

*Bless God for Choosing You!*

Ephesians 1:3-6

Reading: 1 Thess 2:1-12

Bethany Baptist Church

March 19, 2017

*...pray...*

Do you know this hymn...?

*When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed;  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost.  
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done!*

The Apostle Paul could have written that! (Actually, *Johnson Oatman, Jr.* did...)

But my point is: God calls you to *Count Your Many Blessings* & that's what Paul began to do as soon as he started his letter to the *Ephesians*...

God can give *all kinds* of blessings: *health & friends & position & prosperity*.  
Nothing *wrong* with these!

Still, you know what the **best** kind of *blessing* are..? 😊

**Let's open our NT to another "blessings hymn," found in Ephesians 1:3-14.**

Vv.3-14 was just **one**, *long sentence* in Paul's original letter – **202** Gr. words!

Some think it may have originally been a *hymn*! A hymn about *blessings*!

*Because* it's just **one**, long sentence, it's kind of difficult to *break down & explain*.

But most *Bible teachers* agree that it can be organized into **3 stanzas**:

- 1<sup>st</sup> – *Blessings that come from the Father* (3-6).
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – *Blessings that come from the Son* (7-12).
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – *Blessing that come from the Holy Spirit* (13&14).

We're going to *tackle* the **first** stanza this morning (vv.3-6; **one/week**):

**Every real blessing you have comes from your wise & good Heavenly Father!**

- 1. The Source of blessings (v.3).**
- 2. The blessing of election (vv.4 & 5).**
- 3. The praise of the elect (v.6).**

## The source of every blessing you enjoy is God! Read v.3

1. Verse 3 serves as an *introduction* & a *theme* to Paul's long, **three-stanza** *worship song*.
  - a. Right away, you can't miss the word "*blessed*:"
    - i. We *bless* God, He has *blessed* us & every *blessing* is in Christ!
    - ii. "**ble**ss" → *eulogy* → (v – action) "to praise" or (n – thing) "benefit" or "blessing."
    - iii. So (Reader's Digest, v.3): **Praise God** for blessing us with every spiritual benefit because we are **in Christ**!
  
2. The "*fount of every blessing*" is the *God of the Bible*!
  - a. He is God: *Creator, Sustainer, Judge, Sovereign King*!
  - b. He is the *Father* of our *Savior*: the *Lord Jesus Christ*. Paul's use of Jesus' full title suggests: *Master & Perfect Man & Promised Savior*.
  - c. Don't miss Paul's little word "*our*" – **we** are beholding to God, not only because He made us, but He has *sent* Jesus His Son to be our *Savior & Lord*.
  - d. Paul's *point* is that all our blessings come from *God & His Son*!
  
3. And so they come from *heaven*! Heaven includes God's *Fort Knox* of *spiritual blessings* for all His people!
  - a. Paul is spotlighting *spiritual blessings* – i.e. *benefits* that God gives every saint through the working of the *Holy Spirit* in his/her life.
  - b. Through **OT** prophet *Malachi* God promised Israel that if they would *repent* He would "*open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.*"
  - c. In the *Sermon on the Mount* Jesus cautioned that His followers should *store up treasures in Heaven* (not earth) where they would be *safe* from *moth & rust & thief*.

- d. Paul assured the *Philippians* that *God would supply all their needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*
4. If God is the *fount* then we are the *catch basin* – the recipients of God’s *gracious benefits.*
- a. ...we are like the *little robins* who sit in the *nest*, with *heads up & beaks* opened wide, while *mama* keeps *droppin’ in the breakfast!*
- b. Now, the Bible says that there is a sense in which God blesses every man & woman born of Eve & Adam – *rain & sun* – and sometimes a *measure of happiness “under the sun.”* → “*Common blessings*”
- c. But *here* Paul is praising an entirely *different/higher* plane of blessing: “*spiritual blessing*” reserved for Christians because they are *in Christ* – *alive in Christ, united to Christ, one with Christ.*
- d. We spoke of this *essential truth* last Lord’s Day (v.1) – “*in Christ,*” which embraces our entire Christian *identity & experience.* Paul references “*in Christ*” (etc.) **164X** in his **14 NT letters**, **10X** (various forms) just in this **14 vs worship anthem!** You are *blessed* because you are *in Christ.*
5. This morning, if you are *trusting* in Jesus & *assured* of His forgiveness then God has *opened the doors of heaven & turned over His spiritual treasure chest & poured His riches in glory in Christ Jesus out* on you! ☺
- a. Yes, your *earthly, temporal blessings* may *come & go...possessions, health, favorable situations...*
- b. (And even when they **go**, that is for your **good...**)
- c. But *God’s spiritual blessings* on His people are *imperishable & uncorruptible & unfadable!*

