



God's Grace

Understanding that God chose us for eternal life.

Note: The Scripture references in this Bible study are taken from the New King James Version.

April 28, 2002: Grace

Ephesians 1:3-7 – 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 has 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.

What does it mean that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ?

We have eternal life, an eternal abode that is being reserved for us in heaven by Jesus...

John 14:2 - In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

Are the blessings we have in Christ limited to after we are resurrected?

The blessings of having a relationship with the Savior is not limited to after we are resurrected. We have also been blessed with the presence of the Holy Spirit who bears spiritual fruit in our lives...

Galatians 5:22-23 – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Having the Holy Spirit in our lives is a benefit of having a relationship with Jesus in the here and now. The fruit of the spirit is a byproduct of that relationship. This is what Jesus was talking about when He said:

John 10:10 - I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

In verse 4, Who chose us to be in Who before the foundation of the world?

The Father chose us to be in the Lord Jesus Christ before the foundation of the world...

John 6:37 - All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

What does verse 4 say that we were chosen to be?

God has loved us so much that He chose us to be holy and without blame before Him.

How is it that sinful humans may be holy and without blame before God?

Jesus paid the penalty for our sin if we accept this provision for us by trusting in Him. A gift is not a gift until it is received. Likewise we must appropriate the free gift of eternal life through faith in God's provision.

What does it mean to be in Christ?

Being in Christ means to have a relationship with Him. Just as we are in Him He is in us in the person of the Holy Spirit...

John 15:4-5 - Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

What does it mean that God chose us to be in Christ before the foundation of the world?

Our turning to Jesus for salvation was God's plan for us from the beginning, from before He created the heavens and the earth.

What does it feel like to be chosen?

Pretty good, especially to one who was among the last picked when teams were being chosen for sports in elementary school like myself.

Does this mean that we had no choice in the matter, that those who will be saved are fated to be saved?

No, we do have a choice. Scripture makes it clear that we must let Jesus into our lives. The Lord is the ultimate gentleman, He will not force Himself on anyone. He has already made the way for us to have our sins forgiven so that we may have a relationship with Him, the ball is in our court to respond to His provision.

Rev 3:20 - Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

How do you reconcile the fact that those who are saved are predestined and yet we must chose to have a relationship with Him?

I am convinced that this is not something that we can fully comprehend in this life. Both are true... Almighty God is in such control that those He chooses will be saved and at the same time, we are not chosen to be saved unless accept the provision He made for us by receiving Jesus as our Savior and Lord.

If we are predestined to be saved, does it follow that there are those who are predestined to be lost?

God is outside the confines of time and knows who will not respond to Him and thus chose to be lost. But God does not desire that any be lost...

2 Peter 3:9 - The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

How does God give everyone an opportunity to be saved?

God gives every one an opportunity to be saved. He has revealed Himself in His creation...

Romans 1:20 - For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

God has also written His law on our hearts. This is why it is universally accepted that crimes such as murder is wrong.

Rom 2:14-15 - for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them)

Likewise, we all know we are sinners against our Creator.

We can suppress this reality enough that this thought no longer bothers us but this is the choice we make...

John 3:17-18 - For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

God gives many more people an opportunity to be saved than will respond to Him...

Matt 20:16 - For many are called, but few chosen.

How is the relationship of those who are saved described in verse 5?

We who are saved have been adopted as sons...

John 1:12 - But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

Are you ladies bothered by the translation here that says adoption as sons rather than saying adopted as children or as sons and daughters?

You shouldn't be. This is just the way the language works, what is said for men is done so for convenience. Its application to women is implied. God is not a gender sensitive as we have become in our society...

Gal 3:27-29 - For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The fact that the term sons is used instead of sons and daughters or simply children has significance when you look at it in the context of the society of the people to who the letter to the Ephesians was initially written... back then, the inheritance of an estate was passed down through the sons. I take it that this assumed that the daughters would come by property through marriage. So the significance here is that our inheritance will be direct, not through another .

