



# TRANSFORMED LIFE

## PART 2

### Notes

### Transformed Life (Part 2: Eternally Blessed) <sup>i</sup>

By Leston Blackburn

*Text: Ephesians 1:3-14 <sup>ii</sup>*

*3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. 4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, 9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfilment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

*11 In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard*

*the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.*

## **Introduction**

There is a story about a man who had to take a long voyage on a ship from England to the United States at a time when this was pretty much the only means of travel available. Although he longed to make the trip with the promise of starting a brand new life, there was no hope of ever being able to afford the ticket. It was simply out of his means.

But then one day an incredible thing happened to him. A wealthy man got to hear about his plight, and, knowing that the man had no hope of ever buying a ticket himself, out of sheer grace and generosity he bought the man a ticket.

The poor man was completely overwhelmed. Never before had anyone ever shown him such a kindness. So, with much excitement and no small supply of expectation, he gathered his few earthly possessions together and set off to the promise of a brand new life.

Now in those days sailing across 'the pond' was no mean feat; it could take as long as three weeks. Knowing that he did not have much money for food, the man scraped his last few pennies together and bought a few loaves of bread and a few blocks of cheese – enough to tide him over until he reached his destination.

Being mindful of the fact that he was poorer than almost all the people on board, he spent the bulk of the journey in his cabin below deck; never even considering venturing into the dining hall. It didn't bother him too much though; after all, he was grateful to even have a ticket in the first place. Who was he to expect any more?

Then the day finally dawned when the ship reached port and he made his way anxiously from his cabin with a heady mix of anticipation and trepidation. What lay ahead? As he was shuffling along behind the crowd of people disembarking ahead of him, he noticed that the captain was saying farewell to each and every passenger as they disembarked. When his turn came, the captain, a very friendly gentleman who always made a point of greeting each passenger on board, noticed that he had not yet met the man, which was rather unusual.

“Sir,” exclaimed the captain, “How is it that I haven’t yet had the privilege of making your acquaintance in the dining hall?”

The man replied rather sheepishly, “Thank you captain. But unfortunately I didn’t have money to eat in the dining hall, so I stayed in my cabin instead.”

The captain asked where his cabin was situated, and when the man told him, the captain exclaimed dismayed, “My dear fellow! Not only did your ticket entitle you to eat in the dining hall every day, but it actually entitled you to eat at the captain’s table!”

And we all go, “aw!” That’s a really ‘happy-sad’ story, isn’t it? We all agree that it was a wonderful gift of grace in the first instance and we feel elated for the man knowing that he had an opportunity to make a fresh start; one which would never have been afforded him but for unmerited grace. Yet we are equally sad because we realise that the man never fully appreciated the true value of his ticket and subsequently never enjoyed the fulness of the blessing and the opportunity that had been gifted to him!

How sad it would be to miss out on such an experience, would you agree? But here’s the irony; we often don’t understand the full extent of the grace that has been extended to us. Like the man in the story, we see this life more often than not as merely a journey to our ultimate destination where we will one day enjoy the true and full benefits of salvation and grace. Of course there is a sense in which this is true – great things await those who believe, things

that 'no eye has seen and no ear has heard' as the Bible puts it. But have we ever truly stopped to consider the full value of the ticket we have been given or are we spending the bulk of the journey to eternity cooped up in life's cabin when we should be enjoying a foretaste of heaven? You see, the gift of eternal life which is ours in Christ Jesus does not only make eternity possible, it makes eternity ours now! We are even invited by Jesus to pray daily that God's kingdom will come to earth as in heaven and that His will be accomplished in our lives on earth as in heaven.

The reality is this - whoever believes in the saving work of Christ's cross, whoever embraces His unmerited, undeserved gift of grace, has already received a brand new life, a brand new start, a brand new hope, a brand new future and a brand new destination!

What is more, we are *already* eternally blessed! The privileges of heaven are *already* ours! We are *already* in Christ. We are *already* invited to stand before the very throne of grace for help in times of need. We are *already* seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He *already* stands before the Father as our representative and advocate, pleading our cause. We are *already* there in Him! Let that sink in for a moment!

We are no longer merely citizens of earth waiting to occupy heaven; rather we have **already** become citizens of heaven who currently happen to occupy earth! We are **already** eternally blessed! There is no need to suffer from cabin fever eating cheese and stale bread when we have *already* been invited to the table of our Captain! But don't take my word for it:

*3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

Definition of 'has' = the verb in the Geek is aorist, participle, active. Not to bore you, but this effectively means, 'It has happened and continues to

happen.’ i.e. God has blessed you and continues to bless you with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.

Friends, let us not live in ignorance of the value of the ticket we have been given. We are already eternally blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus!

So Paul writes to the Ephesians and tells them 11 times in the very first chapter (11 times in the original text) what they are and who they are in Him. What is more, he finishes this chapter by giving us a wonderful assurance and guarantee of this already-life.

*V13-14 - 13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.*

We are already eternally blessed! We have already received the Holy Spirit as our deposit of the fulness of eternity that yet awaits. We have already begun life in the Spirit and can experience now what life in the Spirit is like. The balance of our lives here on earth are meant to be as profoundly impacted as was the case in the life of the early Church. We can already draw down on the deposit! We are already eternally blessed!

You see, it’s not simply about the destination – it’s just as much about the journey. You have already started your eternal life. You are already eternally blessed. Whatever you do for God in this life is already credited to your heavenly account as it were! You already have the privilege and the right to fellowship with Almighty God through Christ and by the Spirit!

I don’t know if this has already dawned on you, but you have already started your eternal life the moment you became born again!

