

The Wonder of Redemption in Christ

Scripture: Ephesians 1:7-10

Code: 49-3

Ephesians chapter 1 is the text that we're looking at. Through the years, obviously, over fifty years, there have been a couple of times when this church went through the book of Ephesians. But it is a book that needs to be brought to every new generation of Grace Church folks; and thus, we're looking at this book again in 2021. It is a foundational book. It's foundational in the sense that we saw last time, that it begins with sovereign election. It is foundational in that it lays out the gospel in no uncertain terms thoroughly. It is foundational as well, that it defines how we live: sanctification. It gives the structure for the church. It informs us about all human relationships: marriage, family, even employment. It tells us how to battle against the spiritual powers of hell. It does all of that in just a very, very brief few chapters.

So as we go through the book of Ephesians, the reality is that this book, verse by verse, becomes a launching point for explaining a lot of other things. In fact, you couldn't read the statement "He chose us" without that forcing you to answer the immediate questions, "What does that mean?" You can't read the word *predestined* or the word *adoption* without wanting to know what that means. And you can't, in the text for this morning, starting in verse 7, see the word *redemption* without asking, "What does that mean?" And so it's as if the book of Ephesians is the doorway into sound theology, sound truth, that shapes our lives, transforming us.

Now I want you to go back to this wonderful chapter and be reminded of verse 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." We then are responding to that command; "blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," comes across as a sort of a command, although it isn't in a formal sense. It is a call for all of us to join the apostle in providing worship, adoration, to the one who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing.

This is what praise is. This is worship—worship given to God, worship given to Christ. This is worship because God is worthy, because Christ is worthy, the Spirit of God is worthy. He deserves our joyous adoration. He deserves to have blessing pronounced upon His person and work. And particularly, we bless Him for the blessings which He has given to us. We can obviously honor the Lord for His creation. We can honor the Lord for His common grace for those things which are short of eternal salvation. But that for which we bless His name most is that which has had the most effect on us, and that is that He has granted us every spiritual blessing that heaven has in Christ.

Blessing is a familiar word to us, and there are two words in the Greek language that are translated "blessing." One is *makarios*, and you find it in the Beatitudes. It's used about fifty times in the New Testament, and you find it in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are those who." And the Beatitudes give you different reasons to define that blessedness. But it has the idea of being satisfied or being happy. It's more subjective.

The other word is *eulogeō*, and that is the word used here. And it means essentially to endow with an

ability, to make someone worthy. The first one is subjective, to be happy and satisfied; this is objective. The first one talks about a kind of blessedness which we experience. This second word, *eulogeō*, defines a kind of blessing that we receive from God. He blesses us, and therefore we become blessed. God is blessing us with all the blessings that heaven can unload on a sinner through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

God is worthy of our blessing Him; we're not worthy of Him blessing us—right? Luke 17:10 says, "We are unworthy slaves." Acts 13:46, "Judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life." We do not deserve "all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." And yet He blesses us with all those spiritual blessings, so that in turn we can bless His name. Worship is our response to such inexhaustible and eternal blessing.

From birth we are actually cursed. We're cursed as to our fallen nature, and we're cursed as to our sinful behavior. How is it, then, that we move from the category of the cursed into the category of the blessed? How is it that we move from the category of the cursed into the category of the blessed—without it having anything to do with our worthiness? Why is it that God blesses us? How is it that God blesses us so that we can bless Him who is worthy?

He does it because of grace. And we remember, don't we, down in verse 6, His blessing to us—starting with election, as we saw last week, is "to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us." We didn't earn it, we couldn't earn it; but God has by grace poured out all the blessings that heaven holds, with regard to eternal bliss, on people who are unworthy and have done nothing to earn it; and therefore, all glory and praise goes to Him for such grace.

Now the way Paul breaks this down in the opening fourteen verses, which is what we're looking at, is in the very obvious past, present, and future tenses. Verses 4 through 6 defines the blessing in the past, the blessing of being chosen before the foundation of the world. That's the past blessing that started all the other blessings. That's the first and greatest blessing, the blessing in the past when we were chosen.

