

What Christ has done for us

July 12, 2009

As Paul began his beautiful letter to the Ephesians, he began with the traditional thanksgiving and opening prayer. This was customary for every Epistle. Just like there is a format for our business letters...date, address, subject, salutation...there was a format for letters in Paul's day as well. But in this case, Paul gets carried away! He begins to think of the ways in which God has blessed us in Christ Jesus and to give thanks for them and he gets overwhelmed and becomes carried away. The entire first chapter is one long run on sentence! It is as if Paul begins and does not take a breathe until chapter two! He is carried away in the glory of Christ Jesus. It is an attempt to describe the indescribable. To put into words the tremendous, magnificent, awesome, matchless love of God in Jesus Christ—a love that begins before the world began and does not end, ever! Not even when the sun has stopped shining and the stars have all burned out: God's love still burns bright and strong and hot. So hot that he sends his Son—so wonderful that he gives his all for us all, holding nothing back.

Paul is both amazed and grateful. He shares with us some of what we gain in Christ. Some of the benefits we have in Christ through faith...

We begin by noting that God takes the initiative in our salvation. God is the one who is responsible for our salvation...not we ourselves. Our salvation is a gift from God, out of his amazing grace and boundless love and the richness of his mercy...which he pours out upon us. We accept this gift through faith. It is God who has saved us. As Paul says, it is the a free gift, lest anyone should boast...

Grace is a hard concept for many. Because it insults our pride. We want to do it ourselves. We want to be responsible. We want to stand before God and say we did it ourselves and compare ourselves to others...saying "we didn't kill anyone!" That is not the point. We don't compare ourselves to the right person...we must compare ourselves to

God and God's standard...and none of us measure up. But fear not...God loves us and God has taken the initiative to save us! God love us and does not want us to perish...

And the language Paul uses is that of being chosen. It is not that God has chosen ME, and therefore not chosen someone else for salvation. We are told clearly that God desires that everyone should be saved and that none should perish. That Christ came for the whole world and died for the whole world. And that who so ever believes will be saved... No, we are chosen in Christ...We have free will to chose or to reject. God is working to influence our choice...of course. To encourage us to come to the truth. But when we chose, we come to Christ and In Christ we are chosen for great things...because Jesus is chosen for great things. In Christ we are predestined...for Jesus will be victorious over the powers of the earth, over the powers of evil...and he will reign in glory. And if we are with him and in him, we will too.

It is like getting on a freeway. The freeway is heading to the ocean. If we stay on the freeway, we get to the ocean too. Jesus is the freeway...in him we are chosen, because he is chosen. Paul always says IN CHRIST...chosen in Christ or In Christ we are chosen or predestined.

Paul celebrates that in Christ we are:

1. **Blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing!** We are blessed with every spiritual blessing already. The tense indicates that is a single past action with ongoing consequences in the present. God has done this completely and we will continue to be blessed. Do you know that you are already blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms?
2. **He chose us to be Holy and Blameless in his sight.** We are forgiven completely in Christ. God does not remember your sins or keep a record of wrongs done. This is something that we have

trouble with. We tend to suffer from guilt for a long time...we carry a load of guilt for a long time, even after we have learned the lessons it can teach us and struggled to forgive ourselves and everyone involved. It has stopped being instructive and simply is a burden. But God does not do this. You are holy and blameless in God's sight. God does not keep score. If you remember the wonderful chapter in 1 Corinthians on love, chapter 13, one of the characteristics of love is that it does not keep a record of wrongs done...and God is love. You are holy and blameless in God's sight.

- 3. In Love, He predestined you to be adopted as his sons and daughters through Jesus Christ in accordance to the pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he has given us in the one he loves!** In Christ Jesus we are to be adopted as God's one children. Not servants, nor slaves. But sons and daughters. I am reminded of that wonderful passage in Revelation 21, where we are told of what heaven will be like...how God himself will live among us and we will be his children and he will be our God and he will wipe every tear from our eye...Adopted children are wanted, chosen, sought and found, loved. Because of this glorious grace, the relationship we have with God is intimate and joyful...as Jesus said, ABBA, Dad or Mom...a loving, kind and close relationship of caring.
- 4. In whom (Jesus) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.** To be redeemed is to be ransomed or to be saved, to be restored. We once were dead, but now we are made alive. We once were blind, but now we see...amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that once was lavished on one such as me. I love the word lavished! God brought us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light and love. Redemption is the same as forgiveness of sins...in

Him we have forgiveness of sins. In Jesus we have forgiveness, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us. He did not just give us grace, but he lavished it upon us. Sort of reminds you of some uber rich person...Conrad Hilton or Rockefeller or somebody like that who can shower you with treasure. God in Jesus has showered us with grace beyond your wildest dreams!

5. Having believed in Christ, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.

The Holy Spirit was promised by Jesus as the counselor and comforter and the one who would empower the disciples for the tasks of life and faith. The Spirit is the presence of Christ in the life of the believer. Bringing Christ into the home, the hospital, the workplace, the heart and the mind...the soul... Jesus said the Spirit would be with us and be within us. And that the Spirit would give us peace. A peace that the world could not understand or experience. The spirit provides the gifts in each Christian for service to Christ and others to help the ministry grow.

The Spirit helps us and comforts us and draws us into the very presence of Christ as we worship and pray....

And it brings us full circle...we are not alone, Christ is with us. He is here as we break the bread, as we share the cup...as we sing and pray and worship.

One of the things Paul is grateful for is that in Christ we are never alone, Jesus is always with us through his Spirit. And that Spirit is part of the promise that we will inherit the kingdom...that our place in heaven is assured. It is not dependent upon what we do, how much we accomplish...it is completely and solely by grace.

So we come this morning to renew our faith, to celebrate all that Jesus has done for us...and to give thanks! We break the bread and share the cup as our Lord instructed us...and in doing so we remember the grace he lavishes upon us...the redemption, the forgiveness of sins and the presence of the spirit...

And we come humbly and give thanks. We confess our sins and seek his presence and renew our faith.

Let us pray