



Lifeline

...a prayer letter from John and Jackie

November 22, 2002



Dear friends,

Greetings again in Jesus' wonderful name! We are, as always, grateful to be able to communicate with you, and very thankful for your friendship. Whether you are a family member, a longtime partner, or someone who met us along the way and hasn't seen us since that time, we are trusting God for His blessing and protection in your life, your family, and your work.

Living in God's blessing...

There is a good foundation for our expectation that God will bless you:

1. The Father's own goodness and love gives us confidence!
2. Because of His great love, He provided a limitless blessing packaged in your salvation, available through faith in Jesus.
3. He gave great assurance of His will to bless by establishing that will in the promises of His Word, a covenant underwritten by the blood of His own Son.
4. He made it possible for you to experience all this great blessing through faith in that covenant Word and friendship with the Holy Spirit.

The promises of God are wonderful, and speak to your whole life -- past, present and future. According to His Word, you can expect something good to happen everywhere in your life!

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..." Ephesians 1:3

I like the word "blessed". One thing I know: it doesn't mean cursed! I can tell that "blessing" means something good! It means God has good in mind for you, not bad! Take note of the word "every" in this verse. The blessings must be complete, and they must be many! And, praise God, it says He "has blessed"! This means that God has already done it, He's already given all those blessings. You don't have to try to get Him to do it. You can simply receive what He has already given. I also like the word "us". I am simple enough to believe that includes me and you. And I really like the words "in Christ". This means the blessing comes to you because you belong to Jesus. It doesn't matter *who* you are; it just matters *where* you are! (in...Him.)

Now, about that word "spiritual". "He has blessed us with every *spiritual* blessing..." Frankly, when I was younger I would look at that word and feel a little disappointed. Now, I was not disappointed with what I read in the verses after those words. Wow! The description of these blessings in Ephesians were so wonderful they were beyond my understanding! But they all seemed...well, spiritual. They all seemed so...eternal. I

wondered if these blessings included the other things I was dealing with here on earth: things like finances, health, family, job, goals for my life, etc.

Eternity is the most important thing. Where we spend it, and what we have when we get there, are more important than the few decades we may live on the earth. Let's make sure we are on track for God's blessings for the millions of years yet to come!

The rest of the good news is this: the promises of God are not only for eternity in heaven, but also for here on the earth. Someone said, "I need God, not just for the "sweet bye and bye", but for the "nasty now and now"! Just dig into your Bible. There is a good promise that can be found for any human need.

All those promises can be called spiritual blessings, because they come to us from God who is spirit, by means of His promises which are spiritual, and through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Whether we are talking about eternal life and holiness, or healing, financial help and family problems, God has a provision for us, and it comes to us spiritually. The provision comes through the promises, instruction, and commands in His Word. This Word is spiritual in nature, and so is our relationship with the Holy Spirit. In other words, there is a spiritual blessing already provided for every area of your life!

I suggest to you that God's provision covers everything you need in this life as well as in the next life.

"...His power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness..." Everything. 2 Peter 1:3

Here are some notes on Eph. 1:3 from classic authors:

1. *"who has blessed us"*: "The believer is seen as the recipient of all spiritual blessings. Hence he has no need to seek additional blessings from God. He must, instead, appropriate the ones that already have been provided."

Wycliffe Bible Commentary

2. *"with every spiritual blessing"*: this is "every possible blessing for time and eternity which the Spirit has to bestow."

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown

3. *"in the heavenly places"*: "this phrase occurs only in Ephesians. It is found five times - Eph 1:3,20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12. The word *places* is not in the original. Here it denotes the spheres or realms of our association in Christ. We are not yet actually in heaven, but our calling is heavenly; the power for our daily living is heavenly; God's provision is heavenly."

Wycliffe Bible Commentary

(over)

Here then is the J. Matthews translation of Eph. 1:3:

"God has already provided for us every needed blessing because we are joined to Christ. These blessings come to us through the Holy Spirit, and are experienced in His presence – the heavenly places."

In simple terms, two things are necessary to live in the lavish and abundant blessings of God:

1. We must know what is available. You probably won't receive something from God that you don't know about, understand, or believe.

2. We must know how to appropriate those blessings.

God has provided His blessings, but we will not automatically experience the blessings. God's promises are all dependent on our living in a relationship with Him and with those around us, according to the conditions that He established for those relationships.

