

AM Ephesians 1 To the Praise of His Glorious Grace

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[0 : 00] Let's read together Paul's letter to the Ephesians chapter 1. Ephesians chapter 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things, according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ, might be to the praise of his glory.

[2 : 23] In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom, and of revelation, in the knowledge of him.

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of his great might, that he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the one to come.

And he put all things under his feet, and gave him as head over all things, to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Doesn't scripture leave you breathless sometimes? Chapter 1 is, as God leads us on, I would like to think about this morning.

[4 : 49] In the ESV, it says, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the beloved. In the New International Version, it says, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us, in the one he loves.

If we look back at the original Greek words, and literally translate them, transliterate them, what it says is, to the praise of the glory of his grace, with which he engraced us, in the one he loved.

the word for grace, and the word for freely giving us, or blessing us, is the same word.

If like supermarket food, and now restaurant food, the calorie content of the spiritual food, we have just read, was to be calculated, we would have a very rich meal, indeed here.

It's not one for those on a diet, not for babies, and not for those who want to pick a bit of the meal here, and then push the rest to the side of the plate, because this text, gives us the gospel of Jesus Christ, in all its richness, and fullness.

[6 : 25] It's a gospel meal, which has been graciously, and thoughtfully prepared, and beautifully presented, a true MasterChef masterpiece.

And it also very succinctly, presents us with a definition, of purpose, our ultimate purpose, the why, of why are we here.

I do just love that passage, in 2 Samuel, when Elijah had stood up, against the prophets of Baal, and he had been resoundingly victorious, as God upheld his cause.

But then Elijah had taken, his spiritual eyes, off the Almighty, and had looked at Queen Jezebel instead. And she was not just threatening, but promising, his premature demise, a fatwa, had been issued.

And Elijah ran, the length of the country. We would call it, an ultramarathon, now 110 miles. And then further, into the wilderness, and he prayed, for his life to end.

[7 : 37] But then he was given, strength, from food, provided by an angel, to travel onwards, to Mount Sinai, or Horeb, as it's alternatively called. And when on Horeb, the still small voice, of the Almighty spoke, that quiet whisper, asked that very question, what are you doing here, Elijah?

Now what are we doing here? Why are we here? You could argue that we're here because of God's word, his will, his protection, his promises.

He has, in a very real sense, brought us all here today. But the answer to the why of our presence, the why are we here, it's encapsulated in the answer to the second question, of the shorter catechism.

What is man's chief end? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. That's the why of our existence answered.

We're here to glorify God, the triune God, and to enjoy him forever. And can we marry that answer with today's text, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us, and the one he loves.

[9 : 06] Let's see if we can. So let's try and get our heads around this extraordinary text in verse 6, because it's like a gourmet spiritual meal with three phenomenal courses to be consumed, each with multiple ingredients.

You can tell I like cooking. I also like eating, but I love cooking. And so I recognize in this something really, really special. Now we read this verse in the context of Paul writing to Ephesian believers living in a pagan country, not unlike ourselves, and he's seeking to broaden their horizons as to the abundance of God's riches lavished on them.

And his particular prayer, as we have it in verse 17 of chapter 1 that we read, is that they and we, for this is surely us too, is that they may know God better.

Now verses 3 to 5 of Ephesians chapter 1 sets the scene for understanding about spiritual blessings in Christ for us, for you and me.

This is for us. Just how remarkable is that? And in these verses is where we're confronted with the answer to many basic and essential spiritual questions.

[10 : 43] The who, what, where, when, how, why questions. The first is who. Who is the source of spiritual blessings? All true spiritual blessings.

Well, it is none other than almighty God himself. God, Yahweh, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 3.

The when is he the source of these spiritual blessings? Well, verse 4 tells us we were chosen in him before the creation of the world. That is when the blessings were generated, but they exist now, praise God, and they shall exist throughout eternity to come.

Our God does not change like shifting shadows. Our God is eternal. He is constant. He is faithful. So who, when, the where, where were we chosen?

It was in the heavenly realms. This was before Genesis 1. Before there was a physical world at all. The what?

[11 : 53] Every, every spiritual blessing in Christ. Because it's taken for granted and rightly so that life does not consist only in this physical body and mind, but we are spirit.

