

Ephesians: Forwarding God's Care

God's Care Received

God's Caring Choice: Blessing - Ephesians 1:1-14

THE LAVISH GRACE OF GOD: God chooses to bless us, to pour out his favor upon us. He holds nothing back but gives to us "every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). These words describe the best of all possible positions for a human to occupy.

God's treatment of us is pure grace. We have not earned these blessings in any way. We are offered them because of who God is, not because of who we are.

The lavish grace of God, once experienced, changes our understanding of ourselves and of our world. God's blessings are given and received in wisdom and understanding. God communicates the truth through these blessings to us.

THE FREEDOM OF GOD: We do not tell God what to do. We do not manipulate the Deity with our gifts or our prayers. We cannot man-handle God on any level. God is God. He may bind himself to us in covenant, but he does so by his own free choice. God's freedom is fundamental to our understanding of his character and his relationship with us.

God made some choices that have predated all our choices. God's choices are determinative for this world and the next for every one of us and for creation itself.

God loves us freely. Love is genuine only if it is freely given. True love cannot be coerced. I cannot be forced to love you or anyone else.

Yes, love is a command and an obligation. But this does not nullify its free nature. Love is an obligation to which we give our free consent. We can choose to withhold our love, and we often do. This power to withhold love is intrinsic to the nature of love, and intrinsic to human nature and to the divine nature.

God has acted freely in both our CREATION and our SALVATION. God's grace is given freely. "Freely, freely you have received. Freely, freely give."

I. God chose Christ as the Fount of EVERY BLESSING: *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ v3*

***Come thou fount of every blessing, Tune my heart to sing thy grace; streams of mercy never ceasing, Call for songs of loudest praise. Jesus sought me when a stranger, Wandering from the fold of God; He to rescue me from danger interposed his precious blood O to grace how great a debtor, Daily I'm constrained to be! Let thy goodness, like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to thee.

***I told my father that I was going to preach through the book of Ephesians. He said, "Remember, it is all 'in Christ.' That is the key to the book."

- A. God's intention is stated clearly in Ephesians 1:10: to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. Christ is God's center on this planet and in human history.
- B. Christ must also be your center. Every good gift comes through him to you. Every blessing is found in Christ.
- C. Christ is the treasure trove you hoped one day to find. You thought it was a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, but it is Christ himself who holds all the divine blessings which you seek.

II. God chose Christ as the Agent of our ADOPTION: *In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Christ Jesus, in accordance with his pleasure and will v4-5*

- A. God's pre-determination of our adoption is THROUGH CHRIST.
- B. Adoption, as Bob Brian's father reminded me emphatically, is not about a baby coming into the family. It is about legal rights and responsibilities passed on to us by God's gracious choice.
 - 1. We are heirs to the good things of God.
 - 2. We are responsible for the disposition of God's gracious gifts in our lives.

III. God chose Christ as the Currency of our REDEMPTION: *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding v7-8*

- A. Redemption is an economic word. We redeem things when we buy them back out of hock.

B. Our redemption is through is blood. This means that the death of Christ has bought for us our spiritual salvation and liberation. Christ paid the price to buy us out of sin's pawn shop. We sold our souls to the devil, and Christ paid the price with his death upon the cross.

C. This redemption is also a future promise: the Holy Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory v14

IV. God chose CHRIST as the Source of our KNOWING: *He made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ v9*

A. Paul does not have some spiritual formula which he has invented to break the code on the secrets of the universe. He is not suggesting some secret knowledge that is itself the way of salvation. That notion keeps coming up in human history. You will find people all over and all the time peddling their secrets to the fountain of youth and to health and well-being through a knowledge they will sell you in a box or a book.

B. The source of knowing is Christ himself. Knowledge comes through Christ, not through a secret philosophy or idea.

C. This knowledge is PERSONAL rather than speculative or formulaic. It comes in the Incarnation of God in Christ.

D. The mystery of his will is not something God wanted to keep secret. It is something he wanted to tell. And this he did in Christ. The mystery is this: God has opened to all people the gift of salvation through the work of Christ upon the cross. It does not matter your lineage, language, ethnicity, economy, or culture. All people have access to God through his Son, Jesus Christ.

V. God chose Christ as the Ark of our SALVATION: *And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal v13-14*

A. You have experienced a selection in your believing. God has chosen you IN HIM. The word "Christ" means "chosen one" or "anointed One" or "Promised One."

You do not have to go behind Christ to find God's real choice somewhere else. Christ is God's real choice. And you are chosen IN HIM. God decided to SAVE all who BELIEVED in Christ.

B. You have experienced an INCLUSION as a follower of Jesus. You have been included in Christ.

***Noah's ark was designed to carry all who chose to believe his preaching. Only eight entered into it, but to them the door of the ark was opened, the ramp was lowered, and they were welcomed into safety and salvation.

Christ is the ARK of our salvation. All who trust in him are carried safely to God's house and to their eternal home.