
What We Have In Jesus

By

Mark A McGee



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Chapter One

Our Blessings

We are just weeks from Easter and people are starting to think about Jesus again. Why is that? Why do people think about Jesus around Easter and again at Christmas? Why do they think about Him at those times, but not think about Him in the months between? There is something special about Jesus, even to those who don't think much about Him during most of the year (including a remarkably large number of people who call themselves Christians). God prepared a special "body" for His Son so that He would become like us and die for us (Luke 1:26-38; Hebrews 10:1-10; Philippians 2:1-11). What does that mean for us?

We have "everything" in Jesus! The Apostle Paul wrote a powerful letter to the Christians in the ancient city of Asia Minor known as Ephesus. He began his letter by telling them what they already had in their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

"Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him. In Him also we have obtained

an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. In Him you also *trusted*, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul made a bold statement to the Christians of Ephesus and every other city in the world of that generation and century until this day: we are blessed with “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.” That’s a declaration that could come only from a direct Apostle of God’s Christ. Who else could make such a claim with absolute knowledge and impunity? Who else could know for sure unless they had heard it straight from the Mouth of God? Leaders of other ancient religions and philosophies made claims that were mostly preposterous, but none could be so bold to claim that their deity or philosophy had the ability to grant “all spiritual blessings.”

Most religions and belief systems hold back somewhat in their claims in case they’re wrong about some spiritual or physical aspect of life, every religion “except” Christianity. Getting to heaven or “paradise” always depends on the works of the individual in other belief systems, thus letting the “dieties” off the hook if the promises don’t work (which they don’t). Christianity is the only religion where God does it all stating clearly that the human race is unable to do anything for itself. Jesus Christ says He is the only Way to God in Heaven. There is no other way. No one could come close to the Throne of Almighty God unless they go according to the Way, the Truth and the Life: Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

The people of Israel immediately recognized the difference between the message of Christ and the messages of other religious leaders because Jesus spoke as one who had authority from heaven (“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He

taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” Matthew 7:28-29). Jesus has the Authority to save lost humanity and He gave His Authority to His apostles to carry out the work of preaching the Gospel of the world. Those apostles gave their authority to their disciples who gave it to their disciples... until that authority reached you and me.

Paul was given specific instructions along with heavenly authority to preach the Gospel of Christ to Jews and Gentiles and to promise them about the spiritual blessings they would have as they placed their faith in Christ for salvation. He explained that to King Agrippa of Judea.

“While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? *It is* hard for you to kick against the goads.’ So I said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ And He said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you. I will deliver you from the *Jewish* people, as well as *from* the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, *in order* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’ Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance. For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill *me*. Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and

Moses said would come— that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the *Jewish* people and to the Gentiles.” Acts 26:12-23

Jesus told Paul he was to tell believers (those who were sanctified by faith in Christ) about their spiritual “inheritance.” That’s what Paul did for decades as an Apostle of Christ. That’s what Paul wrote believers in his many letters to the churches and individuals. That’s what Paul addressed first in his letter to the Ephesians.

Chapter Two

Our Inheritance

Christians have an amazing spiritual “inheritance.” We can thank Jesus for that. We are blessed in every imaginable way because of Christ. “Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.” (Ephesians 1:3)

- Our blessings are “spiritual” and in “heavenly places” – our blessings are not earth based. They’re not something we can see with our eyes, hear with our ears, smell with our noses and touch with our fingers. They will not pass away, they will not rust, they will not decay. They are by nature “spiritual” and thus spiritually perceived, understood and enjoyed. They are blessings of another realm. They are not lying on the ground, flying through the air or floating on the water. They are not restricted by height, width or depth. They are not held within an earthly container that has boundaries of size and shape. We don’t have “some” spiritual blessings. God says we have “every” spiritual blessing. We don’t compare what we have spiritually with other believers as if one Christian can have more or less of God’s blessings than another believer. Every believer has every spiritual blessing. Our blessings are safe from being stolen, lost or given away. They are secure in heavenly places. No person, no government, no army, no angel can hide or take our spiritual blessings from us. Everything God has given us is under His Supreme provision, protection and purpose.
- That knowledge should fill us with hope and joy every moment of our lives. Life on earth is hard. Sometimes it can become too much for us to bear ... in our own power. It is at those times we need to read and re-read Eph.

