

Message: I Will Bless the Lord and Give Him Glory

Text: Ephesians 1:1-6

Introduction

- A. Today, Sunday, June 16th is a special day on the TRB calendar for 3 separate reasons.
1. It is the 12th wedding anniversary of Brent and Beth Everett.
 2. Yes it is Fathers' Day in this country, when we bless and honor our dads for the many ways they have been a blessing to us over the years.
 3. In this country and in countries around the world, this day is also celebrated by Christians as the Lord's Day, the first day of the week when we bless our heavenly Father for raising Jesus from the dead for our justification. And so on this day we gather to bless and honor Him for his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.
- B. Today we begin a new series exploring our Heavenly Father's disclosure of Himself to us in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. Paul begins by addressing believers in the region of Ephesus, which is in modern day Turkey (map), where the majority of church members were Gentiles.

Ephesians 1:1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are *at Ephesus* and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- C. After addressing them, Paul opens his letter with a major blessing of God that begins with verse 3 and (in the Greek) is one continuous sentence through verse 14, listing some of the most significant reasons why believers bless God.
- D. I assumed I'd begin the Ephesian series with the "reasons" Paul begins blessing the Lord, but find myself struck first by Paul's "practice" of blessing the Lord and his statement that this is what believers do.

I. Believers whom God blesses bless Him.

Ephesians 1:3 **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. What does it mean to bless the Lord, and how is our blessing Him different from His blessing us?
1. When God blesses believers He graciously improves our circumstances, our inner person/character, our destiny, and in doing so He honors us.
 2. When we bless the Lord, we do nothing to change or improve His circumstances, character, or destiny. What we do is honor him with our praise. Notice in Psalm 34 the parallel descriptions of blessing the Lord.

Psalm 34:1 I will **bless the LORD** at all times; **His praise** shall continually be in my mouth. ² My soul will make its **boast in the LORD**; The humble will hear it and rejoice. ³ O **magnify the LORD** with me, and let us **exalt His name** together.

- B. Notice also the example of Paul - this is what struck me. He is doing what Psalm 34:1 instructs us to do, making blessing the Lord a spiritual discipline or practice woven into the fabric of everyday life, not just in corporate worship.

Psalm 34:1 I will bless the LORD **at all times**; His praise shall **continually be in my mouth**.

1. Devout Jews made a practice of individually blessing the Lord within the every day routine of life, along with blessing Him corporately when they gathered for worship. We see in the Scriptures they would bless God ...

- a. when receiving a good gift (E.g., Zacharias at the birth of his son, John, Christ's forerunner)

Luke 1:68 "**Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,**"⁶⁹ And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant--

- b. When receiving answered prayer (E.g., Daniel prayed for an interpretation of the king's dream).

Daniel 2:20 Daniel said, "**Let the name of God be blessed forever and ever...**"²³ "To You, O God of my fathers, I give thanks and praise, for You have given me wisdom and power; **Even now You have made known to me what we requested of You,** for You have made known to us the king's matter."

- c. When bringing good news (E.g., Ahimaaz brought David news of his army's victory.)

2 Samuel 18:28 Ahimaaz called and said to the king, "All is well." And he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground. And he said, "**Blessed is the LORD your God, who has delivered up the men who lifted their hands against my lord the king.**"

- d. When observing God's blessing upon someone. (E.g., Boaz became Naomi's kinsman-redeemer, preserving her family land/inheritance).

Ruth 4:14 Then the women said to Naomi, "**Blessed is the LORD who has not left you without a redeemer today,** and may his name become famous in Israel.

2. The very early rabbinic writings of the Mishnah begin with the section on benedictions (blessings), and show how central the blessing of God was to their practice of piety. It was routine for them to bless God before reciting the Shema (Hear O Israel, the Lord your God is one, Deut 6:4ff) each morning and after reciting it at day's end, to bless God upon entering and leaving a city, upon completing construction on a house, upon passing by a place where God had worked a miracle/deliverance for Israel, upon seeing God's power in a thunder storm, etc.
3. While we know Paul and other Pharisees practiced such things from misguided and wrong motives, such practice is taught by the Lord to be done from a sincere, wholehearted faith in the Lord (Ps 103:1). This is what Paul is practicing, and what he says believers in Christ practice.

