

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:12 - For the praise of his glory

In **verses 9-10**, Paul provides the evidence that God chose us. It's in God "making known to us the mystery of his will....to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." The proof that God chose us, then, is that we have no trouble believing that **God had everything mapped out in his Son** before this physical world of ours existed - including, **verse 11**, the part that **we would play** in his plan too.

So, what is the part we play, and for what purpose? Well, that's what Paul answers for us in **verse 12** - it's "in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for **the praise of his glory**." Or, expanding that a bit, "so that we, who first fixed our trust and confidence in Christ, are now the means by which **God's glorious attributes are revealed**."

Peter said the same thing in **1 Peter 2:9**, that we are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may **declare the praises of him** who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." So this is what our Father called us for, which the Holy Spirit also made clear right from the beginning of the church in **Acts 2:11**, when inspiring the apostles to "**declare the wonders of God**" in the native languages of those in attendance.

So, here we are in this age now, as the ones God called at this time to reveal and make known his attributes, praises and wonders. It's what all Christians are called for, as we see in Paul's use of the word "we" in **Ephesians 1:12** referring to his fellow Jews, and then switching to "you also" in **verse 13** to include us Gentiles. So, Jews and Gentiles, we're all in the same boat in all ages, and for the same purpose too, to become walking, talking, living displays of God "for the praise of his glory."

Which ties in with God making us in his image, the intent being to have millions and billions of us all displaying his amazing attributes in a huge variety of ways - IF we'd eaten off the Tree of Life, that is. But we didn't eat off that tree, unfortunately, so here we are now in a terribly sorry state. How on earth are we going to manifest God's attributes to the praise of his glory now, then?

Fortunately, Paul gave us a clue a few verses back....

And it's a pleasant surprise, because our sorry state can be a jolly useful declaration and display of the wonders of God. That's because, as Paul points out in **verse 6**, we know it was only "God's glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves," that got us to where we are now.

What we are, then, is a walking, talking, living display of **God's glorious grace**. And we're perfectly equipped for it too, because we understand that if it wasn't for God giving us "every spiritual blessing" in verse 3, and God making us "holy and blameless in his sight" in verse 4, and God adopting us as his very own children based purely on his good pleasure and will in verse 5, and God redeeming and forgiving us in his Son in verse 7, and God making the mystery of his will known to us in verse 9, and God mapping all this out for us in his Son before we and this world even existed in verse 11 - we wouldn't have had the slightest clue what this life and this planet of ours are for.

Worse than that, **Romans 9:22**, we were "objects of God's wrath prepared for destruction," and it was only because of God's "great patience" (same verse) that we were spared.

So, if we're thinking the pressure is **on us** in our sorry state to declare God's praises and reveal his attributes by the outstanding example we set, or by the brilliant display we're putting on of all the fruits of the Spirit - that isn't what we were called for. **God called us to make his grace known**. Not our glorious brilliance, but **his glorious grace**.

And that's made clear in Paul's own life, because when he was Saul he really lived an exemplary life. Like Job, he was at the top of his game, putting on a brilliant display of zeal and dedication to God. When it came to "legalistic righteousness" - obeying all the laws of God - Paul, amazingly, was "faultless," **Philippians 3:6**. BUT - is that why God called him?

No, because in Paul's own words, it was because "The **grace** of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly," **1 Timothy 1:14**. This is what God called him for, as Paul goes on to say in **verse 16**: "I was shown mercy **so that** in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might **display HIS unlimited patience** as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life."

So, what leads people to "believing on Jesus"? Is it our faultless example of legalistic righteousness, or our life of service to others, or being known for being such a good person? It may gain admiration and notice, yes, and even some wonder at how honest and kind we are, but is it our fine example that stirs people to believe in God?

