



## TIME OF GRACE®

# Choose Gratitude Over Grumbling: Because of 14 Spiritual Gifts You Already Have

### Study Notes

### Summary

Have you read the Bible's longest sentence? In the book of Ephesians, the apostle Paul (in his original Greek) set a record for most words used in a single sentence. What was Paul so grateful for that inspired him to go on and on? As he sat under house arrest, what could have inspired such joy? Listen to this message from Ephesians chapter 1 and find out!

<b>EXPECTATIONS</b>	
<b>THE GRUMBLE ZONE</b>	
<b>EXPERIENCES</b>	

<b>EXPERIENCES</b>	
<b>THE GRATEFUL ZONE</b>	
<b>EXPECTATIONS</b>	

- **Ephesians 1:3-14:** <sup>3</sup>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. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—<sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. <sup>7</sup>In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace <sup>8</sup>that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, <sup>9</sup>he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, <sup>10</sup>to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. <sup>11</sup>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, <sup>12</sup>in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup>And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is a

deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

- God, thanks for every \_\_\_\_\_!
- Through Jesus, we are \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

### *Points to Ponder*

1. Agree or disagree: Even in this life, it is better to be spiritually blessed than physically or financially blessed.
2. Read a similar section of Scripture in 1 Peter 1:3-9. How many spiritual blessings can you find in that paragraph?
3. Which blessing from the list of 14 impacted you the most? Why do you think you chose that blessing compared to all the other incredible options?

### *Homework for Next Week*

Read Romans 5:1-5.

Time of Grace Ministry  
**Choose Gratitude Over Grumbling: Because of 14 Spiritual Gifts You Already Have**  
Ephesians 1:3-14  
November 14, 2021

*Pastor Mike Novotny*

Last week we kicked off this series talking about gratitude and cultivating a thankful heart, and if you heard it, I am not sure how it impacted you, but I know how it impacted me. Hearing what God has to say about gratitude, it changed me, it stuck into my heart, and it helped me to resist the urge to grumble... for about 47 minutes.

Yeah, I got to give that message twice last week and afterwards, it was a beautiful fall night in Wisconsin. A friend had a campfire I gathered around, and about two hours later, as I was driving home, I thought to myself, "I think I grumbled about everything tonight." You know, it was something about work, something about getting older and my health, something about life. Like, God's Word stuck with me and I was so passionate about it, and then I was reminded again how difficult this all is. Right? It is easy to fill in a blank in a bulletin, it is easy to hear a Bible passage, but actually resisting that urge to grumble, and complain, and go off, and to stop and to thank God and be grateful, is a battle for many of us to fight.

And that is why I have been thinking a little bit more deeply about all of this. Like, why is it you can believe these things that God says, you can know that you are blessed, and yet, you still struggle in the moments and are still so tempted to grumble? And I came up with a theory, and my theory is this - that grumbling is a temptation not primarily because of what we go through or experience in life, but of what we expect out of life. Or to put it another way, like this.

Grumbling happens when there is a gap between your high expectations and your low to average experiences. In case you are more of a visual kind of learner, let me show you a picture. I call it, "The Grumble Zone." When your experiences do not reach those high expectations, you end up with frustration, you end up with exasperation, you end up grumbling. But what if you had those same experiences, except this time instead of really high expectations, you had very realistic, moderate, or maybe below average expectations?

Well, then the picture might turn to this, what I call, "The Grateful Zone." When experiences exceed expectations, you could actually go through the same thing and end up with a different attitude. Let me give you two examples to try to prove my point. Let us imagine that you and I both step out of our front doors and we step into a 66-degree day. Do you grumble or are you grateful? And the answer is... well, it depends. If it is July and you are at an all-inclusive, and you are in Florida, and you have finally got a week off. Oh, wait - and you stop, got your swimming suit, your cover-up, your towel or your sandals, and 66-degrees? You are not a happy camper, are you? Your expectations for the weather were way up here. But what if I step out my door? It is a, let's say a January day in Wisconsin. 66-degree days, how do I feel then? My

goodness, I am skipping, I am high-fiving strangers! You know, everyone is going to be gushing with gratitude, not because of the temperature, but because of what we expected the temperature to be.

