

Section 2- Ephesians 1:3

by Lewis Sperry Chafer

In this sermon, Lewis Sperry Chafer explores the profound spiritual blessings believers receive in Christ and their implications for daily living.

Scripture: John 14:14-17, 1 Corinthians 3:21, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 1:3, Ephesians 1:6, Colossians 2:10, Hebrews 9:14

Topics: "Position In Christ", "Spiritual Blessings"

Description

Lewis Sperry Chafer preaches on the Epistle to the Ephesians, highlighting the three distinct lines of truth: the believer's exalted position, the truth about the Church as Christ's Body, and the consistent walk of the saved. The Epistle emphasizes the believer's exalted position secured by God's grace, followed by the call to live a worthy life. It stresses that God accomplishes the believer's position in Christ before calling them to live accordingly, contrary to the human concept of earning merit. The sermon delves into the believer's standing in Christ, the relationship between the Father and the Son, and the spiritual blessings bestowed on believers in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Transcript

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.

In the salutation of the Ephesian letter the Apostle Paul is identified as its human author, and those to whom he writes are addressed as, first the saints whose earthly abode is Ephesus, but whose spiritual position is in Christ Jesus. Secondly, the message is tended to all the faithful everywhere and anywhere who are in Christ Jesus.

Being thus addressed only to those who are saved, three distinct lines of truth inhere in the Epistle:

- (1) the present exalted position of each born-again believer;
- (2) the specific truth relative to the Church which is Christ's Body; and
- (3) the consistent walk and warfare of those who are saved.

Again, the order of truth as presented in this Epistle should be observed with care. True to the plan of divine grace, the Epistle first presents the believer's exalted position which has been secured through the

infinite mercy and power of God, and this is followed by an appeal to the one thus favored to walk worthy of the calling wherewith he is called. Thus, in the divine plan, the walk, or manner of daily life, is seen to be a normal result, or reasonable expression, growing out of the possession of the exceeding riches of grace in Christ Jesus.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, under God's provision in grace, God must first accomplish by His own unaided power all that enters into the believer's position in Christ and secure it forever; then, after this is accomplished, the saved one is called upon to live as one should live who has already entered the most exalted abiding position to which any created being could ever be brought. Naturally, the human heart with its ideals of personal merit and appreciation of common justice has always had a different conception. Is it not the usual plan to ask children to be good and then to reward them according to their effort?

Life Under the Law

Was not this God's way of dealing with Israel under the law when they were before Him as mere minors and under tutors and governors? And shall we dare to believe that a new plan has been secured through the death and resurrection of Christ and the present ministry of the Spirit wherein God perfectly and eternally saves the trusting sinner apart from every consideration of his merit or demerit, and that He does all this before any appeal for the daily life is made? Are we to believe also that this appeal, when it is made, is based only on the fact of a perfect merit already secured in Christ? Is it true that to be good because we are saved is even a stronger motive than to be good because we hope thereby to be saved? Satan has ever sought to confuse the weak believer at this crucial point by laying upon his conscience the responsibility of his walk before that believer has a true conception of his standing in Christ -- from which standing everything that is vital in his walk must proceed.

In Christ

Certainly the first step for each child of God is to see himself as standing perfectly in the righteousness of God, that imputed righteousness which is gained by his position in Christ and to which nothing could ever be added in time or eternity. When the conscience is thus set free from the unbearable burden of human responsibility, namely, the providing of perfect merit in the sight of God, and is purged from dead works through the blood of Christ (Heb 9:14), there is opened up to the mind and heart of the one thus enlightened the new sphere of liberty which belongs to the sons of God -- liberty, indeed, to do according to the desire of the heart; but invariably these desires are to be accompanied by a right adjustment to the mind and will of God, for God is always working in a yielded heart "both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Php 2:13).

In beginning the verse-by-verse contemplation of this Epistle, we shall find that the first section (Chapters 1, 2, and 3) contains no word of exhortation as to the believer's daily life, nor is any mention made of the service which he should render to God. The section is characterized by the revelation of the boundless work of God in behalf of one who trusts in Christ. Since the salutation occupies the first two verses of the letter, the message of the Epistle begins properly with verse 3:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

God is not only the source of every blessing, but He is the object of all our thanksgiving, worship and praise. The word here translated blessed is found eight times in the New Testament and is addressed only

to God. It is an ascription of supreme worship in which all devotion and adoration that the human heart can give is ascribed to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is revealed to us by and through His Son; but according to the following Scriptures, the contemplation should not stop with the Son alone; it should lead on to the Father:

"All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Mat 11:27);

"God ... hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb 1:1-2);

"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (Joh 14:13).

