

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the one having blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world that we might be holy and blameless before Him, in love 5 having predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the pleasure of His will 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace which He freely gave us in the Loved One 7 in Whom we have the deliverance through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which overflowed to us in all wisdom and knowledge 9 having made known to us the mystery of His plan, according to His pleasure which He planned in Him 10 the task of the fulfillment of the times, to unite all things in Christ, the upon the heavenly realm and the upon the earth in him 11 in whom also we were chosen, having been predestined according to the purpose of the one working all things according to the will of his plan.12 to the end that we, the ones having hoped in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory 13 in Whom also you, having heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation, in Whom also, you, having believed were sealed by the Holy spirit of promise 14 Who is a deposit of our inheritance, to deliverance of the possession to the praise of His glory.

We have just begun a study of the book of Ephesians, and we began last time looking at this amazing blessing that begins the book. It's one, long sentence that goes through v.14 that calls us to bless God because of the way He has blessed us. So this is all about worship. If you walk out of here today without an increased capacity and desire to worship God, then we've blown it.

The Five Blessings

Blessed be God who blessed us in five ways: Sanctification, Adoption, Salvation, Revelation and Possession.

1. Sanctification v.4

4 He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him

Back in eternity past – prior to the Creation, God, in His infinitely wise, perfect mind decided to bring a whole bunch of things into existence. Everything He was to create, of course, would be good. But some things better than others. So God said, “I’m going to create billions and trillions of different things – with varying degrees of goodness... But one of the things I’m going to make is going to be *supremely* good – a being who will be holy and blameless. His name is going to be... (your name)” If you are one of the elect, God not only loves you with a love that will never end, but He loves you with a love that never began. And He selected you, right from the start, to be one who would be holy and blameless. And there are three parts to how He does that. It starts with a legal declaration at your conversion, where Christ’s righteousness is credited to your account. Then a process goes throughout this life in which you are becoming more like Christ in your actions. And the whole process is culminated when the Lord returns and your body is redeemed, and every last influence of sin is gone, and you are sinless forever.

Blessing #2: Predestination to Adoption

Bless God because He has blessed us...by choosing us to be holy and blameless **in love 5 having predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the pleasure of His will**

Being able to call God “Abba” Father is part of what makes the New Covenant greater than the Old. We are unique in that we were predestined for intimacy with God. The concept of adoption is so central to every aspect of the way we live our lives. We have been given the Spirit of sonship (adoption) who constantly reminds us that we are God’s children. He testifies to our spirits that we have that family relationship with God, reminding us that to us God is “Abba, Father.” And that changes everything about how we view our lives. The commands of Scripture are transformed from a list of rules to another call to intimacy – I obey because I want to be a good son. I want to bring pleasure to my Father. Now when trials and suffering come, instead of resisting them and fighting against them as unwelcome, dangerous intruders into our lives, we see them as discipline from the hand of a loving Father – “God is treating you as sons.” It deepens our love for one another. We are brothers and sisters, and we greet each other with the equivalent of a holy kiss. Our closeness to each other as siblings in God’s family is more profound even than natural blood relationships on earth. But there is more to this concept than just closeness with God and each other.

Inheritance

When you hear the word “adoption,” what comes to your mind is probably not quite the same as what it meant to the original readers of this. We think of adoption as a way to add a child to our family. In the ancient Roman world, they had other means of doing that. If they just wanted to add a child to their family and raise that child, they would purchase the child. Many people did that, and they raised those kids, and loved them like their own. The only reason they would go through the process of υἱοθεσία (*huiiothesia*), or “sonship” (That’s the word translated “adoption” here) – the only reason for going through that process was if they wanted the child to be the heir to the family estate and carry on the family name. So adoption wasn’t primarily for the purpose of *gaining* a child; it was for the purpose of *giving* an inheritance. Think of that. It’s amazing when you think of the fact that for a human father, he might adopt a son out of his own need (maybe he is childless and needs an heir, and needs someone to carry on his name after he dies). But first of all God will never die and His name is not at stake, and secondly He already has a perfectly good heir in His Son Jesus Christ. So why adopt further co-heirs with Christ? It’s just because He wants to give them an inheritance. God adopted you just because it gives such pleasure to Him to give to you. As for the inheritance itself – we will get to that when we get down to vv.13,14. Another thing you need to know about adoption in that culture: Under Roman law, when a child was adopted, there remained no sense in which he was still the son of his former parents. The new parents were every bit as much his father and mother as they possibly could be – it made no difference at all if the child was adopted or born naturally to those parents. Legal sonship takes precedence over biological sonship. That’s why Scripture establishes Jesus’ right to the throne by tracing Joseph’s genealogy. Jesus was not the biological son of Joseph, but He was the legal son, which means in God’s eyes He was Joseph’s son. That’s significant for you who have blended families. The Bible does not speak in terms of step parents or step children. If you are married, then your spouse’s children are your children in God’s sight every bit as much as if they came from your body. You should teach those children to respond to the new parent exactly as they would respond to a biological parent. Another interesting thing about that culture was if you were adopted, not only are you no longer the son of your old parents, and any debts you may have are now cancelled. If you just wanted to add a child to your family, you would purchase that child, and he would come into your household – but he would still maintain some connections with his former family. To adopt someone, the new father had to purchase him three times. You would pay the price, then set him free, pay the price, then set him free, and then pay the price a third time. Once that happened, all connections with the old life are completely erased. So when the Bible says you have been adopted by God, it carries a lot of implications. Your whole past life is cancelled. You are completely free from your past life. You are now in the family of God and there are no loose ends with your old life that maintain some claim on you.

