

# God's Great Plan for Everything!

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[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning, Watermark. The scripture reading comes from Ephesians chapter 1. Starting in verse 1, we read, 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, the forgiveness of our trespassers, 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 are the first to hope in Christ, might be to the praise of his glory.

[ 1 : 48 ] 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 God. Great, Iris. You read that so well. Well done. Thank you. Okay, let's look at this passage.

And we're going to dive right in. It's a very meaty, meaty passage. Let's see if we can try and make sense of it. He starts off, Paul, verse 1, Paul, that's the guy who's writing this letter.

And he writes to a bunch of Christians. He says, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God. Okay, we're going to talk a lot about the will of God in a few minutes' time. Hold on to that thought. And he says, To the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Last week, we spoke a little bit about the word saints. Saints doesn't mean super religious people or super holy ones. It just means those that are in Christ, those that are followers of Jesus. And he says, To those who are in Ephesus.

[ 2 : 58 ] Paul is this apostle who is writing this letter to this small church in the ancient city of Ephesus. Now, let's talk a little bit about Ephesus.

Ephesus was one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire. It was the fifth largest city in the Roman Empire. It was the capital of the province of Asia in the Roman Empire.

It was given this title, The First and Greatest Metropolis of Asia. That was the title, which sounds a lot to me like Asia's First World City.

Right? Is that Asia's World City? That's our title. Okay, Ephesus, Asia's World City. But that's not the only place where connections with Hong Kong end. It was also a major port city.

It was built. It had a major harbor. It was built on a port. It was a major trading city because it was built on the trading routes in that region.

[ 3 : 56 ] And so all the trade and the shipping routes that came past would stop in Ephesus and do their trade. So it was a very economically important and powerful city. It was also a very well-educated city.

There was a big library called the Library of Celsus. It was actually built a few years after this letter. The third biggest library in the whole Roman Empire had 12,000 manuscripts and documents.

So it was a very well-educated city. It was also a very religious city. Just outside of the city of Ephesus was this great temple called the Temple of Artemis, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.

Ephesians were very proud of their Temple of Artemis. But it was also a very superstitious city. Everywhere you walked, there would be these little shrines and people offering offerings to Artemis, to the goddess of Artemis.

There's actually a great story in Acts chapter 19. There's a silversmith called Demetrius, and he makes silver shrines of the goddess Artemis that people buy and then, you know, worship and carry around in their pockets.

[ 5 : 00 ] And he gets upset because the apostle Paul comes to Ephesus and is telling people about Jesus, and now people aren't buying his silver shrines because they're following Jesus. And so he gets this mob together to try and kill Paul and the apostles or at least drive them out.

And this is what he says. He says, this guy Paul is persuading people to turn away from gods made with hands, saying that they're not actually gods. Which that's an interesting thought, right?

Anyway, we can talk about that another time. He says, there's a danger not only to this business of ours, but also the great goddess Artemis, causing her to be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the whole world worship.

So they're getting upset because now these Ephesians are hearing about Jesus, who they say is the one true God, not Artemis, and now people are no longer buying his shrines or worshipping there at their temple.

And so here is this great big world city, this trading city, this port city, this harbor city, an economically important city, a religious and superstitious city, lots of magic and spiritualists in the city.

[ 6 : 11 ] And in the middle of the city is this small little church. It's not very impressive, not very fancy. They maybe met in somebody's house, a house church, 10 people, maybe 15 people.

And they're facing opposition and persecution for following Jesus. And the apostle Paul writes this letter to encourage them in their faith and to encourage them to follow Jesus.

And so that's kind of what the letter is and where it's going. So verse two, he says, grace to you and peace from God, our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the next 12 verses from verse three to 14 are a tsunami of information and doctrine and theology.

Okay? It's kind of like drinking from a fire hydrant. It's just you, the point is to be blown away. Okay? And in the Greek Bible, these 200 words are one sentence.

It's probably the most complex sentence in the whole Bible. Paul goes all over the place without a full stop. And Iris did such a great job of reading it, but even our English, we've broken down to various sections.

[ 7 : 21 ] Paul just is overwhelming us with the tsunami of doctrine. Okay? And so let's try and see if we can pull out the threads and see something of the big idea of what Paul is saying and what God is wanting to say to us.

