

Ephesians, Chapter One, Lesson Two

BLESSED IN CHRIST Ephesians 1:3-6a

STIMULATE

** From our opening study in this marvelous epistle last week, what were the godly examples we saw either in the life of Paul or in the lives of his readers?

1. Paul's total commitment to Christ because he knew Who had set him apart for ministry.
2. Paul boldness and confidence, tempered by genuine humility.
3. The fact that the Ephesians were known as those who were "Faithful in Christ".

** How have you applied what we learned together last week?

For my own life, the challenge of remaining totally committed to Christ while maintaining a humble boldness and confidence in the Lord has been my daily preoccupation that I might be considered to be "Faithful in Christ".

MOTIVATE

** As a bit of a review, who was Paul writing to when he penned this epistle?

This was a circular letter to the churches of Asia Minor and Ephesus was at the hub of the Christian world at that time.

** Was Paul writing just to the specific needs of those in that geographical area or is there a broader application of the truths he presents?

The design of this epistle is broader in scope and was to reach all of those in Asia Minor, and even to us as well!

** Well, to help us set our minds on what the Lord has for us today, let me ask you a question. How much time do you spend just praising God? Do you realize how much you have been "Blessed in Christ"? What does it mean to praise Him?

Extol His goodness, give thanks, rejoice in spirit.

Read passage - Ending with "His grace" in Verse 6a

Opening Prayer

Blessed in Christ

INVESTIGATE

V. 3 ** Just as a footnote, verse three through verse 14 inclusive is one sentence of 202 words in the original Greek language. Paul presents to us the triune God in this beautiful expression of adoration to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It will take us three weeks to properly digest this sentence and hopefully catch a glimpse of Paul's love for his Master. Today we will begin with our look at God the Father.

** How does Paul open the passage?

With a doxology (or praise saying about God) - "Blessed be . . ."

** Is that appropriate?

Absolutely - Revelation 5:13 "And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, 'To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.'"

** What did Paul mean by "blessed be"?

eulogeo - from this word we get our English word "eulogy", which is a message of praise and commendation, the declaration of one's goodness. Paul is beginning his comments by "speaking well" of our Heavenly Father.

** What two terms does Paul use to describe God?

- 1) God . . . of our Lord Jesus Christ
- 2) Father . . . of our Lord Jesus Christ

** What does this double title represent?

1) God of Jesus, refers to the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. cf. Matthew 27:46

2) Father of Jesus, refers to the equality between Jesus Christ and God the Father. It proclaims the deity of Jesus!

Paul would repeat this theme of the deity of Christ four more times in this epistle by mentioning Him in the same breath with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

cf. Ephesians 2:18, 3:14-17, 4:4-6 and 5:18-20

The Jews of Jesus' day fully understood that if God were the Father of Jesus it would mean that He too was deity and was to be worshipped. Let's look together at one of those times when Christ had to confront them on this issue. All see - John 10:22-33

** Now, back in Ephesians 1:3, what has the Father done to warrant Paul's blessing?

He has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places".

** How does that compare with us blessing God?

God is the source of all blessings, through the agency of the Holy Spirit. We bless God by our words, He blesses us in His deeds. cf. James 1:17

** What is the significance of these blessings being in the "heavenly places"?

Heaven proves to be the source of our eternal blessings. In verse 4 is the blessing of our election, verse 7 is the blessing of our redemption and in verse 13 is the blessing of our certification. In addition to all of that, with our blessings coming from heaven, it keeps our focus there and not earthbound. cf. Philippians 3:20 & Colossians 3:1-3

**** What is the package that all of these wonderful blessings come in?**

Jesus Christ, Himself! Just in this one sentence alone, Paul drives home the importance of Christ being the Chief Cornerstone by repeating the phrase "in Him", through Jesus, in the Beloved, through His blood or in Christ eleven times. All that we are or ever hope to be is completely dependent on the reality that we have been safely hidden, secure "in Jesus Christ".

cf. Philippians 3:8-9, Acts 17:28

V. 4 ** Paul now mentions possibly the greatest blessing in all of scripture, what is it?

"He chose us . . ."

**** What doctrine speaks of this wonderful reality?**

The Biblical doctrine of "election". The word used by Paul for "He chose us" is eklego and means to select. It comes from two other root words meaning "from out of" and "to speak". God chose us from among a fallen race and spoke His will, leading us irresistibly to salvation through faith in His Son - Jesus Christ.