6. Before we go *one* word further, let's stop & remind ourselves what God's Word is *calling us to do*...
  - a. ... To *worship!* To *bless God* for *blessing us!*
  - b. It's *quite a deal*, when you think about it: God blesses us with *substantial benefits* – we can really only bless Him with *words!*
  - c. But *that's* what He *wants!*

***Blessed be the God & Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!***

***God's first blessing on His children happened in eternity past: the blessing of election (read vv.4-5).***

1. **Vv 4&5** look back *through* time, to *before* time, to praise our *good & wise & sovereign* God for *choosing* us to be His own.
2. *He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world.* What we have before us is one of the Bible's *multiplied* clear teachings of the "*Doctrine of Election*"! Paul frames it up w/ **two** *intertwined terms* that describe God's *actions* in our *salvation*: God **chose** us (4) & He **predestined** us (5).
3. God has *blessed us* by **choosing** us.
  - a. Paul's Gr. verb is **ἐκλεγῶ** - *select from, to choose out of*.
    - i. Our verse tells us that God *chose us* – the *saints*, Christians. Not everyone, just *Christians*.
    - ii. There is *no explanation* in the Bible of *why*. Simply that among all mankind, God *selected some*.
  - b. The apostle is very clear as to *when* God made His *choice*: *before the foundation of the world*. Before **Gen 1:1**. Before *time began*. Before you or I *existed*.
4. God *chose* you and He *predestined* you (5).
  - a. To *predestine* (lit. – *determine before*) is to *determine/decreed* someone/something **before** it comes to pass.
  - b. The immediate & broader *biblical context* makes it clear that Paul also places "*He predestined us*" with "*He chose us*" in eternity past, i.e. "*before the foundation of the world*."

5. Paul identifies **two** *outcomes* in our *lives* that flow from God's *choice*: ***transformation & adoption***. (Both results, *in & of themselves*, should be counted *huge blessings!*)
- a. To what *result* did God ***chose*** you? **V.4** – *to be holy & blameless before God in love.*
  - b. Here are **three** *fundamental descriptions* of a *transformed* sinner:
    - i. ***Holy*** – to be *set apart to God & His purposes.*
    - ii. ***Blameless*** – to be *w/o blemish or blame; to be righteous.*
    - iii. ***Love*** (**αγαπη**) – Paul is referring to *our love for God & for one another; a godly love that makes our holiness & righteousness worshipful & warm.*
  - c. Do you know God's *purpose* for your life? Do you know *why* He saved you? Why He *selected* you? God *chose* you to *pour grace* on you & thus *transform* you into the *likeness* of His Son!
    - i. Turn w/ me to **Rm 8:28-30 (read)**.
    - ii. **V.28** – God so *orders* your life so that it follow the path it does so that His *purpose* for you will come to pass. Do you know what His *purpose is....?*
    - iii. **V.29 (middle)** – God wants you to be *conformed to the image of His Son*; i.e. to become *Christ-like*. That's it!
    - iv. **V.29-30** – OBTW, don't miss Paul's *Doctrine of Election* vocabulary: *foreknew, predestined, called*. Simply put, *before the foundation of the world*, God *chose* you to *transform* you.

6. The **second** purpose of *election* in Eph 1:5 is *adoption*.
- a. In *Roman society*, a man could *adopt* a son from outside his family, even from among his *servants*, to become fully *identified & privileged* as his *son*. A full & unencumbered *heir*.
  - b. *Adam's race* is a *fallen* people, *enslaved* to sin, *following* Satan & in *rebellion* against their Creator & King.
  - c. Yet in *eternity past* God *determined* to *rescue* some of these rebels and to *adopt* them as His *sons & daughters*. The *King* is now their *Father!* We are His *heirs*.
    - i. And (v.5) *linger* w/ me for just a moment on those **2** little words "*to Himself...*" (pause)
    - ii. The Father *determined* to *adopt* you **to Himself** – *intentionally, personally, intimately, graciously, lovingly...&* that is **good!**
  - d. *Make no mistake!* Do not *twist* God's words! God didn't simply *pre-decree* the **plan** – God *pre-selected* His *adopted daughters & sons!*
7. Again, this is all **in Him** – *in Christ*. Our *salvation* is possible because God sent His Son to *die for us*. Our *transformation* is so that we will become *like Christ*. Our *adoption* was decreed so that we will be *fellow heirs* with Christ. If we are *His* it's because God *chose us* to be *in Him*.
8. There are people who *object* to the *Doctrine of Election!* E.g. ...
- a. **It attacks free will.** The lost man has a *will (volition)*. He is offered legitimate *moral choices*. God holds him *responsible* for the choices he gladly makes. But the sinner's will is **not free**.
    - i. His will is in *bondage* to sin. He is *spiritually dead* in sin. He *follows the course of this world*. Sin keeps every "*Son of Adam*" from making *choices/responses* that *please God*.
    - ii. Col 2:13 – *And you were dead in your transgressions.*
    - iii. Rom 3:11 – *There is none who seeks for God.*



