

Sermon Notes: *Praise God's Glorious Grace* (Ephesians 1:6).

Intro: No truth is more plainly taught in the Scriptures than this: salvation is of God's grace from first to last. And no truth is more glorious and praiseworthy than this: God the Father was "pleased" (vs. 5) to "bruise" (cf. Is. 53:10) so that sons of disobedience might become God's much loved sons by adoption. When people ask the speculative question why God went forward with the creation when he knew that a countless multitude would fall into sin, one answer we can tentatively put forth is that God predestined us to a higher dignity than even a sinless creation would have given us. Adoption at Christ's expense all to the glory of his grace. *Why is this grace so praiseworthy?*

#1: Because of the *generosity* God's grace reveals. God is great. He created the universe from nothing by the power of his word. God is wealthy. He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. God is wise. Not one atom in the universe is unaccounted for. God is good. He cares for the most insignificant sparrow. But God's generous grace in choosing and predestining sinners to adoption through Christ, in a sense, outshines all his other attributes! It leaves angels in hushed awe and should move us to unceasing praise. Sovereign generosity. In Paul's day, paganism conceived of gods as being bound to worshipers by bonds of self-interest. Pagans believed that God somehow depends on the gifts and service of worshipers for his own well-being and happiness. Modern unbelief, similarly, often has at the back of its mind the feeling that God somehow feels obligated to love, forgive, and help. A dying French philosopher: "God will forgive—that's his job." How unlike the Biblical perspective (Acts 17:25). Infinite joy characterizes the eternal fellowship between the Persons of our Triune God! More than that, however, not that mankind has disobeyed God, he is not bound to show us any goodness only justice and condemnation. We simply cannot get God into our debt! He is under no obligation to offer his pity or pardon. If he should, it is only because of his own sovereign, free, and spontaneous generosity. Sacrificial generosity. What makes God's grace so glorious is not simply because it is free and sovereign but also that it is so costly and sacrificial to God the offended deity! He gave his best. He gave all that he had. He gave his much loved Son to judgment in our place. He impoverished him under our deserved condemnation so that we might be infinitely rich in glory for eternity (2 Cor. 8:9).

#2: Because of the *difficulties* God's grace overcomes. God's grace overcomes the most insurmountable difficulties possible that bar us from friendship and fellowship with him. The difficulty of our sin. Paul could not put it more starkly than he does in Eph. 2:1ff. How great the difficulty of our own corrupt nature and the sinful desires of mind and body which issue from it. Are not all men and women free? Yes they are! They are free in that they make their own decisions and choose what is most pleasing and desirable to them. However, all people are naturally also slaves to sin so that they have no desire or ability to choose God's way. Why? Because of a depraved nature. Left to ourselves we will only sin freely and destructively. We are naturally dead in sin. This is a difficulty we cannot possibly overcome! But God has through Christ (2:4ff.). The destructive and harmful ways of thinking and behaving (selfishness, uncontrollable anger, vengefulness, prejudice, lust, etc.) God has conquered by judging them in his Son. Do you despair of being delivered from these destructive pathologies which hold you in bondage? Do you fear that in coming to God for a changed mind and heart, he will reject you? Come to him for a new mind and heart in the name of Jesus! (Ezk 36:26). See how wrong you are! The difficulty of God's justice. How formidable an obstacle is a hard heart but even

more insurmountable is God's holy justice. His wrath burns hotter against sin than the surface of the sun! But God has overcome even his own wrath and anger, by giving his Son over to the justice we deserve. God was "pleased" to bruise his Son for us because God is pleased to reveal his glorious grace. Christ's cross proves that payment was made for sins. Christ's empty tomb proves that the payment was accepted (Rom 4:25). If God in Christ, according to sovereign sacrificial grace overcame the obstacles of your sin and his justice, what could keep you from receiving Christ crucified and raised in order to have pardon, acceptance, new life from God?

#3: Because of the *sons* God's grace creates. Receiving Christ with the empty hand of faith we are accepted and loved "in the beloved." Focus on Christ not your feelings. Don't judge your Father's estimation of you by your highs and lows! By faith in Jesus you stand accepted in one who never alters, in one who is always beloved of God, always perfect, always without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Focus on Christ not your foes. You wrestle with temptations and the devil but be of good cheer. You are accepted in the beloved who overcame evil for you (1:16-19). Accepted in the beloved who crushed Satan's head. Even the perfected saints in glory are not more accepted than you. In view of God's rich grace. Strong in it. Trusting in it bring glory to your loving Father.