1:3 and remember this great “fact” about our position in Christ. We have “every” spiritual blessing and no matter how difficult life becomes, we don’t lose what Christ **won** for us. Jesus won those spiritual blessings for us through His pain, through His humiliation, through His stripes, through His death on the Cross, through His resurrection from the grave, through His ascension into the heavenlies to sit on the Royal Throne of Heaven. The “spiritual blessings” you and I enjoy today were provided for us at great cost to the God of Heaven. He loved the world so much, He gave His One and Only Son so that those who believe would not perish, but have everlasting life. We can thank Him every day for what Christ did for us and enjoy those spiritual blessings.

The spiritual blessings we have in Christ are certainly remarkable and constitute true miracles since they cannot be performed by anyone but God. However, our spiritual blessings contrast deeply to those of God’s other chosen people, Israel, and should give us great reason to pause and reflect on the vastness of our blessings. The relationship God has with us is based solely upon His Grace. Israel’s covenant is based upon God’s Grace and the Law He gave them in the wilderness. The Church, which is the Body of Christ, receives every spiritual blessing in heavenly places as a gift of Grace from Jesus Christ, the Savior and Head of the Body. We do not deserve it and cannot earn it. Israel received its spiritual blessings as it obeyed Jehovah. Israel did not receive “every” spiritual blessing as Christians do because no flesh can obey God.

“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known.” Deuteronomy 11:26-28

Even as God gave Israel His Law and His promise of great reward in a land flowing with milk and honey, Jehovah the Almighty laid out for Israel the sad

future it would face in its inability to obey even the least of God's commandments. This portion of God's Word was prophetic of the terrible history of Israel's punishments for its sins for thousands of years to come.

"I *am* the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, that *you* should not be their slaves; I have broken the bands of your yoke and made you walk upright. 'But if you do not obey Me, and do not observe all these commandments, and if you despise My statutes, or if your soul abhors My judgments, so that you do not perform all My commandments, *but* break My covenant, I also will do this to you: I will even appoint terror over you, wasting disease and fever which shall consume the eyes and cause sorrow of heart. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall be defeated by your enemies. Those who hate you shall reign over you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you. 'And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. I will break the pride of your power; I will make your heavens like iron and your earth like bronze. And your strength shall be spent in vain; for your land shall not yield its produce, nor shall the trees of the land yield their fruit. 'Then, if you walk contrary to Me, and are not willing to obey Me, I will bring on you seven times more plagues, according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, destroy your livestock, and make you few in number; and your highways shall be desolate. 'And if by these things you are not reformed by Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you, and I will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword against you that will execute the vengeance of the covenant; when you are gathered together within your cities I will send pestilence among you; and you shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. When I have cut off your supply of bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall bring back your bread by weight, and you shall eat and not be satisfied. 'And

after all this, if you do not obey Me, but walk contrary to Me, then I also will walk contrary to you in fury; and I, even I, will chastise you seven times for your sins. You shall eat the flesh of your sons, and you shall eat the flesh of your daughters. I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you. I will lay your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries to desolation, and I will not smell the fragrance of your sweet aromas. I will bring the land to desolation, and your enemies who dwell in it shall be astonished at it. I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you; your land shall be desolate and your cities waste. Then the land shall enjoy its sabbaths as long as it lies desolate and you *are* in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest and enjoy its sabbaths. As long as *it* lies desolate it shall rest—for the time it did not rest on your sabbaths when you dwelt in it. 'And as for those of you who are left, I will send faintness into their hearts in the lands of their enemies; the sound of a shaken leaf shall cause them to flee; they shall flee as though fleeing from a sword, and they shall fall when no one pursues. They shall stumble over one another, as it were before a sword, when no one pursues; and you shall have no *power* to stand before your enemies. You shall perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies shall eat you up. And those of you who are left shall waste away in their iniquity in your enemies' lands; also in their fathers' iniquities, which are with them, they shall waste away. 'But if they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their unfaithfulness in which they were unfaithful to Me, and that they also have walked contrary to Me, and *that* I also have walked contrary to them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if their uncircumcised hearts are humbled, and they accept their guilt—then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and My covenant with Isaac and My covenant with Abraham I will remember; I will remember the land. The land also shall be left empty by them, and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; they will accept their guilt, because they

despised My judgments and because their soul abhorred My statutes. Yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, nor shall I abhor them, to utterly destroy them and break My covenant with them; for I *am* the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I *am* the Lord.’ These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws which the Lord made between Himself and the children of Israel on Mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.” Leviticus 26:13-46

