

“The Greatest Spiritual Blessing”

(Ephesians 1:3-6)

Introduction

➤ The greatest spiritual blessing that we have as Christians (those who are truly “in Christ”) is the salvation that has been given to us in and through Jesus Christ. This reality is what compelled the apostle Paul to write, after his initial greeting, one-long doxology – a profound and extensive praise to God for the salvation He has given to those who are in Christ.

Eph 1:3-6 ~ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love⁵ he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.”

➤ In the original (Greek) language, Ephesians 1:3-14 is one very long sentence (202 words in Greek, 244 in ESV). This “sentence” of praise covers the full gamut of salvation – from “*before the foundation of the world*” (vs.4), for “*the fullness of time*” (vs.10), “*until we acquire possession of our*” (vs.14) eternal inheritance in Christ. All this is obviously and exclusively to the glory of God: “*Blessed by the God and Father*” (vs.3), “*to the praise of His glorious grace*” (vs.6), “*to the praise of His glory*” (vs.12), and “*to the praise of His glory*” (vs.14).

➤ To help us understand this passage, some commentators/preachers have divided this passage into a Trinitarian outline: 1] The salvific work of God the Father (vs.3-6), 2] The salvific work of God the Son, Jesus Christ (vs.7-10), and 3] The salvific work of God the Holy Spirit (vs.11-14).

Others have outlined this passage chronologically: 1] Past: election (vs.3-6a) 2] Present: redemption (vs.6b-11), and 3] Future: inheritance (vs.12-14). Both are incredibly biblical and beneficial.

➤ No matter how we frame it, this extensive doxology is ultimately beyond our mental capacity to understand us as our finite human brains cannot contain the infinite mind of God. We are made in God’s image, He is not made in ours; He is the Creator, and we are His creation. This passage is replete with profound theological concepts that are simply beyond our human comprehension.

✓ **Illust:** “Though this is an incomprehensible truth to finite thinking, it is one of the most repeated in Scripture. The record of God’s redemptive history is that of His reaching down and drawing to Himself those whom He has chosen to save. In these opening verses of Ephesians Paul gives us a glimpse of eternity past. He lets us eavesdrop as God planned to save us – not only long before we were born but long before the earth was born” (John MacArthur; *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*; 1:3-6a).

➤ This should not, however, dissuade or discourage us from studying this passage (and passages like these). In fact, it should have the opposite effect on us – for there is much we can learn here, as Scripture is an infinite well of truth, knowledge, and wisdom. We should relish any opportunity to plunge into the mystery and immensity of Almighty God [note: if you fully understand your “god” than what you have is either an idol or a superficial understanding (or misunderstanding) of God]. The self-existing, eternal, infinite Creator God should overwhelm us created, mortal, and finite beings.

✓ **Illust:** In the sermon he preached on January 7, 1855, Charles Spurgeon (at the age of 20) gave the following introduction:

“There is something exceedingly improving to the mind in a contemplation of the Divinity. It is a subject so vast, that all our thoughts are lost in its immensity; so deep, that our pride is drowned in its infinity. Other subjects we can compass and grapple with; in them we feel a kind of self-content, and go our way with the thought, ‘Behold I am wise.’ But when we come to this master science, finding that our plumbline cannot sound its depth, and that our eagle eye cannot see its height, we turn away with the thought that vain man would be wise... No subject of contemplation will tend more to humble the mind, than thoughts of God ...

But while the subject *humbles* the mind, it also expands it. He who often thinks of God, will have a larger mind than the man who simply plods around this narrow globe... Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued investigation of the great subject of the Deity.

... go, plunge yourself in the Godhead's deepest sea; be lost in his immensity; and you shall come forth as from a couch of rest, refreshed and invigorated. I know nothing which can so comfort the soul; so calm the swelling billows of sorrow and grief; so speak peace to the winds of trial, as a devout musing upon the subject of the Godhead” (quoted in *Knowing God*, by J.I. Packer, p.17-18).

- For our purposes this morning, I have chosen to outline this message based on most of the verbs found in these verses (four out of five). Four ways in which God has granted us salvation in Christ. The subpoints highly the twelve different prepositions that are used in this relatively short passage. This, I hope, will reveal to us not only what God has done in our salvation but also how and why He has saved us.