Now today we come to verses 7 through 10, and move into the present; and in the present we have redemption. This is the second blessing. Sometimes you hear people talk about the second blessing; this is the true second blessing. The first blessing from heaven was divine sovereign election: We were chosen by God for salvation and eternal glory before the foundation of the world. The second blessing is redemption. Let me read these verses to you, 7 to 10.

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace"—again it's grace that provided election, and it's grace that provides redemption—"which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him . . ."

There is so much there, so much. Just the fact that verse 10 says, "summing up of all things in Christ"—that is vast. That is almost incomprehensible, "summing up all things in Christ."

But that's the nature of these truths in the opening chapter of Ephesians. The first one: the doctrine

of election. You remember last week took us all over the Bible to demonstrate the fact that this is consistent with how God works. And God is God, and that's what defines God as God: He's in charge; He makes the choices. Redemption is equally a vastly revealed truth on the pages of Holy Scripture, as we'll see this morning in verses 7 to 10. And then verses 11 to 14, which end this opening section, looks to the future glorification. So categorically, salvation blessings come in three tenses: in the past, election; in the present, redemption; in the future, glorification. Those three sum up everything, and everything is summed up in Christ.

So when we talk about being blessed with spiritual blessings, we're sweeping from eternity to eternity through time. Our blessings are that vast, that comprehensive, and that is all the blessings there can possibly be. All that is truly spiritual, righteously so, all that is truly heavenly, all that can possibly be granted by God from eternity to eternity, passing through time, is given to us in Christ. So when you say that you are in Christ or that you're a Christian, this is not some part of your life, this is your existence. This is the most defining thing about you; and if it is not the most defining thing about you, then there's reason to think that you may think you're a Christian but not be one.

Now Paul is not focusing on the subjective of being happy and satisfied like the Beatitudes say; he's focusing on the objective—not what we experience, but what God has endowed us with to make our lives everything God wants them to be. These are endowments. These are gifts from heaven that lead to our ultimate glory and the eternal fulfillment of God's plan. If you are a believer, you're in the middle portion of this eternity-to-eternity work of God. You are in the process of experiencing redemption, which will lead to glorification. We have been chosen, and then we have, verse 7, redemption.

Now let me talk about redemption, starting at a rather broad level. All religions exist for the purpose of some kind of redemption, all religions. That is the selling point of religion. Religion assumes that you're afraid of some deity, and religion offers you some means to get on his good side—or get on their good side, in the case of many gods. The whole purpose of religion is to conscript your life in such a way that is intended to pacify deity, to make a way for you to go from disfavor to favor with the deity, to get you out from under his hostility, out from under his judgment, out from under his anger, his wrath, even move him from indifference to some level of interest.

So all religions assume deity, and they assume that you are bound to this deity in the sense that he's either going to treat you favorably in life and death or he's not. And religion is simply a mechanism, not just humanly devised, although humans are involved in devising it, but satanically devised, to make you think that whatever deity you are worshiping can be pacified by your own good deeds. All religions assume a deity who's to be feared. All religions assume a deity who is offended—if not personally, nonetheless offended. In some way, then, you have to be reconciled. In some way you have to be redeemed from your status as one who is under judgment. So reconciliation or redemption is the essence of religion, all religion. Universally, in all religions, the one who has offended the deity must find a way to be redeemed, to be reconciled, to avoid the deity's anger. Universally, in all religions, the offending sinner must by his own efforts make an acceptable atonement to earn the merit that cancels sin, removes the offence and the guilt, and brings redemption.

Now I'm building on that, one sentence at a time. Universally, then, in all religions, the merit that earns redemption is done by the sinner, the offender—by good works, moral action, by religious rituals, by restitution, reparations, self-abasement, sacrifice. Whatever it is, whether it's moral or

ceremonial, it falls to the offender to find a way to turn the hostility of the deity to favor. If you're a Muslim—and you're a serious Muslim in the Middle East—you probably have been convinced that one certain way to do that is to kill infidels. Anything short of that will not give you the sense that you have earned his favor. That's how all the religions of the world are basically structured; you can change the names, but that's how they're structured.

