

Jim's Notes
May 23, 2007
The Letter of St. Paul to the Ephesians

Ephesians 1:3-4

Ephesians 1:3a

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

Now the phrase blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is to be read in a double sense. It first means that God is blessed as the maker of all things, this being the main clause. To this is then added "who is also the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It means that both God and Father are to be referred in common to our Lord. Blessed is the God of the man who has been assumed and the father of him who was the Word of God with God in the beginning! Not that the assumed one is other than the Word who assumed him, but that he who is one and the same is spoken of now by sublime and now by humble titles, according to what circumstances demand. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.2)

Ambrosiaster [pseudo-Ambrose] (about A.D. 370):

He means not with an earthly but a heavenly blessing, not corruptible but eternal, because Christ's glory is not in earth but in heaven and in Christ. For every gift of God's grace is in Christ. If someone who despises Christ imagines that he is blessed by God he is wrong. Yet God is blessed in one way, humans in another. There is indeed one term blessing, but it should be understood as is proper to the recipient. . . . God is blessed when he is extolled with due praises, but the way in which God blesses human beings is to impart to them the gift of his grace, not according to their merits but according to his mercy. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3.1-2)

Ephesians 1:3c

St. Jerome (AD 347 – 420):

Now God has blessed us not with this or that blessing but with every blessing. It is not as though we all obtain them all at once, but singly we obtain particular ones in due time or some of the whole number. Thereby we possess their fullness through these singular blessings. He speaks not only of earthly blessings but of spiritual - there are indeed earthly blessings, as when someone has children, affluence in riches, the pleasure of honor and health. . . . But spiritual blessings are in the heavens because the earth is too small to circumscribe a spiritual blessing. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.3)

Hilary of Poitiers (AD 300 – 367):

Since God reveals himself to be blessed in spiritual and heavenly things, it is not amid these earthly and corporeal things that one should look for that perfect blessedness of the saints. (Treatise on Psalm 127, chap. 8)

Theodoret (AD 392 – 457):

He has conferred on us the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He has given us the hope of resurrection, the good news of immortality, the promise of the kingdom of heaven, the dignity of sonship. These he calls the spiritual blessings And he adds in heavenly places, because these gifts are heavenly. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.3)

Ephesians 1:4a

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

What he means is this: The one through whom he has blessed us is the one through whom he has elected us. . . . Christ chose us to have faith in him before we came into being, indeed even before the world was founded. The word foundation was well chosen, to indicate that it was laid down from some great height. For great and ineffable is the height of God, not in a particular place but rather in his remoteness from nature. So great is the distance between creature and Creator. (Homily on Ephesians 1.1.4)

St. Jerome (AD 347– 420):

Paul, wishing to show that God made all things out of nothing, ascribed to him not the "composition," the "creation" or the "making" but the *katabole*, that is, the inception of the foundation. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.4)

Ephesians 1:4b

Origen (AD 185 – 251):

One might ask if this is not contradicted by the prophetic saying in your sight shall no living being be justified (Psalm 143:2). . . . One may answer taking refuge in the double meanings of prophecy, that . . . no one is in all respects and throughout his whole life justified in God's sight, since he will of course have sinned at some time. But this would not prevent some from being at times holy and blameless before him if they have become so through correction. (Epistle to the Ephesians)

St. John Chrysostom (AD 349 – 407):

"You have been elected," he says, "in order to be holy and unblemished before his face." . . . He himself has made us saints, but we are called to remain saints. A saint is one who lives in faith, is unblemished and leads a blameless life. . . The sanctified life is not the effect of our labors or achievements but of God's love. It is not born of love alone or of our own virtue. For if it were from love alone, all ought to be saved. Again, if it were from our virtue his earthly appearing and the whole of his work would be unnecessary. But it is not from love alone or from our virtue but from God through God. . . . Virtue would have saved no one had there been no love. . . . For to become virtuous and to believe and to advance, this too was the work of the One who called us, even though it is something we can share. (Homily on Ephesians 1.1. 4 & 5)

St. Jerome (AD 347– 420):

Between saintly and unblemished there is this difference, that one who is saintly is *ipso facto* understood also to be unblemished, but one who is at some point unblemished is not by that fact itself saintly. Infants, after all, are spotless because their bodies are pure and they have committed no sin; and yet they are not saintly, because sanctity is not acquired without will and effort. Moreover, he who has done no sin can be called unblemished, but the saintly person is the one who is full of virtues . . . It is asked how anyone can be saintly and unblemished in God's sight . . . We must reply [that] Paul does not say he chose us before the foundation of the world on account of our being saintly and unblemished. He chose us that we might become saintly and unblemished, that is, that we who were not formerly saintly and unblemished should subsequently be so. . . . So understood, it provides a counterargument to one who says that souls were elected before the world came to be because of their sanctity and freedom from any sinful vice. (Epistle to the Ephesians 1.1.4)

St. Dionysius of Rome (Pope AD 259 - 268):

Next, then, I may properly turn to those who divide and cut apart and destroy the Monarchy, the most sacred proclamation of the Church of God, making of it, as it were, three powers, distinct substances, and three godheads. I have heard that some of your catechists and teachers of the divine word take the lead in this tenet. They are, so to speak, diametrically opposed to the opinion of Sabellius. For he, in his blasphemy, says that the Son is the Father, and vice versa. But they proclaim that there are in some way three Gods, when they divide the Sacred Unity into three substances foreign to each other and completely separate.

It is necessary, however, that the Divine Word be united with the God of the Universe; and the Holy Spirit must abide and dwell in God. Therefore the Divine Trinity must be gathered up and brought together in One, a Summit, as it were - I mean, the omnipotent

God of the Universe. . . . Nor are they less to be blamed who hold that the Son is a work, and think that the Lord was made, as if He were one of those things which were truly made. The divine statements bear witness to a generation suitable and becoming to Him, but not to any fashioning or making.

It is a blasphemy, then, and not a common one but the worst, to say that the Lord is in any way a handiwork. For if He came to be Son, then once He was not; but if, as He says Himself, He be in the Father, and if, which you know the Divine Scripture says, Christ be Word and Wisdom and Power, and these attributes be powers of God, then He always existed. But if the Son came into being, there was a time when these attributes did not exist; and, consequently, there was a time when God was without them – which is utterly absurd. . . . Neither, then, may we divide into three godheads the wonderful and divine Unity; nor may we disparage the dignity and exceeding majesty of the Lord by calling Him a work. Rather, we must believe in God, the Father almighty; and in Christ Jesus, His Son; and in the Holy Spirit; and that the Word is united to the God of the Universe. "For," says He, "the Father and I are one (John 10:30);" and "I am in the Father, and the Father in me (John 14:10)." Thus both the Divine Trinity and the sacred proclamation of the Monarchy will be preserved. (Letter to Dionysius of Alexandria)