

"To the Praise of the Glory of His Grace, Part One" Ephesians 1:1-6

February 10, 2008
by C.W. Powell

*"1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:
2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:
4 According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:
5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,
6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph 1:1-6)*

Paul had greeted the church with a simple and straightforward greeting similar to that which he gave all the churches. He affirmed His divine calling from God as an apostle, called the people saints and faithful and enjoined grace and peace unto them, which comes from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then comes one of Paul's greatest passages. Verses 3-14 is one great eulogy in which the great apostle blesses God the Father for an immense store of spiritual blessings in the Lord Jesus. The Holy Trinity is here: the Father who grants the gifts; the Son who is the depository of the gifts and the Holy Spirit who actuates these spiritual blessings. Because we cannot think of everything at once, and these great gifts make up together the great gift of salvation, we must think of each aspect one thing at a time, but we also must remember that they all make up what we call grace, the gift of salvation to us sinners.

The Lord willing, I will try over the next several weeks, to unpack the parts of this eulogy. You know, John 3:16 is a great verse in the Bible and it captures the essence of the Gospel that is rooted in the love of God which sent the Lord Jesus to die for our sins; and I would not denigrate that in any way. But this passage fleshes out John 3:16 and makes it robust and precise. What does it mean that God loved the world and gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him might not perish but have everlasting life? This is explained in Ephesians 1:3-14. John 3:16 emphasizes the love of God; this passage emphasizes the will of God, and unpacks the elements of the love of God

- I. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - A. God is blessed for the very things that irritate the humanists the most. His sovereignty, His predestination; His free and unmeasured grace. Instead of apologizing for these great truths, Paul puts them into context and sees them as a reason to bless and honor

the Lord, not apologize for them. He would shout these things to the world, for they are a reason for blessing God, not apologizing for Him, and being embarrassed about it.

- B. “Blessed” is the translation of the Greek from which we get the word “Eulogy.” A Eulogy is a list of someone’s virtues. We do them at funerals and retirement banquets. This word is used in two different forms in verse three:
1. “Blessed be God” and “hath blessed us” The first is descriptive; the second is an action.
 - a. The first, the descriptive is ascribed only to God in the New Testament and speaks of his essential being: he is blessed in Himself, and when we speak of God as “blessed” we are not adding anything to Him, but simply acknowledging as He is. [“Bless the Lord, Oh my soul” means that my soul is to acknowledge God as blessed, not that my soul adds anything to God.]
 - b. The second is the act of imparting good things to us. He, the blessed one, blesses us. It is never the other way around. God is not blessed by anything we do or say; all blessings come from Him who is the source of all good things. As James says, “Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights, in whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.” There is no darkness in Him at all, but pure and unchanging light.
 2. He enumerates the blessings that we receive:
 - a. As Francis Faulks put it in the Tyndale Commentaries:
 - (1). Election from the very beginning;
 - (2). Sonship by adoption;
 - (3). Redemption, which is forgiveness;
 - (4). Insight into God’s all-embracing purpose;
 - (5). The privilege for both Jews and Gentiles to be His people;
 - (6). The sealing of the Spirit, which is the earnest of the final inheritance.
 - b. We will be speaking of these one at a time and all together in the sermons of the next days.
 3. To summarize: God is blessed by us when we acknowledge His perfections and praise Him for them; we are blessed when we receive His gifts.
- C. As a side note: When Christianity has resided for a long time in a language and a culture, the language itself picks up the nuances of the faith. This is true of the word “blessed” which is derived from the word for blood, and it means something that is made sacred or holy by means of blood.
- II. There are Three Themes, tremendous themes, that run throughout this great eulogy. These will also be emphasized in the series of sermons that we will preach by God’s grace:
- A. **First Theme:** These blessings reside in God from eternity and are revealed and worked out in time. They exist in God “before the foundation” of the world. This word is a figure of speech and is derived from a word meaning throwing down, as the sowing of seed in a field or the begetting of a son or laying rocks for a foundation. Because it is from eternity, it must be free. We are not chosen because we are holy and without blame, but we are chosen to be holy and without blame. The choosing is before our works and unto our works, not after our works even in the mind of God as if God is moved by our will rather than we moved by His will. We will see this idea reinforced as we proceed through this great epistle. Note the following:

1. "8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph 2:8-10)
 2. "10 And not only this; but when Rebecca also had conceived by one, even by our father Isaac; 11 (For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) 12 It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. 13 As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." (Ro 9:10-13)
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 4. "9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2Ti 1:9-10)
 5. There are many other such passages in the words of our Lord, the words of the other apostles which indicate that the origin off all things is in heaven; that things are what they are on the earth because of what God decrees in heaven. We must become well enough versed in these things so that we can refute the foolishness of those who think that they are saying what the Bible says, when they are trying to read the Bible selectively in order to try to confirm their own will and sovereignty and reason. We cannot help it if they say, "I don't believe it," but we can show them to be liars when they say, "The Bible and the Apostles didn't teach it."
 6. They are then left with these choices: affirm their own ideas and deny the Bible; choose irrationality by trying to say that the Bible teaches both the sovereignty of their will and the sovereignty of God will [this is the default position of many even in Reformed circles], or to affirm the Bible and deny their own thoughts: this is what the bible calls us to do, "Let the wicked forsake his ways and the unrighteous man his thoughts..." and "He that trusts in his own heart is a fool."
- B. **Second Theme:** This eternal plan and purpose of God is in Jesus Christ, and the blessings from God are in Christ alone.
1. "That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus." (Phm 1:6)
 2. "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." (2Ti 2:10)
 3. "9 Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, 10 But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2Ti 1:9-10)
 4. "17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: 18 The eyes of your

understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us—ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 21 Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: 22 And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, 23 Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph 1:17-23)

5. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:” (1Co 1:30)
 6. “12 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: 14 In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: 15 Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;” (Col 1:12-19)
 7. “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” (Col 2:9)
- C. **Third Theme:** All of this is to be to the praise of the glory of His grace. We receive blessings from God so that we might bless Him—specifically for His grace. He gives to us so that we might acknowledge His perfections. We praise Him in His attributes.
1. The praise of idols is vanity, because they have no attributes. They have eyes but don’t see; ears but don’t hear; mouths, but don’t speak; the semblance of life, but are dead. They are clouds without rain.; painted and dead images.
 2. How different is our God: The creator; omnipotent; eternal; immutable; infinite; loving; gracious; the Father of our Lord Jesus; Who, with the Son, sends forth of the Spirit; He upholds all things; in Him we live and move and have our being. This is the great blessing of the Gospel that reveals all these things to us in Christ.

May God bless you.

Amen and Amen.