

Every Spiritual Blessing

Ephesians 1:1-3

After spending the past five years carefully examining and studying God's word from the Book of Luke, today we will begin a similar journey into the Book of Ephesians. And I am especially excited about this particular study because I know that it will take us into some of the deepest realms of the heart and the plan of God; and will reveal to us things that we has never known before.

And we can be confident that that will take place because, like all the other words of scripture, these words are the very breath of God. As He said to us in 2 Timothy 3, 16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

This Book of Ephesians will do all of these things within you and me because its words have the actual power of God's Holy Spirit flowing within them . . . expressing doctrine and theology and precepts and commands and instructions in righteousness. And the only thing that God asks of you and me is that we open our hearts and our minds to receive it.

If we are willing to do that, to receive it, we will surely be changed by it, changed into the very image of Christ, doing things that we have never done before, witnessing and discipling and carrying forward all the many things that Christ did while He was here among us, never again being mere "hearers" of the word, but instead also being "doers" of the word.

Some weeks back, we spoke on the subject of "Precepts before Application", acknowledging that we dare not go forth and try to give others the precepts of God unless we first know them and embrace them for ourselves. Many well-intending men and women have erred in this and have taken their trusting listeners down wrong pathways. But as we study this precious Book of Ephesians God will be faithful to instill in us the real truth that we will need to impart to others, truth that will lead them, and us, to eternal life in Him.

With all of that being said, may we begin with the reading of these first words of chapter one. . . . And I will confess to you that we will probably not get very far in our study of these words each week, because they are so filled to overflowing with precious insights into the ways of God.

Please read along with me, Ephesians 1:1-14 (NKJV). We will probably only talk about the first three verses, but I would like for us to read the first fourteen verses so that we can receive them in context.

1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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, 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, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved. 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him. 11 In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, 12 that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:1-14 (NKJV))

These words begin with a salutation that clearly reveals to whom this epistle is addressed. It is addressed to, and is intended for the understanding of “saints”, those who have already received Christ as Savior and Lord and are completely saved. That is important for you and me, as believers, to know. And that is why unbelievers, though able to read the words, truly do not grasp their meaning. No matter how scholarly and intellectual an unbelieving a reader might be, these words will always be foreign and beyond their spiritual comprehension. Granted, yes an unbeliever might gain some academic insight and might even be able, from an academic sense, to argue the validity of these words. And we see that take place often in our universities and other academic settings.

But as we know from the words of 1 Corinthians 2, “Spiritual truths” can only be accurately discerned by the Holy Spirit dwelling within a person. So then, even the most brilliant of secular minds, though they “know the words”, their knowledge will be

devoid of the power that lives within those words. And again, these words do have power within them, enormous power, power to change our souls and to save each of us to the uttermost.

12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. (Hebrews 4:12-13 (NKJV))

This is the power within these words. Each of the words that we just read here in the Book of Ephesians is living and powerful, sharper than any double edged sword, able to reach deeply into our hearts and souls and to make changes that will bring you and me to righteousness.

Looking on further . . . these next few words here in Ephesians chapter 1 also give us a clear understanding about who is speaking forth these words. It is God Himself. Verse 2,

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Ephesians 1:2)

So often, readers of these words and speakers and preachers get caught up in emphasizing that the Apostle Paul wrote these words. Yes, the Apostle Paul penned them, but these are not his words. He is simply the messenger, no more and no less. God gave these words, verbatim, and Paul is simply delivering the message exactly as God gave the words and the meaning to him. And note carefully that the words of this verse clearly establish God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ as being equal.

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
(Ephesians 1:2)

And each truly is equal within the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. They are One, all co-equal members of the Same Person, "God".

I believe that we, in this congregation have the proper understanding of this equality within the Trinity, but some people do get it confused, some even thinking that the "red letters" indicating the words of Jesus are more important or more valid than the other words, those in black. But that is not so! God is God! And God is One! And every word within these scriptures carries with them the very same validity.

Yes, each Person within the Trinity does have different functions and they carry forward their purposes in different manners. But they are ever and always One and part of each

other. The Father gives us His Son. The Son reveals the Father. The Holy Spirit reveals the Son. The Son sits at the right hand of God the Father and intercedes for you and me for our sinful behavior. The Holy Spirit also intercedes on our behalf “with groans” that we cannot understand.

