

Praise God for His Glorious Grace—Ephesians 1—6/28/2026

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We gather today to praise God for His glorious grace.

That's what we've done when we've gathered in 2 services for 4 years & it's what we get to do all together now in 1 service!

What a blessing to enjoy fellowship together with our common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ & our shared submission to His Word.

We unite in the life of the Spirit with God as our Father as we live together as the church Jesus is building.

We recognize that every good thing is a gift of God's grace to us.

We don't gather to boast in ourselves though we recognize how you all faithfully serve & give & love one another.

All such blessings are reasons to boast in **God's grace in your lives** as God has worked marvelously to show His glory **in & through you**.

So it is fitting that we turn our attention to Ephesians 1 this morning to the theme of the praise of the glory of God's grace.

As some of you know, I preached this passage at Berean Bible Church in Hilo, Hawaii 3 weeks ago with a flower lei & a nut lei on my neck.

Ephesians 1 is what Pastor Daniel Costales asked me to preach.

And that seemed like a fitting passage for the celebration of facility expansions that are allowing us to return to one service this morning.

It is all by God's glorious grace—we exist & grow **by God's grace** & we will persevere & bear more fruit **by God's grace**.

That grace comes to us **in Jesus Christ, because of Jesus Christ**, as the Holy Spirit has awakened us & is operating in us.

So open your Bibles to Ephesians 1 & let's begin by reading this chapter we'll overview today—Ephesians 1:1-23. [READ]

My guess is that you are familiar with some verses in Ephesians.

For example, I'm sure most of you would recognize Ephesians 5:22-33 that was read in yesterday's wedding.

From weddings & more, you know how Ephesians 5 speaks of Christ & the church as analogous to the relationship of husband & wife.

And you also likely know how Ephesians 6 speaks to parents & children & addresses the believer's armor in spiritual warfare.

If you value relationships, you likely grasp God's design for the church & the patterns for growth & change in Ephesians 4.

We as a church surely treasure our unity in Christ as Ephesians 2-3 extols for us who were formerly separated & alienated.

Most of you have surely read, heard, and maybe memorized Ephesians 2:8-9 about salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

But whatever your familiarity with the truths in Ephesians 2-6, to fully appreciate & experience them, you must know the foundations of God's mercy & sovereign initiative in chapter 1.

You may have heard Ephesians outlined in that way—with the 1st 3 chapters in the indicative & chapters 4-6 in the imperative.

That is, chapters 1-3 tell what we **are** in Christ & chapters 4-6 tell what to **do** in light of those powerful, positional truths.

And Ephesians 1 is the foundation & root of all that.

So today is a refresher of those truths to encourage our faith & enflame our praise to God on this historic day in our church.

Yet I must admit that Ephesians 1 is a chapter that says such shocking things in praise of God that some are confused & others are offended.

But that's not the goal of Paul's extended praise of God here.

The goal is to exult in the amazing love & grace of God—the point is to be lifted heavenward in praise & anchored deeply in faith.

So that's going to be our goal this morning as we survey the extreme happiness grounded in what's extolled here.

This chapter is rich with reasons to be happy in Christ, to celebrate & praise God & enjoy Him & delight in His love & seek Him.

And what's so happy about it is that it's not mainly about us.

I mean, think about it—the saddest things in my life are usually about me, about my bad attitude or response to a situation, about my failure to live or love or serve or think like I should have.

So when I look to myself, I usually don't feel so stellar.

But when I lift my eyes above my struggles & circumstances to look to God, I find reason to feel better.

And that's what I pray Ephesians 1 will help us to do today.

This may be simply a reminder, but I pray we'll be freshly amazed at God's timeless love & gracious commitment to our good for His glory.

And that renewal of our minds can move us to praise & prayer.

Sensing God's majesty & our minuteness can be so riveting & helpful.

As you know, that's why people like us travel to Hawaii to marvel at the beauty of God's wondrous works on the land & in the sea, from the majesty of a volcano to the colors of fish.

One reason people love to behold mountaintop vistas & vast canyons & oceans is because it's invigorating to feel so small.

It's good for us because it reminds us that our Creator God is greater than it all & He exists outside of created boundaries.

Since God is not bound by time or space, it's difficult to describe Him without physical or temporal constraints.

Even the word 'timeless' is too simplistic because it implies only that God lasts through time & is not affected by time.

Those are true, but God is outside the bounds & experiences of time.

So we always need to remember that the God of the Bible explodes the categories of human thought.

