

EPHESIANS CHAPTER 1:3,4 - FULL, ETERNAL AND GLORIOUS BLESSINGS

INTRO: What was your greatest, most surprising earthly blessing? 50th birthday party? Birth of Elizabeth? Seeing the grandeur of Yosemite?

Easily answered when we think in spiritual terms. Once we were lost, but now we are found. Once we were darkness, but now we are light. Once we were spiritually dead, but now are alive in Christ.

Paul glories in this greatest of blessings as we'll see as we start his long list of seeing amazing Grace in action.

- I. A FULL BLESSING - vs. 3 - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."
 - A. God's exaltation - Paul begins a 7-blessing doxology in a long, continuous sentence of praise. He's excited and amazed at God's grace. He starts his list by blessing God.
 - B. How can we "bless" God? Isn't He the source of blessing toward us? How can we give Him anything that adds to His perfections?
 - C. "Eulogetos" and "Makarios" compared. "Eulogetos" used of God only. Definition: to be adored, lifted up, praised. "Makarios" is used of God and man. Definition: state of God-conferred benefits, both material but mostly spiritual, as in the Beatitudes. Doesn't just mean "happy" as Rick Warren and many others insist. We are blessed of God whether we're feeling happy or not.
 - D. "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" - Why does Jesus, who is God Himself, call His Father His God? (Matthew 27:46; John 20:17) - Refers to Christ's human nature, whereas sonship refers to his divine nature. The unfathomable mystery of the Trinity will be an eternal mystery to our Lilliputian minds.
 - E. "who has blessed us" - the Church, and ultimately individual believing, faithful saints. Not a future only blessing, but a past, present and eternal enjoyment of grace, mercy and sonship. And if God has blessed us, what does it matter who curses us? As fallen creatures we are prone to fear in just about every area of life. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8:31.
 - F. "with every spiritual blessing" - not just a sprinkling, but a perpetual fountain of God's love lavished upon those who have found mercy through Christ. Included with this list of blessings is God Himself. He blesses us with Himself as the chief prize. John Trapp, ". . . spiritual blessings are so knit together, that they all make up one blessing; and where God gives one, He gives all." Can we list those blessings? [ON BOARD] Paul is going to list a number of them that we'll look into next time. But without looking. Salvation from the penalty of sin: God's wrath; now holy and

blameless; knowing truth; personal relationship with God and Christ; fellowship; spiritual gifts; others.

- G. “in the heavenly *places*” – see chapter 2:4-7 and Phil. 3:20. These blessings are “heavenly”, they come from heaven. They fit us for heaven. We are children of the Kingdom. This world is not our true and lasting home. We look for a city whose builder and maker is God. But there is a present tense sense and reality that God in Christ is ruling all things NOW. We share his Kingdom now. Why aren’t we more enthusiastic about experiencing Jesus as Lord in His Kingdom right now? In a war that seems to be overwhelming, discouraging, and endless.
- H. “in Christ” – Christ is the cornerstone of our salvation, and Paul emphasizes and reemphasizes this 12 times in his letter. We have been translated from the kingdom of darkness to his heavenly kingdom, not because of anything in us that is meritorious or deserving; not because of our faith (which is a gift as well); but because it was God’s good pleasure to bless us IN CHRIST. We didn’t give ourselves new hearts: He did. We didn’t pay for our own sins (and couldn’t): He did. We couldn’t confer “every spiritual blessing” upon us: but He did. Salvation is all of grace, and all of Christ, and all IN Christ.

II. AN ETERNAL BLESSING - vs. 4, “Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . .”

- A. “Just as He chose us in Him” – the doctrine of Election – Trinitarian in in scope, unfathomable mind and work of God. Deut. 29:29 “The secret things belong to the LORD, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever” – God has decided to reveal this doctrine to us, but we will not fully understand it. Must first lay a groundwork and foundation before we can more fully understand what HAS been revealed. Creation, Providence also mysteries.
- B. “Just as” – “According to”; the blessings list starts here
- C. God is sovereign – the doctrine of Divine Sovereignty - Isa. 46:10; Eph. 1:1; Heb. 6:17; Rom. 9:15,18; James 1:13; John 1:5; Acts 4:27,28; Num. 23:19; Eph. 1:3-5. – God is Creator and Maintainer of every atom in the universe. He spoke all things into existence, but didn’t and doesn’t have a “hands off” policy. He orchestrates the whole of the physical and spiritual worlds to His glory, for His purposes. The Church is part of that eternal purpose and the gates of hell will not overcome it. 1689 Confession: “God has decreed in Himself, from all eternity, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably, all things, whatsoever comes to pass; yet so as thereby God is neither the author of sin nor has

any fellowship with any therein; nor is violence offered to the will of the creature, nor yet is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established; in which appears His wisdom in disposing all things, and power and faithfulness in accomplishing His decree.” Man is not sovereign. In spite of what Satan would tell us.