Why did God do all this? The reason is given at the end of v.5. Pay careful attention to this:

5 having predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ for Himself, according to the pleasure of His will

He did it for Himself, because He liked doing it. This whole passage is theocentric from beginning to end. The word “chose” in v.4 is reflexive (He chose for Himself...having predestined us for Himself according to the pleasure of His will). That takes a little effort to process, because we are used to that being a bad thing. If we do something just because we like doing it, that’s not a high reason for doing something. But the pleasure of God is the highest good there is, so if He doesn’t something that pleases Him, that’s the best thing that can happen. The greatest good is to please God – even for God! A lot of people read the end of v.5 and aren’t satisfied. They say, “OK, He chose me because that was in accordance with the pleasure of His will... but why was that so pleasing to Him?” They are looking for a higher reason that goes beyond v.5. There is none. There can be none. As Luther said, “God’s will has no ‘why?’.” Since God is God His purpose and activity have no ultimate cause outside of His own being. (Bruce 257) God does things because He wills them. But asking the question, “Why does He will them?” is like asking “What moves the Prime Mover?” If there is anything, past, present or future, that moves the Prime Mover, then He’s not the Prime Mover. And if there is anything outside of God that ultimately causes God’s actions, then God isn’t God. So the pleasure of God’s will is the highest reason there is. But so often that answer doesn’t satisfy us. We want to know the details of why me and not my neighbor? Why that woman and not her husband? Why millions in this country and almost none in that country? Are there any reasons for which individuals are chosen? Or is God capricious – doing things arbitrarily for no reason at all? God is neither capricious nor arbitrary. He has reasons for everything He does – it all fits into His perfect plan. Once in a while He even gives us a peek into some of that reasoning.

In Ex.9:16 we find that God raised up Pharaoh and then hardened his heart (by allowing Pharaoh to harden his own heart), and then He gives one reason He did that - **I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.** (Ex 9:16)

Why was the Apostle Paul chosen instead of someone else? One reason is given in 1 Tim 1:15-16 **Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners-of whom I am the worst. 16 But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe**

So there are those kinds of reasons. And God revealed them here and there in some cases to make a point in Scripture.

But for the vast majority of people, obviously, those reasons aren’t spelled out.

Because we don’t need to know that. Can’t we just trust God that His reasoning is sound?

Are we going to stand there and say to God, “You’re reasoning about Pharaoh is acceptable, and Your excuse for saving Paul passes my approval, but I’m going to reserve judgment on everyone else until you provide a full explanation for all your reasoning.”?

Do we really need anything more than what is in this passage? You were chosen, because when it’s all said and done, your being one of the elect is in accordance with the pleasure of God’s will.

What information do we need beyond that?

When we ask, “God, why did you choose me?” and He responds “Because that was fitting with the pleasure of My will” the only thing left to say is, “Wow!” and move on to the next verse.

Why did God choose you specifically? Because He liked choosing you specifically. It brought Him pleasure to do so.

- Why are the things happening in your life that are shaping you the way they are?
- Why were you given certain parents,

- whatever spouse you have or don't have,
- illnesses, weaknesses, etc.?

Because the end product of all that is a you that brings God pleasure.

Why did God save you? Because he liked saving you.

That's all. There may be other details, but that's the highest reason.

Do you think God saves you out of sheer determination or some kind of sense of duty that His love required of Him?

Did God say, "That Darrell Ferguson is a huge disappointment and a big drain, but, since I'm God I'm supposed to love the unlovely so, (sigh), here goes..."?

God chose you not out of duty or determination, but out of sheer delight.

