

His From All Eternity

The Christian life is one of reciprocal blessing: we bless God because He blesses us. In today's text, we can see how the Apostle Paul describes this phenomenon:

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Observe:

1. We must always bless the Lord (3a)

What does it mean for us to bless God? Literally, the word “bless,” means “good word.” That is, if we bless someone, we say a good word to or about someone. It’s the same word from which we get our word “eulogy.” In Ps. 103 David very famously blesses the Lord: “Bless the LORD, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits...”

How shall we bless Him?

We bless Him with our words—how we speak of Him to others and how we speak of Him to His face. We bless Him when we acknowledge Him alone to be the source of all blessing—the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We bless Him when we choose Him above all others. We bless Him when we find our full satisfaction in Him. We bless Him when we do His works on His behalf, for His glory. We bless Him when we trust Him regardless of our temporal circumstances, like Job, who after losing his children, his wealth, and his health, said: “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.”

2. We must recount His blessings to us (3b-6)

We bless God because He has first blessed us. Notice that the Apostle first speaks of how God blesses us in general, and then in verses 4-14, he shows us very specific blessings we have received. In today's text, we'll examine the first particular blessing Paul describes in vv. 4-6.

A. In general (3b)

Paul speaks here in general about all of God's blessings, which he unfolds in vv. 4-14.

- I. Our blessings are in Christ. Every blessing we have received comes only in and through Him.
- II. Our blessings are complete. We have every blessing. We lack nothing.
- III. Our blessings are divine; they come from “the heavenly places.”

B. In particular: He chose us (4-6)

Paul begins with God's gracious election of His people.

I. He chose us unconditionally (4a)

God chose us. Let this rest upon your mind for a moment—God chose us. To be clear, the Apostle says that it was before time began. What is the significance of that statement? When you choose someone for your staff or your baseball team, it's because you believe they can contribute something. But here Paul says God chose us before we were born, yea before the worlds were made. What does that mean? Clearly that this is a deliberate, irreversible decision. What does that mean? You are safe! Look at Rom. 9:11 to see the unconditional nature of God's election.

II. He chose us purposefully (4b)

Some fear that God's unconditional love will lead to moral license. Here the Apostle addresses that concern head on by showing that election produces quite the opposite effect. What election eventually generates is holiness.

III. He chose us lovingly (5a)

God's election amazes us, and so we ask, Why did God do this? What was His motivation? What was the great power behind the predestination of His people? It was love. That alone can explain His amazing works of redemption. A particular sort of love—love for sinners, for His enemies! Because it is based on something in Him rather than something in us, we are confident of the endurance of His love for us.

Look at the relationship for which He chose us: sonship. He not only elected us for service, but, dear ones, He elected us for fellowship. Do you see this? He wants to be with you in intimate relationship, just as He enjoys fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ, for our adoption is “through Jesus Christ.”

IV. He chose us happily (5b, 6)

Some people hesitate to embrace unconditional election because they are concerned about the establishment of man's free will. Paul is here concerned primarily with the establishment of God's free will! He does whatsoever He wills to do, and His will is always infinitely wise and good and beautiful.

But would it not ruin His reputation to reward wicked people with His special favor? And would it not be an eternal burden to Him to fellowship with them? Some of you introverts are asking, “Wouldn't He really like to be left alone for a long while?”

Here is what Paul teaches us: Just as creation provides for the display of God's power and wisdom, so our fall and redemption provide a theater for the glory of His grace. All the peoples of the earth will one day wonder at the magnitude of His love and mercy toward undeserving sinners. We could never be happy without Him. And He has declared that He will not be happy without us. Our happiness and His great glory are mutually inclusive.

Bless the Lord, indeed!

