**Living Theology Friends1414**

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 June 8, 2014

**“Ephesians: CH 1: 3”**

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**Eph 1:3 “Blessed {be} the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly {places} in Christ,”**

We enter a remarkable section of this letter for it is all one sentence from verse 3 through verse 14! Even this one verse seems inexhaustible as we could meditate on it the rest of our lives. Paul just heaps praise and doctrine together in a magnificent crescendo.

God blesses the world with what we call “general grace” (Matt 5:45). Only the children of God have been blessed with the blessings from “specific grace” (Acts 4:12, 1 Tim 2:5, Col 1:19, Col 2:3, Col 2:9). Paul makes it very clear here that these blessings in heaven are only for those who are “in Christ”. Thus he is talking specifically to the true children of God for these blessings are only for those who are “in Christ”. Paul starts this verse with praise and thanksgiving to God and that attitude should be present all the time in our lives. We also need to note that the Bible tells us to praise in a Trinitarian manner. We offer praises *to* God the Father *through* God the Son *by* God the Holy Spirit. An unbalanced attitude toward God by stressing one to the lack of the others often leads to errors that damage our witness to the world and our worship of God. Just as we must always be Trinitarian, we must also never forget that Christ is the only access to the Father.

People who are not born again have no interest in **true** spiritual matters. They cannot show an interest in true spiritual matters because they are spiritually dead and will remain in that state until the Holy Spirit regenerates them. After regeneration they have a spiritual mind, eyes, and ears (1 Cor 2:14). They are a temple (1 Cor 6:14) and can really offer praises to God (Rom 12:1). Only a child of God can offer true praises to God.

Note that our blessings are in heavenly places. Paul says “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” and not “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob”. The covenant and representation are different and so the blessings are different. In Old Testament times, blessings came mainly in a material and temporal sense. After the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, blessings are not so much here on earth but “in the heavenly places” beyond human sight. The Christian faith is honestly and openly otherworldly. The same concept is expressed by Peter: *“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.” (1 Peter 2:11).* We are not **of** the world anymore, and we are at war with the world. We are aliens in a strange land and what the world esteems, we must generally reject. A Christian looks at the world from a very different perspective than the non-Christian. We must obey both of the following:

* Col 3:2 *“Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth.”* **and**
* Rom 12:2 “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

This “transformation” is a metamorphosis that is never totally achieved while we live here, but we are commanded to move in that direction. We call this transformation the sanctification process. One day we will die, and we rest in the hope expressed by: “*For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2Cor 5:1)* Jesus is preparing this place for us (John 14:2-3). We also know that God Himself is reserving our inheritance for us (1Peter 1:4).

The next word in this great sentence (Eph 1:3) that we should focus on is “all”, for Paul says “all spiritual blessings”. Peter also says in 2 Peter 1:3 that *“God has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.”* Also note that Paul says in this great verse that God **has blessed** us”. This is not some future blessing. This blessing has already occurred. God has already blessed us with all spiritual blessings. So we are to enjoy and use them now. Paul elaborates on some of these blessings in verses to come. God reveals them slowly to us so that we are able to comprehend them fully as we go through life. The blessings will be progressively revealed to us until the time when we fully enjoy Him forever.

Now what does Paul mean about “in the heavenly places”? Paul uses this phrase five times in this letter and he used the same term in*: “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago-- whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- such a man was caught up to the third heaven.” (2Cor 12:2)* The “third heaven” is the same word as “heavenly places”. This concept was well known to the first-century readers. The “first heaven” is the atmosphere of our earth. The “second heaven” is the surrounding universe as we see it with its stars, planets, etc. The “third heaven” is the dwelling place of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is there and being “in Christ” joins us to him there. This concept of Christians being in heaven is also mentioned in: “*and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly {places}, in Christ Jesus,”* (Eph 2:6). So there is a spiritual sense in which we are already in the third heaven.

We are in the world and we are in heaven! We are Christians yet we still have a weakness for evil. We find that we don’t want to sin and yet we do sin. But we also know that we are at peace with God, and knowing that we can also be at peace with ourselves. As the sanctification process continues, our peace with ourselves increases. We must come to reckon the truth as stated in: *“For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” (Col 1:13)*

We are indeed now citizens of heaven with all the rights and privileges earned for us by Jesus Christ. So now we must spend time making sure that we understand that by being in Christ we have all of the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. We are also in the world, and our goal is to glorify God in all that we do here so as to make known to others that God indeed has worked in our lives and that it is only God who can make an immediate and eternal difference in individuals and in the world.