1. God has **BLESSED** us in Christ (vs.3)

- This first one is all-encompassing: “*Blessed be ... God ... who has blessed us*” (vs.3). Notice the parallel between the phrases “*Blessed* [eulogētos; adj.] *be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (vs.3) and “*who has blessed* [eulogēō; vb.] *us*” (vs.3). This can be a bit confusing as we typically understand that God blesses us, but we often do not think of ourselves blessing God. After all, how can we be a blessing to God? To bless God is to give Him praise and thanks. As glorifying God does not make God more glorious – He is absolutely perfect in His divine nature and character – so blessing God does not add to or benefit God in any way (see Acts 17:24-25). We bless God when we acknowledge and revere Him, when we extol Him for who He is and are grateful for what He has done (and will do).
- This is the same express the apostle Peter used as He described our great salvation:

1 Peter 1:3-5 ~ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (see 1Chron.29:10-13; Ps.41:13; 72:18-19; 2Cor.1:3)

- God is deserving of all praise and glory for our salvation because He is the one who sovereignly initiates and ordains salvation. God is the author, perfecter, and protector of salvation. Salvation is not the result of any human achievement, but of divine accomplishment. God alone is to be praised for our salvation because He alone can raise the dead sinner to spiritual life; He alone can empower the godless (unrighteous) to live godly (righteously); He alone can give wisdom to the foolish; He alone can reconcile those at enmity with Him; He alone can redeem those who are enslaved to sin; and He alone receives the blessing for those whom He has saved.
- The only verb in this verse is found in the expression that God “*has blessed us*” (vs.3). This, of course, does not mean that God praises or thanks us (for we have done nothing to receive praise or gratitude from God). The reason why we ought to bless God is because He has blessed us (not the other way around)!

How has God blessed us? In truly innumerable ways. Paul gives three prepositional phrases (“*in*”, “*with*”, “*in*”; vs.3) as he described – with broad brushstrokes – the (salvific) blessings Christians have received from God.

♦ “*in Christ*” (vs.3)

- First, in the ESV translation, we note that all of God’s blessings are found “*in Christ*” (vs.3). This has always been true and will always be true. Everyone who has ever been saved, and everyone who will ever be saved, is saved in and through Jesus Christ. The Old Testament saints were saved by God’s

grace through faith in Christ who was to come, and the New Testament saints (including us) are saved by God's grace through faith in Christ who has come.

As is clear in this verse, and throughout the Bible, Jesus is the incarnate Son of God ("*the ... Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*") (vs.3; Jn.1:1-3, 14; Col.1:19; 2:9).

➤ All of God's blessings come through the person and work of Jesus Christ – the one and only Son of God and the one and only Savior from God. As the Christian's identity is fully "in Christ" so too are all the Christian's blessings from God. Apart from a true saving faith in Jesus Christ, a person cannot receive any (salvific) blessing from God (see Jn.3:18, 36; 14:6; 1Jn.2:23; 5:11-12).

◆ "*with every spiritual blessing*" (vs.3)

➤ This is explicitly stated with the very next prepositional phrase: "*with every spiritual blessing*" (vs.3). Notice that these blessed are described as "*spiritual*" (*pneumatikos*) as opposed to material or physical. All of God's spiritual blessings come to us in Christ – every single one of them – and God has not withheld any spiritual blessing from those who are in Christ.

James 1:17 ~ "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

➤ While not exhaustive, Paul identified several of these blessings in the larger passage (1:3-14): 1] Election (vs.4), 2] Sanctification (vs.4), 3] Adoption (vs.5), 4] Redemption (vs.7), 5] Union with Christ (vs.6), 6] Forgiveness (vs.7), 7] Wisdom (vs.8), 8] Inheritance (vs.11, 14), 9] Security of salvation (vs.13-14) – just to name a proportionate few.

While some of these spiritual blessings have already been received, and others are promised in the future, the true Christian can be assured that God will not withhold a single spiritual blessing which He has promised to all who are in Christ.

◆ "*in the heavenly places*" (vs.3)

➤ These spiritual blessings in Christ are not found here on earth, they are located "*in the heavenly places*" (*epouranios*; vs.3). This is not so much a reference to a physical address in heaven (although heaven is a real place), but to the heavenly realm or the supernatural realm of God.

Eph 1:20-21 ~ "that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places [*epouranios*], ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

Eph 2:6 ~ "and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places [*epouranios*] in Christ Jesus"

Eph 3:10 ~ "so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places [*epouranios*]."

Eph 6:12 ~ "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places [*epouranios*]."

