
The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON IV : OPENING EULOGY PART ONE: THE ELECTIVE PURPOSE OF GOD THE FATHER (1:3-14)

“The Most Monstrous Sentence Conglomeration”

PRAISE AND PERPLEXITY — Vss 3-14 is one long sentence in the Greek which consists of 202 words. Comments about this range from the highest mountain peak to the lowest valley:

- One scholar who is quoted in several commentaries describes this as being ***“the most monstrous sentence conglomeration that he has ever found in the Greek language”*** [Eduard Norden]. *This is one of the most often repeated quotes among the commentators I have ever experienced.*
- O’Brien notes Norden’s comment in his commentary but also quotes C. Masson’s praise of Paul’s sentence: ***“one is struck by the fullness of its words, of its liturgical majesty and its perceptible rhythm from beginning to end.”*** [O’Brien, 90]
- Lincoln also quotes Norden and then adds these comments: Danker says, “As a syntactical salmagundi, ***the marvelous spiral of Eph 1:3-14 is probably without rival in Greek literature.***”
- “On the one hand, it has been criticized as a grammatically cumbersome sentence of 202 words, but, on the other hand, ***it has been praised for its fullness of words, liturgical majesty, and perceptible rhythm, and these verses which seem to defy structure are described as ‘a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights and shifting colours.’***” [Hoehner, 159]
- ***“I have yet to find a man who has thoroughly followed that sentence clear through and kept up the connection.*** The grammatical construction is exceedingly difficult, making a clear analysis very hard, because the apostle, like a Titan, piles mountains upon top of mountains in his thoughts. He is very economic in his use of periods.” [Carroll, 76]
- ***“In one sense the language is exalted and extravagant and yet, in another, the very repetition of phrases reveals its poverty and inadequacy to do justice to its subject — salvation on the grandest scale and broadest canvas. The flow of thought spans past, present, and future, and its reflection on God’s activity can be seen to have a trinitarian content.”*** [Lincoln, 43]
- ***“Says John Calvin, ‘The lofty terms in which he [Paul] extols the grace of God toward the Ephesians, are intended to rouse their hearts to gratitude, to set them all on flame, to fill them even to overflowing with this disposition.’*** [Hendriksen, 72]
- “Repetition and redundancy are of the essence of liturgy and here the repetition of certain words and phrases, the repeated genitives, and the collective of synonyms not only have the effect of intensifying the force of the concepts involved but also serve to provide the sentence with a certain rhythm. In addition the succession of long syllables in a number of places periodically slows down the flow of words so that a chantlike effect is produced as the eulogy is spoken.” [Lincoln, 12]

THE PERICOPE HAS DEFINITE PURPOSE BUT THERE IS NO AGREEMENT AS TO ITS STRUCTURE —

“Although there have been many efforts to determine the form and structure of the paragraph, no general agreement has been reached. J. T. Sanders’ verdict, ‘every attempt to provide a strophic structure for Eph 1.3-14 has failed’, still holds true, even after further attempts have been made since he wrote. This is not to suggest, however, that there is no plan to the pericope. The eulogy has been carefully constructed, as can be seen from v. 3 where ‘bless’ appears three times. There are recurring phrases, such as ‘according to the good pleasure of his will’ (vv. 5, 9, 11) and ‘to the praise of his glory’ (vv. 6, 12, 14), which appears after the work of Father, Son, and Spirit. The prepositions ‘in’ (especially the phrase ‘in Christ’ and its equivalents) and ‘according to’ are frequently used. Three important participles — ‘having blessed’ (v. 3), ‘having predestined’ (v. 5), and ‘having made known’ (v. 9) — represent significant steps in the movement of the paragraph. There is a further progression within the passage, from the declaration of praise to God (v. 3) to a description of his great purpose and its outworking (vv. 4-10), which are the grounds for such exultation, on to its application to the lives of the readers, who are Jewish and Gentile believers (vv. 11-14).” [O’Brien, 90f] ***“The attempt to precisely decipher the divisions as a liturgical hymn has proven impossible. Though the grammatical structure is at times difficult to determine, all this is understandable when considered in the context of praise and prayer. However, this assumes that this passage had to fit into some liturgical mold. This seems to be reading too much into this text. Rather, it is more likely to be a spontaneous utterance of praise to God.*** It is noticeable in the present day that when one offers extemporaneous praise and / or prayer, often long complicated sentences with many subordinate clauses and phrases are used. This is not to say that there is an absence of structure, but rather there is the absence of a neatly divisible structure that can be found in a liturgical hymn or recitation that was carefully thought out and written down. This does not mean there is no plan. Certainly, this eulogy shows development, for one sees that the refrain ‘to the praise of his glory’ (vv. 6, 12, 14) is given after discussing each person of the Trinity in the order of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Also, there is progression from a pronouncement of praise to God (v. 3), to a description of God’s great plan and action (vv. 4-12), and finally to its application to the believers at Ephesus (vv. 13-14). Therefore, the abundance of descriptive words of God’s purpose, plan, and action in a long

