

Eternally Blessed in Christ
Ephesians 1:3-6
By Randy Wages
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

I. **Introduction:**

- A. Today I will begin a series of messages dealing with what it means to be “Blessed in Christ.” This entire series will be an exposition of one long and loaded sentence – loaded with the glorious, eternal blessings of grace for the objects of God’s mercy and grace in Christ Jesus. I’m speaking of the sentence found in Ephesians 1, verses 3-14. While the translators did insert some periods, you’ll find in reading these verses that they certainly read as one continuing sentence. And in this one sentence, Paul sets forth the multi-faceted blessings of salvation by God’s Sovereign grace, a salvation fully accomplished by the God-man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And as we progress through this series, we’ll see that it is the triune God – Jehovah God in three Co-equal Persons, (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) – all acting in perfect unity in accordance with their undivided essence of Deity to achieve God’s design and purpose in the salvation of His people.
- B. Now this morning, we’ll focus on verses 3-6 in this first message which I’ve titled, “Eternally Blessed in Christ.” Here we’ll begin with a consideration of the wonderful mercy and grace that rested upon a people chosen in Christ long before they even existed – even before the very foundation of the world – from eternity past. And I pray that you’ll be able to rejoice as I have when studying these verses, marveling at what true believers were given in Christ from all eternity (and shall possess forevermore). Oh to discover you’re among those “Eternally Blessed in Christ!”
- C. Well, while our primary text begins in verse 3, let’s begin our reading back in vs.1 “***Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:***”
1. Many believe that this letter, penned by Paul while imprisoned in Rome, was actually a circular letter written to multiple churches and was not (nor is intended to be) limited to the church at Ephesus. Clearly, God has likewise providentially extended this letter to the church of our day through the canon of scripture. Note that Paul is writing first to the “...***saints which are at Ephesus.***” If this was a circular letter as most believe, then it is assumed that other churches would have also received the exact same letter except perhaps that the location of their church would have been substituted in the place of Ephesus. My point is that this letter is written to the saints everywhere and in every age. The “saints” are the sanctified ones – meaning set apart by God the Father in Christ, and made holy before God in Christ (as we’ll examine further in just a moment).

2. Notice that Paul himself also makes it clear that this is written to all saints everywhere by having added, “...*and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*” This phrase can be likened to Paul’s salutation in the opening of his first letter to the church at Corinth where we read, “*Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,* ²*Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:*” (I Cor. 1:1-2).

D. It’s interesting that if we continued there in I Corinthians, we would see that verse 3 reads exactly the same as our text in Ephesians 1:2 where Paul says to the saints everywhere, “*Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Here Paul opens the subject of the grace and resulting peace that belongs to those to whom he writes. And if it is of grace then as Paul states, it is from God – God the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as mentioned here. But likewise it is from the Holy Spirit for it is He who makes these blessings known to the saints in time.

E. Now we’re about to look into the wonderful blessings that belong exclusively to these saints to whom Paul writes. So if the blessings he describes concerning all those He saves are yours – if they speak of that which is the savor of life unto life to you – then rejoice with me today in consideration of what a great and certain salvation we have in Christ. But on the other hand, if you’re among those (whether religious or indifferent) to whom God’s gospel (His way of salvation as described in this passage) doesn’t fit your fancy or stands in opposition to your own religious doctrine – then I pray you’ll see the tragic folly of standing in opposition to the word of God. You see, in these verses Paul is about to describe spiritual blessings in Christ that belong exclusively to those He saves. Now regardless of whether you consider yourself among the saved, know this: If these descriptions don’t suit you, then you have no sound rationale to presume this letter is written to you. As such, it’s akin to you reading someone else’s mail and foolishly interpreting it as if it were written to you. This letter is written to the saints who are blessed as described in the verses that follow. So let us all examine whether we are among the saints so blessed in Christ. In a future message when we get to verse 9, we’ll see that all these who are so blessed have the gospel made known unto them, this gospel that sets forth God’s blessings in Christ. The “mystery of his will” as it is called, will be made known unto them all in time.

II. Verses 3-6: Let’s begin now with verse 3 where we read, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:* ⁴*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him <,>in love:* ⁵*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,* ⁶*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*”

A. First notice that Paul, immediately directs their attention toward praising God the Father for having blessed His people with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (or things so as to distinguish them from the temporal blessings such as the rain that falls on the just and the unjust) in Christ! All who are eternally blessed are blessed in Christ. To be in Christ, by having been graciously made one with Christ by God the Father, is to have all spiritual blessings! And these blessings are now in accordance with the manifestations of grace and love that Paul begins to describe there in verse 4.

B. In these 3 verses, verses 4-6, he ascribes to God the Father 3 manifestations of His grace and love toward these saints in having:

1. Chosen them in Christ, (vs. 4)
2. Predestinated them to the adoption of children by Christ, (vs. 5) and
3. Accepted them in Christ to the praise of the glory of his grace (vs. 6).

