

Blessings in God's Grace Family

Ephesians 1:3-14

Introduction

Doxology — “Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.” What blessings? Material, temporal? Perhaps that explains why we are not always so eager to praise God and give Him glory. Because some days we just don't feel all that blessed. Things aren't going our way. We're tired and exhausted.

Let me suggest that an understanding of God's grace will cure that malady. The primary reason we should praise God is because of the spiritual blessings that flow from His hand of grace. These blessings are not subject to our feelings. And unlike our feelings, they do not change.

Kenny Boles writes, “It may be a good index of our own spirituality to consider for which kind of blessings we are more likely to cry out, ‘Praise the Lord!’”

The College Press NIV Commentary — Galatians & Ephesians, p. 202-203, College Press, Joplin, MO, 1993.

It is my humble opinion that our praise is less inhibited and affected by our surroundings and circumstances as we grow in our understanding and appreciation of God's marvelous gifts of grace. The gathering on the Lord's Day becomes a rich fellowship among those who join in praising the glory of God's grace.

I genuinely grieve for those who apparently view worship and service in the Kingdom as a loathsome duty and obligation. I long for them to come to an understanding of the spiritual blessings we have in Christ by His amazing grace. Only then will worship stop being a service to render out of obedience to a command and will become a sacrifice of praise emanating from a grateful heart.

I. He chose us.

Paul certainly had good reason to rejoice in God's grace. Paul, like us, is like the dumpy, clumsy, fat kid that is usually last to be selected when dividing up on teams to play ball.

Despite the fact that we are not worthy of His favor, God loves us! He received 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. But some Christians don't want to be different — separated from the world. 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.

II. He predestined us to adoption.

Kids will sometimes ask their parents if they were adopted. Parents have teased their children, asking, “If we'd had our choice, do you think we would have chosen you?!” Well, God's answer is, “Yes!” It was His good pleasure to choose us.

The reason it pleases Him is because we are in Christ. The Father is eager to consider all of Jesus' brothers as joint heirs of promise. *John 1:12* says, “As many as received [Jesus], to them He gave the right to become children of God.”

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, however, 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 response to this ought to be that we would 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.

III. He 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 (*1 Peter 1:18, 19*).

This redemption, Paul says, is the forgiveness of our sins. Not just the covering of our sins, but the Bible says it is 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.

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.

IV. He made known to us the mystery of His will.

Now it is important that we understand that this word "mystery" does not refer to something that is difficult to comprehend or figure out. It refers to something that has been hidden but is now being 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 that body in which all men are united under the authority of Christ is the church.

This administration was to be inaugurated in the fullness of time, or at just the right time. Paul identifies this time in *Galatians 4:4* as the birth of the Christ child.

The primary focus of God's will is that everything would come together under the headship of Jesus. In *Colossians 1:19-20*, Paul writes, "***For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in [Jesus], and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross.***"

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.

V. He 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 (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 praise His glorious grace. Peter wrote (*1 Peter 2:9*), "***You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.***"

God's ultimate end in making us His heritage was not for our own benefit and 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.

VI. He sealed us with the Holy Spirit.

If you were the king, and you wanted to mark something as belonging to you, you would affix the royal seal to it. It is similar to a cattle brand. When affixed to a document, it gave it royal sanction or authority.

But Paul says it is also like the downpayment on a house, in that the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance. He [the Holy Spirit] is “the first installment of similar payments to be made in the future.” (Boles, p. 211)

The word Paul uses is the word that Greeks today use for an engagement ring. It is the pledge of faithfulness to a promise. What a fitting parallel that the bride of Christ, the church, should wear Him as the token of the promise that we will share in 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). The conclusion to which we are forced is that 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. And 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: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Conclusion

Our tendency might be to fall into the same sin of the Jews, who gloated in their relationship to God. But the purpose and focus does not revolve around us, but in the glory of God's grace (v. 6, 12, 14).

We would not have this relationship with God were it not for our position “in Christ.” All praise and glory belongs to Him!