal and perfect will. It is existed forever. You cannot lose your salvation because there was never a time before God had already loved you and predestined you to be saved.

This is a fact of his divine will, and what that means is that it cannot be thwarted. It can't be canceled. It can't be annulled. It can't be broken. It can't be discarded. We are very different from that, aren't we? My will changes all the time. I can wake up and be grumpy in the morning. And something that I like the day before. I don't like that day. My will is flimsy. My faith is fickle, my desires can turn one way or another. As a matter of fact, most of the decisions I make, I'm really just trying to please people, right? That's how we are as humans. You make decisions that kind of lead you towards trying to please the group of people you want to please. That's how we are. But Paul says this, your salvation is not like that. **Your salvation is rooted in the unchanging and eternal will of the father.** It is not flimsy. It is not fickle. It can't be drawn away. It can't be distracted. You can't trip and drop it and lose it. It is yours forever. Yes, God is saving us and he's doing it in accordance with his own perfect intention. And by the way, if you are not currently a believer, if you're sitting here and you're saying all those things that you are saying right now, pastor, have nothing to do with me, I don't believe those things. I want you to know if it is God's will for you to be in Christ by faith, then there is nothing that you can do. There is no way that you can outrun his salvation for you. There's nothing that you can do to keep him at

bay, because he has decided from before the foundations of the earth that you are his in faith in Christ. You see, this is a great, great cause of hope, and that God does this through what I like to call a thick sovereignty. Yes, he's at work in us and he's drawing us to him, but it's not a thin sovereignty. He's not a puppet master with strings telling us what to do. He is working through the whole expanse of the cosmos, including your own desires, your history, your autobiography, your thoughts, the way your brain operates. He is at work in all of the world because he is creator and sustainer of all of the world, and there's nowhere that you can go to thwart his will for your life. It's a fixed sovereignty. So let's draw our attention, having talked about the fact that this is all of us being in Christ, set aside from before the foundations of the earth, what then, are the blessings that Paul wants to highlight for those of us who are in Christ, set aside before the foundations of the earth. And I want to point out, he points out for and if you actually read through each one of these passages starts with in him God did these things in order to bring about blessings for us.

Let's look at the first one verses 3-6, who had blessed us in Christ. He says with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. Notice he's giving us the context, is giving us the scope of our salvation, that we should be holy and blameless before him. ***In love he predestined us what for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will.***

So the first thing Paul wants to highlight is that if you are in Christ, then you have been adopted in Christ. You are not just a criminal who's whose debt has been paid to society. Now we allow you to hang out around town. You are a son. You are a child. You are a member of the family. You have access to the home. As with our image bearing, there's a thing that comes out of our image bearing. In the same case, we see this with unbelievers in a different way. All humans want to belong. We all want to be a part of a thing. And when you're an unbeliever, you're seeking to scratch that itch, that desire to be, to belong to, to be a part of the group that you want to be a part of. We all have that desire, and yet it's ultimately unsatisfied. We can't satisfy our need to belong in the universe, not by family. Even though family is a good thing, it doesn't satisfy our need to belong, not by political affiliation. We try to wear the right T-shirts. We want to put the right signs on our front lawn. We want to wear the right hats so that we can show that we belong, that we're a part of the group, but it doesn't satisfy special interest groups don't give us the belonging that we yearn for. I know this isn't a temptation of Briarwood, but allegiance to sports teams does not give you the belonging you desire - you just take my word for it. Some churches are like that. Not even belonging to a church. If you are not in Christ, that won't meet that need. But when you come to the Lord in faith, you are not merely pardoned of your sins, you are adopted as a child of God, and you have been set aside to be a child of God. Just to remind you again from before the foundations of the earth, you see, there's a deep

human desire to belong, and our adoption provides us with the ultimate fulfillment of that desire.

The cosmos itself, according to Paul, celebrates in our adoption. So wonderful passage in Romans 8:19 where he says, the world around us, this, this pain and suffering that we see around us, this is the world yearning like a woman in labor. What you expect him to say for new creation. But he doesn't say that, he says, yearning for the return of Jesus, but doesn't say that. Paul says ***the creation is yearning like a woman in labor for the revelation of the sons of God.*** That's you. Creation. The cosmos. Oak Mountain Park is yearning for the sons of God to be revealed in this earth. And you are a Son of God. If you are adopted in Christ. But let's look at the next passage.