Christianity, on the other hand, the only true religion from the only true God, says this: The sinner can do nothing to redeem himself. The sinner can do nothing to change his status. The sinner can do nothing to move him from the anger and wrath and judgment of God into the favor of God. And no matter what he does, even his righteousness, says Isaiah, is filthy rags. And furthermore, Jesus affirmed the inability of the offender to change his status because he said the standard is perfection. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." You want to change your status with the true God: Be perfect.

Well that's not possible. No amount of good deeds, no amount of good works, no amount of moral action, no amount of religious rituals, restitution, reparation, sacrifice, self-humiliation—none of it, or all of it combined together, can provide merit that earns you favor with God. Reality is, go back in history to the Reformation. That is what causes Martin Luther to go back to the Word of God and find that salvation was by grace through faith—because he was tortured by his inability to satisfy his own soul and quiet his own conscience; and he realized he could do nothing to change his wretchedness before God. God's standard of perfect righteousness and man's total unrighteousness eliminates any possibility of redemption by merit.

Just for a glimpse of that, look at chapter 2 of Ephesians—and we'll get into this in detail, obviously. "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." That's the problem. You don't have any capacity to change anything because you're dead. There's no power in a dead person. You were dead. You were functioning according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience. You were basically energized and driven by Satan himself. You "lived," verse 3 says, "in the lusts of the flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath." All of this led to the fact that you were a child of wrath, which is to say wrath was going to be your destiny.

"But"—verse 4—"God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ"—only one way that could happen—"by grace you have been saved." Not by works; and that's what it says in verses 8 and 9, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

God elected us, and God redeemed us; and He redeemed us, and in that redemption was regeneration, which now gave us the capacity to do things that pleased God. We don't receive our salvation because we do things that please God; we can't do them before we've been redeemed. But afterwards, we have been redeemed "unto good works."

So redemption, reconciliation, like election, comes from God to the sinner. Salvation is a work of God, not a work of man. God provided the atonement that redeems. God chose who He would redeem, and then God provided the atoning sacrifice by which that redemption would be applied to those He had chosen. That's why verse 7 says, "We have redemption." We don't earn it. We don't

earn it. We have it because He lavished it on us. He lavished it on us.

Election and redemption, then, are the work of God, for “the praise,” verse 6, “of the glory of His grace.” His glory only touches sinners by His grace. Without grace, we never possibly could see the glory of God. The only way we would ever be able to see the glory of God would be by grace, not by works. I know this is basic, but it’s so refreshing to hear it again, because it’s the reason for our worship, isn’t it, because of this grace.

Listen to Romans 5:17, “For if by the transgression of one,” that is the sin of Adam, “death reigned through the one”—in other words, the whole human race died when Adam sinned—“much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” So through Jesus Christ those who were condemned by the sin of Adam receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness.

In the next verse he says, “So then as through one,” Adam, “and his transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness”—that is the act of righteousness done by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—“there resulted justification of life to all men.” That’s a staggering statement. And we know the impact that one man can have on the whole human race: Adam sinned, and the whole human race catapulted into corruption.

But the other is also true: One righteous life, one righteous sacrifice results in “justification of life to all men.” Through one man’s disobedience, the many were made sinners; “through the obedience of the One,” Christ, “the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase”—that’s all the law can do, is show us our sin. “But where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” This is unmistakable.

Salvation is by grace and not by works, and that grace was made possible by the substitutionary death of Christ, who took our place and received our punishment. So Peter says in 1 Peter 1, verse 18, “You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile,” or empty, “way of life inherited from your fathers,” you were redeemed rather “with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.” Then in chapter 2 of 1 Peter, verse 24, “He bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness.”

Just to make that point very clear to all of you, false religion demands the sinner earn back a right standing with a deity—that is all false religion. That is why we say there is only one true religion, one true God, one true Savior, and one true gospel. In Hebrews 9:15, “He is”—that is Christ—“the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.”

