

with God is founded upon His declaration that we never again need to fear being condemned by Him for our sin, for Yeshua Himself is our peace (Eph 2:14) because those who are saved by His grace have died with Yeshua and risen again with Him to life eternal.

This peace, then, of which Paul speaks, is likewise a gift, for it is “peace from God our Father and the Lord Yeshua Messiah.” There is no greater gift that a person can have than to know that he or she has unending peace with God and never needs to fear being condemned or banished from His presence. Thus, Paul throughout this epistle seeks to help his readers (including us) to experience in greater measure the realities of God’s grace in Yeshua and the peace that this brings into one’s life.

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah,

It is Paul’s normal practice in his epistles to include an introductory thanksgiving after greeting the recipients of the letter, followed by a giving of praise and thanksgiving to God. In Ephesians, however, he changes the order. Following the opening in which he identifies himself and those to whom the letter is addressed, he pens a hymn of praise to God for what He has done for those who are believers in Yeshua. This “hymn of praise” comprises vv. 3–14 which in the Greek comprises a single, long sentence made up of 202 words! Scholars have offered many proposals for understanding the structure and overall message of this long doxology.¹ But the most important thing to recognize is that in this opening hymn of praise, Paul is setting forth the foundational truths of God’s saving work on behalf of His people who are kept eternally by God’s omnipotent grace and promises, made known in the work of Yeshua, and applied by the power of the Ruach HaKodesh.

It is interesting to note that the opening doxology (vv. 3–14) clearly is focused upon the three persons of the Godhead: God the Father, (vv. 4–6); God the Son (vv. 7–12); and God the Spirit (vv. 13–14). Some have suggested that Paul specifically intended the structure of this opening section to emphasize the unified work of Father, Son, and Spirit in accomplishing eternal salvation for His people.

The word that characterizes the opening doxology (vv. 3–14) is

¹ See Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary*, pp. 153–161.

εὐλογέω (*eulogeō*), “to praise, speak well of, extol”¹ along with its cognate noun εὐλογία (*eulogia*), “a blessing, an act of praise, a eulogy” and verbal adjective, εὐλογητός (*eulogētos*), “to be blessed, praised, spoken well of.” Thus Paul opens his epistle by glorying in the greatness of God as made known in His grace to sinners and the bounty of blessings He has bestowed upon all those He would save and bring into His family.

The lofty terms in which he 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 thought. They who perceive in themselves discoveries of the Divine goodness, so full and absolutely perfect, and who make them the subject of earnest meditation, will never embrace new doctrines, by which the very grace which they feel so powerfully in themselves is thrown into the shade.²

It is when we, as believers in Yeshua, have come to know and understand the infinite riches of God’s grace made secure to us in the unspeakable gift of salvation, that our faith is strengthened against anyone or anything that would seek to undo our full confidence in God’s promises. And as we grow in our understanding of what God has done for us in the gift of salvation, we are moved more and more to make our lives an anthem of praise in our thoughts, our speech, and our actions.

The Greek in v. 3 does not include the verb “to be” in the opening line “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah,” so there is a question whether Paul is writing a statement of fact, “the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah is blessed,” or whether Paul is exhorting his readers to engage in praise for God’s greatness, “May the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah be blessed!” While both emphases are true and undoubtedly within the scope of Paul’s words here, it seems very likely that he is expressing in this opening line a common form of a *berachah*, apparently used in opening lines of synagogue prayers in Paul’s day, beginning with something akin to בָּרַךְ אֶתְּהָ אֲדֹנָי, *baruch ‘atah Adonai*.³ We also find a similar pattern of blessings used by the Qumran society, which gives evidence of its

1 BDAG, “εὐλογέω,” p. 408.

2 Calvin, *Ephesians*, p. 196.

3 See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, pp. 157–58; F. F. Bruce, *Ephesians*, p. 252; Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Baylor Univ Press, 2009), p. 5.

usage in the pre-destruction era.¹ Such *berachot* (blessings) followed a pattern already found in the Tanach. For example:

Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, Who alone works wonders. : בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל עֹשֶׂה נִפְלְאוֹת לְבִדּוֹ: (Ps 72:18)

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, From everlasting even to everlasting. And let all the people say, "Amen." Praise the LORD!

: בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן־הָעוֹלָם וְעַד הָעוֹלָם וְאָמַר כָּל־הָעָם אָמֵן הַלְלוּ־יָהּ: (Ps 106:48)

Thus, Paul begins Ephesians with a song of praise for God's blessings which form the very foundation for the believer's life in Messiah. A life more and more characterized by praise and thanksgiving is the inevitable fruit of the believer's life as the knowledge and understanding of God's grace in Yeshua increases.

...*the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah* – The words “the God and Father” (ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατήρ) follow a grammatical structure known as the Granville Sharp rule, which means that the two words, “God” and “Father” refer to the same “person” of the Godhead. Thus, the meaning of the phrase is “the God *Who is* Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah.” It appears that in the early Centuries some may have used the concept of God being “the Father of Yeshua” to argue against Yeshua's eternal divine nature. This might explain why the Peshitta changed the wording to read “Blessed be God our Father, *and* the Lord Yeshua Messiah...”²

But this phrase is common in Paul (Rom 15:6; 2 Cor 1:3; Eph 1:3; Col 1:3) and we find it used by Peter as well (1Pet 1:3). Moreover, Paul makes it clear that God the Father is likewise the Father of Yeshua in v. 17 of this same chapter:

...do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. (Eph 1:16–17)

1 Hoehner, *Ibid.*, p. 157-58, noting Karl Georg Kuhn, “The Epistle to the Ephesians in the Light of Qumran Texts,” in *Paul and Qumran: Studies in New Testament Exegesis*, ed. and trans. Jerome Murphy-O’Conner (Priory Press, 1968), 116–20.

2 אֱלֹהֵי אָבוּהֵי דַמְרִין יֵשׁוּעַ מְשִׁיחָא

John makes the same claim in Rev 1:6.

and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father — to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Rev 1:6)

In this verse the subject is Yeshua, for John is extolling His work of making us to be a kingdom and priests “to His God and Father,” clearly referring to God the Father as being the Father of Yeshua.

What are we to learn, then, from the repeated biblical phrase that describes God the Father as the Father of Yeshua? There are two emphases which we derive from this phrase. First, that the Father is “the God...of Yeshua Messiah” emphasizes the incarnation, for in becoming man, Yeshua humbled Himself to live as a man Who was dependent upon the Father and Who prayed to the Father to receive direction and help. Though Yeshua never ceased being the divine and eternal Son, He nonetheless voluntarily set aside the use of some of His divine attributes in order to live in this world as fully human. This is Paul’s meaning in Phil 2:6–8.

...although He *always* existed¹ in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:6–8)

Second, the eternal divine nature of Yeshua is emphasized for the obvious reason that a son shares the very nature of his father. Thus the title “Son of God” identifies Yeshua as God in the flesh, without beginning and without end. Moreover, that Yeshua is the Son of God also emphasizes the unique relationship that He has with the Father. He made this clear when He taught:

All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matt 11:27)

When Yeshua stated “nor does anyone know the Father except the Son,” He is proclaiming that He has an eternal, uninterrupted fellowship

1 The present active participle ὑπάρχων carries the sense of an on-going reality, thus “always existed.”

with the Father, meaning He is one with the Father in all of the divine attributes.¹

our Lord Yeshua Messiah – Here, in the opening of the epistle, Paul refers to Yeshua with all three titles: Lord, Yeshua, Messiah.²

