

The Spiritual Blessings that Are Ours in Christ

Ephesians 1:3-6

Ephesians 1:3-6 - *“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, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. In love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

Background Notes

All Scripture is the revealed Word of God, but we believe that while the entire Bible is the revelation of God, the New Testament is certainly further and fuller revelation from God. Now let me ask you this question: in the New Testament, where do we find the ultimate revelation of the heart and mind of God? I think we would have to agree that we would find it in the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.

In Colossians we have the person and work of Christ fully revealed. The doctrine of the supremacy and all-sufficiency of Christ is the theme of Colossians, that wonderful book of Scripture! In Ephesians we have the full revelation of the believer's position in Christ. Not only have we been saved, but we've also been exalted in Christ and enthroned with Christ *“in the heavenly places.”* Look at Ephesians 2:6: *“God raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* In Ephesians we learn the wonderful truth that we have not only been saved from our sins and identified with Christ in His death and resurrection -- but we learn the wonderful truth that we are actually ascended with Christ! As far as our position in Christ goes, we are exalted with Christ and enthroned in heaven!

Notice that verse 3 is a doxology: *“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.”* In this burst of praise, we're informed that believers are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. What are these “heavenly places” or “heavenly realms” that are mentioned here? The term “heavenly places” is used five times in Ephesians. It does not refer to heaven itself, but rather to the spiritual realm or spiritual sphere into which we're brought as a result of our salvation and position in Christ.

Verse 3 says that we are blessed with *“every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”* We may or may not be blessed with earthly blessings, like good health and long life. Earthly blessings are not guaranteed to the Christian. But here's the point: we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. There is not a spiritual blessing that Heaven has to offer that is not yours already, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ! What are these spiritual blessings? Paul begins to list them in verse 4.

Doctrinal Point

Believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings

The list of our spiritual blessings in Christ is found in verses 4-14. The first two blessings are in verses 4-6: our election (v4), and our “son-ship” (v5-6). These two blessings will be the two sub-points under our doctrinal point, that believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings.

a. Our spiritual blessing of “election.”

Verse 4: “Just as God chose us in Him in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him, in love.”

Now that’s quite a blessing -- to be chosen by God! We were lost because of sin, and we deserved nothing but the judgment of God. But in His grace, God chose us for salvation! He “elected” us for salvation – He not only forgave our sins, but He also made us holy and blameless and in the sphere of His love forever. Wow! What a blessing!

Why did He choose us? Well, it can’t be because we chose Him first. No, because the verse says He chose us before the foundation of the world! That’s long before we could even make a choice! “Well,” you may say, “maybe God looked down the corridors of time and foresaw what choice we would make, and then rubber-stamped us to be elect.” The problem with that supposed solution is that you’re saying that God is not fully omniscient, that He doesn’t fully know everything. If God had to somehow foresee what choice we would make and then elect us on that basis we are essentially saying that there was a time when God didn’t know what choice we would make -- that is, He didn’t know until He foresaw. But God is omniscient. He always knows everything. He’s outside of time. He’s not bound by time. Everything for Him is in the present. He is the “I Am”! Therefore -- if He knows, He chose! Hear it once again: if He knows, He chose. Not on the basis of our choosing Him, but on the basis of His sovereign grace. It’s as simple as that.

Now when I say “simple,” I don’t mean that this concept is easy to understand. In fact, this doctrine is beyond our finite comprehension. Remember, the Bible also teaches the full responsibility of mankind. You must accept the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation -- and you can’t blame God if you don’t make that choice. In addition, the Bible never teaches that God elects or rubber-stamps anyone for hell. People go to hell because they didn’t choose God. Now how these two doctrines -- the full sovereignty of God on the one hand, and the full responsibility of mankind on the other -- how these two doctrines fit together is beyond us, but they are both true. Our minds are finite. These truths, and how they are fully harmonized, is beyond what our finite minds can comprehend. The point, of course, is that our election is a wonderful spiritual blessing.

b. Our spiritual blessing of “son-ship.”

Verses 5-6: *“Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”*

Predestination and election are not exactly the same concept, although they certainly overlap. Election has to do more with “who,” and predestination has more to do with “what.” Believers were predestined to be adopted as sons in the family of God. That’s the blessing that we have before us here: believers were predestined to be adopted as sons in the family of God.

The concept of adoption as mentioned here comes from 1st century Roman family life. When a biological son reached an age of maturity, he went through an adoption ceremony whereby he was recognized as a son, with all the rights and privileges of “son-ship.” That’s the idea here. Believers have been born into the family of God -- not only as sons, but we have all been given all the rights and privileges of “son-ship.” The Lord Jesus is *“not ashamed to call us brethren”* (Hebrews 2:11)! What a spiritual blessing!

Have you appreciated this spiritual blessing of “son-ship,” -- that you, as an individual, are a child of God? You are a son of God, and you have the spiritual blessing of son-ship. Notice that this blessing is not given because of anything we’ve done, or because there is anything intrinsically good in us. No, it’s *“according to the good pleasure of His will”* (v5) and *“to the praise of the glory of His grace”* (v6).

I don’t know “why me?” -- but I **do** know that I will be forever grateful for the spiritual blessings of my election and my son-ship! Believers are blessed with all spiritual blessings.

Practical Application

Do you really understand what it means to be “accepted in the Beloved”?

In verse 6 we read that we have been blessed with God’s grace, or *“accepted in the Beloved.”* The “Beloved” here, of course, is our Lord Himself. He is the beloved Son. He is the Son of God’s love, and all of our blessings come to us because God sees us as inseparably linked with His beloved Son. We are “accepted in the Beloved.”

Do you really understand that concept? Maybe this illustration will be helpful. When I was a student at Rutgers University in New Jersey, I commuted each day in a “less-than- conservative-looking” 1949 Ford convertible. That’s the best way I can describe the appearance of that old -- but “hot” -- car! It seemed that I was often pulled out of “the even flow of traffic” and given speeding tickets by the local police, who evidently didn’t like the way my car looked or sounded. Finally, I

accumulated enough demerit points, and I received an official letter telling me I had to go to the state capital for a hearing and possibly have my driver's license revoked. I went in fear and trembling, because I was a "commuter" – I had to be able to drive to continue my university studies. I even wore my Army ROTC uniform to the hearing, hoping to make a good impression on the judge!

The judge was just about to take away my license when he asked me about my uniform. I told him I was in ROTC at Rutgers University. At that point he named another student and asked me if I knew him. I not only knew this other student, but we were in the same ROTC unit! And guess what? That other student was **the judge's son!** You can't believe how the atmosphere in that office changed! The judge even got up out of his chair, came around the desk and shook my hand.

And my license was **not** taken away! Why not? We talked, and what do you think the subject of our conversation was? We talked about his son. I was accepted "in the beloved" -- I was accepted in his beloved son! That's what made the difference.

When we become Christians, we are related to God's beloved Son, and God accepts us "in the Beloved." What a wonderful truth! I hope this illustration will help you to understand more fully how and why God accepts us. God sees us and accepts us in His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ!