

Song of the Father's Love
Ephesians 1:3-6
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(Lord's Day Service, Sunday, September 16, 2018)

Ephesians 1:3-6

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵he predestined us^[a] for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.

Introduction

Chapter 1 of Ephesians talks about salvation from God's point of view. Chapter 2 of Ephesians talks about salvation from our point of view. Chapter 1 is more theological; Chapter 2 is more psychological. We need to have both perspectives. If not, we have a limited perspective. We know we have a limited perspective when somebody does not know or see our perspective.

We have our own ways of thinking what is normal, what is right and what is just, but sometimes we don't understand other people. Theologically, we have an anthropocentric, man-centered view of what is happening: in reality, in eternity, in salvation. We don't like theocentric (God's perspective of looking at salvation) eternity. Often, we misunderstand concepts such as predestination, election. We have our own ways of judging what God has done and ignore God's perspective. We need to take out our ethnocentric, anthropocentric way and to learn to look at things biblically, which is God's perspective.

Joseph knew this throughout his life in Genesis. He went through all the hardships and difficulties; in an anthropocentric perspective. Some questions he might've asked would have been, "Why am I going through hard times?", "Why are there broken families?" But later on, he sees in God's perspective, that the events that man had intended for evil, God was fulfilling the dream that Joseph dreamed when he was young. God meant it for good and used him to save the world during that time.

We are studying verses 3 to 6, but it's actually part of a larger passage, verses 3 to 14. Paul is singing Ephesians 1:3-14 in one sentence in Greek...because he was seeing salvation in God's perspective. He was so excited about God's theocentric perspective of eternity and salvation, he couldn't stop and kept babbling - singing, praising, and worshipping in these 12 verses. The study of God's word should always lead us to sing, worship, and praise, and hopefully that happens today as well.

I. The Father Blessed Us – We are infinitely blessed [3]

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

A. God and Father

Paul begins this song by blessing God for blessing us with every conceivable blessing. More particularly, he makes a deliberate reference to the Trinity. The phrases “God and Father”, “Lord Jesus Christ”, and “Every spiritual blessing” reveal this. Three persons, One God, blessing us. Charles Hodge put it this way, “Blessings are spiritual, not merely because they pertain to the soul, but because they derive from the Holy Spirit, whose presence and influence are the great blessings purchased by price.”

It’s easy for us to see His blessings in the Old Testament because they are more visible and material. Old Testament blessings most commonly took form in family (relational), children, and land (security, safety, provision). In the New Testament, we know that those joys we would have received in those material blessings, we would receive in an infinitely greater manner in Christ. The three most powerful persons in the universe want to bless us.

B. Lord Jesus Christ

Spiritual blessings are blessings we will receive by God the Father, because of God the Son Jesus Christ, through the means of the Holy Spirit. It is not only material blessings, spiritual, emotional relational blessings. It doesn’t mean everything will go perfectly, right, or easy, but it means we have everything we need, and we can be eternally joyful in Jesus Christ.

C. Every spiritual blessing

Why does it seem like in verse 3 that we are “blessed” [is] in the past tense? It seems like it is saying that He has already blessed us. Often in the Bible, when there is a past tense it means three things:

1. It began

2. It will progressively get better

3. It will last forever

Whatever joy you experience in Jesus Christ, it comes and goes because of circumstances - life is not easy. You jam your toe once and your happiness is gone. Three persons and One God is ready to bless us eternally.

II. The Father chose us - We are forever loved

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

We might have experienced His blessings for us the moment of our spiritual birth when we first put our faith in Jesus Christ. Our experiences of His blessings were planned ever since eternity began. That's what verse 4 is saying, when it says, "He chose us." Choice entails preference. John Stott says, "The doctrine of election is a divine revelation not human speculation." This is not a doctrine that Martin Luther, John Calvin, Saint Augustine or Apostle Paul came up with, but this is the description of reality of God's perspective that we can read, realize and find in the Bible. Be open minded, don't be ethnocentric or anthropocentric.

A. Objections

1. Unfair

There are two objections to the doctrine election:

1) "God chose" means He did not choose someone else. If God chose people, then it is unfair for the people who aren't chosen.

2) And if God chose me, it means I have no freedom. These are the two main objections that I have observed when talking to people.

"God electing or choosing someone means he did not choose someone else," and in that sense, it seems unfair or unjust. What the Bible says about this is that God's choosing of somebody is God's perspective of how he deals with an individual. When He thought about you, he was mindful about you, and loved you. He loved you before you were good. It's his personal dealing with you. We can learn this through Peter's denial of Jesus. After Peter was forgiven and reinstated as an apostle, he was worried about being able to be used by God. After Jesus prophesies Peter's death and his life of service to Christ, Peter looks at Jesus and then looks at John and asks Jesus about John's future. And this is what Jesus says to him in John 21:22. (John 21:22)

22 Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

This means that "if I (Jesus) want him to live or die or anything, what is that to you? *You just follow me. Don't worry about others. There are 7 billion people in this world, and each one of them I deal with differently and individually. You won't understand even if I explain so don't think of others that way. I'm dealing with you. You're going to go through suffering, but you will glorify me.*" God deals with each individual, justly and fairly. You're just seeing the preview in this life. God will make everything right.

