

GRATITUDE FOR GRACE

In Mary's "Magnificat" she pours out personal praise, as God moves forward His plan to bring the Christ, Messiah, into the world through her. The key passage of Luke 1:39-56 is "*He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.*" The gift of God is given and received by grace.

1- THE MIRACLE CHILD. Mary's hymn echoes that of Hannah, also blessed with a miracle child. Samuel 2:1-10 records, "*my heart exults in the Lord, I rejoice in Your salvation, there is none holy like the Lord.*" God took notice of Mary also, in her humble estate as a peasant girl, with nothing to offer except herself. She receives, as does a handmaiden, a servant of the Lord. Mary rightly recognizes God's grace, exalting Him, not herself, for receiving such blessings. 1Corinthians 1:26-31 says, "*God chose what is weak and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ.*"

JC Ryle observes, "Humility is the highest grace that can adorn the Christian character, and above all is the grace that is within the reach of every converted person." Mary says, the God of miracles, who is mighty and merciful, He is the One gracious to me, the mere humble receiver of God's amazing grace. "*For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name.*"

2- THE LORD IS MIGHTY, for His purposes, beyond us. Isaiah 57:15 declares, "*for thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite. I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; creating the fruit of the lips. Peace, peace, and I will heal him.*" God's might and mercy and holiness gives grace, to build up, to transform, to change lives.

Mary continues, "*and his mercy is for those who fear Him, from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted those of humble estate.*" Fearing Him from generation to generation speaks of God's everlasting covenant. And it echoes the Psalms, which remind the coming generations of God's promises, so that children's children will worship and reverence God.

3- MAGNIFY THE LORD. Mary transitions from her personal blessings to blessings for all who will believe God's promises. "*Strength with His arm*" is an anthropomorphism, describing God in human terms, such as Psalm 98:1 and 118:16, which likewise picture God's mighty actions. "*The proud in the thoughts of their hearts*" is the opposite of humility before God, exalting themselves instead of exalting God Most High, as though they had personal righteousness worthy of God's attention.

Ancient rulers and conquerors made grand display of their greatness and power, carried on elevated thrones as throngs of people exalted them. But Israel in that day was a humble vassal of the Roman Empire. Mary uses the aorist tense in Greek to convey that what God says He will do will most certainly come to pass: "*scattered the proud, brought down the mighty from their thrones, exalted those of humble estate.*" The proud receive the opposite of what they desire. All this will come about, just as God has said. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords comes to inaugurate His holy kingdom on earth.

4- THE LORD IS MERCIFUL in His undeserved grace. He promised justice, righteousness, restoration, and "*mercy for those who fear Him.*" Mercy is not receiving what you deserve, and grace is receiving what you do not deserve. Mary sings, "*He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent away empty. He has helped His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.*" Echoes of thanksgiving themes in Psalms 34 and 107.

And of Luke 6, as Jesus says the spiritually hungry can only be filled by God. Those who are already rich are self-satisfied, not really wanting what God provides, not receptive to His grace. But God helps the humble contrite heart, the poor in spirit. And He keeps His promises to His people, as prophesied to Adam, Noah, Abraham and his offspring forever, continuing the promise through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, and David. This is God's everlasting covenant about the Promised Offspring to come. Now in the fullness of time, it is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ, the child that Mary carries in her womb.

5- IS THIS LORD YOUR LORD? That's the question before you today. Have you responded like Mary and Elizabeth? Simply trusting what God says is true, and acting upon it? "*Let it be to me according to Your word*" and "*blessed is she who believed what was spoken from the Lord*" and "*for those who fear Him.*" Their words evidence another miracle in their lives: regeneration and faith, by the Holy Spirit. That's why Jesus came! God pours out His grace on those whose lives intertwine with His plan. Being born again from above by the Holy Spirit is evidenced in repentance and faith, trusting and obeying the Lord.

AW Tozer says "gratitude is an offering precious in the sight of God, and one the poorest of us can make and not be poorer but richer for having made it." Gratitude is an attitude of contentment in what God provides, in the path designed uniquely for you. JC Ryle observes, "we walk by faith, and this faith leans on promises, confidently. They will bear all the weight we can lay on them. God keeps His word, and what He has spoken, will always in due time perform." Are you living in the gratitude of grace? If you have received God's grace in Christ, then your life will evidence Him in your values, how you live, and make decisions. Like Mary, put God's purposes before your own. You will never be truly happy until you do! ☐