J Jeffrey Smead tells a rather amusing story that helps illustrate how we can sometimes live oblivious of the 'already-blessings-of-God' within:

One night a wife found her husband standing over their infant's crib.

As she watched him looking down at their very first child, she saw on his face a mixture of emotions: disbelief, delight, amazement, scepticism and enchantment.

Touched by this unusual display and the deep emotions it aroused, with eyes glistening she slipped her arm around her husband.

"A penny for your thoughts," she said.

"It's amazing!" he replied. "It's just amazing."

She was so touched by his wonder – that is, until he continued;

"I just don't see how anybody could make a cot like that for only £66.95!"<sup>iii</sup>

We laugh, but you know, I think that is kind of how we live our Cristian lives most of the time – aware of the great miracle without, what awaits us, but ignorant of the great miracle within (who indwells us and what this implies)! You are already eternally blessed!

Friends, being eternally blessed doesn't mean having to wait until we reach our destination; it's about learning to embrace the new life in the Spirit that we have already started; we are already *in Christ* and He is already *in us* by His Precious Holy Spirit! We can and should hear God as did the early believers, walk with God as did the people of the book of Acts, experience God as did the early disciples. The things God did through them are the things God longs to do through us.

We are already eternally blessed! Don't be so blind to the true value of your ticket that you spend the rest of the journey cooped up in your cabin, living beneath who you already are in Christ. You are already eternally blessed! You are already seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus! You are already as loved and valued by God as you will ever be. Yes, we may still be some way from our final destination, but the journey has already begun. We are already new! We are simply getting closer day by day to becoming complete! So my heart's cry to you is this: don't miss out on what is already rightfully yours in Him. You are already eternally blessed.

But just what does this mean? Well, let's consider a few wonderful, liberating truths together:

### **You are already chosen in Him**

You are not an accident. You were made on purpose for a purpose! God chose a purpose for you that predated your birth.

*1:4 - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*

*Again in 2:10 - For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

When you give your life to Jesus Christ, you miraculously pass from death to life. You are born again, born anew. You begin a brand new eternal life in Him.

Just like the man who received the ticket to board the ship by an absolute act of grace and kindness, so we begin this new life, this brand new journey into the brand new us by the absolute grace and kindness of Christ our Saviour. We don't have to try and strive to earn what is already ours and what we could never earn in the first place. Dead people cannot earn new life – it is only a living God's to give in the first place!

If you have surrendered your life to Christ, you are already chosen in Him.

### You are already adopted in Christ

*In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will*

Here is the great news. As Dave Smith puts it, whether your parents planned you or not, whether they wanted you or not, there is a heavenly Father who has always wanted you, and who planned you into being in ages past! You are no accident! You are not the consequence of some disaster. However you came into this world, God has always had His eye on you to adopt you into His glorious family. His invitation to a brand new life has always been at the ready.

### God predestined you for adoption to full son-ship!

*Romans 8:14-17 - For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

I certainly know this to be true of my life. At a time in my walk when I was living far from God, I cried out to God and asked for His forgiveness, but for weeks it felt to me as if there was no possible way God could forgive me. Then one night I had the most wonderful dream. I saw the outline of the Lord and tried to call out to Him, but I couldn't speak. Then it is as if a voice spoke from within me, saying, "Abba! Father!" I woke up overwhelmed, but not fully understanding what this meant until three weeks later, while reading Romans

8, I came across the verse – “You are no longer slaves but sons, and heirs according to His promise. And it is the Spirit within you who cries out, “Abba! Father!” The rest was history! I knew my new identity! Eternity had come to me!

Now you may be saying, “Oh I wish I could have had a dream like that! I wish I could know God’s forgiveness in that way!” I want to say to you; “Come out of the cabin!” If you have already invited Christ into your life, you have already been given full and complete access to heaven’s throne! You are already adopted into His family! He is already your Abba Father just as He is mine! You are already seated in heavenly places in Christ! You are already eternally blessed! It may just be that, like the man on the ship, you just don’t know it yet!

**You are already free and forgiven in Christ.**

*7 In him we **have** redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace 8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding...*

**You are already sealed in Christ.**

The mark of the Holy Spirit in your life is the mark of security, of protection, of ownership.

Paul uses a picture to help us understand this wonderful truth; a seal, a mark of ownership, if you will.

In Bible times, a seal proved ownership of something. A slave, for example, would be marked with a seal. The tomb of Christ was marked with a seal. The Jews were instructed to be circumcised as a mark or seal on the covenant between themselves and God.

It has already been done! Hallelujah! You are already eternally blessed. Just how blessed? Say it with me and let it sink in for a moment...

*3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.*

## Conclusion

So then, what exactly does all of this mean? Well, let's summarise as we close.

You have been bought a great price. You are already new! You are simply on the journey to becoming complete in Him! But here's the thing – the journey has already started and the Holy Spirit is the deposit that proves it! You are sealed in Him! You have already begun your eternal life. Every good work you now do, you do as you simply carry out what God predestined you to do! The rest of your life on earth is already the beginning of your life in heaven! You are already eternally blessed! Reaching heaven's shore one day will simply be the seamless transition from the deposit to your full inheritance in Him.

If you are in Him, you are already fully forgiven, affectionately adopted, compassionately celebrated, eternally empowered, and divinely delivered! It's now simply time to come out of the cabin and start living like you believe it!

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<sup>i</sup> Based on the series *Transformed Life* by Dave Smith

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<sup>iii</sup> Holy Spirit – The Miracle Within; A sermon by J Jeffrey Smead