

Sermon Notes & References  
Blessing God for His Blessings  
Ephesians 1:3  
January 20, 2008

Introduction

- 1. Scripture Reading, Psalm 103, <sup>A</sup> is a Psalm of
- 2. The text commences a
- 3. in the beatitudes <sup>B</sup> blessed means
- 4. in Ephesians it means
- 5. what is the importance of who pronounces the blessing?
  - a. us
  - b. for example, Jacob <sup>C</sup>
  - c. God <sup>D</sup>
- B. The Source of Blessing is <sup>E</sup>
  - 1. Blessing God is a way of
  - 2. God's actions reveal <sup>F</sup>

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<sup>A</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5  
<sup>B</sup> Matthew 5:3-12  
<sup>C</sup> Psalm 105:8-15, Luke 13:28, Genesis 49:1  
<sup>D</sup> Genesis 1:3, Isaiah 55:10-11  
<sup>E</sup> James 1:17  
<sup>F</sup> Psalm 145:3-6

- C. The Object of Blessing is
- D. The Extent of God's Blessing is
  - 1. this is the case because God is <sup>G</sup>
- E. The Nature of God's Blessing is
  - 1. does that make it unreal? <sup>H</sup>
  - 2. to be realized it requires <sup>I</sup>
- F. The Scene of God's Blessing is
  - 1. which means that
    - a. it is not
    - b. it is shared
- G. The Realm of God's Blessing is
  - 1. so it is found in Christ's kingdom which <sup>J</sup>
- H. Conclusion – my response to God's blessing

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<sup>G</sup> 1 Kings 8:27  
<sup>H</sup> Psalm 102:25-27  
<sup>I</sup> John 3:3, 5ff  
<sup>J</sup> John 18:36

A. Introduction

1. Scripture reading

Psalm 103

- a. verse 1: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, And all that is within me, bless His holy name.”* – this begins with two parallel phrases and, as is found in both Hebrew and English poetry, two similarly sounding words – the words *barak*, *bless*, and *qereb*, inward part
- b. *bareki napheshi* – let my soul bless, kneel before (the Lord)
- c. *wecal-qerabay* – and all my inward parts (the holy Name)
- d. words which echo the thought of Deuteronomy 6:5, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”*
- e. this, then, is a Psalm of praise and worship
- f. « read the entire Psalm 103 »

2. Our text today is Ephesians 1:3: *“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, ...”*

3. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians

- a. is marked by a number of outbursts of praise and prayer
- b. as though Paul, in dealing with the tremendous subject of God’s people the church
  - (A) cannot but pause in wonder and awe
  - (B) praise God for what He has done
  - (C) and pray to God for those who make up the church
- c. our text today begins such a section or time of praise
  - (A) a section which ends with verse 14
  - (B) forming but one, single sentence
  - (C) which caused one Greek scholar to criticize it, stating it to be, *“One infinitely long, heavy, clumsy sentence, replete with dependent clauses, excursus, specifications, and repetitions. It is the most monstrous sentence conglomeration I have ever run across in the Greek language.”* —{2}.
- d. but to those who know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour

- (A) the joy of forgiven sin
  - (B) the peace of being a child of God
  - (C) there is not a single clause, phrase, nor repetition
  - (D) which does not express the praise they feel toward God
- e. which is probably why the NIV starts 'Praise be to God...'
- (A) an equally well accepted translation
  - (B) which also avoids a possible confusion
  - (C) since 'bless' is used in two different ways in the verse

4. Let's discuss that word, 'bless' occurs three times in the verse

a. we might have chosen that well-known passage

(A) from Matthew 5, known as the beatitudes as our Scripture reading to set the temper for our message

(1) ... 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ...

(2) but the word for 'blessed' in that passage

(3) differs in meaning from that in Ephesians 1:3

(4) having the thought of being happy or joyous

(B) but, this word in Ephesians is more akin to the OT word that we commented upon as we read Psalm 103

b. the word in Greek is made up of two parts:

(A) *eu* - well or good

(B) *logos* - a word

(C) which comprise the imported English word, 'eulogy,' a speech speaking well of a guest or one who has died

c. the import and power of a blessing

(A) depends a great deal upon who is pronouncing it

(B) if I bless you

(1) as when I greet you with 'Good morning'

