

Chosen to Praise

Ephesians 1:3-6

Online Sermon: http://www.mckeesfamily.com/?page_id=3567

“Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness.”

Psalms 29:2

Ever get so excited about what God has done in your life that all you want to do is climb the highest mountain, shout and praise His holy name? While we are fully aware that God sending His Son Jesus to die on a cross for those who used to be His enemies, dead in their sins and incapable of seeking God on their own is more than sufficient reasons to praise Him; one can't help but wonder how this can be done in a manner worthy of He who has heaped upon us every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Even though many of our deeds are like filthy rags and our words vain and reflect the ways of this world this does not negate the responsibility of His ambassador's and royal priests, i.e. us Christians, to at least attempt to praise our Creator in a manner worthy of His greatness! If only we would believe that He who created us in His image can do all things, including molding and shaping our lives so that we might be living sacrifices, holy and acceptable in His sight! Today's sermon is going to review the character, sphere and ground of our blessings in order to spur us on to not only praise and glorify His name with our lips but also through His power strive to become blameless in His sight!

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” (verse 3)

The Character of our Blessings

With a profound sense of gratitude¹ and a genuine desire to elicit emotions of hope, humility, and joy,² Paul begins his “mystic hymn”³ by praising God for having given us “every spiritual blessing in Christ!” Unlike the “Old Testament days when God's promises were largely material,”⁴ the blessings granted to those who have received a new heart under the new covenant are derived from the Holy Spirit, purchased by the blood of Christ and are spiritual in nature.⁵

¹ R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 21.

² Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 227.

³ Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 17.

⁴ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 34.

⁵ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 33.



Even though Apostle Paul “knew little of material blessings,”⁶ the spiritual blessings of have been chosen (v. 4), predestined (v. 5), forgiven (v. 7), and a recipient of God’s grace (v. 7-8) whom was included, marked and sealed by the Holy Spirit (v. 13); made Paul feel like he had boundless wealth!⁷ The value of these blessings are to be “measured by the price that was paid to obtain them when on the cross the Son of God fought satanic opponents and disarmed them (Col 2:15).”⁸ Praise be to God that whatever our spiritual lives

require, He “amply and abundantly provides”⁹ without neglecting to provide for our basic, physical needs as well (Matthew 6:25-34)!¹⁰

Sphere in Which Blessings are Experienced



These gracious gifts are not just future benefits to be realized upon the return of Christ¹¹ but are to be experienced in the “heavenly” realms in the present.¹² “Heavenly realms” is not “an exact synonym for heaven¹³ nor does it strictly refer to the “sky” above or a “literal spatial abode.”¹⁴ The sphere in which believers receive every spiritual blessing in Christ¹⁵ is the unseen spiritual reality that is all

⁶ Curtis Vaughan, [Ephesians](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 18.

⁷ James Montgomery Boice, [Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 10–11.

⁸ A. Skevington Wood, “[Ephesians](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 24.

⁹ Curtis Vaughan, [Ephesians](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 18.

¹⁰ James Montgomery Boice, [Ephesians: An Expositional Commentary](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 10.

¹¹ Peter Thomas O’Brien, [The Letter to the Ephesians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 97.

¹² Curtis Vaughan, [Ephesians](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 19.

¹³ Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene Albert Nida, [A Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians](#), UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1993), 10–11.

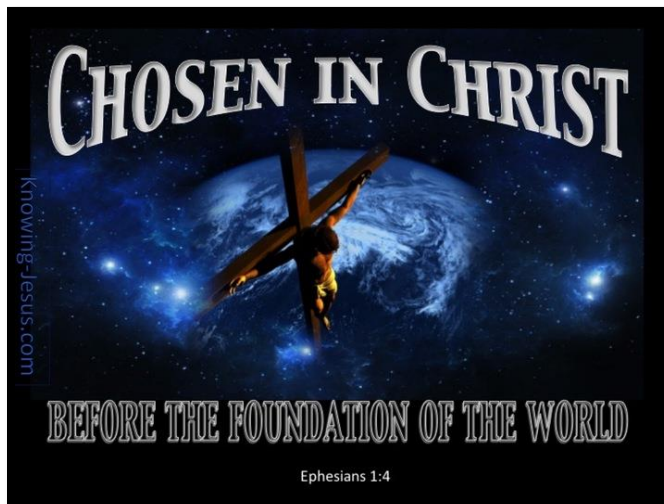
¹⁴ John R. W. Stott, [God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 35.

