

EPHESIANS 1:3a
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 7, Nov. 29, 1998

Intro: Let us do a little review this morning before we begin the first major section of the contents of the book of Ephesians. We have given an introduction to the letter. We looked at the historical city of Ephesus. My wife was reading in the Daily Bread booklet the other day and one of the readings was on the city of Ephesus. This article pointed out how the silt of the Cayster River gradually pushed out the shoreline and eventually Ephesus lost its prominence due to this slow silting process. The application drawn was that as Christians we must ever guard against the slow silting of sin in our lives. You know, silt is made up of particles ever so small. In the Song of Solomon we learn that it is the little foxes that spoil the vineyard. Well, we looked at some of the beauty of Ephesus and those events recorded in the book of Acts where the Gospel first came to Ephesus.

Then we considered the introduction of the letter to the Ephesians as given in 1:1-2. We saw that the Paul is the writer of the epistle, and that he was an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God. We are told in this introduction that the recipients were the Christians, the saints in Ephesus and that these saints are also those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. Then we saw that Paul desired for these Christians to experience the grace and peace of God and that these come from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have outlined the contents of the book of Ephesians 1:3-6:20 like this:

1:3-3:21 The wonderful work of salvation
4:1-6:20 The worthy walk of the saved

From that you can readily see that in 1:3-3:21 we will be immersed in the doctrine of salvation. I suppose with regard to the doctrine of salvation this is the most profound passage to be found anywhere in the Bible. I want to encourage you again to take notes and jot down things as we go along.

So from our outline we see that 1:3-3:21 is a doctrinal section, and from this outline we can also readily see that

4:1-6:20 will deal with practical issues of life. How we are to live. I have mentioned before that most of Paul's epistles may be divided like this. The first section is usually doctrinal and the second outlines duties. It is in the second section we find the do's and don'ts of practical Christianity. So we turn our attention to the wonderful work of salvation.

II. THE WONDERFUL WORK OF SALVATION (1:3-3:21)

This section I have called the wonderful work of salvation will come under three points:

- The Blessed Source of This Salvation (1:3-14)
- The Thankful Messenger of This Salvation (1:15-2:10)
- The Timely Reminder Regarding This Salvation (2:11-22)

A. The Blessed Source of This Salvation (1:3-14)

Ephesians 1:3 begins thus, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." Now everything from verse 3-14 comes under this main statement and modifies it. This is one long sentence. It is not the longest sentence in this book for in the Greek, 1:15-2:10 form the longest sentence in the Bible. When I outline a passage I do what I call an exegetical outline. Every point is drawn from the grammatical structure of the passage. But because I could not see how I could possibly do that and still stay on the page (every modifying point moves the outline to the right four points on the page and thus we would move right off the page). So to overcome this, once I come to the fourth level of the outline, it will be more topical than exegetical. However, my notes will all be determined by the exegetical method.

I would not explain that except that these messages go out on tape to those who request them and someone who understands exegetical outlines may wonder what happens after the fourth level.

1. The One who is to be blessed (1:3a)
 - a. The God of Jesus Christ

Notice first the word blessed. It is the Greek word *eulogeetos*. In its verb form it is to

speaking well of. When one is *eulogeetos* he is one well spoken of. He is blessed. The idea is that God may be well spoken of. The NIV translates this clause thus, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." From my studies I have concluded at this point that there is an explainable difference between praise and blessing. The word *praise* occurs several times in our passage (6, 14). It is the Greek word *epainos*. Notice Psalm 34:1 which says, "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." The difference between blessing the Lord and praising the Lord, as I see it, is this: Praising the Lord is saying good things to the Lord about the Lord. Blessing the Lord is saying good things about the Lord to others.

When you think good of God or when you speak well of God He is blessed. You see, when we give testimony to how God is working in our lives and the things He is doing, then God is blessed. And when God is blessed or praised He is glorified and that is the very purpose for which God made man as the first question and answer in our Catechism affirms.

Let us ask ourselves this question this morning: Am I usually critical? Do I have to stand as judge over everything? Are my thoughts positive and centered in God? Or am I negative and critical? If negativism and criticism is characteristic of my life then I am probably not blessing God much. I then have a hard time to see the good. This is an area the Lord has been speaking to me about of late. May God be blessed! May He be well spoken of in my life!

The Scriptures exhort us to rejoice in the Lord. Now I have something to tell you from personal experience because my natural tendency is to be critical and negative. It is this: It does not work well to be critical and negative and to be one who blesses and praises God. Oh, may God teach me to be theologically

correct and spiritually positive. This deeply theological passage begins with a note of praise and a request for praise and blessing. "Blessed be God..." May God be blessed in this place.

