

# The Glory of His Gracious Purpose

Ephesians 1:4-6

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## **Introduction:**

Junior's parents had some older friends come over for a visit...

- Junior liked these friends because they always took a special interest in what he was doing.
- And today, as they were out visiting with his parents on the front porch,
  - Junior was busy working on various bicycle tricks.
    - For the first time, he was able to ride with no hands.
    - He showed his parents and their friends, and as he expected, he got a lot of praise for it, especially from the friends!
      - Then he showed them how he ride carrying a book
      - Then a sword in one hand and a gun in the other
      - Then a big stick
      - And then—
        - He went on and on interrupting the adults with his demand “Look at me! Look at me! Look at what I can do.”
        - Finally, his father had to take him aside:
          - “Junior, you are showing off and I want you to stop.”
          - “It was okay when you first called us to watch you ride with no hands, but you are being rude—you keep interrupting us.”

What do you think of show-offs?

- You know, somebody whose main concern is to be sure that you see how great he is and what great things he has done!
- There's something very wrong about that, isn't there? Something irritating and tiresome...
- But why? What is the problem with the show-off?

The problem with those we call show-offs is that they try to force us to be impressed with that which is really not all that impressive.

- Like Junior,
  - A show-off is someone who keeps calling for your attention and your applause.
  - He thinks that what he has to show you ought to take centre stage.

- Isn't that the problem with the show-off?
  - Its not that he ought to hide his talents when they might be used for the blessing and delight of others...
  - The problem is when he mistakenly supposes that there is nothing else so worthy of admiration and attention than whatever he has to show you.
    - When he thinks that even though it is not true...
      - even though there are a lot of other things that are a lot more worthy of your attention and your praise.
      - You know, there is the brat in the school room who wants to be the centre of attention when the teacher is the one who ought to be the centre of attention...
    - We call such a person a show-off.

But there are times when we actually want people to show-off what they can do or what they have done...

- In fact, we will pay good money watch them and we will give them our full attention...
  - When you go to a concert, you pay the musicians to perform for you...
  - The same with a hockey game—
    - you give them your full attention and if they do not perform, you let your displeasure be known...
    - and if they do perform, you cheer them on!
    - We love it when they show off!

In Ephesians 1:3-14, we have an account of how the Lord shows of His grace upon the elect!

- The Apostle Paul shows us one thing after another that the Lord has done for us and three times He tells us what His purpose in doing it is...
  - the demonstration of His glory in order to gain praise to Himself!
    - Look at v. 6: “to the praise of the glory of His grace.”
    - Look at v. 12: “to the praise of His glory.”
    - Look at v. 14: “to the praise of His glory!”
- My brothers and sisters, God's ultimate purpose in saving us is to show-off His grace—to display the glory of His grace for the admiration of His rational creatures!
  - It's a marvellous thing!
    - He purposed that mankind should fall by our own fault into sin and wretchedness in order that He might be glorified in stooping to redeem us!
      - That His glory might be seen in pulling us out of so great a destruction—

- so impossible a situation as far as we are concerned...
- and that He might bring us from the lowest place to the highest place!
- He wants to take all of you who are His elect and make you an example of His grace before the whole universe—
  - before angels and principalities and each other...
  - He demands our attention to this—even in Ephesians 1.
    - He is saying, in effect,
    - “Look at me! Look at me!”
    - “Look at how gracious I am!”
    - “Look at how kind I have been to my elect!”
- Now at first, it might rub you the wrong way to think of God like that...
  - But it shouldn't.
    - The chief end, the highest privilege, the greatest joy, the most fulfilment for all of God's rational creation is to behold the matchless glory of our God!
    - He has a whole great company of angels who behold Him and admire Him with greatest delight that fills up their whole being with praise of Him...
      - And in order that they might see His grace, He willed to show it upon certain members of the human race by pulling them out of the slime pit into which they fell by their own fault.
  - The only reason to take offence is because of dullness and blindness to see how worthy He is of all glory...
    - It is only because of our dullness and blindness that we are not more enamoured with His glory in our salvation than we are!
      - There is nothing more glorious for us look upon than this!
        - It is the very apex of God's revelation before all His rational creatures!
      - He is not only fully justified in demanding that all angels and men give all praise and honour to Him for the grace He has displayed,
        - but it would also be wrong of Him not to demand it.
  - Show-offs offend us because they demand more praise than they are due,
    - but if we are offended by God demanding praise from us—
      - or if we consider His demands to be unworthy of our attention—
        - then the problem is not with God asking too much,
        - but with us being so blind and dull that we cannot see what is truly worthy of all praise and glory!

