

All of Grace from our All-Sufficient Father Who Adopted Us (1:2-3)

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on 10-10-10

www.goldcountrybaptist.org

C. S. Lewis began a sermon *The Weight of Glory* with these words: [In Scripture] ‘if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.’¹

Russell Moore, professor, dean, and VP at Southern Seminary in KY tells a moving story that illustrates this dynamic:

‘When Maria and I first walked into the orphanage, where we were led to the boys the Russian courts had picked out for us to adopt, we almost vomited, in reaction to the stench and the squalor of the place. The boys were in cribs in the dark, lying in their own waste.

Leaving them at the end of each day was painful, but leaving them the final day, before going home to wait for the paperwork to go through, was the hardest thing either of us had ever done. Walking out of the room to prepare for the plane ride home, Maria and I could hear Maxim calling out for us, and falling down in his crib, convulsing in tears. Maria shook with tears, and I turned around to walk back into their room, just for a minute.

I placed my hand on both of their heads and said, knowing they couldn’t understand a word of my English, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” I don’t think I consciously intended to cite Jesus’ words to his disciples in John 14:18; it just seemed like the only thing worth saying at the time.

... We loved them. We claimed them. And it didn’t matter that for the next several weeks they’d still be called “Maxim” and “Sergei.” The nameplates hanging on the wall of their new room in a faraway country read “Benjamin” and “Timothy.” ...

When Maria and I at long last received the call that the legal process was over, and we returned to Russia to pick up our new sons, we found that their transition from orphanage to family was more difficult than we had supposed. We dressed the boys in outfits our parents had bought for them. My mother-in-law gathered some wildflowers growing between cracks in the pavement outside the orphanage.

We nodded our thanks to the orphanage personnel and walked out into the sunlight, to the terror of the two boys. They’d never seen the sun, and they’d never felt the wind. They had never heard the sound of a car door slamming or felt [what must have seemed] like they were being carried along at 100 miles an hour down a Russian road. I noticed that they were shaking, and reaching back to the orphanage in the distance ...

I whispered to Sergei, now Timothy, “That place is a pit! If only you knew what’s waiting for you: a home with a Mommy and a Daddy who love you, grandparents, and great-grandparents and cousins and playmates, and McDonald’s Happy Meals!” But all they knew was the orphanage. It was squalid, but they had no other reference point. It was *home*.

We knew the boys had acclimated to our home, that they trusted us, when they stopped hiding food in their high-chairs. They knew there would be another meal coming, and they wouldn’t have to fight for the scraps. This was the new normal.

They are now thoroughly Americanized, perhaps too much so, able to recognize the sound of a microwave *ding* from forty yards away. I still remember, though, those little hands reaching for the orphanage, and I see myself there ... [biblically speaking, as *spiritually adopted children of God* from a far worse off place spiritually, we] don't fully believe that our new Father will feed us, so we hang on to our scraps and long for the regimented schedules of the orphanage. And when our Father pushes us along to new tastes, we pout that he's not good to us ...'²

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the children of God in Ephesus, the heart of his prayer for all adopted spiritual siblings is in v. 18: He prays that the eyes of our heart would be opened, enlightened, to see and be satisfied in how good God the Father has been to us! Paul prays we would behold and be changed by the spiritual blessings the Father has lavished on us after He brought us from darkness into light, and from the squalor of sin to a seat at His own table, not for some little treat at the golden arches, but an eternal celebration feast in a heavenly city with streets made of gold!

We were not left as orphans. We've been called by a new Father and adopted, brought into His family, and Paul prays that calling would give us hope in v. 18. We don't need to recoil at where our Father takes us, even if we don't understand it at the time, we can trust Him. His children don't need to reach back to where they came from, as the children of Israel did while God was taking them to the Promised Land (or like the Galatians were doing with their old ways or like Lot's wife). Paul prays in v. 18 for God to reopen eyes of God's children to remember, if we've forgot, or to recognize for the first time, if we haven't before, *the riches of the glory of the inheritance* to us as sons of the King! Realize, rejoice!

