

Blessed Unto Holiness

Let us turn to our Bibles to Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1. Our verse this morning is verse 3. I'm going to go ahead and read the whole percopy of this section that I've been going over the last several weeks. To put it in a broader context again. Let us listen attentively to the word of God.

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.

In Him we also have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him, who works all things according to the counsel of His will.

That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. In Him also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who was the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory.

Let us pray. Herein, God, in this great doxology and theology of praise, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we learn and see so much beautiful depth. In here, as we drill down into verses 3 and 4, we ask and implore you, God Almighty, that you would help us to see and to be encouraged by the truth that you have blessed us in all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places, in particular, God, to be holy, to be sanctified, and to grow thereby.

We long for such things, God, because we hate our sin. Help us thereby, we pray, to be strengthened in the inner man this morning. By the blood of Christ we pray.

Amen. This grand doxology, a theology of praise and adoration of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you can see the progression here in these verses. Verses 3 to 14, they all go together of a piece.

It's full of depth and wonder. It teaches us to honor and glorify the blessed three in one, both for who they are and especially for what they have done for us in our redemption, in your salvation. God the Father selects, God the Son saves, and God the Spirit seals.

It's one way to look at these verses. We also learn that our full salvation from God is guaranteed and is all of grace because three times Paul emphasizes what? Predestination and election before the foundation of the world. Without an omnipotent God, we would have no deliverance from Satan's kingdom, for he is greater than we are.

But this wonderful doxology teaches more truths for edification. As you know, Paul says a lot of things in these verses, such as this verse and the one right after it, 3 and 4, describing why we are saved in the first place. So let's see that, that we are blessed unto or for the purpose of being holy.

Blessed With Every Spiritual Blessing

What does that mean? What does that entail? The first point, blessed with every spiritual blessing. Blessed with every spiritual blessing. Verse 3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He thanks God. It's a praise to Him who has blessed us. We bless Him.

He blessed us. First, of course, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. The opening verse here tells us, one, the source of our blessing, which is God the Father.

All blessings, especially spiritual, of course, but of course material as well. The emphasis will be upon the spiritual here. The resurrection is implied, I think, in verses 13 and 14 at the end of the section.

But it's especially the spiritual, that which pertains to our soul in its relation to God. That's what spiritual means. Our soul in relation to God.

And these blessings, not some of them, not most of them, but all of them, and we'll cover some of them in a bit, comes from God Almighty for our good. And the means of these blessings, or through whom, is Jesus Christ. As you recall, we went over the economic trinity in particular, and that it's from the Father, through the Son, and in the Spirit, is a typical way of phrasing it in theology.

You can see why here from the Bible. And it's through Jesus Christ, the blessings that we have, not around or independent of Him, but through and by Him, as the God-man, both divine and human, do we have this salvation. He's divine to satisfy divine justice, for that which is eternal and infinite, the honor and the law of God, can only be satisfied by that which is divine and eternal, the Son of God.

He must be God to save us. But He also must be man to be our advocate, to be our second Adam, to identify with us. And so in His work of redemption and mediation for His people, He is exercising this as one person, divine person from eternity past, who is both God and man, both divine, what we mean by God, He is eternal and has all the attributes as the Father does, and human, both a body and a soul.

And all blessings come from Him, and of course the Father, and even the Holy Spirit, although not mentioned here in verse 3. Paul is sitting down thinking, how am I going to write this out logically and carefully, so that I cover all the categories of thought for systematic theology. He's writing letters of encouragement, letters of admonition, letters

like we do in everyday life, in which thoughts flow through your head, and you write it down, and sometimes it seems very weird, I didn't know I could write all this, put this together, and say all these things. But even then, it's not a clear, systematic approach to your friends, about everything you believe.

It's just not the case. And it's the same with this, often. And of course, as only God can in His divine providence, the Spirit was behind it all anyways.

What He has written here, is what should have been written, and is sufficient for us. But, what I'm saying here is, we find out elsewhere in the Bible, at the end of verse 13 and 14, of this long doxology, 3-14, of the Holy Spirit, and how He is also involved in the blessings given to us. Why? Because we were sealed, in verse 13, with the Holy Spirit, a promise.

And having the Holy Spirit seal us, surely is a blessing, surely is a good thing. And why was this attached to? Well, who He, then, as the Spirit, is a guarantee, or the down payment, of our inheritance. You couldn't buy Heaven.

But the Holy Spirit could, to put it crassly. This kind of metaphor is what it is. Or more like, more precisely, Jesus paid the price for us, and gave us the Spirit as the down payment, to get to Heaven.