- And Oh my friends...
  - We all struggle with this dullness if not blindness...
  - We all struggle to truly grasp the greatness of God's glory...
    - Even we who are the recipients of His grace have such a low estimation of it compared to what we might have!
  - Not only is it unjust of us to fail to give God the glory due to His name...
    - but it is also that we miss so much—
    - We miss what is the only real root and source of our true happiness—
      - the contemplation of the glory of God.
- Isn't this what animated Jesus when He was going to the cross?
  - Was it not the assurance that through His work, we would come to know the Father?
    - that we would see the glory of God the Father and the glory of Jesus Himself that He had shared with the Father from before the foundation of the world?
    - Was that not the final goal of all of His work for us—difficult as that work was?
      - Was it not to praise of the glory of God's grace?
        - So that all would be able to understand how glorious God is and be taken out of ourselves?

Do you long to see this great glory?

- Then let me encourage you to look carefully over the next few weeks at Ephesians 1:3-14!
  - Here, our Lord has given us a display of the glory of His grace so that we might see it and understand it and glory in it and praise Him for it!
    - This is all our happiness if we will but pursue it!
- I am going to take three more weeks on this topic...
  - This week, we will look at:
    - “The glory of His gracious purpose in verses 4-6.”
    - In this, we will look at how gracious the Father was in purposing to save us before the world was even created.
  - Next week, we will look at:
    - “The glory His gracious act in verses 7-12.”

- In that sermon, we will look at how gracious our Lord Jesus was in coming into this world to redeem us.
- And the third week, we will look at:
  - “The glory of His gracious bestowal, verses 13-14.”
  - In that sermon, we will see how gracious God’s Spirit is to begin in us that saving transformation that He has assured us will be brought to completion at last.
- Each week, our focus will be on a different member of the Trinity...
  - This week, the Father in His purpose of grace.
  - Next week, the Son in His act of grace.
  - and the Third week, the Spirit in His bestowal of grace.
- And each week our goal will be that we may see the glory of God’s grace in His kindness toward us.

TRANS> So now let us consider this week’s topic:

- “The glory of God’s gracious purpose.”

**I. I want you to see first of all that the only reason you are blessed is because God wants to bless you—he is pleased to do so.**

A. Remember how we saw last time (in verse 3) that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places?

- Do you remember what those blessings are?
  1. The “spiritual blessings in the heavenly places” are those blessings that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have enjoyed for all eternity in heaven...
    - They are the blessings that they have known in loving one another...
      - in the Father giving all things to the Son and the Son doing always what pleases the Father...
      - And in the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son to do what pleases them, and the Father and the Son delighting in the Spirit and in giving all to Him.
      - It is a household that is characterised by a love so powerful and so perfect and so delightful that I can barely describe it!
  2. In verse 3, we are told that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has blessed us with these very same “spiritual blessings in the heavenly places!”

- He has taken those same blessings of heaven that He Himself delights in and has deigned to bring them to us!
- Jesus Christ actually brings down heaven to us so that we might live in the delightful fellowship of the Triune God forever...
  - that you might know the Father and Jesus Christ whom He has sent!
  - that your joy might be made full in heavenly fellowship with the Father and the Son!
- It is a marvellous thing.
  - Even now, He is preparing a place for us in glory as He prepares us for glory by washing away our sins—
    - both our guilt and our corruption.
- He is bringing us into the very joys of heaven!

B. But how is that you who have these blessings have come to have them?

- you who, like every other human being, are by nature full of corruption and folly...
- 1. Is it because you have climbed up out of the mire of sin into the heavenly places to obtain them?
  - Surely not!
    - As fallen creatures, you have no such aspirations...
      - That is one of our problems—we don't even want what is glorious because we do not love what is good and holy...
    - But even if you did,
      - God is holy and would surely destroy you if you dared to enter the glorious fellowship of His heavenly place because you are defiled and corrupted by sin.
  - You are not fit for communion with such holy company.
    - His holiness would utterly repel you—
      - To you, He would be a consuming fire of eternal death!
      - The last thing you want is to be brought near to the true and living God if you are defiled!
        - It would be your eternal ruin.