Just go ahead and look at verse seven through ten. You're not merely adopted from before the foundations of the earth. You have been set aside to be redeemed from before the foundations of the earth. Again. Look in verse seven, in him you see this again in Christ. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, with he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight from where? What source, making known to us the mystery of his will. You see, our redemption is emerging out of this divine will of God that exists forever. It's a mystery to us as creatures. And yet we've been given a glimpse at it because we have been redeemed in Jesus Christ.

Now, this idea of redemption, I know this is a common church term, and yet we should recognize this is a term that does exist beyond church. This is a commercial term. This has to do with a commercial transaction. It's a matter of fact, when I go to take my coupons in, right, if I was going to go to a store and I want to use a coupon, we say that we're redeeming the coupon. If I have parking tickets to pay, I go to the redemption office. I remember in our old state, that's what they called it. You'd go to the redemption office and that's where you'd pay your parking tickets when you got a ticket that you had to redeem. You see, there's a transaction that happens. There's a paying of a price, and then there's a receiving of a good.

Notice what Paul is saying here. Is that Christ, when he died, one who did not deserve to die was not a slave to Satan. Sin and death. But when he died, he paid off your old slave owner, that is Satan, sin and death, those to whom you had been enslaved and constrained over the course of your life because of the fall. He paid your redemption price. He paid your ransom, and now you are no longer enslaved. You are no longer constrained by the guilt in the power of sin, but rather, as we just read in Romans 8 during our assurance of pardon. Rather you have been made what alive and free. You see, our redemption has won for us a freedom in Christ, where once you were constrained, you thought you were free, you thought you were doing what you wanted to do, but you were actually living unto death. But now that you have been redeemed, you are living unto life, and you're now actually finally free to enjoy the world that God has

made without fear. Because death has lost its sting. You can finally freely enjoy the God of life, who has made the world and made us to thrive in it. You can finally enjoy it now because you've been made free. You see, redemption is the gift, but freedom is the resulting condition. So because of our adoption, we've been made to belong. Because of our redemption, we've been made free.

And now, thirdly, we learn that we are not merely adopted as children, but that we are adopted as children who receive an inheritance. In the Roman world, not all children received an inheritance. As a matter of fact, the inheritance was usually limited to the first born or the first and the second born sons. The idea being that that the daughters would go get their largesse from their husbands who they marry. But the sons needed to have the inheritance. Notice what Paul says here in verse 11, in him again in Jesus we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel again of his eternal will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. Notice what Paul is saying here. You are not just a child in the sense that you have access to the house. You are a child in high standing. He's not being misogynistic when he calls us sons or adopted into sonship. There's a way to say adopted into childhood. He could have said it's the term is technically, he could have said that. But he says we are these'll, which means adopted into sonship. But he's not being misogynistic. He's saying you're one of the children who gets the inheritance. That the father has offered to the son and inheritance. And if you are in the son, then guess what? You get the priestly inheritance of the king.

Now, we don't know exactly what this looks like, but we know from other passengers like the Beatitudes, for instance, what do we learn? Those who are poor in spirit, those who are meek, those who are in the son by faith? What do they inherit? The earth, the kingdom of God? Or what? Paul might say, every blessing of the heavenly. You see, if you are adopted, you are not just adopted as a child, you are adopted as a son, and you receive the princely inheritance. Let me tell you practically, this means that your faith is a faith of abundance. When you come before the Lord and you are asking him for wisdom and for faith and for assurance, which we'll talk about next, and you're asking him to watch over you and to bless you and to bless your family. Do not feel as if you're kind of trying God's patience. He loves to give his inheritance to you. He loves to give generously. And you can go in with the status of the firstborn son. So go in boldly. So because of our adoption, we belong. Because of our redemption. We have freedom. Because of our inheritance, we have abundance. Our God is not a God of scarcity, and we ought not live out of a scarcity mindset. Our God is a God of abundance.