But let us notice something a little further in the text. One of the most profound mysteries of the Bible is the Trinity. Throughout the Church age, various theological battles have taken place. One of the hottest battles ever fought in the Church is with regard to the deity and humanity of Jesus Christ and how that all fits into the godhead. That battle, for the Christian church, was fought and settled a long, long time ago. Today we do not battle that doctrine in the church any more. But as soon as we confront the cults, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons etc... we immediately are engaged in this battle. Many cult members can back most of us Christian into a corner in a few moments, not because the Christian does not have the Bible on his side but because it is not an issue in the church and we simply take it for granted.

But notice now these words, "Blessed be the God ...of our Lord Jesus Christ." Does Jesus have a God? I thought He was God. (See also Eph. 1:17.) Turn with me to Matthew 27:46 and note these words, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Does Jesus have a God? Yes. You see, Jesus always has been God but He became a man at the incarnation. In His humanity He too has a God. In His deity He is God. In the book of Hebrews the first chapter the writer sets Jesus Christ out as being superior to angels (read 1:5-8). Here God the Father calls His Son God! Was He God? Well, yes of course. No doubt, here we are speaking of His deity.

So you see, God the Father is the God of Jesus but Jesus is God too. When I was in Bible school I had to write a paper on the Trinity. I concluded that though the Trinity is

unexplainable, it is the only teaching that does full justice to the Scriptures.

We have studied Genesis 1-3 not too long ago. You will remember that Genesis 1:26 says, "Let us make man in our image..." You will recall that some hold that the plural pronouns are used out of respect for God. I explained to you how in the low German language we use the plural pronoun "ye" to address an older person. But in Genesis 1 it is not the plural of majesty. It is the plural denoting more than one person. I pointed out to you that the imperitives in Genesis 1 which go like this, "Let there be..." The subject understood is, "You let there be..." God is not talking to Himself. He is talking to God the Son for the NT clearly teaches that Jesus Christ is the one who created all things.

b. The Father of Jesus Christ

Now we must ask a deep and heavy theological question. When did God the Father become the Father of Jesus Christ? Let me put it another way: When did Jesus Christ become the Son of God? There are two possible answers. First, He became the Son of God at the incarnation or second, He became the Son of God in eternity past and thus has always been the Son. For this latter view Scripture support is sought from Psalm 2:7. The question now raised is which day does this refer to or what is the Psalmist speaking of? This verse is quoted 3 times in the NT Acts 13:33; Heb. 1:5 and 5:5. Only Acts 13:33 helps to determine the time the Psalmist is speaking of (Read Acts 13:26-34). Here Paul refers Psalms 2:7 as speaking of the resurrection, which is not when Jesus became the Son.

Acts 13:33 is very helpful to answer a question the cults will ask when you speak of the Trinity. The JW's are always quick to lead you to Colossians 1:15 which says of Jesus Christ, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." The JW's

will quickly tell you that a firstborn has a beginning and we say Jesus Christ is eternal. What is the answer to that? Well, Jesus was begotten by God in a sense in the resurrection. God raised Him from the dead. Now look at Col. 1:18 and see that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead. He is the first to be resurrected giving Him firstbirth by resurrection and thus by right.

It is my view that God became the Father of Jesus Christ by the incarnation (See Luke 1:26-35). We are coming into the Christmas season. Here is a Christmas message, God is the Father of Jesus Christ. That is why He is the God of Jesus Christ. So I disagree that Jesus has been God's Son eternally but He became God's Son at the incarnation and will forever remain the Son of God. You see, in the incarnation, Jesus Christ became something more than God. He became man. Now He is both God and man. He opened the way between God and man and He could do it because He was both God and man.

We will find out throughout Ephesians that all we have and are is in Christ. We will find in verses 3-14:

- that God has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing (13b).
- that God chose us in Christ (1:4)
- that God made us acceptable in Christ (5-6)
- that God redeemed us in Christ (7-9)
- that God will gather all things together in Christ (10)
- that God has given us an inheritance in Christ (11-12)
- and that God has made a downpayment on our salvation in Christ (13-14)

Concl: So Paul begins this heavily theological section with these words, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ..." We realize that central to thoughts expressed in 3-14 will be both God and the Lord Jesus Christ. All we have and are as Christians come to us in Christ.

In conclusion, I want to read you this most profound passage which speaks in particular of God the Father. Then I want to let a black preacher describe to you the Lord Jesus Christ.