"*Blessed be God the Father!*" we should all shout in v. 3!! It says He "*has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies*"! Every believer gets every spiritual blessing from God!

- verse 4 says He chose us, in v. 5 He predestined to adopt us
- verse 7 says He paid the price to buy us back (redemption), and it was a very costly price and sacrifice to make us sons
- verse 8 says our Father lavished on us from His riches (7b)
- verse 14 says our inheritance as His redeemed possession is secure and ours because His pledge is guaranteed by God

I'm not going to walk through all those phrases today. I just want to whet your appetite and I pray God will open the eyes of our hearts to see and savor and celebrate these spiritual blessings, and appreciate these blessings we've been given, and appropriate them.

Outline:

1. The Nature of our Blessings
2. The Source of our Blessings
3. Our Response to these Blessings

1. The Nature of our Blessings (spiritual and sufficient)

In v. 3, the root word "bless" is used 3x in 3 ways in my translation. "*Blessed be*" – In English this is spelled the same as the verb also in v. 3 "*who has blessed us*" but at the beginning of v. 1 in Greek it's not a past tense verb, it's actually an adjective, "*blessed be*" or "*blessed is.*"

If you were to look this up in Strong's concordance you'd see it's not the Greek word in the Beatitudes (*makarios*) for "blessed" happy people, the word "blessed" at the start of v. 3 is a word only used of God in the NT. It means *blessed* in the sense of worthy of praise, blessing who God is in worship. The Greek root is *euloge* that we get the word eulogy from. The very best things we ever say about the living God can never overstate or exaggerate.

Verse 3 then says our blessed God "*has blessed us...*"—that form of the verb *is used of God blessing humans*, not in the sense of praise, but in the sense of pouring out His kindness in provision, power, possessions, benefits. Then the third form of the word "bless" is used in v. 3: "*blessed us with every spiritual blessing ...*" (noun).

Blessed be God who has *blessed* us with every spiritual *blessing*.

- What's the key word repeated in v. 3? *Bless*
- Where are these blessings located? *in the heavenlies*
- Who at the end of v. 3 are all these blessings in? *in Christ*
- When do we receive them? (is v. 3 future tense or past?)
- What kind of blessings did we receive? *spiritual*
- How many blessings did we receive as Christians? *every*

Ironside: "People often ask me if I have obtained the 'second blessing' yet. Second blessing? I generally say: 'Why, I am somewhere up in the hundreds of thousands so far as that goes, if you refer to experience; but, *actually*, I obtained *every* blessing that God has for a redeemed sinner when I put my trust in the Lord"³

Listen, beloved, if you are a Christian here this morning, and you don't feel "blessed" – the eyes of your heart need to be opened to behold and be amazed by the riches of the glory of the inheritance you were given at salvation, that Paul begins to mention in v. 3, but that's not the end of the sentence. In the original language v. 3-14 is one long sentence! It's been called a "glorious run-on sentence."

Think of verse 3 as a launching pad that fires up and explodes with praise that propels Paul into the heights of worship and wonder, and it keeps climbing and climbing till v. 14, lifting us up higher and higher above this earth, till we're sent into orbit around God.

Jay Adams, in his *Christian Counselor's Commentary*, writes:

'Paul now launches forth on the longest sentence in the New Testament ... in which Paul speaks of blessings of every kind ... a significant truth to convey to a discouraged [person]. It took the longest sentence in the Greek New Testament to describe them all. Take him to this passage and read about all that **God has done for him** ... Complaining, downcast, depressed [people] need to be reminded of **all God has done for them** so that their hearts may be filled with praise and thanksgiving. Not all Christians will receive material blessings in this life. That they will is never promised. But spiritual blessings? Yes, of all sorts! ...[do you] deny it?...read on. The catalog of blessings that follows ought to evoke gratitude and thanksgiving from any true Christian. If he comprehends what he reads, he will see that God has prepared for and granted him all that he could ever possibly need'⁴ [it's all yours, all in Christ]

2. The Source of our Blessings (God in Christ)

Remember, Paul is writing from prison, satisfied with *all spiritual blessings* from an *All-Sufficient* Father who's *already* given *all* we need for life in salvation and in Scripture. Don't look elsewhere!