The elect will receive glorification, the eternal inheritance, because of the redemption, the death that covered all their transgressions. Eternally, by the way, we will remember this; this is what heaven will be focused on. We are going to be in heaven doing essentially what we did this morning: singing about amazing grace, singing about the salvation given us in Christ.

So redemption, then—I’m just trying to give you the big picture—is the work of God by which He

Himself offers His Son as a ransom price for sin which has outraged His holiness. And since He chose the sacrifice—He chose the satisfactory atonement when Christ died—the Father was satisfied, and the payment was made in full, and that payment redeemed all who belong to God.

Back in Leviticus 25, interesting portion of God's laying out the law. When an Israelite became so poor that he had nothing left to do but sell himself into some form of slavery, the law of God made provision for his family to redeem him, redeem him out of bondage by paying a price. Similarly, all of us are in bondage to sin. We are bankrupt, and Christ has paid the price to redeem us. That's why Mark 10:45 says, "He gave His life a ransom for many."

Now people often ask, "To whom was the ransom paid? To whom was the redemption price paid?" And there have been a number of suggestions. I think it's pretty obvious. The ransom was paid to God. God was the offended one, right? God is the one who demanded the payment. God is the one who chose Christ. God is the one who predetermined that He would die, according to the book of Acts. God chose the means of atonement. God chose the agent of atonement: His Son. God chose the extent of atonement: the leveling of all judgment against all who would ever believe and all their sins, in the substitute. The one who started the necessity for redemption is God, because it was God who cursed humanity. Go back to Deuteronomy 27 and read all the curses, curse after curse after curse, laid on the people by God Himself.

It is God who is the judge. It is God who is the executioner. It is God who destroys both soul and body in hell. It is God who has to be satisfied. It is God who chooses the means of atonement and the agent of atonement. This is the work of God. We have literally been bought back from a curse. And that's what we're promised, isn't it, that Christ was made a curse for us. God cursed Christ in order that He might remove us from the curse.

In Colossians chapter 2—many verses coming in my mind—but we read in chapter 2, verse 12, "Having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgression, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." Magnificent language: "having nailed it to the cross."

Paul's wonderful words in Galatians 3:10, "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written"—and this is from God right out of Deuteronomy 27—"Cursed is everyone who doesn't abide by all things written in the book of the law, to perform them." You're cursed if you don't keep the law perfectly.

Now that no one is justified by the law before God is evident, "for the righteous man shall live by faith." If you could be justified by law, you wouldn't have to live by faith to be justified. "However, the Law is not of faith; on the contrary, 'He who practices them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'" Christ became the curse for us.

Our condition is so profound that in John 8:34 we are identified as "slave of sin." Romans 6:17, "slaves of sin" again. Romans 7:14, in bondage under sin. Romans 8:21, slaves to corruption. And in

this condition we can do nothing to please God. Only God can determine an atonement that is satisfactory.

Titus 2:13, “Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”—then verse 14—“who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good works.” Christ Jesus gave Himself to redeem us to pay to the Father the price the Father required to redeem us from every lawless deed, every sin, every sin, and purify for Himself a people for His own possession. I love that phrase, “a people for His own possession.” We belong to Him. We were love-gifts to the Father, given to Him, but we never would have been able to be received by Him if He hadn’t paid the price of our redemption. That absolutely foundational to any understanding of Christianity, any understanding of the gospel.

Listen to what it says in Hebrews 2:10, “It was fitting for Him”—speaking of Christ—“for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” So how did we go from being hated by God and the enemies of God to being the brothers of Christ? How is that possible? It’s only possible if someone comes and takes our place.

Verse 14 says that: Christ partook of flesh and blood, became like us, “that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death”—that is the devil—“and free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.” He freed us. He redeemed us. This is repeated many places in the New Testament; I’ve just given you some samples.

