

THREE PROFOUND REASONS TO BLESS GOD

1 ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ, ⁴since he chose us in him before the creation of the world in order for us to be holy and blameless in his presence. In love⁵he predestined us to be his adopted sons through Jesus Christ, by his own will and desire, ⁶for the praise of the glory of his grace. [This grace] he freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved, ⁷by whom we have redemption through his blood, [namely,] the forgiveness of our transgressions. By the riches of his grace, ⁸which he lavished upon us with all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, which originates from his own desire and which he determined by himself. ¹⁰[This mystery pertains] to the final dispensation,* [namely, his determination] to unite all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth. (Eph. 1:3-10)

*The Greek text literally reads: “a dispensation of the fullness [or, fulfillment] of the times.” What is being spoken of is a dispensation (i.e.; an ordering or arranging of all things) that goes into effect at the time when all the periods of time (καιροι) have been fulfilled (πληρωμα); thus, it is the final dispensation of all things.

Introduction

The famous composer, Franz Joseph Haydn, was present at the Vienna Music Hall when his oratorio, *The Creation*, was being presented. As the majestic work moved along, the audience was caught up with tremendous emotion. When the chorus and orchestra reached the passage, “And there was light!” they burst forth with such power that the audience could no longer restrain its enthusiasm; the vast assembly arose in spontaneous applause.

At this point Haydn himself stood and motioned for silence. He then pointed to heaven and said, “No, not from me; but from there comes all.” Having given the glory and praise to the Lord, the elderly composer fell back into his seat, exhausted (*Our Daily Bread*, 9/20/92.)

Franz Joseph Haydn rightfully blessed God as the true Source of his composing talent and the true Author of the great composition, *The Creation*. In the same spirit, may we join with the Apostle Paul in blessing God as the Author of our great salvation and all the benefits derived from it.

Our great salvation and all of its benefits are due to the sovereign and gracious work of God, who alone is worthy to receive the glory and the blessing. Because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has bestowed upon us all of His great blessings in Christ, we are exhorted to bless Him.

I. Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...Because He Chose Us to be Holy (1:4)

In verse 4 the Apostle Paul writes, *“he chose us.”* The Lord Jesus declared the same to His first disciples when He informed them,

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last ... ¹⁹If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (Jn. 15:16a, 19.)

Our Lord’s choosing of His disciples is a vivid example of how God the Father has sovereignly chosen whom He will to be His people. Consider the Apostle Paul’s testimony recorded in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14,

... we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. ¹⁴He called you to this through our gospel, so that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Thess. 2:13-14)

According to the Scriptures, the ultimate reason a man comes to Christ is because the Father has chosen him, not because the man has first chosen Christ; as the Lord Jesus testifies, *“All whom the Father gives me will come to me; and he who comes to me I will by no means reject”* (Jn. 6:37.)

Paul further explains that God chose us *“in him”* (i.e.; in Christ.) Because of His divine majesty and infinite holiness, we could never draw near to God in our own finite human condition apart from Christ, especially as sinners before a holy God.

There was never a time when God did not view the Christian (even before he was born) in his relationship to Christ—from His divine perspective, God has never viewed the Christian apart from Christ; indeed, God chose us in Christ *“before the creation of the world.”*

The fact is, God chose us long before we even had the opportunity to chose or reject Christ, as we learn from the Book of Acts, *“all who were appointed for eternal life believed”* (Acts 13:48b.) Salvation is a work of God’s sovereign grace. If the choice were left to us, we would never choose Christ, note John 1:10-11, *“He was in the world, and the world was made through him, but the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own [people], yet those who were his own did not receive him”* (Jn. 1:10-11.) To *“know”* is used here in the sense of having affinity with Him, receiving Him and loving Him. Again, consider the testimony of the Lord Jesus concerning sinful man’s response to the LORD in His holiness:

... this is [the reason for] the condemnation: the Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness rather than the light; because their works were evil. ²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light and does not come to the light, so that his works will not be exposed. (Jn. 3:19-20)

