

TREASURE HUNTERS

EPHESIANS 1:4-6

As a boy Mel Fisher's favorite books were Robert Louis Stevenson novels like *Treasure Island*. Stories full of lost treasure... swashbuckling pirates and Spanish galleons - gold doubloons and pieces of eight.

As Mel grew older underwater exploration and treasure hunting became his hobby. He opened a scuba shop and purchased a salvage ship. He spent his vacations in the Caribbean exploring sunken wrecks, collecting coins, and gathering lost artifacts.

Eventually, Mel became a full time treasure hunter.

Over the years, Mel had heard of a lost Spanish galleon named the "*Atocha*." The ship sunk in 1622, and was thought to be carrying fabulous wealth.

For 16 years Mel searched for the *Atocha*.

And his quest cost him dearly. He teetered on the edge of bankruptcy. More significantly, he lost his son and daughter-in-law in a tragic boating accident.

But on July 20, 1985, 41 miles off the coast of Key West, Mel found his pot of gold. He picked from the ocean floor 40 tons of silver and gold - *100,000 pieces of eight, 1000 silver bars, and Columbian emeralds*.

A total treasure worth \$450 million. It's was one of the richest archeological finds since King Tut's Tomb.

And what little boy hasn't laid in the bed at night and dreamed of discovering buried treasure? **What big boy** hasn't had similar dreams of instant fortune, and

overnight wealth? *Why do you think folks spend their hard-earned cash on lottery tickets and sweepstakes?*

We've all fantasized of a fabulous fortune.

Yet what if I told you, that I know the whereabouts of a buried treasure! I've located a bounty that makes Mel Fisher's discovery - even the Georgia Lotto's Mega-millions - look like pocket change. *Well I do!*

I've unrolled a crusty old treasure map, and traced the lines, and pinpointed the "X" that marks spot.

And that "X" is the cross of Jesus Christ!

The book of Ephesians is the map which points to His sacrifice as the reason we've been given *"every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ."*

This morning we're going to pop the top on God's treasure chest, and spend some time admiring the loot.

That's what this morning's text is all about. From verses 3-14, the Apostle Paul, the author of this letter, takes an inventory. He itemizes our treasure trove.

And Paul gets carried away! He's so excited - so hyped-up over our blessings. In the Greek text verses 3-14, 273 words, are a single sentence. Paul writes without using a period. He doesn't even *take a breath*.

My HS English teacher taught us a single sentence should never be more than 30 words. If you exceed 30 words you've got a run-on sentence. Well, here's the run-on of all run-ons. If Paul were taking English he'd flunk, but he excels at flaunting our wealth in Christ!

A couple of weeks ago Jose Fernandez, rookie pitcher for the Florida Marlins, hit his first Major League home run against our beloved Atlanta Braves.

But when he hit it, he stood at home plate and took a little too long to admire his prowess. Baseball has an unwritten rule. Hit a home run and we'll tip our cap, but if you stand there and flaunt, then expect a response.

Brian McCann had a word or two with the rookie. In fact, Jose apologized to the Braves the next day.

Yet I got to tell you, it's been 2000 years since Paul flaunted His blessings in Christ, **and he ain't apologizing!** He's still flaunting, and rightly so!

Paul is still at home plate admiring the homer - and nobody begrudges him - for *he* didn't hit it - Jesus did! The blessings - our blessings - were earned by Christ!

Today let's open our Bibles and go **treasure hunting!**

We'll do a little flaunting ourselves, as we, *along with Paul*, relish *who we are* and *what we have* in Christ.

We begin this morning in verse 4, **“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...”**

Here's our first spiritual blessing - we're **“chosen!”**

You didn't just wander into God's family, or stumble onto God's blessing. Your pardon and acceptance was no accident. Some of us think our salvation was a spiritual fluke - some sort of anomaly. We backed into salvation. We must've caught God in a weak moment and He made a special exemption for us - *but not so!*

You were handpicked by God to be His child.

“Before the foundation of the world” God peered down the corridors of history, and picked you out of the masses of humanity that have ever walked this planet.

God chose you *“in Christ”* to be His child. Imagine, this means Jesus died on the cross with you in mind!

