

To The Praise of His Glory Ephesians 1 and 2

After Paul's two line greeting to the church at Ephesus, he launches into one long 200 word sentence - no commas, no pauses, no breaths! He begins his lengthy declaration with the word "blessed" (1:3) and ends it with "glory" (1:14). In between is a direct and immediate orientation to the WHO and the WHAT and the WHY of what we call Christianity. We hear from the beginning that we are immersed into eternal realities and blessed with eternal portions of God's wealth. We discover it is all of God - God the Father's thought of love for us, God the Son's work of redemption for us, God the Spirit's work of applying all this to our experience.

Our Triune God has "blessed us" (1:3) with a supply of Christ's life for every contingency. He "chose us" and "destined us" (1:4-5) to be pre-planned, pre-loved sons and daughters. He "bestowed" and "lavished" upon us (1:6,8) eternal doses of redemption and forgiveness. He "makes Himself known" (1:9,17) to us as God for us, in us, and through us. He actively "works all things after the counsel of His will" (1:11-12) to be sure that He fully finishes all that He began in us. He has "sealed us" (1:13-14) with His Holy Spirit marking us forever as Christ-possessed people.

All this is God's doing, His activity. We call that grace. All we are asked to do is accept His doing, receive His activity. We call that faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith" (2:8). Throughout the rest of eternity we will be growing up into the fullness of what it means to be "saved". In experience after experience we will be reminded what we were (2:1-3), what God did for us (2:4-6), and why He did it (2:7-10). Day after day we will join God in writing the story of our lives as we learn to increasingly cooperate with His loving operation. He will make use of every circumstance to grow us up, to transform us from Christ-possessed persons to Christ-expressed persons. He will carefully determine the precise conditions necessary for such growth and transformation, then providentially place us within those conditions. It will result in both our good, and, "the praise of His glory." (1:6,12)



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GREETINGS

From time to time I am impressed by God to try and communicate our gratefulness to you for your many gifts that make *One In Christ* a viable and (I hope) valuable ministry in God's kingdom. Your prayers, your words of encouragement, your personal presence, your friendship, your financial contributions among other such gestures fill our hearts, fuel our desires and even finance our efforts.

In a culture where time and money are "tight" for so many, your participation with us in mission and ministry is incalculable in human terms. When so many churches and Christian organizations are struggling to keep the lights on and the staff paid, we feel doubly blessed by God and by you for the many ways you keep us supplied with all we need to be about all that God has called us to do.

Some of you have been a faithful part of our journey for more than 20 years, some of you we have just recently met. All of you are precious assets in God's kingdom and dear associates co-laboring with God and us. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

Steve

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