And I think there's two big ideas here. Okay? The first one is this, the blessings of being in Christ and secondly, the cosmic purpose of God in Christ.

Okay? The blessings of being in Christ for us individuals and the cosmic plan of God for the whole world in Christ. Okay? Let's see if we can try and make sense of that. So let's look at the first one, the blessings of being in Christ.

Look at how Paul starts off. He says, blessed be or praise be or glory be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So it's a statement of praise. He's worshipping God. All glory to you, God. And why is he doing that? Well, look what he says. For he has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[ 8 : 26 ] So he writes this declaration of praise. Paul is doing what we did earlier. We sang. Nate and Cynthia and Jeremy led us in songs of worship and he's worshipping God.

Why? Because of the multitude of blessings that God the Father has given or bestowed on those who are in Christ. Now, of course, he's not talking about material blessings like this great job I got or this house I've got or my great wife that I've got.

Those are wonderful blessings as well. He's talking about the spiritual blessings, those that come from the Holy Spirit that pertain to my relationship with God. Praise be the God and Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Okay, well, what are those blessings? Well, the rest of the passage is jam-packed full of them. Okay, let's look at a couple of them. Firstly, look at the blessings in the past.

He says here in verse 3 and 4 how God has blessed us in Christ even before time began. Okay, he says here, blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ even as He chose us, verse 4, in Him before the foundation of the world.

[ 9 : 38 ] So, I mean, that's a little mysterious. I'll give it to you. Okay, I don't fully understand how that all works. But something is saying before time began, before the foundations of the world, God chose to set His love on His people.

Now, I may say that sounds a lot like election, predestination, and that whole big thing, right? And you're right. That's exactly what it sounds like. And how does that work?

Well, I'm not exactly sure. But all we know is what the Bible says about it. The Bible says it's true. God and His sovereignty somehow arranged it like that. But Paul's point here is that God's blessings on His people didn't originate with me.

God didn't look at me and say, now, Kevin, there's a good guy. There's a guy I can really bless. Not actually, before I'd done a single thing, good or bad, but before I'd done anything, God somehow in His mind chose to set His love on His people.

And if you're in Christ, that's true for you as well. Christians aren't the instigators of God's blessing and a favor in our lives. We're the recipients of it. God is the instigator.

[ 10 : 49 ] It begins with Him. God set His love on His people. Now, one way you may think about this is if you're a parent here, when did you first decide to love your child?

Was it when they started to make their bed? Right? Or they started to obey you or listen to you? Or maybe when they were finally potty trained, no more diapers, now I'm going to love my child.

No, no, no, before they were even born, right? You love them. I remember when Claire and I went to have a scan. Claire was pregnant with Sierra, our first child, 12 weeks pregnant.

And you go and have the scan to see if there's any medical conditions, right? If there's Down syndrome and they look at the nose and the flesh behind the neck, and when you go, the doctor says, now listen, these are the odds of a Down syndrome baby at your age and everything.

And if the scan reveals that there's something wrong, well, these are your options, right? This is how we can terminate the pregnancy. And Claire and I said, no, no, no, we've set our hearts, we will love this child.

[ 11 : 54 ] Okay, there may be some medical challenges, okay, we'll live with that. No, we've decided before this child's even born, before we've met this child, we will love this child. Well, think about adoption, right?

You go and you want to adopt a child, the agency doesn't say, okay, here's five pictures, choose which one's got the same nose as you and the same ears and which one looks cuddly.

No, they don't give you a picture. And the agency says, we've got to tell you, there may be some medical challenges with this child, we don't know, right? And what do you say? we have decided in our heart, we will love this child as if it's our own flesh and blood.

We have set our love on this child. Well, that's actually Paul's argument. Look what he says in verse five. He says, in love, he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ.

Praise be to God and Father who in eternity past chose to set his love on us. That's in the past.

Well, what about the present blessings? Well, look what he says.

[ 13 : 00 ] In Christ, we've been adopted as sons through Jesus Christ. Verse five. Adopted as sons, welcomed into his family. Now, you may say, why does Paul use the word of sons?

Why not sons and daughters, right? Is Paul being chauvinistic? What's wrong with daughters? Well, in the ancient world, it was very common for sons to be adopted by high-ranking members of society, senators, and other officials in order to ensure that they had an heir to pass on their name and their inheritance.