Israel continues under the curse of the Law to this day and has yet to be redeemed from individual and national sin, though their redemption is drawing closer every day. Fortunately for Christians, we are not under any curse and have been forgiven all our sin because we are not under the control of the Law, but are under the protection of God’s Grace!

“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace” Romans 6:14

Anyone who stands outside God’s salvation which came through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Jew or Gentile, is under the curse of God’s Law. No man, woman or child can stand before God on the merits of their own works and good deeds. No one is justified by the Law. Those who are just live by faith.

“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.’ But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God *is* evident, for ‘the just shall live by faith.’ Yet the law is not of faith, but ‘the man who does them shall live by them.’ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree’), that the

blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” Galatians 3:10-14

We are truly blessed to know the salvation of God and not only are we saved from eternal punishment, which every one of us deserves, God gives us every spiritual blessing in heavenly places! Before any of us might become proud of what “we” were able to accomplish when Israel could not, let us always remember that what we have in Christ is all from God and because of God. None of us received any spiritual blessing because of our goodness. We are no better than the Jews and they are no better than the Gentiles.

“What then? Are we better *than they*? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one.’ Romans 3:9-12

It’s pretty clear, then, that the pride any of us should feel about our having every spiritual blessing in heavenly places should be in Christ only, Who earned our blessings with His Body nailed to a Cross and His perfect obedience to God’s Law. Without Christ we have no hope. With Christ we have every spiritual blessing. What a gift!

Chapter Three

Our Life

The Apostle Paul is specific about the individual blessings God gives His children. The first he mentioned is that God chose us in Him “before the foundation of the world.” When we consider who we were before we were saved, God’s choosing us becomes an even larger blessing.

“And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” Ephesians 2:1-3

We were “dead” in trespasses and sins. We lived our lives according to the direction of every other sinner in this world. We lived according to the direction of Satan, the prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit that works in all children of disobedience. We used to live as children of disobedience behaving according to the lusts of our flesh. We lived our lives to fulfill every desire of our flesh and sinful mind. We were by our very nature children of wrath, just like every other sinner. We were spiritually dead, dirty and diseased. No one would look at us and find anything attractive about us. If we were put up for adoption, no one would want us. No one, except God.

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ,

just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.” Ephesians
1:3-4

God “chose” us. He wanted us. He loved us. His desire was to make us part of His spiritual family, part of the Body of believers in His Son Jesus Christ. How amazing is that?

“... just as He chose us in Him.” Those seven words hold a world of hope for every believer and every person who will believe. God chose us. We are His choice. He wanted us. He loved us. His wish was that we belong to Him. How wonderful!

He chose us. We are not an unpleasant duty. We are not a dreadful deed God had to do to fulfil some ancient obligation He couldn't find a way to escape. God chose us freely, voluntarily, willingly, wantingly, gladly!

God chose us “in Him.” The words “in Him” are used in the context of the location of our blessings: “in the heavenly places in Christ.” God the Father chose you and me in Christ! God's work is always done in perfect harmony. The triune God – Three in One – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – make “their” choice. It's never one against the other. The Triune God makes a singular choice – and their choice was you and me! God the Father chose us in His Son and God the Holy Spirit agreed with the choice and plays a vital role in carrying out the purpose of the choice.