Remember what Jesus told His disciples in John 15:16, *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you...”*

I love verses 4-5 in TLB, *“Long ago, even before He made the world, God chose us to be His very own, through what Christ would do for us; He decided then to make us holy in His eyes, without a single fault - we who stand before Him covered with His love.”*

When I was born, I was handed to my dad, and he loved me. I’m sure, He was the proudest father in the hospital, *but really, my dad didn't have a choice!*

It’s not like he had the opportunity to browse the maternity ward and picked out the baby he liked - no, he was stuck with me! My father didn’t have a choice, yet he still chose me! And he’d do it all again... *I hope!*

But in contrast, *God did have choice!* God knows each and every one of the 77 billion humans that have cross the stage of history, and yet God still chose you!

Remember when you were a kid - on the playground, at recess - when teams were picked. You were always chosen last. It would come down to you and Durwood, and they picked Durwood... *You guys get Sandy...*

It’s a sinking feeling to stand there under inspection, and with each succeeding selection, be found lacking.

Your self-worth wilts after every choice. You realize you're not wanted. You're a nobody. *Just once pick me!*

Like gradual weather erosion cutting ruts into a hillside - torrential rejection eats away at who you are!

It's the same feeling you had *the day your wife announced she wanted a divorce... or the day you found out about your husband's affair... or when your dad told you he was leaving... or the last time a boss called you into his office and handed you a pink slip...*

Some of us have never been chosen for anything. Now we view this world as cold, cruel, and calloused.

"In Atlanta" this may be the case. But *"in Christ"* God wants you on His team! God has a choice and despite your *faults*, and *failures*, and *flaws* **He chooses you!**

Comic Garrison Keilor recalls his times of rejection on the playground. *"The captains are down to their last grudging choices - a slow kid for catcher, or someone to stick out in right field where nobody hits it. They choose the last ones - the scrubs - two at a time, "you and you" - because it makes no difference. You hear them say, "If I take him, then you've got to take him."*

Sometimes I go as high as sixth, usually lower. But just once I'd like Darrel to pick me first, and say, *"Him! I want him! I was never chosen with much enthusiasm.*

Just once Garrison wanted to be chosen **early** and **enthusiastically**. *And yet that's how God chose us!*

He chose us **early**. How about *“before the foundation of the world?”* Is that *early* enough? And He drafted us **enthusiastically** - we were handpicked *“in love.”*

And here’s **why** we were chosen, verse 4, *“that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...”*

Realize God’s choices aren’t whimsical. He didn’t spin the roulette wheel, or rolled the cosmic dice, and come up with my name. God isn’t *a capricious chooser*.

He never acts randomly and makes decisions for no reason. God never falls victim to impulse buying. **God always has a good reason for everything He does!**

And God’s purpose for us is to stand *“before Him.”* Or as the theologians say, *“Corem Deo”* - *“before God.”*

God’s motives are so simple! We’re the ones that complicate Christianity. We immediately focus on performance, and vocation, and exaltation - *God what do you want me to do? How can I advance with God?*

But that’s not God’s priority! He’s interested in *proximity*, and *intimacy*, and *fellowship* with us. He just wants us... before Him - by His side - in His arms.

Sin separates us from God. *He just wants us back!*

We’re told the first man, Adam, walked with God in cool of the day... Again, the Scripture tells us that Enoch, and Noah, and Abraham all walked with God.

Genesis 17:1 tells us, *“When Abram was 99 years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to Him, ‘I am Almighty God; walk before me and be blameless.’”*

We assume God is like our teenagers, or the tele-marketer - *He wants something from us!* He's like the old friend you haven't heard from for years who sweet talks a while, then says he has a business opportunity he's sure you'll want to try. *That's not a God move!*

God just wants you and Him to hang out together.

When Jesus called His disciples, recall what He said? **“Follow Me.”** He wants us to live life *before Him!*

Yet some work has to be done between you and God to achieve **“Corem Deo”** - or a **“before Him”** posture.

When Adam and Eve sinned they hid from God. They were *afraid* and *ashamed* to stand **“before God.”**

Their sin had to be remedied and resolved. To live *before* a holy God you have to be pardoned, and cleansed of your sin, and clothed in His righteousness.

I have to come before God **“holy and without blame.”**

And I can't do that by myself - in my own power.

That's why verse 4 tells us we stand **“before Him in love”** - because of **“God's grace”** not *our goodness*.

We're **“holy and blameless”** not because of anything *we've done* or *not done*, but because *we're in Christ*.