What does verse 5 have to say about why God saved us?

God saved us as an act of His will according to His good pleasure. This is a good definition of grace. He chose us to be saved. We didn't do anything to earn salvation, God showed us unmerited favor by blessing us with salvation. God is under no obligation to save anyone, we are all saved the same way...

Eph 2:8-9 - For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Note that even the faith necessary to respond to God is a gift from Him.

What does verse 6 have to say about why God saved us?

God saved us to the praise of His glory of His grace.

What is the glory of God's grace?

God's glory is the revelation of who He is, His becoming known by His creation.

How is God's glory increased?

By spreading the good news of His grace, helping others to know God...

Ps 145:11-12 - They shall speak of the glory of Your kingdom, and talk of Your power, to make known to the sons of men His mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of His kingdom.

What specific aspect of God's glory is addressed in this verse?

His grace which is as a result of His wonderful character that demonstrates agape love toward us. This awesome aspect of His nature to bless us with unmerited favor is beyond our mortal comprehension yet we who know Him have experienced it...

Rom 8:16-17 - The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

What does it mean in Romans 8:17 that we will be glorified together with Christ?

God has promised that we will spend eternity in the same type of glorified imperishable body that Jesus has right now...

Romans 8:29 - 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.

What does it mean in Ephesians 1:6, "He has made us accepted in the Beloved"?

The Beloved is God the Son who the Father sent to be our Savior. The Father has accepted us as His children in Christ, part of the family of God.

What does verse 7 mean where it says we have redemption?

To redeem is to claim. The Lord has chosen us and has thus laid claim to us, taking us from the world which is headed to destruction.

What does the blood have to do with our redemption?

Everything... it is the blood of Christ that paid the penalty for our sin.

Hebrews 9:22 - And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

Sins may be forgiven only by the shedding of blood.

Why is it that blood must be shed for sins to be forgiven?

- Because the penalty for sin is death (Romans 6:23).
- Ultimately sin is rebellion against God through disobedience. God made it clear from the beginning that the penalty for disobedience is death (Gen 2:16-17)

We are all going to die, why can't our own death be the payment for our sins?

- Death is more than the body physically expiring, the greater aspect of death is spiritual separation from God.
- If we were to pay our own sin debt, we would have to be spiritually dead for eternity.

Is it fair to have to pay the penalty for sin eternally when the offence was perpetrated over a finite period of time?

This question takes a salvation-by-works perspective. But going with this view it is important to recognize that God's standard is perfection...

Matt 5:48 - Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Perfect is perfect. If there is any blemish on one's record, you are not perfect even in the context of eternity...

James 2:10 - For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

How can Jesus' death be counted as full payment for everyone who believes?

Jesus was without sin Himself. And Jesus is not just a common man. He is a man but is also God manifest in the flesh. As the only man who is also the eternal God, Jesus is uniquely qualified to pay our sin debt. On top of all that, God promised salvation for all who believe in Him...

John 3:16 - For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

How is God's grace described in verse 7?

As being rich. Not only had God demonstrated grace toward us, He has shown us abundant grace...

Rom 5:17 - For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

How is God's grace rich or abundant?

God's grace is more than sufficient to save not only us but all who trust in the saving work of Christ...

Rom 5:15 - But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

The abundance of God's grace is not limited to the numbers of people who will be saved, it also has to do with the quality of life He has blessed us with both after our resurrection and in the here and now. This is why Jesus came...

John 10:10 - I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

How may you experience the abundant life that Jesus makes possible?

A - By first Accepting your condition before God, that you are a sinner, unable to be saved without God's mercy.

B - Then believing in the provision God has made for your salvation. Believing that Jesus paid the penalty for your sin with His own blood, and that His resurrection authenticates that what He told us about Himself and the promise of eternal life is true.

C - Then Commit yourself to the One who has redeemed us, Jesus our Savior and Lord...

Matt 16:24 - Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."