

The Lord's Portion

Deuteronomy 32:9, Ephesians 1:3-14

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

As frosted air forces its way into our lungs and our teeth chatter as we jar our frozen car door open in the darkness of the morning, we can't help but feel a tidal wave of depression consume our soul. How long will it be until the sun produces enough radiant heat to not only melt our snow-packed, ice covered roads but also warm the cackles of our hearts? If the cold was not enough to freeze and paralyze our lives, Christmas is over and now we must face the reality that the "stuff" we purchased to help escape the pain and sorrows of life have only succeeded in leaving us drowning in a mountain of debt. While this description of January might seem melodramatic for some, for more than half of the populace it is extremely difficult to feel unspeakable joy during wintry trials and tribulations. Even though we know in our hearts winter will end, these "jars of clay," which are impatient and fragile, can't help but be a little more depressed and irritable each time the temperature drops, or snowflakes fall! To cure us of these winter blues this sermon is going to invite us to not focus on the hot sun we have lost but, on the Son, whom has blessed us in the heavenly realms!

Depressed, it is Winter!



One in five people fall victim to the winter blues.¹ People tend to get more depressed, anxious, gain more weight and have less energy in the winter months than during any other time of the year!² Going to work and arriving home in the dark, trying to pay off credit card debts accumulated from Christmas, the quickly approaching tax returns and maneuvering in the ice and snow packed terrain has left caused many to experience feelings of hopeless, self-loathing, isolation, anxiety, sadness and guilt. To further exasperate these negative feelings is the fact that death rates are the highest in the months of November to January.³ While 51 percent of Canadians will experience the winter blues,⁴ 5 percent of the population will experience a seasonal affective

¹ Taken from the following website: <https://www.everydayhealth.com/depression/the-saddest-days-of-the-year.aspx>

² Taken from the following website: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/annaborges/get-it-its-called-sad>

³ Taken from the following website: http://icecap.us/index.php/go/new-and-cool/winters_not_summers_increase_mortality_and_stress_the_economy_updated1/

⁴ Taken from the following website: <https://www.benefitscanada.com/benefits/health-wellness/half-of-canadian-workers-experience-the-winter-blues-survey-109071>

disorder which means a loss of interest in everyday activities that during the rest of the year brought them great pleasure.⁵ Winter not only affects our attitudes but church attendance as well. At McKees Mills Baptist church attendance is about 20 percent lower during January and February, the coldest months of the year!

Looking Through Another Lens

While we cannot snap our fingers and wish winter away, by looking through the lens of Scripture, we can feel unspeakable joy during the coldest and most fidget of days! In the book, *Bible and Mission: Christian witness in a Postmodern World*, Richard Bauckham defines a



metanarrative⁶ as being “an attempt to tell a single story about the whole of human history in order to attribute a single and integrated meaning to the whole.”⁷ The bible is the only story that qualifies as a metanarrative because only God, the creator and sustainer of the universe, can explain the purpose of man’s existence. “Not only is self tied to knowledge of God, but we know ourselves truthfully only when we know ourselves in relation to God. We know who we are when we can place ourselves – locate our stories – within God’s story.”⁸ Since

God knit us in our mother’s womb and knows everything about us (Psalms 139), only He can tell us how we can be happy in all circumstances. To overcome the wintery blues then we must look through the lens of Scripture that says we can feel unspeakable joy by remembering we are God’s portion by sovereign choice, by purchase, by conquest and by faith.⁹

⁵ Taken from the following website: <https://www.verywellmind.com/light-on-winter-darkness-1067434>

⁶ This is a term created and defined by the author.

⁷ Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 87.

⁸ Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1983), 27.

⁹ The first three points outlined this sermon were taken from: C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896). While the titles of the points were taken from Spurgeon most of the details behind the points were not his.

God's Portion by Sovereign Choice

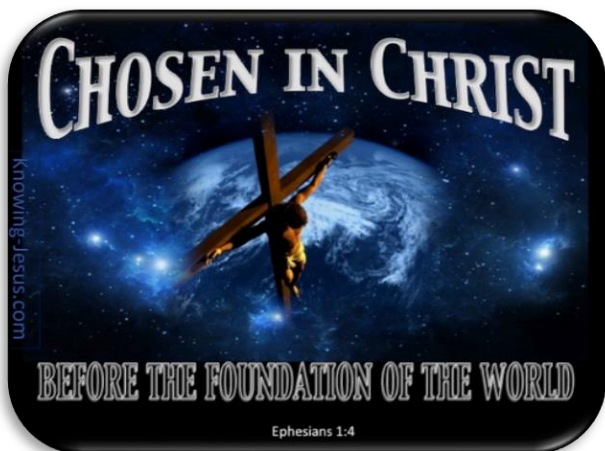
One cure for the winter blues is to remember whom oversees this world. God is to be praised, for out of His infinite wisdom and omnipotence He created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1) according to His pleasure and eternal plan (Ephesians 3:11). God is sovereign



(Isaiah 46:10). His heavenly throne is fixed and firm (Hebrews 1:8) and His kingdom rules (1 Timothy 6:15) over all things seen and unseen (Colossians 1:16), from the depths of the earth to the peaks of the Mountain (Psalms 139). His eternal power and divine nature can be clearly seen by examining His providential care of all that He has created (Romans 1:20-21). He keeps the earth on its foundations, the seas within His boundaries and each creature is given fresh water and food in due season (Job 38). When He hides His face from those who refuse to acknowledge His existence and to serve Him, they die and return to the dust in

from which they came (Psalms 104:29). He is the breath of life (Job 12:10). While God often allows us to experience many things by chance (Ecclesiastes 9:11) during these cold, fidget months, He still is in control and promises us the strength (Isaiah 40:31) to not only endure winter but to receive good things by His hand during this season (Romans 8:28).

