

# DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

*Verses & Notes May 16, 2007*

*Ephesians 1:3-14 (Part 1)*

- 3: 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.
- 5: He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ,  
according to the purpose of his will,
- 6: to the praise of his glorious grace  
which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
- 7: In him we have redemption through his blood,  
the forgiveness of our trespasses,  
according to the riches of his grace
- 8: which he lavished upon us.
- 9: For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will,  
according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ
- 10: as a plan for the fullness of time,  
to unite all things in him,  
things in heaven and things on earth.
- 11: In him,  
according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things  
according to the counsel of his will,
- 12: we who first hoped in Christ  
have been destined and appointed to live for the praise of his glory.
- 13: In him you also,  
who have heard the word of truth,  
the gospel of your salvation,  
and have believed in him,  
were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit,
- 14: which is the guarantee of our inheritance  
until we acquire possession of it,  
to the praise of his glory.

## INTRODUCTION:

- We all know the old phrase "can't see the forest for the trees," but are we guilty of it? And it can especially be a problem in Bible study. Now don't get me wrong. I'm especially an advocate of getting to know the trees. I've always encouraged my sons to know how to identify trees and plants and weeds and birds and wild animals. If we know nothing about the rich details, the forest can be nothing more than a mindless blur. But especially in Bible study, too much focus on the intricate details can cause us to miss the intended beauty of the whole. This is part of what we will be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.

- A. Welcome ...
- B. It's possible that the most important aspect of studying this portion of Scripture, is our presumptions.

- C. As baptized Christians we live in two dimensions:
- Visible & invisible; horizontal & vertical; physical & spiritual.
  - By baptism...new birth...adoption as sons of God...new citizenship.
  - Though we are now citizens of heaven, we continue to live in this world.
  - DANGER: forgetting this OR never truly understanding or appreciating it!
    - Sadly many baptized Christians never experience the "2nd" conversion!"
    - Far too many people, even Christians, live only in the horizontal, visible world.
    - As a result, never experience growth in faith, hope, & love.
  - We live in a constant onslaught of "voices": the "world, flesh, & the devil."
    - To forget the invisible / vertical / spiritual blessings of God
      - That WE HAVE ALREADY RECEIVED BY BAPTISM!
  - This is what St. Paul is trying to prevent in this opening benediction.
- D. Assumptions:
- Paul in prison after many years of active & embattled ministry;
  - Time to reflect:
    - Understandably could be consumed with his visible / horizontal situation;
    - BUT he becomes overwhelmed by the joys of the vertical!
  - Not merely a letter & especially not a systematic treatise on the faith!
    - Probably a homily to be read in worship addressed to baptized Gentile converts.
      - Baptized: themes throughout letter; esp. this invocation.
        - 1:5, 6, 7, 13.
        - They are new children of God, citizens of heaven.
      - Gentiles: come with different baggage than Jewish converts!
        - More difficult to make mental transition.
      - Believers:
        - Paul is saying nothing here they don't already know!
        - Paul is presuming on the traditions they have been taught.
  - We must, therefore, be careful of getting caught up in the "trees"
    - Temptation to get sidetracked on discussion so predestination & justification;
    - Yes, we need to understand what these mean to understand the whole;
    - Yet, St. Paul presumed they already know & no where does he define them clearly!
    - Rather, he builds on their knowledge and draws their focus upwards!
    - Eg. One thing has been done every single day since the resurrection: praying the Psalms!
      - Carrying on Jewish tradition, Christians have prayed the psalter...worship!
      - However, when the psalms are studied as sources of theology, the worship aspect can sometimes be lost!
    - The same is true with this invocation: our attention needs to be on God!
      - Entire denominations of Christians have been divided by contrary interpretations of topics found in this invocation & book
      - Contrary to Paul's intent! Eph 4:1-3
 

*"I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with patience, forbearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

## BREAK

### Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long Christian "berakah"

- One long sentence, one of the longest in NT
- Built on a Jewish liturgical prayer of praise called a berakah:
  - Ps 28:6, "Blessed be the Lord! For he has heard the voice of my supplications."
  - Ps 41:13, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting."
  - Ps 68:19,20, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation."
  - Ps 72:18,19, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed

- be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth!"
- Luke 1:68...the "Benedictus," "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people ..."
- The focus of this entire section is praise to God, not on ourselves:
  - Remember from childhood Sunday school, biblical theme "blessed to be a blessing"
    - Great, as far as it goes...can become imbalance / self-centered.
  - The basic theme/summary of this Christian Berakah is:
    - **"Blessed be HE who has blessed us to be a blessing."**
    - All the rest of Eph 1:3-14 elaborates on this,
    - But always with emphasis on God, not primarily on our blessings.

### What is meant by "bless"

- The term is used 3 ways in this verse:
  - "Blessed be God..." who has "blessed us" ...with spiritual "blessings"
  - Sometimes "blessing" is translated as "happy"...i.e., Psalm 1...
    - This is why I prefer "blessed" vs "happy" ...would make no sense here!
  - "Blessed" conveys more than happy; it points to God as the source.
- How can we bless God?!
  - Essentially this means in the simplest sense: giving God all the credit!
    - Turning our focus completely in His direction, praising & thanking him!
    - Ps 103:1, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name."*

### Who is He who has blessed us?

#### ***"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"***

- God the Father is the constant title Paul uses for God throughout Ephesians:
  - (1:3,17; 2:8; 3:14; 4:6; 5:20; 6:23)
- A bit like being introduced as "Marcus, the husband of Marilyn"
  - A new, balanced understanding of their relationship to God their creator:
    - Jews: "God the father of A, I, and J" or "Creator of Heaven and Earth"
    - Gentiles: their many pagan gods;
    - Imbalanced: shift from both to Jesus alone!
  - Balanced: To God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ by power of Holy Spirit (1:13)

### How has He blessed us?

#### ***"who has blessed us in Christ"***

#### ***with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."***

- The rest of this invocation is Paul's answer to this, not as a list but as praise.
- ***"He has blessed us"*** Past tense: already received through baptism;
- ***"in Christ"*** A very common phrase, with many shades of meaning:
  - They would have been used to him & their teachers saying this;
  - Summarizes their new status through baptism: 2 Cor 5:16,17, *"From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once regarded Christ from a human point of view, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation"*
- ***"with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places..."***
  - What could he possibly mean by this?
    - How many of us, when we examine our Christian lives, would, at least inwardly, wonder whether this applies to us?
  - Remember, Paul focus is upon God, praising and blessing Him!
    - God has given us far more than we can ever realize!
    - He has given us & continues to give us all we need!

- We mostly miss His blessings by sin & ignorance;
- **"Spiritual"** because they come from more than natural causes;
  - Our new life / sonship is a gift of grace.
  - He is emphasizing that life is more than the horizontal!
- **"In the heavenly places"**
  - Our true home, where Christ now reigns! (1:20)
  - Where believers reign with him! (2:6) ; CCC 1003,  
*United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains "hidden with Christ in God."<sup>660</sup> The Father has already "raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."<sup>661</sup> Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we "also will appear with him in glory."<sup>662</sup>*
  - Where angels & demons operate unseen (3:10; 6:12)
- We will discuss this later in Ephesians, but again the purpose here is to draw our attention upwards & praise God.