complicated sentence structure is entirely fitting within the scope of a eulogy. The abundance of words does not denote verbosity, but instead it is an attempt to use a multiplicity of words to praise God for his supernatural plan and acts that are almost beyond description. Finally, *though it is Paul's praise of God's goodness to him, it also serves as a model to encourage the Ephesian believers to offer praise to God, for believers then and now need to acknowledge the many blessings bestowed by him.*" [Hoehner, 159] Here are some of the ways different commentators divide up this pericope:

- after the doxology in v. 3, it is divided into three sections around the three Persons of the Trinity: God the Father (vv. 4-6), God the Son (vv. 7-12) and God the Holy Spirit (vv. 13-14).
- a doxology surrounding three Greek words ("having chosen" in vv. 3-4, "having predestinated" in vv. 5-8, and "having made known" in vv. 9-14) with two minor subdivisions surrounding the words "in whom" in vv. 11 and 13
- a doxology in three sections: vv. 3-6, vv. 7-10, and vv. 11-14, with each section having its own two portions
- a poem or hymnic structure of four parts: vv. 3-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-14.
- a hymn with an introductory strophe of v. 3, followed by three strophes which also each are further sub-divided: vv. 4-6, vv. 7-12, and vv. 13-14.
- basing his work on ancient Greek meter and music, one scholar counts the words and syllables and after the heading of v. 3a, he divides it into two major parts (above: God's work in vv. 3b-10 and below: believer's experience in vv. 11-14), with two strophes of 60 words and 136 syllables each in the first section; the second of two strophes of 40 words each; at the end of each strophe he has a refrain
- one scholar believes the organizing principle of the eulogy is the phrase "in Christ" and divides it into three parts: benediction in vs. 3, vv. 4-12 (subdivided into vv. 4-6, 7-10, and 11-12), and vv. 13-14.
- one scholar divides it according to the formal aspects of linguistic analysis, making six divisions of two verses each (vv. 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, and 13-14)
- some believe the eulogy divides into two parts: the plan (vv. 3-6a) and the purpose (vv. 9b-14) with vv. 6b-9a being added from Colossians

A HYMN? ... A PROLOGUE? ... AN EULOGY? — At the beginning of the 20th century it was common to consider these verses as a **hymn**, dividing the section according to Greek meter or rhyme. "Innitzer appears to have been the first to divide the passage into strophes according to the rules of classical Greek meter. He found three strophes (vv. 3-6; 7-12; and 13, 14) which treated God, Christ, and the Spirit respectively and the whole was to be considered 'a disguised hymn, a song of praise in the simple clothing of artistic prose.'" [Lincoln, 13] In the mid-20th century some scholars began to depart from the hymn basis and considered these verses as a **prologue** that summarizes the whole epistle, an **euology** born out of a Semitic background. Some point out that the language and style of Ephesians has evidence of Semitic influence from Qumran literature and that the eulogy of 1:3-14 is the typical Hebrew sentence structure of the Qumran texts. "It is thought that although the Qumran texts and Ephesians are independent of one another, they both go back to a common tradition that has their basis in the OT. Thomson depicts 1:3-10 as a form of a Jewish *berakah* with a chiasmic pattern:

intro (v. 3)
 A (v. 4)
 B (v. 5)
 C (v. 6)
 D (v. 7a,b)
 C' (vv. 7c-8)
 B' (v. 9a,b)
 A' (vv. 9c-10)

Eulogy means "praise, blessing" and comes from the Greek word εὐλογέω [eulogeō] which is often used to translate the Hebrew "berakah."