When did God make this choice? Was it recently? Was it just before we prayed to receive Christ as our Savior? Was it at our birth? Was it when our parents prayed we would pray to receive Christ? The Bible says clearly that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit chose us “before the foundation of the world”! God chose us before He created the world. His choice was not made in haste. He chose us in Christ before His creative act of bringing the world into being. God knew us intimately and loved us intensely long before the first human beings walked on the earth. He chose us before there was a world surrounded by a sky

filled with stars, planets and moons. He created us before there was water, air and land. He created us before the birds sang, the fish swam and the animals foraged for food. God wanted us and chose us before He created the world we live in and depend on for life. God's choosing us was an amazing activity of the Great Mind of God before He thought and spoke the worlds into being. God chose us, then created a place for us. What phenomenal love!

God didn't just choose "people" to be saved; He chose "you" personally because He knew you before time, loved you and wanted you. He knew who you would be. He knew when you would be born. He knew where you would be born. He knew who your parents would be. He knew what you would look like, what you would do as a child, what you would become as a teen and adult. He knew all about you. He knew your strengths and weaknesses. He knew your sinful ways and made a way for you to become His child. He sent His Son to die for your sins and make a path to righteousness. He knew when you would believe, when you would pray to receive the salvation He provided for you, how you would live your life as a Christian. He knew everything and chose you!

God chose us in Christ before He created the world "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." God had a marvelous purpose in choosing us. He wanted the best for us. He wanted us to be saved from sin, to be spiritually and physically whole again. God chose us to be "holy and without blame before him in love." The word "holy" means we are separated and dedicated to God. We are set apart for God's service. The words "without blame" mean we are without any blemish. God has made us perfect in Christ. We are like Him. Christ was the pure sacrifice without blemish and God chose us to be made like His Son. No one can point to any blemish and accuse us of being unworthy of belonging to God because God has made us without blemish. We are without blame (blameless) in Christ. That's how God sees us now, how He saw us before the creation of the world and how He will see us through eternity. God chose us before He created the world that we should be holy and without blame.

The position of our blamelessness is “before him.” We would be foolish to think we are perfect in this world. We know our faults. We know our sins. We know our failings. We are as imperfect as they come. We don’t (can’t) live up to all God asks of His children. We are human. We are sinners. However, in Christ, we are saved sinners. God sees us differently than we see ourselves or other believers. He sees us standing before Him in love as sinners saved by His Matchless Grace. He sees us covered by the Blood of Christ. He sees us saved and set apart for service to Him. We are holy and without blame in God’s sight – in His view.

As we will see during our study, God is the reason we can be holy and blameless. We are not holy and blameless because of something we did, do or will do. We are holy and blameless in God’s sight because He sees us “in” Christ. Jesus is the Holy One. He is the Blameless One. We are holy and blameless before God because we are in Christ and He is in us. That is both a “miracle” and a “mystery”.

This first spiritual blessing is the greatest blessing of all. We have hope for every aspect of our lives. When we fail (as we will continue to do every day we breathe air on this planet and our heart pumps blood through our body), we can pick ourselves up and know that in God’s eyes we are holy and blameless in Christ. We will blame ourself for so many things in this lifetime, but God chose us to be holy and without blame before Him in love. That’s how God sees us and how He wants us to see ourselves, other believers and those who will become believers.

The first blessing is how we learn as Christians to see God, see ourselves, see others, see this world and the world to come. We can do what God calls on us to do because we have the proper perspective about life. We understand when He chose us, how He chose us and why He chose us. That perspective makes every day special, every moment important, every opportunity vital.

You are so special! God chose you from before the foundation of the world. He chose you to be holy. He chose you to be without blame before Him in love. Enjoy your life!



Chapter Four

Our Adoption

The first blessing Paul mentions in Ephesians is that God chose us in Him “before the foundation of the world.” The second blessing Paul mentions is our “adoption.” Paul wrote that God “having predestined us to **adoption** as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” What a blessing! What an eternal joy! God chose us “before the foundation of the world” to become His children through spiritual adoption. We were born into this world by flesh into sin. We were dead in trespasses and sins. We were under the control of the world, the flesh and the devil. However, God knew us from before the foundation of the world and chose us to become His children through legal adoption!

“Having predestined” speaks of God’s “marking out the boundry or limits” (*proorizo*) of our relationship with Him at sometime in the past (before the foundation of the world). God “predetermined” or “defined beforehand” what our relationship would be with Him. The word was used by ancient Greeks when speaking about the gods determining their destiny in life. It was something determined “beforehand.” Some translators have chosen the word “foreordain” to explain the meaning of “predestined.” It is a predetermination about a person’s future. God predetermined that He would adopt you as one of His children!