John MacArthur writes: 'Many Christians continually ask God for what He has already given. They pray for Him to give them [the Holy Spirit or] love, although they should know that "the love of God *has been poured out within our hearts* through the Holy Spirit *who was given to us*" (Rom. 5:5) ... [God promises His] "divine power *has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness*, through the true knowledge of Him who called us ..." (2 Pet. 1:3) [the issue is our knowledge of Him]. It is not that God *will* give us but that He has *already* given us "everything pertaining to life and godliness." He **has blessed** us already **with every spiritual blessing**. We are complete "in Him" (Col. 2:10).

Our resources in God are not simply promised; they are *possessed* [just because you don't utilize some of your possessions at your house or forgot them in your garage or storage isn't the fault of the one who gave them to you]. Every Christian *has* what Paul calls "the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:19). God cannot give us more than He has already given us in His Son. There is nothing more to receive. The believer's need, therefore, is *not to receive something more but to do something more with what he has*. [Look at Ephesians 2:6 for a moment] Our heavenly position and possession are so certain and secure that Paul speaks of God's having already "raised us up with Him, and *seated us with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus*" (Eph. 2:6) ...

Christians have a ... two-level existence—a dual citizenship. While we remain on earth we are citizens of earth. But in Christ our primary and infinitely more important citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20). Christ is our Lord and King, and we are citizens of His realm, **the heavenly places** [not "will be" – we *are now* citizens] ... When an American citizen travels to another country, he is every bit as much an American citizen as when he is in the United States. Whether he is in Africa, the Near East, Europe, Antarctica, or anywhere else outside his homeland, he is still completely an American citizen, with all the rights and privileges that such citizenship holds. As citizens of [heaven] Christians hold all the rights and privileges [and benefits] that citizenship grants.'⁵

We may be away from that home now while we travel, but our passport is stamped with the seal of God's Spirit (cf. v. 13b). The blessings of our heavenly citizenship are ours wherever we are, whether we recognize them or not, whether we invoke them or not (as Paul invoked his Roman citizenship on occasion in Acts, and it changed his circumstances). Paul wants citizens of heaven to know who we are and what we have, so it will change how we live. If we *actually believe it and receive it*, it changes everything! We need to invoke our citizenship in the sense of speaking of these blessings as Paul does through chap. 1, claiming the promises as our own by faith, reminding ourselves of what we truly are and have in Christ instead of listening to the lies of the world, our flesh, and the devil.

- We are citizens of heaven and every spiritual blessing there is available to us even on earth now, in and through Christ
- No matter what bad choices a child of God has made, God has chosen us for salvation (v. 4) and nothing changes that

- We are sons of the King now (v. 5), permanently adopted
- Every blessing the King gives to His natural Son (v. 6b “the Beloved” Jesus) is shared with His brothers and sisters as joint heirs, not because of anything wonderful in us, but because we are wonderfully now “*in Christ*” (key phrase).
- It’s not about us, it’s all about Christ, through Christ, and for the glory of Christ, which is good news for us *in Christ*

⁵ *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,* ⁶ *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.* ⁷ *In Him* [i.e., in Christ, the Beloved Son] *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace* ⁸ *which He lavished on us ...*

The riches are not just waiting for us *up there*... they are lavished on us *down here*. This bank is always open 24/7 offering unlimited withdrawals for life. There will never be a run on this bank and it doesn’t need government backing or bailouts, or FDIC-insurance, this is G-O-D-insured and backed by the wealth of the King of the Universe! Verse 13 in NIV says God Himself by the Holy Spirit “*is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance*”—that’s banking terms.

But the bank analogy breaks down in our day, because unlike our banks, you can always speak to a real person (3 of them, Father, Son, Spirit) at any time for assistance with your needs or questions without being on hold and waiting pushing buttons in a impersonal automated system, you can go right to the top any time and talk to the owner who also happens to be your dad (abba in NT language)!