Psalm 103:1 A Psalm of David. 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;

Psalm 34:1 I will bless the LORD **at all times**; His praise shall **continually be in my mouth.**

Ephesians 1:3 **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,

4. If like me, you feel this revelation from God leaves us coming up short of what God has created us in Christ to be, then we have a God who is pleased to change and transform us from glory to glory.

- a. ... consider how different a people we would be if from the heart we made blessing the Lord a central part of our daily living by faith in Him. How would that make our family life different? Our occupational life different, our attitude toward our church and its ministries different, our view of our possessions different, our view of our present circumstances and future prospects different?

b. ... let's ask the Lord for grace to forget none of His benefits, to be thankful for all of His benefits to us in Christ, and to have a heart to bless Him from all that is within us.

II. Reasons to bless the Lord - He chose us.

- A. The Lord has blessed us with earthly benefits that are nearly beyond numbering. It is when they are taken away that we become most conscious of what we often take for granted. Sometimes when earthly blessings are removed from us, their removal can become so overwhelming as to become debilitating, And then we don't take pleasure in all that we still do possess by way of God's blessing.
- B. While our earthly blessings from the Lord will one day be taken away (health, possessions, youth, spouse, this mortal life itself), Christ through Paul has us focus on those spiritual blessings in the heavenlies that will never be taken away, and which provide us with God's immeasurable wealth of grace.
- C. Today we have time to focus on the first of these ways listed by Paul that God has blessed believers in Christ Jesus - He chose us to stand before Him holy and blameless.

Ephesians 1:4 just as **He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.**

D. What is remarkable about this statement?

- 1. This is a believing Jew, speaking to believing Gentiles, who were natural enemies of the Jews, God's chosen people, saying they were all together chosen by God to be a holy, blameless people before Him.
- 2. It is a remarkable gift to be chosen by God to be His. We all have experienced what it is like to be rejected, to be excluded, to not be chosen (E.g., for a job, promotion, scholarship, team, prom, spouse).
- 3. These Gentile believers were once excluded from the people and covenant promises of God. But now through the gospel of Christ they have been brought near to God through faith in Christ.

Ephesians 2:11 Therefore remember that formerly you, **the Gentiles in the flesh**, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands-- ¹² **remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.** ¹³ **But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

E. "Holy" and "blameless" refer to our being set apart for God in our conduct as His possession in this present age, as well as in the age to come.

Romans 12:1 Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and **holy** sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be **blameless** and innocent, children of God above reproach **in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,**

F. It is a transformation that Christ graciously and miraculously works His chosen ones through His Spirit at Word.

Ephesians 5:25 ... Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, ²⁶ so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be **holy and blameless.**

Ephesians 1:4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be **holy and blameless** before Him.

- G. When people in the world choose us for a job, scholarship, promotion, sports team, training partner, party, fiancée, spouse, it is because they see something in us that is desirable, commendable. Yet that is not why God chose us. He chose us to be united with Christ before the foundation of the world, before we were created to do or be anything commendable. And the only reason believers become holy and blameless before Him is not because of any self-transforming work but because of Christ's transforming work in us.
- H. There was no condition we met that moved God to choose us. He chose us unconditionally. God did not peer into the future to learn who would respond to the gospel with faith in Christ and then choose those persons. God does not learn - He is all knowing, and knows the future because He appoints all that happens in the future. His choice or election of us was simply according to the counsel of His own will and His good pleasure. His choice, election of us to be His holy, blameless people was unconditional.

Conclusion

- A. We would not know this by our own reasoning - we know it only by His revelation to us in His Word as His Spirit convinces us that His Word is true.

1 Corinthians 2:9 but just as it is written, "**THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND which HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.**"¹⁰ For **to us God revealed them through the Spirit**; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

- B. The response of those who know and love Him is to display in their every day lives of faith the centrality of blessing the Lord.

Ephesians 1:3 **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,**