So, here is my big question for you today. Based on your relationship with God, what would you expect from him? You know, as I think back to last week, sitting around the campfire, realizing once again that I am the guy who can preach it, but I so often do not practice it. I mean, my expectations for how God should treat me end up going down day by day. And maybe a bunch of you are in the same boat as I am. Your struggles with living a good, selfless, generous, forgiving life, it is not... it is not that you are ignorant of what the Book says, it is just that in the moments, you know what to do and you just do not do it.

And if you are anything like me and you struggle every day with a thousand different moral things, what would you expect a holy, perfect, beautiful, righteous God to do to you? When we think about our own sinfulness, and struggles, and weakness, our expectations get pretty low for how God should treat us - which is why today is really crazy.

Because today, I want to read to you what every Christian gets to spiritually experience because of Jesus Christ. Today we are not going to talk about your finances, we are not going to talk about your migraines, we are not going to talk about your anxiety or depression. Today we are going to talk about the spiritual life that is yours already through faith in Jesus. And I can guarantee you this. If you are aware of your own sinfulness and the expectation is here, God is going to blow your mind with what you get through Jesus. In fact, today's passage is so good... you might not know this. In the original language that it was written in, it is the longest passage in the Bible.

In Ephesians 1, I want to show you in my Bible, the Apostle Paul starts a sentence right down here in Verse 3. And even though my English translation breaks it up into eight separate sentences, in Paul's original language, one sentence started here and ended there. 202 words, the longest sentence in the entire Bible. Paul went on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and on, and I think the English translators were afraid of all of the English teachers with their red pens. And so, they broke it up, but Paul was gushing, and he was praising, and he was grateful, even though he wrote this letter while sitting in a jail cell for a crime he did not commit, and today, you are going to find out why.

The Paul who right here, on this page, said that he was dead in his sins and following the ways of the world, and would not have expected anything good from God, he got to experience something so good, and he wants to share it with you, too, today. So, if you struggle with gratitude like I do, let the Apostle Paul, let God blow your mind with every spiritual gift that is already yours through faith in Jesus.

When I was practicing, I was trying to read this entire thing in one breath. I cannot. But I am going to read it as fast as I can. Hold on tight. The longest sentence in the Bible goes like this. "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 Christ, before the creation of

the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship 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, Jesus, 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, he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment - to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. In Christ 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 put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you were also included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in Christ 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."

Woo! Did you catch the praise party that Paul's throwing? I counted four times - Verse 3, 6, 12, and 14. "Praise God, the praise of his grace, the praise of his glory, the praise of his glory." Quadruple praise from a guy who has been sitting in jail for years for a crime he did not commit. And how can a guy like that be that grateful? He expected this and he experienced that. If I was going to summarize Paul's teaching, and if you are taking notes in your program or watching at home, I would put it this way, that Paul looked up to heaven and he said, "God, thanks for every spiritual blessing."

What I want to do with you today is preach a 14-point sermon. Now, I have got to warn you, at my last church, the longest sermon I ever preached was a 10-point sermon, and I am not making this up. In the middle of it, a guy had a heart attack. So, no doing that today. I actually told the band that if I was not done in the appropriate amount of time, I owed each of them a dollar today. So, we are going to move fast. Here is what I need you to do. I need you to put your hands like this. I will wait for you. I need to shake them out. Need you to stretch them out. I need you to grab a pen, because we are going to go fast, all right?

I have got 14 blanks in your program. We are going to fill them all in and realize just what Paul made... or what made Paul gush with gratitude and blessing. Fourteen things that are yours in Jesus - ready to go? All right, here we go. First of all, Paul says that Christians are chosen. He said, "You were chosen in Christ." Have you ever been chosen for something? Ladies, did a guy ever choose you for homecoming? Did an employer ever choose your name out of a stack of applications? Did a coach ever choose you to start or play on the varsity team? There is something emotionally unique when there is a big group of people and someone calls out your name. And according to Paul, that is what God did for every Christian. God picked you. He chose you. This is not some zit-faced boy from the sophomore class. This is the Holy God of the universe said, "I want you, I choose you, and I pick you."

He chose you, number two, to be holy. I know many of you do not feel that way because of your sin and your struggle, especially if it is sexual in nature. You might feel dirty, but that is not true. You might feel unworthy, but that is not true. Because of Jesus, what is true of you, Paul says, is that God chose you to be holy in his sight. Have you ever heard the phrase, "holier than thou?"

Literally and biblically, there is no one on earth that can be holier than thou, because Jesus made you as holy as he.