You may remember Caesar Augustus, the first emperor of the Roman Empire, was actually not the son of Julius Caesar. He was adopted, his adopted son. And yet, he was the heir of Julius Caesar. All his money, all his wealth, his status, everything was passed on to him. In the ancient Roman world, sons, adopted children, like in our day and age, have full legal rights and standing as natural children and is.

There's no difference. Do you see what Paul's saying here? For those who have come to Christ in faith and repentance, you've been given the full legal standing and rights as if you are a legitimate child or son of God.

[ 14 : 19 ] In Romans 8, Paul writes this, In Christ you've received the spirit of your adoption as sons, through whom we cry, Abba, Father. The spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children then heirs, heirs of God, and listen up, fellow heirs with Christ, co-heirs with Christ.

Now, in some ways, that sounds almost sacrilegious. I mean, Paul's almost saying if you're in Christ, you are equal with Christ before God the Father.

Now, he's not saying you're divine, okay, I'm sorry to break it to you, you are not God. He's not saying that you're holy like Jesus, but he's almost saying there's something of equality that what Christ, the Son of God is, you as a son of God or daughter of God are a co-heir with Christ.

I mean, it sounds ridiculous, right, that me, sinful, broken, messed up me, with all my issues and all my idols that I go and worship and all my insecurities and my fears, God looks on me and says, my son, I love you like I love my son Jesus.

I mean, that's incredible. It almost feels wrong to say that. Oh, but we've been adopted as legal sons and daughters of God. And look at what he says in verse 7. In him you have redemption through his blood.

[ 15 : 44 ] Redemption means you once were a slave, you were under bondage, a price was being paid and now you're set free. So think about the ancient world, right? Someone's a slave, they've got the slave master that's cruel to them, always telling them what to do and somehow they are redeemed from slavery.

Somebody pays the ransom price and they're set free. Well, the next day the slave goes into the marketplace and their previous slave owner comes and says, hey slave, come to me, I've got a job for you to do.

And what does he say? You've got no claim on me. I've been set free. Whatever you say is meaningless. Well, Paul says here we have been redeemed through Christ.

In other words, the bondage of our shame, the bondage of our guilt, the bondage of our debt that we owe as a result of our sin has no claim on us.

You know that wonderful song we often sing? When Satan tempts me to despair and tells me of the guilt within, up where I look and see him there who made an end to all my sin.

[ 16 : 53 ] Friends, maybe this week you messed up, you did something wrong and Satan comes and says, you're such a sinner. How could God ever love you? Do you really think God the Father accepts you after all the things you've done wrong?

How could God love you? Do you know what you say? I've been redeemed by the blood of Christ. Your accusations have no claim on me. We've been redeemed by His blood. He also says, in Christ we've been forgiven of our sins, washed, cleansed, justified, treated as if we'd never sinned. In Christ, the record of sin has been nailed to the cross. It's been torn up. It's been destroyed. To justify means just as if I had never sinned.

Friends, look what he says in verse 4. God has chosen us to be holy and blameless in His sight. All of this is the blessings for those who are in Christ.

Chosen before the world began. Redeemed, adopted, forgiven, cleansed, holy and blameless.

Friends, we've been welcomed into God's family. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

[ 18 : 12 ] It's amazing. It really is amazing. Oh, but that's just the past blessing. That's just the present blessings. We haven't even got to the future blessings. Look at verse 11 to 14. Skip over 9 and 10.

We'll come to that a little bit later. He says, in Him, we, he's talking about the Jews, okay, Paul's a Jew. In Him, we Jews, have obtained or been allocated an inheritance.

That means a future blessing. Having been predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. Okay, I told you he's very wordy.

Nobody taught Paul to write short sentences. Zoe, he needs to go back to your grade 5 classes.

You can teach Paul how to write, okay. In Him, you also, Gentiles, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel, we're sealed with the Holy Spirit, a guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire it.

All that, what Paul is saying is, there's a future blessing that is coming for those who are in Christ. An inheritance. What's an inheritance? Maybe you've got inheritance coming your way, okay, one day.

[ 19 : 17 ] Some great uncle in the Bahamas, you get a phone call from a lawyer one day saying, your great uncle passed away, he left you an inheritance. What's an inheritance? It's a future blessing, it's a gift of grace that comes to you not having earned it.

