

You Bless

Long Beach Alliance Church • March 16, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

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...

~Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)

1) An Explosion Of Appreciation & Praise

- A) Following his inspirational greeting (Ephesians 1:1-2), Paul explodes in praise, launching into a massive 202-word sentence blessing God (1:3-14). The sentence is written in an Old Testament style of an extended eulogy (appreciation/praise).
- B) Praise for God's election (v. 4), adoption (v. 5), will (v. 5), grace (v. 6), redemption/forgiveness (v. 7), wisdom (v. 8), mystery of His will (v. 9), the ultimate unity of all things (v. 10), including believers (we & you), are unified together in Gospel delight!
- C) The framework of blessing occurs in the church (ecclesiological), with a central focus on God (theocentric, 1:3-6), Jesus Christ (christocentric, 1:7-12), and Holy Spirit (pneumocentric, 1:13-14); all under the capstone(s) 'to the praise of His glory' (1:6, 12, 14).

2) Blessing God

- A) "Bless" is one of those "churchy" words Christians sometimes abuse which diminishes its significance. Whether it's a "bless you" after a sneeze, "blessings" as a goodbye, or "I'm blessed" as a Christianese greeting, the concept is buried by overuse.
- B) To 'bless' is to "show favor to someone or something." You can bless with words, prayers, and even actions. But, none of these quite capture the intent of the blessing in Ephesians 1:3. Paul actually blesses God for Christ and His Spirit-ual provision.
- C) Paul blesses God for His gracious Gospel plan through all of history.

The blessing evokes praise for God for His blessings "in Christ." Christ mediates divine blessing. In other words, we 'get blessed' when we are "in Christ." We are the undeserving beneficiaries of God's gracious saving work and 'every spiritual blessing in Christ,' which is life in the Spirit (v. 3; cf. vv. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14)!

- D) How do we bless God? Living "to the praise of His glorious grace" (1:6). This is life "in Christ!" We live to give God glory. We bless God because we "reflect" Him. With Paul we cry out -- 'Bless Him who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing' (1:3).

3) Amazing Grace Elects Us To A Life Of Purpose

- A) Remarkably, life in the Spirit has been planned by God from BEFORE the beginning (1:4). Election "language" (choosing before the foundation of the world), often occurs in the context of thanks (1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2:13; Romans 8:29; 2 Timothy 1:9), as part of abounding gratitude for God's amazing grace.
- B) To say election takes place before creation indicates God's choice is due to His own free decision and love, independent of human merit. He does not choose us because we are good. He chooses us because He is good. God is blessed to share His goodness.
- C) Election comes entirely from God's sovereign grace, for the purpose of being "holy and blameless before Him" (1:4). In other words, when God chose us we must have been unholy and blameworthy, deserving judgment rather than adoption (1:5).
- D) Understanding the technicalities of predestination is never the biblical focus. Rather, God provides knowledge of His sovereign choices for our assurance. As well, election provides direction for us. We are chosen with purpose, not for ourselves alone, but also to bless God through reflecting "holy and blameless" living.

4) His Character Properly Reflected Is Glorious Grace

- A) Saying God's grace is truly glorious means it properly reflects (shines) His glory, His revealed character, thus igniting praise (1:6).
- B) Bless God who freely chooses His children for adoption in Christ for the appointed purpose of accurately reflecting His holy and blameless character, thus revealing His glorious grace, which is His will, producing Spiritual praise for God in His Beloved (1:3-6).