- (2) or part from you with 'Good bye'
- (3) or even, when with pastoral authority I pronounce one of the great benedictions of the Scriptures upon you, committing you to God
- (4) the blessing has only limited power, being wholly dependent as a prayer upon the grace of God
- (C) when any of us blesses God
  - (1) which forms an expression of devotion to God
  - (2) an ascription of how good, how kind we think Him
  - (3) then it has no power to make God any better – He has no need of our praise for Him to be good
    - ...
    - (4) but it can change us, intensifying our love to Him
- (D) however, when Jacob blessed his twelve sons, Ephraim and Manasseh in the closing chapters of Genesis
  - (1) his blessing did have a power beyond that which we have just spoken
  - (2) the Scriptures reveals Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to be prophets (Psalm 105:8-15, Luke 13:28)
  - (3) so that Jacob could open his blessing in Genesis 49:1 with these words, *"Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come."*
- d. BUT, when God blesses
  - (A) when God 'speaks good' upon a person
  - (B) it has a totally different meaning
  - (C) because when God speaks it is an omnipotent word
  - (D) it is one of the first truths we learn about God
  - (E) *"Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."* (Genesis 1:3 NAS)
  - (F) and it is what God claims for Himself: *"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, And do not return there without watering the earth And making it bear and sprout, And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; It will not return to Me empty, Without accomplishing what I desire, And without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it."* (Isaiah 55:10-11 NAS)
  - (G) when God blesses you, you are blessed for real!

5. the word bless occurs in three forms in this verse and we will look at each of these as we consider

- a. the source of blessing
- b. the object of blessing
- c. and the character of blessing

B. Source of Blessing – ‘[Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ](#)’

1. here the form of the word is an adjective, a descriptor word
  - a. the prayer is, ‘may God be spoken of as good’
  - b. a eulogy at a funeral does not make to deceased good
    - (A) it may, or may not, describe that person’s goodness
    - (B) but it can in no way change the facts
  - c. our eulogy to God in this fashion, does not, as we have already stated, change God for the better
  - d. but rather is our confession and decision, ‘let us account, reckon or consider that God is good’
2. pause for a moment and notice the difference in the coupling of the Trinitarian Persons from the preceding verse, Eph 1:2:
  - a. [“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”](#) where the Father and Son are coupled with an equality in respect to their nature – they are equal
  - b. without in any way weakening that equality, verse 3 differentiates the Father from the Son as to their work
  - c. it is the Father, who by His plans, purposes and counsels brings the blessing which we shall shortly discuss
  - d. and it is the Son in whom this blessing is put into effect
  - e. God the Father is the source of each and every blessing that His children receive, [“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.”](#) (James 1:17 NAS)
3. ‘Actions,’ we say, ‘speak louder than words.’
  - a. to a great extent, we begin to know and to understand just who God is by what God does
  - b. the history
    - (A) of mankind, of Israel, of the church in the Bible

- (B) of the church over the last two millennia
- (C) of an individual believer over his spiritual lifetime
- (D) all bear testimony to who God is by what He has done

c. God's works reveal God Himself

- (A) we sing in praise of God, 'All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth, and sky, and sea' <sup>{3}</sup>.
- (B) the Psalmist in 145: 3-6 sings, "Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts. On the glorious splendour of Your majesty And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, And I will tell of Your greatness."

4. God, particularly in the Person of the Father, our heavenly Father, is the source of every blessing to His children

C. Object of Blessing – 'who has blessed us!!!'

1. here the form of the word is a verb, an action word

- a. this is the work that the Father God has done
- b. He has spoken good, commanded good, ordained good
- c. and the tense of the verb is one that usually speaks of a single action in the past at a certain point of time
- d. as we look at the next verses in a future message, Lord willing, we will be able to identify that action
- e. but, for the moment, remember this
  - (A) Paul is not speaking of something in the future
  - (B) but something already accomplished
  - (C) and, something which affects us right now
- f. let us consider for a moment, the object of God's action

2. it is US!!!

- a. Tennis superstar Arthur Ashe died of AIDS, which he contracted from a blood transfusion during heart surgery. More than a great athlete, Ashe was a gentleman who inspired and encouraged many with his exemplary behaviour on and off the court.

b. Ashe could have become embittered and self-pitying in the face of his disease, but he maintained a grateful attitude. He explained, "If I asked, 'Why me?' about my troubles, I would have to ask, 'Why me?' about my blessings. Why my winning Wimbledon? Why my marrying a beautiful, gifted woman and having a wonderful child?" <sup>-{4}</sup>.

c. well might we ask 'why me?' in considering God's blessing

(A) Paul never seems to have recovered from the wonder of God's grace that found him on the Damascus road

(B) in a sense, that God should care for an individual such as I out of all His creation, demonstrates not only His great grace, but His greatness; period.