The purchased possession, that we will ultimately have. So the Spirit's involved as well. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

What I described a little earlier, as described as the economic trinity, not that they are selling and buying, and things like that, it's an old word, which actually comes from this text, verse 11, verse 10, excuse me, the dispensation, or the household economy, the way God administers redemption, where the Father has His office and role, and the Son, His office and role, and the Spirit, with respect to us. And the method of our deliverance, more broadly, and from eternal referent point, is election, right? Before the foundation of the world, He slides right into it. Blessed be the God who has blessed us in Christ, in the heavenly places, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

It goes together, it's of a peace. And He repeats that again, in the other verses, 11 and 12 or so, in which He explicates it with the word, predestined. Predestined.

This is one of the tools or methods in which God is pleased to save us and redeem us. He exercises, in other words, His power, His sovereign prerogative, in space and time, for your good and for our glory. And what is He giving us? The Father, as the source, through the Son, of course, and by election, He's given us a blessing.

Many blessings, all kinds of blessings. Not specified here, of course, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. Great, Paul, give me a list, please.

He doesn't. But it's in these verses, if you read it carefully. You go through the verses, you'll see a number of key words, nouns, and even verbs, which explain and show good things given to us that we did not deserve.

That's what these blessings are. Holy. That you would be holy.

Verse 4. And he says right after that, because they're probably paired together, without blame, or blameless. Next is, we are adopted. Verse 5. Having predestined us to what? To what end? To be adopted, to be brought into the household of faith.

Redemption through Christ's blood. We have in verse 6. In him, 7. In him we have redemption through his blood. So there's holiness, there's adoption, there's a shedding of blood for our deliverance.

Forgiveness. It's tied more explicitly here in verse 7. Through his blood, the forgiveness of sins. We have redemption, specifically forgiveness of sins.

They've been washed away. That's clearly a blessing. And then there's also an ingathering.

Maybe you never thought of it this way. In verse 10. That in the dispensation, the administration of God's timing, of the fullness of times, when things come to fruition, he might gather together, we are gathered together, in one on all things in Christ.

And to be gathered together in one thing on all things in Christ, which is also talked about at the end of 1 Corinthians, is clearly about the resurrection and the end of all things. And that's a great blessing. We look for that day when Jesus Christ shall return.

And all sin will be completely eradicated. No more temptation. No more sorrow and tears.

This too is a blessing. The ingathering of all God's people at the end of the age. And then in verse 13 and 14.

We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Again, that's a good thing. Necessarily because God is good.

The Holy Spirit is good. What he does for us, the sealing must be a good thing. Who is our guarantee, verse 14, of our inheritance.

We have an inheritance. We have a promise given to us. This too is a blessing.

And it's all the good things and all the spiritual blessings mentioned here more broadly in verse 3. But of course there's more. Paul went through all this in his praise before the Lord, Father, Son and Holy Spirit and said a lot of things. But we know elsewhere in the Bible there are other blessings, other ways of describing the blessings as well.

For example, Ephesians 5.9. Ephesians 5.9 we have, For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. I know as a kid, learning the fruit of the Spirit, having the list, and then I learned a little later when I got older, well, the lists are slightly different. Galatians, Colossians and elsewhere.

But it's saying the same thing is the point. And here Ephesians 5.9 tells us there's more than just that list. The list is not exhaustive in other words.

And Ephesians 5.9 reminds us that the fruit of the Spirit list there in Galatians for example is not exhaustive because it is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. That's a lot of fruit. That's a lot of good things in the Christian life.

A lot of blessings. A lot of mercy and grace from God Almighty through us. Goodness and truth in every Christian is a blessing from the Holy Spirit in particular.

To do good things. To speak the truth. So the blessings are not just abstract or general but particular in working in through our lives.

As we often think of the fruit of the Spirit or as I said in Ephesians 5.9 here even more broadly goodness, righteousness, and truth. Whatever that may be in our life. It's certainly always in accordance with the Word of God and to His glory.

And again in 2 Corinthians 5.17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. All things have passed away. Behold all things have become new.

That clearly is another blessing. Paul doesn't explicate in these verses but elsewhere but implied. That's why he says all spiritual blessings.

I'm showing you some of the all part there. Even this is not an exhaustive list. We are a new creation.

Both individually as believers as the Spirit regenerates us and brings us new thoughts and desires to love Him and to follow Him but also collectively as the body of Christ and His church. Another way of looking at it through the theological categories is that we have been given calling of salvation the justification in particular adoption, sanctification and ultimately glorification.