Not only are we to rejoice that God is in control of winter but that the “Lord’s portion is His people” (Deuteronomy 32:9)! Even before human history began God chose to fearfully and wonderfully make us (Psalms 139:14) in His image (Genesis 1:27) and to divinely elect Israel as a light unto all nations (Isaiah 49:6).¹⁰ Ephesians 1:4-5 states the following concerning this spiritual blessing:



“For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love ⁵He predestined us for adoption to sonship ⁿ through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will”

Even though God knew there would be no one righteous and deserving of His grace (Romans 3:10-18), before time even existed He “elected” or chose Israel from among the nations to be His

¹⁰ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy*, ed. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 299.

covenant people (Deuteronomy 4:37, 7:6; Isaiah 44:1,2),¹¹ and in the New Testament He chose those whom had faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ to be adopted into sonship, holy and blameless in His sight.¹² Before we existed, God knew would openly defy His right to rule over us and our sinful hearts would be at times colder than the minus 20-degree temperatures we often face during winter. Despite our defiance God chose to offer us a path of adoption into His family. When winter blues grip our hearts and sadden our minds let us remember our spiritual blessing of being the Lord's portion by His sovereign choice!

God's Portion by Purchase

We are the Lord's portion by purchase. Being adopted into God's family came at the price of His Son's own life! Ephesians 1:6-8a states the following concerning this spiritual blessing:

“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.”

Out of His own will (John 10:16-18) Jesus chose to empty Himself of the glory He had with the Father in heaven (Philippians 2:5-11), to be born amongst humanity and to pay the ransom price



of being cursed on a tree (Galatians 3:13) so that we might be freed from the bondage of sin.¹³ While paying off our credit card debts from Christmas might seem like an insurmountable burden no one should bear, should we not rejoice in knowing that out of His glorious grace¹⁴ Jesus paid the debt we owed God for having sinned against Him? Think about it, had Jesus not appeased God's righteous wrath we would not have the privilege of merely confessing our sins and being forgiven (1 John 1:9)! And while going to and from work in the dark and experiencing and maneuvering on the ice and snow packed

terrain can feel like tribulations beyond our ability to bear, does these hardships truly compare to Christ whom His own people spit, strike (Matthew 26:67-68) and yelled out "crucify Him" (Matthew 27:22-23)? When the winter blues grips one's heart remember the debt Christ paid on our behalf and let us rejoice and be glad in Him!

¹¹ Arthur G. Patzia, [*Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 151.

¹² Peter Thomas O'Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 100.

¹³ Peter Thomas O'Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), 106.

¹⁴ Ben Witherington III, [*The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 236.

God's Portion by Conquest

We are the Lord's portion by conquest. Jesus patiently pursued our allegiance for He wants no one to perish (2 Peter 3:9). Even though the truth has been made clear to us through the testimonies of nature, His word and Spirit; the siege that Jesus laid upon our hearts was not won over night!¹⁵ Ephesians 1:8a-10 states the following concerning this spiritual blessing:



**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 fulfillment—to
bring unity to all things in heaven
and on earth under Christ.**

It is only through the gift of His wisdom and insight that enables a person to understand the mystery that it is God's will that all should be reconciled to Him through Christ Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17-20)!¹⁶ Based on our own

effort salvation is impossible (Ephesians 2:8-9) for without His Spirit revealing the mystery concerning Christ the cross would forever remain not only a symbol of beauty¹⁷ but also one of foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18)! For us to truly know God He must first draw near and reveal Himself to us.¹⁸ When this happens, it is only when such a person is willing to surrender their complacent heart¹⁹ that God opens one's eyes to the reality of the spiritual kingdom, indivisibly present and shining all around us!²⁰ To combat the winter blues just remember the day when "He placed His cross against the wall, and scaled your ramparts, planting on your strongholds the blood-red flag of His omnipotent mercy,"²¹ and rejoice!

God's Portion by Faith

And lastly, we are the Lord's Portion by faith in His Son! To become adopted into His family does not cost us anything (Isaiah 55:1-2) but faith in He who bought us at a price (1 Corinthians 6:2)! Ephesians 1:13-14 states the following concerning this spiritual blessing:

¹⁵ C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896).

¹⁶ Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 155.

¹⁷ A. W. Tozer, *The Racial Cross: Living the Passion of Christ* (Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers), page 3.

¹⁸ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God: The Human Thirst for the Divine* (Camp Hill, PA: Wing Spread Publishers), page 11

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 17

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 53.

²¹ C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening: Daily Readings* (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1896).

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, ¹⁴who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

Regardless of ethnic origin both the Jews and Gentiles (verses 11-13) are offered inclusion into God's family through faith in His Son.²²



Once this happens the Holy Spirit enters the person as a seal that God who has made one His “inviolable possession,”²³ guarantees one's inheritance and redemption. This inheritance is both experienced in the present in the form of the Spirit's power, presence, comfort, illumination and sanctification; but also, in the future when one gets to heaven where there is no more sorrow, pain or death (Revelation 21:4)! When one thinks about all the presents that one bought, and the massive credit cards bills one has, isn't it nice that one does not have to “buy” one's way into God's family? All He wants is our love and

allegiance and He will “bless us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (verse 1). So, the next time winter blues comes think about how wonderful it is to be God's portion by His choice, purchase, conquest and small price of our faith in a risen Savior!

²² Arthur G. Patzia, [*Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*](#), 156.

²³ Peter Thomas O'Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), 120.