And that explains adoption. God adopted you because He wanted to give to you. He made you His child just to put you in the best proximity for Him to bestow His favor upon you.

God wanted you close so you would be easy to bless.

So that's a summary of the doctrines of election and predestination in Eph. 1.

The process God uses to make you holy and blameless is an incredible process.

But equally amazing than the process is the mere *fact* that God chose you for that.

And there are some very important implications for us.

Implications

1. Understanding this will draw you to fulfill your purpose for existing.

Think of your life – from the moment you were conceived on throughout eternity (since you will never go out of existence)... Think of every moment, every thought you have ever had, every experience, everything. The whole thing is happening because in eternity past God said, "I want to create a being for Myself who is holy and blameless." Spend some time meditating on that, and see what happens next time you face a temptation. What's going to happen the next time you are struggling with a decision between holiness and unholiness? Over the last two weeks that I have been studying this I can tell you the effect it's had on me. I see sin as a greater enemy that I used to. It is so absolutely counter to my whole purpose for existing, how could I chose to engage in it? If God told you, "It is your destiny to climb to the top of that mountain," and every once in a while Satan tried to tempt you to walk downhill for a while, the knowledge that your destiny is to climb to the top will help you resist. You don't want to walk downhill, because you know you will need to struggle right back up, and put forth all that energy you have already put forth just to get back to where you are right now. If going down a ways and staying down there is an option, then you might be tempted – especially when the climb is especially hard. But if going down and staying down is no option – you know you are going to go to the top, then you aren't going to want to give up any progress at all.

2. Another practical application of thinking about election is the knowledge of election shapes your entire outlook on life.

When you make decisions about what career to pursue or how to pursue your career, or who to marry or where to live or what to major in at school...

...or any decision, to make the right decision it is crucial that you know why you exist, what your purpose in this life is, and what your destiny is.

Knowing that you exist for holiness makes all the difference in which path you chose.

3. The knowledge of election effects the way you think about God.

Nothing is more crippling in the Christian life than a wrong perspective about God.

Many Christians have extreme difficulty because they don't understand God's kind and lofty intention for them.

For some, they overlook the kindness of God's purpose. They experience pain and decide "I'm here so that God can make an example of me," "God wants to humiliate me, punish me, destroy me..."

No. God's whole reason for bringing you into existence was a kind, loving purpose.

There are other Christians who understand the love part of it just fine, but they miss how *lofty* God's purpose for them is.

They say, "I realize God has a kind intention for me, and He wants to show me love," but that's as far as they go.

They don't realize the transcendent, eternal, lofty nature of God's purpose.

So they run into suffering and get confused. "Wait a minute – I thought God had a kind intention for me, but I'm not getting what I want at all!"

They don't realize that God's purpose is so infinitely higher than just them getting things that feel good in this life.

God's purpose extends so many light-years beyond you just getting things you want.

It has to do with His eternal purposes for the fulfillment of all things in His grand purpose for creating the Universe.

4. Knowing God chose you from eternity past will help you love God more.

Loving God is the greatest commandment. Jesus taught that it is the single greatest thing a person can do.

And nothing draws you into loving someone like being loved. When you understand that someone deeply loves you, the more you enjoy that love, the more you find yourself loving that person.

5. Knowing you were chosen for holiness will give you a desire to be different.

The root idea of "holy" means "different."

- The Sabbath was holy, because it was different from the other six days – set apart for God.
- A Temple is holy, because it's different from other buildings – set apart for God.
- A priest was holy, because he was different from other men – set apart for God.
- God is holy, because He is utterly different from all created things.

So holiness means being different.

And knowing that you were chosen before time to be holy will cause you to seek to be different from the world, rather than seeking to fit in.

A Christian should be noticeably different from the world. You should stick out at work or school.

- You live differently
- you think differently
- your attitude about suffering is different
- your attitude about this life is different
- your attitude about the creation is different
- your attitude about sin and righteousness is different
- your attitude about yourself is different
- your attitude about others is different
- your attitude about God is different
- your goals are different
- your passions are different
- your very nature is different

Similarity with people in the world should come only at the points where their lives approximate the Christian life.

6. The knowledge that you were selected from eternity past for blamelessness will cause you to despise any blemish.

If you think of yourself not as a person who must experience pleasure, but rather as a sacrifice on an altar whose only purpose is to bring pleasure to God...

- then instead of putting all your energy into feeling good, you will put all your energy into blamelessness.

As you picture yourself as a sacrifice to God, you will be *alarmed* at anything that would make you a blemished sacrifice that would dishonor God.

