

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow. Among all God's blessings that evoke our praise and gratitude are those in the spiritual realm that are bestowed by God's grace. Paul celebrates these in Ephesians 1.

#### **GOD CHOSE US.**

To be chosen is to be favored. To be favored by God requires grace. Despite the fact that we are not worthy of His favor, God loves us! He receives us when we accepted Christ. God determined before He created the world that He would choose for His own all who would choose His Son.

He chose us, not because we are holy, but so that we would become holy. To be holy is to be different, that is, set apart from the world for a divine purpose. Some Christians resist this, however. When they sing, "Just As I Am," they are thinking they can come to Christ without changing. Someone correctly said that God loves us too much to leave us the way we are.

When we grasp the beauty and wonder of the fact that God, in grace, chose us, not on the basis of our goodness, but rather on the basis of our faith in His Son, then we will want to become wholly devoted to Christ.

#### **GOD PREDESTINED US.**

It is God's good pleasure to choose us because we are in Christ. See John 1:12.

In Jesus' day the person being adopted was usually not an infant or a child, but a boy or man old enough to serve as a slave. Adoption was often combined with the making of a will, the provision of which was that the adopted son was to care for the aging "parents."

Praise be to God, Who adopted us in love, according to His pleasure and will. God is not willing that any perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). When men do repent, He is happy to accept them into His family. He is not only willing to save us—he takes great delight in it.

Our grateful response is to gladly honor the family name by displaying the family traits and characteristics. How gracious God is and how grateful we are to be included in this family.

#### **GOD REDEEMED US.**

We were held captive by Satan on account of our disobedience to God. But Jesus paid the ransom necessary to set us free. The ransom price was His very life's blood. See 1 Peter 1:18-19.

This redemption is the forgiveness of our sins, says Paul; the washing away of our sins. This redemption price deposited at Calvary is applied to the sinner in the waters of baptism, where the Bible says our sins are washed away and the old man of sin is buried in the likeness of Jesus' death. See Romans 6.

Some may think His supply is not enough to atone for all their many sins or the depth of their depravity. But God's grace is inexhaustible! Romans 5:20 says that where sin abounded, God's grace abounds more and more! And He is happy to pour it out on us in abundance!

Our grateful response to full redemption must include our willing denial of self, the taking up of our cross daily to follow Him. He has freed us from slavery to sin to freedom in Him. We will gladly become His servants.

#### **GOD MADE KNOWN TO US THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL.**

This "mystery" is not something that is difficult to

understand, but rather that which, once hidden from view, has been uncovered or revealed. That something is the salvation of all men through the sacrifice of Jesus; that is, the bringing together of all men under the one Head, Who is Jesus. And the body in which all men are united under the authority of Christ is the church. This was to be inaugurated at the right time, Paul writes. He identifies this time in Galatians 4:4 as the birth of the Christ child. It was to be initiated through the reconciliation in peace provided by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:19-20).

Our grateful response to this wonderful grace is first to be reconciled to God in Christ, and then to be reconciled to all those who are a part of this family of grace. But we should also respond by cherishing and reading the revelation of God's will.

#### **GOD MADE US HIS HERITAGE.**

Not only was it the purpose of God to make known the mystery of His will, but this purpose was also actually fulfilled in us (Gareth L. Reese).

Before Pentecost, or at least the conversion of Cornelius, God's heritage was Israel alone. But all that God was to Israel He will be to His church today. God's plan from before the beginning was that His heritage would consist of all those who unite with Christ by faith.

Our response to this grace should be that we would not only testify to His grace, but that we would be a testament to His glorious grace, resulting in praise to Him. See 1 Peter 2:9.

God's ultimate end in making us His heritage was not for our own benefit or privilege, as the Jews tended to think. It was for His benefit in that we are to glorify Him. Let us express our gratitude by being a people for whom God receives glory and praise.

#### **GOD SEALED US WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Kings affixed their seal to that which belonged to them. Cattlemen today burn their brand into the hide of stock belonging to them. At baptism the Lord seals us with His Holy Spirit, marking the Christian as belonging to Him. The wedding ring communicates the pledge of faithfulness to a promise. The church, the bride of Christ, receives and displays the Holy Spirit in prospect of realization of eternal glory at the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).

This gift of the Holy Spirit is sometimes connected in Scripture with baptism (Acts 2:38-39; 5:32; 1 Cor. 12:13). But it is also connected with our faith (Acts 19:2; Gal. 3:2, 14; Eph. 1:13; 3:17). So baptism and faith go together. You can't have one without the other. Baptism is the sinner's expression of faith in the promises of God. An one result of that expression of faith is the awarding of the Holy Spirit to dwell within us as God's security deposit that He will give to us the full inheritance.

We should express our gratitude and praise to God for this gift of grace by displaying the fruit of the Spirit. See Galatians 5:22-33.

Our salvation by God's grace is to be to His eternal glory and praise, for we would not have this relationship with God were it not for our position "in Christ." Oh, God, may our lives of sacrifice and service express our gratitude for Your grace.

# GRACE & GRATITUDE