- (1) **Lord** emphasizes His relationship to the believer: He is Lord, that is, the One the believer worships, obeys, honors, and seeks to be more and more like Him.
- (2) **Yeshua** is His name as the incarnate One and identifies Him as “Savior,” from the Hebrew verb *יָשָׁא* (*yāshaʿ*), “to save from danger, help, rescue,” and its corresponding noun *יְשׁוּעָה* (*yeshūah*), “help, assist, salvation.” “She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save (*yāshaʿ*) His people from their sins.” (Matt 1:21)
- (3) **Messiah** means “one who has been anointed,” *מָשִׁיחַ*, *mashiach*, and identifies Yeshua as the Messiah Whom the prophets of Israel foresaw and wrote about, the One promised by God beginning with His words to the enemy in the garden: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise Him on the heel.” (Gen 3:15)
This therefore also identifies Yeshua as the King and the Priest, for the priests as well as the kings of Israel were anointed (e.g., Exod 29:29; 1 Sam 9:16; 2 Sam 5:3)

... *Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing* – God is blessed and is to be worshiped and praised because of Who He is, i.e., the Creator and Ruler of the universe, but the greatest impetus for blessing God

1 For further study on the title “Son of God,” see my *The Messiah: An Introduction to Christology* (TorahResource, 2006), pp. 69–74.

2 “Lord Yeshua Messiah” is found six times in Ephesians: Eph 1:2–3, 17; 5:20; 6:23–24. “Messiah Yeshua” is found ten times: Eph 1:1; 2:6–7, 10, 13, 20; 3:1, 6, 11, 21. “Yeshua Messiah” (without “Lord”) is found once: 1:5. “Messiah” (without “Lord” or “Yeshua”) is found 27 times (Eph 1:3, 10, 12, 20; 2:6, 12–13; 3:4, 8, 17, 19; 4:12–13, 15, 20, 32; 5:2, 5, 14, 21, 23–25, 29, 32; 6:5–6). “Yeshua” (without “Lord” or “Messiah”) is found once: 4:21. Whether or not Paul intends to emphasize a specific aspect of Yeshua’s person and/or work by choosing a different combination of His Names/ Titles can only be determined by the context where each name or combination of names is used.

is that He has “blessed us with every spiritual blessing” (ὁ εὐλογῆσας ἡμᾶς ἐν πάσῃ εὐλογίᾳ). God is to be especially praised by those He has brought into His family because He has bestowed upon them blessings in abundance. As recipients of His undeserved love and favor, that is, His grace, we have been changed and made new so that our heart’s desire is to honor, praise, and worship Him for all that He has done for us. Through the wisdom gleaned from the Scriptures, and through the work of the Ruach in opening our hearts and minds to know the mind of Messiah, we are able to know and affirm that God is the source of all that is good.

Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. (James 1:17)

Thus, when Paul writes that we have been blessed with “every spiritual blessing,” he means that each blessing we have in life is that which God has given. This is why we can affirm the words of Paul in his epistle to the Romans:

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (Rom 8:28)

In describing God’s blessings as “spiritual” (πνευματικός, *pneumatikos*), some have understood this to describe “non-physical” as distinct from “material” blessings.¹ Note Westcott’s comment on this verse:

the temporal blessings of the Old Covenant are contrasted by implication with the spiritual blessings of the New.²

But the Greek word πνευματικός, *pneumatikos*

in the N.T. always implies the working of the Holy Spirit, never bearing merely our modern inaccurate sense of spiritual as opposed to bodily.³

1 E.g., Hendrickson, *Ephesians*, p. 73f; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 167;

2 Westcott, *Ephesians*, p. 7.

3 Henry Alford, “ΠΡΟΣ ΕΦΕΣΙΟΥΣ” in *The Greek Testament*, 4 vols. (Moody Press, 1958), 3.70.

Indeed, *πνευματικός, pneumatikos* is found 26 times in the Apostolic Scriptures, and if one takes notice of the wider context in each instance, it is clear that the definition of “spiritual” is that which is the work of the Spirit in the life of the believer, whether relating to the physical or non-physical realms of our existence. When Paul writes “For we know that the Torah is spiritual (*πνευματικός, pneumatikos*), but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.” (Rom 7:14), he is contrasting life apart from the Spirit as contrasted to the Torah which is used by the Spirit both to point out what sin is as well as to reveal God’s will to those who are His children.

The important fact to remember is this: every good gift and blessing, whether of the physical or non-physical realms, comes from God and He is therefore to be praise, blessed and honored as the source of all that is good.