Paul used *proorizo* in other letters to Christians to help them understand their unique relationship with God.

1 Corinthians 2:7 – “But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden *wisdom* which God ordained before the ages for our glory.”

Romans 8:29-30 – “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.”

Luke used the word in Acts 4:28 – “... to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” The apostles used the word in the context of the enemies of God gathered together against Him to murder His Son Jesus Christ. It is a reminder that God “predetermined, predestined, foreordained, chose beforehand,” that Jesus Christ would die a violent death at the hands of God’s enemies.

Paul used the same word when describing the decision God made about you and about me in “predetermining” that we would be adopted as His children. The word “adoption” is *huiiothesia* and means “a placing as a son” and speaks of an adult rather than a minor child. It means the adopted person received all the benefits of a son who had reached the age of “maturity,” including full civil status. That status included the position of heirship (heirs with Christ).

Paul was the only writer in the New Testament to use the word *huiiothesia*.

Romans 8:15 – “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”

Romans 8:23 – “Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.”

Galatians 4:5 – “... to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”

The word “to” is the preposition *eis* and means “with a view to,” which speaks of purpose or result of an action. Adoption as adult, mature sons of God was the purpose of His predetermination made as part of His choosing us from before the foundation of the world. How blessed we are!

This adoption as adult sons was “by Jesus Christ to Himself.” The word *dia* is a preposition of intermediate agency. Jesus Christ was the intermediary (intermediate agent) between God and you. Sin carved a huge chasm between God and the human race. God is holy, the human race is unholy. People could not approach the Holy God except through an intermediate agent. Paul wrote to Timothy – “For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the* Man Christ Jesus.” Jesus Christ is God’s Only Begotten Son. He alone is worthy to be the permanent and eternal intermediate agent. His death on the cross broke the wall of partition between God and the human race making salvation possible. Our adoption as adult sons was “by Jesus Christ” to God the Father.

This adoption is about the highest and most important relationship any human being can have in this life and the life to come: a personal relationship with their Creator. In Christ’s famous prayer just before his arrest, Jesus prayed to His Father -

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.” John 17:20-24

Jesus prayed for all the people who would believe in Him and asked His Father to make them “one in Us.” The purpose of that relationship of unity was so “the world may believe that You sent Me.” Christians’ personal relationship to God is much bigger and higher than just our salvation. Our relationship with God is a primary way the world sees that the Father sent the Son to save the world. Christ’s prayer for the unity relationship goes a step further to include Christians’ relationship to each other. “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” The way we support, encourage and treat each other is vitally important in God’s plan to reach the lost world for Christ.

Our “adoption as sons” comes with great reward and great responsibility. We have been given the privilege of being numbered among the redeemed from the world’s masses. We have direct access to God through Jesus Christ (“Abba, Father”). God listens to our prayers and gives us answers as a Father would an adopted child who has full legal rights of maturity and heirship. We will have access to God in person when the mortal puts on immortality and we go to be with Him forever in Heaven. That access to our Heavenly Father comes with a big price and responsibility. It cost the Only Begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, His Blood and His Life. Jesus paid the highest price the Son of God could possibly pay to redeem unworthy, lost sinners, like us. He sacrificed His holy life for us. We went from being lifeless and filled with sin to being alive and saved by grace because of the price Christ paid on the cross for us. We have the highest responsibility to conduct ourselves as sons of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords through humble obedience and grateful service. The world is watching to see whether we are one with God and each other. What they see will tell them if what we claim is real about God sending His Son to earth to die for their sins.

God's plan for our relationship with Him through His Son is also from before the foundation of the world. "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world." It is difficult for us to comprehend anyone or anything that existed before the foundation of the world. We are so locked into time and space that the thought of God living outside that framework is hard for us to get our minds around. However, the fact remains that God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) predetermined before the creation of the world that you and I would receive the many benefits of His Love and Grace. One of the primary benefits is we are allowed to behold the glory of Christ. He wants us to be with Him where He is at the Right Hand of the Almighty God. We now see the glory of Christ in small part because of our mortality, but one day as immortals we will see and experience the complete and outstanding glory of Jesus Christ when we witness His full power and glory in Heaven!

