

Every Spiritual Blessing – Part 2

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul extols the spiritual blessings that God the Father has lavished on the elect
2. aim – to cause us to praise God that we are the recipients of such grace and blessing
3. passage – Ephesians 1:3-14

b. outline

1. The Spiritual Blessings of the Father (Ephesians 1:3-6)
2. The Spiritual Blessings of the Son (Ephesians 1:7-12)
3. The Spiritual Blessings of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

c. opening

1. the **fundamental** nature of the passage
 - a. although the passage maintains a clear view of the Trinitarian nature of God, the passage itself is fundamentally a praise of God **the Father**
 1. the construction of **v. 3** targets the Father as the one “blessed” (the Father “of”)
 2. most of the verbs are works of the Father (note **v. 4** – “chose”, **v. 11** – “predestined”)
 3. many of the pronouns of “him” or “he” are actually of the Father in contrast to another member of the Trinity (note the distinction of divine Persons in **vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13**)
 - b. here, Paul is **patricentric**, because he wants to *elevate* the focus of the blessing of God from the *specific work* of the Son or the Spirit to the **divine decree** of the Father over it all
2. the **decree** at the heart of this passage
 - a. the divine decree = the eternal wisdom of God, in which he has foreordained all things that come to pass, for the purpose of his own glory (see **Eph. 3:9-11**; **i.e.** the entire book points to this)
 1. these are “spiritual” (not material) blessings “in the heavenly realms” (in the heart of God; **v. 3**)
 2. **IOW**: the specific plan of God (**i.e.** in his eternal mind) to glorify himself through the actions of creation, redemption, and the consummation of all things to his eternal glory (**Isa. 46:9b-10**)
“... for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’”
 3. determined in and flowing from the very **character** of God himself (as an **ontological** reality)
 - b. the decree in a **theoretical** sense – it is a “concept” or “idea” in the mind of the Triune God – a plan flowing out of the very nature of Yahweh whereby the three Persons of the Trinity would covenant to accomplish the glory of the whole of God (**i.e.** in eternity past)
 1. **i.e.** it is in this decree that the “secret things” are held (**Deut. 29:29**; **e.g.** why elect anyone?)
 2. thus, the “blessed” nature of the Father is this decree (in total)
 - c. the decree in a **practical** sense – it is a reality flowing through concrete actions in time and space – a specific set of actions performed by the Three Persons of the Trinity (**i.e.** in their *economy*) to create, redeem, and consummate all things together for the glory of God
 1. thus, the “heavenly” blessings (in theory) are praiseworthy because they “become” (in reality)
 - d. the decree encompasses **everything** in God’s purpose, *not just* the salvation of a people
 1. the whole of time and space, natural law, the existence of evil, the role of non-corporeal beings (angels, demons, spirits), humanity as image-bearers, human and redemptive history, etc.
 2. however, in this passage, Paul “narrows” his focus to the blessings of **soteriology**
3. the **Trinitarian** roles at the heart of this passage
 - a. the various blessings *from our point of view* are accomplished in time and space
 - b. and, they are accomplished by *specific members* of the Godhead working in or through creation
 - c. so, the rest of the passage is about these specific soteriological elements (**i.e.** “even as”, **v. 4**)
 - d. thus, we can (should?) work through the passage in a Trinitarian order
 1. God the Father in **vv. 4-6**, God the Son in **vv. 7-12**, God the Holy Spirit in **vv. 13-14**
 2. **note**: here is an example of that “moderate” pace (**i.e.** these concepts *should* take longer)
 3. **note**: today we come to two (2) of the most hated words in some Baptist circles

I. The Spiritual Blessings of the Father (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Content

c. the blessed works of God the Father (vv. 4-6)

1. blessed work #1: election (v. 4)