It's not a wage, it's not a salary, it's not a consultancy fee, you haven't earned it, it's just a gift of grace that comes to you by the kindness of some person.

Paul says here, we've got an inheritance, an eternal inheritance that will never perish, it'll never spoil, it'll never fade, it won't lose its value on the stock market, okay, many people have lost a lot of money on the stock market, you'll never lose your inheritance, it cannot be taken from you, no one's got to break into your cryptocurrency account and steal it from you, the algorithms, you've got an inheritance in Christ that is coming, an eternal inheritance that can never be taken away from you. praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

Now, why is that? Why is it that you, or I, should be blessed with all these great blessings? I mean, I'm not a very nice guy, there's nothing special about me, sorry to reveal to you, there's nothing particularly special about you, I know your parents told you that you're special, but, but, but why not everyone?

[ 20 : 51 ] Why, why not the bus driver? Why, what's, what's different? Well, there's one little phrase that appears about 15 times in this passage. I wonder if you noticed it when Iris was reading, I just couldn't hear, I couldn't help but smile at the repetition.

Did you see it in your passage? Look at how many times he says the phrase in Christ, in Him, in the Beloved, in Christ Jesus. Look at verse 3, He has blessed us in Christ.

Verse 4, chosen in Christ. Verse 4, made holy and blameless before Him. Verse 5, adopted as heirs through Jesus Christ. Verse 6, blessed in the Beloved.

Verse 7, in the Beloved we have redemption. Through His blood we have forgiveness of sins. Verse 11, in Him we have obtained an inheritance. In Him you are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.

Do we get the message? The point is, it's all in Jesus. Every spiritual blessing, every gift of grace, everything that you want and desire and need in life is found in Christ, in Jesus.

[ 22 : 02 ] And apart from Him, you have nothing of eternal significance. Oh, you may be a billionaire, you may have houses all over the world and accolades and have your name in lights, but you'll have nothing of eternal significance, nothing that's going to last, nothing that a thousand years from now anybody's going to actually give any rocks about.

Okay? Nobody's going to care. But in Christ, you have everything you need both now and for all eternity.

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with everything we need in the heavenly places. All this is because of Jesus.

Okay, that's the first point, the blessings of being in Christ. Now, to be honest, we've only just scratched the surface. I mean, there's so much more here, right? And there's so much more that the New Testament talks about.

Now, all that we said is good and true. I hope you can see it's in the Bible. I didn't make it up. But actually, that's not the main point of the passage. Everything we've just said is secondary to the main point of the passage.

[ 23 : 21 ] The main point is actually found in verse 9 and 10. We skipped over it. Look at how often Paul talks about God's plan or His purpose or His will.

Okay? The main point here is God has a cosmic plan for the whole of creation that He is working towards. Look at verse 5. In love He predestined us according to the purpose of His will.

Verse 11. 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.

In verse 9, the great climax in the gospel He has made 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.

What Paul is telling us here is there is a great big cosmic universal plan, a purpose that will be revealed at the fullness of time, the end of time, to which the whole of creation is moving towards.

[ 24 : 37 ] There is a cosmic arc for the whole of the universe that God is orchestrating together. So just recently we looked at the book of Ecclesiastes, right?

If you remember that. And we meet this guy called Kohelet, the teacher. And remember his worldview? What does Kohelet say? Anybody? Meaningless, meaningless. Everything is meaningless, right? You wake up, you go to work, you eat, you sleep, tomorrow you're going to do the same thing. The sun rises, the sun sets, tomorrow it's going to do the same thing.

Meaningless, meaningless. Everything is meaningless. Well, Paul here looks Kohelet in the eye and says, you've lost your marbles. It's not meaningless.

There is a great big purpose and a plan for all of creation. Nothing is meaningless. The problem, of course, is that we can't see it. We're blind to it.

[ 25 : 34 ] Which is why in verse 18, in the next page, we're going to look at it next week, Paul prays this great prayer and he says, God, I pray that the eyes of their hearts will be opened to see the hope of the gospel.

The problem is we can't see the great plan which is why we need our Bibles because we'll never discover it on our own. But Paul's point here is that God is not just this watch keeper God. He, you know, dialed up the watch and then he put it aside and said, let me just sit back and let life happen on its own.

No, God is working all things. There's a plan, there's a purpose, there's a narrative arc to which the whole world is ended. There's a teleos, an end point for all of creation.