TRANS> So how is it that you (who belong to Christ) have come to be partakers of “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”?

- Well Ephesians 1:4 tells you...

2. It is because God chose you from before the foundation of the world to receive His blessing!
  - a. That's why you have it—not because you chose Him, but because He chose you in Christ!
    - 1) He chose to put you where Christ is!
      - To join you to Christ in such a way that you could go where He goes and receive what He receives!
      - Christ, the Son of God, came from Heaven to bring us the blessings of heaven...
      - God chose to make you a recipient of all of His blessings through Christ.
    - 2) That He chose you before the foundation of the world makes it very clear that the cause of your salvation is wholly His doing.
      - The only reason you came to him is because God had previously chosen you—
        - He chose you long long before you had anything at all to say about it...
      - It was part of His gracious plan to take you out of the mass of ruined sinners and redeem you...
        - It was not that there was anything in you that made you worthy...
          - In fact, He chose you because there was nothing in you to attract Him to you...
            - He chose you because you were so repungnant and so offensive to Him in your fallen estate that nothing less than the blood of His Son could atone for your sins!
          - His very purpose was to make you an example of His kindness to those who deserve the very opposite.
  - b. Knowing this out to have a huge impact on your life!
    - 1) First, it ought to make you very thankful and full of praise to God.
      - You, as a recipient of His grace, are able not only to see how great the grace is, but also to benefit from it!
      - Just consider where you would be apart from the grace of God!
        - You would be destined to face God in your defilement as a consuming of fire of eternal judgement.

- Let your heart be lifted up to God with wondering praise who has displayed His grace so wonderfully.
- Let your life express gratitude by putting away all that pettiness and complaining and whining...
  - If you have been so graciously redeemed, it is totally inappropriate for you to go around acting like you have been cheated or short changed!
  - You need to act like someone who has been lavished upon—
    - because you have been lavished upon!
    - Live a life of gratitude and praise before God.

2) Secondly, it ought to make you humble!

- It ought to make you see that you are no different your neighbour.
  - You were fallen just like everyone else.
  - The only thing that makes you any different is that God chose you that He might be gracious to you...
    - not so you could boast, but so all would boast in Him as the One who shows grace to the unworthy.
- If you truly understand this,
  - you won't be all surprised when you see great wickedness in your neighbour...
  - Never should a Christian say,
    - "I don't see how anybody could ever do that..."
    - If you say that, it shows that you don't really understand the depths of your own depravity...
      - or the grace that God has shown toward you.
- There is no room for a feeling of pride of superiority in any believer, only humility.

3) Thirdly it should make you secure...

- The fact that you were chosen and predestined before the foundation of the world shows that this wasn't something that God did on a whim!
  - It was not a reaction to something or a last minute decision.
- His plan to create a people who would rebel against Him,
  - be justly condemned and cursed by Him for their sin,

- and then out of those people to chose a certain number upon which He would have mercy was something that He planned entirely beforehand.
- If you have heard His call and have come to Christ,
  - You have every reason to be secure when you realise that you have come to Him because you were chosen from before the foundation of the world...
  - It was God's purpose concerning you all along and that purpose is not going to change...
    - If He has begun a true work of grace in you so that you have been converted...
      - He is sure to bring it to completion...
    - If this certainly that God will finish the work He has begun in you makes you lax,
      - it is a sign that you were never truly converted...
        - but if it encourages you and spurs you along to holiness,
        - you have every reason to be sure that you will attain all that you seek.

TRANS> And now, having seen that all of your blessing in Christ comes to you because God chose you to receive it...

3. I want you to notice the reason God chose you...

a. It was because He wanted to!

- That is what it says at the end of verse 5...
- He chose you to be holy and adopted you as His child "according to the good pleasure of His will!"

b. Isn't that marvellously comforting?

- To know that pouring out grace on you was something that the Father was delighted to do.
  - You know, there are things you do because you must—
    - Jesus wanted to redeem us, but He did not want to go the cross...
    - The cross was something He did because he had to if He was going to save us...
    - If there had been another way to redeem us, He would have been glad for it...

