

Intro: When I say the word “eulogy” you probably think of death. It is not joy or gratitude or blessings that first come to mind because in our society our best words are saved until after a person has died before we ever speak them. What a sad commentary on our society. We don’t know how to praise appropriately. We are a family of cynics in this land, and I am the chief cynic. I find myself seeing the bad, not the good, the ugly, not the beautiful, and I have turned Garrison Kiellor into a sage when he says, “Complaint is an American art form. And it has risen to operatic levels.”

We do praise some today, mostly unimportant things like throwing a puffed-up pork rind over 50 yards, and we get excited when somebody actually tells the truth. But on the whole we live in a cynical society of professional complainers and I fear that we Christians are more affected by our society than we would like to believe. We rarely *really see* the beautiful benefits that God has graced us with in Christ. We lose sight of the laudable, we wander away from the wonderful, and we roam from the redemptive glory of Jesus. In Ephesians 1:3-14, a single sentence of over 200 words, Paul explodes in a pronunciation of God’s grace and His deserved praise for all the benefits that He has lavished freely on those in Christ. Verse 3 is the capstone, the main thesis statement, overarching theme that drives the entire soliloquy.

What we have in vss. 3-14 is an explosion of the deep gratitude of Paul’s heart erupting forth in praise from his mouth. He basically breaks into song, melodiously crooning of the benefits accrued to us in Christ and coming back three times to the refrain, “to the praise of the glory of His grace!” To the praise of the glory of His grace! What a wonderfully perfect response of praise towards God when we glimpse the beauty of His kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.

God is praiseworthy because He has bestowed benefits upon us in Christ with spiritual blessings in the heavenly places:

1. “Blessed” is the adjective from the verb *eulogia*, or “to speak good words”
 - a. to bless God is to speak good things of Him
 - i. Praiseworthy is God; May He be praised (spoken well of)
 - ii. Primarily speaking good things of those who deserve appreciation, honor, praise
 1. “Blessed be...” because of their good works
 2. Pronouncement of goodness and always given with reasons attached.
 - b. It is used a few times of things in the OT; a couple times of people; but predominantly used of God in the OT
 - c. Used 8 times in the NT and always of God
 - i. Characteristic of Jewish prayer that had become fixed in the *Shemonah ‘Esreh*, or 18 Benedictions. These were said three times a day and each refrain ended in the phrase, “Blessed are you, O Lord.” This was well-known to people of the NT.
 - ii. Title was used for God’s name in Mark 14:61 when the high priest asks Jesus, “Are you the Christ, the son of the Blessed One?”
 1. Had become customary to replace God’s with the title “Blessed One,” which indicates their understanding that God is the one worthy of praise, honor, etc.
 2. Zechariah blessed God for the promised salvation from sin when John was circumcised (Luke 1:68).
 3. Paul speaks three times in his letters of “God, who is blessed forever (Rom 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor 11:31).
 4. The other times it is used it is in eulogies like the one here in Ephesians (also 2 Cor 1:3 and 1 Peter 1:3) it is used with exactly the same words, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...”
2. Blessed is twofold
 - a. God simply *is* worthy of praise: God is blessed!
 - i. Declarative of God’s worthiness to be praised
 - b. We are called to praise Him: Blessed be God!
 - i. Imperative

- c. Both uses are possible and may even be intended in such a eulogy. These meanings would be entirely consistent with the thought and intention of such following praises.
3. There needs to be reasons stated for eulogia
- a. Praise is not praise unless its spoken and it's reasonable
 - b. All praise, or good words, must have their root in the beauty and goodness of the thing praised
 - i. He is the God and Father of Jesus Christ
 - 1. Jesus is God's Son – relation as deity
 - 2. The Father is also Jesus' God – relation as humanity
 - ii. Jesus Christ is our Lord
 - 1. Personal relationship with God and us "*His* Father" and "*our* Lord"
 - 2. His name, Jesus, from Yeshua, "The Lord is Salvation"
 - 3. He is our Master, Lord, etc.
 - 4. He is the Christ, the promised Messiah who brings salvation
 - c. God is praiseworthy for Who He is, but also for what He has done
4. He has blessed us.
- a. This word for blessing is different, although from the same root.
 - i. -Used primarily in the OT as the opposite of "to curse": it means to set benefits upon something, to prosper someone
 - ii. -God "lavishes" and "graces" us with benefits *in Christ*
 - b. Believers praise God because He has graciously benefited us.
 - c. How has God benefited believers?
5. These benefits are spiritual.
- a. The benefits, prosperity, are not temporal, earthly things, but are spiritual things according to the Spirit of God.
 - i. Contrast to the earthly blessings of the OT
 - ii. Spiritual is what is pertaining to the Spirit of God Himself, that which finds its source in God's Spirit
 - iii. There are spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1; 14:1; Rom 1:11), spiritual wisdom (Col 1:9; James 3:13-18), and those who walk by the Spirit (Gal 6:1).
 - iv. These spiritual benefits are for the effectiveness of the believer in this present society in proclaiming Jesus Christ.
 - 1. We have already been given them so that we can live effectively for Jesus.
 - b. God's specific spiritual benefits toward us, wrought in Christ, are listed in the following 11 verses.
 - He chose us (v4)
 - He sanctified us (v4)
 - He predestined us (v5)
 - He adopted us (v5)
 - He freely bestowed His grace upon us (v6)
 - He redeemed us (v7)
 - He forgave us (v7)
 - He lavished His grace upon us (v8)
 - He revealed the mystery of His will (v9)
 - He gave us an inheritance already obtained (v11)
 - He predestined us to sonship (v11)
 - He sealed us with the Holy Spirit of His promise (v13)
 - He pledged to us our inheritance (v14)
 - He promised complete redemption (v14)