Again, these words, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”, are given to you and me so that we can know for sure that the next words we read came directly from them. And we need to accept each word that is given here as being from them and each word is divine and is completely trustworthy.

Next, in verse 3 we read,

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. (Ephesians 1:3)

Here, again we see the complete agreement that takes place within the Trinity, and especially so as it benefits you and me. The simple words “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”, reveal to us a kind of “satisfaction” and “contentment” that exists within their relationship, and especially as it relates to you and me and to the salvation that Jesus wrought for us on the cross.

These words harken back to the “propitiation” and the “Expiation” that took place as Christ gave Himself for our sins and reconciled us to God. We spoke about these words in a recent message as we considered the suffering that Christ endured on the cross for our salvation. Those words, first from Romans 3:23-25 (NKJV)

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith. (Romans 3:23-25 (NKJV)

And then also 1 John 4:10

10 In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1John 4:10)

This word “propitiation” has a two-fold meaning and is often translated “expiation”. Expiation emphasizes the removal of guilt through a payment of the penalty, while propitiation emphasizes the satisfaction, the payment in full, of the debt, all of which then relieves the need for God to execute judgment upon us. So, as we read the words,

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. (Ephesians 1:3)

We can know that God the Father is blessed, is satisfied, is in complete agreement with His Son that His Son's blood has paid the full and complete debt for all the sins that you and I have committed. And now, with our sins having been completely washed away by the blood of Christ, and the penalty for them no longer accountable to you and me, God the Father can now shower us with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places". The next thought that comes immediately to mind is, "what are those spiritual blessings in heavenly places" that God the Father will bless us with?

Do those blessings include temporal blessings, such as take place on the earth? Perhaps, but please understand, temporal blessings are not the focus of the blessings that God portends within these particular words. No, these are blessings of another realm, spiritual blessings, that have their beginning and their impact in heaven, with their effects reaching on out to us in our temporal realm.

May I repeat something that I said a moment ago? The spiritual blessing begins with our penalty for sin being satisfied in the heart of God. He is completely reconciled with, and happy with, you and me, and now He can get on with other spiritual blessings. And those "Spiritual Blessings" began to take place in the very first moments of our salvation. As you and first received the salvation of Christ, the first spiritual blessing was God's Holy Spirit immediately coming to live within our soul. And along with the Holy Spirit came all of His fruits, which are wonderful and powerful spiritual blessings. Listen!

22 . . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV))

Yes, without the Holy Spirit's presence we can, in a natural sense, have some love and some periods of joy and peace. We can even have some patience and kindness. But those natural fruits are not nearly as good as God's "Spiritual Fruits." They are usually so self-centered that they fall short of truly satisfying to us. The "fruits of the Spirit" are really real and really good. And they not only bless us, they bless everyone we meet along our way.

Then, along with the "fruits of the Spirit", God also blesses us with "spiritual blessings" of special "gifts of the Spirit", at least one "gift" for each of us. Listen to these words in 1 Corinthians 12:4-1.

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another

faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:4-1)

These are “spiritual blessings” that are given within the heavenly realms but they extend on out into our temporal realm so that we can “walk a walk” of Godliness and love, passing God’s blessings on to others.

One other “Spiritual Blessing” that is revealed to us in the Book of Acts, is one that bespeaks a measure of God’s Spirit that is in addition to His gift of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. This additional measure of God’s Spirit is expressed as being “a pouring out” of His Spirit upon us. And that “pouring out” upon us seems always to be for the purpose of equipping and empowering us to do certain special tasks and callings.

Yes, God’s Spirit always has power. And His power is always living within our souls. But there are times and reasons and occasions when God will give us a very special “unction”, an anointing that will enable us to accomplish things that are beyond human abilities. John the Baptist spoke about it when he said,

11 “I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. (Matthew 3:11 (ESV)

And then Jesus said in

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 (ESV)

Folks, for those of us who have received Christ Jesus as Savior, there are “Spiritual Blessings” that have been put to our account beyond all that we could hope or imagine, “Spiritual power” and a “Spiritual fire” alive and working within us.

We must close for now, but God willing, we will pick back up next week here in chapter one, where God will explain to us in clear and plain words the real truth about how we got to where we are today. Praise be to God for His indescribable free gift.

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. (Ephesians 1:3)