

Ephesians 1:3

In the Greek, verses 3-14 are one long sentence containing a variety of praise items and detailing how God has blessed us, with the ministries of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit all mentioned in these verses. The thrust of this long sentence is that God deserves praise.

Ephesians 1:3 is the thesis of Paul's challenge that runs through to verse 14. In this section Paul called upon God's people to praise God for who He is and for the many spiritual blessings He has showered upon us. Verse 3 introduces it and verses 4-6 describe how God the Father determined to redeem lost humanity. Verses 7-10 detail how our redemption was made possible because Jesus shed His blood for us. Then in verses 11-14 we have the ministry of the Holy Spirit in sealing believers to identify them as belonging to God and ensuring the promised inheritance that awaits every believer.

Read Ephesians 1:3. A key theme in this opening section is the praise that belongs to God because of who He is and because of what He has done for us. This verse begins with praise to God and the rest of the sentence amplifies the reasons for praise. Verses 4-14 develop around 3 stanzas, each ending with the phrase **"to the praise of His glory."** (Verses 6, 12, 14) God wants us to praise Him and is certainly worthy of our praise. Read Psalm 96:4.

Have you ever thought about why we should praise God besides the truth that He is worthy of it? God wants us to praise Him but not because He is egotistical but because He knows what praise can do for us. God is totally complete in Himself, so He does not need our praise or worship. So why praise Him?

First, praise acknowledges **where our blessings come** from. James wrote that every good and perfect gift comes from above (1:17). Because of our sinful nature we tend to want to take credit for what we have. Praise turns our thoughts to the one who, as Paul wrote in verse 3, **"has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing."** Praise causes us to step back from the philosophy that life is all about me and reminds us that it is all about Him. The Greek word for **bless** gives us the English word *"eulogy"* which means to speak well of someone. It reminds us that God has spoken well of us when He blesses us.

Praise also reminds us that He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing and every good gift because He **loves** us. Life is far more exciting when we remember that we are loved by God. Praise leads to a positive attitude that is essential to real happiness. It is virtually impossible to complain and maintain a negative spirit when we are praising God. Praise changes us.

When we acknowledge that every blessing has come from above, we acknowledge our dependency on Him. In the process of recognizing our dependence on Him we will also recognize that He is able to meet our every need. God is all sufficient. Any discussion of God's nature or that which He has provided for us should begin and end with praise.

How do we praise God? First, we praise Him in worship. As we sing hymns and express thanksgiving in word and thought we are praising Him. Second, we praise God when we express our love and thanksgiving with our lips. Read Psalm 34:1. Third, praise comes from the way we live. Read I Corinthians 6:19-20. When we honor Him in our bodies, we are praising Him.

Paul detailed some of the ways God has blessed us, and they are seen in verbs that he used. We read in verse 3 simply that God has **“blessed us.”** In verse 4 He **“chose us.”** In verse 5 He **“predestined us for adoption to sonship.”** In verse 7 He has provided **redemption** through the provision of Jesus and we have **forgiveness of sins**. In verse 10 we read God intends **“to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.”** God has a plan for us and the world in which we live. We live in a very broken and hurting world but that is not the end of the story as far as God is concerned. History is going somewhere and when God says, **“Now”** it will all come together as He designed it and desires it to be. Read Philippians 2:10-11.

In verse 13 we read, **“When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”** In ancient times official documents were sealed to verify their legitimacy. God has given us the seal of the Holy Spirit to guarantee that we legitimately belong to Him. Paul concluded by noting that Holy Spirit is **“a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession.”** Verse 14.

When the truth of all God has done for us sinks in, we will want to express our thanks in praise. As a challenge for the week ahead, think about all God has done for you and then consider how much of your prayer time is praise.

Returning to verse 3, Paul went on to declare that God **“has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”** Note three important facts in this phrase:

1. God has blessed us in the heavenly realms;
2. With every spiritual blessing;
3. And it is all in Christ.

First Paul noted we have been blessed in the **heavenly realms**. The phrase **“in the heavenly realms”** occurs as a noun only in Ephesians and Paul used it 5 times in this letter (1:3; 20; 2:6; 3:10 and 6:12). A detailed study of those uses shows that Paul was talking not about a specific place, i.e. the heaven where God dwells or the heaven in which we will dwell. Instead Paul used a general term for the whole spiritual realm over which Jesus reigns supreme (1:20). The term is used to describe the spiritual world. In Ephesians 1:20 it is used to describe where Jesus reigns. In 2:6 Paul wrote that Christians sit with Jesus in the heavenlies. Paul used it in 3:10 to identify it as the place from which God makes known His will for His church. When Paul got to the end of this letter, he wrote that it is in that **heavenly realm** where spiritual warfare is taking place against satanic forces who have invaded that realm (6:12).

The term **heavenly realm** reminds us that while we live in a physical world, there is a very real spirit world also. That spiritual world has a lot to do with how we live our lives as believers. It is

from that **heavenly realm** that God blesses us. and it is from that **heavenly realm** that Satan attacks us. That is why Paul concluded this letter by describing the armor of God essential to our fighting off the temptations that ultimately have their origin in the **heavenly realm**.

Paul also made note of the fact that the blessings he was specifically speaking about were **spiritual blessings**. When we think of God's blessing on us, we tend to think of the many material blessings we have from family to housing to daily bread etc. All of those are important to us here and now but none of them have eternal consequences. Here Paul detailed spiritual blessings that can be ours.

Finally, Paul wrote that everything we have is "**in Christ.**" Last week I noted that the little phrase "**in Christ**" was tremendously important to Paul because it summed up the source of every blessing. We noted that Paul used that phrase or one similar to it numerous times in this letter. **In Christ** denotes the truth that every Christian has been united with Jesus in both His death and His resurrection.

If it were not for Jesus, we would have nothing. Every spiritual blessing comes to us through Him. Read Ephesians 2:12. In Paul's letter to the church in Corinth he spelled out the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian as being the difference between being in Adam and being in Christ. Read I Corinthians 15:22 and Galatians 2:20.

As Paul went on in his letter, he detailed both key truths of the church that ought to form the basis of their faith and inform their daily living. In a sense Paul is going to detail how richly we have been blessed, so he began by reminding us of the importance of praising God. We are to praise God because He is worthy of it and we have been so richly blessed by Him. We praise Him as a reminder of the source and multitude of blessings. It is in such a reminder that we find encouragement and a deeper faith in Him from whom all blessings flow.