

Glorious Grace (1)

Often we refer to the grace of God. I ask someone, ‘how are you brother?’ the answer is, ‘by the grace of God, I am doing well’. ‘By the grace of God I had a safe trip’. ‘By the grace of God I got a contract’. ‘By the grace of God I passed the exams’.

Ephesians 1:3-14

“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. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will-- to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One he loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of His glory.”

Grace is the unmerited favor of God and is the basis of our salvation, justification, predestination, adoption, forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit. All these spiritual blessings listed here are unmerited and undeserved given to unworthy sinners who have broken God’s commandments and laws and deserve only hell and damnation.

IN CHRIST

Verse 3, “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”.

We start with God and with worship. The way to be blessed is to look to God and praise Him. Never look for blessings and run after blessings. We must consider the source of the blessings and be in touch with God. Honor Him, glorify Him, meditate on Him, listen to Him, and communicate with Him constantly.

The first thing to observe is the way these blessings come to us. They come ‘in Christ’. If you leave out the ‘in Christ’ you will never have any blessing at all. There are certain common general blessings which are enjoyed by all people and this is called common grace. Some examples of common grace are the air you breath, rain, sunshine, as

explained in by our Lord in the sermon of the mount Matthew 5:45, that God makes the sun to rise on the evil and the good.

Paul is writing to Christian people and his concern is that they understand the special blessings and privileges possible only if they are 'in Christ'. There are no blessings for Christians apart from Him. Christ has no assistant and there is also no substitute or supplement. There is no other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, says the Apostle Peter in Acts 4:12. **THERE IS NO SECOND NAME!** There is only one mediator between God and man and that is Jesus Christ. 1 Timothy 2:5. Christ is the One and Only channel for blessings to you and I. This may sound exclusive and intolerant but this is the great message of truth committed to us by God Himself. We dare not change it.

The Christian is what he is because he is in Christ, joined to the Lord Jesus Christ by being born again. Never forget this. Without Christ we are still in our sins and bound for hell. Every blessing we enjoy, everything good that we may achieve or experience all come from Him. To be a Christian means that God has given you new birth and has put a principle of heavenly life within you.

CHOSEN IN HIM

Verse 4, "For he chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight."

Here the apostle begins to explain to us how all the spiritual blessings become ours. He goes right back into eternity, before the creation of the world, and he starts with that has been done by God the Father. The teaching is that those who enjoy these spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ do so because they have been chosen by God to do so. **THERE ARE TWO POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS OF THIS STAGGERING STATEMENT.** The first is that we are chosen by God simply as a result of His own good pleasure and will and entirely apart from anything we have ever done or said or thought.

The second explanation is that the Christians were chosen by God before creation because God in His foreknowledge saw that they would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words God chooses those who of themselves have already chosen to be Christians, those who decided to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and have sought salvation. Which of these two is correct?

Let the Bible answer. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14,
"But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In other words you have been chosen, set apart, by the Spirit in order that you may believe the truth. You are not chosen because you believe it, but in order that you may believe it.

God has chosen to call out His people by means of evangelism and the preaching of the Gospel. He ordains the means as well as the end. God's plan of salvation does not depend upon man or the choice of man. Salvation is from God from beginning to end.

You are what you are because of the grace of God, His glorious grace.

There is no better explanation of this passage we are examining than that which is found in 17th chapter of the Gospel according to John where we have the Lord's High Priestly prayer. There we find the Lord making statements concerning Himself:

Verse 2, ***"For you granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those you have given Him"***. The teaching is that the Father has given these people to the Son. Or take verse 6: ***"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to me and they have obeyed Your word"***.

These people, the believers including you and me, belonged to God before they became the Son's people. The primary action is that God the Father who chose unto Himself a people out of whole mankind before the creation of the world, and then presented, gave these people whom He had chosen to the Son, in order the Son might redeem them and do everything that was necessary for their reconciliation with Himself.

HOLY AND BLAMELESS

Verse 4, *"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight."*

Man's condition by nature as we see daily is the exact opposite of that holiness that God demands. God says. "Be holy for I am holy". In Christ we are holy for He is holy. This is God's plan and purpose for you and I. For this holiness we are chosen in Christ.

"It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit."

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8

The preaching of holiness is an essential part of evangelism. To be saved is to be rightly related to God and that is holiness. We must never think of holiness as something we may decide to go in for. Being a Christian and being holy belong together. You are either in Christ or you are not in Christ. If you are in Him you are holy. According to Paul we are not chosen with the possibility of holiness, but to the realization of holiness; He has chosen us to holiness. Being 'chosen' and being 'holy' are inseparable.

Because it is God's purpose that we be holy, it will be carried out. If God has chosen you for salvation God will make you holy. If for some reason you are not willing to be led by

God and be led by His love God will use another way of making you holy as explained in Hebrews 12:6-10.

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son."*

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness".

-
God, who has chosen you to holiness will make you holy; and if the preaching of the Gospel does not do so, God has other means and methods. He may strike you down with illness, He may ruin your business. God will make you holy because He has chosen you to holiness. If you defy Him, well then, terrible things may happen to you.

I cannot possibly say, 'I am chosen and therefore I can do as I like, I shall be forgiven'. It works in the opposite direction. Our sense of honor as child of God is involved. God's love for us and our love for Him are involved. The desire to please God is involved. This is top priority for the Christian because for this we are chosen by God.

Our holiness is to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. We take no credit for holiness. All glory and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ. We can only say, "thank you".

Thank you for being chosen.

Thank you for being adopted into God's family.

Thank you for salvation.

Thank you for redemption.

Thank you for forgiveness.

Thank you for the Holy Spirit.

Thank you for your holiness.

Thank you for all I have in Christ.