

TO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY [PART THREE]

May 31, 2002

Ephesians 1:3-6,

"3 Blessed [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly [places] in Christ, 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 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."

REMEMBER:

- Ephesians 1:3-14 is one long run on sentence in the original Greek.
- That the entire section of verses 3-14 is Paul's praise to God and that it lays the foundation for the rest of Paul's letter.
- That this section sums up the blessings of God to the saints, in a span of time, which begins before creation in eternity past and stretches into our blessings in eternity future.
- That this section is a brief summary of the blessings of God, which are the basis for our worship, praise and obedience.
- That these blessings are spiritual blessings, brought about in Christ, but involving the activity of the entire Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We have been focusing our attention on verses 3-6 the last few weeks as we have looked at the activity or the work of the Father.

- *What works of God the Father have we examined already?*

This week we will look at the work of God highlighted in verse 6; that is His freely bestowing His grace on us. We will answer two questions regarding the grace of God.

- *First, What is Grace?*

It is necessary to mention that there are **two main categories of grace**. The first category is called **common grace**: *the unmerited favor of God toward all men displayed in His general care for them.*

- *What do the following passages of Scripture have to say about common grace?*

Psalm 145:9-9

According to John MacArthur: "Common grace is the grace of God that imposes moral constraints on people's behavior, maintains a semblance of order in human affairs, enforces a sense of right and wrong through conscience and civil government, enables men and women to appreciate beauty and goodness, and imparts blessings of all kinds to all peoples."

The Grace of God that Paul mentions here in Ephesians 1:6 is the second main category of grace known as God's **Saving Grace**. God's saving grace is *the irresistible work of God that frees men and women from the penalty, power and some day the very presence of sin.*

Now, in the New Testament the Greek term for *grace*, can mean "graciousness," "attractiveness," "charm," "favor," or "gratitude." Intrinsic to its meaning are the ideas of "favor, goodness, and goodwill.

Someone has proposed the acronym for GRACE as **God's Riches At Christ's Expense**. That's not a bad way to characterize grace. When we consider the meaning of this word as it is used in the New Testament theologically, it refers to the free, unmerited favor of God; to the favor or kindness given to those who can never deserve it or earn it by anything they do or refrain from doing.

Here is what some modern day theologians have had to say about God's Saving Grace:

- As Chuck Swindoll aptly puts it, "Every time the thought of grace appears, there is the idea of its being undeserved. In no way is the recipient getting what he or she deserves. Favor is being extended simply out of the goodness of the heart of the giver."
- A. W. Tozer defines grace this way, "Grace is the good pleasure of God that inclines Him to bestow benefits on the undeserving."
- Theologian Alva McClain says grace is "the actual going forth of divine love in the form of benefits to sinners who deserve nothing."
- Jerry Bridges in his book, *Transforming Grace* says Grace is "God's free and unmerited favor shown to guilty sinners who deserve only judgment. It is the love of God shown to the unlovely. It is God reaching downward to people who are in rebellion against Him."
- A. W. Pink in his book *The Attributes of God* says, "Divine grace is the sovereign and saving favor of God exercised in the bestowment of blessings upon those who have no merit in them and for which no compensation is demanded from them."
- John MacArthur in his book *The Gospel According to the Apostles* says, "Grace is not merely unmerited favor; it is favor bestowed on sinners who deserve wrath." He goes on to say, "Grace is God's sovereign initiative to sinners and that it can be defined as the free and benevolent influence of a holy God operating sovereignly in the lives of undeserving sinners."
- J. I. Packer in his book *Knowing God* says, "God's saving grace is love freely shown towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity, and had no reason to expect anything but severity."

Packer goes on to state that there are four truths that must be understood if a person is to even begin to comprehend God's amazing grace: Let's take some time to look at these.

1. We must first understand: **The Moral ill-desert of man–We are totally depraved!**

- *As we have looked at in the past weeks, what do the following verses teach us about the state of mankind?*

Romans 3:10-18

Isaiah 53:6

All mankind are sinners. We have all sinned. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. We are all deserving of God's judgment. We are all deserving of hell. Mankind is totally depraved!

1. We must also understand: **The Retributive Justice of God–God Must Judge Sin!**

- *What do the following verses teach us about God?*

Psalm 11:7

Psalm 33:5

Ecclesiastes 3:17

Hebrews 10:30

Habakkuk 1:13

- *What do the following verses teach regarding the penalty of sin?*

Romans 6:23

Hebrews 9:27

1. Third we must understand: **The spiritual impotence of man–We cannot save ourselves!**

- Read Ephesians 2:1-3!

We are dead in our trespasses and sins. We are by nature children of wrath. There is nothing good in us. We are totally worthless and therefore, because of our helpless state we are completely incapable of saving ourselves.

1. **Fourth We must understand: The Sovereign Freedom of God—God was not obligated to choose anyone!**

- *Remember the following verses from the last couple of weeks. What did they teach regarding election?*

John 15:16

Matthew 20:1-15

Romans 9:6-24

Remember that God's election is according to the kind intention of His will, not because of any obligation. If we understand that we are totally depraved; God must judge sin; we cannot save ourselves' and that God was not obligated to choose anyone, we begin to see how truly amazing His saving grace is.

Grace is biblically defined in Ephesians 2:1-10.

Second, Let's look at the distinctive marks of Grace highlighted in Ephesians 1:6

- *First, Who is the Source of Grace according to verse 6?*

- *What do the following verses have to say in this regard?*

Psalm 84:11

James 1:17

1 Peter 5:10

Hebrews 4:16

- *What is the manner of Grace highlighted in verse 6?*

- *What do the following verses teach regarding the manner of grace in comparison to Ephesians 1:6?*

Ephesians 2:8-9

Romans 5:15

2 Timothy 1:9

The verb rendered *freely bestowed* comes from the same root as the noun *grace*. It literally means that *God graced us with His grace*. It emphasizes the abundance of God's gift of salvation as well as implying His generous attitude as the giver.

For believers in Christ, the term *grace* is virtually synonymous with the gospel message of God's gift of unmerited salvation in Jesus Christ and includes everything associated with our life in Christ from beginning to end.

- ***Third, according to verse 6, who is the agent of Grace?***

The title, beloved is a reference to Christ. In Mark 1:11 and Colossians 1:13, Christ is called God's beloved Son. As we consider the context of verses 7 and 8, we clearly see that Christ is the Beloved.

- ***What do the following verses teach regarding the agent of Grace?***

John 1:17

Romans 5:15

2 Timothy 1:9-10

APPLICATION:

- ***What should be our response to such a wonderful work of God?***

- ***How should we respond to God's Amazing Grace?***