

An illustration of a man with dark hair, wearing a light blue robe, kneeling on a wooden floor. He has his eyes closed and his hands clasped together in a prayer position. A bright, warm beam of light shines down on him from the upper left, creating a soft glow around his head and hands. The background is a light, neutral color with some faint, stylized lines suggesting a simple interior space.

Accepted in the Beloved: Why You Don't Have to Earn God's Acceptance

Opening

Ephesians 1:6 says:

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

You can spend your whole Christian life trying to earn something God has already given you.

You can pray more, serve more, behave better, read more chapters, avoid every mistake you can think of, and still quietly wonder, "Does God really accept me?"

And when you fail, that question becomes even louder.

Maybe God accepted you yesterday when you were doing well. But what about today? What about after that thought, that reaction, that temptation, or that failure?

Ephesians 1:6 answers that question by showing us that our **acceptance with God isn't tied to how well we performed today.**

Our acceptance is tied to **Jesus**.

Sometimes we read a familiar verse, understand its basic meaning, and then move on. But when we trace its words and themes through Scripture, we discover that Paul is saying much more than, "God likes you."

He's describing the **secure position** every believer has been freely given in Christ.

So let's look at the verse behind the verse and answer one important question:

What does it really mean to be "accepted in the beloved"?

1. What Ephesians 1 Is Saying

Ephesians 1 begins with one long declaration of what God has **already done** for us in Christ.

Paul says God:

"Hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

- He chose us in Christ.
- He predestinated us unto the adoption of children.
- He redeemed us through Christ's blood.
- He forgave our sins according to the riches of His grace.
- He revealed His will to us.
- He gave us an inheritance.
- He sealed us with the Holy Spirit.

Notice the direction of everything Paul is saying.

Paul isn't beginning with what we must do for God.

He's beginning with what **God has done for us**.

That's important because many believers have unknowingly reversed the order.

We think, "If I can become good enough, spiritual enough, disciplined enough, and faithful enough, perhaps God will finally accept me."

But Paul says God has already:

"Made us accepted in the beloved."

This isn't a reward at the end of a successful Christian life.

It's part of the **grace we receive at the beginning**.

The verse doesn't say we made ourselves acceptable.

It says: "**He hath made us accepted.**"

God did it.

And He did it: "**In the beloved.**"

Our acceptance is found in someone else.

It's found in **Jesus Christ**.

2. Grace Given Freely

The word translated "made us accepted" comes from a Greek word connected directly with **grace and favour**.

It carries the idea of being graciously favoured or freely graced.

In other words, God hasn't reluctantly tolerated us.

He has **freely shown us favour** because we are in His Son.

The same Greek word appears when the angel speaks to Mary in Luke 1:28:

"Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee."

The wording is connected with being favoured by grace.

That helps us understand Ephesians 1:6.

To be "accepted in the beloved" means God has freely placed us within the **favour that belongs to Christ**.

That's why Paul begins the verse by saying: "To the praise of the glory of his grace."

Our acceptance displays the **glory of God's grace**.

If we earned it...

It would praise our performance.

If we achieved it...

It would display our discipline.

If we deserved it...

It would honour our goodness.

But because God freely gave it to us in Christ...

All the praise belongs to **His grace**.

Grace isn't God pretending our sin doesn't matter.

Grace is God dealing with our sin through the cross and then giving us a position we could never earn for ourselves.

3. Who Is "The Beloved"?

The beloved is **Jesus Christ**.

The language reminds us of what the Father said concerning Jesus.

At the baptism of Christ, Matthew 3:17 says:

"And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Again, at the transfiguration, Matthew 17:5 says:

"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Jesus is the **beloved Son**.

He is the One in whom the Father is completely pleased.

And this is where the truth becomes almost too wonderful to take in.

We are accepted in Him.

God doesn't look at us as isolated people standing before Him with nothing but our own record.

He sees the believer in **union with His beloved Son**.

- Jesus is righteous, and we are in Him.
- Jesus is pleasing to the Father, and we are in Him.
- Jesus is the beloved Son, and we have been brought into God's family through Him.

