

Blessed in Heaven for Life on Earth

Text: Ephesians 1:1-3

Introduction:

1. Paul writes Ephesians around A.D. 61 during his first imprisonment in Rome (See Acts 28:16-31). Paul refers to himself as “the prisoner of Jesus Christ” (3:1), the “prisoner of the Lord” (4:1) and as “an ambassador in bonds” (6:20). Philippians, Colossians and Philemon were also “prison Epistles” written during the same time period.
2. Outline of the Book:
 - Our Wealth in Christ (Chp. 1-3)
 - Our Walk with Christ (Chp. 4-6:9)
 - Our Warfare for Christ (Chp. 6:9-24)
3. The theme of Ephesians can be summarized in the phrase “in Christ”. Ephesians has been given such titles as “the believer’s bank”, “the Christian’s checkbook”, and “the treasure house of the Bible.” Knowing our position and who we are in Christ is essential to Christian living.
4. In these opening verses of Ephesians, we are introduced to the author (Paul), the audience (the Ephesians) and the aim (the theme).

I. THE AUTHOR (VS. 1a)

A. His Ambassadorship for Christ – “an apostle”

Consider the word Apostle in its...

1. General sense
 - a. The word Apostle means “a sent one, one sent on a mission, a messenger”. The idea in the word “not only included the sending of the messenger but more importantly the authorization of the messenger.” (Hoehner)
 - b. There is a sense where we are all sent ones, ambassadors for Christ sent to a lost and dying world (2 Cor. 5:20).
2. Official sense
 - a. The word refers to one of the twelve Apostles of Christ, chosen to a special and temporary office for the establishment of the church (Eph. 2:20). The foundation is the first part of the building. It only needs to be laid once and then the structure can be built on top.
 - b. The qualifications for an Apostle are outlined in Acts 1:21-22. To qualify as an Apostle, you had to have been with the Lord in his earthly ministry and be an eyewitness of His resurrected body. Paul qualified as He saw Christ (1 Cor. 9:1), was one “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8) and was commissioned as the “Apostle of the Gentiles” (Rom. 11:13).

B. His Appointment by Christ – “by the will of God”

1. Paul was not a self-made man who entered on this ministry because he thought it was a good idea. He was Divinely set apart for His calling by God.
2. Paul therefore writes with Apostolic authority.

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II. THE AUDIENCE (VS. 1B-2)

A. The Position of the Ephesian Christians (Vs. 1b)

They are described as...

1. Saints at Ephesus

a. "the saints"

- i. Nine times in this brief letter, Paul addresses his readers as saints (1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18). The word 'saints' comes from the root word 'hagios' which means "set apart, holy, dedicated to". The word is translated 'holy' 161 times in the N.T. and 'saints' 61 times. The words saint, sanctify, sanctification, hallow, holy and holiness are all translations of the same root word.
- ii. Historical background: Wuest explains, "Paul took this word right out of the terminology of the pagan Greek religions. In Greek it meant "devoted to the gods." For instance, a Greek worshipper would bring an offering to the god as a gift. He devoted it to that god. Or a temple would be built and devoted to a certain god. The building was thereby set apart from any secular use, and separated to a religious one. The building was therefore holy (not in the sense of pure) but holy in the sense of being non-secular, and therefore religious in nature. The term was also used of persons who were devoted to the service of a god." For the believer then it means "a set apart for God person, a consecrated person."
- iii. A saint is "not a sinless person but a separated person – separated to God in Christ Jesus." (Harry Ironside)
- iv. The teaching of the Bible is that the believer is holy and therefore is to live holy (1 Peter. 1:14-16)! "It is not what we do that determines who we are. It is who we are that determines what we do." (Dr. George T. Crabb) "We do not become saints by saintliness, but we should be characterized by saintliness because we are saints." (Ironside)
- v. Legalism says "to be holy in Christ you must do this or that". License says "because you are in Christ and have experienced God's grace, you don't have to do this and that." Neither position is correct. The Biblical position is that I am holy in Christ and because of that, I live differently. In fact, every area (all manner of conversation) is affected. E.g. what I will and won't say, what I will and won't think, where I will and won't go, what I will and will not watch, what I will and will not listen to, what I will and won't drink, who I will and will not fellowship with and what I will and won't wear.
- vi. Wuest writes, "It is easy to see that this set apart position of separateness demands a separation of life in his (the believer's) experience, separation from the age system of evil, separation in his own sphere of life from everything

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that would interfere in the least from the worship and service which is due to the God to whom he is set apart.”

- b. “at Ephesus”
 - i. They were both “at Ephesus” and “in Christ”. The believer operates in two spheres: the human and the Divine, the visible and the invisible.
 - ii. Ephesus was a wicked place but they were holy, separated ones in the midst of that evil place.
 - iii. Phillips: “To be a saint at Ephesus was to be like a lovely lily in a stagnant pond. Ephesus rivaled Corinth as the “filth capital” of the Roman world.”

