

"The Praise Of The Glory Of His Grace"

"For the praise of the glory of his grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved ..." (Eph. 1:6). "Grace" means favor. We think of it as "unmerited" favor. From unmerited comes that thought of "free" or "freely." The declaration of Paul has is that God's favor is "freely" bestowed on us, in the Beloved--that is, in Christ.

Twelve times Paul uses the word "grace" in this letter to the Ephesians, but not always in the same sense. Twice he uses it to bestow or comfort a blessing upon God's children, those who love Christ with an incorruptible love (1:2; 6:24). Once he uses the word to describe a blessing Christians may be to others. *"Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear"* (4:29). Three times in chapter three (verses 2, 7, 8) Paul uses "grace" to describe the apostleship God gave him; a blessing that brought tribulation along with the blessing of being God's chosen apostle to the Gentiles. Five or six times the word is used to describe the gift of salvation God bestows on man in Christ (1:6, 7, 22:5, 7, 8; 4:7). The uncertainty as to the exact number lays with the last reference: *"But unto each one of us was the grace given according to the measure of the gift of Christ."* It is possible that "grace" in this latter passage refers to spiritual gifts so necessary in the first century church. The context suggest such a possibility for it says of Christ, *"When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive and gave gifts unto me ... and he gave some to be apostles, prophets, etc."* (4:8f). Yet while these supernatural gifts might be included in this grace, that would not rule out that those who received no supernatural gift (grace) did receive the gift of grace: salvation. I believe that taking the whole of the section together, that, whatever else "grace" might include, it does include salvation.

In the first chapter notice that Paul speaks both of *"the praise of the glory of his grace"* and of the *"riches of his grace"* (vss. 6, 8). While in the second chapter he refers to the exceeding riches of His grace and he speaks elsewhere of our salvation being by grace, not only in this letter but in others as well (Eph. 2:5, 8; Titus 2:11). It is in these expressions in verses 6 and 8 we are primarily interested. First he speaks of the *"praise of glory of his grace."* Every tongue should exalt the name of the Father and His Son for their glory, the majesty of the unspeakable gift to us. Why should the glorious God who made the world and all things therein be concerned about men, the creature, who rebelled against His laws? Why should He allow His Son to die the heinous death He died to rescue fallen, sinful man? Why should the Son be willing to leave heaven and come to earth to die for men who, as the prophet fore showed, *"rejected"* Him? The preciousness of such is an awe-inspiring

matter. Love is the answer, of course and with all certainly we may say that praise is due Him for this glory, which is free and freely bestowed on us who are in the beloved.

Second, the apostle speaks of the "*riches*" of his grace. What despair his grace lifts us from! What a wondrous future await those upon whom he bestows his grace! How significant is this passage from Paul's Roman letter: "*Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past tracing out!*" (Rom. 11:33).

Salvation is a wondrous gift. While it is free to the obedient, men have nothing of which they can boast "*for by grace have ye been saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is from God. Not of works that no man should boast*" (Eph. 2:9f).

Jim McDonald