The God of Scripture is grander than any human could have invented.

And that's a testimony to the divine authorship of Scripture.

It reminds us that God Himself wrote the Bible—because no creature could make up a God so awesome.

Let's remember that as we dive into the transcendent complexities of God's majestic salvation in Ephesians 1.

And recall this should lead us to an overflow of praise to God.

As we breeze through the 23 verses of Ephesians 1 this morning, I'll offer 3 headings to package our amazement.

These are 3 channels for our amazement to overflow in glad worship.

The 1st of those is—#1—to be amazed by God's eternal love—point #1—Be amazed by God's eternal love.

That's an overall focus of Ephesians 1:1-6 where Paul opened wishing grace & peace & then blessed God from whom grace & peace come.

Paul did not merely highlight God's goodness in a vague way that makes us smile at Him as a happy face in the sky.

Rather, Paul emphasized God's **blessings** as rooted in God's **plan**.

Read Ephesians 1:1-3 to begin to meditate on that. [READ]

Paul was writing to **saints**, meaning those set apart by God as holy to Himself, as saved from sin's penalty & power.

Those saints were also called the **faithful**, meaning believers in Jesus Christ, those who trust Him & live by that faith.

He could wish grace & peace from God as their shared Father & Jesus Christ as their shared Lord because they were in the **family** of faith.

And then in verse 3, he turned to **bless God**, to **speak well of** God, to **praise** Him from whom these blessings flowed.

So verse 3 begins to lead us to be **amazed by God's eternal love**.

It's amazing enough to hear God called our Father & Jesus our Lord so we're no longer called enemies of God & slaves of sin.

It's amazing enough to read that God has **blessed us**, meaning God has blessed Paul & his believing readers, which includes us all in Christ.

If you have turned from sin to trust Jesus to rescue you from sin's life-wrecking power & punishment, this is for you too.

If you cannot do anything good enough to reach God, but you bank on Jesus to give you all you need, then these descriptions include you.

If you are not sure that includes you, then keep listening & asking God to lead you into this amazing love.

The key is to **seek Him for it**, to want Him because you feel your need.

And what's further amazing in verse 3 is that it speaks of being blessed with **EVERY** spiritual blessing in the heavenlies.

And these are **spiritual** blessings, not merely passing stuff on this earth that can **break** or be stolen or be lost or lose value.

These are **transcendent treasures** from God who is all we need.

In this eternal love, the God who created time & all things also He **chose** us in Christ before He made all else—read verses 4-6. [READ]

That is amazing!—the Creator, Sustainer, & Ruler of all **chose us** to be in Christ before the foundation of the world.

It's further amazing that His **goal** was for us **to be holy & blameless!**

Think of that—I'm **not** holy & blameless on my own, but if I'm in Christ then **God has purposed that for me**.

And the end of verse 4 into verse 5 tells **how** this is so—**in LOVE** God **predestined** us to adoption as sons.

God **lovingly** preplanned or predetermined us to be in Christ—where the word pictures drawing a circle beforehand.

That circle encompassed all who would be adopted into God's family as recipients of the love He had planned to give.

And that was not because we merited it.

Stop & think—why would God do such a thing when we are rebels & sinners against Him & we can never measure up to His standard?

How & why would He choose to show **love** in this way?

Listen—here are biblical answers to the tough philosophical musings regarding God's choice before time of those He planned to save.

Questions of **how & why** are answered by verses 5-6.

The **how** is *according to the kind intention of God's will* & the **why** is *to the praise of the glory of His grace*.

Let me rephrase another way the **how** question is asked—how could God plan to save some & not others?

The answer is that it was **the kind intention of His will**, meaning God is **kind** & He wished to show that kindness & so He **planned** to do so.

That's **how** God did this—it was in conformity to, in keeping with, & in connection down from *the kind intention of His will*.

God did **not** do it randomly or senselessly—He did it **on purpose** out of His own inherent kindness—that's how He did it.

Then a related '**why**' question may come like this—why did He show that saving love & adopting kindness to only some?

And the answer is that it was *to the praise of the glory of His grace*.

He did it to show the glory or radiant beauty & compelling majesty of **His grace** to allow His grace to be gladly praised.

He did it to welcome others into the thrill of seeing & experiencing the treasured goodness of His **grace**.

Grace is giving what is **not** deserved, freely meeting a need.

So think about that—if anyone **deserved** it, then it would not be grace & it would not be freely given.

