

DEEP IN SCRIPTURE

Verses & Notes May 30, 2007

Ephesians 1:3-4 (Part 3)

- 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.

INTRODUCTION:

- The words of Scripture teach us that in Christ we received enumerable blessings and graces because of God's infinite mercy and love, or as St. Paul says in today's text, we have been blessed "in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." This is what we are told, but is this what you have experienced in your life as a Christian? ... This is part of what we will be discussing today on **Deep In Scripture**.
- A. Welcome ...
- B. Continuing where we left off last week with Eph 1:3;
 - We reviewed the dangers of misusing this text as a systematic theological text...
 - Paul from prison writing a homily to newly baptized Gentile believers...
 - He is building upon what he presumes they already know...
- C. Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long Christian "berakah" or blessing; essentially an Invocation.
 - The focus of this entire section is praise to God, not on ourselves:
 - The basic theme/summary of this Invocation 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 on our blessings, but on our need to bless God: How? In the simplest sense, this means giving God all the credit; Turning our focus completely in His direction, praising & thanking him!
 - Eph 1:3-14 is an Christian invocation not unlike Ps 103:
 - Today's Psalm reading in the Office of Readings (LOTH);
[1] Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!
[2] Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits,
[3] who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases,
[4] who redeems your life from the Pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
[5] who satisfies you with good as long as you live so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
[6] The LORD works vindication and justice for all who are oppressed.
[7] He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.
[8] The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
[9] He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever.
[10] He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities.
[11] For as the heavens are high above the earth,
so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
[12] as far as the east is from the west,
so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
[13] As a father pities his children, so the LORD pities those who fear him.

[22] Bless the LORD, all his works, in all places of his dominion.
Bless the LORD, O my soul!
 - The Psalmist was calling to his own soul to thank / bless God,
 - And to never forget His blessings which he enumerates;
 - But would every one of his listeners have confirmed this to be true?

- He did not intend his psalm as a check list or for theological study, but as an incentive to call God's people back to obedience!
 - However, people can get distracted off onto theological discussions and in the process miss / forget / neglect the obedience;
 - Such is true with much biblical theology, especially with how these verses in Ephesians are often treated.
- D. Today we pick up with the second half of verse 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,

- In this verse, St. Paul draws our praise to God by pointing out our infinite, immeasurable debt to His love and mercy:
 - His love is so great for you and me that He has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places—in other words, from now until eternity;
 - Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world—in other words, He has loved you & me from the very beginning;
 - Why? That we should be holy and blameless before him—now and forever.
- When we return, we will examine this text in closer detail, so that we can more fully experience God's blessings but mostly so we more fully praise & bless Him.

BREAK

E. How has God 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.
 - What could he possibly mean by this?
 - How many of us, when we examine our Christian lives, might wonder, at least inwardly, whether this applies to us?
- **St. Paul points out (at least) SIX THINGS about these blessings:**
 - 1. They are SPIRITUAL (3);**
 - **"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!
 - 2. They come to us as a part of God's loving plan: (5,9,11);**

*5: "He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,
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
11: "In him, according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to the counsel of his will"*
 - 3. They come to us as a gift of His Grace (6,7,8);**

"to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us."
 - 4. They come to us NOW because we are in Christ (3);**
 - **"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 accustomed to hearing him & their teachers say 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"

5. They come to us **in the Heavenly Places** (3);

- 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.
- **"In the heavenly places"**
 - Our true home, where Christ now reigns! (1:20; Phil 3:20; Col 3:1)
 - 1:20: "which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places"*
 - PHIL 3:20: "But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ..."*
 - Col 3:1: "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God."*
 - Where believers reign with him! (2:6) ; CCC 1003,
 - 2:4-6, "But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."*
 - "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." The Father has already "raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." ⁵⁶¹ 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."*
 - Where angels & demons operate unseen (3:8-10)
 - "To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places."*
 - Where the true battle of life is fought! (6:11,12; 1Ptr 5:8)
 - "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places."*
 - 1 Ptr 5:8, "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world."*

6. They are complete (3).

- **with EVERY spiritual blessing**
- 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!

F. What is the proof positive that we have received these blessings? 1 John 3:11, 14a

11: For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,

14: We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.

G. What can prevent us from experiencing these spiritual blessings?

- Ignorance
- Indifference
- Rejection of the sources of grace
- Denial
- Disobedience (1 John 3:14b) *"He who does not love abides in death."*
 - Eph 1:3-4 "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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that **we should be holy and blameless before him.**"*