In the OT the people safe inside Noah's Ark were sinners just like the folks who died in the flood. But God **chose** Noah's family, and invited them inside.

They believed God's promise and entered the Ark. They were saved by "God's grace" and "their faith."

And this is why *we're saved, and declared holy, and made blameless* - not because we've achieved some moral superiority - but we're *in our Ark* - "in Christ."

All God's blessings are *obtained and maintained* not by our efforts, or goodness, or prowess - but *in Christ!*

A modern crime my grandma never had to worry about is **Identity Theft**. Criminals today can take your identity, and all that comes with it - they can trade on your good name, or credit score, or online reputation.

They can take advantage of all you've earned - even empty out all the wealth that you've accumulated.

But realize a Christian is a person who's received an **Identity Gift** - *not an Identity Theft, but Identity Gift*.

In Christ we share in all *He is* and in all that *He's done!* God *treats us* just as he *treats Jesus!* We trade on *His good name, and His score, and His reputation*.

Treasure #1 is we're "chosen!" But the blessings are just getting started. We're told in verse 5, "having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will..."

Here's our next blessing, we were "predestined to adoption." This word "predestined" is a strong term.

It means "to predetermine." Here's a definition, "to decide beforehand - a decree of God from eternity."

This means you didn't apply for adoption. God didn't comb through dozens of files to settle on you. *No way!*

Before He considered anything about your character or future, God chose you, and for one reason only - His choice was based on "*the good pleasure of His will.*"

That's like saying, "You don't need to know why. I chose you because I wanted to choose you." And since God is God, He can do just as He pleases, without *owing us a reason, or offering us an explanation.*

Understand, God picked you - totally unprovoked by anything *in you or on your resume* - for no other reason than it pleased Him. He tapped you... "Tag! You're it!"

That's incredible! This is the same dilemma some of you husbands had in your relationship with your wife.

You still haven't figured out what she saw in you.

Of all her possibilities, what prompted her to select you? *Was it momentary insanity? Pity? Blind love? An optical illusion? She wanted a challenge? Who knows!*

You just chalked it up to one of life's many mysteries.

This was the case with Kathy and me. The moment she agreed to marry me - *she chose me* - I rushed her to the altar, just in case she changed her mind. We were engaged on July 2 and married on August 23.

I didn't want to allow any chance for reconsideration.

Realize, God predestined you to adoption before the foundation of the world. He had a long, long time to think it through, and reconsider, *and still He chose you!*

Let me caution you, this is not a truth you need to spend a lot of time mulling over, and dissecting, and trying to discern how this can possibly be. Theologians have tackled that for centuries, and it's still a mystery.

Just take it for face value! God chose you before He hung the worlds. He predetermined your adoption!

It means that God really, really wants you!

Yet I know what you're thinking... Aren't there verses that teach salvation is our choice? *And yes there are!*

Romans 10 tells us, "Whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be saved?" and "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in your heart..."

Implied is that we have to choose to be saved!

Hey, if we had the faith of a child *we wouldn't feel the need to reconcile these two doctrines.* We'd just believe them both. We'd choose Jesus - then rejoice in the truth that we've been chosen! A little humility would teach us that *we really don't have to figure it all out...*

The truth is that the Bible teaches both *God's predestination* and *man's free will.* Who says we have to understand God's logic, and be able to decipher all His ways? If **God says it** why isn't that enough? We need to elevate *Divine revelation* over *human reason.*

Listen to John 6:37, Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me (*that's predestination*), and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out (*that's free will*). Both truths taught in the same verse!

For centuries, men far smarter than you and me have argued these doctrines. One group twists the free will verses to fit predestination. The other group twists the predestination verses to accommodate free will.

Stop twisting! Just accept that the Bible teaches both doctrines - for it does! I like how one theologian put it, “Try to explain predestination and you may lose your mind. But try to explain it away and you may lose your soul!” In short, **God is too big for us to figure out.**

Some truths about God appear contradictory or illogical. But we see life from an very earthbound and time-bound perspective. Whereas, the Almighty God’s vantage point is spiritual, and heavenly, and eternal.

Famous scientist, and former atheist, Mortimer Adler became a Christian late in life. When asked why he converted, He answered, “I believe Christianity is the only logical, consistent faith in the world. But there are elements to it that can only be described as mystery.