Lastly, he tells us that we are sealed. The Ephesians, like us, might ask, well, how do I know if I am in Christ? How do I get to know if I am a recipient of these blessings of which you speak, Paul? And he says this, look at verse 13, in Him again, in Christ you also when you heard the

word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you heard it, you believed in him and 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. So notice what Paul ends with his fourth blessing of the every blessing. It's one of assurance. It's having the Holy Spirit as a kind of seal on our salvation. It reminds us of what Christ prayed when he was praying to the Father in John 17. Make them one with us, like you and I are one. Let them also be in us. And we might say, well, how? How, how, Lord, are you going to make us one with you? And it's only then that we hear that he has to go send another. If you remember that time in between the resurrection from the dead and the Ascension, Jesus has this interesting interaction with many of his apostles where they come to him and they want to hold on to him and keep him with them. Understandably, they thought they'd lost him, and now he's back and better than ever, because he's in his resurrected form and they want to hold on to him. And he says, you cannot hold on to me because my work is not yet done. Think about Mary in the garden, crying out when she finally recognizes Christ and she says, Roman in Aramaic. She says, my Lord, my master, my rabbi. And what does he say? ***Don't hold on to me, for I must still listen to the father.*** He has to assume, because he has to send the other one. It's the last step in his initial work. He has to send the Paraclete, the advocate, the spirit who Paul calls the Spirit of Christ. And what is the spirit do? He is a seal for us in our salvation.

Now, I want to be clear about this. Think about what a seal is. You know, when a king is writing a letter and he writes the letter and puts it in the envelope, then he puts the wax on the envelope and he takes his ring, usually with his emblem on it or his image, and he presses it down into the wax. What does that do for us? For the recipient of the letter? Does that make the words be? Somehow the words of the King knew. They were always the words of the king. But what does the seal do? The seal assures the recipient these are the words of the king. The Holy Spirit and one of the things that he does, he does many things, but one of the things that he does is he is an assurance to us.

He is a seal on us that we are indeed in Christ. He assures us that Christ is Lord even when we're struggling with doubts, because I don't think we always experience the spirit in the same way. So even when we're struggling with doubts, even when we're not quite sure, that does not mean that the spirit is not at work. I might struggle, I might wrestle with doubts. And yet the spirit is at work, says Paul, confirming to us the lordship of Jesus Christ.

You might say, well, how do I know that's the case? And Paul gives us multiple diagnostics to check on the spirit.

One of them is this it's found in first Corinthians 12 three. And Paul says this. ***Do you say Jesus is Lord and you mean it?*** Are you sitting in here this morning and you're worshiping and we're singing, Not I, but Christ in me. Do you mean it? Are you saying it? And you recognize those

words to be truth? Paul says, then you have the spirit. He goes so far to say, no one can say Jesus is accursed. That is to say no one can say Jesus is not Lord and mean it and have the spirit within them. But in the same way, no one can say Jesus is Lord. No one can worship and praise and sing in Christ alone, or can receive the benedictions in the name of the father and the son, and the spirit, and believe that unless Christ and His Spirit is within you. And that doesn't mean we all experience it in the same way. And it's a worthwhile thing. You, child, son, who is a recipient of the inheritance, that when you go to the father, say, Lord, give me assurance, Lord, I believe. I love it that Jesus gives us the story where the father and the son come. And the father says, help me, I'm in need. And Jesus says, do you believe? And what does he say? I believe, help me in my unbelief. And Jesus says, that's good enough. That's the kind of prayer I'm looking for. When you pray to the father, you say, Lord, I believe. Help me in my unbelief. May the spirit seal for me so then I feel it acutely the Lordship of Jesus Christ as a worthwhile prayer.

Let me tell you, beloved, the Lord loves to bless us in that way. He loves to answer those prayers. So these four blessings that we have been adopted and therefore we belong, that we've been redeemed. Therefore we are free, that we are have receive an inheritance. Therefore we enjoy abundance and that we are sealed and therefore assured. Those are blessings that are offered to us in Christ, and they are certain in our lives. They are as certain as the world around you, because they exist even before the foundations of the earth. And they are wonderful reminders to us when we are disoriented and when we feel lost and we feel alone. I love that Paul starts the letter before he gets into the details. He starts the letter with this great map to show us the way. And he says, remember this only Christian, that you belong as a child of God, that you are free of sin's guilt and power, that you are an heir to his abundance, and that your salvation is assured by the seal of His Spirit.

Let's pray.

Our God, we come before you in Christ because we know of no other way to come before you. And yet because we come before you in that way, we come before you boldly. I pray that these words, the words of this letter, would be pressed down deep within our hearts, that we would not only receive them, but that we would be transformed by them. Let us seek you, Lord, as children, let us rejoice in the freedom that you have given us through our redemption. Let us relish the abundant inheritance that you have poured out on us, and may we feel deeply assured by the ceiling of the spirit. In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.