

Blessed Ephesians 1:3-6

Introduction

NJFK—Christmas gifts—not earned, given freely out of love to family members and good friends

God's priceless gifts to us are given freely out of love. He has made us part of His family through Christ, His beloved Son.

Who we are in Christ—our identity

Divine vocation (calling)

Heavenly citizenship

Family privileges and blessings

Rightly leads us to praise God—because He is responsible for it all, not us.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

1. The Priority of Praise (3a)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Bless—word we get eulogy from; to speak well of, to give a good word about

Paul uses the same word for God's blessing us. What is the difference between our blessing God and His blessing us?

God actually brings good upon us when He blesses us. We respond by speaking well of God in praise. It's not that we are providing something for God that He lacks.

Rather, we are responding to Him the way He deserves, given all He's done for us.

Psalm 103:1

Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

Application:

So very important for us to engage with God in praise to Him. To bless Him, to express adoration of Him, and all He's done. We were created for this purpose—to glorify Him and enjoy Him forever—and we are happiest and healthiest when we exercise this, our created purpose.

Don't hold off till a formal service. Bless God through your waking hours. Do it out loud. Reinforce the reality of His goodness to you in your soul.

He deserves our praise because of the perfections of who He is, and because of all He's done for us.

Think about why you would speak well of any person you truly love and appreciate. Expressing your love strengthens it.

Psalm 103:2-5

² Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, ³ who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, ⁵ who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

2. The Reasons for Praise (3b)

Who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

All three Persons of the Trinity have brought these blessings into our lives:

God the Father

God the Son—our Lord Jesus Christ

God the Holy Spirit

The letter to the Ephesians will continue to highlight the activity of all three Persons of the Godhead.

God the Father has blessed us because of our connection with Christ—"in Christ" (later, in

the Beloved)—1 Tim. 2:5 One mediator
between God and man
And He does so by means of the Holy Spirit—
with every spirit-ual blessing

We might be tempted to talk about spiritual blessings in contrast to material blessings, but be careful. God gives us all the things we enjoy material and spiritual. He has made us both material and spiritual beings, and the two intertwine and interact—we each are one person.

But the spiritual is by its nature something we do not see. Rather we see the effect. Love, joy, peace, faith, honesty, courage, humility—spiritual in nature. Our sin record being cleared before God happens in the spiritual realm. The warfare we fight to be pure and holy before God has physical effect but occurs in the spiritual struggles of the mind and heart.

The heavenly places—the heavenlies

What does that mean?

Occurs five times in Ephesians, but nowhere else in Paul's writings.

1:3 Every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies

1:20 Christ seated at God the Father's right hand in the heavenlies

2:6 Having been saved by grace, God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenlies

3:10 The rulers and authorities in the
heavenlies

6:12 Spiritual forces of evil in the heavenlies

John Stott: “the unseen world of spiritual
reality” (35)

What are some of these spiritual blessings
God has conferred on us? Verses 4-5 mention
two important ones.

3. The Actions of Love (4-5)

⁴ even as he chose us in him before the
foundation of the world, that we should
be holy and blameless before him.

Election—God chose us in Christ

Not new language:

God chose Abraham—also connected to
Christ, the offspring of Abraham

God chose Israel and made them a nation,
not from their own merit or size, but purely
from His goodness and love. (Remember God
chose Jacob long before Jacob ever trusted
God as his God.) as the people through whom
Christ would come

Family blessings help us understand election
at least in part: we do not choose our family;
we are born into it, or adopted into it.

Jesus chose His disciples—You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain (John 15).

When did God choose us in Christ?
Before the foundation of the world

For what purpose did God choose us?
To be holy and blameless before Him—
perfection (God's sight)—amazing!

We are not naturally so. God has to bring this about in us. When He's done, that's what we will be.

Abraham was an idolater in Ur of the Chaldees.

Jacob was an unbeliever.

The 12 apostles were doing their own thing until Jesus called them.

Paul was on the road to Damascus to arrest Christians when Christ arrested him and saved him.

In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,

Because of His love for us, in accord with His will

Predestined—to mark out the boundaries ahead of time

Adoption—emphasis on the rights of sonship—all the benefits of belonging to the family, in particular the inheritance
Romans 8:23 We wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.

Conclusion

Paul returns to the theme of praise in v. 6: ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Glorious—shining splendor of God; radiance of His goodness

Grace—unmerited favor/goodness/kindness

This unearned and undeserved favor and goodness is the blessing God has conferred on us because we are in the Beloved Son.

John 17:22-23

²² The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.