My chief reason for choosing Christianity was because the mysteries were incomprehensible.

What's the point of revelation if we could figure it out ourselves? If it were wholly comprehensible then it would be just another philosophy.” I certainly agree!

I don’t want a God that fits in my pocket. “A God I can fully understand, isn’t a God I can fully worship.”

Trust me, when we get to heaven it’ll all make sense!

Picture two ropes hanging out of a drop ceiling - one goes up, one comes down. The arrangement looks unrelated - two ropes moving oppositely. But what if you

popped a few ceiling tiles, and discovered the two ropes were actually one rope strung over a pulley.

This is what we'll find when we get to heaven. We assumed that our free will and God's predestination are at odds. In reality they're working hand and hand.

There's no contradiction! A higher logic, known only to God, was at work all along. We'd all be wise to recall Isaiah 55:8, "**For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,**" says the LORD."

And it's amazing how these two doctrines - though so irreconcilable in theory, work so well in practice.

If a non-Christian complains, "**This isn't fair, God didn't choose me?**" I can reply, "*How do you know?*"

If they say, "**Well, I'm not a Christian.**" I can fire back, "*Why not? The Bible says whosoever will may come.*"

And if they answer, "**Yes, but I'm not sure I want to come?**" I'll respond, "*Then maybe you're not chosen! But it's not God's fault. Don't blame Him. It's your fault.*"

2 Peter 3:9 reads, "**The Lord is... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.**"

No one can blame their unwillingness on God.

I like what Henry Ward Beecher once said, "**The chosen are the whosoever wills, and the non-chosen are the whosoever won'ts.**" God's doctrine of predestination is meant as *a comfort* - never *a cop-out*.

So Treasure #1 we're "*chosen.*" Treasure #2 we've been "*predestined.*" Now Treasure #3 we're "*adopted.*"

Verse 5, "*having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ...*" Here's another mind-boggling blessing... In ages past when God predetermined that He would pick you, He didn't choose you to be His *butler*, or *maid*, or *gardener*, or *chauffeur* - but His *son!*

God wanted you to be His kid! To take His name and bear His image... To sit at His table... To share in His wealth... To have you partner with Him in His work...

God wrote you into His will! He made you His heir! As Paul said to the Romans, "*And if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.*" In Christ, you and I have a cut of God's family fortune.

God has transformed us *from sinners to sons!* And the Bible describes the two ways He's done this...

First, we're "*born again.*" When we believe, the Holy Spirit does heart surgery. He cuts out our sin nature and sparks a new nature - *one that loves God and loves others.* The miracle of the new birth happens inside us. We're spiritual offspring of God our Father!

But we also become God's kids through "*adoption.*"

God grants us His sonship in every way possible. You and I are children of God **spiritually and legally!**

And the primary benefit of being *an adopted child* is you always know you were planned and wanted!

Adoptive parents never see their child as an accident, or a mistake, or an interruption. From *day one* you're the focus of extravagant love and affection.

Let me read you an excerpt of an article by a young lady named Melissa Cope. She writes, "I was adopted at birth. When I was five days old, my six year old brother carried me out with the caseworker to present me to my parents. I had spiky hair, and I was delivered with forceps, which temporarily pinched a nerve and made my mouth hang down, so I had a crooked smile.

But when my brother handed me over, he said, *"Isn't she pretty? Doesn't she look just like me?!"*

There are times when God intervenes in our lives in nearly flagrant ways. He interrupts the logical order of things, and turns everything upside down in the best way possible. In my case, He took me from being an unplanned pregnancy - to a pined-after, "chosen child" in a family where I have been inordinately loved.

And there's the Gospel - things were going along one way, but God intervened, and changed everything, not because of anything I deserved as a crooked-faced baby but because He's God, and He's good, and He can." Here's a treasure - we've been *"adopted"* by God.

Adoption was far more common in Roman culture than it was in the Hebrew community. Adoption Law gave enormous benefits to the person being adopted...

First, *the child's past was blotted out*. They got a new name, and a new start. There were no open adoptions.

Second, *any debts that might have been attached to the child were erased*. The child became a free person.

And third, as to inheritance, the adopted son was given *an equal share with the family's natural heirs*.

In fact, Roman Law so preferred adoption, in later years the Law was abused. People used it to shirk responsibility and avoid paying huge debts. The Laws had to be modified. But initially, the Roman practice corresponded perfectly to our blessings in Christ...