- Sometimes there are things you do with reluctance...
- But God the Father's choosing you for salvation and predestining you to adoption was His delight!
  - He delights to be gracious to us.
  - He takes pleasure in choosing you to be an object on which He displays His grace before the whole universe!
    - It is as if He says,
      - "Watch this—I will show you how gracious I am!"
      - And then He chooses us out of the horrible mess of sin that we were in, sparing no expense, making very sacrifice,
        - and brings us from the mire to the very courts of heaven to live in His very own house as His sons forever and ever!
        - He loves to pour His grace on us for all to see!
          - Divine power is put into exercise to bless you!
          - That is what our Lord delights to do!
          - That is His way of getting praise from us!
          - And He is going to keep on doing it!

TRANS> So you see then that you are blessed because the Lord chose to bless you—He chose to bless you in order that He might show off His grace upon you.

**II. And now I want to show you the two blessings that He had purposed to bestow on His chosen ones!**

- **two blessings mentioned in verses 4-5 designed to show off His grace!**

A. First, that He has chosen us in Christ that we should be holy and without blame before Him!

1. The doctrine of holiness teaches that whatever is defiled is destroyed when it comes into contact with God's holiness.
  - a. You can learn what holiness is from the Old Testament...
    - In the Old Testament, God symbolised His presence on Mount Sinai in a dark cloud and in the temple at the holy place.
    - You will remember that the people could not go near the mountain or enter the holy place because they were not holy!
      - And whatever is not holy is destroyed by what is holy—
        - it is judged and swallowed up in misery...

- It is swallowed up in God who is a consuming fire to that which is not holy.
- b. You will remember that the High Priest was made holy through a whole series of sacrifices and purification rites so that once a year he might enter the holy place to offer sacrifices for Israel's sins.
- By this, God was showing that sinful fallen human creatures can have no access to Him unless radical measures are taken to make them holy...
  - He was showing that we cannot make ourselves fit for communion with Him and that if we come near without being consecrated by Him,
    - we will be swallowed up forever in Him as a consuming fire...
    - That is what Hell is to those who come before Him at the last day and are not holy.
    - He made it clear that anyone who tried to come near to Him unless He had been purified by God would be destroyed.
2. But Ephesians 1:4 teaches us that God has chosen us to be holy and without blame before Him!
- a. How could we, who are sinful fallen creatures be holy and without blame before God?
- Before a human court, perhaps, but before **God**?
    - How could we be holy and without blame before *Him*?
    - To be holy means that we fit in with Him—
      - that we are in harmony with His absolutely pure and undefiled person!
      - that we are able to have communion with Him—to enjoy the blessed fellowship of heaven!
    - It means that we are without spot or blemish in His eyes!
- b. And you see how this is so—we are chosen **in Christ** to be holy and without blame...
- 1) This holiness is not like the OT holiness that was just a type or a picture of real holiness...
- This holiness is a new life that God gives to His chosen...
  - He turns us from those who offend Him into those who please Him.
  - From those who are corrupt to those who are pure and spotless.
- 2) And He does this by bringing us into Christ...

- a) Into Christ our representative who went to the cross for us and atoned for our sins.
  - Into Christ who fulfilled all righteousness for us...
  - We will focus on that next week...
  
- b) But there is something to think about here...
  - Usually when the Bible speaks about us being holy and blameless, it is not talking about the righteousness we have from Christ as our representative—
    - holiness and blamelessness usually refers to what we ourselves are through grace—
      - you know, we grow into holiness—we become more and more like Jesus—we become holy.
  
  - And I believe that is exactly what this verse is talking about...
    - But I also do not believe we should entirely separate a holy life from repentance and faith in Christ...
    - What I mean is, if you, as a fallen sinful human being, are going to be holy and blameless,
      - it will only be as one who confesses your sins, repents of your sins, and looks to Jesus Christ for the cleansing of your sin.
  
    - In other words, you ought not to think that there is a kind of holy and blameless life that does not consist first and foremost in repentance and faith in Jesus Christ!
      - To be one who does not believe in Him is to be one who is leading an unholy life of blindness and rebellion...
      - The holy and blameless man is the man who is in Christ by faith.
  
    - In the new birth, God makes us holy and blameless by bringing us into Christ...
      - He changes us from unholy persons who reject Him and avoid Him to holy persons who come to Him to be cleansed and purified...
        - And we do, He fully accepts us.
        - We become law keepers because we are trusting in the One who washes away our sin.

3) But it does not end there...