- D. Mankind is totally lost, dead in sin, and unable to seek after God – the doctrine of Absolute or Total Inability – Romans 5:6-9; Ephesians 2:1-10 (with the story of Lazarus); John 6:44,65,66; Matt. 8:21,22; - We’re not just spiritually disabled; we’re spiritually dead and in the coffin. MacArthur, “I’m not saying that sinners can’t do some human good. They can be philanthropic. They can be charitable. They can help people. They can be kind. They can be merciful. But they cannot do any spiritual good. They cannot do anything that pleases God, because no one can do anything that pleases God unless it’s done for His glory, and it can’t be done for His glory unless it’s done in the name of His Son. So while there is human good, it is dead good. It has absolutely nothing to do with God.” Luke 11:13; II Peter 1:1; Philippians 1:6,29; I Cor. 26-31; Colossians 2:13; Genesis 2:17 with Romans 5:12; Ecclesiastes 7:29; But what about John 1:12? All who ‘receive’ Christ are given the right to become the sons and daughters of God. But don’t leave out the next verse. John 3:5; Matthew 11:25-27; Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9,13:23; Psalm 143:2; Proverbs 20:29; II Cor. 4:3,4; Romans 8:7,8; I Cor. 2:14
Martin Luther said, “A man is like a pillar of salt. He’s like Lot’s wife.” “He’s like a log. He’s like a stone. He’s like a lifeless statue which has neither eyes, nor ears, nor mouth, neither senses nor heart, unless he is enlightened, converted and regenerated by the Holy Spirit.” Romans 3:10-18 – the litany of sinfulness in unbelievers. II Timothy 2:25; Titus 3:3-5;
- E. Election defined: “to select from a number.” Random House dictionary: “the choice by God of individuals, as for a particular work, or especially for salvation or eternal life.”
- F. Election in Scripture: Genesis 12:1-3; Nehemiah 9:7; Deut. 14:2; Deut. 7:7, 8; Psalm 89:3; Jeremiah 1:5; John 6:37,39,44; 10:27-29; 17:2; Acts 22:14; Romans 8:30; 9:11; II Thes. 2:13,14; II Tim. 1:9; I Peter 2:4; John 15:16,19; Acts 13:48;
- G. “in Him” – Christ is the sole foundation of the Church. Christ was our Representative and Substitute in eternity past - Covenant of Grace. Hebrews 10:5-7; - We cannot be elect and chosen apart from Him and His work on our behalf.

- H. “before the foundation of the world” - the blessings were part of God’s eternal plan to set His love on each one of us in eternity past, so it’s not by chance that you’re sitting here right now.
- I. “that we should be holy and without blame before Him” - Watson, “God did not choose us because we were worthy, but by choosing us He makes us worthy.” Here is our calling: sainthood; holiness; imitators of Christ; Story of girl who would be queen. No one told her, fearing she’d become more of an undisciplined, demanding brat. But all of a sudden her behavior changed to that of a loving, giving, and obedient daughter. Everyone wondered what happened. She had found out that she would be queen and wanted to start acting like the princess she was and the queen she would be. “We love Him, because He first loved us.”
- J. “in love” - Ephesians 3:13-19 - A free love - and unmerited love - a gracious love. Thomas Brooks, “The only ground of God’s love is His love. The ground of God’s love is only and wholly in Himself. There is neither portion nor proportion in us to draw His love. There is no love nor loveliness in us that should cast a beam of His love to shine upon us.”

III. APPLICATION - A GLORIOUS BLESSING

- A. The most humbling doctrine - “I’m proud to be a Christian” should never come from our lips.
- B. A most glorious doctrine - Romans 11:33 - God is to be praised for His glorious mercy on helpless and hopeless sinners like us. To Him be all glory, not us - not even an atom of glory to us.
- C. A most energizing doctrine - God has his sheep. They hear His voice through His word and the gospel. We are assured they will follow. God’s Word is the vehicle He uses to grant faith and repentance. Let us be confident as we plead with others to run to the Savior and have life. Let be confident that as the gospel goes out it will accomplish all to God’s glory.