This is why our acceptance can't be based upon our changing emotions or inconsistent performance.

It's grounded in the **unchanging relationship between the Father and the Son**.

God's love for His Son doesn't fluctuate.

The Son's righteousness doesn't weaken.

Christ's finished work doesn't expire.

And our acceptance is in Him.

4. The Old Testament Picture of Acceptance

The need to be accepted by God runs throughout the **Old Testament**.

Leviticus 1 describes a person bringing an offering before the Lord.

Leviticus 1:3 says:

"He shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord."

Then verse 4 says:

"And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him."

Notice the wording: "**It shall be accepted for him.**"

The worshipper didn't approach God empty-handed, trusting in his own personal goodness.

An **acceptable sacrifice** stood in his place.

The person placed his hand upon the offering, identifying himself with it, and the offering was accepted on his behalf.

That sacrifice pointed forward to **Christ**.

Hebrews 10 explains that the blood of animals could never fully take away sin. Those sacrifices were shadows pointing toward the one perfect sacrifice Jesus would offer.

Under the old covenant, an acceptable sacrifice was offered for the worshipper.

Under the new covenant, we are accepted because of the **perfect sacrifice of Christ**.

Hebrews 10:14 says:

"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Christ didn't offer a temporary sacrifice that needs to be repeated every time we stumble.

By one offering, He accomplished what all the previous sacrifices could only picture.

Our acceptance rests upon **His offering**, not our ability to maintain a flawless record.

5. Accepted Through Jesus Christ

First Peter 2:5 says believers are:

"An holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

Even our worship, service, praise, and obedience are **acceptable to God through Jesus Christ**.

That doesn't mean our actions don't matter.

It means our actions aren't the **basis** of our relationship with God.

Religion says:

"Perform so that you might be accepted."

The gospel says:

"You have been accepted in Christ, so now live *from* that acceptance."

- We don't obey so that God will finally accept us. We obey because we have been **accepted in Christ**.
- We don't worship to convince God to love us. We worship because He has already loved us and brought us near.
- We don't serve to purchase a place in God's family. We serve because He has already made us His children.

This changes everything.

One produces **fear**.

The other produces **grateful obedience**.

One keeps us constantly measuring ourselves.

The other keeps our eyes fixed upon **Jesus**.

6. The King's Table

There's a beautiful Old Testament story that helps illustrate this truth.

After David became king, he asked in 2 Samuel 9:1:

"Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

David discovered that Jonathan had a son named **Mephibosheth**.

Mephibosheth was lame in both feet and living in a place called Lo-debar.

He came before David afraid, possibly expecting judgment because he belonged to the household of Saul, David's former enemy.

But David said to him:

"Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake."

Then David restored Saul's land to him and declared:

"Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually."

Why did Mephibosheth receive this kindness?

It was **for Jonathan's sake**.

David had made a covenant with Jonathan, and Mephibosheth benefited from that relationship.

This story isn't a direct prophecy of Ephesians 1:6, but it gives us a helpful picture.

Mephibosheth didn't sit at the king's table because he had earned the position.

He sat there because of **someone else**.

He was received for Jonathan's sake.

And we have been received for **Christ's sake**.

We come before God with nothing to boast about.

We aren't spiritually impressive.

We aren't bringing a perfect record.

But God says, in effect, "You will sit at My table because you belong to **My beloved Son**."

7. What About Our Failures?

This is where many believers struggle.

We understand acceptance when we feel close to God.

But what happens when we **fail**?

Does God throw us out of Christ every time we stumble and then place us back into Christ once we have apologised enough?

Scripture doesn't present salvation that way.

Romans 8:1 says:

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

Notice the phrase again: "**In Christ Jesus.**"

No condemnation isn't based upon a perfect week.

It's based upon our **position in Christ.**

This doesn't mean God ignores sin.

- The Holy Spirit convicts us.
- The Father corrects His children.
- We confess our sins.
- We turn away from wrong behaviour.
- We seek forgiveness when we hurt others.

But **correction isn't rejection.**

Conviction isn't condemnation.

Discipline isn't abandonment.

