

Excerpts from Life-study of Ephesians, Message 5
THE PRAISE OF THE GLORY OF GOD'S GRACE

Bible Verses:

- Eph 1:5 Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,**
1:6 To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved.

In this message we shall consider the praise of the glory of God's grace (1:6). This may appear to be a very simple subject, but actually it is very difficult. We may think that we are familiar with the words praise, glory, and grace, but if we are honest, we shall admit that we do not adequately know what they mean.

What is God's grace? It is very difficult to define grace. I have been puzzled by this for many years, and even today I am still studying it. According to the New Testament, grace is what God is to us for our enjoyment (John 1:16-17; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 Cor. 15:10). John 1:17 says that the law was given through Moses, but that grace and reality came through Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul says that he labored more than the other apostles, yet not he, but the grace of God which was with him. Galatians 2:20 is parallel to 1 Corinthians 15:10. Galatians 2:20 says, "Not I, but Christ," and 1 Corinthians 15:10 says, "Not I, but the grace of God." This indicates that grace is Christ Himself. Other portions of the New Testament emphasize grace. For example, 2 Corinthians 13:14 says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all." Furthermore, Paul opens all his Epistles with a reference to grace; he also ends them all with a word about grace. Galatians 6:18 says, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit." Second Timothy 4:22 says, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit. Grace be with you." In this verse Christ and grace are parallel. For the Lord Jesus Christ to be with our spirit is equal to grace being with our spirit. This indicates that grace is virtually equal to Christ. When we have Christ, we have grace. When Christ came, grace came. This is the reason John 1:17 says that grace came through Jesus Christ, indicating that grace is somewhat like a person. It is personified. This personification of grace is God Himself.

Although this may sound strange to some ears, it is nevertheless a fact. If you get into the spirit of the New Testament concerning grace, you will realize that grace is somewhat personified. When Paul said, "Not I, but the grace of God which was with me," grace was a living person to him. In Paul, a Person became the very grace to labor. Therefore, grace is actually God Himself; it is what God is to us for our enjoyment. When God is enjoyed by us, that is grace. Grace is the very God in His Son Jesus Christ to be our portion so that we may enjoy all that He is. God is love. If we do not enjoy Him as love, we do not have grace. But if we enjoy God as love, we have grace. Again, I say, grace is what God is to us as our portion for our enjoyment.

Now we need to consider what the glory of God's grace is. Perhaps you have read the book of Ephesians many times without noticing the phrase "the glory of His grace." Hebrews 1:3 says that Christ, the Son of God, is the effulgence of God's glory. God has a glory, and the effulgence, the shining out, of this glory is His Son. If you carefully study the subject of glory in the Bible, you will find that glory is God expressed. Whenever God is manifested, that is glory. We may use electricity as an illustration. Electricity is hidden, but when it is expressed as light, that light is the glory of electricity. Likewise, when God is hidden, we cannot see His glory. But when He is expressed, His glory is made visible. Hence, glory is God expressed. As soon as the tabernacle was erected, it was filled with the glory of God (Exo. 40:34). That glory was the expression of God. In the same principle, the Son of God came as the effulgence of the glory of God, which means that He is the expression of God. No man has ever seen God, but we have seen the glory of the only begotten Son.

The glory of God's grace is that His grace, which is Himself as our enjoyment, expresses Him. God is expressed in His grace, and His predestination is for the praise of this expression. As we receive grace and enjoy God, we have the sense of glory, although we may not have the words to express this sense. Sometimes

after an excellent meeting we are full of grace and say, "That was glorious!" This is God expressed in His grace.

When we realize that we have been chosen to be holy and predestinated to sonship; that we have the Spirit of the Son, the life of the Son, and the position of the Son; and that we shall be conformed to the image of the Son, have the completion of sonship, the redemption of our body, and inherit the full sonship, we shall say, "What a glory!" We need to consider six items prayerfully: the Spirit of the Son, the life of the Son, the position of the Son, the image of the Son, the completion of sonship, and the inheritance of sonship. If you do this, you will be in glory and praise God for the sonship.

Now we must come to the most difficult aspect of this message: the meaning of praise in verse 6. What is the praise of the glory of God's grace? Have you ever praised God for the sonship? We, the sons of God, do not praise God very much. Usually, we simply thank Him. When we say, "Praise the Lord," we often mean, "Thank the Lord." To thank God means that we have received a certain benefit and thank God for it. But when we praise God, we praise Him primarily for what He is or what He does, no matter whether or not we have received any benefits from Him. In praising God, you need to forget yourself and get outside of yourself.