God is spirit. And as, and those who worship him, as Jesus said to the woman at the well at Samaria, those who worship him must worship him in spirit and in the truth.

But these spiritual blessings are not in Buddha or Mohammed or our own intellect and pride, but in one place and one place only, one person and one person only.

and that person is Christ Jesus. And how, how are these spiritual blessings?

Well, how are they to come, they're to come in love, agape, love, unconditional and unrestrained love. He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will.

[13 : 09] However, our text today in verse 6 gives us the definition of divine purpose. It tells us not the who, the when, the where, the what, or the how, but the why.

And the why is for the praise of his glorious grace. Verse 6.

To the praise of his glorious grace. Let's examine the ingredients here. Praise. What's praise? Praise is recognizing in another value, accomplishment, excellence, virtue, goodness.

I'm giving expression to that recognition in thought and truth, in words, in shouts and cries and song. Now that could be as true of our response to our grandchildren or the football team we support.

Giving them praise. But when it comes to the praise of and to almighty God, we take that attitude of mind and body and it infuses our souls, our spirits with awe and reverence for our creator God and heavenly father and it gives us a boldness, a holy boldness purchased by the blood of Christ shed on Calvary, a holy boldness to enter the holiest of holies through the torn curtain and bring our adulation to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

[14 : 49] Praise my soul, the King of Heaven to his feet thy tribute bring. Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven.

Who like these praise should sing? Praise him, praise him, praise him, praise him, praise the everlasting King. Praise his worship. worship.

It's recognizing as far as our human limitations permit the supreme worth of the supreme being, the great I am that I am and falling down before him in wonder and love and praise.

And this is our reasonable service. This worship with our bodies, our living sacrifice, the sacrifice of our lives, not just now but throughout the endless ages of eternity.

Just how great is our God? So, all of this is to the praise of what?

[15 : 55] Man's ingenuity, technology, engineering, genetic or otherwise, artificial intelligence, our leaders, their integrity, our church leaders, their holiness, ourselves.

No, no, no, no, no. What we have to praise is something much greater in every way. Someone much greater in every way.

The praise is to be of his. That is God's grace. So, what's grace? grace and mercy go hand in hand, where mercy is us not receiving the punishment we are due for our rebellion, but grace is us receiving wonderful gifts from God which we don't deserve.

Some people like to use the mnemonic and anacrostic really, G-R-A-C-E, God's riches at Christ's expense.

To help us to grasp a little of the abundance and the character of these riches because they're not measly or stinting. These are God's riches which we're receiving.

[17 : 19] Good measure pressed down and running over, lavished on us, verse 8. Indeed, Paul uses the term superabundant to describe what we're gifted.

And it is the Lord Jesus who has paid the price for what we superabundantly receive. And make no mistake, that price was paid.

The anguish of Gethsemane and the cross, the burden of your sin and mine on his shoulders, the yielding up of his spirit, all that happened.

It is recorded historical fact. Jesus died. But he was sinless and innocent. And God's beloved son was not just another entertainment for cruel Roman soldiers.

His death had meaning and purpose and eternal value because he is the only one who ever was sinless sinless world was the only one who could pay the price of sin and so restore to right relationship with God those who put their trust in him and in him alone.

[18 : 44] Those chosen in him as it says before the creation of the world to be his adopted brothers sisters and sisters are you starting to see immense immense unworthy privilege being given to us?

But you see it suits our pride to overlook the utter undeservedness of that grace shown to us. Surely we argue surely we have contributed even if it's only a little bit to this salvation surely we've played a heart.

No, not one iota. I'm reminded of a true story I heard many years ago when I was in my teens, it wasn't yesterday, from my then minister.

He told a story of a bygone era really, almost culturally different from where we are now. It was in 1941, shortly after the Clydebank Blitz, and King George VI was making a private visit to Glasgow to see the devastation for himself.

And my minister, whose name was Roderick Mackenzie, was walking in the centre of town in Glasgow, and he was waiting to cross the road when the royal car drew up and stopped at the traffic lights.

