

Trophies of God's Grace
Ephesians 1:6
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Note: The text below was prepared for oral delivery rather than for publication in print. As such, be aware that sentence fragments are intentionally used and that this document has not been edited to correct the errors in grammar, sentence structure, etc.

- I. **Introduction:** Like me, many of you may have heard this description of believers as being referred to as "Trophies of God's Grace." That's the title of today's message and that concept is taken from Ephesians 1:6 which shows this indeed to be an accurate description of those who truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for all their salvation. Verse 6 falls within one long, 12-verse sentence (Eph. 1:3-14) which we will also be considering. So let's begin by looking at the beginning of this sentence in verse 3 where we read, "***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: ⁴According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*** <and here's the emphasis, all these blessings> ***To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.***" Trophies of God's grace.

While the trophies of God's grace are living souls, we typically think of a trophy as an inanimate object – but an object which honors the achievement of someone. For example, a trophy won a track meet does nothing to contribute toward the winner's achievement, but rather that trophy is given to honor the person and his or her accomplishment in winning the race. In my day we didn't receive "participation" trophies – only the winner got the blue ribbon or the trophy designating their achievement – a trophy which only the one victor deserved. Well, so it goes for true believers as they, as trophies of God's grace, show forth HIS achievement – HIS victory over sin and Satan. By the God-given gift of faith by which a sinner will look to Jesus Christ (and Him alone) for all their salvation, they (these trophies of God's grace if you will) praise and glorify Him. All their blessings are said here to be ... "***To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made*** <them> ***accepted in the beloved.***" Of course we know from the context that "the beloved" is speaking of Jesus Christ just as God the Father had referred to Him at His baptism as in Matthew 3:17 where He said, "***...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.***"

- II. Verses 7-14: And in my recent study of this passage, I was struck by the extent to which this notion of believers being trophies of God's grace is emphasized throughout this loaded sentence of Ephesians 1 – a sentence loaded with the wonderful multi-faceted blessings of God's salvation by sovereign grace through and by the Person and work of Christ.

Let's read the rest of that sentence which began in verse 3, by picking up where we left off, starting with verse 7 where Paul speaking of Christ, the beloved, writes, ***"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;*** <Note that grace by definition is bestowed upon those who do nothing to earn it – so that which they possess in Christ is owing solely to this eternal union with Him and to His doing and dying for them. "...according to the riches of his grace..."> ***⁸Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: ¹¹In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: ¹²That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. ¹³In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*** So in verses 6, 7, 12, and 14 of this one sentence, we have set forth God's chief design that, in the salvation of sinners, He alone is to receive all praise, all glory, all honor. We see that in every aspect of a sinner's salvation, it is all to the praise of His grace – all redounding to His glory!

III. The Glory of His Grace: Well, in light of this emphasis, just how are believers made to be to the praise of His glory and grace? How do believers become these trophies of His grace? In answer to that, I'd like to point out 3 observations from this passage regarding God's work of salvation, owing to the 3 Persons of the God-head, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Being trophies of His grace, we see first, is...

A. Owing to their eternal Union with Christ the God-man / Owing to God's Electing Grace: As we see in these first verses, Paul ascribed to God the Father, 3 manifestations of His grace and love toward these saints in having: (1) Chosen them in Christ, (vs. 4); (2) Predestinated them to the adoption of children by Christ, (vs. 5) and then (3) as we read in vs. 6, Accepted them in Christ – all these eternal blessings being to the praise of the glory of his grace. And I want you to notice how this election, this choosing by God of a people is not just a choice to save them by some yet-to-be-determined means, but that rather from before the foundation of the world, they weren't simply chosen by God, but they were chosen by God in Him, in Jesus Christ.

Among the 12 verses which make up this wonderful sentence, I want you to see this emphasis as found in 8 places, in 7 of the 12 verses. And specifically, how it's all to the praise of the glory of His grace in that all the blessings which accompany a sinner's salvation are said to be "in Christ." Let's quickly survey those verses. First as I noted, he begins with the declaration in....