Verses 11-14 are closely joined to the previous verses but are not chiasmic in structure. Van Roon shows that the characteristics of this eulogy have affinities with thought-rhyming of OT Hebrew poetry and yet are in keeping with the environment of the Jewish-Hellenistic style of the first century. *Robinson argues that it is not uncommon in both canonical and noncanonical Jewish literature to have a eulogy before the intercessory prayer. Here the eulogy is followed first by thanksgiving (vv. 15-16) and then intercession (vv. 17-19). Hence, it seems that Paul is expressing praise that is consistent with the Jewish-Hellenistic style of his day, which has its roots in the OT.*" [Hoehner, 158] Others believe it to be a doxology, a liturgy with Semitic influence, a mystery, a baptismal praise, an eulogy, a berakah, or a Christological hymn, among other suggestions.

THE HEBREW "BERAKAH" — "The earliest and simplest form of a *berakah* or eulogy, an example of 'declarative praise' ... was a single sentence in which an individual responded joyfully to God's deliverance or provision (Gen 14:20; 24:27). Later it came to be associated with the cult and Israel's worship (1 Kings 8:15, 56). Finally, in a developed and liturgically fuller form the *berakah* provided the doxological conclusions to the books of the Psalter (Ps 41:13; 72:19-20, etc.). It remained dominant in rabbinic Judaism (cf. the Eighteen Benedictions of the synagogue service) and the Qumran literature. Along with its roots in the Old Testament (and Judaism), the specifically Christian dimension of the eulogy appears, first, in the way in which the God of Israel is described: he is praised as the Father of our Lord Jesus (v. 3)... There appears to be no precedent outside the New Testament for a blessing introducing a letter. (The letter of Hiram to Solomon in 2 Chron 2:11,12 contains a blessing, but it was

independent prior to the letter, as 1 Kings 5:21 shows.)” [O’Brien, 89]

Berakah Formula — v. 3a	<i>Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,</i>
Ia — v. 3b	<i>who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ</i>
Ib — v. 4	<i>According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:</i>
IIa — vv. 5,6	<i>Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.</i>
IIb — vv. 7,8	<i>In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;</i>
IIIa — vv. 9,10	<i>Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:</i>
IIIb — vv. 11,12	<i>In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: that we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.</i>
IV additional “in who” statement addressing recipients — vv. 13,14	<i>In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: In whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.</i>

HOW WE WILL CONSIDER THIS SENTENCE — Even though there is lack of agreement on how this sentence should be divided, the division I prefer and the one we will be using for our study is as follows:

Greeting

¹ Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God,

To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

God the Father

³ 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 love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption 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.

God the Son

⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹ In 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, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

God the Holy Spirit

¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Introduction to the Eulogy (1:3)

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: (KJV)

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (NIV)

Blessed [is] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who did bless us in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, (Young's Literal Translation)

“This verse marks not only the introduction but also the main sentence of the eulogy. It is in essence a summary of the whole eulogy.” [Hoehner, 162] It is normal for Paul to have intro thanksgiving after greetings, but in Ephesians Paul gives thanksgiving in v. 15 after the eulogy. In 2 Cor 1:3-4 the eulogy takes the place of the thanksgiving. The only other NT epistle that has a eulogy following the greetings is 1 Pet 1:3-12.

blessed — *Εὐλογητός* [*eulogētos*] verbal adjective, appearing 99x in LXX from the Hebrew “berakhah”, meaning “blessed” in the sense of *someone deserving appreciation, honor, and praise*. Used 1x to bless a thing (“wisdom” in 1 Sam 25:33), a few times to bless people (e.g., Deut 28:6; 33:24), but the predominant use is to bless God (e.g., Gen 9:26; 14:20; Ex 18:10; and so on). God is blessed for:

- His care for mankind (Pss 68:19, 35; 72:18; 119:12; 144:1; Zech 11:5)
- His provision (Ruth 4:14; 1 Kings 1:48; 5:7; 8:56; 1 Chron 29:10; 2 Chron 2:12)
- His response to prayer (Gen 24:27; 1 Kings 8:15; Pss 28:6; 66:20)
- His deliverance from enemies (Gen 14:20; Exod 18:10; 2 Sam 18:28; Pss 41:13; 124:6)
- His deliverance from evil (1 Sam 25:32, 39)
- for who God is (Pss 72:19; 89:52; 106:48; 135:21)

Note while God is sometimes “blessed” for who He is, the blessing is usually tied to something He had done for His people. This is not a wish, “Blessed be God,” but rather a declaration, “Blessed is God.”

This word is used 8x in the NT and always in reference to God. It was used at Jesus’ trial when He was asked, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mark 14:61) *It would often be used by the Jews to avoid using the name of God, and often connected with “the Holy One,” thus addressing God as “the Holy One, Blessed is He.”* Zechariah blessed God for the promised salvation from sin at the circumcision of John the Baptist (Luke 1:68). Three times it is said God is one who is (to be) blessed “forever” (Rom 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor 11:31). The only other times this word is used is as an introduction to a eulogy (2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3), with the exact same wording being used in each instance.

the God and Father — *ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ* [*ho theos kai patēr*] frequently used: Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; 11:31; Col 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3. This term for God was rarely used in the OT (15 times out of 1448 occurrences), it is the predominant use in the NT (245x out of 413 occurrences).

of our Lord Jesus Christ — *τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* [*tou kuriou hēmōn Iēsou Christou*] This could be understood either as “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” or as “*Blessed be God, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” The differences between the two are minor. Four things are here declared:

- *His personal relationship to the believer: “our Lord”*
- *His name: “Jesus”*
- *His Lordship: “Jesus is Lord” was an early confession of the church; cf. Acts 2:36; 8:16; 10:36; 11:17; 19:5; Rom 10:9; 14:9; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 4:5; Phil 2:11.*
- *His title: “Christ,” the promised Jewish Messiah who would bring salvation*

who has blessed us — *ὁ εὐλογήσας ἡμᾶς* [*ho eulogēsas hēmas*] *The first reason given for God to be praised is because He has blessed us.* Blessed = *eulogēsas*, form of same word as “*blessed is God the Father...*”. *In the NT it is used 42x in several different ways. The one which best fits this context is God providing the object with benefits.* “As Mary was the object of God’s gracious provision of being chosen to bear Jesus (Luke 1:28, 42), so believers today are the object of God’s blessing, enrichment, or provision of benefits.... [The word here] seems to summarize the activity of God and gives a causal idea. The believers bless God who has blessed them, or the believers praise God because he has benefitted them.” [Hoehner, 166] Paul then continues with the verse to explain the manners in which God has blessed the believer.

DIFFERENT WAYS IN WHICH “BLESS” IS USED — “[W]hen God is the object of a person’s blessings, it has the idea of ‘praise’ and when a person is the object of God’s blessings, it has the idea of ‘happiness, success, an increase of earthly possessions’ (e.g., Gen 27:4, 33, 34; 49:28; Pss 5:12; 65:12; 67:7-8; Hag 2:19). When one petitions God to bless someone (e.g., Num 6:23, 24, 27; Pss 28:9; 67:2) it means that he petitions God to grant success to that person. It is the opposite of curse, which means to be exposed to destruction (cf. Lev 26; Deut 27-28). Therefore, *to be blessed by God means to receive benefits from God in the sense of possessions, prosperity, or power.*” [Hoehner, 165f] “In the typical Old Testament *berakoth* the name of God is followed by a relative pronoun and a participle clause which gives the reasons for praising God: ‘Blessed be the LORD, the God