In adopting us as His kids, God has blotted out our former identities - He remembers our sins no more - He's made us co-heirs with His only Son Jesus.

Author Kent Hughes shares a letter from a young mother. She writes, *"I stayed with my parents for a few days after the birth of our first child. One afternoon, I remarked to my mother that it was surprising our baby had dark hair, since both my husband and I are blonde.*

She said, "Well, your daddy has black hair."

I replied, "But Mama, I'm adopted, that doesn't matter." With an embarrassed smile, she said the most wonderful words I've ever heard: "I always forget."

I said last week we need align *how we see ourselves with how God sees us*. Ultimately this effects how we live our lives. Well, it begins here. *This is how God sees you - as His very own!* Never doubt His love!

Those of you deprived of a father's unconditional love grew up with a hole in your heart. Sons fill that hole with rage - daughters fill it with promiscuity...

Fatherless sons and daughters reach out for the love of the dad who walked out... By abandoning them, dad told his kids *they weren't worth loving*. This effects a person in unexpected ways - *even after they grow up*.

A father defines us. He sets the trajectory of our life.

Today, a whole generation has this "father hunger." This is why God's "adoption" should be so coveted. God wants to be your father! You're worth it to Him.

As often as I've been to Israel you'd think my Hebrew would be better. *I can pick out very few words..*

"Boker Tov" which is "Good morning." And "Shalom." That's about the extent of my Hebrew speaking...

But there's one word my English-hearing ears always hear. When an orthodox Jew is followed by his kids you'll hear the children chirp, "Abba, Abba, Abba."

It means "Daddy." It's not the formal word "father." It's a term of endearment and intimacy. And my ear is tuned to this cry. It resonates deep within my spirit.

Romans 8:15 explains that every Christian receives "the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out 'Abba, Father.'" When God makes us His child He puts this cry of "Abba" in *our spirit*. Open your heart to Jesus, and listen... See if it doesn't echo, "Abba, Abba, Abba."

Romans 8 tells us, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." When God adopts you this is the miracle you get to experience.

I believe in this inner Abba... God's Spirit tags your spirit, and cries, "Abba." It's God's way of letting you know "You're it!" You've been adopted. You're His child.

Here's some spiritual treasure - *chosen, predestined, adopted*. But the creme de la creme is in verse 6, we're "*accepted in the beloved*." Treasure #4 is "*accepted*."

Several weeks ago Kathy and I hosted a time for pastors and their wives. It got mushy toward the end.

All the participants wrote down five reasons they liked being married to their spouse. One of Kathy's five was, "*He accepts me*." I'm so glad she recognizes that!

What a relief it is know you can be yourself - warts and all - who you really are - and be totally accepted.

Now I'm not saying there aren't a few things about Kathy I'd change if I could. *There are...* She sneezes really loud! We're not talking sniffles. We're talking these wake-the-neighbors, super-sonic sneezes.

Yet Kathy *knows* whatever comes from her *nose* isn't going to change how I feel about her - *I accept her, sneezes and all*. Regardless, I want her with me!

This is God's acceptance. Sure, there's stuff about us He intends to change. He wants to purify us. But our flaws don't stop God from wanting us with Him.

You may be *addicted to alcohol, or drawn toward pornography, or struggle with same sex attraction, or indulge in gossip, or lose your temper, or drink too much, or tell an occasional lie, or boast and brag...*

And does God want to change you? Of course He does. He wants to change me, and you, and all of us.

He loves us and knows the destructiveness that sin causes. But "*in Christ*" - "*in the Beloved*" - He looks passed our flaws, and chooses to show us favor.

You're His... and He's not ashamed to call you His child... Yes, there's some chinks in our armor. Yes, there's some toxic spills that need to get cleaned up.

But God agrees to accept us *"in Christ"* - and His acceptance allows us to be all He created us to be.

It gives us time and space to grow. God takes us *just as we are* and *right where we're at* - all the while working in us to make us a reflection of our Lord Jesus.

Everything about us - from *our unique personality* to *our spiritual purity* - flourishes under His acceptance.

It's God's acceptance that allows us to stand *Coram Deo*, or *before Him*... long enough for Him to *melt our hearts*, and *change our ways*, and *alter our behavior*.

