

(There will be no Weekly Reflection next week, 9th September; things should be back to normal God willing on Friday 16th September)

**(Suggested Subfolder: 02 Almighty God)**

**194 Blessed be the God and Father ....**

Last week we came across "the great woman" of Shunem who reacted with such trust and wisdom when confronted with the sudden death of her young son. Throughout her ordeal she held to the reality of "Shalom", that state of "wellness" which no circumstances of life can affect; (it was almost as if she had had a preview of Romans Chapter 8!). This shalom-state was founded on the ministry of "the man of God" Elisha, but more profoundly on the God whom Elisha served and made known.

This time, in Ephesians Chapter 1, we make a start on a glorious passage of revealed truth about Almighty God - truths which, in those pre-Messiah days, neither the Shunamite woman nor Elisha himself were given the privilege of knowing. Humanly speaking, Paul is writing this letter from prison in Rome to the Ephesian Christians in about AD 62. It was in Ephesus that Paul had had such a blessed, but tough, ministry (Acts 19 - 20.1), culminating in that great riot involving the whole city (19.29). Yet in the midst of the idolatry, wickedness and turmoil of Ephesus, a community of Christian believers had been formed, and were "keeping at it" in a very hostile environment.

Things were tough at Ephesus, and tough for Paul in Rome, so we could understand if a bit of "Oh dear" crept into his letter. But not a breath of it! Instead the Holy Spirit is given free rein through Paul: in the AV there is no full stop until verse 23, so we gather we are in for quite a ride as we appreciate these wonderful truths in the next few Reflections.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (v 3, AV). These words are probably familiar to us, and how easy it is for such a rich passage to drift by without our comprehending afresh the enormity of what we are being told.

Attention is given first and foremost to God the Father Himself - He is the One who has blessed us in Christ. Too often these days, particularly in newer songs, the Father is hardly mentioned, with all our focus being placed on the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet scripturally, the Holy Spirit points to Christ, and Christ points to the Father, and the Father points to the Son, and a maturing Christian faith on our part should honour these precious relationships: the Father is the Initiator, and the Son is the "Carrier-Out" in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Next, notice the past tense that is used - the Father has already blessed us! The deed is done, the blessings are there, in place, already a reality. Right now, wherever we are, whatever our circumstances, Christ-accepters are already blessed by God the Father, in Christ. There is no whiff here of "Might be / let's hope so / sounds nice", etc. As we comprehend the status we have already been given and which we already possess in Christ, what a difference this simple truth can make to our outlook and actions. There is not the slightest reason why Christian people have to be perpetually "on the back foot" when confronted with rampant falsehood and wickedness in all its manifestations.

And the blessings themselves? We have been given "all spiritual blessings" (v 3, AV), or "every spiritual blessing" (the literal Greek): God the Father has been abundantly lavish towards us - He simply could not have given us more, because there is no more to give that can be given! These blessings are "in the heavenlies" (v 3, Literal), the place of truer, fuller, greater reality than down here in the "earthlies". How often we get this truth back to front, majoring only on the physical realities before us here, while neglecting the far more dominant spiritual realities beyond our merely physical sight.

Finally this time we end with the Start! - "in Christ" (v 3 / Hebrews 12.2 / Philippians 2.5 - 11 / etc). All these blessings are centred in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Lord, Saviour, Redeemer, Lamb, Brother, Friend, Head. By faith in Christ, as in Romans 10.9, we know we will be saved, and we know also that all these spiritual blessings are ours, right now. So no wonder we join afresh in the shout of praise, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!".

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