So more broadly in the ways of describing these good things from God these blessings upon us justification, adoption, sanctification and in the future as we read in verse 13-14 glorification in which the Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption the buying back and giving and having possession of our inheritance of a new body of a better soul purified soul.

And more particularly and more narrowly the fruit of the Spirit where the blessings again are primarily of the soul and this would fall under it seems to me the category of sanctification the fruit of the Spirit being born again we have the Spirit with us we are sanctified even as we are justified the two are separate but occur in the same person. Since salvation is primarily of the inner man the fruit of the Spirit is mentioned.

Here in Galatians 5.22-23 we read but the fruit of the Spirit is love joy, peace long-suffering kindness, goodness faithfulness, gentleness self-control against such there is no law.

God has not forbidden it and these are primarily hard attitudes. You may think of kindness as an action but the purpose here in the emphasis fruit of the Spirit the Spirit dwells in us specifically inwardly and as a spirit he is related to our spirit. Salvation again is primarily

although not exclusively of the soul the body is going to be delivered we don't have the promises now to have super healings or whatever else we have families that are sick are they somehow inferior? Are they not really saved?

Sadly people teach that in some circles but we remember that's the future that's when we get a new body meanwhile we have first and foremost the saving of our soul and the fruits thereof the fruit of the Spirit within us and these are also blessings particular blessings concrete blessings we can think of when you have joy when you have peace when you have self-control.

I hope you have that that's evidence of a blessing upon you a good thing that the Spirit is working within you and among you and the greatest of these is love and our salvation here is tied to the love of Christ we read it at the end of verse 4 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 in love they put the comma there there is no comma there in the Greek so it could be in love having predestined us.

I think that's implied even if it isn't there I mean he didn't do it because he hated us but it makes it more explicit here in love that we should be holy and without blame before him in love God's love in Christ is for us it's not a sentimental love it's not an emotional love the way sometimes we think of love but the sovereign almighty love of God the Father who conquers our hearts and brings us to redemption from eternity past that's what's described here in particular.

The Father as the source of our redemption through the Son giving us what blessings to what end why do we have these blessings why did he choose us in particular verse 4 just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world that we or in order that we should be holy this is why you are saved for the purpose of holiness he says holy and blameless.

I'm just going to emphasize here in the rest of the sermon holiness or sanctification we call it blamelessness although often we're kind of we feel awkward using that phrase I mean the word blameless could be relative here that is being holy and set apart compared to unbelievers right or objective or external sanctification in particular perhaps baptism for example or absolutely that which is found in our justification before God we are absolutely blameless before him because Christ is blameless.

And God sees Christ his blood covers us he is our advocate God does not see us in our sins but sees the righteousness the perfection the blamelessness the moral purity of our Lord and Messiah Paul does not specify here but it could go either way and it certainly does in the Bible described elsewhere and holy similarly could be divided amongst objective or subjective absolute or relative objectively we are holy in Christ saved and set apart by him externally and internally of course externally by our baptism being part of the church

Internally is often more subjective that personal holiness in which some of us are more holy than others at different times in different places and under different circumstances for different reasons depends and depends sometimes what question you're talking about what part of holiness some people are more holy in this way of being holy other people are more

holy in that way whatever Paul is speaking of here I'm going to talk about in particular holiness as sanctification as our growth and our love for him because that is certainly highlighted and emphasized a number of times in the New Testament by Paul

He may mean both here just holy and without blame the purpose is that we should be holy not that we are holy so it seems to me he's emphasizing this growth this maturation as believers or the more subjective element of sanctification that we all typically think of when we hear I want to be sanctified I want to be more like Jesus because we are not.

Blessed Unto Holiness

So it leads us here then to the second point blessed unto holiness so to the purpose of holiness why we are saved why we are elected why we are blessed what the blessing is and unto now broadly salvation is from damnation and judgment it is from damnation and judgment no longer in Satan's kingdom no longer judged guilty by God and Christ which is a glorious thing to behold.

But on the other hand we are saved unto holiness and sanctification to be more like our Lord and Savior moral purity and separation is the idea of the word holy used often in the Old Testament but also in the New Testament.

Another synonym for this is godliness to be godly that is to be separated morally similar like unto God so the referent there of course is God or consecration which is more used in the Old Testament there to be dedicated to pure living or dedicated to God with the idea of pure living or holiness.

And of course sanctification which is a language we're more familiar with these are all synonyms they're all pointing and emphasizing the same thing holiness or sanctification so therefore our shorter catechism doesn't ask in question 35 what is holiness but rather asks what is sanctification.

