

“Spiritual Blessings”
Ephesians 1:3-6
(Preached at Trinity, October 20, 2013)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. So far in Ephesians we've limited our focus to the nature of those Paul is writing to. "To the saints who are at Ephesus and *who are faithful* in Christ Jesus"
 2. Christians are holy and they are faithful, believing - ἅγιος and πιστός
These two words are at the heart of Biblical Christianity: holy and faithful
 3. In **Verse 4** Paul says that holiness is at the heart of God's purpose in saving His people. **Ephesians 1:4 NAU** - "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy (ἅγιος) and blameless before Him. "
 4. Ephesians is divided into two sections. The first part is largely doctrinal followed by a section that is more practical in nature. Doctrine always leads to right living. This two part structure is common in many of Paul's letters including Romans, Colossians, Philippians, etc.
 5. Also common to Paul is continual expressions of praise. **Verse 3** is one of His many expressions of doxology in Ephesians. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."
 6. Then Paul declares that this God worthy of praise has blessed us with all "spiritual blessings." Paul could be stressing that these are blessings that come by means of the Holy Spirit or he could be speaking of spiritual blessings in contrast to physical blessings. Most likely Paul is drawing this contrast between physical and spiritual blessings.
 7. I'd like to make this distinction this morning.
- I. God has blessed all of humanity with physical blessings
- A. These physical blessings come through Jesus Christ by the richness of God's mercy
 1. All of humanity enjoys common grace
 - a. We enjoy life – life was forfeited by the fall. Every day is an act of God's mercy and grace.
Genesis 2:17 NAU - "but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."
Acts 17:26-28 NAU - "He made from one *man* every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined *their* appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation, ²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; ²⁸ for in Him we live and move and exist"

- b. In this way Jesus is the Savior of all men – **John 3:16**
1 Timothy 4:10 NAU - "For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers."
 - 2. All of humanity enjoys the rich blessings of God's common grace
He sustains us. He brings the harvests, provides air and water. He blesses family relations – God blesses marriage even with the lost man.
 - 3. All of humanity share in this world's riches. He has given us many rich things to enjoy. Our generation in our Western culture has been richly blessed
 - a. Large homes – electricity, AC
Conveniences – dishwashers, stoves & ovens, refrigerators, computers, telephone (cell phones)
 - b. Amazing transportation
 - c. Supermarkets, shopping malls
 - d. God has given far above food and raiment for our generation
 - 4. The lost also enjoy the blessings of God's mercy upon this world in displaying His beauty. God has given us five senses so that we can savor His goodness. We can see the beautiful sunsets, the flowers, the splendor of the sky. We can hear the oceans roar, the birds sing, and the gentle stirring of the leaves in the trees. We can smell the infinite aromas pleasing to the senses. We can feel the cool air on a fall morning.
 - 5. Sadly, the lost look upon and enjoy the riches of God's grace they fail to give glory to the One who gives them.
 - a. They become lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God
 - b. They worship the creature rather than the Creator
Romans 1:22-23 NAU - "Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."
- B. Christians are blessed with physical blessings as well
 - 1. David announced the blessedness of receiving from God
Psalms 116:12 – "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?"
Psalms 103:1-2 – "Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, *bless* his holy name. ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."
 - 2. God has given us many things to enjoy – blessings from His hand
 - 3. It isn't sinful for Christians to be wealthy.
Abraham enjoyed great wealth. Isaac also enjoyed great wealth.
Genesis 26:13 NAU - "and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy"
 - 4. These things are meant to be received with thanksgiving.
But these things cannot be compared with the spiritual blessings God bestows through Christ.

5. And Christians enjoy the beauty and extravagance of God's creation and glory in His excellence.
Psalm 8:1 - "O LORD, our Lord, How majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens!"
Psalm 103:1-2 NAU - "Bless the LORD, O my soul, And all that is within me, *bless* His holy name. ² Bless the LORD, O my soul, And forget none of His benefits"

II. Spiritual Blessings

Ephesians 1:3 NAU - "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"

- A. Paul describes them as having their foundation in the heavenly places
 1. They were designed in eternity past for God's elect people
 2. These are blessing that those tied to this earth will never know
Nor will they be able to comprehend these blessings. Only those born again shall know these blessings.
 3. Jesus told Nicodemus
John 3:3 NAU - "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." ὁράω
1 Corinthians 2:9-10 KJV - "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. ¹⁰ But God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."
 4. Paul now goes on to describe these spiritual blessings. In the Greek **Verses 3-14** are a single sentence, a long expression of the richness of God's grace.
- B. Paul describes these blessings
 1. Election – God chose His elect people – **Verses 4-5**
 2. Adoption as children – we have been brought into God's family – **Verse 5**
 3. Redemption
Ephesians 1:7 – "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;"
We were slaves to sin and Satan. We have been delivered from the wrath of God, the power of sin, the curse of the Law.
 4. Forgiveness of sin
Ephesians 1:7 NAU - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace ⁸ which He lavished on us"
 5. Divine Illumination
Ephesians 1:9 NAU - "He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him"
We have been given the wisdom of God.
We have an understanding of God's eternal purposes—the things concealed from the lost man.

6. Divine Inheritance
Ephesians 1:11 NAU - "also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,"
7. The sealing of the Holy Spirit
Ephesians 1:13 NAU - "having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise"
The Holy Spirit is given to us as a down payment of the glory that is to come

III. "Heavenly places" - The already, not yet

A. Paul describes these blessings:

"every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ"

1. They are spiritual blessings, in contrast to physical blessings
2. They are blessings "in Christ." In other words, these are blessings that come to those who are united with Christ. Paul uses the expression, "in Christ" over 80 times.
3. Paul also describes them here as blessings "in the heavenly *places*." It is from a single Greek word, and adjective translated literally, "in the heavenlies." It refers to the realm of heaven.
 - a. On one hand it brings us back to eternity where he chose us from the foundation of the world.
 - b. On the other hand the heavenly realm has present realities.
4. Where is Jesus right now? He is seated at the right hand of God.
Romans 8:34 NAS - "Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us."
Hebrews 1:3 NAS - "And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;"
Hebrews 10:12 NAS - "but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,"
5. In a very real sense, those who are united with Christ are dwelling with Him in the heavenlies. We have been raised with Him.
Colossians 2:12 NAU - "having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead."
Colossians 3:1 NAU - "Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."
6. We are already partakers of the spiritual realities of the heavenly realm even though it won't be fully realized until we are in our glorified state. It is the already, not yet.
Although we are not yet in heaven we are currently experiencing the wonderful aspect of the glorious hope.

B. The fruit of being partakers of these blessings in the heavenlies

1. It gives us confidence - God has prepared for us His glorious salvation. He has adopted us as His own. He will not disown us or allow us to be plucked from His family.
2. It gives us a heavenly perspective.
 - a. This life is not free from trials and adversity. Some are terrible. We know our home is in the heavenly realm. This present life is temporary.
 - b. This causes us to worry less and trust more. We are in God's care. Earth's distresses only cause us to draw nearer to our great God. Trials cease to be as intimidating as they would be if we did not have such hope.

Conclusion:

1. All of these blessings come in Christ Jesus.
2. Jesus is at the heart of God's great work of redemption and at the center of the Book of Ephesians.

Verse 4 – God "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world"

Verse 5 – God "predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself"

Ephesians 1:7 NAU - "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"

Ephesians 1:6 NAU - "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved."

Ephesians 1:20-23 NAU - "which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly *places*, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."