

GOSPEL of *Grace*
FELLOWSHIP

Ephesians 1:3-4

Safe in God's Providential Blessing

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March 18, 2018

God's Mighty Deeds Extolled

Ephesians 1:3 (ESV)
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

- Paul declares all believers blessed because of God's work in Christ
- See Psalm 115:1-3
- There is no secret curse to be uncovered by a shaman to achieve blessing

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Chosen in Christ From Eternity

Ephesians 1:4a (HCSB)
For He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world . . .

- "For" = Here this is causal (Arnold)
- "He chose" = God is the active agent
- "Us" = Believers which means both the individuals and the group they constitute
- "Before the foundation" is used of Christ in eternity (John 17:24; 1Peter 1:20)

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Holy and Blameless in Christ

Ephesians 1:4b (HCSB)

to be holy and blameless in His sight.

- "In love" belongs at the beginning of vs. 5
- Believers have been given holy and blameless status in Christ
- Pagans in Asia Minor followed rigorous ascetic practices to find freedom from the hostile powers that they feared
- Jews also feared hostile spiritual powers

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Implications and Applications

- Reject all shamanistic claims
- All truths about what God has done for us in Christ apply to all Christians
- Rigorous ascetic practices will not make anyone holy or blameless
- Do not allow human traditions to harden you against God's word

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God's Wisdom Is Revealed

Ephesians 3:10 (HCSB)

This is so God's multi-faceted wisdom may now be made known through the church to the rulers and authorities in the heavens.

- "The heavens" is the same word as in Ephesians 1:3 (ESV 'heavenly places')
- Saving Jews and Gentiles shows to the hostile powers God's wisdom in Christ's work
- God uses the church but He is the agent

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God Uses Christ Not Shamans

Ephesians 3:11 (HCSB)

This is according to His eternal purpose accomplished in the Messiah, Jesus our Lord.

- We did not come to our blessed status by interacting with wicked spirits
- Those who try shamanism will always be deceived and hopeless
- The wicked spirits have been in their realm for millennia and are master deceivers

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All Who Believe Are Blessed

Galatians 3:8, 9 (NET)

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the gospel to Abraham ahead of time, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you." So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham the believer.

- Blessing is relational not symptomatic
- We need to believe, not process the past!

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Do We Trust Man or God?

Jeremiah 17:5, 7 (ESV)

Thus says the Lord: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. . . . Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord."

- Trusting self or human wisdom is a curse
- Trusting God and His promises is a blessing

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Only God Makes Us Blameless

Colossians 2:18 (HCSB)

Let no one disqualify you, insisting on ascetic practices and the worship of angels, claiming access to a visionary realm and inflated without cause by his unspiritual mind.

- To have "access" the shamans taught rigorous, ascetic practices for the elite
- Recent discoveries from a temple north of Ephesus show what Paul likely addresses

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Human Traditions Are Not Binding

Mark 7:7, 8 (HCSB)

'They worship Me in vain, teaching as doctrines the commands of men.'
Disregarding the command of God, you keep the tradition of men.

- Jesus cited Isaiah 29:13
- Human traditions are not the commands of God whosever they are: Jewish, Pagan, or parochial 'Christian'

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The Gospel IS Binding

John 3:36 (ESV)

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

- There is a strong contrast between 'believes' and 'does not obey' (1Pet. 4:17)
- Believing in Christ is what it means to "practice the truth" and "come to the Light" in John 3:21

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