2. Faithful in Christ Jesus

- a. ‘faithful’ = means believing. They were believers in Jesus Christ and that distinguished them from the pagan, idolatrous city in which they lived.
- b. “in Christ” = the key phrase of the Epistle. These believers were in Christ and therefore were recipients of all the riches of Christ. Every individual is either in Adam or in Christ (see Rom. 5:12-21). **Are YOU in Christ?**

B. The Prayer for the Ephesian Christians (Vs. 2)

- 1. Prayer for Grace – “grace be to you”
 - a. The word occurs 12 times in this book. Wuest explains that in classical Greek, grace was “something conferred freely, with no expectation of return, and finding its only motive in the bounty and free-heartedness of the giver. It was also used to describe an act that was beyond the ordinary course of what might be expected. This favor was always done to a friend, never to an enemy.” The grace of God is infinitely higher as it was shown to those who were his enemies (Rom. 5:6-10). The word therefore means, “God’s kindness towards undeserving people” (Wiersbe). It is God’s unmerited, undeserved favor.
 - b. There are two experiences of grace in the believer’s life:
 - i. Saving Grace – experienced at the moment of salvation. Grace means there is no room for earning one’s salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). Think of it, we were bitter enemies, sinning against God and yet out of bounty and free-heartedness of His great heart, Christ came and died in our place that we might be redeemed. The Ephesian Christians had already experienced this grace.
 - ii. Sanctifying (serving) Grace – experienced day by day in the Christian life as God enables us to obey and serve Him. The Christian experience from start to finish is all of God’s grace. We are saved by grace and we live by His grace! It was this sanctifying grace that Paul desired for the Ephesian believers.
- 2. Prayer for Peace – “and peace”
 - a. The word ‘peace’ “comes from the root word meaning “to join.” That is, when things are disjointed, there is a lack of harmony and well-being. When they are joined together, there is both.” Through the “blood of His cross” (Col. 1:20) Christ “bound

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together again the believing sinner and God, thus making peace.” (Wuest)

- b. There are two experiences of grace in the believer’s life:
 - i. Salvation Peace – peace with God that is enjoyed at the moment of salvation. Romans 5:1 “Therefore being justified by faith, we have **peace with God** through our Lord Jesus Christ:” You will never experience this peace unless you first received God’s gift of grace.
 - ii. Sanctifying (serving) Peace – the peace “of God” ministered to us each day by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Col. 3:15 “And let **the peace of God** rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.” Philippians 4:7 “And **the peace of God**, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Peace is “a spirit of rest in all the changing circumstances of life.” (William Macdonald)
3. The Source of grace and peace – “from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ”. These virtues are stated as coming equally from both the Father and the Son. This means Christ is co-equal and co-eternally with the Father.

III. THE AIM (VS. 3)

Verse 3-14 is a single long sentence in the Greek. It has been described as “a magnificent gateway” to the Epistle and a “golden chain of many links.” Verse 3 marks the introduction to this whole section. Consider four truths about the spiritual blessings we have received through salvation:

A. The Source of our Blessings – “blessed be the God...who hath blessed us”

1. The Blessed One – “blessed by the God”
 - a. ‘blessed’ = “has the idea of someone deserving appreciation, honor and praise.” (Harold Hoehner) The word is made up of ‘lego’ (to speak) and ‘eu’ (good), thus to speak well of (our word eulogize). Paul is praising God for all the riches of His grace.
 - b. “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” = “Christ proceeds from the Father by eternal generation in a birth that never took place because it always was.” (Wuest)
 - c. “our Lord Jesus” = God becomes our Father and Christ becomes ours when we are saved.
2. The Blessor – “who hath blessed us”
 - a. In the O.T. God is said to bestow blessing over 400 times (Hester).
 - b. Our blessing of God is in word, His blessing of us is in deed. He confers benefits upon us.

B. The Scope of our Blessings – “all spiritual blessings”

1. ‘all’ = “God cannot give us more than He has already given us in His Son.” (Macarthur)
2. This means that in Christ you possess everything you need for the Christian life!

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3. Col. 2:9-10 "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. **And ye are complete in him**, which is the head of all principality and power:"
4. 2 Peter 1:3 "According as his divine power hath given unto us **all things that pertain unto life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."
5. Macarthur: "Because we are in Christ, Christ's riches are our riches, His resources are our resources, His righteousness is our righteousness, and His power is our power. His position is our position; where He is, we are. His privilege is our privilege: what He is we are. His possession is our possession: what He has, we have. His practice is our practice; what He does, we do."

C. The Sacredness of our Blessings – "spiritual blessings"

1. "Spiritual" is in contrast to that which is natural and material. It refers to the things of the Spirit of God, the blessings related to heaven rather than earth (heavenly places).
2. God does bless us with His provisions for our daily needs in this life but the greatest, most precious blessings are heavenly rather than earthly.

D. The Sphere of our Blessings – "in heavenly places in Christ"

1. "in heavenly places"
 - a. As Christians, our lives are centered in heaven. We are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20) and our names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20) and therefore, our focus is to be on things in heaven (Matt. 6:19-20; Col. 3:1).
 - b. Wiersbe: "The Christian really operates in two spheres: the human and the divine, the visible and the invisible. Physically, he is on the earth in a human body, but spiritually he is seated with Christ in the heavenly sphere – and it is this heavenly sphere that provides the power and direction for the earthly walk."
2. "in Christ"
 - a. This truth ought to captivate our hearts and minds. Christ is in us (Col. 1:27) and we are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).
 - b. Chafer: "To be in Christ, which is the portion of all who are saved, is to partake of all that Christ has done, all that He is, and all that He ever will be."

Conclusion:

1. Are you in Christ? Have you repented of your sin and received Christ as your Saviour?
2. Are you in Christ? If so, what effect is that truth having on your life? Are you living differently from the world?
3. Are you in Christ? If so, do you worship, praise and thank God for His amazing grace?