1. Verse 3: That the Father is He "***...who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ***:" That covers it, but He goes on to elaborate beginning in the next verse, verse 4...
2. Verse 4: saying. ***According as he hath chosen us in him***... The doctrine of election isn't just that God chose a people, but He chose them unto salvation in their Savior in Jesus Christ! Before the world began, God the Father gave them to God the Son to be their Surety, Substitute, Representative, Redeemer – their Savior and He willingly took that upon Himself. And then in our primary text verse 6, where He says all these eternal blessings are "***To the praise of the glory of his grace, ...***
3. Verse 6: "***...wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved***." And then in the next verse 7, it begins with...
4. Verse 7: "***In whom*** <i.e. – in the beloved Son in whom God the Father is well pleased, in Christ...> ***we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.***" And then skipping down to verse 10 we read...
5. Verse 10: ***That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him***:
6. Verse 11: Christ, ***In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:*** < And He continues in verse 12 saying ¹²***That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.***
7. Verse 13: Christ, ***In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,***

All of these eternal blessings from the triune God-head are said to be in this Person, the Lord Jesus Christ. And you notice they are not to be merely attributed to Christ as if salvation is merely "by" Christ – as in by His meeting a prerequisite of sorts that merely would make their salvation a possibility, but no they are found IN Christ – that is we are what we are, these trophies of God's grace, solely owing to this eternal, immutable union made ours according to the eternal purpose and counsel of God's own will – not ours. We possess exactly what our dear Savior has earned for us due to our unbreakable, eternal union with Him. That's the only way a holy God could accept sinners such as you and me.

God, our Maker (so to speak), made us accepted in Christ by the same almighty and sovereign power by which He spoke this world into existence. And we know the ground of this acceptance to be by God the Maker (as we read in 2 Cor. 5:21) having “...**made him to be sin for us**, <speaking of His beloved Son...>**who knew no sin; that we** <trophies of God’s grace> **might be made the righteousness of God in him.**” How does God make us this way? By this glorious, sovereign act of imputation wherein we discover that for all He saves, Christ was made sin – He had their sins imputed (or reckoned to His account) that He might bear the just penalty due unto the demerit of those sins so that likewise, each and every one whose sins He bore, would have the entire merit of His obedience unto death, His perfect righteousness, made (imputed or reckoned to their account). It’s all in Christ, beginning with God the Father’s electing grace from before the foundation of the world.

Secondly, we see that believers being made trophies of His grace is owing to...

- B. God the Son’s finished work for us / God’s redeeming grace: As we read in verse 7, “**In whom** <i.e. – in the beloved Son in whom God the Father is well pleased, in Christ...> **we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.**” This is that which Christ in time accomplished as their Surety, Substitute, Representative, and Redeemer. We know that due to the sovereign, infallible, therefore sure-to-take place purpose of God the Father in having made us one with Christ, it was always sure and certain that Christ would indeed take into union with His deity a sinless humanity and walk this earth to live, die, be buried and raised again all for the justification of those given to Him by the Father.
1. Redemption: Now Christ did not shed His blood to merely make redemption and forgiveness possible. Redemption is not something that is made possible by way of Christ’s shed blood as if His shed blood merely somehow paved the way for sinners to procure their own redemption or appropriate unto themselves the redemption price that Christ paid. Not one drop of His blood was shed for any who aren’t eternally redeemed. The redeemed always have been and always shall be accepted in Him, their Surety, their Substitute, their Savior, and their Redeemer. Based upon God’s never changing view of them in Christ – having viewed them in Christ, having imputed (or charged to their accounts) the merits of His work of redemption – it is in Him that they have redemption. As I Cor. 1:30 puts it, “**But of him** <God, the Father> **are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:**³¹**That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.**”

You see only for these who were graciously put “in Him” (chosen, predestinated to adoption as children, and accepted in Him) is He made unto them to be their redemption. And if it’s any other way, the sinner would have room to glory in himself – for it would then suggest that something remaining to be done by, in or through them is what distinguishes the saved from the lost. And that’s not God’s way of salvation by grace, the way that redounds solely to His glory!