God's predetermined choice to make us adult sons is "according to the good pleasure of His will." What a stunning thought! What God did in choosing us to become adult sons pleased Him. It was "according to" (dominated by) the good pleasure of His will. The words "good pleasure" come from the word *eudokian*. It has the meaning of "good will, satisfaction, delight, counsel, purpose." This good pleasure comes from God's "will" (*thelema*). It is a desire that comes from God's heart and emotions. As God looked into future time and space ("before the foundation of the world") from His eternal throne, He chose us and predetermined our relationship with Him as adult sons. That expression of His grace and mercy was dominated by the delight and good counsel of His loving heart. What a wonderful gift and benefit we have in Christ!

Chapter Five

Our Purpose

The first blessing Paul mentions in Ephesians is that God chose us in Him “before the foundation of the world.” The second blessing Paul mentions is our “adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” The third blessing is that we were adopted by Christ “to the praise of the glory of his grace.” We have a high calling and purpose! There is nothing small or ordinary about Christians. We have been called by the Most High God to the most high purpose: “to the praise of the glory of his grace.” That statement in itself is amazing and almost beyond explanation.

“to the praise”

- Praise is the Greek *epainos* and means “applause, commendation, approbation, praise.” Jesus Christ is the object of our praise. I like the word picture of applause. I’ve often thought about how hundreds of millions of Christians will react to seeing Christ in Heaven’s great arenas and applause and shouts of adulation come to mind. I can just see and hear the throngs of the redeemed applauding, shouting and singing songs of praise to the Lamb of God as we see Him in all His Heavenly glory. We get a picture of that in the Book of Revelation as the heavenly host sing “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.” Won’t it be wonderful to join with the angels in heaven to sing their song to Christ? We’ll see the 24 elders worship Christ saying “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” We will praise

Christ with our whole body, including mouths for shouting and singing and hands for applauding.

- We don't have to wait until we get to heaven to praise Christ and applaud Him. We were adopted as children "to the praise" of Christ in this lifetime and for eternity! The singing and praising and shouting and applauding started at our adoption service (our salvation) and will continue forever. The purpose of our entire life is to be to His praise!

"of the glory"

- Our excited praise is because of the "glory of his grace." Glory is *doxa* and means a high opinion of someone or something and the honor that would go with it. In the case of Jesus Christ, *doxa* would be the highest opinion and the highest honor we can possibly give! We know about the glory of Christ through what He created and His life-giving sustenance to everyone and everything ("For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him." Colossians 1) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." John 1)

"of his grace"

- Grace is *charis* and means "unmerited favor." *Charis* has the underlining meaning of favor that causes joy and gladness. The Grace of God brings joy! It brings gladness! It brings hope! We were lost in sin. We were spiritually dead. We deserved God's punishment, but instead we received His Love and Grace! That's why we sing! That's why we shout! That's why we applaud!

God's Grace is what we praise and honor. Christians were adopted as children of God to the praise of the glory of His grace. We spend our lives praising God, applauding God, singing to God and serving God because of the glory (highest opinion and honor) of God's Grace (unmerited favor). There is nothing higher or more important in our life than the high purpose of our calling. We are God's children. We were adopted as His children to be to the praise of the glory of His Grace.

How do we live our lives to the praise of the glory of His grace? We obey Him. That means knowing what He says about every subject of life, every aspect of life, and obey what He says. That means reading the Bible regularly, intently and fervently. That means praying to God regularly, intently and fervently. That means living the life of Christ before others regularly, intently and fervently. That means sharing Christ with others regularly, intently and fervently.

Think about how excited Christians get at sports events, entertainment events, church events. We shout and applaud and high-five each other and enjoy ourselves thoroughly. Do we have that same high opinion of Christ? Does being a child of God bring out that kind of fervent joy and gladness? If not, why not? What keeps us from enjoying our relationship to the Most High God to a higher degree than our favorite team making a touchdown or getting a home run or hitting another basket or making another goal? Why would we become more excited about hearing our favorite singer or group in concert than hearing from God in prayer or study?