¹⁵ Curtis Vaughan, [Ephesians](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 19.

around us.¹⁶ The heavenly realm Paul is referring to is the realm in which we exist and Christ reigns supreme but until the final consummation allows the evil powers of this “present evil age” to wage war against God’s children.¹⁷ Our struggle while on this earth is not against flesh and blood, according to Paul but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12). Praise be to God that through our union with Christ, we have not only been blessed with what we need to survive the fiery darts of Satan but have also been guaranteed victory through our union with Christ whom already defeated him on the cross!¹⁸

Ground in Which Blessings Come

For He chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love ⁵ He predestined us for adoption to sonship ⁿ through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will (verses 4-5)



The grounds in which we have received every spiritual blessing was in accordance to the eternal purpose of God.¹⁹ Before the beginning of time and creation²⁰ God’s “unstoppable, undefeatable, invincible” plan²¹ was to provide the means in which humanity could be adopted in Christ as His children.²² Since the Fall all have sinned and are dead in their transgressions and incapable of “making even the smallest movement back toward God.”²³ Before the foundation of the world God elected, i.e. “marked off in advance,”²⁴ a “significant portion of the human race”²⁵

to receive salvation through the atoning sacrifice of His Son Jesus.²⁶ How God chose those to be

¹⁶ Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 150.

¹⁷ Douglas J. Moo, “The Letters and Revelation,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2399.

¹⁸ Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 151.

¹⁹ Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 19.

²⁰ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 100.

²¹ John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1990–1999)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²² John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1990–1999)* (Minneapolis, MN: Desiring God, 2007).

²³ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 16.

²⁴ Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 20.

²⁵ R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 23.

²⁶ Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 20.

elect without violating human free will²⁷ or His own justice²⁸ is a mystery that has “baffled the best brains of Christendom for centuries.”²⁹ What is known with certainty concerning election is that humans do not obtain salvation by trying to conquer heaven like Satan tried, not is it bought with spiritual currency or inherited based one’s image being in the likeness of God³⁰ but can only be received by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ!³¹ So regardless if one is a Calvinist or Arminian one can wholeheartedly agree that “God’s election is free and beats down and annihilates all the worthiness, works and virtues”³² of humanity.

Being elected to be saved by grace through faith is not “just a privilege but carries with it great responsibility.”³³ By sin our fellowship with God became impossible but by “grace, in and



through Christ, restoration to sonship was made possible (John 1:12).”³⁴ “All believers, male and female, who receive the Spirit that brings about adoption (Romans 8:15, 23) acquire a new status with its accompanying privileges and responsibilities.”³⁵ Those who have been adopted into God’s family are to become holy and blameless in His sight!³⁶ This eternal security in Christ is not to be taken as a license to sin (Romans 6:1-4)³⁷ but as an invitation to have our lives transformed and renewed in His image daily (Romans 12:1-2)! Even though our final state of perfection will not be realized until the return of

Christ this does not lessen our responsibility to embrace the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit,³⁸ i.e. saying, thinking and doing what Jesus did while here on earth! Praise be to God by

²⁷ R. C. Sproul, *The Purpose of God: Ephesians* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 23.

²⁸ Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 152.

²⁹ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 37.

³⁰ James Montgomery Boice, *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Ministry Resources Library, 1988), 14.

³¹ Curtis Vaughan, *Ephesians*, Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 21.

³² John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 39.

³³ Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 100.

³⁴ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 56.

³⁵ Douglas J. Moo, “The Letters and Revelation.” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 2400.

³⁶ Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 55.

³⁷ John R. W. Stott, *God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 38.

³⁸ John R. W. Stott, *Ibid.*, 40.

imitating Christ we have assurance that we are elect,³⁹ His child and about to spend an eternity in His presence!