➤ This is in contrast to earthly or physical things, which are temporary and will one day be destroyed (by God). The spiritual blessings given to those who are in Christ are eternally secure in the dominion of God's sovereign reign.

Matt 6:19-20 ~ "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."

1 Peter 1:4 ~ "to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you"

2. God has **CHOSEN** us in Christ (vs.4)

➤ A second way that God has granted us salvation, according to this passage, is that “*He chose us*” (*eklegomai egō*; vs.4; Jn.15:16, 19). This is known as the biblical doctrine of “election” (*ek + lego*, lit. to pick out), which is a teaching that runs throughout all of Scripture (see Rom.8:33; 9:11; 1Thess.1:3-4; 1Pet.1:1-2). This refers to God’s sovereignty over salvation in that He choose those whom He would save. Just as God sovereignly and graciously choose Israel to be His people (Deut.7:6-8), as Christ chose the Twelve to be His apostles (Lk.6:13; Jn.15:16, 19), and as God chose Paul to be an apostle before he was even born (Gal.1:15), so too God sovereignly and graciously chose all whom He would save.

Scripture teaches that the unbeliever is unable to choose God without divine intervention. That is because the sinner is “dead in sin” (Eph.2:1), with a “*heart of stone*” (Ezek.36:26), “*desperately sick*” (Jer.17:9), “*a slave to sin*” (Jn.8:34), “*hostile to God*” (Rom.8:7), “*children of the devil*” (1Jn.3:10), and “*children of [God’s] wrath*” (Eph.2:3). God is the one who initiates salvation, not the sinner, as the sinner is able to do so apart from God.

John 6:44 ~ “No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws [*helkō*] him. And I will raise him up on the last day.” [*helkō*; to pull, or drag, or lead by force; “*haul it in*”, Jn.21:6; “*dragged*”, Acts 16:19; 21:30]

John 6:65 ~ “And he said, ‘This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted [*didōmi*; given] him by the Father.’”

John 6:37 ~ “All that the Father gives [*didōmi*] me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out.”

John 17:24 ~ “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given [*didōmi*] me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

➤ Apart from God’s sovereign election, no one can be saved. All those who are truly saved have been chosen by God. God is the one who chooses, calls, justifies, sanctifies and glorifies the believer, and this divine work is the result of (on the basis of) God’s sovereign will and not human goodness or good works (Eph.2:1-5, 8-9; 1Cor.1:26-31; 2Tim.1:9; Tit.3:5).

✓ **Illust:** “John R. W. Stott calls election ‘a divine revelation, not a human speculation.’ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones refers to this teaching as ‘a statement, not an argument’” (James Montgomery Boice; *Ephesians: An Expository Commentary*; p.15).

♦ “*in Him*” (vs.4)

➤ Again, all of the believer’s salvation, justification, sanctification, and glorification is “*in [Christ]*” (vs.4). As has been stated, no one can be saved – let alone glorified – apart from Christ (Jn.14:6; Acts 4:12). Even God’s sovereign election is founded in, and for, Jesus Christ.

Col 1:15-20 ~ “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

➤ The catalyst and glory of God’s sovereign election is Christ.

♦ *“before the foundation of the world”* (vs.4)

- God’s election for salvation does not occur the moment a person believes. It did not originate after Jesus’ death and resurrection. It was not even determined in the Garden with Adam and Eve, or after God created the heavens and the earth. No, God’s sovereign (salvific) election took place *“before the foundation of the world”* (vs.4). That is, before the world was created. This same expression is used to describe the eternity of the Son of God (i.e., preincarnate Christ).

John 17:24 ~ “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.”

1 Peter 1:18-20 ~ “knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold,¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you”

- At some point in eternity past, before the world was created, God determined – on the basis of His sovereign love and grace – to save all who would ever believe. This clearly indicates God’s sovereign initiative and saving grace as He chose to save a people before they were even created.

This is not, as is commonly portrayed, God looking down the corridor of the future and choosing those who would choose Him. That negates God’s sovereign election, and gives the believer the merit of choosing God (giving man the glory, ability to boast, for choosing God). As we will see, the basis of God’s sovereign election is *“according to the purpose of His will”* (vs.5; cf. vs.11) and *“to the praise of His glorious grace”* (vs.6).