C. Now all 3 of these are glorious blessings of God the Father. And in my study, I was impressed by Robert Hawker's commentary on this as he pointed out how all 3 of the blessings mentioned here are declared to be:

1. The result of his own good pleasure and will, (vs. 5) and...
2. These are declared to be so blessed before the foundation of the world (vs.4) – These are eternally blessed in Christ!

D. So let's briefly consider each of these 3 blessings of God's grace in Christ:

1. Chosen in Christ – as verse 4 puts it, ***“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him”***

(a) As I've pointed out, God's choosing or election of a people is (as is true of all that God does) according to his own good pleasure and will. But not only that, it was from all eternity for God never changes. He did not look down through time and, in foreseeing who would believe, choose them on that basis. It's according to His will that He chose them from before He had even formed the world and created man.

(b) Now the doctrine of election does not stand in isolation. He chose a people (1) unto something or with an objective in mind and (2) He chose them in a Person – the Lord Jesus Christ. Notice that God chose a people unto salvation in Christ, that they ***“...should be holy and without blame before him...”***

Think on that! God has always viewed the elect, those He chose in Christ unto salvation, as holy and without blame in Christ. The all-knowing God knew, even ordained that these saints would fall along with all the rest of humanity in Adam. And thereby, sin entered so that they were made sinners – not holy, not without blame if judged in their federal head, Adam, or according to their own personal character and conduct. Yet here we see that God always viewed them in Christ as perfectly flawless – having the merits of the obedience unto death (that Christ most certainly would accomplish) accounted unto them.

(c) Some will argue, “This can’t be – None could be accounted holy and without blame before Christ had come in time.” And without argument, the time line of events proves that before the world ever existed, Christ had not yet come to this world to die on the cross of Calvary and to establish the perfect righteousness by which these saints are accounted holy. But consider this: Was there ever a remote possibility whatsoever that almighty God’s purpose from eternity could possibly be hindered in any way? Was there any possibility that God the Son would not, in time, become incarnate so as to make an end of sin and bring in an everlasting righteousness as God foretold would take place through the prophet Daniel? No, we’re talking about almighty God – the One who spoke through the prophet Isaiah in Isa. 46:9 saying, ***“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:”***

(d) Now the suggestion that this God who declared the end from the beginning could be bound by some man imposed limitation that would restrict or hamper His own determination regarding the objects of His everlasting love does not add up. This concocted notion that God is incapable of imputing (charging the merit or demerit of a work) until that work has been accomplished in time is easily proven wrong in that Christ died to pay the penalty for all of the imputed sins of all His elect. This includes those born from every generation – both before and after the cross. The demerit of my sins (even those I’ve yet to commit) were imputed to Christ long before I was born – before I personally committed any sin. 2000 years ago when Christ died for my sins on the cross, at that time the only sin I had committed was in my representative, Adam as the federal head of all humanity. But Christ put away all the sins of His elect from every generation.

(e) I hope you can see that God’s view of His people in Christ from all eternity does not make the cross unnecessary in any way nor does it diminish the preeminence of Christ’s finished work there. No. It made it a certainty! Christ, by His death on the cross some 2000 years ago, truly put away the sins of all those the Father had chosen in Him. God’s choosing of them in Christ before time made it absolutely necessary and guaranteed that He would come and redeem His people in time! God the Father viewed His chosen ones as holy and without blame from before the foundation of the world on the sole basis of having imputed (or charged to their account) the merits of Christ’s obedience unto death, His righteousness – the very righteousness He inevitably had to (and did) establish in time at the cross of Calvary.

(f) “Holy and without blame before Him” is both the first and never ending view the eternal, immutable God has of the church, the saints in Christ. No sin in Adam could destroy the holiness in Christ nor prevent His accomplished work in time at the cross. God chose His people to be holy in Christ.

(g) And the scripture tells us that by his one offering of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed his Church from all iniquity, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). So, the Church, when finally brought home by Christ, will still be found in Christ, holy and without blame, before God; and Jesus will **“...present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish”** (Eph. 5:27).

2. Predestinated them to the adoption of children by Christ – Now God not only chose a people, but we see in verse 5 of Ephesians 1 a second manifestation of God the Father’s grace and love, when he continues saying, beginning with the end of verse 4, **“...in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,”**

(a) Now as before, this manifestation of God’s grace is likewise (1) of His own good pleasure and will and (2) and declared from the foundation of the world – Again, an eternal blessing in Christ.

(b) We can distinguish the predestination (of vs. 5) from God’s election (of vs. 4) in this sense: He chose a people in Christ with this objective – that they should be holy and without blame before Him. So His choosing determined who they were. But His act of predestination is the appointment of the means to that end.

Specifically, it is the determination of them as children – an appointment to Sonship in Christ. And as such, it makes the achievement of the objective for which they were chosen certain and sure and everlasting!