- iv. Turn w/ me to **2 Cor 4:3-4** – It’s as tragic result of the *Fall* (“*Total Depravity*”): man is *spiritually blinded, rebellious ... dead!*
- b. Some argue that *election means God is unjust.*
    - i. *Justice means getting what you deserve.* As we’ve just clearly seen, sinners *deserve (choose!)* judgment & condemnation (Heb 9:27).
    - ii. So God is not *beholding* to any, but He *graciously* chooses to saves *some!*
    - iii. In fact, note **v.5b** – *He predestined us...according to the kind intention (good pleasure) of His will.* God’s *plan* & God’s *choice* are *good & kind!*
    - iv. As many point out: *the wonder is not that God saves some, the wonder is that God saves any at all.*
  - c. The Bible deals with many objections to God’s *election* in **Romans 9**; you can *sum-up* the responses in **9:20&21**:
    - i. *On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, “Why did you make me like this,” will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?*
    - ii. Simply put: it is God’s *sovereign right* to do as He *pleases* with all His *creatures*. Including to *pour grace* on *some*.

***Beloved, praise God for this: He chose you in Christ!***

*In fact, praise is exactly the way Paul wraps up this first stanza of His worship hymn! Read v.6.*

1. “*To the praise of the glory of His grace*” – we said at the *beginning* that this expression appears in **vv. 6 & 12 & 14**, to mark the end of each of these **3 sections**.
2. We are called to *praise* God’ *glory*....but what is “*glory*”? (It sounds like a nice “*church-word*,” but what does Paul *mean*?)
  - a. *Glory* (w.r.t. God) means His *weightiness*. Lit. His *heaviness*...
  - b. I.e., God’s *glory* is the sum of God’s *everything*: His *attributes* & His *character* & His *works*.
  - c. God’s *glory* is therefore His *reputation*. And it’s *impeccable*!
3. Here is the *blessing* Paul here says brings God *glory*: ***grace***...
  - a. *Undeserved favor*. **God** giving ***us*** the *desire* & *power* to do His *will*.
  - b. *Grace* really fits what Paul’s just written about: ***election*** is *all about* our *undeserved favor*! God giving *us* what we wouldn’t *choose*.
4. *Grace* suggests *gift* – remember? God’s *grace* is *freely given to us*. We didn’t *deserve* it; we couldn’t *earn it* or *pay for it*. God simply *chose* to give *it to us*.
5. *Grace* is God’s *gift* to every *saint*, secured through *sin-bearing death* & the *death-conquering resurrection* of God’s *beloved Son- our Lord Jesus Christ*.
  - a. The *saving benefit* of the *death* & *resurrection* of the *Beloved Son* is ours through *faith* & *repentance*.
  - b. Yet even that *faith*, as we’ll read in the next chapter, is simply a “*gift of God, so that no man should boast*.”
  - c. Salvation’s *plan* & *promise* & *Prince* & *people* & *purpose* where all ***determined*** before the *foundation of the world*.
6. So God’s *sovereign election, from eternity past*, is a *glorious, praise-worthy display* of God’s *grace...for us...in Christ*.

*Paul opened Ephesians with this song – a **praise** song!*

It's kind of a list of  **blessings**: *election, redemption, revelation, kingdom citizenship, inheritance, the Holy Spirit, eternal security.*

You might even say this song is written around one of those “*Best of...*” lists. Like Paul's picks for the “*Best Blessing of all Eternity*”! ☺

And this morning's text puts “*The Doctrine of Election*” squarely at the *top* of the apostle's *favorites*!

If that's so, then think w/ me what Paul's *worship anthem* implies:

You can't fully *enjoy* God or *worship* Him if you *redefine* or *ignore* any of these truths ...

**Read vv.3-6.**

*... to the praise of the glory of His grace.*

*...pray... Bless you...Father...for your grace!*

**Choosing us. Saving us. Transforming us. Adopting us.**

**You are glorious! Your plans are glorious us! Your Son is glorious!**

**Blessing us, Lord! Put your praise on our lips, all week long!**

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So how can you be *certain* you are one of the *elect*?

*Come to Jesus! Believe* He's God's Son. *Trust* that His *death* pays for all your sins. *Trust* that His *resurrection* means you can live forever too. And *come!*

Jesus said (Jn 6): “*All that the Father gives to me will **come** to Me (election). And all that **come** to Me I will never turn away (redemption).*”

Do you want to sure that *God gave you to Jesus*? **Just come to Him - now!**