So we say the death of Christ was a substitution, and it was. That means He took our place. The death of Christ was a propitiation; that means a satisfaction. It was satisfactory to the Father, and that’s why the Father raised Him from the dead. It was a reconciliation, it brought us back to the Father as adopted children. It was a redemption; we were bought back from bondage in sin. And it was a domination.

I don’t hear the word “domination” used nearly enough in speaking about the death of Christ. But the death of Christ was the domination over all sin, all the forces of evil. It delivered us, put us in a position where God doesn’t account for our sins at all; they were paid for in Christ. So the work of redemption comes to those who were chosen. We saw that last week in John 6 and John 17: The Father gives the elect to the Son; the Son provides the redemption price to receive them and make them His own possession.

Just expanding on that a little bit so you’re clear, the Old Covenant could only condemn. That’s what the law does: It only condemns. And all the blood sacrifices didn’t change that. All the blood sacrifices going on throughout the whole history of Israel all the way up to the death of Christ could never bring redemption, never bring forgiveness, never bring satisfaction. They couldn’t propitiate, they couldn’t substitute, they couldn’t dominate, they couldn’t reconcile, they couldn’t redeem, and they couldn’t provide adoption. But “the new covenant in My blood,” as Jesus spoke of it in Luke 22:20, “takes away sin.” And this is where God’s grace is put on display. Father planned our salvation, the Son purchased our salvation, and the Holy Spirit applies our salvation. We are redeemed by grace, confirming our election, and our redemption and our glorification.

Now let's go back to Ephesians chapter 1 and just look a little closer. Speaking of closer, I'd better get the clock over there. Ephesians chapter 1. And we've already covered so much, but there's something left that I want to get to. But let me just point out some things.

We find here, first of all, the Redeemer. And with just a comment or two. The Redeemer, end of verse 6: "in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption." The Redeemer is the Beloved, the Redeemer is Him, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one beloved of the Father, the one of whom the Father said at His baptism and His transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son. This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased. This is My beloved Son; listen to Him."

So the Father's beloved Son, beloved because He was eternally loved because He's eternally God, because He's eternally perfect. He is the one the Father loves. This is the Redeemer. There is no other redeemer, only that Redeemer.

Who are the redeemed? The Redeemer, we know, is Christ. But who are the redeemed? That's pretty clear if you just go back to verse 3 and see how many times you see "us," the pronoun, verse 3, verse 4. See how many times you see "we." Coming all the way down again, "us, we, us, we." Clearly this refers to those whom He chose. He chose us.

So who are the redeemed? The redeemed are the chosen. Christ actually died, provided a sacrifice, a substitutionary atonement, a true atonement, a real atonement, an accomplished atonement for the elect. First Corinthians 3:21–23 says, "All things belong to you . . . things present, things to come; all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ; and Christ belongs to God." You're the redeemed. So election to adoption to redemption; loved by the Father, loved in the Son.

Now what was the redemption price? We've already said it, but let's look again at the text: "through His blood, through His blood," simply referring to His death. I won't take time to explore that, it's obvious. Hebrews 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." So "through His blood" is a metonym for death. It doesn't mean there was anything about the fluid that saved; it was in His death, basically referred to by referring to blood.

Romans 3:23, for example, says, "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood," or in His sacrificial death. The Redeemer is the beloved, the redeemed are the elect, and the means of redemption is the sacrifice of Christ. So through His death the Son purchased the redemption of God's elect to bring them to holiness, to sonship, and to His presence forever, so that they would be God's own possession, which is used down in verse 14.

Now I want to talk for just a few moments about the redemptive results, the redemptive results. Verse 7 again, "the forgiveness of our trespasses." OK, we know about that, we've talked a lot about that. Jesus at the Last Supper, Matthew 26:28, when He was going to show them to commit their regular attention to the cross by the cup and the bread, said about the cup, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." So we know that that's the first great reality.

