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**Main Idea:** Do we truly realize the blessings we have as Christians, as people bought by Christ's blood and freely given grace we did not earn or deserve? How have we praised Christ for these? Are we grateful that He chose us? Do we understand that we cannot choose Him on our own let alone be made His? What do we with the knowledge that we are chosen by Him? Saved by Him? Loved by Him? First and foremost, we must praise Him ever so much. If there is no praise, there is no recognition of Who Christ is and what He has done.

We must make every conceivable effort at due diligence to do our best in all things for His glory. Why? We have His salvation, and we are formed to give Christ the Glory. We are made to praise Him out of our gratitude and for His Holiness. We have His approval; we have all we need for relationship and service to the Kingdom. We are called to a purpose that is all about knowing and growing in Christ and letting this Truth being contagious to those around us. He is gracious; He wants to enter our hearts for sanctification, for our effectual spiritual growth. He even sees you as perfect because of the Son.

### Contexts and Background:

This Epistle is a letter the Apostle Paul writes to a church in need of crucial instructions. He gives a reminder of who and what they are meant to be. This is a church like any that has existed and all that are here today. Paul reminds them--and us--of his apostolic authority and humbly and in prayer gives his salutations and thankfulness to the people. He gives some difficult truths, too: Hard things may come into your life; life will not always go your way; life is tough; it is hard, and bad things happen. Life was hard for the early Christians just as it is difficult today. In the midst of it all, we still have God who cares, who has a plan, and who is there.

### Commentary—Word and Phrase Meanings:

- *Praise.* This is our outward expression of worship and/or a lifestyle of honoring God. Praise is shown in many ways and includes singing, clapping, dancing, creating or giving in gratefulness for who Christ is. In contrast, worship is our inward expression of attitude and reverence to His Holiness and is and what He has done. Both are offered as a church service for worship and a lifestyle for being a Christian. This acknowledges Christ as Lord over all, including us; it is recognizing His attributes, His sovereignty, and His control, and then seeking His strength (Gen. 18:18; 22:18; Isa. 60:1-5; Psalm 22:27; 29:2; Gal. 2:20-21; Phil. 1:6; 3:1-14; Rev. 5:12; 10:11; 12:5; 13:7; 14:6-8; 15:4; 17:15; 18:3; 19:15; 20:3; 21:24-27).
- *Praise be/praise be to God.* This the chief reason to be a church. This is called the 'exordium' the word, *berakah*, comes from Jewish blessings, and means the *God Who blesses us*. It also means rebirth—that God *converts* or "re-births" us. It is the theme that, as Christians, we are born again because God adopts and changes our nature as in *starting again as new*. This is also a redemptive prayer Paul gives (Psalm 66:2; 149:9; Jer. 1:11-12; Ezek. 36:24-27; Mic. 1:10-15; John 3; 7:37-39; 1 Pet. 1:3).
- *Blessed us.* It refers to salvation—our deliverance from sin. We are God's children, sealed in Him and joint-heirs with Him by His Work. For the Jews, this meant inheriting a future world such as Israel's inheritance of the Promised Land while wandering the desert. It infers redemption and the process God used to redeem us. To the Jews, then, it meant treasures stored up in Heaven for them (4 Ezra—a Jewish apocryphal book). For us, by Jesus' righteousness and our obedience,

our treasures are also stored up, while we still have opportunities now (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Pet. 1:3-12; Heb. 1:14).

- *Heavenly realms/places.* Where God is. In Paul's time there was no distinction between what lies outside of the atmosphere and what is heaven and the various levels of it. Today, we see a distinction of atmosphere, space, dimensions and a metaphysical realm of Heaven unseen by the naked eye. This, in context, showcases Who and What Christ is, Who redeems us, as Christ was raised from the dead, He also raises us out of sin by His victory over death and makes us to be eternal with Him. It also means we are purposed and governed by and by Christ for His glory (Eph. 1:22; 2:6).
- *Spiritual blessing.* In struggles and hardships, God is our comfort! If we just live our lives with the attitude of how things affect "me" and not "others," then we are living with the devil, and not with God (Rom. 15:27; 2 Cor. 13:11; Phil. 4:9; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 3:16)!
- *In Christ.* This means God is our Redeemer. The point is we are made by and for Christ for a personal relationship with God the Creator (Deut. 7:7-8; Rom. 9:11, 16-18, 29-33; 9:6-26; 11:5; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:5; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:18-21).
- *Chose us before the creation.* This is true, and we see an outstanding example of this when God chose Israel through Abram before the Covenant, changed Abram's name to Abraham to be the father of His adopted people all for His glory. God did all this before we were conceived to be in a relationship with Himself (Deut. 7:7-8; Jer. 1:4-5; Rom. 9:18; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13 ).
- *The world.* This means God is not limited. His salvation is a certainty and forever! The saving power of Christ is not limited. He also seeks those outside of His will who live to and for themselves. For Jews, this meant ones who were not Jews, but here God extends Himself to all peoples. A misconception of the Reformed faith is that we teach Christ's death is limited in its power and scope and thus can't save everyone. The fact is that both the Bible and Calvin did teach Christ's power is effective to save everyone, but not everyone will be saved. The elect means those to whom God's perfect choosing and love is given; those who do not receive it reject Christ by their will and pride and thus condemn themselves (John 3:16; Eph. 1:3-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).
- *Holy and blameless.* This is about our forgiveness of sins, and in God's sight by His atonement, covering, we are covered. We will not be called to account for the sins. It is by what Christ has done that God does not see or is unaffected by our sin; we are declared clean. No charge can be brought upon us because of His forgiveness. He brings not only our salvation, but also personal renewal (Rom. 5:6-12; 8:33; 2 Cor. 11:2; Phil. 2:15; 3:8-9; Eph. 1:4; 2:4-10; 5:25-27; Col. 2:13, 22; 1 Tim. 3:10; Jude 24).
- *In love.* This is the 'why' of Who and What Christ did for us, His undeserved favor, and pure unconditional love. This also means we are joined together so a group is united in purpose and companionship, with love as the foundation. This is how a church and family must exist to be healthy. It is essential that the pastor, church leaders, and members be united in Christ, by His love and according to His Word so to exercise the full understanding of His call and instructions and thus dwell as a cohesive unity, a Body of Christ (Luke 10:25-29; John 4:24; 10:25-30; 17:21-23; Acts 2-4; Rom. 1:16-17; 12:1-3; 1 Cor. 12; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 1:10; 3:17; 4:2, 15; 5:2, 30; Phil. 2:5-8; Col. 2:2; James 4:8-11).
- *Predestined.* This means God is the One Who redeems us. He chooses us to be regenerated. If we were not chosen and redeemed, we would stay in our sins and be eternally separated from

