

SERMON: To The Glory of God's Grace

GOOD Morning OIC & Welcome to Father's House,

Having completed my messages from the Book of Romans let us remember the main Theme of Christianity which was woven throughout that Book. That theme is that JUSTIFICATION is the declaration by God that we are no longer guilty but we are made righteous on the basis of Jesus' death on The Cross to buy OUR eternal forgiveness. Today, we will begin the Book of Ephesians, also written by Paul. Paul's Letter to the Church in Ephesus tells Christians to live in God's perspective, as if they were already in Heaven. Paul boldly proclaims repetitively that God has given more than Christians need to SUCCEED in living a holy life on Earth which continues in Heaven to The Glory of God's Grace.

This letter by the Apostle Paul was to the Church at Ephesus as well as to be circulated to other churches in the province of Asia. He wrote it in AD 60 during his two-year imprisonment in Rome. We read in **(Ephesians 1.1-2)**, *Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* Paul will often repeat that it is *his calling, not just his spiritual gifts*, that enable his Apostleship, thus he writes *by the will of God.* He either was commending these Christian saints, or suggesting to others, that holy sainthood requires a degree of being *faithful in Christ Jesus* as these Ephesians were.

The subtitle for Ephesians Chapter 1 in the **(NASB1995)** Bible is, **“The Blessings of Redemption.”** This is appropriate, for Paul wastes no literary time getting to his main theme of this Letter in **(v.2)** *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* We Christians appropriately often use the word *Grace* in our conversation about our relationship with God. I like to remind myself and others, that the exact meaning of *grace* is *unmerited favor.* This needs to be occasionally recalled to our minds. In **(Ephesians 1.2)**, the short preposition **from** denotes the infinite and truly never ending source of this grace, that is **from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** The Older Testament Jewish “Shema,” which means in Hebrew “to hear,” was accurate to describe the LORD GOD ALMIGHTY as “complex unity.” This is clear by the use of the Hebrew word *echad* for *one.* The “Shema” from **(Deuteronomy 6.4)** is *“Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one {echad}!”* Jesus revealed God completely as the Trinity of

Three Persons: Father-Son-Holy Spirit, One God. I like to remember, especially in prayer to God, the Bible verse in **(1Corinthians 8.6/MOUNCE)**: *yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.* All good things come to Christians from God the Father as in **(James 1.17)**: *Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.* And, all good things coming from the *Father of Lights* to Christians come through the *one Lord, Jesus Christ.*

Grace and Peace are two of those good things!

We read in **(Ephesians 1.3-4)**, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.* Paul is beginning his treatise on Christians being part of a unique citizenship, already being spiritually *in the heavenly places in Christ.* We also see in **(v.3)** that we praise and give our Blessings to *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.* Father has already blessed us with *every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.* Remember that God is above Time. He sees us where we are, and at the same time, already in Heaven. He withholds no *spiritual blessing* from any Christian. It seems to me, that our lack of spiritual blessings is more on our side of *not asking for them.* At any rate and regardless of that, Father keeps giving us *Grace and Peace.*

A Christian truly has a life of being stretched, with one foot on earth and another foot in Heaven. This sounds like a joke or a funny story until we consider that the many struggles we have on Earth become small when we can focus on our Eternal Home.

Next, Paul now teaches what Jesus taught him about God who is above time, and about the Elect, or Chosen by Him in **(Ephesians 1.4)**: *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.* This “knowledge of God” or “theology” was given in detail in Chapter 8 of the Book of Romans as I preached on March 17, 2024 in my message titled *Justification: God, the Chooser:*

(Romans 8.29-30/NASB) says, *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters; 30 and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*

Similarly, now here in Ephesians Chapter 1 he puts a more measurable or scientific timeline on “foreknew” and “predestined.” He writes “*before the foundation of the world,*” thus emphasizing God the Creator of the physical not just the spiritual universe. We Christians often forget God's intention and power to cause or bring to pass *that we would be holy and blameless*

before Him. Without legalism, but with hunger for relationship with Jesus, we recall in **(Hebrews 12.14)**, *Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.* Our reverence for a Holy God plus our strong motivation to see Jesus promotes what we call “sanctification” by reverence and a childlike faith. The word sanctification means being set apart from the spirit of this world. Here at OIC a few weeks ago our childlike faith was expressed as we sang the children's glorious song “*Heaven Is A Wonderful Place.*” We sang along with the happy puppets “*I want to see my Saviour’s Face*”...and, over and over and over -- ***I WANT TO GO THERE!*** This focus on our Heavenly Home with Jesus allows us to be gentle as we pursue peace with all men. When we do that, we can trust that God will bring about his perfect will, His “*Grace and Peace,*” despite any conflicts.

