

GOD'S GIFTS

Dear Friend:

God bless you! May you receive all the wonderful gifts that God has abundantly bestowed on you, for He is sooooo good!

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession - to the praise of His glory." (Ephesians 1:3-14)

That's a mouthful, isn't it? Look at all the wonderful phrases and words in here that indicate just how passionately in love the Lord is with us!

"Blessed us"- showers of blessing, spiritual riches beyond comprehension, ready to be released in ever-deeper quantities as we are willing to receive it through faith and obedience.

"Every spiritual blessing"- He's withheld nothing from us; it is all ours for the taking as we fully yield to Him and receive it.

"He chose us"- imagine, Him choosing me! It is so hard to fathom that the holy God of this universe is passionately in love with me and longs to be intimate with me, and that He exists outside of time and sees all of me - the beginning, the middle and the end. He knows all my sins and yet still is so in love with me, still longing to draw me closer to Him. He has chosen me - before I was born, He chose me, He predestined me, He called me, He tugged on my stubborn heart, and He continues to tug, longing for my righteousness that I may draw closer to Him in love.

"To be holy and blameless in his sight"- God truly desires to see us succeed! We're so used to people seeing us succeed and being jealous, but not the Lord! He is there deeply desiring to see us become more and more successful in growing in righteousness, becoming more like Him. He's making every provision to make it happen. Because of His grace, we have forgiveness of sins and one day, when we get to heaven, sin and temptation will totally depart from us and we will stand before His glorious throne in awe of Him. We will be like Him - holy in all our ways, no stain or blot or blemish - praise God!

"Adopted as sons (and daughters)"- Wow! I've been adopted into the family of God - with you as my brother/sister and others as my family members, growing up in love. The family of God is

so exciting to me, and He is my Father - what an awesome Father! Unlike your father or mine, He is perfect, totally loving in every way, reaching out to us and blessing our lives as we seek Him out.

"In accordance with His pleasure and will"- When God sees you, do you know how pleased He is with you and how desirous He is to bless you? How he longs for you, that you bring pleasure to His heart? His love is not fickle, it is here to stay, constant, always reaching out, drawing us closer. And He does this all in pleasure - it brings Him no greater joy than to reach out in love to us and draw us closer to Himself!

"To the praise of His glorious grace"- (Paul was so caught up with this phrase that he repeats it 3 times in this passage!) Everything that we see in this universe, His great love, His creativity, His mercy and grace - it all points back to Him and how glorious He is! How I long to bask more deeply in His glory and praise Him all day long.

We get several scenes of what it will be like on that day when we will be gathered around the throne - and what is it that we will be doing in heaven? The prime thing that is talked about in the Word is that we will be so caught up praising Him! "I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: 'To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!' The four living creatures said, 'Amen' and the elders fell down and worshipped." (Revelation 5:13-14)

Oh, how I long for that day! To praise Him, to see Him face to face and bathe in His glory, to no longer be hindered by sin and sorrow, every tear wiped free, no more trials or temptations, just pure intimacy with Him, the Lover of my soul! His grace is so incredible- that He would choose me, undeserved as I am to receive anything, but yet He freely poured it all out for me, and with such gladness, such passion: "the riches of God's grace which he lavished on us." How I love that word "lavished"- He poured it out on us, He anointed us with His love overflowing. All that we are willing to receive He has poured out. Will we truly be willing to receive it to the fullest measure?

We have a free will. We can choose to obey and receive or we can choose to reject His love in the many decisions we make every day that aren't pleasing to Him, but His desire is to lavish His love on us. Will we receive?

"In Him we have redemption"- He has purchased us with the blood of Jesus Christ - we are truly free from sin! We can live in the power and victory over sin every moment of every day. Oh how sin can weigh down, oh how eager I am to cast all my sin before Him in true repentance and yearn to do all His will for my life. What freedom there is there! And to know that I am redeemed and nothing can tear me away from Him. He paid the price for my sins, past, present and future, and I can rest in that confidence that "Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ," NOTHING!"

"With all wisdom and understanding"- God holds my life in the palm of His hand. He understands my ways, He knows how to help me to draw close. Every trial and tribulation is there for a purpose and I must trust that He is accomplishing His great purposes in me in every circumstance that comes my way. Will I trust this when the going is hard? He has done it all. He died on the cross for my sin; won't He make sure that nothing will separate me from Him? Won't He make sure that all the events in my life will cause growth in me - that all that is required on my part is to step out in faith in all of this and just believe, just live according to

what He desires for me?

How easy it is to doubt His wisdom, "Lord, how could You have let this happen to me?" But we must know that everything He does will help us to grow up in Him, our Head. How do we know this for sure? "Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession." We know it because we know the Holy Spirit is in us - we can feel His power, and it reminds us that we are a marked man/woman! He'll never let us go, the Spirit inside us reminds us that our inheritance is a sure thing - but will we walk in it? How easy it is to get downtrodden in sin, fall away and lose all sense of what the Spirit is doing. We quench the Spirit through sin and then feel so distant, but when we repent and live for Him, we have this wonderful confirmation in the Spirit that we belong to Him. That confidence is so incredible - reminding us of who we are in Him and where it is we're going, reminding us of our inheritance He has wonderfully planned for us! We see that we are pilgrims down here. This earth is not our home. We will have a new body - we will deposit the old one at death and receive in the Spirit that new resurrection body, glorious like He is!

God bless you in your pursuit of our wonderful, loving Lord who has bestowed every spiritual blessing on us!

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