...*in the heavenly places in Messiah* – The blessings that God has given to those He has saved are said to be “in the heavenly places” (*ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις*). This same phrase is found four more times and is unique to the Epistle to the Ephesians:

which He brought about in Messiah, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (Eph 1:20)

and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Messiah Yeshua, (Eph 2:6)

so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the *ekklisia* to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places. (Eph 3:10)

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Eph 6:12)

The point Paul is making in all of these verses is that ultimately our lives are bound up with the work of Yeshua, Who is seated at the right hand of the Father as our King and Who “always lives to make intercession for us” as our heavenly High Priest. Thus, every blessing which comes to us does so through the agency of the Ruach HaKodesh Who brings about what our Messiah Yeshua has determined in accordance with the will of the Father. The sovereign will of God and thus the blessings He has decreed for His people emanate from the throne

of God which is “in the heavenly places.” And in the realm of divine salvation of sinners, all is based upon the work of Yeshua in His death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, so that He would have “first place in everything” (Col. 1:18). Only those who are “in Messiah” receive the spiritual blessings which He has procured for those He has saved. For Paul, to be “in Messiah”¹ means to be in union with Him, having died with Him and risen with Him to new life.”

For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. (Rom 6:5–7)

I have been crucified with Messiah; and it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20)

It means that “in Messiah” a believer is counted as righteous even as He is righteous.

By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. (1Jn 4:17)

He made Him who knew no sin to be the sin-offering on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2Cor 5:21)

Thus, every blessing that comes to the believer has its origin in the “heavenly places” where our Lord and Savior Yeshua reigns as Priest and King for all who are His.

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him in love.

As Paul begins to note the blessings that have been given by God to His children, he begins with the blessing of divine election. For some,

1 Found 13 times in Ephesians: 1:1, 3, 10, 12, 20; 2:6–7, 10, 13; 3:6, 11, 21; 4:32.

this does not appear to be a blessing at all, for it goes contrary to the teaching of “free will” by which one person accepts the offer of the gospel and another refuses, making the individual person the one who determines the outcome. But, of course, this cannot stand in the face of the clear and straightforward statements of Scripture.

Indeed, the sovereign election of God is taught from the beginning of the Scriptures through their conclusion. Abraham is chosen by God and called out of the Ur of the Chaldees to become His covenant partner in the divine plan of salvation.

For I have chosen him [literally “known him,” יָבַחְתִּי], so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him. (Gen 18:19)

Likewise, Jacob and his offspring were chosen by God to be His covenant people Israel.

You only have I chosen [literally “known,” יָבַחְתִּי] among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.” (Amos 3:2)

In our verse, the verb “chosen” is the Greek word *ἐκλέγομαι* (*eklegomai*) which carries the sense of “to pick out someone,” “to choose for oneself.”¹ This denotes God’s sovereignty in choosing those whom He would save eternally. The chosen ones were so chosen “in Him,” that is, to be brought into union with Messiah Yeshua and thus, through the avenue of faith in Him, to receive the eternal blessings of salvation and eternal life in the very presence of the Almighty. Once again, Paul emphasizes that salvation from sin and unto holiness is available only “in Messiah,” that is, in the work of full redemption He has accomplished.

What is more, the adverbial clause which follows denotes when this choosing took place: God chose those whom He would save “before the foundation of the world.” This Greek phrase (*πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου*) utilizes the Greek noun *καταβολή* (*katabolē*) which carries the sense “to lay something down, with the implication of providing a base for something,”² To “lay down the foundation of the world” is a metaphor from the realm of building, and denotes the very beginning of building

1 BDAG, “ἐκλέγομαι,” p. 305.

2 Ibid, “καταβολή,” p. 515.

an edifice. Thus, all the blessings that God has lavished upon those who are in Messiah Yeshua flow from His eternal choosing of them before anything was created. In the eternity in which God alone existed, He determined to save a host of people from every tribe, family, and language group, and to bless them with every spiritual blessing in Messiah.