

The Fount of Blessing

Ephesians 1:1-4

Halifax:2 September 2007

Introduction

We live in a broken world.

- We all know that things are not right here.
 - It's not right when teen age girls swarm an older woman in the park out of sheer meanness...
 - It's not right when a young mother tries to flush her new born baby down the toilet at McDonalds.
 - It's not right when we have nasty quarrels with our own spouse or with our children or our siblings.
 - It's not right when we grind away and still find that we can barely make ends meet.
 - It's not right when we lay on our sick beds in pain.
 - It's not right when the peoples of the world continue at war, when there is oppression and hunger and hatred all around.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if somewhere there was a fountain of blessing from which we could draw?

- Some have dreamed of a fountain of youth that would make them perpetually young and healthy...
 - This seems to be as popular as ever...
 - just read some of the propaganda about health products!
 - But who would really want to live in this world of strife and discord forever?
- Some have dreamed of finding treasure—a store of riches that would never be exhausted...
 - But why is it that we love riches?
 - It's because they give us power to get other people to do things for us...
 - We can get them to make things for us and to do what we want...
 - but we can never get them to love us.
- What we really need is a fountain of blessing that could bring us into perfect unity with God and man—

- Then we would not need a fountain of gold because we would serve each other out of love—
 - we would not have to buy each other’s service...
 - we would do it willingly...
- And having God’s favour,
 - we would have a fountain of youth,
 - for He would lift His curse that brings death and sickness.

My brothers and sisters,

- Paul’s letter to the Ephesians tells us that there is such a fountain.
 - The whole book is about our union with Jesus Christ...
 - Again and again, it speaks of our being “in Christ” and in Him, having every spiritual blessing.
 - The first three chapters tell us of the marvellous blessings that come to us from this fountain in our relationship with God,
 - and the last three chapters focus on the blessing that comes from Christ in our relationships with each other.
 - This morning I want to present this fount of blessing to you as it is revealed to us in the opening verses of Ephesians.
 - Verse 3 introduces us to this fountain when it says:
 - Eph 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,”
 - This morning I want to answer three questions about this fountain of blessing that are answered in the first three verses of Ephesians:
 1. Who the fount of blessing is?
 2. What does the fount of blessing do for us when we drink from it?
 3. Who are the ones that the fount of blessing blesses?

TRANS> So first of all...

I. Who is the fount of blessing?

- Well, you can see the answer to that in verse 3—
- A. The One who blesses us with endless blessing is called “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
1. This clearly distinguishes the true God from all other gods (which are not really gods at all but demons asserting themselves as gods)

- a. If someone tries to tell you that they have found blessing from God,
 - and the god from whom they claim to have found blessing is not the Father of Jesus Christ...
 - not just any Jesus Christ, but the Jesus of history as He is infallibly presented to us in the Scripture...
 - If He is not the God who sent His only Son from Heaven to become man so that the Father became His God as He is ours...
 - and if He is not the One whose son went to the cross to atone for the sin of the world and who was raised on the third day as one whose offering was fully accepted for us...
 - I say, if He is not all this...
 - then you can know that this person who claims to have found blessing in God is deceived...
 - This person has found something that has given them some kind of comfort and some kind of satisfaction...
 - but it is not the lasting comfort and the lasting satisfaction that will grow to perfection...
 - it is a sham, a mere vapour that will soon evaporate.
- b. You need to tell your friend that he is deceived...
 - The Bible makes it very clear that there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved than that of Jesus Christ.
2. By this identification of the fount of blessing, you can find access to it...
- a. People go searching all over to find their fount of youth or their key to peace unless they have given up...
 - Such a fountain does you no good unless you are able to locate it...
 - It must be pointed out to you so you can drink from its virtuous supply.
 - b. And we are told that the fount of God's blessing is presented to us in Jesus Christ.
 - 1) If you come to the true God apart from Jesus Christ, you will find Him to be holy judge who has sentenced you to eternal condemnation...
 - Instead of blessing, you will find cursing—
 - and not a cursing that is rooted in meanness or injustice,
 - but a cursing that is fully warranted because of your vileness that will be exposed if you try to approach Him...
 - 2) But if you come to the true God as He is revealed in Christ,

- you will find Him still be a holy judge who has justly sentenced you to condemnation,
 - but a holy and perfect Judge who has pardoned you through the blood of His son that was shed for your sins.
- You will draw near and you will find a blessing that is so rich and so full that you will not be able to contain!
 - Come to Christ as the lamb slain, and you will find a fountain opened up for you to cleanse you and to unite you to God forever in happiness.

TRANS> So we see that the One who blesses is the One who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...

- He is called that because He is the One who sent Christ to purchase and secure His blessing for us...
 - You can roam the whole earth, but it is only in Christ that you will find the true blessing of the true God...
 - He is the God and Father of Jesus Christ...