Now Paul shares the power, or eternal cause and reason, behind the “***Grace and Peace***” that God gives to Jesus followers. First and foremost, ***In love***; but Paul adds a new phrase or expression that seems to capture our Eternal Love and Thanksgiving back to Him, who is Love. *That is the phrase to the praise of the glory of His grace.* This is introduced by Paul in **(Ephesians 1.4-6)**: *In love 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.* Paul will repeat these wonderful words of life ***to the praise of the glory of His grace,*** in this Letter. This is an eschatological, or an End of Time, perspective or view from God's standpoint, but we Christians will all experience it. We are justified sinners thus holy saints. We will be presented to God in Heaven by Jesus. We will fill the universe with our giving thanks and praises for ***the glory of God's grace.*** No matter how faithful we might have been, or true to our Jesus, and determined to live a *sanctified holy life*...we will be overcome with thankfulness as we realize that it was the *glory of God's grace* that brought us there...from eternity past when *God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ's blood sacrifice on the Cross*....and finally when Time is No More.....there before the Throne of God, blameless and without spot or wrinkle. Paul will further describe this future for Christians in **(Ephesians 5.27)** where he wrote, *that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.* Paul taught his pupils that “*Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*” as he wrote in **(Acts 14.22)**. But these *tribulations* seem infinitesimal or small and weak when put up against the unlimited love and power of ***the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved,*** as declared in **(Ephesians 1.4-6)**.

Reading **(Ephesians 1.7)**: *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace.* The writer to the Jewish Christians makes the

price of Redemption exact and clear in (**Hebrews 9.22/MOUNCE**), *In fact, according to the law almost everything is sprinkled with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.* All our *Grace and Peace* and every blessing we receive today as Redeemed Christians was paid for by Jesus' shed blood on the Cross over 2,000 years ago.

Paul will use the word *grace* {*unmerited favor*} only twelve times in the Book of Ephesians. But, he will repeatedly emphasize and magnify God's intentions to all of Jesus' followers to receive the *glory of His grace*. Paul is not giving us Christians a handbook on how to live, but Holy Spirit inspired words to create within us a heart of thanksgiving to believe in our Heavenly Father's eternal love toward us. The emphasis is on God, the Father, and His Son, the Beloved, who redeemed us by His blood. We Jesus Followers are the recipients of such love in action. Dear OIC Saints, when our hearts stay thankful for God's wonderful grace, somehow we find ourselves walking in the Spirit, without a set of rules, but as holy followers of Jesus. As the old hymn goes: **“His Law is Love, and His Gospel is Peace.”**

Now in (**Ephesians 1.8-9**): *which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.* **God has lavished the riches of His grace on us, including forgiveness of our trespasses {sins}!** Again, Paul's choice of the word *lavished* in the Greek New Testament is *περισεύω* (*perisseuō*). This means: **to be over and above, to be superfluous, to cause to be abundant.** The Apostle wants the Ephesians (and all Christians) to get a larger and bigger idea of the Love of God to them. **God never gives love in teacups or thimbles, but in oceans!** This has nothing to do with our worthiness, or it would not be to the **Praise of the Glory of His Grace.** It is only because we received His Son by faith.

In (**Ephesians 1.9**) we read, *He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.* Before Jesus came to Earth, God's will for mankind was truly a *mystery*. We see this in regard to God's revelation in the person of Jesus Christ to a New Testament Believer as compared to God's revelations to faithful Older Testament prophets. This is written in (**1 Peter 1.8-11**) **8** *and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,* **9** *obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.* **10** *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries,* **11** *seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.* We Christians are indeed blessed abundantly to ***the glory of God's grace.*** Many of these prophets who preached God's Promises

regarding the Coming Savior to the nation where Jesus would appear were killed or imprisoned. They did not see what we have received, the “mystery” fulfilled.

Also, it is written in **(Ephesians 1.9)**: *according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him. Kind intention* is a simple concept like *kindness* may seem; and not great enough or powerful for God. But the Bible tells us that *God is love* in **(1 John 4.8)**; and of the Fruit of the Spirit of God, we read in **(Galatians 5.22-23)**, *22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* It does not take many years of living in this sinful world to realize how rare true *kindness* is. Truly only the Spirit of the *kind* God Himself can make it an everyday fruit in a human heart. God's kind intentions are thus purposed in Jesus to all who would believe in Him. The Amplified Bible is worth quoting here before moving on to the next verse. In **(Ephesians 1.9/AMPC)**, *Making known to us the mystery (secret) of His will (of His plan, of His purpose). [And it is this:] In accordance with His good pleasure (His merciful intention) which He had previously purposed and set forth in Him,* Christians may truly be in awe of such a privilege and blessedness to have God reveal the secret of His Eternal will for mankind to them. And of course, this, in the past a **mystery**, is now the Good News or Gospel of Jesus Christ which we proclaim to the ends of the earth. God no longer wants to keep the gift of Eternal Life a secret! ...Neither should we!

