

Ephesians 1:3-12 | The Source of Blessing

Tyler Velin | September 12th, 2013

Welcome back to Grizzly Christian Fellowship. We are happy you came back. At this point in your relationship with us, you can still be here for a variety of different reasons. You have friends here, you wanted to win some books, you think it is good for you to come here, whatever, but ultimately we want you to come to GCF because the gospel attracts you. We are diving headlong into that gospel tonight as we look at Paul's words and prayer in the book of Ephesians. Last week we saw that Paul was wanting to reshape our view of life in his opening as he gave us a Christ-centered view of himself, a Christ-centered view of others, and Christ-Centered view of life, and he is going to continue down that path tonight.

We had our GCF table set up at the welcome feast a couple weeks ago, and while I was standing there one of my old classmates from college came up to me and started talking to me. We shared a little bit of our lives for one another, and she talked about how happy she was for me because my life seemed to be going so well right now. She talked about seeing pictures of my family on facebook and seeing posts about what we are doing here at GCF and was almost dumbfounded by the level of enjoyment I was getting out of my life. As she was saying this I really didn't know what to say except the phrase, "I'm blessed."

But after I said that I was kind of convicted. Convicted because I think our culture has a wrong definition of blessing. I was nervous that when I said, "I'm blessed," what she heard was, well I'm a Christian and God gives nice things and good lives to those who have earned it.

Is that really what we want to communicate when we talk about blessing? Is it some genie in a bottle gift that God gives all Christians? What does it mean to be blessed? Most of the time we use it in terms of material blessings, I have been blessed with a house, and a wife, and a financially stable job. Sometimes it's in a physical way. How many times do athletes say they have been blessed with a God given ability? I looked up #blessed today on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter and I saw the most common usage was, "Thankful to wake up today." But then it was ladies taking selfies of their smile, people thankful for their Kanye West tickets and new shoes, people bragging about their spouses or girlfriends, and one dude very grateful for fried chicken.

Certainly all of these things can be blessings, but these are all secondary blessings to what Paul is talking about tonight. Paul is going to once more take things that we know of, and frame them in light of who God is. **Let's pray.**

Tonight we are going to be looking at Ephesians 1:3-12, the passage which was just read for us. And we are going to see four attributes of blessing.

1. God – The Source of Blessing

Eph 1:3-4a.

Now when I first read this passage I was kind of confused. Because here we see that the word blessed is used twice in this passage. The first time Paul is saying, "Blessed be God," the second time he is referring to the blessings that God has given us.

Certainly God doesn't need the blessings that he gives us. There are aspects of our blessing, such as redemption, that God doesn't need. He doesn't need to be redeemed, he doesn't need to be forgiven. He is God. So what is Paul saying here when he opens up with Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? What does it mean when we sing the song:

Blessed be the name of the Lord? Can we bless God in the same way God blessed us? Well Paul is actually using two words here. When he says blessed be God, the word he is using is a word that actually means to be made adorable. Not adorable like a cuddly kitten, but adorable in terms of adoration. To be made holy. To be worthy to be set apart. So before we see that God is the giver of blessing, we see that God is the source of blessing.

Paul is calling us to see the worthiness of God the Father in and of himself. Even if God were to never give anything to anyone, he would still be worthy of ultimate adoration. Ultimately the root of sin is a failure to see God as worthy of worship. It is not a failure of belief, it is a failure of worship.

I was thinking of how odd this sounds to us as humans. To see God as such an object of ultimate worth that ultimate worth that he demands our worship. But we are experts at this concept. I had the unfortunate pleasure of watching the MTV video music awards the other day. Miley Cyrus and all. And I'm not a big music guy, but when they brought on Justin Timberlake for his six hour gala performance, I was mesmerized. The whole area sat and watched as he sang and danced, but I noticed something that you all have noticed before. Justin Timberlake was walking on this stage, and as he moved, you saw hand go up around him. The closer he got to you the more people wanted to reach out and be touched by Justin Timberlake. You see people saw a worth in Justin Timberlake even when he was at a distance, but the closer he got to someone, the more ecstatic the desire to behold him became. Justin Timberlake offered his hand. The God of the universe offered his son. God is the blessed blesser. The worth of who God is dictates the worth of blessings he bestowed and he bestowed a great blessing. **Eph 1:3-4a.**

Blessings are underserved. Rewards are merit based, blessings are giver based. God blessed us in Christ before the foundations of the world. Not only did God bless us in Christ, but he blessed us in Christ by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. Every blessing. Every blessing in the heavenly places is ours in Christ. Why? Because before the foundations of the world he chose us that we should be holy and blameless before him.

This answers a great questions of the ages. Was the entrance of sin, through the fall of man part of God's ultimate plan? It would appear so. Because before the foundations of the world, God reached out to a people who would not acknowledge his worth, and through Christ he made the blameworthy blameless, and the profaned he made holy.

While God is the source of blessing, **2. Christ – The Way of Blessing**

Eph 1:4a-6

So we know that God has blessed us in Christ, but how has God blessed us in Christ. In what way are we blessed? We are blessed that in love God predestined us for adoption through Christ Jesus according to the purpose of his will, to praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the Beloved who is Christ.