2. Forgiveness: And part of being made trophies of God’s grace that is owing to His redeeming grace includes the forgiveness of sins. Notice that in verse 7, we see that in Christ, “...we have redemption...<and> the forgiveness of sins...” The Apostle speaks of this work of redemption and the connected forgiveness of sins, as a thing possessed. This forgiveness of sins is not a product of our repentance. No, the sense of 1 John 1:9 (which is often misinterpreted and cited to support that fallacy) is that our repentance is instead an evidence of one who has already been redeemed and forgiven. We, those chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, don’t do a thing to redeem ourselves. The saints were put in Christ who would (and did) in time redeem them. Christ said on the cross, “It is finished” and indeed redemption was – then and there.

And yet consider with me today the vast dimensions of redemption. Its impact is infinite and reaches through all time, and through all eternity. As vs. 4 taught us, from before the foundation of the world, the saints were chosen in Christ to be holy and without blame before God. How can they, who would fall in Adam and come into this world as spiritually dead sinners, be so accounted holy from eternity past? It’s only by their redemption Christ would work out in time at the cross. Now that boggles my mind. But make no mistake – these saints do nothing to become redeemed – they have redemption! And not only that – they have the forgiveness of sins.

First and foremost, consider that redemption most definitely speaks of a price or a ransom being paid. Christ Himself referred to it as a ransom in Matthew 20:28 when He said, “***Even as the Son of man came ... to give his life a ransom for many.***” As you have heard me and others before me put it, redemption is not an attempt made – but a price paid – and it speaks of a price paid in full, no balance remaining due. It is a price paid to holy God, whose justice is offended, whose law is broken – against whom all sins are committed. It’s paid to a God whom the Bible tells us will not clear the guilty at the expense of His justice. His justice must be satisfied. In Rev. 5:9 Christ is said “to redeem” men “unto God by His blood.” And so we see that the redemption price is (1) His shed blood and (2) it is paid unto God the Father.

And we know it was sufficient and paid the debt in full for Christ arose from the grave in victory over death, proving that God's justice was fully satisfied by His shed blood – by the everlasting righteousness He rendered which demands everlasting life for all for whom it was rendered. He bought them with His blood. As I Cor. 6:20a puts it, ***“For ye are bought with a price...”*** That's redemption. Dare any suggest that the price of His precious blood was insufficient for even one for whom it was shed? And it is just that, His precious blood, that is precisely the price of redemption so clearly set forth in our text in Eph 1:7 where we see that ***“...we have redemption through his blood, ...”***

By God's redeeming grace, their sins have been remitted – paid for. And though these blessings describe different aspects of salvation, they cannot be detached from one another – not according to God's Word. And from there we know that for any whose sin debt was paid or remitted by His shed blood, forgiveness of their sins is the sure and certain result. The Greek word, aphasis (af'-es-is) that is translated as “forgiveness” is found here in Ephesians 1:7 and in 6 other places (if I counted correctly). And that very same word is translated as “remission” in 9 other New Testament passages. In these instances, “forgiveness” and “remission” are the same Greek word. It's a word that means deliverance, pardon, release and a complete forgiveness – it means paid in full. This should make sense to us for we know that when you remit a payment so as to pay someone off, you are released from the obligation, forgiven of the debt, but only if it has been paid in full.

So we see here how believers are made trophies of God's grace (1) by His electing grace, (2) by His redeeming grace, and (3) thirdly, we see that believers being made trophies of God's grace is owing to...