(1) Oh, to be a child of the King, a prince, blessed in Christ with all of spiritual Israel. You may recall how God changed Jacob's name (a name meaning cheater, a sinner) to Israel – a name which means 'prince.' And that's in keeping with God's reference to His children, spiritual Israel, as "sons of Jacob," sinners, who are blessed as we read in Mal. 3:6: ***"For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."***

(2) Paul wrote in Romans 8, beginning in vs. 14, ***"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. ¹⁵For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. ¹⁶The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: ¹⁷And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ;..."*** (Rom. 8:14-17a). Think about that – before this world existed believers were put in Christ, predestinated to His earned inheritance – an everlasting one because it is all based on the everlasting righteousness He would and did establish for the saints at the cross.

(3) That's in keeping with the rejoicing expressed in I John 3:1 where it reads, ***"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God:..."*** (I Jn, 3:1a).

(c) Now also notice from verse 5, that this predestination to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, is said to be ***"...to himself."***

(1) I believe the "...to himself..." is with respect to the one undivided God as He subsists in His three-fold character of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. That would make sense in consideration of 2 Cor. 5:19 where we read that, ***"...God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself,..."***

(2) Now, think on this with me for a few moments. God predestinated a people to be His children, not just to bless them (as He most certainly does) but it was to or for Himself. Consider these verses:

(a) In Isa. 43:21 God says, ***"This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."***

(b) And then as the Psalmist writes in Psa. 135:4, “*For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure.”*

(c) And then Romans 11:36 where we read, “*For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*”

3. The Acceptance of the Saints in Christ: Now God not only chose a people in Christ and predestinated them to glory as sons in Christ, but we see in verse 6 of Ephesians 1 a third manifestation of God the Father’s grace and love, when he continues saying, “*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*” This is referring to the saints being eternally united to Christ their Savior and accepted in Him.

(a) And as with God’s gracious election and predestination, this act of God’s grace in accepting His chosen children in Christ is likewise (1) of His own good pleasure and will and (2) and from the foundation of the world – from everlasting, an eternal blessing in Christ.

(b) Now recall that Paul began in verse 3 talking about how the saints or believers have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. But up through verse 6, he has not brought up actual external operations of God the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. But don’t worry; this long and loaded sentence is far from over. In fact, a peek at the next verse will show he is about to talk about those blessings which take place in time, beginning with the redemption of these chosen, predestinated, accepted saints through the shed blood of Christ.

(c) But today, we have focused primarily on God’s view of His children in Christ from all eternity to all eternity. And now, as in verses 4 and 5, verse 6 sets forth the blessing of being accepted in the beloved – in Christ. And notice it is spoken of as in the past tense. So all that is said of His choosing, predestinating, and accepting is said to be before the foundation of the world – before sin had entered by the fall of Adam – so even before the events which would make redemption needful had taken place. Now this boggles my mind but it is a glorious truth!

(d) We, as creatures of time and with the recorded history of God’s word, we know that we were made sinners in Adam and suffer the consequences of his fall, proving to us our representation in him as the federal head of all humanity. And so we should know we need a Savior, a Redeemer and it must be One who could satisfy God’s justice for this blessed group of otherwise ungodly sinners.

(e) And from eternity past, God had already accepted them in the beloved Savior – the One who covenanted with the Father to be my Surety and my Substitute. Why? Because I was chosen, predestinated and accepted in Him who alone could and did save me by His doing and dying on the cross.

(f) How can any sinner, be accepted before a holy God? They can't apart from having been chosen and accepted in Christ from all eternity. For you see, what Christ did, He did for these, His sheep – these chosen, predestinated, accepted saints. And apart from having His righteousness (the merits of His redemptive work) made mine by God's gracious imputation or accounting of it to me – my sins would bar me from His presence. He chose me and predestinated me, a sinner, to be holy and without blame. How? By accepting me in His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased – the One who, in the fullness of time was sent forth by the Father, made of a woman, made under the law to do for these objects of God's grace what they could not do for themselves by His perfect obedience unto death as their Surety and Substitute. He redeemed them!

III. Summary. Well, you might well ask – what makes you or others so special that God would choose you and not someone else. There's only one answer to that – God does! As these verses make clear:

- A. The original and eternal choice of each and every person that God will save in Christ is solely from Himself and according to the good pleasure of His will. It's not based on any good or distinguishing thing He foresaw in them for there is none righteous, no not one. Their distinction is solely owing to God's mercy and grace – God having put them in Christ that they should be holy and without blame – being accepted on the basis of His perfect righteousness.
- B. Secondly, these verses also make clear that all that God had determined from eternity would take place, including the fall of His elect in Adam, would not counteract these eternal, everlasting blessings in Christ.
- C. And lastly, these verses make it clear that the full acceptance of these saints in Christ is to the praise of the glory of His grace. All of these glorious gifts of our great God are the result of His own free and sovereign grace that He might receive all glory and praise.

Well, does this describe the origins of your salvation? It does for these saints to whom Paul writes. What a blessing to be eternally blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.