Please Note in The First Chapter of Ephesians the awkward placement of verse numbers such as , #5, #8, #10, #11, #14, in the NASB. This version does not aid in describing this exegesis. Most likely the NASB's close adherence to the original Greek may be the cause. This is really arbitrary for the original New Testament manuscripts were written with no verse numbers and in only upper case or capital Greek letters. Nevertheless....we press on!

Now Paul emphasizes the position of the Believer, *in Him*, that is *in Christ*. We read in **(Ephesians 1.9-10)**, *in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.* All of Mankind can be divided into just two spiritual categories: 1) **in Christ** or 2) **not in Christ**. Paul has been writing to the Ephesian Christians remarkable and “*Wonderful Words of Life*,” as sung in an old American Hymn, so titled. {{Pastor sings one phrase}} These Wonderful Words are only for people **in Christ**.

More Notes on Bible translations: The various New American Standard Bible translations closely align to the Original Greek New Testament. However, for English speakers and Japanese as well, who are not familiar with Greek, the grammar constructs often make understanding more difficult depending on the context. I would appreciate my Japanese friends to give me some feedback on this sermon and this idea in general. I have chosen the **New Living Testament (NLT)** for the

sweeping picture that Paul is painting here in these few verses **#9-11 in Ephesians Chapter 1.**

These verses express the End of Time or *fullness of time* for those **in Christ.** The meanings brought out from the words “*administration suitable to the fullness of time*” seems more clear as we read in **(Ephesians 1.9-11/NLT):** *9 God told us the secret of what He wanted to do. It is this: In loving thought He planned long ago to send Christ into the world. 10 The plan was for Christ to gather us all together at the right time. If we are in heaven or still on earth, He will bring us together and will be head over all. 11 We were already chosen to be God’s own children by Christ. This was done just like the plan He had.*

Here Paul gives the prophetic Bible Word, the Lordship of Christ. This is much more than a *grand title, but the Deity and Authority of Christ.* Regarding Jesus' Deity, the Apostle Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, gave a strict and convicting message to those Jews in Jerusalem who had participated in, or at least allowed without complaint, the Crucifixion of Jesus, God's Beloved. We read Peter's famous sermon in **(Acts 2.34-36), 34** *For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: {Peter quoting Psalm 110.1}*

‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD,

“SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’

36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Peter, a Jew himself, knew the high thoughts the Jews had of King David, not in idolatry but in respect and for his Messianic qualities. So he quoted **(Psalm 110.1)** to the crowd who had gathered after they had heard the speaking in many languages by Jesus' Spirit-filled disciples. Peter shocked them into the realization that they had just crucified their *Messiah!* To **the Glory of God's Grace,** many repented and became Jesus Followers as they were baptized in water to prove their commitment to Him.

What does this mean today? Well, Jesus is Lord of Heaven and Earth. Jesus with His Heavenly Host of Angels, and with His power, does battle against the Devil and the spiritual Prince of Japan, a fallen angel. He does this more so when we ask Him in prayer to do so. That evil Prince thinks he can own **Japan!** Jesus is LORD of the Universe both seen and unseen. In **(Psalm 110.1),** again it says: *‘THE LORD {GOD THE FATHER} SAID TO MY LORD {JESUS} , “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, 35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET,”’* quoted by Peter in **(Acts 2.34-35).** Jesus' authority, at the right hand of God the Father, is realized through Christians' prayers, to keep God the Father's Promise to Jesus in **(Acts 2.35):** *“... UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’* This term, “Your Enemies,” includes Satan and principalities like the Prince of

Japan, as well as human beings. God wants to save Jesus' human enemies, of course. But, the day is coming, burning like a furnace, for the human enemies who continually keep rejecting Christ.

Now, about the wonderful Gathering for us Believers in **(Ephesians 1.10/NLT)**, *10 The plan was for Christ to gather us all together at the right time. If we are in heaven or still on earth, He will bring us together and will be head over all.* **The non-Christians are not included in this Gathering at the End of History, the End of Time.** Too many sinners think only of the gentleness and kindness of Jesus. These qualities still being true, this same Jesus will come to judge the human race. We see this in **(Revelation 1.16)**: *In His right hand He held seven stars, and out of His mouth came a sharp two-edged sword; and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.* And in **(Revelation 19.15-16)**, *15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. 16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."*

There is only one Jesus. He will return to exert the authority and use the sword in His mouth (Word of God). He now uses this Sword, along with us, against the Devil, and his messengers; but then, also against all the nations. It is noteworthy that Jesus' Sword, the Sword of the Holy Spirit, that is the Word of God, is also used to save sinners and heal saints. It is not always pleasant when applied to either, but the Great Physician uses His Sword like a Master Surgeon, to heal and cure souls.