of Israel, who alone does wondrous things' (Ps 72:18). The same construction is followed in the New Testament eulogies (2 Cor 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3), and here the ground for blessing God is similarly expressed by a participial clause: 'who has blessed us.' As we have noted, *there is a deliberate play on words, for three terms from the same stem are compactly woven together in this short verse: 'Blessed by God, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.'*" [O'Brien, 94f]

with every spiritual blessing — ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ πνευματικῇ [en pasē eulogia pneumatikē] **Every** = shows the quantity; it could be translated "all" but is here preferably translated as "every." **Blessing** = eulogia is yet another form of our same word eulogy, having here the sense "obtaining benefits." These benefits are what Paul proceeds to enumerate in vv. 4-14.

SPIRITUAL = HAVING ITS SOURCE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT — **Spiritual** = that which pertains to the things of the Spirit of God and is supernatural, having its source in God. It is contrasted with that which is natural, finding its source in earthly human beings or things. *"The blessing consists of God's saving activity in Christ and this fullness of divine blessing can be described as 'spiritual,' not because it belongs to a person's inner, hidden life but because it is bound up with the Holy Spirit.* This sense of 'spiritual,' as resulting from the presence and work of the Spirit, is to be found in 5:19 (cf. also Col 1:9; 3:16), and the last two verses of the eulogy, vv. 13, 14, indicate that present appropriation of the blessing of the inheritance occurs through participation in the Spirit." [Lincoln, 19f] "Everything that Christians have received through God's saving act in Christ is comprehensively summarized in the expression *every spiritual blessing.* Here the adjective *spiritual* means 'pertaining to or belonging to the Spirit', and thus 'spiritual blessings' signify those which 'properly pertain to the life of the Spirit.'" [O'Brien, 95] *"Therefore, 'spiritual benefits' have their source in the Spirit of God, are supernatural, and are applicable at the present time to believers who are on earth. The spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:1; 14:1; Rom 1:11), wisdom (Col 1:9), and spiritual persons (Gal 6:1) are to aid the believer to function on this earth in the present time. For a believer to live effectively in society, he or she needs benefits that have their source in God. So God has blessed the believer with every spiritual benefit necessary for his or her spiritual well-being."* [Hoehner, 168]

THE PRINCIPLE OF APPROPRIATION — "[T]hough spiritual benefits have been given, believers need to appropriate them. An analogy of this is God's promise to Joshua (1:3) that every place in the Promised Land on which he places his foot has already been given to him in accordance with God's promise to Moses. *Although it had been given, it was not a reality until Joshua placed his foot on it. As it would have been presumptuous for Joshua to pray for the land that had been given to him, so is it likewise presumptuous for the believer to ask for the spiritual benefits already given to him or her.* The only reason Israel did not obtain the land in Ai (Josh 7) was because there was sin in the camp, not because they did not pray. In fact, the first time Joshua prayed was after the defeat at Ai and God told him to stop praying and deal with the sin that caused the defeat (Josh 7). *The reason the believer does not receive spiritual benefits is not because God is in some way stingy and he or she must plead for them, but because believers are not appropriating by faith what God has already bestowed in their behalf. The problem is not with God but with the believer.*" [Hoehner, 172] *"Many Christians continually ask God for what He has already given. They pray for Him to give them more 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). They pray for peace, although Jesus said, 'Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you' (John 14:27). They pray for happiness and joy, although Jesus said, 'These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full' (John 15:11). They ask God for strength, although His Word tells them that they 'can do all things through Him who strengthens' them (Phil 4:13). God's 'divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence' (2 Pet 1:3). 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. 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.*" [MacArthur, 8] Cp. Phil 2:12, *"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling."**

Imagine Joshua standing on the banks of the Jordan prior to entering Canaan, not moving but just praying, *"Lord, give us this land we beseech Thee! ... O Lord, come and bless Your people with Your land! ... Lord, move and give us the land, for Your honor and glory!"* What God-honoring and God-dependent prayers ... yet they would have been sinful prayers! *God had already given them the land, there was no need for them to pray for that; rather now it was up to them to appropriate by faith that which the Lord had given them!*