B. And this God is further described as the one who has blessing in Himself...

1. Of Him, Paul says:

- Eph 1:3: "Blessed be God."
 - a. He does not say, "God is blessed," but rather, "Blessed be God."
 - 1) The idea is that God is full of blessedness,
 - full of virtue and excellence...
 - full of what is praiseworthy.
 - 2) In other words, God does not derive His blessing from some other source, but He has it in Himself...
 - Paul is saying that those who know God are constrained to praise Him because of His excellence and worth—because He is full of blessing

b. When we speak of a man as blessed,

- We mean that He has something, but it is always something that he has received...
 - He is not blessed in himself, but has been blessed by God.
 - What do you have that you did not receive?
- But you see, God is the source of all blessing...

- Blessing originates from Him.
- c. God is altogether lovely and glorious from the very root of His being!
- When we first see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ, we exclaim as the queen of Sheba exclaimed when she came to see the glory of Solomon...
 - “The half had not been told me!”
 - In Jesus Christ we see that He is a God of such grace that He would even die for us and we are amazed!
 - We see how greatly He is offended by our sin because we see how contrary we are to His perfections...
 - But then we see to what extent His grace reaches to redeem us and we cannot but cry out...
 - “Blessed be God!”
2. Oh how you need to see Him in this way!
- a. Sin has blinded us—
- We were created to love glory and beauty...
 - and we do...
 - All but the most hardened see the beauty of love that sacrifices for others and the beauty of a well set table.
 - But we grovel around as worms and do not lift our eyes to behold the glory of God—
 - we satisfy ourselves with nothing but the passing glories of this fallen world...
 - We do this because we are ashamed to look at the glory of God—
 - We are terrified when His glory breaks forth to us because we feel so condemned
 - We avoid looking at how blessed our God is because we cannot bear it...
- b. This has such a detrimental affect on us!
- Without Him, we have nothing truly noble to respect and honour...
 - We have nothing beautiful to inspire us and move us...
 - We have nothing holy to purify us.
 - This is the path to death.

- c. But once you turn to Him and God opens your eyes,
 - You see how blessed He is and He gracious and kind He is,
 - You want Him...
 - You want to live in His house forever!
 - You want to become like Him—
 - as Paul says in Eph 5, you want to imitate Him...
 - you want to be a copy of Him as one made in His image.
 - You want to be near His glory always and you want His glory to be seen in your life.
 - You know how it is with children—when they see someone they really admire...
 - They want to be like that one...
 - They want to learn of that one...
 - They are captivated by the blessedness they see in that one.
 - They are drawn to that one.

TRANS> So I am saying, do not pull away from Him!

- I know you are a sinner, but in Jesus Christ, our God is a blessed fountain for sinners to give them eternal life...
 - He is truly blessed...
 - He is not one to avoid, but one to come near to for eternal happiness...
- In fact, let us look at our next question...

II. What does the fount of blessing do?

- What does He do when you come to Him as the Father of Jesus Christ?
 - Well, it's really quite simple...

A. He blesses you

1. When the scripture says “Blessed by the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” it adds, “who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing...”
 - it is true...
 - He really does bless those who come to Him.
2. What I mean is, when you are blessed by Him, you will not be disappointed.
 - a. This is such a simple truth that I fear you may miss it...

- I am saying that He knows how to bless us when we come to Him...
 - We need have no fear the God who made us will not know how to perfect us and please us and make us beautiful.
- b. And you say, “Of course He does—why do you need to tell us this?”
- “It is self evident, isn’t it?”
 - Yes, at least it ought to be...
 - But we are foolish...
 - We have this thought that if we really abandon ourselves to God,
 - If we really forsake all to follow Christ,
 - We will miss out on something...
 - We will not be fully satisfied and fully blessed...
- c. Do you not hear this all the time...
- People will say, “A little religion is good, but don’t go too far.”
 - What? There is a fountain of perfect blessing, but we are just to sip from it?
 - How is it going to harm us?
 - Now of course there is a kind of person who comes to God in an artificial extreme way...
 - a person who puts on a show of piety by doing things that are very visible and ostentatious—
 - sitting on a pillar for his whole life or coming up with a complex ethical code...
 - but that is not a person who is really drinking from the fountain of God...
 - Those are persons who are partaking of the doctrine of demons.
 - It is not following some man-made system,
 - it is devoting ourselves entirely and honestly to Christ as He is revealed in the scriptures.

TRANS> If you drink from Him alone, you will never be disappointed.

- He knows how to bless those who come to Him...
- We are told further that:

B. He blesses us with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies”

- What does this mean? What does He do for us?

