

Every Spiritual Blessing – Part 1

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – Paul extols the spiritual blessings that God the Father has lavished on the elect
2. aim – to cause us to praise God that we are the recipients of such grace and blessing
3. passage – Ephesians 1:3-14

b. outline

1. The Spiritual Blessings of the Father (Ephesians 1:3-6)
2. The Spiritual Blessings of the Son (Ephesians 1:7-12)
3. The Spiritual Blessings of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:13-14)

c. opening

1. the **scope of blessing** in the Christian life
 - a. **question:** how many of you feel blessed, particularly as a Christian? How do you feel blessed?
 - b. **reality:** most church-goers feel blessed, but the bulk of their “blessings” are related to physical or material benefits that they perceive in life (**e.g.** comfort, success, security, relational, etc.)
 1. this is natural, because we are physical creatures that live in a physical world
 2. this is unnatural, because (as believers) our *primary* blessings are not material, but spiritual
 - a. our election, redemption, adoption by God, inheritance, etc. are all *intangible* realities
 - b. and, much of our life (even as believers) is weighed down by material trials and tribulations
 - c. which has a tendency to *negate* the “feeling” of being blessed materially
 - c. **principle: the true blessing of being a follower of Jesus is found in the inexpressibly wonderful spiritual realities granted to us by God in his grace which transcend our physical existence and become the stabilizing force of our lives in the face of confusion and pain**
2. the **nature** of this pericope (**vv. 3-14**)
 - a. it is (in the original language) a single, long sentence
 1. **e.g.** which may indicate the “hurried” nature of the letter (**i.e.** written quickly and sent off)
 2. **note:** most English translations try to “help” by breaking it into sentences along lines of thought
 - b. it has a structure (rhetorically), but it is less “organized” than other Pauline works (**e.g.** Romans)
 1. **e.g.** upon quick inspection, it *seems* to be divided along trinitarian lines
 2. **note:** I intend to exploit this (seeming) trinitarian structure to divide this sermon into parts
 - c. it is unique in the N.T. Pauline corpus as the most God-centered introduction
 1. **e.g.** most of Paul’s letters begin with a greeting, and then move (generally) to a praise of those to whom he is writing due to their personal/corporate success in the faith (**see Romans 1:7-8**)
“To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world.”
 - a. exceptions: **2 Corinthians** (a follow-up letter) and **Galatians** (a polemic against error)
 - b. but: Paul will turn his attention to their faithfulness in **v. 15**
 - d. it touches upon a whole blizzard of deep (controversial?) soteriological concepts
 1. **e.g.** election, predestination, adoption, redemption, the divine decree, inheritance, the sovereignty of God, his providence, the perseverance of the saints, and the glory of God
 2. **note:** in many cases, these doctrines appear in *verb form* (**e.g.** chose, predestined, etc.)
 - e. it is unique exposition by Paul in bringing together all of these topics at once
 1. **e.g.** he typically works *through* these kinds of doctrines in larger expositions and explanations
 2. **note:** the rapid-fire nature of this passage may suggest that Paul *assumes* the Ephesians are familiar with them all, and does not feel the need to exposit them in detail (**although we will!**)
 - f. it is the basis of where Paul is going to go in the heart of this letter (**4:1-2a**)
“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness ...”
 1. **e.g. (see above)** these particular soteriological concepts form the basis for how we are to live
 2. **i.e.** these things **transcend** our physical existence, and they **stabilize** us in the midst of pain

I. The Spiritual Blessings of the Father (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Content

a. the blessed nature of God (v. 3)

1. a form of the word “blessed” appears three (3) times in **v. 3** (blessed, blest, blessing)
 - a. which implies that it is the *focus* or *theme* of the section (**from the outset**)
2. it is a specific root word translated “blessed,” but is unique from other words also translated as such
 - a. **i.e.** it requires more than just an English concordance to understand the meaning
 - b. **e.g.** the word “blessed” in the Beatitudes of **Matthew 5:3-12** means happy, fortunate, contented
 1. but, this word is different – it does not mean “Happy is God the father ...”
 2. **BTW: Happy Father’s Day – may you dads have a blessed day!!**
3. it is a word translated from the Greek word “*eulogia*”
 - a. from this word, comes our word *eulogy* = a written or spoken set of praises about another, typically someone who has just died (**note:** by the common grace of God, *everyone* can be eulogized)
 - b. “*eulogia*” = worthy of commendation; well spoken-of; praiseworthy
4. it is a word used in three (3) distinct ways in this verse:
 - a. as an **adjective** (“blessed be”) = that God is, by his very nature, commendable, praiseworthy
 1. retranslated “commendable is the God ...” or “the God and Father ... is praiseworthy”
 - b. as a **verb** (“has blessed us”) = that has, according to his nature, acted commendably, worthily
 1. retranslated “who has acted commendably towards us in Christ ...”
 - c. as a **noun** (“every blessing”) = that has, according to his actions, done that which is commendable
 1. retranslated “with every spiritually commendable thing ...”
5. it is a word that makes an **ontological** case for the works of God
 1. it is because God is commendable (worthy of all praise) that his actions are commendable (praiseworthy), and the results of those actions are commendable (worthy of praise)
 2. **IOW:** it is from the nature of God that his actions flow, and his actions produce results that are consistent with his nature

b. the blessed nature of God the Father (v. 3)

1. **observation:** although the passage maintains a clear view of the Trinitarian nature of these blessings, the passage itself is fundamentally a praise of God **the Father**
 - a. the works of Christ and of the Spirit are both established and celebrated (**note v. 7, v. 13**)
 - b. but, it is the Father who is singled out for praise here:
 1. the construction of **v. 3** targets the Father as the one “blessed” (the Father “of”)
 2. most of the verbs are works of the Father (note **v. 4** – “chose”, **v. 11** – “predestined”)
 3. many of the pronouns of “him” or “he” are actually of the Father in contrast to another member of the Trinity (note the distinction of persons in **vv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 13**)
2. the **patricentric** view of this pericope
 - a. Paul is clearly **Christocentric** – there is no doubt that the work of the Second Person of the Trinity was uppermost in his redemptive theology
 - b. here (however), Paul is quite **patricentric**, because he wants to *elevate* the focus of the blessing of God from the *specific work* of the Son and Spirit to the **decree** of the Father over it all
 - c. to say, that the spiritual realities that bring true joy to us are found in the everlasting purpose of God in his decree, which undergirds everything that Christ did
 1. **fact:** most Baptists do not believe that there is a decree of God over all things
 2. **reformed Baptists recognize that the decree of God is the foundation under the redemptive work of Christ and of his Spirit, and it is in this decree that our true faith finds its deepest roots**