If this seems fearful to you dear listener, then as it says in **(Psalm 2.12/KJ21)**, *Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.* How do I do that, Pastor Bruce? Simple pray to Jesus and turn away from your sins and accept His Blood sacrifice. Then you will never experience that terrible wrath of judgment by the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I will highlight the next several times that Paul writes the words **"In Him:"**

In **(Ephesians 1.10-12)**, *In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, 12 to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.* Paul continues to emphasize our position before God

In Him... An inheritance....NOT YET: Jesus is our Reward. What He said to the original Apostles in **(John 14.3)**, He says to us as well: *If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.* The Apostle Paul wrote in **(Ephesians 1.10/NLT)**, *He will bring us together and will be head over all.* This is

prophetically writing the large scope of picture, that when Jesus brings all Christians together He will, not only as it says, *receive you to Myself*, but also will take His position as Lord over all in His authority on Earth and Heaven. At that time God Almighty will have put all of Jesus' enemies under His feet; and we will be with Him in Glory on Earth, not just in Heaven. **(Habakkuk 2.14)** says, *“For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea.*

In Him... An inheritance....ALREADY: Day by day we have this glorious hope, our inheritance in the future, as well as Jesus' Presence by the Holy Spirit. Jesus stays with all His Sheep until that Final Consummation or End of Time. For He promised in **(Matthew 28.20)**, *and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”* But, dear OIC Saints, our human frailties have us oftentimes feeling that “Some days are better than others.” This is when we must concentrate on **(Ephesians 1.11):** *according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.* It is a challenge to our faith to believe that God is really still doing this *counsel of His will* when the plans we believe that He gave us fall to pieces. A good friend of mine, a former missionary in Nigeria during the Civil War there many years ago, called this “The death of a vision!” He knew that is how missionaries and all Christians feel when the doors all seem closed to them. These harder days need a *sure dogged endurance* to believe and trust Jesus for our calling to ***the Glory of God's Grace***. As a great and eloquent teacher Paul repeats the simple phrase again in....

(Ephesians 1.13-14), *In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

In Him ...ALREADY, as it says “after listening” and “believed” - It never ceases to amaze me how “immature” Christians get gold when they take time to dig for it in their goldmine of their Bible Reading. Well, it never ceases to amaze me how I, your pastor, sometimes gets gold as I dig into the goldmine of the Bible. Yes, we are Christians because we accepted Jesus after *listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation.* Yet, as Shingo was led by the Holy Spirit last week to lead us in many worship songs emphasizing our early days **in Christ**, we need to dig for gold and review the Glory of the Cross until we see Jesus face to face. This helps us to never stop listening and never stop believing.

In Him ...ALREADY sealed- *having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,* The power of Jesus in Christians is the Holy Spirit. We were sealed, as with the King's seal in ancient days, and as even with the Japanese family name seal, or “inkan”, is sometimes still required in business transactions. But God's seal is the seal of the King of Kings and Lord of

Lords! Holy Spirit guarantees as Jesus promised, that we are being kept by the power of God until the End of Time or the End of our life on Earth.

Thus we are told in **(Ephesians 1.14)**, that Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity, is *the Holy Spirit of promise, 14 who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.* The *Amplified Bible* brings out or exegetes a clearer meaning for “**pledge**” as we read here, *14 The Spirit is the guarantee [the first installment, the pledge, a foretaste] of our inheritance until the redemption of God's own [purchased] possession [His believers], to the praise of His glory.* The Holy Spirit given to us is God's first installment or pledge that we will receive our home in Heaven, our full inheritance in Heaven with Jesus. We renters in Japan know how large the first installment may be. Our spiritual installment is even larger, God Himself, Holy Spirit, is that installment.

Many Christians experience, such as Fanny Crosby experienced, God's pledge of the Spirit is *a foretaste of Glory Divine.* Even as she wrote in verse #1 of the famous hymn *Blessed Assurance*: “O what **a foretaste** of glory divine.”

The more we Christians learn to acknowledge the Presence of Holy Spirit, not only by our senses but also with our minds, we will be in awe of what we have received **in Christ.** As the Holy Spirit song, “*The Comforter Has Come*” says: “**Though I a child of Hell now in His Presence shine, the Comforter has come.**” *{{Preacher pause and look and emphasize}}* This is all with the view in God's eyes, of our Redemption as we are **in Christ.** *{{pause}}* **We are God's own possessionto the praise of The Glory of God's Grace.**

Let Us Pray

REFERENCES

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