God. He loves you and chooses you (Gen. 45:8; 50:20; Job 14:5; Psalm 33:13-14; 115:3; 147:5; Prov. 5:21; 15:3; 16:1, 4, 9, 33; Is. 14:26-27; Dan. 4:33-34; John. 1:13; 13:18; Acts 2:23; Rom. 8:29-30; 9:9-18; Eph. 1:2-14; 2 Thess. 2:13-15; 2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:1-3, 20).

- *Adoption.* Roman citizens could adopt children of non-Roman origin and give them the full privileges of citizenship. In this same way, we who are believers who have the Holy Spirit and turn from our fallen desires can be “*adopted*”. Thus, we are able to persevere even through suffering by being “*heirs of God*”. We are saved and have hope beyond even what we can comprehend, because we will be delivered, if not now, in a time to come. Israel itself was an adopted people (Ex. 4:22-23; 40: 34-38; Deut. 8:2-15; 29:5; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Rom. 8:14-15; Gal. 4:5)
- *Sonship/as sons.* Our relationship to God as a son is to the father, God is undeservingly leading us into the Family of God, into a personal living relationship with Christ by and with the power of His Holy Spirit, to be in Him and for Him by the Word and work of Him. The purpose for us is to realize that we must eventually learn to surrender to Him and be trusting and obedient to Him (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5)
- *Glorious grace.* If you know God, you must also glorify Him. Because of what Christ has done, we should, we must be grateful and exuberant and pour our hearts out to Him.
- *One he loves/the Beloved.* This is the gratitude for the love of Christ, which we received, as we are no longer the object of His just wrath; rather, we are the object of His love. Thus, as grace dominates our lives, we must respond back in kind (Col. 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:19-21).

### **Devotional Thoughts and Applications:**

Worship is what we are made to do. This is an act of awe and attitude, our official reverence, respect, and thanksgiving with our humbleness and adoration. We give our admiration and honor; in so doing, we give our love and our respect to our Most High Lord God (Psalm 150; Matt. 4:10; John 4:20-24; Rom. 12:1-3). Praise is more about our physical and practical outpouring, where we actively honor Him by expression and applause to our Lord God (Gal. 1:23-24; Eph. 1:2-15; Heb. 13:14-16; Rev. 19:4-5). Worship is like the respect we give to a dignitary like a president or king, and praise is like the fans cheering at a sporting event. We venerate our Lord by our response to Him with our trust and obedience from a mind-set of worship, and we show our appreciation to Him by our praise and gratitude, blessing and glorifying our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Church Leadership Tip:** Christ is to be our prime focus--first, foremost, over anything or anyone else. If we are not leading our people to Christ and explaining Who He is and What He does, we are not pastoring. We are simply being prideful and promoting ourselves.

### **The Essential Inductive Questions** (for more Inductive questions, see Inductive Bible Study):

1. What does this passage say?
2. What does this passage mean?
3. What is God telling me?
4. How am I encouraged and strengthened?
5. Is there sin in my life for which confession and repentance is needed?
6. How can I be changed, so I can learn and grow?
7. What is in the way of these precepts affecting me? What is in the way of my listening to God?
8. How does this apply to me? What will I do about it?
9. What can I model and teach?

10. What does God want me to share with someone?

**Additional Questions:**

1. Are you inventing or following Jesus? What does this mean?
2. Do we truly realize the blessings we have as a Christian, one bought by Christ's blood and freely given grace we did not earn or deserve? How have we praised Christ for these?
3. Do you realize that when we devote ourselves more to Christ, we have more opportunities in life and ministry? Why would any Christian not want that?
4. What does it do for your faith that we have a God Who is all knowing, all loving and has a purpose for you?
5. When you are having a bad day or a major setback, what does it mean that God knows you more deeply than you can ever imagine?
6. How can a church and family do to be healthy? How does love, play a role?
7. What happens when the pastor, church leaders, and members are united in Christ?
8. What happens when our attitude of how things affect me rule our behaviors? What does this passage say we do?
9. How do you feel that you are called to a purpose that is all about knowing and growing in Christ? How can this help you be contagious to those around you?
10. What can your church do to make every conceivable due diligence to do our best in all things for His glory?
11. Worship is what we are made to do. So how can you have a better attitude of reverence, respect, and thanksgiving with our humbleness to Christ? What would this do in your life and church?
12. What would happen to your neighborhood if you modeled your salvation and give Christ the Glory?