And if that were not good enough, news number three, Paul says that you are blameless. That means God's not going to blame you. When you see him, he is not going to point a finger at you. If the angels, who are invisible, would suddenly make themselves known, they would not all look you in the eye and say, "There he is!" No, Jesus took away every sin so that God would not blame you, he would not accuse you, he would not reject you, but instead he would invite you. You are blameless in his sight.

Number four is my favorite. You are also predestined. This means that pre-history, every Christian had a destiny. Paul says before the creation of the world, God picked you and he worked out human history so he could find you. And if you cannot fall asleep tonight, I just want you to sit in bed and think about that thought, that if you are a Christian, because you heard the good news of Jesus Christ, why did you hear it? Some people never hear it. How did it get to you? How did it reach your ears? Oh, you just happened to be dating that girl? You just happened to be raised by that mother? No, God had a destiny for you to hear the good news, believe it, and be saved. You were predestined.

And if that were not enough, number five, you were adopted. You know, the older I get, and I am about to turn 40 this week, by the way, the big 4-0, the more I realize that the kind of father you have is one of the most important things about you. People who have a father who is there for them, and listens to them, and cares about them, and forgives them, and uses all of his position and authority to bless and protect them, they have an indescribable gift. Guess what? If you are a Christian, you have a dad just like that. How did Jesus teach us to pray? "Our Father." You can walk around today knowing that you are a child of God and your Father does not own a business, he owns the universe, and he cares about you, and he is present for you, and he is never annoyed with you, he is never done with you, he is never walking away from you, he will never abuse you or hurt you. Our Father in heaven is holy and perfect, and you, through grace, have been adopted into his family. I hope you have a good father, but even if your father was the worst, you still have a Father who is the best - our Father who is in heaven.

If that does not make you grateful, number six, you are graced. Grace means you get love that you do not deserve. So, I am sitting around the fire, grumbling, sinning, an hour after I preached the exact opposite, but I am still loved on the way home, because God loves people like me who do not deserve it. Last week, I was talking with a guy who, very tragically, cheated on his wife, and he said, "But Pastor, she stayed. She should have taken off, but she wants to work on it and fight for this and fight for us, and there is no word for it except grace." And that is what it is like to be a Christian. You just look up to heaven and you say, "I do not know why You are still here, but You are - and God, I love You for it." Paul says he lavished grace on us. He did not give us a drop, a little bit, an ounce, or a cup. We have so much love that we will never, ever get to the bottom of it.

But wait, there is more. Number seven, Paul says you are also redeemed. That means that Jesus paid a price to get you back. You would have been lost, you would have been sold out to the

devil himself, but Jesus shed his holy, precious blood so that you could be part of God's family, and that means we are halfway through. Are you still awake? Still with me? All right, give me an "Amen" if you are awake. Amen?

All right, let us move on to number eight. Eight - Christian, you are forgiven. Paul says we have, "The forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us." Do you know in the Greek language that Paul wrote in what the word, "forgiven," means? It means to send something away. Like, if here is you and here is a big pile of your sin, and God looks at the sin and then he looks at you and says, "Hmm." What Jesus did is he took that whole pile and he sent it away, so that when God looks at anyone who believes in Jesus, all there is, is a sinless person. All there is, is a holy person. All there is, is a redeemed person. All there is, is a precious, blood-bought son or daughter that has been adopted into the family of God. That is what Christians mean when we say we are forgiven.

And if that was not enough, number nine - Christian, you are also included. This means when you take your last breath and you die, you will not be sitting alone at a lunch table in heaven. When I was 18, I went to a Christian college and I did not know a single soul on campus. And it was one of those, you know, first days where there is a big mixer behind the cafeteria, and all of the people who went to school together are hanging out, and I am sitting there by myself. And then, Paul, one of the more popular kids, said, "Hey, you want to sit with us?" Ah, it feels good to be included, and that is what God does with you. The moment you take your last breath, and even invisibly in this moment, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sit in a circle and include you. Like, God, the Trinity, that exchanges laughter, and love, and friendship like you have never experienced before, they have a seat waiting for you because in Christ, you were included.

And then, number ten, you are also saved. Saved is a fancy Bible word that means you are safe. You are not in danger anymore. You know, some of you think, because you have really sensitive consciences, that God's angry at you and he is mad at you, and the reason you struggle, or lost your job, or cannot find work is because there is something in your past and God's getting back at you. No. You are safe from all of that. Anything hard you go through is not God's anger or wrath, because Jesus took every drop of that to the cross. Instead, there is just a God who uses hardships to refine you, and you do not have to worry that your abortion, or your cheating, or your critical spirit somehow endangered you. You are safe. You are safe because of Jesus.