God's predestinating us to sonship is for the praise of His expression in His grace. Probably the angels will be the first to praise God for this. As the angels are praising God for our sonship, the demons may be shocked and say, "Those sinners who were usurped by us have become the sons of God." Not only will the angels praise God for our sonship, but also every positive thing in the universe will praise Him. This will take place at the time of the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19). Presently the creation is groaning under bondage, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. When that takes place, the entire universe will praise God. Thus, Ephesians 1:6 will be fulfilled at the time of Romans 8:19. At that time all the positive things in the universe will praise God because the glory of God's grace will be seen in the revelation of the sons of God. We, the sons of God, may be surprised by the praises offered to God by the angels, for they will be praising God because of our sonship. This is the praise of the glory of God's grace.

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Note: This version is not intended to be printed as material for pursuit during the small group gathering. Instead, it is to be used as additional reference for brothers and sisters who want to prepare in advance for fellowship on the message. We include here notes from the commentaries of the brothers in the life-study radio program. The points from these commentaries can help enrich our understanding and, eventually, our fellowship with the saints on the selected portions of the life-study message. We still recommend that, if possible, the saints still listen to the [audio message](#) in addition to reading the [life-study message](#) for personal pursuit and for preparation for small group gatherings. We also wish to point out that these notes have not been fully polished.

Commentary:

Introduction

[CW]: If we take three simple words from the New Testament like praise, glory, and grace, we may feel quite comfortable that we understand what they mean. But the apostle Paul in Ephesians 1 links them together in one verse, verse 6 “To the praise of the glory of His grace, with which He graced us in the Beloved.” How about now? Do you feel that your understanding is adequate according to the divine revelation, especially when you put this verse in its context, that is as the issue of our being predestinated unto sonship in verse 5? Well Ephesians is rich, high and mysterious because it is written from the viewpoint of God in the heavenlies and from that point of view, praise, glory, and grace flowing out of our sonship are not simple at all, but marvelous.

[BD]: I agree with you. Here we see that praise, glory, and grace are all related to one another, and this challenges us concerning whether we really understand what these three things mean.

[CW]: The way the apostle Paul opens up this book has such a majesty to it, and you get the sense right away, you’re not dealing with anything common. The book of Romans which was also Paul’s writing opens up in such a different way, really condemning men and making a case against men to convince man of his need for salvation. But here it is all from this higher plain, isn’t it?

[BD]: It is, it’s from the plain of God in the heavens. Not from the plain of man’s pitiful condition on the earth.

[CW]: We read verse 6, we alluded to verse 5, “Predestinating us unto sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” Another almost inexhaustible matter opened up in this short verse, isn’t it?

[BD]: That’s right, I think the focus of this verse is this matter of sonship. God the Father in eternity past predestinated us unto sonship and that implies a lot. It implies that we have the Spirit of God’s Son, we have the life of God’s Son, we have the position of God’s Son, we have the image of God’s Son, we have the glory of God’s Son, all these things are included in this marvelous matter of the sonship that God has predestinated us to. So this is our destiny, our destiny is the sonship.

[CW]: We just mentioned Romans, if you go back to Romans in the life-study that we had there, we see that in that book, Paul somewhat personifies sin. He refers to sin almost as if it were a person and of course we know what that is referring to, the nature of the evil one who has an evil persona, and it is expressed in us as sin. Now in this coming portion, we’re going to talk about these three words: praise, glory, and grace. We will see that Paul also personifies grace and I think that will be an interesting revelation to our listeners.

Part 1

[CW]: In Romans, when Paul was referring to the evil that he did, he said, “It was not I but sin.” Now in 1 Corinthians referring to the opposite of the evil he says, “Not I, but grace.” Of course, sin there has to refer to this persona of

Satan. So, it's clear that grace is referring to a person as well and this somewhat challenges the traditional definition of grace just being unmerited favor, doesn't it?

[BD]: It certainly does, in the concept of most people, grace is just something God does for us that we don't deserve, we don't have any merit of our own, but God does something for us, unmerited. But actually, if you read the New Testament carefully especially these portions that Witness Lee pointed out here, it's very clear that grace is personified. For instance, in John 1, it says the law was given through Moses. The law was something given, the law and Moses were not one and the same. Moses gave the law. But then it doesn't say that grace was given through Jesus Christ, it says grace came through Jesus Christ. When Christ came, grace came, because grace is a Person, and grace is really this wonderful person of Christ. As Witness Lee pointed out in Galatians 2:20, Paul said "Not I, but Christ." In 1 Corinthians 15:10 he said, "Not I, but the grace." Well grace certainly here is contrasted with I who is a person, so grace also is a person and when we compare these two verses, we see grace is just Christ living in us. Witness Lee gave a marvelous definition of grace here, he said, "Grace is just God Himself in His Son, Christ to be our portion that we may enjoy whatever God is." Whenever we enjoy God as love, as light, as our holiness, as our righteousness, this is grace. This enjoyment is the real and genuine grace.

[CW]: I was struck with both of these words, he said that when we enjoy and when we participate in God's love, we are participating in His grace and likewise in His light and any other of His divine attributes.

[BD]: That's right, when God's love becomes subjective to us, when it becomes something as a reality within us, even filling us, enabling us to love God and love others with the love of God, that is grace. That is the real grace that is spoken of in the New Testament. That is God Himself as our enjoyment.

[CW]: Grace in Ephesians 1:6 doesn't stand alone, and it's connected to glory, the passage that we read says, "to the glory of His grace", let's look at glory in this coming portion.

Part 2

[CW]: He began this section with an illustration of this matter of electricity and the light bulb to illustrate this concept of glory, we used, I think all Christians and probably Jews use this term glory. What does it really mean, and this is a marvelous illustration but I'm also going to ask you to connect it as he did near the end here to what we were just talking about a moment ago and that was this wonderful, experiential grace that we were participating in and enjoying and now it's related to glory.

[BD]: Witness Lee did mention that in our experience, whenever we participate in what God is, that means we enjoy some aspect of what God is, becomes our subjective enjoyment, then there is a sensation within us of glory. Something is shining, God is shining within us, God is manifested within us, and this manifested God is just the very glory. This grace that we enjoy, which is God Himself becomes glory within us as we are enjoying God. If we have really tasted the Lord in this kind of way, enjoyed Him, we agree there is something so shining, so marvelous in this grace. This grace shines not only within us, it even shines through us, shines out of us so that others can see God in us. When we enjoy God, we express Him, that means God is glorified in us who are His sons. When we enjoy His grace, God is manifested within us and through us to others. He was really true with the Lord Jesus; He is the very effulgence of God's glory. He is the shining out of the invisible God. When men saw Him, when men encountered Him, when men heard Him, they saw God expressed, they saw God manifested, they saw the glory of God. Of course, He was on the mount there in Matthew 17, the disciples saw something very bright and shining, shining out from within Him. It wasn't just something surrounding Him, it was something coming out from within Him. This is God expressed, this is glory. When we enjoy God as our grace, we experience this glory in a very real and subjective way.

[CW]: It is very much like someone just turned on the light bulb within us, isn't it, as we have had such an experience with the Lord and there is that almost indescribable sensation that something within is now shining that previously was not. That is one of the most precious of all of our experiences in the Christian life.

[BD]: It certainly is. We need this experience daily even, I would say, moment by moment.

[CW]: The night that I got saved, when I received the Lord, I was confronted by an elderly sister in the Lord. I'll never forget her face; at that time, she was over eighty years old. She came up and greeted me, she didn't say anything spiritual or religious, but she just grabbed my hand and looked into my eyes. And I tell you, I was transfixed because there was such a shining coming out of her, radiating her like nothing I'd ever seen, and of course I realized shortly thereafter what I was seeing was really the love of God shining out through this sister. You said it doesn't just shine in us, it shines through us and that was more than any words that were spoken to me that night, what really convicted me on the one hand and then filled me with hope that to believe in Christ was the most blessed opportunity that could await any human being. To me this is a very meaningful passage and to touch this topic still some thirty years now later, resonates very deeply in me.

[BD]: And also with me, I still remember the day that I received the Lord. Before I prayed to receive Him, I had the feeling of darkness within me, but after I believed in the Lord, there was a glorious shining within me. I just felt something glorious has entered into me although I did not understand it at the time, but I really experienced God as grace and God as glory.

Part 3

[CW]: I hope all of our listeners caught his early comparison here between thanking God and praising God. I don't know if the Bible tells us that the angels thank God, but it certainly tells us that the angels praise Him, doesn't it? So, what is the difference between thanking God and praising God?

[BD]: Of course, when we thank God, it's always with our self as the center because we receive some benefit from God, so we give Him thanks. But when we praise God, we can praise God when we're suffering, when God does nothing for us at a time of need, we simply praise Him for what He is, we praise Him for Himself and this will take place in a grand way in the future, when we as God's sons who have been produced by the enjoyment of God as grace, when we are manifested as Romans 8 says, the manifestation of the sons of God, when it becomes clear to the universe that we who are once the sinners, under Satan's dominion, have become God's sons, even God's glorified sons, when we are manifested as God's sons then every positive thing in the universe will praise the glory of God's grace which has produced us as sons. It will be a great day. They will praise God for us—the sons of God. I agree, I think we will be a little surprised on that day, that we will be the cause of this praise.

[CW]: So that day is somewhat a fulfillment of Ephesians 1:5-6 in a sense there's kind of a prophetic element to 1:5-6 "Predestinated unto sonship unto the praise of the glory of His grace." Of course, that doesn't mean there shouldn't be a corresponding praise to God today for our sonship and I was challenged by his question here, how often have you praised God for your sonship?

[BD]: That's right, do we realize what it means to have the sonship? If we did, we could not hold back our praise to God.

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