The Old Testament even speaks of God's forgiveness. Psalm 103 says He forgives "as far as the

east is from the west.” Isaiah 44 says He forgives so that sin is obliterated as if it was hidden in “a thick cloud” or a heavy mist. Jeremiah 31 says God remembers your sins no more. Micah 7 says it’s cast “into the depths of the sea.” God’s forgiveness is complete and full forgiveness. Acts 13:38 and 39, “Through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,” and that in Him “everyone who believes is justified from all things, which you could not be justified from through the Law of Moses.” You can’t be right with God by works. But, as Ephesians 4:32 says, “God in Christ has forgiven you.” Romans 8:1, “There’s therefore now no condemnation from God to those who are in Christ.”

Just a reminder that it’s unpopular, for sure, maybe the most unpopular thing of all in this world, unpopular and unacceptable to tell people that they are condemned sinners on their way to eternal hell unless they turn to Christ in repentance and faith to receive God’s forgiveness. You would think that would be a wonderful message unless you realize that sinners protect their sense of goodness and don’t like to admit their true condition. But we can’t receive the gift of salvation if we don’t understand how desperately we need it. The love of God then causes us to be chosen. The love of Christ then causes us to be redeemed by His sacrifice. All of this, go back to verse 7, “according to the riches of His grace.”

As we read a moment ago in Romans 5:20, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” This is rich grace which, according to verse 8, “He lavished on us.” He lavished it. Acts 4 calls it “great grace.” Second Corinthians 4 talks about it as a spreading grace.

But there’s a second benefit, and this is how I want to wrap this up. And this should be obvious. But not only have we received “the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us.” But “in all wisdom and insight,” verse 8, then verse 9, “He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him.”

What is that? Well it’s pretty obvious; it starts with—here’s a second benefit—“He lavished on us” not only forgiveness of sin, but, verse 8, “all wisdom and insight,” all wisdom and insight. These go together because we really wouldn’t be able to receive the forgiveness of sins if we didn’t have the wisdom and insight into the revelation of God that reveals to us the truth of the saving gospel. The forgiveness of sins is only available to those who understand that that is what the Scripture offers. That is the gospel.

In chapter 3, verse 8 of Ephesians, Paul says, “To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in heavenly places.” Paul says, “Look, God gave me the message of the unfathomable riches of Christ so that they could be brought to light, so that the manifest wisdom, manifold wisdom of God might be known in the church and through the church.” So there’s simply this simple idea: God gave a revelation to Paul, and Paul passed that revelation on, and it was received by those who had been given the capacity to understand it.

“The natural man understands not the things of God,” Paul says to the Corinthians, “but redemption granted to you and to me all wisdom and insight.” That is a very unqualified statement: “All wisdom and insight.” You remember back in Matthew 11:25, Jesus talking to His disciples, none of whom

were part of the religious elite, and He said to the Father with regard to them, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and You revealed them unto babes.” Divine revelation doesn’t come to those who are intelligent. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 that the wise have no access to divine truth, but we do. What is mystery to everyone else is clear to us.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 2:6, “We do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God’s wisdom in a mystery”—it’s still a mystery to them—“the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood.” Nobody gets it. But God revealed it to us through His Spirit. First John, John says we have an anointing from God, teaches us all things.

So we are not only blessed to have the forgiveness of sins, but to go along with that, we have the ability to understand all wisdom and all insight into divine revelation. That’s why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:30, Christ has “become to us wisdom from God.” We know Christ; and in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden from the world, but revealed to us. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, chosen us, adopted us, redeemed us, lavished us with forgiveness. And now we have been given wisdom and insight to grasp and believe the full story of the gospel and all that has been revealed from heaven in Holy Scripture.

Not only do we have the knowledge, deep knowledge of the saving gospel, but there’s more. Look at verses 9 and 10 just for a moment. “He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to the administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him.” You know what that is? That’s the future. He’s made known to us the mystery of His will.