They're being a little more precise the answer is sanctification is the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness that is sanctification whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God and die unto sin and live unto righteousness it is a two-fold work of God.

First part is objective as I said before where we are set apart in our baptism Paul emphasizes that Romans 6 if you recall and then of course subjectively our internal renewal in which our thoughts and ultimately our words and actions are from the inside out.

We change we try to become more obedient we are becoming more obedient I'll talk a little bit about that in a bit now some have the first without the second that is they are baptized they are set aside publicly before the world they make a public profession of faith that they're an adult but they have no internal sanctification or renewal they care not of the things of God.

And of course sometimes people have the second they are born again and are sanctified but haven't been baptized yet that may be children that may be because you're an adult in a war-torn situation you have no church to be baptized but ordinarily the two tend to go together Ephesians 4.23.

Let's go through some text here about the idea of holiness Ephesians 4.23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind and that you put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

So here Paul is speaking of writing of as he does in a lot of other places of being holy of being sanctified of being consecrated before God Almighty that we are made in his image although fallen and broken but being born again we are renewed in the spirit of your mind Ephesians 4.23 that you put on the new man created in true righteousness and holiness. Believers are renewed in the image of God and Christ. More precisely Colossians 3.10 Colossians 3.10, and having put on the new man who is renewed in the knowledge according to the image of him who created him so it's a similar idea similar language that we are putting on the new man who is renewed a good thing in the knowledge according to the image of him who created him knowledge of what?

The gospel of righteousness and the like to live a life of holiness that's the emphasis here a holiness in action the Assured Catechism said we are it's a work of the Holy Spirit he's working you over that's what it feels like it's a work of the Holy Spirit that you're renewed in the image of God in Christ to what? die unto sin and live unto righteousness so that's the two parts of sanctification holiness in action die unto sin and to live unto righteousness.

First dying unto sin Colossians 3.5 Paul writes in Colossians 3.5 therefore put to death your members which are on the earth fornication uncleanness passion evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry the language here is intense isn't it therefore put to death your members it brings to mind perhaps it does to me when Jesus says if your right hand offends you you do what?

Put it to death you cut it off is another way of saying put it to death now of course Christ was speaking hyperbolically we would all be running around without body parts in clear violation of the sixth commandment rather he's emphasizing the intensity and the seriousness of this call of sanctification of being holy of being more like God and Christ that requires us killing sin killing the use of our body both the way we think speak and do with our hands and feet it says members here.

Paul often uses members other times he'll say body what he means is using what God has given us which would be our body and our soul as instruments of unrighteousness instead of instruments of righteousness as he says in Romans 6.

And the emphasis here is kill it stop it don't fornicate don't be running around with uncontrolled passions and evil desires and the like put it to death put those old habits and ways of thinking and acting away the call to put to death is broad the members which are on the earth your members the things that God has given you your hands your feet your eye your ear your mind your soul these are all the members upon the earth which should be

used for holy things and not wicked things a righteous use of the body instead of an unrighteous use of the body and of course Paul's list here in Colossians 3-5 is a short list.

There are other lists of sins elsewhere he's dealing with whatever he thought they needed to hear at the time he believes they have problems with fornication evil desires and idolatry coveting things of idolatry the old pagan ways perhaps that they came from and mixing up their religion whatever the case may be we should know clearly that Paul includes all kinds of sins that should be put to death not just this particular list any and all and the call is diverse it's a series of sins and it's sins plural not just one big sin but all kinds of violations and transgressions of God's holy will and different forms and variations of it false worship is idolatry fornication is a different way of using the body etc.

etc. passions is more internal than external but not exclusively so whatever it is it should be stopped destroyed and killed in our life as believers it's a call to die to sin to repent in particular that's the first and easiest most immediate easiest easiest in the sense of pastor what do I do I don't know how to get rid of my sin I keep struggling with it well the first thing you should do is repent and keep repenting and not stop repenting that's what I mean by easy the hard part is it's the rest of your life you keep doing it you don't just stop you live a life of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ and you slowly strangle the sin within you and it takes a long long time to be sure and the way of doing that is repenting of particular sins particularly.

Paul lists particular sins I just generally well you guys have these problems and what not it's specific sins and we repent and kill these sins we must repent of them specifically and not make excuses for them is the implication and then secondly dying of a sin killing it or what's known as mortification right a mortuary a place of death and so our forefathers describe it as mortification the doctrine of mortification next we have the doctrine of vivification to vivify to bring the life right to live unto righteousness 2nd Corinthians 5.17 2nd Corinthians 5.17.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation all things have passed away behold all things have become new so broadly the implication here being because this is the proof text used in the confession the catechism that all things have become new that our mind and our will and our emotions have been renewed more precisely into a new direction it's not like God got rid of the old will and put a new will in new.