Never should we fail to glory in the Son; but it is an indication of spiritual immaturity if the Son has not led us on to the knowledge of the Father. The Son would have us join in adoration to the Father, for the Father is blessed indeed.

This Epistle could hardly begin upon a more exalted plane, nor could it assume more maturity of spiritual enlightenment in the ones to whom it is addressed. Recognizing the wisdom of the Apostle Paul in adapting his message to the capability of those to whom he writes we may conclude that the Ephesian saints were enriched in all things and, to an exceptional degree, were able to receive the "strong meat" of the Word. In undertaking an exposition of these themes, there should be no lessening of their high character even though simplicity in style is so much to be desired.

The phrase, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," is the full title of the First Person of the Blessed Trinity, and it incorporates, also, the full title of the Second Person. True, God the Father is also the Father of all who believe, but for all eternity to come He must first be recognized by that surpassing distinction which, in part, has been His throughout the eternity past, namely, "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The relation of the Second Person to the First Person has from all eternity been that of a Son, and, like all else related to the Godhead, it is not only eternal but unchangeable. He did not become a Son of the Father by His incarnation, nor by His resurrection, nor is He a Son by mere title, nor is He temporarily assuming such a relationship that He may execute His part in the Covenant of Redemption. He was the Only Begotten of the Father from all eternity, having no other relation to time and creation than that He is the Creator of them. It is evident that the Father and Son relationship sets forth only the features of emanation and manifestation and does not include the usual conception of derivation, inferiority, or distinction as to the time of beginning. The Son, being very God, is eternally on an absolute equality with the Father.

The Incarnation

On the other hand, the First Person became the God of the Second Person by the incarnation. Only from His humanity could Christ address the First Person as "My God." This He did in that moment of supreme manifestation of His humanity when on the cross He said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And again, after His resurrection He said, "I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (Joh 20:17).

When contemplating the full title of the First Person of the Godhead, 2Co 1:3 and 1Pe 1:3 should be observed sufficiently to note the significance of the use of this phrase in each instance (note, also, Mat

27:46; 1Co 3:23; Eph 1:17; and Rev 3:12).

Spiritual Blessings

"Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." As it is becoming for us to love Him "because he first loved us" (1Jn 4:19), it is equally becoming that we should bless Him because He has first blessed us, and the infinity of His love does not surpass the infinity of His blessing; for the blessing includes "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly in Christ Jesus." Thus three qualifying conditions are set up with regard to the exalted character of those blessings the believer has now received, each of which reaches on into knowledge-surpassing realms.

(1) The spiritual blessings are not limited to the unseen as in distinction to the seen, nor to the immaterial as in distinction to the material; the thought expressed being that these blessings come forth from God and not from humanly devised circumstances. There is a reiteration here of the great fact so clearly stated by Jonah when he said, "Salvation is of the Lord" (Jon 2:9); and again stated by the Apostle Paul, "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1Co 15:10). From all this it will be seen that, though man possesses a strange power by which he may hinder the work of God, he, on the other hand, is as strangely impotent in the realms of spiritual attainment.

(2) These divine blessings are identified as belonging to the heavenly. The term heavenly is an adjective without a noun, and the human mind naturally seeks to discover what it is that is here said to be heavenly. Heavenly is a term which is peculiar to the Ephesian letter (as the phrase the kingdom of heaven is peculiar to Matthew's Gospel); it occurs also in Mat 2:6, Mat 3:10, and Mat 6:12 The translators of our Authorized Version have supplied the noun places. This would imply that some localities are more blessed than others. Some interpreters have suggested that these blessings are heavenly because of the fact that they originate in, and proceed from heaven.