If anyone did anything or even if God **foresaw** anything they **would** do, that would **not** be free & it would **not** be grace.

That would be **wages** or **merits** or **earned** payment.

But God does **not** owe anyone anything because He's the **source of all good** & everyone owes Him thanks.

God could only show His love freely if it was by grace in His plan to give purely out of His own kindness.

So our proper response is **praise**—we do not boast in ourselves or how we figure this out—we boast in God & His grace alone!

Think of the comfort of knowing that God loves us because **He initiated it** within Himself & **He** shows it **not** based on what we do.

God's love is **not** rooted in what we do for Him—He says simply receive it—we trust in Him alone & not at all self.

So we can feel secure because His love depends on Him alone & not on how faithful we are today or last week.

We could **never deserve it** & we can **never be good enough** to get it & we can **never stay good enough** to keep it.

And that makes His glorious grace extremely secure & happy.

God's love is **unwavering** because God is **unchangeable**.

So be amazed that God's love is **free** & always good because it's **always up to Him** to give it & we gladly trust Him & receive it.

That's what it means that **God loves us by His grace**.

Of course, we must be careful of another error here—God's love & grace **also** mean He **trains** His people to live rightly & love others.

He does not leave us in our sins to wreck our lives.

When God's grace appears, as Titus 2:11-12 says, it does "*instruct us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.*"

So God chose us in Him **to be holy & blameless**—yes, that's our position in Christ, but it's **also** God's goal in our **practice**.

We'll get to that dynamic power of God's grace to change people in a minute—but just realize first that **God's eternal love is fully free**.

That love is the foundation of husbands loving their wives & parents loving children & other commands in Ephesians 5-6.

And look—some of you have been blessed to have **parents** or a spouse or friend who showed you some measure of this kind of love.

They have loved you **whether** you were good or bad, **whether** they were commending you or correcting you.

I hope you have known assurance of those who love you no matter what, who are committed to your good no matter what.

If so, praise God for that small glimpse that He's given you of **His own love** that He gives freely of His own kindness.

Press into knowing & enjoying His love that is always there, rooted in His initiative, dependent on Him to give it & keep it as He said.

And if you have **not** had parents or other relationships where you've sensed some measure of this kind of love, I'm sorry.

That's sad & you may **struggle to believe such love exists**.

You may **doubt** whether you can experience love that is **so free** & **not coerced** & **not manipulated** or **not earned**.

Yet **listen**—God has allowed you to **hear of His love today**, to know from His Word that such a **compelling & secure love** **does exist**.

It's a love He chooses to give **all for reasons within Himself**.

So hear that **God loves you** if you are in Christ.

And if you are **not sure you are in Christ**, then **turn** from all else & come to Him today & know you are loved in Him.

Then you can **know** that you are loved in Christ because God chose to love you & that's it—that's enough, & that's eternal & that's amazing.

So **(#1), be amazed at God's eternal love** & how it comes to you by God's free choice & sovereign grace.

As I say often, marvel that out of the billions of people on the planet, you have access to the Bible & have heard of God's love in Christ.

You didn't do that—you & I did not initiate that—God did it in wondrous & unique stories of each of our lives.

That's why it's thrilling to hear testimonies—**God did it** all **according to the kind intention of His will to the praise of the glory of His grace**.

And to understand grace, we always see it against the backdrop of law & justice, against the contrast of what we deserved.

Since we are all sinners, what we earned would be punishment.

That contrast moves us to see grace as beautiful & happy & as reason to praise God for the **glory** of His grace as verse 6 says.

God's grace is to be praised as the root of His eternal love shown in His free & sovereign initiative to save those He chose.

So being amazed 1st at God's eternal love leads **2^{ndly}** to being **amazed at God's effectual grace**.

Point #2—be amazed at God's effectual or effective grace.

God's grace is not merely fluffy **potential** that hangs up in the air with **uncertain** hope that something will happen with it.

No. God's grace is **effective in accomplishing** what God planned & **finishing what God set out for it to do.**

For God to show grace to save sinners, He 1st had to satisfy the justice that was due to those sinners & He did that in Christ.

He **effectively did** what was needed freely in Christ & then He **effectively applies** that grace to those He chose to trust Him.

He moves hearts to marvel at Christ, to trust & treasure Christ, to believe & receive Him & have eternal life in Him.

Note in verses 7-14 that God is the Actor in all these accomplishments, that God is the one who did what was needed to apply grace to people.

And that grace was **purposed** by God to give all these lavish blessings on His people for the praise of His glory.

