

Sermon Script; St. Andrews Presbyterian Church July 11, 2021

1. “You’re spiritually blessed; you’re blessed; God’s power and blessing resides with us eternally”; perhaps what’s most important in our life is nothing but the spiritual blessing we could only find in the presence of God, our Lord. Don’t you agree?
2. I believe, that is the focal message we can find in the given passage for us today. *You’re blessed, spiritually.* That’s a great message; maybe I don’t have to say anything more about that.
3. But still, at this point, we need to explore that focal message a little further, because the message seems to be too broad or a little murky to understand quite well. So, let’s see what’s really happening in this short complex passage.
4. To begin with, the writer of this letter affirms that we human beings are spiritual beings, and we’re blessed in many ways in the name of Jesus Christ; to say the least, we have received our eternal salvation or redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. So, here is the dual point; first we’re spiritual beings, and second, we’re blessed because we’re in the spiritual presence of Jesus. A great message, I admit.
5. But, I think, and you may agree with me too, that this seeming dual point of the given passage is largely nominal or superficial; because the real hidden (indeed, not so hidden, but still hidden) point is that, listen carefully, it is no one else but God who *initiates this blessing of salvation and restoration of humanity and continues this blessing for us all.* In other words, it is God, it is not us at all, it is God who has brought this spiritual blessing of restoration upon us. It’s totally up to God!

To summarize, God created us human beings, then God redeems us from the fall and brokenness, and God still continues God's eternal spiritual blessing upon us.

6. Therefore, what's really needed in our life is nothing or no one else, except for God. As Paul states in the book of Romans,
For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
7. Basically, he is saying, "I only need Jesus, Our Lord, our God. That's more than enough; that's truly enough for life, and that's my huge, incomparable spiritual blessing I could ever get in this world."
8. Like many of you or all of you, I have a lovely and saintly mother who now lives in South Korea. These days, unfortunately, this holy saintly mother complains a lot to me living in the U.S. The key complaint from her is my less frequency of calling my parents in Korea. So, about two weeks, my mother called me and spoke to me over the phone straight, "Son, I'm so disappointed (of you). It's been already a month, and you haven't called me at all. I waited, waited; you didn't call. So, I'm calling you now." And typically, my only but very weak defense is, "Oh, mother, I was just about to call you, then you called me. Thank you!" You know, I'm the baby in my family, having three siblings above me; so, my mother's love has been so great since my childhood; so I can't complain about my mother's complaint about me not calling often.
9. By the way, there is one thing I really like and appreciate about my mother . . . which is her prayerful life that she has kept for the past 40 years. Like any good typical Christian mother in Korea, she wakes up at 5AM in the morning, soon gets out of the house, and walks for 15 minutes to go to the church for the early morning

prayer service. My mother has had no car nor drive license whatsoever for her entire life. So, she walks in the morning at 5AM, every day, whether it rains or not, whether it snows or not. She wakes up, she walks, and she prays. And I know, because she told me, that she remembers me in the church in her prayer, and she prays for my behalf, saying, "Lord, would you be with my son? Thousands of miles away, would you be with my son? Protect him from loneliness, dangers, and temptations. Would you be with him and his family?"

10. That's a blessing; a huge spiritual blessing, isn't it? Isn't that all I need, truly for my life? God's presence and protection over me? Isn't that all I need, truly for my life? Of course, I may need financial stability, good teaching reputation as a teacher, wonderful colleagues, or great scholarly achievements. I know; I know. But at the end, at the end of all things, I believe, and you all know this already by experience, what we truly need is nothing but God's presence with us, and our love for Christ. That's what really matters for my entire life; and I believe, you already believe, the same applies to you.
11. There is a well-known Christian hymn you may know well by heart, and the song goes like "I have decided to follow Jesus; I have decided to follow Jesus; I have decided to follow Jesus; no turning back, no turning back." . . . I have decided to be in the presence of Jesus. That's what really matters for life, the song sings.
12. Of course, we sincere Presbyterians may not really love this song, because the song sounds very much like Methodist or "un-Presbyterian." In the strict Calvinistic theology, we don't get to decide to follow Jesus or to have faith in God; we don't get to decide. Then, who decides? Of course, it's God; it's God who makes decisions on our salvation; it's totally up to God because we human beings are totally depraved; so we can't make our decisions about God; instead God makes decisions for us all.

Doctrinally we call this theology predestination or the absolute sovereignty of God the Trinity.

13. Whether you like that theology or not, whether you're more like Methodist or not, however, there seems to be the most important fact or spiritual truth does not change in this song, which is, God loves me/you/us, and I really need this God, and we must stay in the caring presence of God; because that spiritual blessing is so much more important above all others matters of life. At the end, at the end of all matters, what I really need is God's love, care and protection.
14. Well, modern philosophers may not agree with us. Dutch philosopher Rene Decartes, who said "Cogito Ergo Sum," which means "I think, there're I am." (which basically means I don't really need God). German Philosopher Immanuel Kant, who published "Critique of Pure Reason" and "Critique of Practical Reason"; he basically said we don't really need religion, instead human reason is enough for good life. Then, we have Friedrich Nietzsche who famously said, "God is dead, we have killed him." Finally, we have French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre who coined the phrase, "Existence precedes essence," which basically means, "I need no one else but myself to know the truth about this world." (We don't need God . . .)
15. Well, they may have found some great truths about this world and humanity. But what can I say? After studying them all and meditating on their writings, and trying to live according to their aphorisms, time and time again, I find myself going back to Christ, saying "My Lord, I need your presence. I need your care and love. I don't get to be satisfied with myself. I truly and sincerely need you God, my love and my redeemer."

So, here I am to worship,
here I am to bow down.

Here I am to say that You're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me

16. My dear brothers and sisters, and holy saints of St. Andrews.

So, here we are to worship,
here we are to bow down.
Here we are to say that You're my God

Be with us Lord, and we will be with you. Your love, your care, and your justice; so much more important than anything else in our life; because

We're so much persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come; nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

17. So, here we are; we're so blessed this morning; this holy gathering of St. Andrews is blessed this morning. Because God is with me, God is with you, and God is with us, Immanuel; that is the real your name, Jesus. You're with us; and we're so blessed. So much blessed. Amen!