And what is that great end point? What is that great big plan? Well, look at verse 9 and 10. The point of the entire passage and actually the point of the whole of Ephesians is here in verse 9 and 10.

It says, God in the gospel is making known to us the mystery of his will. So there's this will that's been hidden for generations. And now he's made it known in the gospel, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ, a plan for the fullness of time.

[ 26 : 51 ] That means when time reaches its fulfillment, and here it is, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and on earth. Okay, there it is.

Paul has just revealed the grand purpose of the whole of creation. There is coming a time when God will unite together in Christ all things in heaven and on earth under the headship of Christ. The word unite there means to sum up or to bring a summary statement, right, under the headship of something. So, if you've got your Bible, there's a heading. It's a summary statement, right, the supremacy of Christ or the spiritual blessings of Christ.

Paul says that God has set forth, he's enacted some plan, some purpose that will be realized at the fulfillment of time. And what is that plan? That in Christ all things in heaven and earth will be brought together under his headship, his rule, his leadership.

Okay, now I know this sounds a little bit philosophical, but we'll get to the applications in a minute. So, at the moment, the world, the universe, is in disconnect.

[ 28 : 07 ] There is a discord in the universe. Do you remember in the Garden of Eden, God and man dwell together, right? And in the book of Revelation, at the end of the Bible, it says the dwelling place of God is with man.

There's going to be this unity together. But we don't see this unity at the moment. The heavens and earth are separated. There's a discord. C.S. Lewis called it the great divorce. There's like a breakdown in the relationship between heaven and earth, God and mankind.

In fact, all the discord that we see in the world, racism, sexism, wars, animosity, that's just a mirror of the breakdown that's happened between God and man. It's a picture of what's happened.

But it won't always be like this. God is going to restore heaven and earth together. There's going to be a unity. That's why in Revelation it says, the dwelling place of God is with man. It's like a marriage.

The two are going to become one again. They're going to be reunited. Heaven and earth are going to be joined together in the one new heaven and earth. Reunited. And Christ is going to be the head.

[ 29 : 10 ] Christ is going to be Lord of all. Heaven and earth are going to be brought together in Christ, under Christ, in His leadership. Look at how Colossians 1 says it. For by Him, Jesus, all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, rulers, and

authorities.

All things were created through Him and for Him. And through Jesus, He will reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven.

Right now, Jesus is the head of this church. One day, He will be the head of all the cosmos, all creation. For all eternity, things will be united under the heavens and earth with Christ as the head and the Lord.

And why is God doing this? What is His motivation for it? Well, there's one more phrase that Paul repeats three times in this passage. I wonder if you picked it up.

Look at verse 6. He says, In love, He predestined us for adoption, according to purpose of His will, to the praise of His glory. Okay, we sang about that earlier.

[ 30 : 15 ] Jeremy introduced that song, to the praise of His glory. Verse 11. We have obtained an inheritance in Christ, being predestined, coined the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glory.

Look at verse 14. The Holy Spirit is our guarantee to the praise of His glory. Friends, sometimes we feel like life is so arbitrary, so meaningless, so random, right?

And Ephesians is meant to arrest the futility and the randomness of life and say, it's not random at all. God has a plan and a purpose. He is working the whole of creation together to an end point to unite things all under Christ to the praise of His glory.

Sometimes we get so focused on our little lives, our problems, our challenges, what's in front of us, right? Oh, that job promotion. I really need that job promotion.

Or, the soccer scores. What's happening with my team? Or, that social media post. Oh, I only got 300 likes and last time I got 400 and what's wrong with me?

[ 31 : 22 ] Or, maybe that text message somebody sends you that's not very nice and you get all worked up and you can't sleep at night and then you get all worked up and we get consumed with our little things and Paul wants to blow open our mindset and see, just take a step back and seeing the world is not about you.

That's Paul's point here. He says, there is a great cosmic purpose and design for all creation and it's not about you. Yes, you are very blessed.

We read about all the amazing blessings. Yes, it has implications for you but actually it's not about you. God is uniting all things together in Christ for the praise of His glory.

Now, we're coming into land. John Stott, look at how John Stott said it. I think we should have it up here. John Stott says this, How did we become God's people?

The answer, according to the pleasure of His will. And why did He make us His people? Answer, for the praise of the glory of His grace.