...to be continued.

In upcoming letters, we hope to look more at what is available from God, and how to appropriate His wonderful blessings. And we want to help you to know what to do when everything goes wrong, and the blessing seems far away!

Meanwhile, here is a fresh update from Ukraine, from our good friend pastor Jeff Orluck who arrived in Krivoy Rog last week.

Hi John and Jackie! (from Jeff in Krivoy Rog on Nov. 19):

'Well so far, all the activity on and under the surface here seems to be good. There's tremendous momentum among the pastors, students and, it seems, in the whole church. In the last three months, 49 churches have been planted in the villages. Plans are under way for 12 more before the end of November and 35 more in December. Offerings were taken in the churches on Sunday. In Gregori's church 3500 grievnas were given. (about \$750 US) Combined with the offerings of the daughter churches it totalled \$1000 US. The pastors who are working in the villages were not required to take such an offering, but they all did.

"Gregori did some math with the plan that you and he worked out and figured that they would reach all 23,000 villages in 58.5 years. To speed up that process he calculated that they would need \$10,000 per month to salary enough church planters. Since this seemed impossible to him, he began to ask the Lord for another way. God told him to read Luke 9:1-6 - "Take no extra bag, money, sandals, etc." He brought this scripture to some of the pastors and the concept was received cautiously. But during the Pastors training conference God has been kicking out the strongholds in our minds around His provision for the ministry. Faith is rising in extraordinary levels - but even more amazing - as we have been reading Luke 9 and dreaming about the reality of those instructions we are hearing reports of young men and women who are doing this very thing!

"One young woman in Kupinsk has planted 6 village churches. She finds that in each village as families are touched by the power of God, they want to honor and bless her with meals beyond their normal means. In every village they are

feeding her and giving her food to take home. Pastor Anatoli has shared that as he has taught on tithing, faith is released in his people and their giving is great! Right now he has 5 pensioners who are giving so much that they are providing every month for all of his family's needs. There is a new understanding and faith arising that these men and women of God can make their living from the gospel. (*In Ukraine, this is a huge step!*)

"Of course, Gregori is continuing to carry the burden of helping all these pastors as much as he can. As he planned to distribute the offering among the pastors, he determined that they needed 9,000 grievnas to support the current church planting work. That's beyond the offering that came in but He is giving it to them anyway from whatever other funds he has available, perhaps using some money that came through you and from J. K. He expects to need this much again in December.

"By the way, the village church count does not include the work of Bible College students who are, perhaps, even more on fire than the pastors. They are also going into villages without financial help, and seeing miraculous works of power and many people being saved. One young woman who is going is only 20 years old. Another young woman is only 7 months old in the Lord. She is going with her brother who is only 3 months old in the Lord. I could go on and on. There is more to tell but I'll send another letter soon.

"By the way, Gregori received an e-mail from the brothers in Armenia. They are asking when I am coming. Apparently he has already told them that I would be coming?! Hallelujah!

"Gregori is concerned about Valodia in Kharkov. I think we will be going there tomorrow."

Blessings, Jeff

Its a time for thanksgiving!

In America, we will celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving with turkey and the trimmings. Pray that as Americans we will celebrate with true thanksgiving to God. This year seems even more a time to be thankful -- for the privilege of life itself, for the simple joys of having family and friends, and hope for the future that comes from resting in the Father's love and the Father's Word.

And we give the Lord thanks for you. May your life be completely overtaken with the blessing of God that comes from living in His presence and giving it away to others! May all of us, more and more, become a greater blessing to those near us, and to those far away from God.

With love,

John and Jackie

Prayer needs:

- 1) *We are planning a return to Ukraine in mid-January.*
- 2) *For the strengthening of the home base of Scarlet Thread.*
- 3) *For friends of Scarlet Thread to experience His abundance!*
- 4) *For more ministers and mission teams to go, go, go!*
- 5) *For progress in writing and publishing.*
- 6) *For our personal support. Every month takes a miracle.*

Remember: for tax purposes, write checks to "Scarlet Thread Ministries"

63 105th Lane N.W., Coon Rapids, MN 55448 Tel: 763-755-6612 Fax: 763-755-2045 E-mail: ScarletThreadInc@cs.com