- It is not as though we trust in Christ and there are no other changes...
  - When there is real trust in Christ, there is a whole different attitude about sin and a whole different life that ensues...
  - There is a yearning to be like Him and to obey God's law in every area of our lives.
    - We begin to live the new heavenly life—we begin to live in communion with God—we begin to love Him and keep His commandments and we begin to love one another.
- And the final result is that when we get to heaven, we will no longer sin at all.
  - We will then be welcomed into the immediate presence of God where we will feast our eyes upon His glory and be filled with joy and love forever more.

B. The second blessing listed here that God has purposed for us is adoption...

- vs. 5 says, “having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...”

1. We have just seen that God makes us holy and blameless before Him—

- but now there is adoption!
  - a. This is over the top—
    - He not only makes us acceptable—
      - He actually adopts us into His very own family—as sons to Himself...
  - b. Think of it!
    - He is our Father!
    - It is His house we enter!
    - It is His welcome we receive!
    - It is His name that we take!
    - It is His image that we are given!
    - It is His discipline that we receive!
    - It is His home that we dwell in forever and ever, not as servants, but as sons—as joint-heirs with Jesus.

2. The Son of God has had heavenly fellowship with the Father for all eternity,

- but now we are brought into the place of sons by Him!
  - He brings us into the house through the path of the cross!
  - We are brought to the very blessings that belong to Him as God's Son!

- a. Now I do not mean to say that there is no difference between the Son of God's relationship with the Father and ours...
  - There is a difference in capacity...
    - As the Son of God, He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, and He dwells with the Father on a level that is far beyond our ability to comprehend...
  
- b. But in another way, there is no difference at all...
  - The Son of God is loved by the Father with a perfect love that gives and receives all that divinity can—
    - there is a fullness of communion that perfectly satisfies infinite capacity!
  - But understand that the Son of God also has a human nature,
    - and that human nature is a real human nature that will abide forever...
    - It is a human nature that has limitation just like ours—it is not infinite or unchangeable...
      - And in that human nature,
        - Jesus receives all the fullness of which the human nature is capable of receiving so that in that human nature He is also perfectly satisfied (just as He is in His divine nature).
  - And that is how it will be the same for us in our human natures!
    - We will be filled to capacity (as humans) with the discovery of God's infinite glory so that we will be forever satisfied in Him.
    - We will be loved and blessed with all the fullness that our human nature is able to bear.
      - and we will love Him and serve Him with the full measure of our capacity—
        - We will not become infinite, but we will become pure and holy through and through just as He is.
  
- c. If you think of love as water that fills a cup,
  - The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit continually fill each other's cups which are an infinite ocean...
  - Our human cup is much smaller, but in heaven, our cup will be just as full as the Son of God's infinite ocean...
    - there will be no empty places, no shortages, no admixture...

- We will love Him with *all* our heart soul mind and strength and He will love us with a fullness that will absolutely satisfy us forever.
- We are brought into the very blessedness of heaven as sons.
- We are brought into the very family of God where He gives Himself to us and where we forever joyfully give ourselves to Him and to each other.

**Conclusion:**

God the Father has planned all this for us!

- What amazing grace!
- What a gracious plan!

Give all praise to Him!

- That He should make creatures that He would adopt into His home is stupendous enough...
  - but how much more outrageous is that grace—how absurdly out of all proportion is that grace—
    - that would take guilty and defiled sinners—
      - make them holy and without blame before Him in Christ...
      - and then bring *them* into His very household to live as His very own sons forever and ever.

This display of His marvellous grace ought to take such a hold on you that you erupt with praise for all eternity!

- Let all heaven and earth praise Him—
  - The myriads and myriads of angels, the principalities and powers!

What about you my friend...

- Has the reality of God's grace taken possession of you?
  - Oh I pray that this sermon will wake you up!
  - Perhaps you have been labouring under the mistaken notion that God is a tight fisted God who asks much and gives little...
    - Oh how mistaken you are!
  - Don't hold Him off another moment!
    - See what God has prepared for those who love Him!
    - See how He has provided everything for your salvation in Jesus Christ!
    - Come to Him and partake, all you who hunger and thirst for His grace...
      - I guarantee you, you will never be disappointed if you do...
      - You will never look back with regret and say,
        - "Why did I ever go to the one who is so gracious to sinners that He makes them holy and without blame before them and predestines them to adoption as sons?"
      - No, you will rather be lost in the adoration of His grace who has chosen us to be an example upon which to show His grace.