

The Reason for THANKS-GIVING, Ephesians 1:1-6

Read Ephesians 1:1-3... God doesn't necessarily bless all His children with good looks, intelligence, health, wealth, or long life here on earth; but we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in and through Christ, i.e., everything we need to know Him, serve Him, trust Him, and enjoy our life on this earth, while waiting to go to heaven to be with the Lord forever..

If you are a Christian, you belong to God and your eternal home is in heaven, but you are on temporary duty assignment here on earth (**1Peter 1:3-5**).

The phrase "inhabitants of the earth" is used 7 times in the Book of Revelation, always referring to those (**17:8**), "whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world..."

At the present time it appears that the inhabitants of the earth (the unbelieving majority) have more wealth and influence than God's people; but God has blessed His people with wisdom and power.

God doesn't choose wise, strong, rich, handsome, or influential people, to serve Him; instead, He chooses regular people like you and me, people who have been forever changed by Christ, that we might testify to the world how the holy and mighty God of Creation is reconciling sinful humans to Himself (**2Corinthians 5:17-21**).

As a Christian you have everything you need to serve God victoriously, as you grow in a personal and eternal relationship with Him, through Christ.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ to forgive your sins and save your soul, please consider it as we study the Scriptures together today.

Read Ephesians 1:4-6... It is not my intention today to try to settle the issue of God's sovereignty vs. man's free will; but I do want to encourage you in reference to what the Scriptures clearly declare concerning why you should believe in Jesus Christ.

The Bible teaches that God is sovereign, and that man has free will to accept or reject God's will; those who reject Jesus Christ will be condemned; whereas those who believe in and receive Him will be saved (**John 1:11-13; 3:16-18; 14:6; Acts 2:21; 4:12; Romans 10:9-10, 13**).

Both Peter and Paul proclaimed, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved"; the Lord Himself said (**John 6:44**), "no one can come to Me unless the Father draws him," (**John 6:65**) "enables him".

God is the Almighty, the Creator, the Savior, the Sustainer and the Judge over All of Creation for Eternity.

Revelation 1:8, "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." **18**, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

Even so, God has sovereignly determined that people from every nation and tongue will believe in His Son. In fact, (**v. 4**) God chose us before there were any people on the earth. The Greek word for "chose" or "chosen" infers that the One making the choice is selecting a small number out of a larger number for a specific purpose.

Wow! God has sovereignly selected, out of all those who will ever live on earth, a measure of people to be set apart for the purpose of knowing and worshipping Him.

God (**v.5**) predestined us (all Christians) to be saved and adopted into His eternal family, that we might be conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus. The word "predestined" means "to mark out ahead of time," to "predetermine" those who would belong to God.

Notice (**vv. 4-6**), it is sovereignly God who has determined (9 times the words He, Him, and His are used to express God's divine act in choosing) those who would be saved and set apart for His intended purpose.

Before Adam and Eve were created, before the curse of sin entered the garden, God had determined to choose for Himself out of all those who would be born on earth, a people of His very own, a people who would become His children and recipients of His unconditional and eternal love expressed in and through Jesus Christ.

The Scriptures are very clear that God has predestined a people to be set apart for salvation, and to live with Him forever in heaven; but do the Scriptures also teach that God has predestined a people to be lost and separated from God's love, condemned to an eternal hell?

No! And again, I say definitively, "No!" The Scriptures do not promote or allow any such teaching, for nowhere in the Word of God does it imply that God has sovereignly predestined or set apart a group of people to be "marked out ahead of time," specifically for condemnation, to spend eternity apart from God in a place of torment.

The very opposite is repeatedly taught in the Scriptures (**1Timothy 2:3-4**), "God our Savior wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth"; and (**2Peter 3:9**), God "is patient not wanting anyone to perish, but for everyone to come to repentance."

Scripture does not say God has predetermined a people to go to Hell; but it does say God has sovereignly chosen some for heaven, to be adopted as His children (**v. 5**) in accordance with His good pleasure and will.

And all this is (**v. 6**), "to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves," Jesus Christ: God's Son, Savior & Lord.

God is, by nature, a loving, merciful and gracious God who blesses those who obey Him; but He is also a just, holy and righteous God who must bring judgment and punishment upon all those who disobey Him.

By His own pleasure and will, God sovereignly determined that He would have a people of His very own.

Titus 2:11-14, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good."

Yes, God is sovereign in salvation. And yes, every person will be judged for all of eternity according to what they did or didn't do with Jesus Christ.

1John 5:11-12, "And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

The greatest reason in all the world for giving thanks, is this: God loves us so much that He sent His Own Son to take our punishment for sin and to provide forgiveness and eternal life to anyone, to everyone, who will believe in and receive Him as Savior and Lord.

And so, for that reason we are commanded (**1Thessalonians 5:17-18**) to, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."