♦ *“that we should be holy and blameless before Him”* (vs.4)

- The ultimate goal of God’s salvific election is “the praise of His glory” (1:6, 12, 14). But related to this is the fact that *“God chose us in Him ... that we should be holy and blameless before Him”* (vs.4). Again, it is not that God chose those who were holy and blameless – for there were none (Rom.3:10-12, 23). God chose us to make us *“holy and blameless before Him”* (vs.4). These two words synonymously indicate sinless perfection – *“holy”* (*hagios*; “saints”, 1:1) and *“blameless”* (*amōmos*; lit. without defect or flaw) – which can only come through the forgiveness and righteousness of God.

This is the heart of justification and sanctification – God forgiving our sins and making us holy through the substitutionary and sacrificial death of His Son Jesus Christ. Through His crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus not only paid the fully penalty of sin for all who would ever believe but also imputed to them the full measure of His sinlessness (righteousness).

Eph 5:2 ~ “And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

2 Cor 5:21 ~ “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” (1Pet.3:18; Gal.3:13; 1Jn.2:1-2)

Heb 10:14 ~ “For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.” (Heb.10:10)

3. God has **PREDESTINED** us in Christ (vs.4-6)

- A third way in which this passage reveals how God graced us with salvation is that He *“predestined us”* (vs.5). While this is a complicated, even controversial, doctrine, the Greek word translated *“predestined”* (*proorizō*) is quite simply defined as “to predetermine”, “to preordain”, or “to decide beforehand” (the same definition as the English translation). This again, as with election, is not a peripheral or infrequent doctrine in Scripture.

Eph 1:11 ~ “In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined [*proorizō*] according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”

Acts 4:27-28 ~ [Christians’ prayer]: “for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined [*proorizō*] to take place.”

Acts 2:22-23 ~ “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – ²³this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.”

Rom 8:28-30 ~ “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. ²⁹For those whom he foreknew he also predestined [*proorizō*] to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. ³⁰And those whom he predestined [*proorizō*] he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.”

➤ In His sovereignty, God leaves nothing to chance and never yields His plan to the whims or actions of humans. Nor is His sovereign will a reaction to mankind’s action. Specifically, predestination is the biblical doctrine that God in His sovereignty chooses certain individuals to be saved.

In our passage this morning, this profound doctrine is gloriously described.

♦ “*in love*” (vs.4)

➤ Back in verse four, we read that God’s predestination of some to be saved is indelibly tied to – motivated by – His sovereign love: “*in love* ⁵*he predestined us*” (vs.4-5). Again, God did not chose to save anyone based on their own goodness or good works but solely out of His “*love*” (*agapē*) for those whom He would save.

Eph 2:4-5 ~ “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved” (Tit.3:3-4)

Rom 5:8 ~ “but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

John 3:16 ~ “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Deut 7:7-8 ~ “It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸but it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

➤ It is important for us to remember that this “*love*” (*agapē*) is not a fleeting emotion – or even an emotion – from God. Rather, it is the divine act (or motive) of God’s sovereign will – He predestined you because He loves you.

♦ “*for adoption*” (vs.5)

➤ The result of God’s sovereign election, according to His predetermined will, is our “*adoption*” (vs.5) into God’s family. Without God’s saving grace, and sovereign love, every person is a child of the devil (1Jn.3:10) and, therefore, a child of God’s wrath (Eph.2:3). It is only by God’s salvation that a person can be – legally and eternally – a child of God.

Rom 8:15-17 ~ “For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ ¹⁶The Spirit himself bears

witness with our spirit that we are children of God,¹⁷ and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.” (see Gal.4:4-5)

✓ **Illust:** “*abba* is an Aramaic word that means “father”; it is a term of endearment used within the family circle (not unlike our word “dad”); its degree of familiarity toward God was unknown in Judaism” (Mounce, W.D. *Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*; “Abba”).

1 John 3:1 ~ “See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

➤ God did not adopt us into His family because we were so lovable, moral, ethical, religious, or spiritual. He did not adopt us because He was lonely, or because He needed anything (Acts 17:24-25). God’s sovereign determination to adopt (justify) sinners is based solely on His grace and love, according to His sovereign purpose and will, not on any attribute or virtue of the sinner. That which Jesus has by divine right – as the one and only Son of God (Heb.1:2; see Jn.3:35; 17:2; Ep) – we receive by divine grace, through Jesus Christ.

God chose us in Christ in order to bring us in the special and sacred relationship of being His children. As it is today so it was in biblical times, in that the legally adopted child (often orphaned or enslaved) had all the rights and privileges of any heir. Which is why those who are truly saved are “*heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*” (Rom.8:17).