And as a Father He loves to give good gifts to His children who ask, as Jesus taught, and as the end of chapter 3 says, He’s able to give exceedingly and abundantly beyond all we can ask or even think! And as v. 7-8 says He not only is able, and not only loves His children, He “lavishes on us” and it’s “according to His riches”

*When we have exhausted our store of endurance ...
When we reach the end of our hoarded resources
Our Father’s full giving is only begun.
His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth, and giveth, and giveth again.*

Our Father doesn’t hold back from us the spiritual resources and blessings we need. Any problem is us, holding on to our mud-pies in the slum as ignorant children, when infinite blessing is available to us, and has been given to us. We just don’t have eyes to see it or hands open to receive it, when we’re clutching things of this world.

Our All-Sufficient Father God has blessed all His children with all spiritual blessings, and it all flows from the first word in v.2: grace.

²*Grace to you and peace from God the Father ...*

This was not the normal way Greek letters began, and archaeology has found thousands of them. The word “peace” in Jewish writings or greetings (*shalom*) was common, but “*grace to you*” became a distinctly Christian greeting, in every letter Paul ever wrote.

This is no mere courtesy, or cliché. This is Christianity in a word. Without the first word in v. 2, you don’t have anything after it. The order of the sentence is important and intentional: without grace first, there is no peace (v. 2) in the true biblical sense of the word.

Any Jew can wish “peace,” any Gentile politician can try and make peace, any naïve postmodern idealist can write blogs about peace, any award-winning musician can give a “shout out to peace” or a “peace out” after performing, any pageant contestant can talk about “world peace,” any pacifist activist can make signs about urging peace with terrorists rather than war, any celebrity can talk about how if we only educated people more there could be peace, any psychiatrist can try and medicate peace to a troubled soul, but no human can ever have true *shalom* if they have not first received “*grace to you ... from God the Father and the Lord Jesus*”

Without grace, there would be no saints in Ephesus or anywhere (v. 1), no faithful / believers (v. 1b), we could have no peace (v. 2), no God as Father or Jesus as Lord (v. 2b), no spiritual blessings (v. 3), no election to salvation (v. 4), no predestination, no adoption (v. 5), no praise (v. 6), no redemption or forgiveness (v. 7), no wisdom or understanding (v. 8), etc. All we have is all of grace! Peace-giving grace, electing grace, adopting grace, redeeming grace, forgiving grace - all of grace from our all-sufficient Father!

So when you read v. 2, don’t read it just as sanctified salutations. It’s not Paul’s way to say, “what’s up, how you doin’”--it’s the very means of Christian living, the power that explains how we’re doing anything at all. It’s Paul’s first wish and prayer for every believer.

The most godly man of prayer I know, Dr. Rosscup (TMS), helped me see how “grace and peace” can be a pattern of prayer for others. ‘It requires grace for believers to experience the privileges Paul prays in [chapters 1-3] will make a difference in their lives ... [and a] God-given supply of grace [to] “walk” as in the last three chapters ... Peace also is strategic as an answer of prayer to help them ... Interceding for grace and peace points out principles of prayer at this point. [I’ve been trying to incorporate this week]

First, Paul puts this intercessory concern up front in ... his epistles, and makes it the first thing he mentions about prayer. We, also, can fittingly think of it promptly in our own alert interest to help other believers. God’s people stand in urgent practical need for new supplies of grace and peace at all times.

Second, cultivate a keen tuning with the members of the Godhead that keeps an open door for calling to the Lord in prayer for His [grace-giving] help to spiritual brothers and sisters ...

Third, coach the heart in a wake up call that relates grace and peace to specific facets of living for God that the epistles mention verse by verse. Then these verses near the outset of letters will not be what many reduce them to, hum-drum good wishes that one can rush past to get to key matters. Praying for grace and peace is highly relevant to being victors in the very facets of life the letters all go on later to describe.’⁶

6:23 *Peace be to the brethren ...*

6:24 *Grace be with all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ with incorruptible love [or “sincere” or “undying love”]*

He starts with “grace to you and peace” and ends with the same. From beginning to end, Paul wishes or prays God’s grace and peace. It’s the beginning and end of the book, and of our faith. From start to finish, all of life is all of grace from an all-sufficient Father God who gives us peace and all spiritual blessings we need.