Jesus tells Peter not to worry about others. God has his own way of dealing with each and every person, justly and fairly. One day after judgment day, we will all marvel at his justice and righteousness. We need to think about election in terms of our own relationship with him - He chose me, He loves me.

2. No freedom

Teenagers often ask these questions, “Do we have freedom?” “Is God sovereign?”. To understand God’s sovereignty and Man’s choice, these three sentences might hopefully help you understand what the Bible says and the reality of the cross between His sovereignty and man’s choice.

1. Man’s choice: Our choices are real in such a way that we are responsible for our choices.

We will be judged for our choices.

2. God’s sovereignty: God is absolutely sovereign.

He’s in control of everything, every cell in your body - or how can you pray for your health. Nothing escapes from his control.

3. Paradox: Without violating our choices, God sovereignly works to accomplish redemptive history.

Two parallel truths that can coexist that seem contradictory to each other. He is sovereign over our choices, in the midst of our choices. We try to distinguish them, but they work together. We should not think of it as my freedom or God’s sovereignty but rather my freedom and God’s sovereignty.

B. Meaning

1. Blessing

We often think His control is a bad thing, but His choosing of us is a good thing. “Even as” in verse 4, means “just as” or “because” explaining verse 3. He thought of you - you occupied a space in His mind for eternity.

2. Love

In the end of verse 4 right before verse 5, there’s the phrase “In love.” I saw a Korean movie on the airplane back from Japan. It was about a mother coming back from the dead to spend time with her family. Basically the movie was about the husband and wife who met in high school, and the husband having a huge crush on the wife. Being madly in love, he tried so many things to get her attention. The story follows the progression of his journey getting close to her, eventually marrying her, only to experience her imminent death. Nearing the end of the movie, the wife’s perspective is revealed. Before the husband liked her, she actually liked him first. Before he chose her, she chose him.

After watching the movie, I felt that is what the electing love of God is like. There is not a single moment He did not think of you or love you. There's a song called "Longer." The lyrics go something like this:

Longer than there've been fishes in the ocean, higher than any bird ever flew,

Longer than there've been stars up in the heavens, I've been in love with you.

Even though the lyrics [of] Dan Foelberg may not be true of the love of man, but it is true of God's love.

We are loved by him so that we can be as it says in verse 4, "holy and blameless before him." "Holy" means separated for him. "Blameless" means living sacrifices, justified in Christ, for him. This means if you are saved, the proof of your salvation is change and growth, because you are in love, progressing in your love for him.

III. The Father predestined us - We have an amazing destiny

⁵ he predestined us^{tal} for adoption to himself 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.

A. The ground of predestination - Jesus Christ

In verse 5 it says, he predestined us - we have a destiny. We are made to be sustained by a meaningful and purposeful future. We should have confidence that our lives today, no matter how mundane, ordinary, or difficult, is a significant step toward something good even great, beautiful tomorrow for his glory. He has a path for us through Jesus Christ's blood and death on the cross and forgiveness.

B. The gain of predestination - as sons

Romans 8:29 - "*For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*" In the midst of our lives and decisions, He sovereignly orchestrates everything that we become more like Jesus.

C. The goal of predestination - to the praise of his glorious grace

Election means we are fully known, infinitely loved. Predestination means we are on the path to a wonderful place, on a path to attaining amazing possession, on a path to becoming an incredible person of Christ. That's God's perspective.

Conclusion

In a theocentric perspective, how should we live?

1. Live freely and wisely

There was an animal with an umbrella. The reason why he got an umbrella was because he heard about rain, but never experienced it. He heard that rain was bad, uncomfortable so he wanted to avoid rain and getting wet. The problem was that the animal was a fish. He's swimming in the water with an umbrella, but he eventually realized that as a fish, water is absolutely necessary to survive. So, he threw away his umbrella and freely lived in the ocean.

For us, we are living in the ocean of God's sovereignty. God's sovereignty is not something bad or uncomfortable, but we try to resist it with an "umbrella". But it doesn't matter what we do, He is sovereign. In fact, His sovereignty is not bad or uncomfortable, but his sovereignty is absolutely necessary. Everything he does, he is working for your good. He loves you, he knows you, he has the destiny for you. Understanding his sovereignty is absolutely necessary in your life and something that is great and awesome from the good, most awesome God. What you need to do is throw away your resistance and umbrella and live freely in the sovereignty of God.

2. Live in the destiny of a million dreams

We have our own selfish dreams, we have millions of dreams, we want to change the world, and be happy. According to the Bible, it's not bad to have dreams, but we need to have Kingdom dreams. Joseph dreamt of Kingdom dreams and they come to life in his life and it's only a picture of what Jesus Christ would do. We need to be a part of the Kingdom dream in our lives that God has planned for us. We need to dream and be a part of this great plan of God, so we can live for His glory.

When I meditated on this verse, Psalm 121:4,

"Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep"

That means God is watching over us. Every moment he does not sleep, he is looking after us. We are His dream. Think about how God thinks about us, loves us, how he wants the best for us. Think about how many dreams that God had for us. That's from God's perspective. Make sure you are sure He is with you, and you are with Him.