[20 : 17] Now Mr. Mackenzie looked into the car and he instantly recognised who was in there and he raised his Homburg hat as a token of respect and to his astonishment the king looked out of the car window at that moment, saw him and raised his hat in reply.

As my minister said, that was grace. He himself was nothing. The king was on the throne of an empire in which the sun never set.

He deserved nothing, but he received a recognition and respect which amazed and thrilled him. That, he said, was grace.

But look at how this grace is described. It's described as glorious. glorious. Now the adulation which fallen men and women receive in this world for some sporting achievement or intellectual accomplishment, be it Nobel or Olympic, or possibly even more so these days for some acting or entertainment award, an Oscar or a BAFTA, it's all tawdry and evanescent, forgotten in days, except maybe in quiz shows.

But not so the grace of our God. This is glorious. It is inherently glorious because God is inherently glorious.

[21 : 59] He defines glory, eternal glory, foolishness to a fallen world perhaps, but this glorious grace will last. What a picture we have here of worth, true worth.

What a picture we have been given of what and where and on whom should be our focus because this is all about Jesus and we don't have adequate vocabulary, try as we might, to describe the awesome majesty and magnificence and power and radiance and beauty and sheer worthiness of our Lord and our God.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit to the praise of his glorious grace. But if we move on to the next course of verse 6 spiritual feast, we have the phrase which he has freely given us or in the ESV with which he's blessed us.

this grace, this glorious grace has come from God, it has come to us, it has been given to us by God and it is absolutely free.

Now, because of our fallenness, we put a deep suspicion, do we not, about anything that is free. You see, if we look in the shops, we may see that if we buy two pairs of socks, a third pair is absolutely free.

[23 : 39] No, it isn't. My first wife, my late wife Catherine, at one point ran a gift wearing collectibles business and the rule she was taught when she went to business college was that you marked up goods by two and a half times what they cost you so that you could turn over a profit to sustain the business and pay yourself a wage.

But it also gave you the capacity to apparently reduce the prices in a sale yet still turn a profit. So, if the cost price of three items might be three pounds, a pound each, you sell them for seven pounds fifty.

If you have a sale, buy two get one free, you receive five pounds. You have a profit even if it's a smaller one and so on. But nothing is free.

It simply involves recalculation. Unless, that is, we are talking about grace. God's grace expressed in Christ Jesus and also those occasions when in performing acts of charity the heart of man intentionally or inadvertently seeks to imitate the heart of God.

God's grace but beware those free gifts, those scams so prevalent in our day and age that involve the subtle stealing of hearts and minds and possessions and even if we look at an international scale of stealing someone else's country.

[25 : 17] glory. Now you're no doubt aware the Bible's packed full of examples of God's giving freely. For example, we've got that wonderful piece of prophetic poetry in Isaiah 55 to use the authorised version.

Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat, ye come buy wine and milk without money and without price.

The whole message of that chapter is that we should seek the Lord while he may be found and call on him when he's near because salvation is freely given now that is.

Tomorrow's not guaranteed. And think about all the covenants of scripture. Agreements where God promises his blessings on fallen mankind when we walk humbly and in obedience before him.

But these covenants are characterised by God taking the initiative and God bearing the cost. This is most clearly seen in the covenant of grace.

[26 : 32] Entered into by father and son before the world was created so that in the fullness of time God would send his son to be the sacrifice for our sin.

To pay the price for our sin. To take the just punishment for our sin. To restore relationship with our father. And what does John 3 16 so memorably say?

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Let's just read a few verses from Romans 5 here which give us Paul's take on this from verse 15 of chapter 5 of Romans.

But the free gift says Paul is not like the trespass for if many died through one man's trespass much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many.

[27 : 49] And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification.

For if because of one man's trespass death reigned through that one man much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

And the wonderful news is that this gift, this free gift, this free gift of grace, this free gift of God's grace that it is given, this is the news it is given to us of all people it is for us.

Can you believe that? If we've got enough sensitivity and spiritual honesty and can bear for a moment to tear our eyes away from the incredible degradation of sin that lay in Judas Iscariot and Hitler and Pol Pot and still lies in Putin and Kim Jong-un if we look at our own hearts do we recognise there as it says in Genesis 6 that the every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart are only evil all the time.