He calls us His own possession (v14)

6. We are given every spiritual blessing by God in Christ.
 - a. “every”; we lack no spiritual blessing if we are in Christ
 - i. Ephesians were used to asking Artemis, through the means of magic, for her blessing upon their decisions
 1. She was the ruler of fates
 2. She was the keeper of the crossroads
 - ii. There is no more to be gained if one is in Christ.
 - iii. There is no blessing to lose if one is in Christ.
 1. These blessing are already given by grace and are kept by the Spirit, as pledged and promised
 2. It is this security of blessing that makes lives of gratitude and holiness not only possible, but natural for the believer
 3. This is why Paul so often reminds his readers, as he does in Ephesians, that holy living begins with an understanding of the grace of God lavished upon us in Jesus Christ
 - b. “in Christ” makes all the difference
 - i. This is the tonic note of the Gospel around which the entire opus of God’s glory is wondrously played out, finding its foundation and its completion in this truth: Faith, through the Spirit, places us *in Christ*.
 - ii. It is the keynote, where our benefits begin, end, and presently sit at God’s right hand.
 - iii. Outside of Christ there are no spiritual benefits bestowed so graciously...there is only the imposing doom of condemnation and curse, the tearing down of one’s soul.
7. These benefits are in the heavenly places.
 - i. -Moth and rust cannot destroy
 - ii. -Where God is and Christ sits on His right hand (Col 3)
 - iii. -They find their source and completion in God the Father
 1. They are in His care under His grace
 2. They are kept by Jesus Himself, because we are *in Him*
 3. We are His possession

What does all this mean to me now?

There is no more blessing, no more reward for those who are in Christ. There is nothing that must be gained in order to be complete or to be “better” in the eyes of God. In Christ, in our identification with His life, death, and resurrection, by faith, we have been given the benefits of all the eternal blessings that there are. This eliminates our inclination to compete against each other, to push each other down when we see failure and to puff ourselves up when we see growth. Our standing before God and the blessings of heaven are all of grace, complete grace, and we lack nothing in Christ! How can we look down on another if we are given EVERYTHING by His glorious grace?! How can we idolize and exalt others if they have been completely benefited by grace alone?! Where grace is grasped in the heart, peace reigns from the soul.

This doesn’t mean that we will not suffer here, for our temporal and earthly blessings are not promised in Christ. In fact, just as God used suffering to glorify Himself in the life of Jesus, so we should expect that God will bring suffering into our lives to create in us a deep dependence upon Him alone. This act of joyful submission can be accomplished because of the glorious and wonderful spiritual benefits with which He has blessed us.

How does this focus my eyes on Jesus?

The position that I have, blessed by God, is ALL because of Jesus! It is His sacrifice, His life, His power, His wisdom, His purity, that has earned all these benefits from God. He gives them to me freely, by His grace, sourced in the Father, too. God truly is working all things together for our good!

Jesus' love for you is so great that He gave His life. For us to be adopted, forgiven, redeemed, given an inheritance, and called God's possession, it took the Son of God bearing the wrath of God in our place. And He did! So, we are humbled amidst all of the blessings, for it is all due solely to His grace toward us. And we are emboldened that Jesus loves us that much! He did do it!! We are safe because Jesus holds us safe. I can forgive the one who has hurt me and love others who hate me because I am secure in Christ. I can be vulnerable and weak and shockingly revealing to others the messiness of my heart because I am completely saved by Jesus! It is not my "having it all together" or even partly together that makes me right or grants me blessings. It is all of the kindness and the love of God alone. What a Savior! What a Redeemer! What a God!!

Let us love without reciprocation because we are loved and blessed so deeply by God. Let us forgive without requirements because we have been blessed by God. Let us shout of His greatness to all who will listen that God has been gracious to His people!! Let us speak good words of great glory of this immeasurably holy, kind, and gracious God and what He has done for us through Jesus Christ our Lord! Frederick Lehman penned it well when he wrote:

Could we with ink the oceans fill
And were the skies of parchment made
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry
Nor could the scroll contain the whole
Though stretched from sky to sky
~Frederick M. Lehman

Look to the Father.
See His gracious promises in Jesus.
Recognize the glory of His grace.
Let the eulogy of the Father begin...