♦ “*through Jesus Christ*” (vs.5)

➤ As we have seen repeatedly, salvation – by God’s predestined election – only happens “*through Jesus Christ*” (vs.5). It is only through Christ that a person can become holy and blameless. It is only through Christ that a person can become a part of God’s forever family. It is only through Christ that a person can be saved.

John 14:6 ~ “Jesus said ... ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” (Jn.3:18, 36)

Acts 4:12 ~ “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

➤ Again, everyone who has ever been saved and everyone who will ever be saved, is saved through Jesus Christ. Apart from Christ there is no forgiveness, no righteousness, no salvation.

♦ “*according to the purpose of His will*” (vs.5)

➤ Furthermore, God “*predestined us ... according to the purpose of his will*” (vs.5; *eudokia* [or pleasure] ... *thelēma* [or desire]). The believer’s salvation is according to God’s good pleasure (as opposed to apathy or malevolence), and according to His sovereign desire (as opposed to reluctance or obligation).

Eph 1:9-11 ~ “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ... ¹¹In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will”

➤ God does not need mankind’s permission to execute His will. He does not need to consult with His creation in order to find out what He should do (Rom.11:33-36). The world is not a democracy – it is God’s kingdom in which He sovereignly rules and reigns as Almighty God (Ps.2).

♦ “*to the praise of His glorious grace*” (vs.6)

➤ While God’s predestinate work in salvation was motivated by His love, for the purpose of our adoption, through the person and work of Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, and ultimately “*to the praise of his glorious grace*” (vs.6; or “to the praise of the glory of his grace”). God’s “glory” (*doxa*; “*glorious*”; used eight times in this epistle) refers to radiant splendor of His divine nature and attributes.

Or, to put it more simply, God's glory is honor or worship that God receives for being God. Everything God does is for His eternal and unmitigated glory.

Eph 1:12 ~ “so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.”

Eph 1:14 ~ “who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.”

1 Cor 1:27-31 ~ “But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

³⁰And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹so that, as it is written, ‘Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.’”

➤ In verse six, however, Paul is extoling God for *“His glorious grace”* (vs.6). That is, with regard to our salvation the attribute of God's grace – His unmerited favor – is especially acknowledged and honored. Every good thing that God does for us, every spiritual blessing we receive from Him, is an act of sheer grace. The ultimate goal of our salvation is not heaven; it is the glory of God. Heaven, forgiveness, holiness, etc., are all means in which God is glorified in our salvation. We ought to be preoccupied with the glory of God, and praise Him for His saving grace in our lives through Jesus Christ.

4. God has **BLESSED** us in Christ (vs.6)

➤ Here, we are back to where we began – *“Blessed be ... God ... who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing”* (vs.3) – as the chorus to a glorious praise song: *“with which he has blessed us in the Beloved”* (vs.6). Acting as a chorus in a worship song, this passage is bracketed by the fact that Christians are immensely and graciously *“blessed”* (*charitoō*) by God (which specifically notes the grace of God's blessings [note: *“blessed ... blessed ... blessing”* in vs.3 is *eulogētos ... eulogēō ... eulogia*]).

♦ *“in the Beloved”* (vs.6)

➤ Specifically, and uniquely, in this verse we read that we (as Christians) are *“blessed us in the Beloved”* (vs.6). The Greek word (verb) translated here *“beloved”* (*agapaō*) is elsewhere translated simply as “love (see Eph.2:4; 5:2, 25^{2x}, 28^{3x}, 33, 6:24). The phrase *“in the beloved”* is found only here in all of Scripture. The unique construction of this expression (*en ho agapaō*) denotes a close personal and loving relationship. It is very similar to God calling His Son *“This is my beloved Son”* (Matt.3:17; *agapētos*; adj.). Since believers are “in Christ” they are, like God's Son, a part of God's *“Beloved”*!

John 17:23-26 ~ “I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. ²⁴Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. ²⁵O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. ²⁶I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Conclusion

➤ This passage showcases four ways in which God has granted us salvation in Christ : 1) Blessed us, 2) Chosen us, 3) Predestined us, 4) Blessed us. Among other things, these verses reveal that God alone is worthy of praise and glory for our salvation (and our very lives). He is the Creator of all things and He is sovereign over all things – including the salvation of His children.

The greatest spiritual blessing that we have received as Christians – the greatest blessing that we could ever receive – is to be “in Christ.”