

GRACE, PEACE & PRAISE

(Ephesians 1:2-3)

In his opening salutation to the Ephesian church, the Apostle Paul conveys his pastoral heart for these believers by establishing in their minds the true identity of every Christian. A true believer, according to Paul, is identified by his relationship and union with Christ. A genuine Christian is a saint who is made holy by God and is set apart for God's sacred purpose (Eph. 1:1). Our Christian identity is also defined by our faith in Christ. We, as believers, exercise faith in Jesus, persevere in our faith through Jesus and overcome the world by the name of Jesus. After addressing the Ephesian believers as saints and faithful in Christ, Paul then proceeds to his gospel greeting and declaration of praise to God. Let's consider these two gospel truths which further explain what biblical Christianity is all about.

1. *Gospel Greeting: We are recipients of God's* _____.

As a pastor who dearly loves the people entrusted to his care, Paul pronounces God's blessing upon the Ephesian believers. His gospel greeting begins with the word grace (Eph. 1:2). Grace is the unmerited and undeserved favor from God which provides salvation for unworthy sinners (Eph. 2:3-5). Grace is also God's sovereign initiative in granting His unconditional love towards undeserving sinners whom He has chosen to save (Eph. 1:4). God's grace results in peace which is the divine assurance that God in Christ has reconciled repentant sinners unto Himself (Eph. 2:12-14). This peace is not only God's divine certainty of our salvation in Christ. This peace is also the presence of the sovereign and loving God in the midst of life's troubles and afflictions. Paul also states that the source of this grace and peace is no other than God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:2) The Fatherhood of God and the Lordship of Christ guarantee the reality of these divine blessings upon every believer.

2. *Gospel Praise: We should be exuberant* _____.

After giving his gospel greeting, Paul declares his joyful praise to God. Verses 3 to 14 of Ephesians 1 constitute one long uninterrupted sentence expressing a sweep of enthusiastic praise unto God. Paul begins his doxology by the phrase, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:3). To declare that God is blessed is to proclaim that God alone is worthy of greatest honor, highest worship and supreme praise (Luke 1:68; 1 Cor. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). We should ascribe exclusive praise to God because He alone has blessed His people with every spiritual blessing. God has granted all Christians every kind of blessing that we need for life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3; Eph. 3:19). These blessings are described as spiritual because they are supplied and enabled by the Holy Spirit. A survey of these spiritual blessings shows why we should praise the Triune God for His saving work. We should render supreme praise to God because of the Father's election and adoption of believers (Eph. 1:4-6), the Son's redemption and forgiveness of our sins (Eph. 1:7-10) and the Holy Spirit's sealing of God's people to guarantee our eternal inheritance (Eph. 1:11-14). These spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms are secured for us by virtue of our union with our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:3, 20; 2:5-6).