Do we recognise that it is our sin that held Jesus to the cross? Well it's not even that is it? Do I recognise that it is my sin that held Jesus to the cross?

[29 : 49] remember Galatians 2.20 I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live but Christ lives in me the life I now live in the body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

you may be familiar with the story of that eminent Scottish theologian from New College in Edinburgh John Duncan Rabby Duncan as he was known he was attending a communion service in a highland church one day and he was feeling really down in spirits and defeated and he felt so personally unworthy that when the elements the bread and the wine were passed to him he felt he couldn't partake in them and he let them pass him by as he was sitting there feeling miserable and sorry for himself he looked up and he noticed another person in the congregation a girl who allowed the bread and the wine to pass by as well and when he saw this he broke down and he wept and he saw that she was crying as well and it drove him back to the truth of the gospel that he himself needed to recall he leant forward and whispered to her take it lassie take it it's meant for sinners and he took the

Lord's supper along with her I just pray today that we would get a right perspective on all this that we would praise the glorious grace of God which he's freely given us but very briefly the last part of the meal the dessert the last part of the meal it's even richer if that's possible than what we've already enjoyed because it tells us that the glorious grace of God has been freely given to us in the one he loves in the beloved there's so much nourishment there it leaves us overwhelmed first of all it tells us that though the glorious grace of God's been given freely to us it was not free to God it cost God the life of his son and God loved that son whose life was given for us we so often gloss over what it actually says in

John 3 16 through familiarity not malice God loved us so to such an extent and in such a way that he gave his one and only son that is the one he loves he gave him in such an act an attitude of unadulterated divine generosity that countless whoever's who believe in him shall not perish but have not just life here in all its fullness but eternal life where our praise of his glorious grace will come to its greatest fruition salvation but the enabling of us sinners our restoration to right relationship with our heavenly father was not free to the trinity to our God this all caused consternation and pain within the trinity because God the father in his infinite justice and righteousness cannot countenance sin and so on the cross even as the price for our sins was being paid he turned his face away from the sin that Jesus had become so that

Christ Jesus cried out my God my God why have you forsaken me now we feel more comfortable don't we if we think of that cry of dereliction as if it were some sort of rhetorical question that doesn't need an answer but our consciences tell us they convict us that there is an answer and we in our sin are the answer the forsakenness of Jesus was because of me of us that is grace so we have a an indication of the cost of our free gift in the one he loves grace but we must also understand the uniqueness of Christ there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin our salvation rests not in several people or entities or philosophies it doesn't rest in

[34 : 46] Buddha or Mohammed or Lenin either John or Vladimir the apostle Peter tells us so clearly in his statement before the Sanhedrin in Acts 4-12 salvation is found in no one else but Jesus for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved so we must also be reminded here that it was not a matter of indifference to almighty God when that supreme act of barbarity and injustice was perpetrated outside the walls of Jerusalem the relationship of God the Father for God the Son was one of love agape love unconstrained love eternal love whose dimensions and character it will take us all eternity to begin to understand and enjoy but it's that same love it's that same love that God shows to us to us whose fellowship and adoration he desires it's that same love he shows to us that he shows to Christ because the grace he has freely given us is in the one he loves it's because we are clothed in the perfect righteousness of Christ that God can look in us at all but he sees his beloved son in whom he is well pleased when he looks at us and that's the mystery of this grace that's why it's amazing riches like us saved plucked as brands from the burning given royal status as brothers and sisters of Christ as kings and priests to reign with him but it's all about prepositions those wonderful little words as we finish we are saved by Christ from our sins we live in him and he lives in us by his spirit to the praise of his glorious grace which God has freely given us in the one he loves let's pray together father we are overwhelmed by your grace and goodness to us amazing love how can it be that thou my God should die for me father give us hearts today to understand that just because we can't get our heads around this amazing grace just because we don't in our pride understand it it does not make it false it is true and we bless you and we praise your name that this grace of yours is for sinners and if any of us here today father haven't embraced the

Lord Jesus as our saviour oh father we pray by your spirit who would work in our hearts and do that mighty work now so that your name would be glorified and that we might praise and glorify you and enjoy you forever we thank and praise you father for your amazing grace in the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray amen