You'll face a temptation and your first thought will be, "I exist to be an offering to God – an offering of worship to glorify Him – *I can't afford to have anything contaminate that offering in any way!*"

7. The doctrine of election is essential for those of you who struggle with thoughts of unworthiness.

None of us are worthy of God's grace in our own merit, but when you are saved, that declaration by God that you are now justified *makes* you worthy.

In 2 Thes.1:3-5 Paul said to the people, "Based on your growing faith, your growing love for believers and your perseverance in trials, I can say that **you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.**"

Remember Jesus' letter to the people in Sardis? That church was mostly a hopeless case, but there were a few believers left. And of those few Jesus said **They will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy.** (Rev 3:4)

So once you have been regenerated, you are worthy. But some Christians struggle to really believe that. They think they are still unworthy because of their sin.

Understanding election can really help with that.

If God selected you from before the beginning of time to be holy and blameless and to be His holy child, the whole question of worthiness disappears – it's up to Him to make you worthy, and if He has chosen you to be holy, then He will.

8. Understanding election will effect decisions you make about how completely you give yourself to His Church.

Having a perspective of God's grand, eternal purposes in the Church will not only have an effect on how energized you are in building up the Church, but it will exponentially increase your level of joy and satisfaction as you minister your gifts to the Church.

9. Understanding election will effect your level of love for the church.

So many times we are exhorted to love the brothers in a special way. That's very important to God.

And understanding your filial relationship with us (that we are your family – brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers, in a greater, more profound way than your blood relatives) – understanding that will make it easier to love.

Thursday night at small group Joe made an interesting point that illustrates that.

The larger your family, the more you understand that various family members do things a little differently.

In our case Josiah is the only lefty in the family, so he always has to sit on the left end of the bench at the kitchen table.

It's an accommodation we make, but no one gives it the slightest thought. No one ever questions his place in the family over that.

Understanding that you were predestined to adoption – and so were we, knowledge of that will result in us showing grace to one another and accommodating differences without anyone being relegated to second class status in the Body of Christ.

10. How about spiritual warfare?

How are we going to respond when we come under attack when we have the knowledge of God's eternal purpose for us in election?

Do you think that will go just a little way toward protecting us from discouragement when the battle gets hard?

Election is the bedrock foundation of what gives life meaning.

If God chose me for a purpose before time, that means for me there are no unimportant days in my life.

You don't ever have to go to bed at night feeling that your life is going nowhere. You don't ever have to give in to the lie that you are not connected to an awesome purpose.

In Christ

It's worth noting the role Christ plays in all this.

There are millions of people who are betting their eternal destiny on the belief that you can know the true God apart from faith in Jesus Christ.

Is that true? Let's take all the riches of the blessings from God and subtract the parts that are dependent upon Christ, and see what's left.

We are to bless God, according to this sentence, because He has...

- blessed us (v.3)
- chosen us to be holy and blameless (v.4)
- predestined us for adoption (v.5)
- lavished grace on us, providing redemption and forgiveness (vv.6-8)
- revealed His plan to us (vv.9,10)
- and gave us an inheritance (vv.11-14)

Now look at the role Christ plays in all that.

- He blessed us in Christ (v.3)
- He chose us in Christ (v.4)
- He predestined us for adoption through Christ (v.5)
- He has given us grace in Christ (v.6)
- We have redemption and forgiveness through the death of Christ (vv.7,8)
- And the plan God has set in motion was purposed in Christ (vv.9,10)

And so we were included in Christ, and our hope in is Christ (vv.12,13)

So what can we say about people who have an affection and a loyalty in their heart toward God, but they haven't committed their lives the Jesus Christ specifically?

What happens when you subtract Christ from this whole picture?

The blessing in v.3 is gone, the election in v.4 is gone, there's no adoption in v.5, there is no grace in v.6, there is no redemption or forgiveness of sins in vv.7,8, there is no hope for an inheritance in vv.12-13...In fact God's eternal plan in v.11 disappears altogether.

It's only through Christ that we can be made holy. In fact, that exact same phrase (**holy and blameless**) is used in ch.5.

Eph.5:25-27

Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

The only way for us to be made holy and blameless is for someone who is perfect to die in our place to pay the penalty for our sin.

That's why the only two things in the Bible that are said to have been pre-planned from before the foundation of the world are our being made holy and the death of Jesus on the cross.

The moment God decided to make us holy – that decision condemned His Son to death on the cross, because that was the only way to accomplish it.

The end was predestined and the means was predestined.