1. A *spiritual blessing* is a blessing that comes from God's Spirit...
 - a. In particular from the work that God's Spirit does in joining us to Christ and then in producing the fruits of that union...
 - 1) The Old Testament prophets promised that the Spirit would be poured out on us in the last days...
 - and Jesus announced that those days had come—that after He ascended into heaven to reign,
 - He would send forth His Spirit to sanctify His elect so that they would understand their sin, come to Him and believe the truth, and joyfully walk in God's commandments.
 - The Spirit is the one who works faith in us so that we are joined to Christ the fountain and are said to be "in Him."
 - 2) We must not think of the blessing of the Spirit as primarily consisting in the charismatic gifts that were given as signs that the Spirit had come...
 - You know, tongues and miracles and all...
 - As magnificent as these were, they were only temporary gifts with a specific purpose: to announce that the Spirit had come,
 - they are like the wrapping paper on a gift that tells you that it is a gift and that it is yours,
 - but the paper is thrown away and the gift inside is what is kept...
 - and that gift is union with Christ and with all His benefits.
 - b. These "spiritual blessings" are the ones that are listed out in verses 4-14.
 - 1) In verses 4-6, there is the blessing of holiness and sonship through Christ...
 - The Lord actually brings us into His house, not just as servants, but as sons...
 - and in doing so, He transforms us to live as His sons, giving us new hearts that delight in His ways!
 - We will look at this in more detail next time.
 - 2) Second, there is the blessing of redemption and the forgiveness of sin through union with Christ...
 - This is a great blessing that clears the way for all the rest...
 - He clears our record of all the wrongs that we have done through the blood of His Son.

- Then we are able to draw near with a clear conscience and we are freed from the condemnation of God's law broken.
- 3) Third, there is sealing of the Spirit to preserve us and certainly keep us until we receive the promised inheritance reserved in heaven for us.
- This is a preserving of us through the testings of this world—a keeping of us to the end so that we may receive the blessing.

TRANS> We will look in detail at these precious gifts in future sermons...

- But before we move on to the next question,
 - I want you to see that:
2. These spiritual blessings are said to be “blessings in the heavenly places”...
- This is a glorious truth!
 - a. “Blessings in the heavenly places” are exactly that...
 - They are blessings that the inhabitants of heaven enjoy.
 - And who are the inhabitants of heaven?
 - The inhabitants of heaven are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - b. We have already seen that God is blessed in Himself...
 - He is beautiful and happy and satisfied...
 - For all eternity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have dwelt in heaven together...
 - They have dwelt in perfect love—giving to each other and receiving from each other—
 - delighting in each other and blessing each other in ways that surpass our understanding...
 - This is the blessing they enjoy in heavenly places!
 - c. But we are told that God, in Christ, gives us these spiritual blessings in the heavenly places...
 - In other words, He brings these very blessings of heaven to us now!
 - He brings us into the fellowship and communion heavenly love!
 - We begin to partake of the heavenly life!
- 1) This completely agrees with what is said of us elsewhere in scripture...
- We are said to be citizens of heaven...
 - We are told that our conversation is in heaven...

- We are said to have the joy of fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
 - We are said to be seated with Christ in the heavenlies...
- 2) In other words, the life of heaven is brought down to us in Christ.
- a) He introduces us into this joyful life of perfect unity with Himself and His Father that spills over into a perfect unity with each other...
 - Everything is changed for us because we are reconciled!
 - And the book of Ephesians tells us all about this change and how it affects us in our relationship with God and with each other.
 - b) It is not, as you well know, that we are already made perfect...
 - But we have the beginnings of what is to come and it ought to make a huge difference in us now!
 - We are drinking from the fountain of blessing that blesses us!
 - The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us!
 - God is showing us the depth and breadth and height of the love of Christ.
 - Jesus prayer that we would see the glory of God that He has enjoyed from all eternity is being answered...
 - This is eternal life, that they may know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent!

TRANS> What a blessing God has for His own!

- But who is it that receives this marvellous blessing?

III. Who are the ones that the fount of blessing blesses?

- In verse 3, Paul refers to the ones who are blessed as “us”...
 - He says that God has “blessed **us** with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.”
 - If you are to know who receives this blessing, you have to know who the “us” is that Paul refers to in verse 3.

A. First, you can see that He describes the “us” of verse 3 in verse 4...

- He describes them as those chosen in Christ to be holy and without blame.
 - v. 4: just as He chose **us** in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame

1. We will look at election in more detail in future sermons,
 - but for now I want you to simply see that the ones who are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places are those who are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame.
 - That they were chosen to be holy and without blame shows that they were chosen out of a mass that was **not** holy and without blame...
 - They were chosen to become what they were not in themselves...
 - holy and without blame before God.
2. And of course that is the whole glory of salvation...
 - That God takes those who are dead in trespasses and sins and makes them alive...
 - Paul uses that very language over in Ephesians 2...
 - “And you He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins.”
 - We learn from this, then, that the “us” that is blessed is a sinful “us”
 - and the blessing is that they are made to be an “us” that is holy and without blame before God!

