



A commentary on the Apostle Paul's beautiful words from the Epistle to the Ephesians describing the Christian's worship of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for the blessings of our personal salvation and His Church.

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*'To the Praise of  
the Glory of HIS Grace,  
wherein HE hath made  
us accepted in the  
BELOVED'*

*(Ephesians 1:6)*

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A clarion call to ascribe praise to the eternal God for both our spiritual and physical blessings in the light of His eternal programme for the Church.



WHILE IT IS A GOOD THING TO enumerate and consider our own blessings, it may inadvertently steer us to a kind of self indulgence. For it may well become a case of the proverbial frog in the well, whose impression limited the scope of its world to the well itself. The recollection and remembrance of God's personal blessings, both spiritual and temporal, benignly afforded to us, in itself is a noble thing. Howbeit, that we should not become inordinate and excessive in this exercise, it is needful for us to behold our blessedness from the perspective and backdrop of the sovereign execution of God's eternal programme and purpose from age to age. The blessings we have heretofore received, the blessings we are presently receiving and the blessings that are yet to be poured upon us are all together only a mere speck in the Almighty God's undertaking of the mammoth programme for the Church, which is His manifold wisdom displayed to principalities and powers in heavenly places. This, if you will recall, is essentially the message of Paul to the Ephesian Christians. Our blessed disposition and the things happening to us — be they pleasant or some form of tribulation — are all to be seen in the context of the eternal will of God, which He had foreordained before the foundation of the world. In this sense, we humbly recognise, that our own disposition and experience in the grace of the Gospel in relation to biblical and Church history is like comparing the earth to the canopy of the vast heavenly expanse above. O, what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man that Thou visitest him?

Yes, the very thought humbles us, that we a mere speck in the boundless ocean of people should be chosen in Christ Jesus before the activation of time itself. This will in turn fill us with awe, wonder, worship and an overwhelming sense of gratitude and love for God. It will rout and eradicate spiritual pride. Moreover, it will cause us to render to God His due glory. For God's faithfulness, power and love are not to be confined within the bounds of our own personal circumstances and experiences, however splendid they may be. Rather, we ought to see it with the backdrop of the unfolding and working out of His great programme for the Church universal, from the very beginning to the very end.

Paul's breathtaking and panoramic view of the glorious agenda of God for the Church is akin somewhat to Moses' view of the promised land from Pisgah's lofty height. When we contemplate upon the sheer immensity and wondrous breadth of the awesome sovereign plan, we cannot but express our aghast feelings. Eternal realities are drawn proximate to us and the present things and material blessings are cast aside to the brink of oblivion.

When we view our blessings in this manner, that is, in the light of the divine programme, we will be able to see the vital importance and the ineffable glory of the Church. We will then recognise the Church as the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. And then we behold ourselves as the workmanship of Christ as a consequence of His atoning work to the end that we might be members in the great household of God, even the Church. When we

see the Church for what it is to God, dear as the apple of His eye, then our affections and concern for her are aroused and stirred. Our keen interest in her history will not be just antiquarian or for mere curiosity. In studying her profile throughout the course of time, we are wont to affirm that the Church militant has been marching triumphantly from age to age, through tempest and turmoil, through the floods of water and the furnace of fire, because the eternal God is her refuge and underneath are His everlasting arms. Yes, for her life His Son died. The Church is God's boasting in this world. It is through the Church, God's transcendent glory shines forth. Hence the words of the Psalm: 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined' (Psalm 50:2). Zion is a reference to the Church invisible. This is substantiated in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 22. Wherefore we do well to heed the exhortation of the Psalmist, to 'walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces' (Psalm 48:12,13a). This implies that we should be acquainted with both her charter by which the Church exists and the highlights in the annals of her history.

We cannot do better at this juncture than to borrow the lyrics of Timothy Dwight (1752-1817) to describe how our regard and feelings for the Church should be:

*I love Thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of Thine abode,  
The Church our blest Redeemer saved  
With His own precious blood.*

*For her my tears shall fall,  
For her my prayers ascend;  
To her my cares and toils be given,  
Till toils and cares shall end.*

*Sure as Thy truth shall last,  
To Zion shall be given  
The brightest glories earth can yield,  
And brighter bliss of heaven.*

And then we shall see our blessings in the proper setting. Our Father in heaven blesses us that we might be a blessing to the Church. When we avail ourselves altogether for the comfort and prosperity of the Church militant then we spent our blessings well. For when the Church of Christ advances here on earth, God Himself is blessed and glorified. Hence, God's blessings vouchsafed to us redound to His own glory.

O, then, what are our joys, tears, rejoicings, weepings, exhilaration and disappointments in this world? All those things that transpire in the affairs of our life are brought to proper alignment when we see it in the light of eternity. Our feelings and spirits will then be made more temperate and mellow. We will then prudently realise that we are not just creatures of time but eternity as well. In a sense, we are summoned from the sphere of time to live in the realm of eternity. When we do so, we will be impelled to think of our Lord Jesus Christ as our all in all. We ascribe to Him the appellation, the Potentate of time. He is the Beginning and the End; the Alpha and Omega. We echo Moses' eulogy, 'From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God'. O, what are we but a mere dot in time.

Yet, wonder of wonders, we are assured by the witness of the blessed Holy Spirit and the testimony of the Holy Scriptures that we are so precious in our Heavenly Father's sight. It is beyond our comprehension but we know, experimentally and by faith, that this is true. Wherefore we say with Paul, 'To the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved'. Yea, the dearly, dearly Beloved. O the thought that we worms are made acceptable in Christ Jesus. Wherefore, let us love our Beloved, let us do so passionately. Seeing that we are sealed with the Spirit of His promise, let His grace abound and prevail gloriously in us.

Let our days count. Let them be counted for all eternity. Let us shake off the cords of slothfulness, tardiness and ineptness. Let us stir ourselves to be diligent, hot and purposeful for our Lord and His Church. Let us spend and be spent for Him alone: this, O dearly beloved brethren, is the apt response to the things we have heard and seen. Our days are numbered, still we must make them all count for His Church and His name sake. Wherefore, O Father in heaven, grant according to the riches of Thy glory that we be strengthened with might by Thy Spirit in the inner man that we may be rooted and grounded in Thy love. In Jesus name. Amen. Unto Him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. ¶



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