The story of Hosea is a fascinating story. In it God's people have turned after other gods, they are offering sacrifices to idols, and they are refusing to say, "Blessed be the God and Father." So God goes and finds this man named Hosea, and he says to him: "Hosea, go and marry a whore, and make children of whoredom." God is telling him to do this to illustrate how Israel is treating God. And so Hosea marries a prostitute named Gomer and they have one child, and his name means, "God sows Judgment." Then Gomer has another child, a daughter, and her name means "No Pity." The term no pity actually carries with it an allusion to the womb, so it is not just no pity, but it almost means, no motherly affection. Then Gomer has another child and God names him, "Not my people." In this whole story God is showing the people of Israel how their sins have isolated them from their father. The result is judgment, isolation, and rejection. But later on in the book of Hosea, God promises a future **Hosea 1:10-11a.** That one head, in

whom we are made a people is Christ. The greatest act of blessing we have received is that God in his ultimate love chose us to be in him through Christ. It wasn't an accident. It wasn't that we stumbled into it, but God planned, like a loving father, the ultimate redemption of his children. You want to know a transcendent truth about God. You chose God. You willingly choose to exercise belief in him, but you only do that because God first chose you. What love.

Rom 5:8.

The result of this love is consuming: **3. Redemption – The life of Blessing**

Eph 1:7-10

When you read the Old Testament, you see both the grace of God, and the justice of God. God made it clear to Adam and Eve in the garden that to sin is to die. Eat from that tree and you will surely die. Sin equals death. And in the OT we see the grace and justice of God in the sacrificial system. Animals were sacrificed like they were going out of style. They weren't sacrificed because God delighted in animal sacrifice. They were sacrificed because blood had to be shed for the sins of the people.

In Leviticus 16 we see instructions for what is called, "The Day of Atonement." The day of atonement is one day out of the year where blood runs rampant. It is the day when the priests in the temple offer sacrifice after sacrifice after sacrifice for the sins of the people because God's lust for justice means that sin is punished so that peace may reign.

The author of Hebrews looks back at this day of atonement and says this: **Hebrews 10:12-14** Christ is the greater sacrifice. That's why I am so crushed by **Eph 1:7**. We brought the trespass, Jesus brought the blood. Hallelujah, what an injustice.

This is redemption. Redemption is a monetary term. Redemption is a transfer of value for the payment of a something owed. But the beauty of redemption is not only that Christ has cancelled our sins, he has also revealed to us the life we are to live. **7-10**

In Christ, God has revealed to us the mystery of his will. We have just solved the philosophical debate of the millennia. What is the will of God? To unite all things in Christ. The word Paul uses for unite is not simple a word which means combination, but it is a word which carries the tone of "sum." The will of God which was set forth in Christ for the fullness of time is that the sum of all things will be in Christ, both in heaven and on earth.

This is not only the will of God separate from us. It is the will of God which consumes us. God will set forth in Christ, is God's will for the church: to reconcile all things to Christ. Paul is still fighting that individualism we discussed last week.

So many times we compartmentalize our blessing. We see blessings for an individual, and blessings for the sake of an individual. We are blessed and that blessing rarely leaks out to anywhere else. But the beauty of this passage is this: in 12 verses, Paul uses 11 plural pronouns (us, we, our). This blessing isn't for the super Christians, this blessing isn't for the pastors, this blessing isn't for the missionaries. This blessing is for those whom God has granted adoption through Christ. You, wherever you are in your walk with Christ, have been given an overwhelming amount of infinite blessing in Christ. And the good news is, it just gets better.

If you are not in Christ, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." I pray that you see the surpassing worth of Christ. I pray that God awakens you from your sin and estrangement from him and brings you into his family through the sacrifice of Christ for your sins. For the praise of his glorious grace.

The plan for the world this the reconciliation of all things in Christ and the beauty of it is that it is still building to that end. Jesus' church is growing. God's plan is succeeding. The Holy Spirit's job is thriving. Regardless of everything you see on TV and in the newspaper, nothing that is happening today is hurting the plan of God. God will unite all things in Christ, and we

have the pleasure, the power, and the responsibility of living our lives for that cause.

This is the final result of blessing: **4. Praise – The Glory of Blessing**

Eph 1:11-12

We are going to revisit this passage next week as we look at verses 11-14. We are going to dive into the vast riches of that inheritance we receive. But I want us to focus on one thing here: that is in Christ we have obtained an inheritance so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Paul is writing this to a people who were a literal first. Paul is preaching to Jews and Paul's message to them is that this Christ is the culmination of the OT. Paul is also preaching to Gentiles and his message is that through Christ you also have the ability to be God's people. But we see in James 1:18 that God chose to bring us as his church up as the firstfruits of redemption. We believers are the fruit of God's labor on the cross. We are the culmination of his glory because in God shattering the bonds of sin, breaking the hold of death, and bringing to life the long deceased God set himself up as the gracious Lord over all things, worthy of more glory and honor and praise forever and ever Amen.

We as a redeemed people are naturally the praise of God. We extol the power of God over sin, but we are also active praisers of God to the glory of his name.

Our job is to live a life of redemption which culminates in worship. Contagious, awe inspiring, God glorifying worship.

There is no greater existence than this. There is no greater love than this. As we, the people of God praise God, we are living and celebrating the wholeness of who God is and the plan he has set in place.

Do you see your blessing in the blessing of God? Are you still looking for blessings from this world, fading, dulling, limiting blessing. Or do you see that the greatest blessing is the blessing that comes from the blessed blesser. The one who out of love chose us who were lost to be found. The one who chose us who were condemned to live. The one who chose us where we were voiceless to be given a voice of praise.

Be blessed people of God for he has done great things and we are filled with joy.

Now I remember a song that sounded really cheesy growing up in church, but as I wrote this message today, I couldn't get it out of my head. So what I want to do in closing is read this hymn, and pray this hymn over our group. As sing-songy as it is, it is filled with beautiful truth and joy.

To God Be the Glory