- a. the concept of election – the phrase “*he chose*” clearly refers to the concept of election
 1. “*election*” in **Romans 11:28** and “*chose*” here have a similar root in Greek
 2. the added phrase “*before the foundation of the world*” points to this doctrine here
 3. **note (see above):** although election (and predestination) are clearly acts by God “outside” of time and space (*i.e.* in eternity past), they are seen *from our point of view* as necessary to the reality of time and space itself (*i.e.* they *affect* time and space, and have concrete outcomes)
- b. the biblical doctrine of election = **the act of God before creation to choose some to be saved**
 1. given that grace is fundamentally a **choice**, election is the **beginning act** of that grace
 2. in the face of the reality that all humanity stands **reprobate** before God
 - a. reprobation = the sovereign choice by God to *pass over* the entire human race unto judgment by virtue of their inclusion in the sin of Adam and their own personal rebellion
 - b. in election, God chooses some reprobates to be the recipients of his grace
- c. the characteristics of election
 1. it is **personal** – it is a choice by God of *specific individuals* from within the sea of humanity
“For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you” (1 Thess. 1:4)
 - a. contra those who argue that God only elects a “class” of people
 1. they argue that “*in him*” means all who *will* belong to Jesus (*i.e.* as a class of people)
 2. they argue that humanity must be able to choose God or reject him in order to be “free”
 - a. but, this goes against the very nature of how humanity was created
 - b. the tree of the knowledge of good and evil established the “boundary” for Adam that defined the extent of his “freedom” – Adam was not “free” to do *anything*
 - c. and, these same people argue that while election is a class, we are still obligated as *individuals* to believe (*i.e.* we choose individually, God chooses by class)
 - b. we are chosen “*in him*” (*i.e.* in the redemptive work of Christ)
 1. our election is personal – it is a choice by God to include us in the covenantal relationship of redemption established in the divine decree
 2. *i.e.* as the Father and Son covenanted together **as persons**, so we are joined to Christ
 2. it is **eternal** – it is a choice by God *outside* of the framework of time, thus cannot be undone
 - a. contra those who argue that God elects *in response* to events in time and space
 1. but, to just “respond” in time (to our freedom) is to make all things *purposeless* (*i.e.* evil)
 - b. we are chosen “*before the foundation of the world*” (*i.e.* in God’s eternal timeframe)
 1. our election is eternal – it is a choice made by God within his eternal decree, as part of his larger divine plan to create, redeem, and consummate a world to his glory
 2. *i.e.* so we are **permanently** joined to the divine decree, without any possibility of end
 3. it is **unconditional** – it is within God’s decree without any regard for the condition of the elect
 - a. contra those who argue that God elects those who choose him first (by foreknowledge)
 1. but, God’s choice to be based on something *outside of himself* becomes an **obligation**
 2. but, for God to look upon humanity is to see nothing but reprobation (*i.e.* **Romans 1**)
 - b. we are chosen “*to be holy and blameless*” (*i.e.* to something other than reprobate)
 1. our election is unconditional – it is a choice made by God *in spite* of what we would *really* be within the framework of the divine decree
 2. *i.e.* so we become the **opposite** of what we really would be in Adam, holy and blameless

2. blessed work #2: predestination (vv. 5-6)

- a. the biblical doctrine = **the act of God to establish the destiny of the elect in advance**
 1. given election, the natural parallel to it is predestination – if God has chosen us, he has chosen us to a *specific* destiny
 2. thus predestination is simply the subset of election whereby God defines the destiny of his elect in advance, as a part of his decree to *accomplish something*
- b. the characteristics of predestination
 1. it is **loving** – it is from within the very nature of God as eternal love
 - a. contra those who insist that for God to love, he must grant us the choice of our own destiny
 1. but, our *natural* choice of destiny would be to rebel against God *forever*
 2. *i.e.* judgment is God giving us what we want – our choice of destiny would always be hell
 3. therefore, true love is the willingness to speak *against* our natural desires

- b. we are predestined “*in love*” (i.e. as an expression of the fullest sense of God’s character)
 - 1. in his decree, God’s nature as love (1 John 4:8) comes to bear as he looks upon his elect with an eye towards *moving* them to a perfect destiny
 - 2. i.e. we are predestined to experience **real and everlasting love**
- 2. it is to our **adoption** – it is to the end of becoming the very sons and daughters of God himself
 - a. a very Pauline concept – seen here, in **Romans 8:12-17**, and in **Galatians 4:1-7**
 - 1. the idea of being *heirs* of the eternal things of God, and *co-heirs* with Christ
 - 2. having a *destiny* of being fully a part of the family of God himself, brothers and sisters together, with Christ as our “elder” brother, welcomed into the presence of the Father, and coming to possess *everything* that the infinite God has in store for his Son
 - b. we are predestined “*for adoption as sons*” (i.e. to a perfect family life)
 - 1. in his eternal relationship as Father and Son, the Trinitarian God, through his divine decree, *expands* his family to include all who are elect
 - 2. i.e. we are predestined to experience the perfect concept of **family**
- 3. it is **purposeful** – it is to the goal of God’s glory being manifested in us
 - a. “*the praise of his glorious grace*” = the resounding accolades (attention) that will be paid to God because of his choice to save a people (i.e. to his glory)
 - 1. the destiny of the elect is (ultimately) to *glorify God*, not to satisfy our need for “heaven”
 - b. we are predestined “*to the praise of his glorious grace*” (i.e. to be the objects of his glory)
 - 1. the divine decree of God accomplishes his everlasting purpose of glory because it shows his grace through the elect
 - 2. i.e. we are predestined to be the everlasting **joy and crown** of the glory of our God
- 3. the blessed works of the Father
 - a. **our God and Father has acted commendably to set us aside to be his own and set our destiny to be one of perfect glory unto himself – he is to be praised without end for doing these praiseworthy things**