**** The Bible speaks of three types of election, or calling by God. Can you think of what they might be?**

1) A Theocratic Call - Israel was called as a nation to be God's people, and yet not all of Israel was saved. cf. Romans 9:6-8, Romans 2:28-29

2) A Vocational Call - The tribe of Levites were called to be priest, and yet not all of them were saved. Jesus called twelve men to be His apostles, and yet one was not saved. Paul was called not only to be saved, but to the vocation of witnessing to the Gentiles.
cf. Acts 9:15 and Romans 1:5

3) A Salvation Call - Spoken of here by the apostle Paul, this is the irresistible call of God unto eternal life. cf. John 6:44 & 65

**** So, here in verse 4, does the "us" represent all men?**

No - it is referring to the ones we saw last week in verse one. Those who are saints by the calling of God, those who are "faithful in Christ Jesus". That would include the apostle Paul, his companions, his readers and us today who have placed our faith in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation.

**** When did this choosing by God take place?**

". . . before the foundation of the world . . ."

**** Does that mean it is a settled issue and man has no part?**

No - This is the paradox of salvation. The Bible teaches, without reservation, the sovereign choice of God in salvation, but also teaches that man is responsible for the choice he makes concerning the person of Jesus Christ.

Let's compare . . .

Election

Man's Choice

Acts 13:48

Matthew 11:28

2Timothy 1:9

John 7:37-38

Ephesians 1:11

John 3:16

Our response to this wonderful paradox, should be adoration and not explanation. God is very comfortable with both realities, we should be also and praise His name for the gift of our salvation.

** What two impacts should become manifest in our lives as a direct result of our being chosen by God?

1) Holy - hagios, this is the same word used for "saints" in verse one. This is how we stand before God. Totally set apart for His use!

2) Blameless - amomos, lit. "without blemish" or "spotless". This is how we are to stand before men, above reproach for Christ's sake.

We can see both of these concepts represented in Peter's writing. Let's turn to 1Peter to see what he has to say about holy and blameless. cf. 1Peter 1:14-16 and 1Peter 2:12

V. 5 ** Now, back in verse 5, most commentators agree that this verse begins with "In love He predestined us". What does that mean and how does it show love?

"proorizo" lit. - to mark out the boundaries or limits beforehand. God showed His love for me by keeping me from going too far from Himself!

** According to Paul, what have we been predestined to?

The "adoption as sons". Even though we were His enemies, He lovingly set the limits of our rebellion so that we might become adopted into His family as joint heirs with Jesus Christ.
cf. Ephesians 2:1-3, Galatians 4:4-7 and Romans 8:17

** Even though we were mercifully predestined before the foundation of the world, what does verse 5 say about the vehicle of our adoption. Whom did it come through?

". . . through Jesus Christ to Himself . . ." It was Christ's work on the cross alone that could accomplish it! cf. John 14:6

** Was this according to any human effort or merit?

No! But according to the kind intention of His will!

V. 6 ** What must be the result of God displaying His kind will toward us?

It must bring about "praise to the glory of His grace". Not merely to His grace, but the glory of His grace. Paul uses the word "doxa", meaning the majestic, brightness or beauty of God's grace.

EXTRICATE

** As we have looked together at God's goodness toward us, does it prompt your heart to join Paul in saying, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"?

Absolutely! We have received so much, while deserving so little, we must offer Him continual praise by our obedient lifestyle in response to all He has done for us!

DELINEATE

** What have we seen today regarding all that our heavenly Father has done for us?

He has: blessed us, chosen us, predestined us, adopted us, He has a kind will toward us and poured His grace upon us!

** What should be our two fold response to our election?

We must be **Holy** before Him and **blameless** before men. We should be praising Him as we keep our focus on the "heavenly places" and not be earthbound in our thinking.

EVALUATE

** Is there something in my life that causes me to not praise God?

We need to deal with any circumstance which would try to rob our joy or defeat us from an obedient walk with Christ each day. Our preoccupation should be genuine praise from a pure heart for the "glory of His grace".

ACTIVATE

** Let's commit to the Lord this week, that we will praise Him and the glory of His grace no matter what each day may hold. cf. Luke 19:37-40

Closing Prayer