D. Extent of God's Blessing – 'with every ... blessing'

1. the final form in which bless occurs

a. is as a noun; a name word; a word that labels a fact

b. God's blessing is fact, not fiction

c. it is concrete, firm, established; not ethereal, dreamy

d. as God spoke the dry land into existence, Genesis 1:9, and it became fact; solid fact; so solid we walk on it; so then

e. God has 'spoken good' for His children and it is done

2. but think just a moment of the extend of this blessing

a. unlimited; without horizon

b. I have been for many years a member of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada - a fact that provides no academic qualifications whatsoever!

(A) as such, I periodically receive papers, journals, etc.

(B) a good deal of which I have to dismiss as speculative

(C) to which my brother, who is academically qualified, has in some cases agreed

(D) one such item I saw recently describe the universe as being infinite; well here most scientists and the Bible agree; this is a finite universe with bounds

(E) you see, only God is infinite, and the Bible tells us, "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain You, how much less this house which I have built!"

(1 Kings 8:27 NAS)

3. because, therefore, the source of blessing is the infinite God, the extent whereby He is able to bless is unlimited

E. Nature of God's Blessing – it is 'spiritual blessing'

1. 'Oh! it's not real then'

a. the thought will come unbidden into our minds

b. 'I had hoped for something more solid ...

(A) something like Jabez prayed for – I'm sure that most of you have heard of Wilkinson's book, the prayer of Jabez, even if you haven't read it – Jabez who prayed that his God would enlarge his territory

(B) I thought maybe a larger piece of property

(C) a bigger house

(D) a better job

(E) something that people could look at and say

(F) "That religion of yours really works."

c. but we have to be reminded again and again

(A) because we are creatures of flesh and bone

(B) as well as of soul and spirit

(C) that it is the spiritual that is the real universe

(D) the physical, material universe is but a passing shadow

(E) "Of old You founded the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; And all of them will wear out like a garment; Like clothing You will change them and they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not come to an end." (Psalms 102:25-27 NAS)

(F) it is the spiritual that is the real, the true, the eternal

d. and, because these blessing are spiritual, there are some lessons we need to learn concerning them

2. because they are spiritual, they can only be perceived by the spiritual eye of faith through being born again

- a. Nicodemus, and others of his time, saw God's blessing, His promises, His coming kingdom as rooted in this world, as related to the promised land, as political, as material
- b. but Jesus corrected Him, showing the spiritual nature of that kingdom: ... "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. ... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:3, 5)

3. because they are spiritual, they address our innermost, spiritual needs as being created in the image of God – and this will become apparent in the weeks to come as we consider them

4. because they are spiritual, they are exalted in their nature

- a. they surpass our human comprehension
- b. so, unfortunately, because what man does not understand he argues about, they have sometimes become points of contention among Christian
- c. yet, let our attitude be rather, 'Lord, I don't understand it, but I know You and I trust You in all these things.'

#### F. Scene of God's Blessing – 'in the heavenlies'

1. Our Scripture reading, Psalm 103, talks about God's blessings

- a. the benefits which it describes are principally material
- b. and we should not belittle temporal blessings from God
- c. for they are to His glory and by His grace
- d. but we must keep in mind that they are just that, temporal
- e. so we have been enriched and more than provided for ... that's temporary, one day it will all pass away
- f. so we have had our years satisfied with good things ... that's temporary, those things will lose their appeal
- g. so we have been delivered from sickness and restored to health ... that's temporary, for death is still coming
- h. nor, are such temporary blessings distributed equally
  - (A) some of us by our place in the world, fare well
  - (B) others, in war-torn and famine-torn countries, face great hardship
  - (C) the 'why?' of this is too large a subject for today, but,

(D) if we focus on these temporal blessings, we will come to quite wrong conclusions about ourselves, about God

2. but these blessings are in the heavenlies

a. there is no such inequity

b. these spiritual blessings are shared among all God's people

c. and, they do not pass away; they are not temporal

d. they existed the day we were saved; they exist today; they will exist when Jesus returns to receive us into heaven; they will exist throughout eternity as we dwell forever with God

e. how come? ... because the ...

G. Realm of God's Blessing – is 'in Christ'

1. Jesus said in His examination by Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm." (John 18:36 NAS)

a. when we abide in Christ

(A) then we abide in a kingdom which is not of this world

(B) a kingdom unshaken by the vagaries of this world

b. it is in this realm that God would have us live each day

H. Conclusion – let us continue in worship to God for all His spiritual blessings as we close by singing "Count Your Blessings"

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2. From a message, “It’s Not About You’ by Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee – Kerux sermons #22865
3. ‘Holy, Holy, Holy’ by Reginald Heber (1783-1826)
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