3. Our Response to These Blessings

First response: Have you received this grace (v. 24)? Is it yours? How do you know if the first word in v. 24 is for you? Who is it addressed to? “*all who love our Lord*” ... do you? Do you love and long to more, “O for grace to love thee more”? If so, know it’s by His grace that you love Him, and your love evidences saving grace

The story is told of a woman speaking to Charles Spurgeon of her lack of assurance. She told him, “I love Christ, I’m just not so sure He loves me, a sinner.” And he shared with her how Scripture says no sinful corrupt heart without Christ truly loves Christ on its own. If you love Him, you can rest assured He loves you as His own. As 1 John 4:19 says “*We love Him because He first loved us.*” In fact, if you’re that concerned with your sin, that’s an evidence of grace. Back in Eph, 1:5 it’s God’s love that moved Him to adopt us, and we grow to love him. The doctrine of adoption (our study in weeks ahead) is one of the most crucial doctrines to understand salvation. It’s the heart of the gospel. Adoption involves every member of the Trinity, not just the Father. Divine adoption helps us grasp the love relationship and security we have as children of the living God.

But if you don’t love the Lord, if there is no affection in your heart to Him, you cannot assume you have His nature within you and you cannot presume you have His love as Father-to-child. As Paul writes the end of his letter to the Corinthians, he says “*if anyone does not love the Lord Jesus, he is accursed*” [judgment, damnation]. Love for the Lord is the basic mark of those in His family, and if you don’t love Him yet and die apart from Christ, you will experience eternal judgment instead of His eternal love.

But His loving arms are open to you today, in the hearing of the gospel, to all who turn from loving their sin to loving Him instead by faith. Grace by definition is unmerited, undeserved, unearned favor of God to sinners who know they have no merit or way to earn God’s love by anything they do, and who know they deserve to be accursed forever in hell, and yet they plead for mercy, not on the basis of anything they’ve done, but on what Christ did for them

Before the cross of Him who died, Behold, I prostrate fall;
Let every sin be crucified, Let Christ be all in all.
Anoint me with Thy heavenly grace, **Adopt me for Thine own**,
That I may see Thy glorious face, And worship at Thy throne.

Fall on your face in repentance and faith for God's adopting grace. If you come to Him this way, He will not cast you out. Jesus calls out from the pages of Scripture "Come!" The Father calls out "Come!" And the end of the Bible, the Holy Spirit and the bride, cry out "Come!" Come to the family, come to the feast, come to the Father through Jesus the Son by the grace and help of the Spirit

Leave your orphanage behind and your old ways and your old life and the mud-pies and miseries of sin, and come to the King's table. You need to believe, truly trust, the pleasures are far greater where you're going than where you've been, so renounce the unsatisfying things your hands are clutching so tightly now, whatever they are, and receive instead the infinite joy offered to you in Christ, as C.S. Lewis said, every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies, as Paul said.

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is **and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.*** [in v. 25 Moses chose to forego earthly blessings, chose not] ... *to enjoy **the passing pleasures of sin,** ²⁶ **considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.***

There's nothing wrong with looking to reward, but everything wrong with looking for it in this world's "passing pleasures of sin" or anything other than God or apart from God to satisfy our souls. There is a temporary enjoyment in earthly things, but infinite joy is offered us in Christ eternally and immeasurably richer reward in seeking Christ, who is better to suffer for than to have all the treasuries of Egypt. King Tut can't hold a candle to King Jesus.

The glory of Christ makes all silver and gold pale in comparison so we can truly say I'd rather have Jesus than to be the king of a vast domain or held in sin's sway, I'd rather have Jesus than anything. To be willing to give up all that you have and all that you are, that is the gospel according to Jesus, who Hebrews goes on to say, for the joy set before Him Jesus endured the cross so we don't have to endure that wrath. He sits at the right hand of the Father where we can be someday if we are in Christ by grace through faith alone.

