

To the Praise of His Gracious Glory – *Ephesians 1:1-6*

Introduction - In WWII, emergency survival kits included dense, dark, protein/calorie enriched chocolate bars that were meant to be consumed in small squares, placed and allowed to melt slowly in one's mouth for 30 minutes. The epistle to the church at Ephesus is like that and so we will consider it in small squares. Enjoy and be revived.

Walking Through the Text – Paul identifies himself as an *apostle*, a transliterated Greek word meaning “one sent with authority,” and in this case, he is sent with the authority of “*Jesus Christ*.” Paul did not volunteer nor climb a ladder of some sort to become an apostle, it was “*the will of God*” (v1a). He writes to the “*saints*,” not a title for super-Christians, but “*holy ones*” set apart for God’s sacred work. The saints are located in two places: in Ephesus and in Christ, Who is seated in the heavenlies (v1b, cf. 20). He blesses them with “*grace and peace*” and this proceeds from “*God*” who is “*our Father*” and “*the Lord Jesus Christ*” (v2).

A blessing is pronounced on God, who is also the Father of *our Lord Jesus Christ*, revealing the full humanity and deity of Jesus (v3a). This praise is not given in the abstract (just because God should be praised) but because *He has blessed us*, and if that is not enough, He has done so with *every spiritual blessing found in the heavenlies in Christ* (v3b).

We were chosen *to be holy* (not because we were holy), proven by the fact that this election took place *before the foundation of the world*. We were also chosen to be *without blame before Him*, which is the flip-side of the coin of justification (v4). But being forgiven and justified was not enough. And so, in the context of love, He also predestined, or predetermined in eternity past, to adopt us; by Jesus Christ we are brought to God who is now our Father (v5a). It is then made clear that He did this because He wanted to, He desired to, it was His pleasure to do so (v5b). And all of this results in the praise of His gracious glory – that gracious glory by which *He made us accepted, or bestowed that grace upon us*, in His Beloved Son (v6).

To the Praise of His Gracious Glory – There are many blessings and we have only begun the sentence (vv3-14). But there are three main clauses and they all end with “*to the praise of His glory*” (v6, 12, 14), with an additional adjective in the first (v6).

The Nature of God’s Glory – While normally translated, “*to the praise of His glorious grace*” or “*to the praise of the glory of His grace*,” I think it is worth emphasizing “*His glory which is gracious*, or *His gracious glory*.” When we behold God, we behold His glory. That glory is not sterile white fluorescent light. It is a rainbow of love and mercy, with favor and acceptance; it is dripping with grace. This helps explain why God predestined what He predestined.

All Triune God of Grace – Look back at v2. The Spirit is not mentioned but is certainly in mind (v13). The Spirit is the grace and peace proceeding from the Father and the Son. Grace is the unmerited favor of God on us and shalom-peace is objective as well as subjective; it is internal and spreads to shalom over the land. Because the Spirit resides in us, we are ministers of grace and peace to the world.

Adoption, Sons, and a Father – Of course, first of all, we have to be recipients of this grace and peace. And we are, but not simply judicially (“you are declared righteous”) or financially (“your debts are forgiven, your account has been imputed with righteousness”) but primarily interpersonally. The plan was to adopt us as sons to our heavenly Father. First, note that both men and women are adopted as “*sons*,” meaning with the same inheritance rights (v11, 14, Gal 3:26-29). Second, human adoptions are only a shadow of this real adoption where we are actually given the Spirit of the Father. Third and similarly, in a world of fatherlessness, we may be tempted to overlook the immeasurable blessing of having a heavenly Father. Human fathers and human adoptions are like the moon to the sun. If you only could see during the night and the moon was your defining experience of illumination, imagine your surprise when one day you saw a noon-day sun.

Unashamed Calvinists – These are the reformed, Calvinist texts, full of election and predestination, but if we miss the point, we will find ourselves ashamed of these doctrines. All of this is “*in love*” and “*according to the good pleasure of His will*.” We see that what happens not only brings praise and not vilification to God, but to His glory. And what is particularly revealed about His glory is the graciousness of it. Not only that - we have only begun to explore the projection of this gracious glory. We will consider later “where” it goes, the exaltation not only of Christ, but of the church in Christ (peek: vv21-23). But that is future. This section (vv3-6) focuses on the past work. Before all creation, God had already chosen, loved, and lavished on us because this is His nature. And, as we will see, for those who are in Christ, then this Spirit, this nature, this life is in you.

The Exceeding Gracious Glory of Being “in Christ” – “*In Christ*” is a favorite phrase of Paul’s. In our passage, it needs to be emphasized that because we are “*in Christ*” the spiritual blessings are all ours as well. You are at peace (no war) with God because you are “*in Christ*.” You are at peace (reconciled in relationship) with God because you are “*in Christ*.” You are at peace (a peace that spreads and takes dominion) with God because you are “*in Christ*.” This is the gracious glory that we reflect as we receive and behold Him.