

Blessed Be The Triune God, Who Blesses Us.

Text: Eph 1:3-14

1) The Father

Suggested Hymns:

2) The Son

140, 141, 452, 291, 532T538

3) The Holy Spirit

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Ephesians 1:3-14, 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,* 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,* ⁵ *having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,* ⁶ *to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.*

⁷ *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace* ⁸ *which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,* ⁹ *having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,* ¹⁰ *that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth -- in Him.*

¹¹ *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,* ¹² *that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.*

¹³ *In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,* ¹⁴ *who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

We sang today in observance of the Festival of the Holy Trinity these words,¹

Thrice holy! Father, Spirit, Son,

Mysterious Godhead, three in one,

This is not a problem of mathematics or metaphysics to be solved by the genius of man. It defies human understanding. It is unique. There is nothing in the whole universe to which we may compare it. Our only reason for accepting it is the fact that God has in this way revealed Himself in His inerrant Word.

Can we, then, ignore it as a teaching which is so far beyond us that it has no practical bearing upon our lives?

Again we turn to the Word of God for the answer. There we see the Apostle Paul in the quiet of a Roman prison, removed from the noise of battle. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he writes a letter to the Ephesians. This document has become known as the Epistle of Grace. But into it he also weaves the Trinity, so much so that more than any other book of the Bible it teaches and implies that God is Three in One.

And rightfully so. Saving grace and the Trinity are inseparable. There can be no saving grace except through the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As the apostle meditates upon it, prose gives way to the language of music, of liturgy, in the passage before us. The theme of his song is: *Blessed Be the Triune God, Who Blesses Us*. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. The Father

The heart of the apostle overflows. It expresses itself in a long sentence, which unveils before us a mystery, a secret, a plan which was conceived in the mind of God before the foundation of the world and which reaches into eternity. As it grows on us, we share the sentiments of the apostle as expressed in the Epistle of today, *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*²

The initiative is taken by God, who is identified as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. His heart goes out in blessing toward us, enriching us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. He knows the needs of the soul which He Himself has created. He provides it with all that is necessary for its welfare, its purpose in this world, and its happiness. He also wants to bring the beginning of heaven to us here, so that, amid the conflicts and varying shadows of life, our citizenship may be in heaven.

As we read these lines, it almost seems as though we were gazing into a sea of light, - brilliant, beautiful, but vague. In the next verses, however, the individual blessings emerge into clearer focus.

The first is redemption. Redemption from our sins. Nothing less than Christ's atoning Sacrifice could save man from the eternal doom which sin deserves. Redemption is, therefore, the heart of the message which God Himself brought to conscience-stricken Adam and Eve in Paradise lost. It is held before the eyes of faith in the Old Testament by ceremonies, sacrifices, and prophecies. It is etched into every page of the New Testament.

This redemption assures man of forgiveness, a forgiveness so complete that God can say to sinful man, as it is written in Isaiah 1:18,¹⁸ ***“Come now, and let us reason together,” Says the LORD, “Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool.”***

Forgiveness removes the barriers which separate us from God. By adoption we are received into the select family circle of God. Predestinated, chosen by God before the foundation of the world, we can confidently lift up our heart and our eyes as we pray, ***“Our Father who art in heaven.”***

We are not only redeemed from something, we are redeemed for something. When the Prodigal Son returned to his father, the father not only forgave him but also ordered his servants to ***“Bring out the best robe and put it on him.”***³³ He wanted him to fit into the environment of the beautiful home.

God intends the same for those whom He has adopted into His family. The rags of sin are to give way to holiness of Christian character and life. He desires that we should walk worthy of the vocation into which we are called. We are redeemed to be holy.

The effects of the redemption reach beyond man. They are felt in heaven itself. The unity which was disrupted by the Fall is now restored. There is now harmony between the unfallen creatures of heaven, the angels, and the restored creatures upon earth. We are redeemed to live forever in heaven.

All of this is the first step leading toward that great day when the adopted children of God will enter their full inheritance in heaven, fellowship with God, perfect life, perfect joy, beyond the reach of sin, sickness, and death. What a glorious panorama of what is and what is to be!

2. The Son

But this would be a mirage or illusion without Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Writers have tried to imagine what our civilisation would be like if they could remove from the world every influence which Jesus has had on literature, art, music, social and political sciences. They find that it is so deeply and intricately interwoven with the pattern of life as we know it, that only a few shreds would remain.