Still another interpretation, which has very much in its favor, is that reference is here made to the sphere of the believer's present relation to Christ. This sphere of relationship is far-reaching and all-inclusive. It includes the sharing of the divine nature; the possession of life which is none other than "Christ begotten in you the hope of glory"; the common purpose with Christ in service indicated by the words, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world"; the relation between Christ and the believer as forming the New Creation; in suffering, for we suffer together with Him; in inheritance, for it is said that we are "joint-heirs with Christ"; and in a yet future glory, when we shall be "glorified together with Him." Such a sphere of blessing is not limited to favored places but is ever and always the deepest reality in the unchanging sphere of identity with Christ, a reality which can shed its radiant glories in the human heart even in the dungeon at midnight as much as in the blazing glory of celestial realms.

(3) In His upper-room discourse, Christ uttered a phrase of seven monosyllables which sets forth the major twofold characterization of the Christian -- "Ye in me, and I in you" (Joh 14:20). Judging from these seven words alone, how marvelous are the inexhaustible and unsearchable riches of divine grace, and yet how wonderful is the simplicity of the divine utterance! The second of these two relationships, stated in the words, "I in you," asserts the essential truth that the child of God has received a new impartation of life, which life is none other than the indwelling Christ. The fact of a new impartation of Christ's life should not be contemplated as being a mere imitation of Christ, or a new rule or ideal of life, it is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." The Christian is one to whom Christ has given His own eternal life, which truth is sustained by no less than eighty New Testament passages, and to which Christ referred when He said, "I give unto

them eternal life" (Joh 10:23, and, in like manner, when He said, "I in you."

"Ye in me"

The first of these two phrases -- "ye in me" -- is the one which is referred to in Eph 1:3 and which, more than all else, discloses the basis on which the knowledge surpassing heavenly blessings rest, as well as the ground on which they are bestowed.

The whole theme of the New Creation is compressed in these three words of two letters each. As the entire unregenerate race is in Adam and constituted sinners by his one act of disobedience (Rom 5:19), so the entire regenerate group are in Christ and are constituted righteous by His one act of obedience. Likewise, because of its relation to Adam, the first creation became subject to death; so, also, the New Creation, because of its relation to Christ, has received the gift of God which is eternal life; and, added to this, all heavenly blessings which are in Christ Jesus. The limitless scope of these heavenly blessings has been pointed out above. It remains to be seen that the release of this transforming divine favor is granted, not on the ground of any fancied or real personal qualities attained or attainable, but is bestowed on the ground of the fact that God now sees the believer as transferred from the ruin of the Old Creation into the riches of the New Creation. By the gracious baptizing work of the Holy Spirit the believer, at the moment he is saved, is joined to Christ and is then eternally delivered from every complication and condemnation arising out of the first Adamic headship. Similarly, and at the same time, he is made to partake of every spiritual blessing in the heavenly association in Christ Jesus. Therefore, it may be said of the least of the children of God that he not only possesses the indwelling Christ, Who is his eternal life, but he is ensphered in Christ and thus enriched with all that Christ is and all that Christ has received. These riches are beyond comprehension; they include not only that infinite grace and perfection which Christ offered to God in our behalf, but they include also, all that He received from the Father (Joh 16:15), and all that was conferred upon Him because of the fact that He was obedient unto death -- an incomparable glory (Php 2:9). The human mind cannot comprehend such riches. Nevertheless, according to the testimony of the Scriptures, the child of God is now a partaker of all these riches in Christ Jesus. Added to this, these divine benefits are made real to the believer's heart and mind by the illuminating work of the Spirit (Joh 16:11-15).

Certain major aspects of these riches are emphasized in the Scriptures: the believer is "made the righteousness of God in him" (2Co 5:21); he is "accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6); he is "in Christ Jesus ... made nigh" (Eph 2:13); he is loved as Christ is loved (Joh 17:23); he is no longer of this world (Joh 17:16); and he is heard when he prays, as though his voice were the voice of the Son of God (Joh 14:14).

It remains yet to observe that all these marvels (and the half has never been told) are the immediate and present possession of every one that is saved. This fact is set forth with great emphasis. Our God and Father hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly association in Christ Jesus, and to those who trust in Christ, though they deserve in themselves only eternal condemnation, it is said, "all things are yours" (1Co 3:21), and, "ye are complete in him" (Col 2:10).

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