So we can be **amazed**, #1, at **God's eternal love** & next, **#2, we can be amazed at God's effective grace.**

Read Ephesians 1:7-9 to start seeing that described. [READ]

How could God forgive our sins?—He did it by **paying the price to cover our sins' penalty & to redeem us** out of slavery to sin—that's the *redemption through His blood* in verse 7.

And **why** would He forgive our sins?—verse 7 tells us that it was *according to the riches of His grace.*

This was grace **poured out**, or **lavished** as verse 8 says.

God gave His wisdom & insight to show us His plan of this redeeming love that was according to His kind intention.

Hear again those descriptions that point back to God as the Source of all good so that His love & grace are free & sure.

Again, this was His predestined plan with Christ at the center.

Read verses 10-12 where that's said again. [READ]

That is—God had all this planned—He had purposed it—He predestined His people to hope in Christ & to praise His glory.

So His grace continues to be effective in accomplishing everything He had set out to do—He acted according to His plan.

That's what I mean to be amazed at God's **effective** grace, His grace that **acts** & accomplishes exactly what He wanted.

It's not just some kind of hope-so grace, out there as a possibility.

It's grace that works as God acts in us & for us & through us.

This effective grace is evident in Ephesians 2&3 as He brings together former enemies into one new body in Christ as believers.

He has done that & then in chapter 4 He calls believers to guard & grow that unity as we grow in our grasp of it.

And God's grace is effectual or effective because He gives His own Holy Spirit as the powerful worker in us so that we believe.

Ephesians 2 describes that awakening moving us from spiritual death to spiritual life—when we were dead, God made us alive.

And we share that new life by the Spirit & are no longer alienated from God & from each other, but rather we share new relationships.

That means we can put off the old ways & renew our minds & put on new ways in every area of life as Ephesians 4 describes.

And the Spirit is also the **guarantee** that God's grace will fully grant us the spiritual inheritance stored up for us in Christ.

Read verses 13-14 to see that. [READ]

Again here, this is all to the praise of His glory.

This is all for recognition & rejoicing to be sent back to God.

It is only right to return all praise to God.

And it is the **only true & lasting happiness** to return praise to God because He alone is the secure source that never changes.

So true joy then is found in resting thankfully & expectantly in Him.

His grace will prove effectual to the end—He will **never** give up or & that gives us assurance & strength for the future.

We can trust God in Christ because His love for us is eternal & His grace to us is effectual & therefore we never stop seeking Him.

And that's where praise leads to petition in prayer.

Please don't miss that—this is so helpful in answering another thing that people wrestle with as they ponder this passage.

See in this passage how God's sovereign grace provides the perfect path from praise into prayer to this same God.

So if God's sovereign choice leaves you a bit unsettled, be encouraged that prayer for the lost is the most fitting response to these truths.

If you feel uncomfortable not understanding all the details & depths of God, welcome to the club—He's God & we are not.

But our **finite limits** should be reasons to trust His **infinite perfections**.

And if you wonder about lost loved ones that you don't know if they are chosen, then realize that it's not your job to know that.

It's not our job to know that—our job is **not** to know that future nor to know the decisions of God that were before time & outside of time.

We are not there—but God He is & always has been.

So realize that these truths teach us that **God is far more trustworthy** than we are & far more than any loved one that we want to be saved.

God is **far more trustworthy** than any lost loved one we want to be saved, that we want to persuade & convince & see changed.

God is **way more able** to save them than we are & He is **more ready to rescue** them though **they cannot be trusted** to do that for themselves.

So we can trust **HIM** far more than we can trust **them**.

So **praying** to God for others is a **far more reasonable response**, far better than arguing against His sovereignty or doubting His goodness.

It's **far better for us** to trust God's effectual grace as good & powerful to save even the most hardened sinner.

He loves to do that & does it all by His grace.

So we ask Him to do so to the praise of the glory of His grace.

With God having this amazing eternal love & effectual grace, it surely should **move us to pray** & to seek Him fervently.

Surely His love & grace **compel us to trust Him** & follow Him & love Him & proclaim Him & enjoy all He has for us.

And that's where being amazed at God's eternal love & effectual grace leads us **3rdly to be amazed at God's established provisions**.

So **#3 today, be amazed by God's established provisions.**

We **could** call these **promises** rather than **provisions**, but the emphasis of the prayer in verses 15-23 is on what's already **provided**.

The emphasis is what's **already** there, **already accomplished** & the prayer is merely for us to know it & experience it.