Self-styled religious liberals have tried to delete or explain away every passage of the Bible which either directly states or implies that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. They want to take Him from the exalted position which He has occupied in all eternity and reduce Him to a mere man.

As such Jesus would only be one of the great thinkers and religious teachers of the ages as well as a living example of the noble life which He advocated. In assigning this mission to Him they think that they are opening the doors of heaven wider so that more people may enter. In effect, however, they are closing it to all without exception.

Regardless of what man says, the Ten Commandments remain unchanged through the years. They are the standard according to which a righteous God will judge all who have ever lived.

It is equally true that advances in knowledge have not changed the nature of fallen man. He has not outgrown sin. If anything, he in our day appears to be moving more deeply into it.

The One Way

There is only one way out, and that is that which God Himself has provided. In the fullness of the time God sent His Son, His only-begotten Son, made of a woman, made under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law. The price of this redemption was the holy, precious blood of the Son of God, His innocent suffering and death on the cross.

It involved both Father and Son. In the National Gallery there is a painting which portrays Jesus on the cross. The background is sombre. At first glance you only see the crucified Saviour. But a closer study reveals other hands supporting

those of Jesus. They are the hands of the Father, whose face indicates an almost greater distress than that of the Son.

The artist has caught the meaning of the Gospel, ***“God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”***⁴

This is God’s answer, the only effective answer, to man’s tragic plight. We, therefore, note how often the inspired apostle, when describing in our text the blessings which God bestows, states that they are ***“in Christ,”*** or ***“by Jesus Christ,”*** or ***“in the Beloved.”***

3. The Holy Spirit

Is this, all that is necessary, for man’s eternal welfare? Picture to yourself a mansion. The materials of which it is built, the architecture, priceless paintings, have made it one of the most beautiful structures in the world. But in one of the rooms lies its owner in a casket, dead and blind to it all.

That would be man’s fate without the Holy Spirit. The Father in His infinite love has given His Son. The Son through His perfect life fulfilled the Law in our stead and by His death on the cross has suffered the punishment that have we deserved.

In this way Jesus has secured blessings for this life and the life to come which surpass all human understanding. But man, for whom all this is intended, is dead in trespasses and sins and spiritually blind.

A miracle is necessary. Man must be raised from this death and given eyes that see. This is the task which the Bible ascribes to the Holy Spirit. The apostle calls the blessings of grace spiritual, not merely in opposition to those which are material, but also in the sense that they are applied by the Holy Spirit.

The Word Of Life

The Holy Spirit does this through the life-giving Word of truth. One day Jesus stood before the lifeless body of His friend Lazarus. He addressed the latter with the words, ***“Lazarus, come forth!”*** The power of life was in that command. This is also true of the Word which the Holy Spirit has inspired and through which He speaks to the sinner. In it is the power for life and sight.

The Holy Spirit also places a seal upon such a person, a seal which marks him as belonging to God. The apostle in his Epistle to the Romans states it as follows, as we read in Romans 8:15-16, ¹⁵ *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”* ¹⁶ *The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.*

Other blessings pour in upon man. There is a profound change, a change so complete that the Word of God calls it a new birth. The lost image of God is returning. Love for God, who first loved him, and love for all for whom Jesus died asserts itself.

All of this is a token and a pledge of greater things to come. Eternal life, heaven, has begun in our hearts. It is a foretaste of the perfect life, the perfect happiness which will be ours when we will be with the Lord forever.

As the apostle envisions this, his heart overflows with gratitude. He says, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* What does he mean?

Several years ago a pastor called on a woman who was a patient in a hospital to give her the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. She knew that he was coming. When he entered her room, she was reading the Bible. He asked her if she cared to suggest a passage on which he might meditate in preparation for the Sacrament.

She said, “Yes. I am reading the 103rd Psalm. I am puzzled. It says here, *‘Bless the Lord, O my soul.’* I was under the impression that the higher blesses the lower. How can I, then, bless God?”

He told her that blessing God means more than praising Him. We may praise a man like Napoleon for his military skill. But we do not bless him. To bless means to couple praise with love and reverence.

That is the spirit in which we today on the Festival of the Holy Trinity join the apostle in blessing the Triune God, who has so wonderfully blessed us. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Hymn 141 v 3

² Romans 11:33

³ Luke 15:22

⁴ John 3:16