Let me mention a couple of mistakes I hope you avoid. First, **don't confuse acceptance with tolerance.**

God doesn't shrug off or tolerate sin as if it doesn't matter. God accepts us *"in Christ"* - despite our sin - so He can bring His help to bear and make us victorious.

This was the problem in the OT. Sin made the Jews unacceptable to God. Thus, they lived ostracized from Him - but apart from God they lacked the power they needed to overcome sin. Israel lived in a Catch-22.

Never assume God's acceptance tolerates our sin. To the contrary, He accepts **us** to deal with our sin.

Here's another mistake to guard against... Realize, **God's love and His acceptance are not the same.**

God loves everyone, all the time. There'll be no one in Hell God doesn't love... *But acceptance is different...*

Acceptance is a step beyond love. For you to stand before a holy God - there has to be a reason bigger than you - even greater than the sheer love of God.

God needs grounds - a basis for your belonging. And He finds it "*in Christ.*" Everyone is loved by God, but only those who live "*in Christ*" enjoy God's acceptance.

Actor Ben Kingsley has two brothers who became doctors. His parents always wanted to know when he was going to give up his acting gig, and get a real job.

He didn't receive a lot of acceptance from them.

In 2002 when Ben was knighted by the Queen of England it was his parents he wanted to talk about...

He said, "I told you about my parents - the fact that any kind of embrace was totally absent from my life.

So to be embraced by Her Majesty... I felt like stopping people in the street, saying my (mom) loves me. Because that's what it felt like to me - the filling of a vacuum in the universe." And this is what it feels like to be embraced and accepted by *His Majesty God!*

Even though you're *scarred*, and *flawed*, and *a-work-in-progress* - to know that God still accepts you as His own... What a comfort and reassurance that provides.

When you come to Jesus you receive a new identity.

Again, it's not *Identity Theft* - it's an **Identity Gift!** Your sin no longer defines you. God sees you **"in Christ."**

Jesus becomes a safe place where you can drop your guard - admit your failures - seek answers... *and still be accepted.* We stand before God - not because of our good deeds - but because we're **"in Christ."**

This is the glory of the Gospel!

And notice in verse 6, all these blessings are **"to the praise of the glory of His grace..."** God did it the way He did to *magnify, amplify, glorify* His amazing grace.

Today, you - a lowly, moldy sinner - stand before a holy God - **Corem Deo** - **chosen, predestined, adopted, and accepted** - and you've done nothing to earn it - nothing to warrant this kind of favor and blessing.

Quite frankly, it's shocking - *even scandalous.*

You wonder how can God get away with such gratuitous favoritism? Well, there's a two-fold answer...

One, **He's God** and He can do whatever He pleases.

And two, it's **"grace."** If God based His blessings on our performance He'd never have a worthy recipient.

Grace bypasses the problem. It takes the initiative and gives us the treasure even though we don't deserve it - *hoping that in receiving it we'll become so appreciative that we'll turn our hearts and lives to Him.*

In his book **"The Reason For God"** Pastor Timothy Keller speaks of a woman who attended his church, and for the first time heard about the grace of God.

But her reaction surprised him. She told Tim that grace was scary to her. Of course, he asked her why...

She replied, “If I was saved by my good works then there would be a limit to what God could ask of me or put me through. I’d be like a taxpayer with “rights” - I would have done my duty and now I would deserve a certain quality of life. But if I am a sinner saved by grace - then there's nothing God cannot ask of me.”

This is the glory of God’s grace - *when properly understood it cannot be denied*. It woos us and draws us to God. I’m sure the devil calls it, “unfair influence.”

In my basketball playing days I had a *high degree of difficulty* shot - a trick shot - I practiced to perfection.

It was an around-the-back, under-the-leg lay-up.

Most guys didn’t have it in their repertoire, so if I ever got into a game of HORSE, and was down to a final shot, I had a chance - *a shot nobody else possessed*.

And this is what God is proving here! He has a shot nobody else has! God blesses like nobody else blesses. It’s called “*grace*.” And it’s a marvel to behold.

No wonder Paul stands there gawking at, and admiring, and flaunting this home run hit by Jesus!

God has blessed us with “*every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ*.” And all the treasure in the chest is to “*the praise of the glory of God’s grace*.”

Let’s you and I be treasure hunters! Let’s dig in and carry away every single blessing Jesus has for us!