And as Psalm 16:11 says, in God's presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasures forevermore. Do you believe that? It's impossible to please God without faith, and not just a faith that believes there is a God (which demons have, according to James, and even atheists have according to Romans 1 though they deny it). Hebrews says the faith that pleases God also believes God rewards those who seek Him. It comes to God for reward and all blessing, not as a means to our end, but as the chief end we are created for, to glorify God *and enjoy God* forever. Saving faith sees Christ as the reward and pursues joy in the Savior it loves, not the sin it now seeks to hate. Every spiritual blessing is an overflow of the fountain, not the fountain itself, but as you come to the waters, as Isaiah 55 says, without cost, without trying to pay for it, but just to enjoy it, not seeking earthly things that can't satisfy, just coming to the waters of life in Christ, and there is abundant satisfaction for your soul, and every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

When Ephesians 1:3 says God "has blessed us," that word *blessed* is especially used in the Bible for being blessed through the gospel.

Acts 3:25 uses the same Grk word *blessed*: God told Abraham ‘*IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.*’ [how has He blessed?] ... *God raised up [Christ] and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.*”

God has blessed all believers from all nations on earth in His turning them from their sins (repentance) to trust Christ by faith.

Puritan Phillip Doddridge’s hymn, “Room at the Gospel Feast”⁷

The King of Heav’n His table spreads ...
 [Grace] and peace to dying men, And endless life are giv’n,
 Through the rich blood that Jesus shed To raise our souls to Heav’n.
 Ye hungry poor, that long have strayed In sin’s dark mazes, come:
 Come from the hedges and highways And grace shall find you room.
 Millions of souls, in glory now, Were fed and feasted here;
 And millions more, still on the way, Around the [table] appear.
 Yet is His house and heart so large, That millions more may come;
 Nor could the wide assembling world O’erfill the spacious room.
 All things are ready, come away, No weak excuses frame;
 Crowd to your places at the feast; And bless the Founder’s Name.

The first application or response to any unbeliever present is *come!* There’s a seat at the King’s table for all sinners who come in faith. Paul in Gal. 3:8 says “*The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, “ALL THE NATIONS WILL BE BLESSED IN YOU.”*”⁹ *So then those who are of faith are blessed with Abraham, the believer.*

If you’re not yet a part of that family of faith, the only appropriate response for you is come, fall on your face, call on God’s grace. I can’t think of any greater appeal to come to the Savior than how those passages present Him. Respond today in faith, repent, receive grace.

But Ephesians 1:3 goes further than that. Not only do Gentile believers get it on the spiritual blessings promises to spiritual Israel so that we are blessed with Abraham and are sons of Abraham by faith – not only are we blessed with Abraham, we are blessed with Christ, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

The same word *bless* is in Mt. 25:34 (ESV) “*the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’*”

This is not the call of “come” to those not yet saved, this is the final “come” to those already blessed by the Father’s adoption, who will at the end of time when the kingdom comes, be called to come to receive their inheritance, the very kingdom itself that the Father “*prepared for you,*” an inheritance befitting a son of the King! Friends, the only appropriate response for us is the response we read at the beginning of Ephesians 1:3: “*Blessed be God!*” Praise the Lord, oh my soul, and forget none of His benefits!

God came to our orphanage. We had never seen the light of day and never would have if He hadn't come for us. God rescued us from our own waste, from a place that was a pit but we didn't know it, where all we knew was stench and darkness, captives to our cribs of sin, in a slum and place of squalor where we didn't know any better and didn't even want to leave at the time. But God came for us. He did not leave us as orphans. He chose us (v. 4), why us out of all the others, Paul doesn't say and I don't know.

God pre-determined to adopt us (v. 5), He placed His hand upon our heads, and put His grace upon our lives, and all we can do is praise the glory of His grace (v. 6). He paid in full to bring us into His household at great cost to Himself (v. 7)! The Father promises an inheritance to us and God guarantees what He pledges (v. 13-14). He not only lets us call Him "Father," He *is* our Father! He doesn't just treat us as sons, He has *made us* His sons, legally, judicially, and spiritually, as much as the Only Begotten Son, full joint heirs! *Blessed be God the Father* we should all shout in v. 3!