[ 32 : 30 ] Everything we have and everything we are in Christ comes both from God and returns to God. It begins with His will and it ends in His glory. For this is where everything begins and ends.

Friends, what's really going on in the world? What's the narrative arc of all of history? That one day all things will either be banished to hell or united under Christ and His Lordship for the praise of His glory.

and so what that means is that our little things in life don't need to consume us anymore. You know, sometimes we get so, I said fixated in the little things in life.

It's like you're missing the birth of your child because you're scrolling on Instagram, right? that's a really dumb thing to do. Don't do that. Nobody would do that.

Oh, but we all do it all the time. We miss the great big cosmic plan of God because we're so fixated on our little things and our little problems. Friends, God's great cosmic plan is to unite all things under Christ to the praise of His glory.

[ 33 : 40 ] And so as we come to close, let me ask you this question. what is the connection between the first point, the multitude of blessings in Christ, and the second point, the purposes of God in Christ?

And the answer is this. Let me see how I wrote here. As you pick up your cross and follow Jesus, as you give your life to what God is doing in the world, all the blessings of God will be given to you not as an end of themselves but as a foretaste of what will be your eternal reality forever.

Okay, does that make sense? You know, sometimes we look at the blessings and we say, oh, isn't it wonderful I'm adopted into God's family. Praise God, isn't it wonderful my sins have been forgiven?

Isn't it wonderful that I've got an inheritance with my name in it? Wonderful. But actually, all those are secondary to those come as a byproduct of what God is doing in the world.

He is uniting things under Christ. So let me give you this analogy. In the Ukraine there's been this terrible war at the moment, right? We all know about it. Absolutely disastrous.

[ 34 : 51 ] Just terrible. And millions of people are needing to be evacuated out of Ukraine. And so imagine this, at the south of Ukraine they say, there are all these children and women and children, we've got a great big ship that is going to come and evacuate you out of Ukraine.

All you've got to do is get to this port town, this harbor front and you will get on the ship and be evacuated out. And so these women and children, they leave and they get to the harbor and there in front of them is this great big cruise liner.

I mean, the best cruise liner you've ever seen. And there's water slides and there's basketball courts and there's golf simulators and there's endless food and there's movie theaters and there's like the greatest cruise liner you've ever seen in your life.

And they get on the cruise ship to be taken away and while they're there for three weeks they have the time of their life, right? But the point of the cruise liner isn't just to have a holiday.

The point isn't just to enjoy all the benefits and then turn around and say, well that was fun, let's go back to Ukraine now. Best of luck. The point is to take them to a new home and there they're going to be established and they're going to be given new passports and a new home and the new home is going to be set up.

[ 36 : 04 ] A place where there is no more war and there is no more suffering and there are no more tears and their family will be taken there and a whole new life awaits them there. And for them to stay on the cruise ship and say, I want to stay here because this is so fun is not the point of being evacuated.

It's a pretty bad analogy but the point is this, in this life God has blessed us amazingly, wonderfully, all these blessings in Christ.

But that's not the end of the story. The end of the story is God is orchestrating all things. He's making a new heavens and a new earth. There is a cosmic great big plan that God has got in store for the whole world and He plans for you to be a part of it if you are in Christ.

And the blessings that God gives you are not an end in themselves, they're a foretaste of what will be true for you for all eternity. And so we end off where we started.

Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing according to the purpose of His will with which He set forth in Christ for a fullness of time to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and on earth to the praise of His glorious grace.

[ 37 : 25 ] Amen. Let's pray together. Father, Father, as we've looked at this very complex passage with a multitude of threads and truths and doctrinal statements, God, the end result is that we get on our knees and we join the Apostle Paul and we say all praise to You, all glory to You for what You've done.

God, thank You for the infinite blessings that we have in Christ. God, for those of us that are not in Christ, I pray that You open the eyes of our hearts to see You and to know You, to know the hope of the gospel and to join You, God, in Your great big cosmic plan for all creation.

God, I pray that we won't be consumed with small, pithy things in our lives, that our lives won't be consumed with Instagram posts and other meaningless things, that God, You'll open the eyes of our hearts.

You'll give us a window into what You're doing that we will spend our lives, pouring out our lives according to Your plan and that therein we will be blessed.

God, we pray this in Your great and Your gracious name. Amen.