Hebrews 12 teaches that God disciplines us because we are His sons.

He doesn't correct us to decide whether we belong to Him.

He corrects us because we **already belong to Him.**

A judge...

Condemns a criminal and sends him away.

A father...

Corrects a child and keeps him in the family.

When we fail, we shouldn't run from God as though we have suddenly become unwanted strangers.

We come boldly to the throne of grace because our access is through **Jesus Christ.**

8. Acceptance Isn't Permission to Sin

Of course, someone may hear this teaching and say, "So it doesn't matter how we live?"

That isn't what Paul is saying.

The same grace that accepts us also **transforms us**.

Titus 2:11 and 12 says:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Grace doesn't teach us to become careless.

Grace teaches us to reject ungodliness.

But notice the order.

Grace appears first.

Then grace teaches us how to live.

We aren't trying to live godly lives so that grace will appear.

Grace has appeared in Jesus Christ, and now that grace begins **changing the way we live**.

Being accepted in Christ doesn't make obedience unnecessary.

It makes **true obedience possible**.

When we believe God is constantly disappointed with us and ready to reject us, we may obey from **fear**.

But when we understand that we are loved, accepted, forgiven, and secure in Christ, obedience becomes a **response of love**.

Jesus said in John 14:15:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

He didn't say, "Keep My commandments so that I might eventually love you."

Love comes first.

Obedience follows.

9. Stop Asking God to Give You What He Has Already Given

Many believers are asking God to accept them when Ephesians says He has **already made them accepted in the beloved**.

We say: "Lord, please make me worthy."

But **Christ is our worthiness**.

We say: "Lord, please let me come near."

But Ephesians 2:13 says: "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

We say: "Lord, please don't turn me away."

But Jesus said in John 6:37: "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

We say: "Lord, maybe one day I'll become good enough for You to love me."

But Romans 5:8 says: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

God's answer isn't to give us a better version of our own righteousness.

His answer is to **place us in Christ**.

First Corinthians 1:30 says:

"But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Everything we need is found in Him.

10. Living From Acceptance

So how should this change our everyday lives?

First, stop measuring God's acceptance by your feelings.

Feelings change quickly.

You can feel loved during worship on Sunday and completely rejected by Monday afternoon.

But Ephesians 1:6 doesn't say we *feel* accepted in the beloved.

It says God has **made us accepted**.

This is an accomplished act of grace.

Second, stop comparing your relationship with God to someone else's performance.

Someone else may pray longer, speak more confidently, know more Scripture, or seem to have everything under control.

Of course, nobody actually has everything under control. Some people are simply better at looking calm while everything is on fire.

But your acceptance with God isn't measured against another Christian.

It's found in **Christ**.

Third, come to God honestly when you fail.

Don't hide.

Don't spend three days trying to punish yourself before you pray again.

Self-condemnation doesn't cleanse sin.

The **blood of Jesus** cleanses sin.

First John 1:9 says:

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Fourth, obey God from security rather than fear.

You don't have to spend your life wondering whether one bad day has erased the cross.

You can repent, get back up, and keep walking with God because your confidence is in **Jesus**.

Finally, praise God for His grace.

Paul says this truth is: "To the praise of the glory of his grace."

When we understand acceptance, boasting disappears.

Pride disappears.

Spiritual competition starts losing its power.

We realise that everything we have is a **gift of grace**.

Conclusion

Let's return to Ephesians 1:6:

"To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

You aren't accepted because you performed perfectly.

You aren't accepted because you never struggled.

You aren't accepted because you prayed enough, served enough, or finally became impressive enough.

You have been made accepted in the beloved.

The acceptable sacrifice has been offered.

The blood has been shed.

The debt has been paid.

Christ has risen.

And everyone who is in Christ stands within the **favour freely given through Him.**

Yes, we still grow. Yes, we still repent. Yes, we still obey. Yes, God still corrects us.

But none of those things means we are trying to **purchase His acceptance.**

We live, obey, worship, and serve because we have **already received it.**

Your acceptance is tied to Jesus, not your performance.

And thank God for that.