Eleventh - Christian, you are marked. And just so I do not lose a bunch of money with the band, let us put twelve. Christian, you are also filled. When you were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God put his mark on you, his name. And just like you care very much about things that have your name on it, God does, too. First, he marked you like a little girl with her backpack, and then he filled you up. He filled you with the Holy Spirit himself. This is so amazing to me. The Bible says that if you believe in Jesus, what lives inside of you is not just some like, twisted, weak, fallible heart. What lives inside of you is the Holy Spirit himself. Can you fathom that? God! Do you know that there are Christians who literally will take weeks off of work, spend thousands of dollars, fly around the world to Israel to see the place where the temple of God used to be? But do you know what today, what the temple of God is? Let me save you some money. The Holy Spirit - that is so unbelievable to me that God himself, God, is here. He

is not far away, he is not distant. I might feel alone, but I am not. I might think I have to do this with my own strength. I do not. I am filled, marked by God and filled with his Spirit.

And if that were not enough, number thirteen - Christian, you are also an heir. When you take your last breath, when this inch or two that we call life is over, there will just be happiness, and love, and affection, and acceptance, and some of you are so close. Statistically, I just crossed the halfway mark. I am like, "I am closer to seeing the face of God than I was before." And my inheritance and your inheritance, it is so great we cannot even fathom it. I mean, front row tickets - nothing compared to God. Falling in love? Nothing compared to God. Holding a grandchild? Shooting a 16-point buck? That joy that you would feel in that moment is nothing. It is not a drop in a five-gallon bucket. It is not a drop in the ocean of what you and I will get to experience forever, and ever, and ever, and ever.

And if that were not enough, we have got one last blank. How am I doing on time? Christians, through Jesus, we are also God's possession. We are God's own. You love your stuff - your car, your phone, your laptop, and God loves his stuff. He loves his people. He adores them. You know, a couple of days ago, I was at a wedding. Two people, young people from our church, got married. And man, I had the most spiritual experience because there is one thing I do at every wedding, and you should do it, too. You should not look at the bride when she walks in, you should look at the groom. You ever done that before? I mean, this guy was a mess, and it was so beautiful. He had like this, like, I do not even know how to describe it! He just like, bit his lip and he was...as his beautiful bride comes walking towards him.

And what got me in that moment is the Book of Isaiah says that, "As a groom rejoices over his bride, so God rejoices over us." So, as you and I pursue gratitude, I have a bit of homework for you. Here it is. I want you to write down these 14 words and phrases somewhere where you can see them for the next 14 days. If you want to jot them down on a little note card, stick it in your cup holder in your car. If you are going to put that note card and tape it up on your bathroom mirror. If you want to put this bulletin and just, you know, magnetize it to your fridge. I want you to remember that no matter what is happening with your body, with your family, with your finances, with whatever, through Jesus you have every single spiritual blessing.

Or you could do what I did. I will show you a picture. I typed all 14 of those words into a Note file, I snapshotted a screen picture, and I made it the wallpaper on my phone. And every time I pick up my phone, which is about a thousand times a day, no matter what I am going through, what I want to grumble about - oh, yeah, I am chosen, and holy, and blameless, and adopted, I am graced, redeemed, forgiven. I am included, saved, marked, Spirit-filled. I am an heir of eternal life. I am God's. I am God's. And it is still a fight, but, man, how good is it to know that every spiritual blessing is mine and yours in Christ?

Let us pray.

Jesus, it is hard to imagine the face of our Father right now, not angry, not frustrated, not annoyed, but his face shining upon us, looking on us with favor, but of a groom who is head over heels for his bride. Thank you. God, if you kept a record of sins, none of us could stand before



you. If we could just see a printout of all of the messed-up things we have ever done, none of us would expect anything from you. But God, you threw that list away and you called us your own.

Today, God, help us to remember that, that we do not deserve a good life from you, but we have eternal life from you. Help us to remember that no matter what happens to us this week or this day, nothing can touch all 14 and the many more blessings we did not talk about today. Thank you, God, for the sentence that never seems to end, just like the life with you that will never end. We are so grateful to be your own and we praise you today with grateful hearts because of everything that your Son has done. We ask it all in his name, and all of God's people say, amen.