God chose us in Christ before the creation of the world *“in order for us to be holy and blameless in his presence.”* Note: We, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, were chosen not because we were holy, or because we displayed the potential for holiness. Isaiah 53:6 describes our natural condition, having inherited the sinful nature from Adam: *“We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.”* The Apostle Paul declares, *“it is written, ‘There is none righteous, no, not one’ ... ²³for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God”* (Rom. 3:10,23.) No, we were chosen not because we were holy, or because we displayed the potential for holiness; on the contrary, we were chosen in order to become holy. The purpose for which we were chosen is to participate and share with God in the beauty of His holiness, note Isaiah 61:1,3,

*... Jehovah has anointed me to preach good news to those who are afflicted. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners ... ³to minister to those who mourn in Zion: to bestow on them a crown of beauty in place of ashes, the oil of joy in place of mourning, the garment of praise in place of the spirit of despair. **Then they will be called Oaks of Righteousness, planted by Jehovah, so that he may be glorified.** (Isa. 61:1,3)*

Let us bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has chosen us to be holy. The most beautiful thing to behold is the LORD in His holiness, and He has chosen us to share in His holiness.

II. Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...Because He Predestined Us to Become His Adopted Sons (1:4b-8)

The Apostle Paul goes on to inform us that God *“predestined us.”* The Greek term used here, προορίζω, means, “to decide before hand;” to predetermine one’s destination. Let us note that what is here attributed to God with regard to our salvation, is something we do on a human level every day: as best we can, we predetermine our activities and our course of action. Why should we find it unusual or offensive to learn that our Creator predetermines the destiny of His creatures, especially predetermining the salvation of those whom He has chosen by His sovereign grace? The reason sinful man finds this to be offensive lies in the fact that we accept and cherish the devil’s lie that we have an autonomous existence—an existence that is independent of our Creator. This was the lie the devil introduced to Eve in the Garden of Eden, a lie that he seeks to perpetuate through all the generations of mankind:

Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field that Jehovah God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed, has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden? ²And the woman said to the serpent, We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, neither shall

you touch it, or else you will die. ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, You shall not surely die. (Gen. 3:1-4)

The devil sought to convince Adam and Eve that God could not carry out His threatened judgment against them, according to the devil, God could not carry out the pronouncement, *“You shall surely die.”* The devil was implying that mankind has an existence that is independent of God. It was only after they ate of the forbidden fruit that they tragically discovered this to be a lie.

It is hypocritical for any man to find fault with our Creator for exercising His divine freedom and rights. The Apostle Paul confronts us with the fact of God’s divine rights and prerogatives:

*But who are you, O man, to talk back to God? Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, Why did you make me like this?²¹ **Does not the potter have the right to make out of the same lump of clay some pottery for noble purposes and some for common use?** (Rom. 9:20-21)*

It is especially hypocritical of us to attempt to do so when we are always demanding the exercise of our human freedom and rights! Being made in the image of God, our human freedom and rights are a derivative and a reflection of God’s divine freedom and rights—and our human freedom and rights are always exercised within the context of God’s absolute freedom and rights, never in rivalry to His divine freedom and rights.

The apostle further informs us that *“in love”* God predestined us. God’s act of predestining us unto adoption is defined as an expression of His love, an act of His divine love; as the hymn writer, Joseph Conder, expresses it:

It was sovereign mercy that called me
And taught my opening mind;
Otherwise the world had enthralled me,
To heavenly glories blind.
My heart owns none before You,
For Your rich grace I thirst;
This knowing, if I love You,
You must have loved me first.

God predestined us *“to be his adopted sons through Jesus Christ.”* By way of illustration: In the Broadway play, *Annie*, little orphan Annie was adopted out of her bondage and poverty in a New York orphanage by Daddy Warbucks, who had the wealth and was willing to spend that wealth for her adoption. He was under no obligation to adopt her; his act of doing so was a free act of his will motivated by his love and compassion.

As verses 7-8 explain, the purchase price of our adoption was nothing less than the shed blood of God's own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, by which He ransomed us from our sins to become the adopted sons of the heavenly Father.

