

The Pearl of the Epistles – Ephesians

God's Blessings are Heavenly

Ephesians 1:1-3

Ephesians 1:1-3 1 Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

Introduction

God has always desired to bless those that love Him. We find many illustrations of this in the Bible. For example, in the Old Testament, God blessed man with material blessings; He promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob land, wealth, fame and a continued bloodline. But the nation Israel misused and hoarded those material blessings.

From the time of Christ, in the New Testament, there was a shift in the type of blessings that God bestowed on His people. The blessings the Lord focused on were the spiritual and heavenly blessings and not material blessings.

Opening of the Book of Ephesians

Through our study of the “Seven Churches in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ” we learned a lot about the first church mentioned; the church at Ephesus.

Many recorded events happened at Ephesus. Paul started a church there that exhibited wonderful conversions. Ephesus was a melting pot of people from all over the known world. Since it was a major seaport in the Roman province of Asia, people passed through the city. To say that the commerce was vigorous would be an understatement. The Apostle Paul stayed in Ephesus for three years, his longest stay since his conversion.

Ephesus was a very religious city: Jews, Christians and followers of the goddess Artemis filled the city.

***Ephesians 1:1** Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:*

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The Apostle Paul identifies himself as the author of the book. This book is written to the “*saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*”

Paul identifies himself as an “apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God.” We all know that Paul’s name was Saul and that Jesus changed his name to Paul. For Paul to acknowledge that he was an apostle should be investigated. Generally the term apostle means “sent ones.” When referred to Jesus followers, it carries the special meaning of “a restricted group of special messengers of Jesus Christ.”

What are the biblical requirements for being an apostle? Well we find that answered in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Acts 1:21-22 So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” (ESV)

The first prerequisite for an Apostle was that only a man, not woman, must have “co-habited” with Jesus while He was on this earth. Therefore these men must have been faithful to Jesus and His mission so much that they left all and joined Him. This requirement would also mean that they were Jews and not gentiles. These men must be followers of Jesus from the time that John baptized Jesus in the Jordan River. They would have to be faithful to Jesus as they would have to have stuck it out until they saw the Resurrected Christ, which was no easy undertaking as there was a death warrant on Jesus followers.

Second they would have to be present at the ascension of Jesus which means that they would have seen the resurrected Christ.

This letter is sent to two groups within the church at Ephesus: first “*to the saints which are at Ephesus*”, second to “*to the faithful in Christ Jesus.*” We all know that not all Christians are faithful. Paul writes to them to challenge both groups to have a closer walk with God.

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

“*Grace*” is defined as the divine influence upon the heart by God, and its reflection in the life of the believer. Grace is not a result of works by us, but rests only in God’s love for us. I have always defined grace as “unmerited favor with God.” I don’t know who coined that phrase, but since

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I was old enough to understand that phrase I have repeated it. It just makes sense to me. I could never be good enough to deserve favor with the Creator of the universe.

“*Peace*” is defined as quietness of spirit, rest and prosperity. Peace is the result of trusting God.

Paul ensures that we know this grace and peace come “*from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*” Therefore the author and architect of grace and peace brings true grace and true peace. There is nothing fake about it.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

“*Blessed*” has two meanings. When blessed is applied to God it encompasses the idea of worship and praise. When applied to man it implies the sense of happiness. In Matthew 5:3-11, the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses blessed as “spiritual contentment.”

In this case “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*”, Paul is clearly stating that the God of grace and peace deserves our worship and praise.

“*...who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*” is the central part of this study. We can deduce that God the Father and God the Son freely give the blessings to man and now Paul identifies what kind of blessings God gives.

These are “spiritual blessings” and they are in “heavenly places in Christ.”

I hate to break it to you this morning, but Paul is not talking about houses, lands, money or property when he is talking about the blessings that God gives. These are “spiritual blessings that are located in heavenly places”.

I want to point out four things we should understand about this:

First the *spiritual blessings* are of the *Spirit*.

Left to himself, man has a tendency to become down or depressed when life is not so good. A spiritual man can control these feelings with the help of the Holy Spirit. The spiritual blessings sent by God, enable a person to control their lives on this earth. These blessings are not carnal blessings.

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1 Peter 1:3 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Second, spiritual blessings are the opposite of temporal blessings.

The spiritual blessings are everlasting and internal at the same time. These blessings are the most satisfying as they erase fear, doubt and being alone. Later in this letter, the Apostle Paul declares;

Ephesians 3:16 16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

Thirdly, spiritual blessings are far superior to material blessings.

These blessings are permanent and everlasting. Since God is giving them they are the perfect gift for us in every way. In heaven there will be a new song given to the followers:

“Revelation 5:11-13 11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. 13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Forth, Spiritual blessings are only found in Jesus Christ

The Son of God was raised from the dead and sits at the exalted place at the right hand of God the Father. The Christ is in the throne room surrounded by the heavenly hosts who are honoring Him with song and worship. It is in the resurrection that glory is bestowed upon Jesus. All heavenly blessings are his to give.

Therefore, if a person is to experience spiritual blessings, he must be *in Christ*. If a person is in Christ, then positionally he sits in heaven with Christ. You might be asking yourself, “How is this possible?” When a person truly *believes in Christ*, the Son of God, that became flesh and dwelt

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among us, died in our place on the cross and took our punishment, God counts the person to be the same as Christ, righteous and acceptable. Therefore, all the blessings of heaven are given to the Christ and His followers.

Conclusion

¹Recognize God's Blessings

A gentleman of wealth, but a stranger to a personal knowledge of God, was walking alone through his grounds one evening. Coming to the small hut of a poor man who earned his family's bread by his daily labor, he heard the continuous sound of loud speaking. Curiosity prompted him to stop and listen. The man of the house happened to be at prayer with his family. As soon as the gentleman could distinguish the words, he heard him give thanks to God for the goodness of His providence in giving them food to eat and clothes to put on, and in supplying them with what was necessary and comfortable in the present life. He was immediately struck with astonishment and confusion, and said to himself, "Does this poor man who has nothing but the meanest fare, and that purchased by hard work, give thanks to God for His goodness to himself and family, while I, who enjoy ease and honor, and everything that is pleasant and desirable, have hardly ever bent my knee or made any acknowledgement to my Maker and Preserver?" This incident was the means used by God to bring this rich man to a realization of his lack of what makes a person really blessed. It was not long before he accepted the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blessing is evidence in both poverty and riches.

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¹ Illustrations of Bible Truths, Quickverse 2006