According to His Pleasure and Will

The reason that God lavished upon us every spiritual blessing in Christ was not due to our foreseen righteousness, obedience or response to the Gospel message⁴⁰ but to stay true to His



nature⁴¹ of love and grace.⁴² Before this universe was even created⁴³ God knew the moment He created us in His image with free will meant that no one would attain righteousness without His Son Jesus atoning for their sins on the cross!⁴⁴ Jesus freely chose to die on the cross (John 10:18) so that God's eternal plan "to reconcile all things, all peoples and worlds"⁴⁵ might be accomplished through His atonement. Out of His "goodness and of His own benevolent sovereignty⁴⁶" Jesus graciously predestined humanity⁴⁷ for "a higher

dignity that even creation could not bestow on us," adoption into His family as sons and daughters!⁴⁸ Surely being offered baptism into Christ⁴⁹ and subsequent adoption into His family are sufficient grounds to break out in praise⁵⁰ to our Lord, Redeemer and King!

³⁹ John R. W. Stott, [*God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 38.

⁴⁰ R. C. Sproul, [*The Purpose of God: Ephesians*](#) (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 24.

⁴¹ Curtis Vaughan, [*Ephesians*](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 23.

⁴² Peter Thomas O'Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 100.

⁴³ John Muddiman, [*The Epistle to the Ephesians*](#), Black's New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 2001), 69.

⁴⁴ Arthur G. Patzia, [*Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 153.

⁴⁵ Ben Witherington III, [*The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 236.

⁴⁶ Curtis Vaughan, [*Ephesians*](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 23.

⁴⁷ R. C. Sproul, [*The Purpose of God: Ephesians*](#) (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 1994), 24.

⁴⁸ John R. W. Stott, [*God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 39.

⁴⁹ Arthur G. Patzia, [*Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 154.

⁵⁰ Peter Thomas O'Brien, [*The Letter to the Ephesians*](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), 103.

For the Praise of His Glory

To the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. Verse 6

The spiritual blessings we have received are to ignite passion and praise to God for His glorious grace.⁵¹ It is easy to become so enthralled and passionate about our spiritual blessings



that we forget to stop and praise Christ whom purchased them at the cost of His very life!⁵² “Just as Israel was chosen to live to God’s praise (Isaiah 43:21), so those who are chosen in Christ must live to the praise of the splendor of His grace.”⁵³ Praise be to God that it was out of His infinite love⁵⁴ and not by works that redemption, forgiveness and adoption into His family are possible.⁵⁵ God’s grace to pardon, redeem and adopt us⁵⁶ are to fill our souls with unspeakable joy⁵⁷ and our lips with unlimited praise!⁵⁸ While God does not

need our praise He certainly deserves it in the form of obedience⁵⁹ and the spreading His glorious message of hope to everyone who is perishing in their sins! In gratitude for every spiritual blessing we have received in Christ may we let our light shine in a manner that points to and glorifies God the Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16)!

Conclusion

How does one rightly praise the Chosen One whom has given us every spiritual blessing imaginable? Even though our words are truly vain, and our deeds are like filthy rags we must not forget God’s eternal and gracious love to elect and redeem us as masterpieces of His grace!

⁵¹ Arthur G. Patzia, [Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 154.

⁵² Walter L. Liefeld, [Ephesians](#), vol. 10, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), Eph 1:6.

⁵³ Curtis Vaughan, [Ephesians](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 23.

⁵⁴ Francis Foulkes, [Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 10, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 57.

⁵⁵ John R. W. Stott, [God’s New Society: The Message of Ephesians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 40.

⁵⁶ John Peter Lange et al., [A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures](#) (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2008), 35.

⁵⁷ Curtis Vaughan, [Ephesians](#), Founders Study Guide Commentary (Cape Coral, FL: Founders Press, 2002), 24.

⁵⁸ A. Skevington Wood, “[Ephesians](#),” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 24.

⁵⁹ Ben Witherington III, [The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 235–236.

While none of us have spiritual coins of righteousness to purchase our way into heaven Christ's atoning sacrifice is more than enough to appease God's righteous wrath and provide the means of reconciliation with a holy God! So, let us through the power of the Holy Spirit throw off the shackles of sin that so easily entangle and let us praise God both in word and deed by becoming living sacrifices. May we let our light shine with obedience, gratitude and thanksgiving for while we were sinners Christ died for the wretches like you and me! Thank you, Lord, that through Your sacrifice one day these dogs⁶⁰ can boldly approach Your Father, bow their knees and say, "I am Yours because You bought me!" Until that day may we take every chance we get to climb the mountains of life and shout and praise God's holy name!

⁶⁰ As Gentiles we are sometimes referred to as dogs inside of God's kingdom.