TRANS> So we may conclude that the us is the writer of this epistle and those who were chosen by God to be delivered from sin.

- But can they be identified further?
- Yes!

B. We can learn who the writer of this epistle is and those to whom he writes by looking back to the opening verses.

- writers in those days used to introduces themselves at the beginning of their letters...
1. In verse 1, the author of Ephesians introduces himself as “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ.”
 - a. There is a foolish discussion that goes on among certain NT scholars about whether Paul actually did write this letter,
 - or if some one (with the best of motives of course) appended his name to it to make sure the message was heard.
 - But this is not possible...
 - This is the Word of God, and because it is the Word of God it cannot err.
 - If it says that Paul wrote this letter, then Paul wrote it!

- b. Now look at how Paul describes himself...
- 1) He says that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ.
 - An apostle is a sent one—
 - One sent by another to speak or carry out business in the name of the one who sent him.
 - The Apostles of Jesus Christ were sent directly by Him...
 - They were given the truth about Jesus and about His work and what it means to us,
 - and they were to authoritatively impart that message to us...
 - they were given the ability to speak and to write under the influence of the Holy Spirit so that what came forth was the very word of God, completely without error.
 - 2) Paul makes it clear that he did not in any way make himself an apostle,
 - but that he is an apostle by the will of God.
 - He was called and appointed to this task so that his message is to be received as the word of God...
 - This is very important—
 - The scriptures will not profit you unless you receive them as they are in truth—the word of the living God.
2. And because Paul is an apostle,
- he speaks God's blessing on those to whom He writes in the name of Jesus Christ—as one authorised to do so...
 - He does this in verse 2 when he says:
 - v. 2: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
 - This is not just a way of wishing them well!
 - Paul is writing to them as those who are the recipients of God's grace and peace...
 - As recipients of God's grace, they are those who receive the spiritual blessings in heavenly places together with Paul!
 - They are the chosen ones in Christ to be holy and without blame!
 - And as the recipients of God's grace, the outcome is peace...
 - equivalent to the OT word shalom...
 - not just peace in the sense of absence of conflict and distress...

- but peace as those who are overflowing with the fullness and wholeness.
- As an apostle who represents his Lord,
 - Paul shares in the passion of his Lord to see His people blessed...
 - You almost get the idea that he is bursting with enthusiasm when he pronounces this blessing because he delights in all the rich grace that God has for them...
 - the treasures of grace that he is getting ready to declare to them!

C. But who are these people that are to receive this blessing from God?

1. Look at verse 1:

- They are “the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus”!
 - a. You can see that Paul is not speaking to all who are at Ephesus,
 - He is speaking to a subset of the population of Ephesus...
 - He is speaking to the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus at Ephesus.
 - b. In other words, they are the ones whose lives have been transformed by the spiritual blessings in heavenly places that are spoken about in verse 3...
 - They are those whose lives bear witness to God’s blessing upon them!
 - A **saint** is one who is devoted to God—
 - they are set apart to Him to do His will—and are doing it.
 - They are not living in open rebellion against Him.
 - And they are **the faithful in Christ**, or better, those who have faith in Christ...
 - They fully trust in Him...
 - They have confidence that He is the way, the truth and the life and that through Him they have every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.
 - c. The work of God’s Spirit is evident in them... it shows!
 - They stand out from among all those in Ephesus as those who are holy and without blame.
 - They are recipients of God’s blessing and the evidence is in them.
2. And I want you to know that what Paul says to these saints at Ephesus pertains to all of you who are saints in Halifax...

- a. To all of you who have been called out by God and transformed by His grace to be consecrated to Him and to trust in Jesus Christ.
 - If this description fits you,
 - they you also are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
 - You have received the very life of heaven by God's grace and it is yours forever!
 - You have been made to share in the very life of God that has been brought to us in Jesus Christ!

- b. Yes, this letter is written to the saints at Ephesus, but it pertains to the saints and faithful in Christ everywhere!
 - Interestingly, many of the earliest manuscripts we have do not even have the words "at Ephesus" in them...
 - This has made some surmise that it was a circular letter that Paul sent to many churches—it doesn't have any of the personal stuff specific to one Presbytery or one congregation the way many of his letters do...
 - But regardless of that, this book that so marvellously presents the wonderful treasures of grace that God has given to His elect is given to you by the Holy Spirit...
 - And these rich blessings are yours if you are a saint faithful in Christ Jesus as they are the possession of the Ephesians.
 - We are all brought together as one in Jesus Christ—
 - We, though once wretched sinners like all the rest, are brought to share in heavenly life with the Son 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!"