The prayer is for us to **enjoy** what's **already been purchased** for us.

One reason we struggle so much with our sins & circumstances is because we're so often looking at ourselves & our situations rather than looking at the God who is sovereign over it all.

When we look to the sovereign God whose love has grabbed us & whose grace has given so much to us, we gain perspective.

We can soak in the hope-filled depth of what's provided in Christ for our present & future both in power & purpose.

So Paul prayed for his readers to know these **provisions** that are **established** as ours through all God has given in Christ Jesus.

Let's start reading that prayer again in verses 15-17. [READ]

Paul had heard of their faith in Christ & their love of other Christians & that proved God's grace in their lives.

So he could pray for them with assurance of what God had for them that they could increasingly understand & enjoy.

He prayed for a spirit of wisdom & revelation in knowledge of God.

Paul knew how God works—he knew God works through His **truth** being understood & applied by the Spirit.

So he prayed for fresh & increasing amazement at God.

When we know all God is for us from eternity past to eternity future, we tend to feel better about where we are in life.

We feel better when we recall the truths of Romans 8—no matter what else may be going on, if God is for us, who can be against us?

And the answer is no one successfully, right?

No one can successfully oppose God's love & grace in Christ.

So we want to know Him as in Ephesians 1:18-23. [READ]

What did Paul want Christians to know?—what did he pray for?

First their future—the hope of our calling & the riches of the glory of what Christ has inherited for us.

Then next he wanted Christians to know their present power that he called surpassingly great.

And why is so great, Paul?—he explained why it's so great.

It's the same power or energy that worked in Christ in raising Him from the dead & seating Him in His rightful place in heaven.

That's amazing—did you hear that?—please don't miss that.

This same power that raised Jesus from the dead & seated Him in heaven is the surpassingly great power at work toward us who believe.

That's amazing!—be amazed at God's established provisions!

Get this—the same Holy Spirit of God who **raised Jesus bodily** came to **raise us spiritually** when He brought us to trust Christ.

Grab ahold of that for your prayer life & your daily practice.

That **same all-powerful Spirit** is what Paul prayed for Christians to **experientially know** in our present lives as we look to our future.

When you are wondering if you can obey that command or endure that trial, **realize the implications** of these verses.

In whatever you face, you have the **same power of the Spirit** that raised Christ—**so I think you can do it**—I think we can obey & endure.

Our future is sure & secure because that same power seated Christ over earth & heaven & above every name.

We can trust that—we can trust God’s power toward us because that same power led Jesus to His rightful place as Head of the church.

The church looks to Christ for all things now & forever because He has proven to be supreme & sure.

So you as a Christian can **pray with confidence in Christ** with this longing to know His power now in our holy living & outreach.

We can pray, knowing His eternal love & effectual grace.

And we can pray with **amazement at God’s established provisions** for us now & in the future in Christ.

Ephesians 1:15-23 is a fabulous prayer to pray on your own.

If you say you don’t know what to pray—***do you ever feel like that?***—then just open your Bible to a prayer like this one & start praying it.

Think through what’s being said & praise God & seek God in the same way by the same truths & same requests.

God put it there & so respond to it in prayer to the God who gave it.

Read all of Ephesians 1 to provoke your heart to **praise God for His eternal love, effectual grace & established provisions.**

Then **let His worthiness move you to pray**, to seek Him.

The **unsearchable** depths of the wisdom of His plans may be **beyond us**, but that can **keep us humble** under Him.

That can **keep us trusting** what He has told us & **leaving the sovereign Rulership to Him.**

We can respond with praise to God as our heavenly Father by His grace to adopt us in Christ & be amazed.

We can be amazed by God’s eternal love, effectual grace & established provisions that come freely & only in Jesus.

And if you do **not** know this love & grace & power in Christ, I urge you to seek Him & ask Him to apply His work to you.

If you are outside of all that this passage describes, then **turn to God in Christ & give up on everything else & trust Him.**

Talk with others after the service to seek help & prayer.

And again, if you **do** know the love & grace & power of Christ, then be **amazed** & be **encouraged in faith** & **deepened in worship.**

Let these foundations **inform & enflame every application for all of life** that flows from these truths.

Let all the familiar areas of application in the rest of Ephesians be **strengthened by these nourishing roots** in God’s glorious love & grace.

I pray those are helpful reminders as we praise God for His glorious grace today & always.

Let’s close in prayer now as we respond to God & His Word.