- C. Their regeneration and conversion in time by the work of God the Holy Spirit / I.e. – Owing to God's regenerating grace: Look again with me at verses 11-14 where it speaks of Christ..., ***“In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: ¹²That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. ¹³In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”*** Just as it was always sure and certain that Christ would accomplish the redemption of all those whom the Father chose in Him unto salvation from eternity past, likewise it is an unailing certainty that by the same power with which Christ was raised from the dead, all those who were put in Him from eternity and for whom He lived and died, shall be raised both (1) to walk in the newness of Spirit-given life as they are given that blood-bought gift of faith by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, and (2) to ultimately be raised to heaven itself.

God's redemption of a chosen people does not negate the necessity of faith – rather it insures it! They shall ALL come to Him. As we so often quote from John 6:37, ***“All that the Father giveth me < to Christ, by His electing grace – Christ their Surety who would come in time to redeem them, showing forth His redeeming grace> shall come to me; <That’s His regenerating grace> and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”***

IV. Conclusion:

I'm not sure I can adequately convey what an awesome blessing and privilege it is for true believers to have been made trophies of God's grace. As our primary text, Eph. 1:6 stated, God's electing grace, His redeeming grace, and His regenerating grace is all (vs. 6), ***To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.*** This acceptance in and by Christ is an awesome thing. The word translated “accepted” in our text is a much stronger word than our English word “accepted.” This word means, ***“highly favored, laudable, praiseworthy.”*** Now we are not, nor ever could be considered acceptable (in the sense this word denotes) before and by the holy Lord God based on anything done by or found within us as sinners outside of Christ, but in Christ (having been made one with God's beloved Son) every believer, every sinner chosen, redeemed, and called by grace, is so completely and totally accepted of God that, even in the eyes of the holy, omniscient Lord God, we are highly favored, laudable, and praiseworthy! Not as sinners in ourselves, but as sinners saved by His grace in Christ. We and our salvation redound to His glory – to the praise of the glory of His grace!

Well, how about somebody you, who hears this message? Are you truly a trophy of God's grace? Sadly, many mistakenly may apply this description to themselves all the while imagining that their salvation is at least in some way or some degree conditioned on themselves. Multitudes who call themselves “Christians” actually believe that Christ died to redeem all and salvation is ultimately based upon the response of you, the sinner. But that's not salvation by God's grace – not if the ultimate determining factor in whether you are saved or lost is a product of something you do or something you choose that others refuse to do or choose. No, that trophy would be a trophy awarded to you for in essence, that would be you, saving yourself – or so men assume. No one is saved because they believe. Rather the true trophies of God's grace believe because they have been saved by His grace. That's a vital distinction.

But know this – that trophy that so many presume to have earned for themselves will not stand at the judgment. Like me, you may have heard stories of vandals breaking into the trophy cases of schools or university athletic departments and stealing or destroying the trophies of those honored for their various achievements.

Likewise, it seems popular in our day for protest groups to remove, tear down, or destroy statues of men honored for their past accomplishments – whether it be as war heroes, the founding fathers of our nation, or others. And it's true, that these who are "heroes" to some are mere mortal men who had flaws – flaws which are used in attempts to justify their destruction. But not so for the trophies of God's grace. They are chosen in Christ, and in Him they are holy and without blame according to Ephesians 1:– flawless. Know this – the proverbial trophy case of almighty God shall never be broken into so as to cast these trophies aside. Rather they shall prevail for all eternity for they are the products of the eternal, immutable everlasting grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we read in Romans 8:38--39, ***"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

Of these trophies of God's grace, Christ said, as recorded in John 10:27-30, ***"My sheep < the sheep which he had said earlier in the chapter He would give His life for, these trophies, My sheep...> hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: ²⁸And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and my Father are one.***

Safe and secure for all eternity are true believers, these trophies of God's grace!

Footnote from the author: While this sermon was prepared and delivered by me, I often utilize the commentaries, study helps, and teachings of others to supplement my own prayerful study of the scriptures. Since this document was not originally prepared for publication in print, please excuse and recognize that it was unfeasible to properly identify and credit all of the various original sources used to develop the content herein. Ultimately, it is my sincere and foremost objective to accurately present the gospel of God's grace found in the only infallible source, God's word itself – the Bible.