I think about this often. Nothing in this life should make me happier or fill me with more joy than being a child of God. Christians should be "the" happiest people on earth. We have something that everyone wants, even though they don't know it. I didn't know I wanted Christ when I was an atheist. I wanted happiness. I wanted joy. I wanted fulfillment. I wanted satisfaction. I wanted love. I wanted acceptance. I just couldn't find it in anything or anyone. My search for peace in

this life was not fulfilled by anything in this life. What I wanted was to be adopted by God. I wanted His love, His grace, His acceptance. I wanted to belong to Him. I just didn't know it until He found me and wooed me and saved me and cleansed me and taught me about His Grace. That's when my applause began. That's when I shouted for joy. That's when I cried with tears of thanksgiving. That's when I knew I belonged. That's when I knew my life had begun. That's when I knew life had meaning. I was a child of God. We are children of God "to the praise of the glory of his grace."

Chapter Six

Our Acceptance

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:3-14

The first blessing Paul mentions in Ephesians is that God chose us in Him “before the foundation of the world.” The second blessing Paul mentions is our “adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.” The third blessing is that we were adopted by Christ “to the praise of the glory of his grace.” The fourth blessing is “wherein he hath made us accepted

in the beloved.” What an amazing statement! God has made us accepted in the beloved. Some key words to understand in the context: “wherein, accepted, beloved.”

“wherein”

Where is the “wherein”? The words just before “wherein” are *tes charitos autou* - “of the grace of him.” The word “wherein” refers to “the grace of him.” That’s where we have all the blessings of God – in His Grace. Understanding, accepting and rejoicing in the unmerited favor of God is everything in a Christian’s life. We have all good things because of God’s Grace.

“made us accepted”

The Greek is *echaritosen*. It comes from the root word *charis* and means “compassed with favor, honored with blessings.” We are surrounded by God’s Grace and honored with great blessings! We do not live in a vacuum. We do not accept Christ as Lord and Savior, receive His forgiveness and the gift of eternal life, then walk away to spend the rest of our life alone waiting for rapture or death. We spend every minute of our lives “in” God’s Grace; we are blessed with its abundance of blessings and protection! God freely bestowed on us His great blessings; He favored us and made us accepted. God’s Grace is active! His Grace acts upon us and in the process we are accepted.

What does it mean to be accepted? The act of accepting is not ours to do. We don’t accept ourselves. We may want to be accepted into a club or school or organization, but it is the choice of the head of the club, school or organization to accept us and make us members. Salvation, the forgiveness of sins cleansing from all iniquity and the gift of eternal life, is for God to give. It is not in the power of anyone else to grant it. God and only God is the Creator of life and He alone is the One to give eternal life. God could have come up with any rule or regulation necessary for humans to be forgiven and receive the gift of eternal life. Anything God would have come up with would have been right for Him to do. He could

have made us climb the highest mountains on our bleeding hands and knees for 40 years to be forgiven. He could have made us fight a thousand trained fighters and win every battle to be forgiven. He could have made us undergo the same kind of torture dealt to Jesus over and over throughout our life to be forgiven. God could have done anything He wanted to us, but what God did was love us and surround us with His Grace. That is what Grace means: we don't deserve it, we can't earn it, we can't buy it, it is a free gift from God.

Paul writes that we are accepted "in the beloved." What or Who is that?

"in the beloved"

The Greek is *en toi egapemeno*i. It is the perfect passive participle of *agapao* (love) and is used only here in the New Testament. It means an action completed in the past with results still affecting the present. "Beloved" is locative of sphere, which means God made us accepted by His Grace in the sphere of His Son.

Jesus Christ is the Beloved of God! God "accepts" us in His Beloved. We do not have to do anything for God to receive His acceptance. We do things for God because of His acceptance. How blessed we are that the Almighty God of Heaven has accepted us in Christ, His Beloved!

My prayer for you is that you enjoy this amazing life that Jesus Christ has breathed into your spirit and body and that you find it your earnest desire to share Him with everyone in your life. You are truly blessed.

“Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ.”

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