It's the same ones redirected to a better end a righteous end is the implication of course by Paul not an unrighteous end God forbid and so in that text it shows and points to what we are and what we are to do as well Ephesians 2.5 even when we were dead in trespasses he made us alive together so there's the vivification again with Christ by grace you have been saved Ephesians 2.5 in the prior verse Paul describes that you are dead in trespasses and sins children of wrath we are living or walking or dwelling in this world of transgressions and violations of God's holy will that we were born in sin and lived and moved in sin whereas when we are saved we lived and moved in righteousness ultimately but the Lord's power and love are greater than our sins and so in this verse he explains what he said before you were dead in trespasses and sins here you were dead but now he's made us alive.

He repeats the idea from verse 1 here to verse 5 he has made us alive the opposite of spiritually dead to him of course he doesn't mean materially dead our body just dying I'm walking around just fine he means with respect to God you were dead and your soul was dead in that relationship to him it's a dead relationship we know what that is we have some of those sadly in our own lives dead relationships what happened to them we don't know sometimes it's our fault sometimes it's their fault sometimes it's just distance.

But of course here the context is it's an aggressively dead relationship we hate God we are children of wrath in sin we lived and moved and have our being but now God has made us alive in him vivified of course externally by being justified in Christ internally by being born again empowered by the spirit who dwells in us and seals us.

And so we are made alive to follow Jesus to do good and to follow righteousness another text that talks about vivification his conclusion here is yes objectively you are dead to sin and objectively you are alive in justification for example but you still have this command even so we should also walk because of the indicative what you are in Christ there is an imperative a command therefore walk in holiness walk in uprightness walk in righteousness live a newness of life that you have already in Jesus Christ.

And so those who claim in the churches at times hey I've been justified I've been declared righteous in the law courts of heaven so I don't need to live a holy life are just apparently ignoring vast portions of Paul's writings and he says even so we should also we should walk in newness of life we should it's the way you should go don't stop keep it up not that it adds to our justification but rather it is the fruit of being saved and of our sanctification and spirit working within us it is a command now righteousness of course is defined by the holy will of God which is summarized in the ten commandments and holiness to the Lord that we are saved unto holiness holiness should not be reduced to a feeling.

Although I hope you have feelings of you know joy or zeal to obey the law of God it's not defined by man-made rules people like in the reformed churches of course we like to hate and hammer the Roman Catholic Church for making up man-made rules that I'm super holy because I'm a monk or something like that.

We have the same thing unfortunately even in evangelical reformed churches at times holiness is defined by God's moral law but we're not alone in our walk with holiness before the Lord God almighty we have the power of God and thus here in our passage just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world.

It was predestined that we would be saved and saved not in the abstract but unto a life of obedience and holiness however far we fall short of that obedience of course that's not the point.

The point being we are driven and we will keep driving in this direction of holiness this narrow path of godliness and of sanctification by the power of God within us sovereignty of God is good news as I preached in the other sermons without his might and power we would still be in our sins the good news is that he can and does keep his promises and I'm going to skip over to chapter 2 verse 10.

I already went over the passages before here about predestination which is a guarantee that we will be saved but saved in a particular way verse 10 of chapter 2 of Ephesians for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them saying it again predestine unto holiness and he says it in different words here in verse 10.

Which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in and what are good works but acts of holiness your growth and holiness can and will happen brothers and sisters if you are his if you hate your sin and you trust in Jesus day by day your sanctification in the spirit of course will take time yes years decades your entire life unless the Lord Jesus returns be patient persevere you can persevere we are saved and blessed with an everlasting grace brothers and sisters.

We are delivered from hate and wickedness in our hearts and lives not that we are now free to do what we want the deliverance and salvation is not I get to do what you want now but rather we are delivered from Satan's kingdom unto God's holy kingdom consecrated people set apart a holy nation by his mercy and power for the praise of his glorious grace amen let us pray Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we rejoice and thank you God that you have delivered us and saved us and called us from eternity past to be saved unto holiness and that we have this desire we know from you to follow your will to obey and to follow Jesus in accordance to the word of God may this ever be our desire God to honor you not in the abstract but in the concrete ways of our hearts and our desires of our actions and our words in obedience to your holy will we ask this by the power of the Holy Spirit who is sealed upon us amen.