God predestined us to be his adopted sons "*by his own will and desire.*" That is to say, when He predestined us to become His adopted sons, God the Father was not acting out of necessity or obligation. He was not required to adopt us; we had no legal or moral claims to adoption. On the contrary, as is the case in all adoptions, He was acting in accordance with His own free will; it was a divine choice motivated by sovereign love, grace, mercy and compassion. The hymn writer, Isaac Watts, well expresses this truth:

While all our hearts and all our songs
Join to admire the feast,
Each of us cry, with thankful tongues,
"Lord, why was I a guest?"

"Why was I made to hear Your voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"
It was the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly drew us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin.

God predestined us to be his adopted sons "*for the praise of the glory of his grace.*" The ultimate purpose of our adoption is that God's grace—which is glorious—may be praised. In His sovereign act of adopting us—an act motivated by His grace—the LORD's grace is displayed; and as it is revealed, His grace is seen to be glorious, and consequently, it elicits the praise of which it is worthy.

Let us bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has predestined us to become His adopted sons.

III. Bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ...Because He has Made Known to Us His Divine Plan (1:9-10)

The Apostle Paul goes on to further inform us that God has "*made known to us the mystery of his will.*" God's "*will*" here is a reference to His ultimate plan and purpose for His creation. God's will is mysterious in the sense that it is hidden and remains unknown to sinful mankind; as the hymn writer phrased it, "the eye of sinful man Your glory may not see." God's will is mysterious also in the sense that it is awesome, beyond human comprehension, apart from divine revelation. God has revealed His will to us "*by the riches of his grace.*" That is to

say, He has revealed His will to us simply because He wanted to do so; this, too, is an act of His sovereign grace and love for us.

God's will—His ultimate purpose and plan for His creation—is something *“that originates from his own desire and that he determined by himself.”* It is a plan and purpose that God Himself has decided upon and has determined to accomplish. In devising this plan and purpose, God was not in any way influenced by any outside forces; nor was His decision in any way dictated by anyone other than Himself. He is the God *“who causes all things to work for the sake of his own plan”* (Eph. 1:11.) He has His own sovereign plan, and He proceeds to carry out and accomplish that plan by causing all things to contribute to the ultimate fulfillment of His purpose and plan. Consequently, the wisdom that conceived His plan and the power that brings that plan to fulfillment are all of God, and, therefore, to God alone belongs all the glory and the praise.

God's will spoken of here *“pertains to the final dispensation.”* The Greek term translated, *“dispensation”* (οἰκονομία), literally means, “the management of a household;” i.e.; the organizing and structuring of an organization, in this case, the arrangement and the purpose of the entire creation. What is being spoken of here is *“the final dispensation.”* What God has graciously chosen to make known to us is His ultimate plan concerning the final arrangement of all things (i.e.; the eternal state.) By way of illustration: If at present your house is in disrepair, undergoing a re-modeling project, it is comforting and re-assuring to know how it is all going to turn out in the end—the same holds true with regard to our lives and the final state of the entire creation. It is comforting to know God's plan for His creation, such knowledge encourages us, especially in hard times, and gives us hope as Christians. Once again, we turn to the words of the hymn writers, this time Maltbie D. Babcock,

This is my Father's world,
O let me never forget
That though the wrong often seems so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is my Father's world:
The battle is not done;
Jesus who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and heaven be one.

God's will is *“to unite all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.”* This present creation, shattered by sin, shall be “re-assembled” in an altogether more glorious formation by the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The philosophers may mourn over the fall of Humpty Dumpty (that nursery rhyme character is actually a symbol for the world in its present fallen state); but the LORD reveals to us His divine purpose to re-create this fallen creation. Having judged sinful man, the LORD shall “re-assemble” this creation in a glorious and holy form.

Let us bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because He has made known to us His glorious divine plan.

Conclusion

The famous composer, Franz Joseph Haydn, so long ago in the Vienna Music Hall stood up, and pointing to heaven, declared, "No, not from me! But from there comes all!" So may we, too, bless the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for all the divine benefits He has bestowed upon us in Christ the Beloved. Among the foremost of those blessings we may enumerate these that we have just considered from this present passage of Scripture: He has chosen us to share in His holiness; He has predestined us to be His adopted sons; and He has revealed to us His divine plan.