Now take a look at v.6:

The whole process of choosing us to be holy and blameless and predestining us for adoption is all **6 to the praise of the glory of His grace which He graced us in the Loved One**

Grace

God's work of choosing us for holiness and adoption calls us to praise (to speak well of) His grace. His grace is so great, that actually it's not even His grace that we praise, but just one aspect of His grace – they glory of it. So it doesn't say to praise God. It doesn't even say to praise an attribute of God. It says these things call us to praise an attribute of an attribute of God. God is gracious, and that grace is glorious, and we are to speak of how incredibly glorious it is. This is a wonderful figure of speech that puts the greatness of God in the highest possible terms. God, with all His attributes, is great. If you focus on just one of those attributes, that is a far lesser thing. And if you just focus on one aspect of that one attribute that is a far lesser thing than the entire attribute. So Paul puts our attention on something that is two orders of magnitude less than God Himself, and calls us to praise that for how infinitely wonderful it is. If just the glory of His grace is worth praising, how great must His grace be? It's praiseworthy to the Nth power, and God is all that to the nth power again. I wrestled and wrestled this week studying this subject of grace. I felt like I was standing at the foot of Mount Everest and someone handed me a backpack and said, "Here, take what you see to the people Sunday morning." God's grace is such an incredibly grand topic, I'm hesitant to even speak about it at all for fear that even my greatest ability to proclaim it will end up being such an understatement and oversimplification that I risk doing more harm than good. Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, said "I am a poor, dumb dog over such a theme." I know exactly how he felt. And whatever the grandeur of the greatness of God's grace is here, it's doubled by the language Paul uses. Literally, "**the grace with which He graced us.**" The verb "graced" is used only here and in Lk.1:28, where Mary is called the "graced" or "highly favored" one. Grace is the foundational principle permeating every part of the way God saves us – so much so that when we properly understand it, it will excite our worship. In the OT the word "grace" referred to the granting of some pleasant thing to an inferior motivated by a desire for that persons' wellbeing. An inferior could never show grace to a superior, because you are already obliged to treat your superiors well. Grace is favor that does not arise out of an obligation, but simply out of a person's good will toward someone. Donald Barnhouse: "Love that goes upward is worship, love that goes outward is affection, and love that stoops is grace. The English word "grace" is generally used to refer to loveliness or beauty – gracefulness. All of that is in the background with the Greek word, but the primary meaning is more along the lines of giving something lovely and beautiful to an underling out of sheer goodwill. In Acts grace is also a gift, but specifically it is the gift of power from God – power for salvation, power for spiritual life, power for ministry, and the power of the Gospel. It goes side by side with empowerment for ministry

Acts 6:8

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people

To send someone out on a task is to commend that person to God's grace.

Acts 14:26

they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been committed to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.

Acts 15:40-41

Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the brothers to the grace of the Lord.

And the primary manifestation of it was in salvation

Acts 11:21-23

The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord. 22 News of this reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. 23 When he arrived and saw the evidence of the grace of God, he was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.

Acts 15:10-11

Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? 11 No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are."

Acts 18:27-28

When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. On arriving, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed.

The Gospel is the message of God's grace.

Acts 14:3

So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.

Acts 20:32

"Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

Acts 20:24

However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace.

The living out of the Christian life is also described as the grace of God.

Acts 13:43

When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

In Paul it's always opposed to works.

It is the most fundamental principle in salvation – God giving us what we need in the midst of our weakness.

It's used to refer to salvation, forgiveness, spiritual gifts (literally called "graces" our word charismatic come from the word grace -charis) as well as ministries (especially in Eph. – each one of us has been given a unique grace – 4:7).

In acts grace came in the form of power from God. A person who was full of grace was full of ability to do God's work.

Everything you have received from God is a grace – your holiness, your forgiveness, your ability to serve, your calling, your ministry, power from God, etc.

But in this passage the emphasis is not so much on grace as a description of something we receive from God, but of God's character.

The fact that I've been given holiness, and a ministry, and spiritual gifts, and forgiveness and redemption and power... all that says something to me about what God is like.

We need to keep the graciousness of our salvation ever before us.

It's easy to fall into thinking that our being saved was inevitable – especially those of us who were born into a Christian home.

I need to always be reminded that I'm saved only because of God's grace, which is a kindness that was not incumbent upon Him to give.

Grace is something that, by definition, the giver has absolutely no obligation to give.

God didn't have to save me. His plan would have worked just as well if He saved someone else instead of me, and had that person's salvation fulfill whatever role my salvation is fulfilling.

And the result of focusing our attention on that should be praise.

We praise the glory of His grace.

The glory of something is that which is good about that thing from the perspective of the observer.

So the glory of God's grace is that aspect of God's grace that we can see as being wonderful.

We meditate on grace and out of our mouths comes praise.