But didn't Jesus say in **Matthew 5:16**, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see **your good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"? Peter said it too, in **1 Peter 2:12**, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see **your good deeds** and glorify God on the day he visits us." So, yes, our example of good lives and good works can be instrumental in God reaching a person, but **that isn't Paul's focus in these first few verses in Ephesians.**

Right from the start his focus is on "Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," **Ephesians 1:3**, because of "the **riches of God's grace** that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding," **verses 7-8.**

Our primary focus in this life, therefore, is God's grace, because, as Paul brings out in **Romans 5:17**, "those who receive God's abundant provision of grace reign in life." To "reign" here means **to live in triumph.** So what God has called us to is a life of triumph, and here we have Paul explaining how such a life is possible. It's being on the receiving end of the abundant riches of God's grace, and that now becoming our daily experience.

So how do we know we're experiencing God's abundant grace? Well, back in **Ephesians 1:8** Paul tells us that God's grace is lavished on us "with all **wisdom and understanding.**" We soon learn, for instance, that God knows exactly how to get through to us; his timing and his methods are exquisite. His ways of keeping us encouraged are so personal too, and amazing, because he never lets us down even when we're angry with him, or we're struggling to understand him. And here we are now: everything life has thrown at us so far, and we're still here, undefeated.

And that's the way it was meant to be, as we see in the life of our big brother, because in everything Jesus did it turned out triumphant. Like his triumph over death and the devil on the cross, his triumph in freeing thousands of people from the grip of evil, his triumph in transforming ordinary folks into fearless followers, and his triumph in being resurrected so he could re-live his triumphant life in us now, so we can experience triumphs too.

Which explains why Peter wrote, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ" in **2 Peter 3:18.** Because what we learn from Jesus' life is the power of God's grace. Jesus lived life under the constant umbrella of God providing everything he needed - because on his own admission in **John 14:10** Jesus said his life was all God's doing, not his own. So in him we get to see what a life totally depending on God's grace does to a person: Jesus triumphed over the worst that evil could throw at him.

And Paul knew what that was like, because the same thing happened to him. He tells of his experience too, in **2 Corinthians 12**, when he was driven to frustration by a physically debilitating “torment,” as he called it. So he went to God to get rid of it. But what he got instead in **verse 9** was God telling him, “My grace is sufficient for you.” All you need to focus on, Paul, is my grace, “because,” continuing in verse 9, “my power is made perfect in weakness.”

What an eye-opener that must have been for Paul, that the reason God had left him with weakness was to teach him the total sufficiency of his grace, because in that grace was **the lavishing of God’s power** on him with all wisdom and understanding. Whatever Paul needed, then, in whatever situation he was in, God would provide the power he needed.

So why did God set it up this way? It was to “make his power perfect” in Paul’s life (verse 9), so Paul would experience a life of constant triumph. He’d get close to the cliff edge of despair, yes, but never did he fall over it, because God wanted Paul to experience the power of his grace. Which is exactly what happened, because on realizing God was making his power known through weakness, Paul’s joyous response was, “Well, in that case I’ll gladly brag about all my weaknesses, if it means I get to experience Christ’s power.” So bring on “weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and whatever other difficulties life throws at me, for when I’m weak, then I’m strong.” Wow, I triumph every time, not by God taking away my weakness, but by making me strong in it.

So on realizing “I can do everything through him who gives me strength,” **Philippians 4:13**, that’s when Paul began to experience what a triumphant life is. It took him a while to get it, but eventually, **verse 12**, he could yell to the world, “I have learned the secret of being content in any and every kind of situation.” **Content** is that lovely combination of peace and joy, and what person on this planet doesn’t want that? But that’s exactly what the Father sent his Son to us for, to “give us life and life more abundantly,” **John 10:10**.

And Paul now knew the secret to it. It was God revealing his glorious grace to him, and the triumphant life he’d now experienced because of that grace, that now made him a walking, talking, living reason for **others** “to believe on God and receive eternal life” as well. Including a serious taste of that eternal life NOW too, as it dawns on us what God is like, and what life will be like living with such a God forever.

In other words, he’s giving us a taste now of **Philippians 4:4**, of “Rejoicing in the Lord always,” because this is what God called us for - to rejoice in who he is, because everything he does is for the praise of his glory, or to make real to us the wonder of his grace.