This heavenly Father loves us and lavishes on us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Let's appreciate the sufficiency of all that God is for us and all that He has given to us. Let's seek to appropriate all the blessings that we already have in Christ, and to celebrate them.

We're just on the dock in v. 3. Paul's about to launch into a big ocean of praise, so get your spiritual scuba gear ready next week, because it gets better and deeper. This is all just a warm-up ...

In the original Greek, vv. 3-14 are one long sentence; 202 words. It's the longest sentence in the Bible, if not one of the longest in all of Greek literature, if not one of the longest ever in any literature! It's a big sentence with big praise for a big God. Maybe the NT's greatest prose of praise, and Paul wrote it from prison! He launches into a seemingly never-ending heart-ascending worship that continuously climbs without pauses for breath or even punctuation!

J.P. Green's Literal Translation tries to bring it over to English: *Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens with Christ, even as He elected us in Him before the foundation of the world, for us to be holy and without blemish before Him in love, predestinating us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace in which He favored us in the One having been loved, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of [sins], according to the riches of His grace, which He caused to abound toward us in all wisdom and understanding, making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, for the administration of the fullness of the times to head up all things in Christ, both the things in the heavens, and the things on earth, in Him, in whom we also have been chosen to an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of the One working all things according to the counsel of His own will, for us to be to the praise of His glory, the ones who had previously trusted in Christ; in whom also you, hearing the Word of Truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also believing you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is an earnest of our inheritance, to the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.*

That's a breath-taking sentence! That's a potentially life-changing sentence, that Paul prays in v. 18 will be an eye-opening sentence, and a heart-enlightening and hope-giving sentence. It defies the normal conventions of grammar in describing the God who defies all categories in unattainable unexplainable uncontainable grace!

It's no surprise that scholars have a hard time agreeing on how to categorize it (hymn, poem, OT Jewish background vs. Hellenistic).

- One says Paul is writing "in a state of controlled ecstasy" and he calls this section of Ephesians "one infinitely long, heavy, and clumsy sentence, replete with dependent clauses, excurses, specifications, repetitions" but with distinctiveness and beauty.⁸
- Another says, "As a syntactical salmagundi, the marvelous spiral of Eph. 1:3-14 is probably without rival in Greek literature."⁹
- Another "At first we marvel at the wealth of his language: but soon we discover by the very repetition of the phrases which have arrested us, the poverty of all language when it comes to dealing with such topics as he has chosen. He seems to be swept along by his theme, hardly knowing whither it is taking him."¹⁰

John Stott: "Commentators have searched for metaphors vivid enough to convey the impact of this opening outburst of adoration.

- 'We enter this epistle through a magnificent gateway' ...
- [or] It is 'a golden chain' of many links, or 'a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colours'.
- William Hendriksen likens it to 'a snowball tumbling down a hill, picking up volume as it descends'
- [or another calls it] comparable to the overture of an opera which contains the successive melodies that are to follow'.
- [or it's] 'like the preliminary flight of the eagle, rising and wheeling round, as though for a while uncertain what direction in his boundless freedom he shall take'.

... all these metaphors in their different ways describe the impression of colour, movement and grandeur which the sentence makes on the reader's mind."¹¹

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us!

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses*, p. 1-2.

² Russell Moore, *Adopted for Life*, 25, 43-44, 50.

³ H. A. Ironside, cited at preceptaustin.org

⁴ Jay Adams, *Ephesians*, 67-68.

⁵ John MacArthur, *Ephesians*, 8-9, italics mine.

⁶ J. E. Rosscup (2008). *An Exposition on Prayer in the Bible: Igniting the Fuel to Flame Our Communication with God* (2198). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

⁷ In *Worthy is the Lamb: Puritan Poetry to Honor the Savior*, p. 127.

⁸ As cited by Morris, p. 13.

⁹ As cited by Andrew Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 11.

¹⁰ As cited by Kent Hughes, *Ephesians*, p. 270.

¹¹ John Stott, *God's new society : The message of Ephesians* (32). Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979.