In Matthew 13:11 Jesus said to His disciples, “For you have been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.” Paul says in 1 Corinthians 4:1 we are “stewards of the mysteries of God.” Paul talked to Timothy about “the mystery of the faith.” And in the end of the book of Romans, chapter 16, verse 25, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but is now manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”

He bursts into doxology when he contemplates the fact that not only have we been given understanding of the gospel, but we have been given understanding of all that is made manifest in “the Scriptures of the prophets.” And “the Scriptures of the prophets” could be an allusion to the Old Testament prophets, but more likely he’s talking about the New Testament prophets. The Lord, Ephesians 4, gave to the church apostles and prophets, preachers of the New Testament, the mystery.

This would embrace—if you go back to Ephesians 1, this is very important—this would embrace the end, the end. How do you know that? Because he’s referring to the fullness of times, “fullness of the times,” the end of everything, “the summing up of all things,” things that relate to “heaven and . . . earth.”

So why did we get this revelation about the future? Why do we have this marvelous revelation which we can comprehend about how everything's going to end, about "the fullness of times," about "the summing up of everything in the heavens and . . . on earth"? Why did he give us that? Two reasons, I think. Number one, to honor His Son so that we might see the true glory of His Son; and secondly, to give us hope. We need it, don't we. The revelation of the end, eschatology, part of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The "administration suitable to the fullness of times" simply means the end of everything, the completion, the consummation of all redemptive history. And what do we know about all redemptive history? It's going to all wrap up in Christ. All of it is going to wrap up in Christ.

Colossians 1, verse 15, "He is the image of the invisible God, the *prōtotokos*, the premier one of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him." So He's the beginning of everything, He created everything, He's before all things. In Him all things hold together. He is the one who created everything, He's the one who sustains everything. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. "It was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him." Then in verse 20, "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself"—not just all people, not all the elect, but "all things"—"having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven." Everything is going to resolve into Christ. He created it all, He sustains it all, it all finds its resolution in Him. This is where history's going. This is where history's going. Wish I had more time.

One more passage, 1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and authority and all power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. And the last enemy that will be abolished is death. He has put all things in subjection under His feet. And when He says, 'All things are put in subjection,' it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. When all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, so that God may be all in all." Just mind-boggling.

Everything resolves in Christ. And when Christ has taken control of absolutely everything, He hands it back to the Father. Salvation is summed up in Christ. Sin and death are gathered up and destroyed in Christ. Old Testament law is summed up in Christ. The Old Testament prophecies are summed up in Christ. The Old Testament ceremonies are summed up in Christ. The Old Testament kingdom promises and blessings are summed up in Christ. Rule over all angelic beings, whether they are holy or unholy, is summed up in Christ. The future of the material creation is summed up in Christ, who will redo the earth for His millennial kingdom; and then it goes out of existence, and He creates a new heaven and a new earth. All judgment is summed up in Christ. All eternal glory is summed up in Christ. Christ is everything, everything. That is why in verse 15 of Ephesians 1, Paul prays a prayer we're going to look at next time: "I pray for you," verse 17, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what the hope of His calling is, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." I want you to know what's coming in the future. I

want you to know a biblical eschatology. You get a glimpse of it in Revelation, don't you, where they're all worshipping the Lamb in chapter 5, and celebrating His redemption; and again in chapter 7 of Revelation, and again in chapter 11. And then He comes with a blood-spattered garment in chapter 19 to set up His kingdom, and then He creates a new heaven and a new earth, and He's the light of that heavenly city. Colossians 3:11 says, "Christ is all, and in all." Christ is everything, everything.

Everything is summed up, such a statement, summed up "in Him," all the way through to the new heaven and the new earth. He is coming. He's coming to judge the ungodly, He's coming first to gather His church; He'll bring them back in judgment. Judgment will fill the earth for a period of time, and then He will return with His saints to establish His millennial kingdom, Revelation 20. After a thousand years He will destroy the rebels that remain and create a new heaven and a new earth. Christ is everything, He's everything.

Father, we thank You for the wonder of redemption. We know You're going to redeem not only Your elect, but You're going to redeem the earth. You're going to redeem the sky. You're going to restore a kind of Eden-like environment in Your kingdom on earth, and then You're going to wipe out this sin-stained creation and create a new heaven and a new earth. You created the original one; You sustain the one that exists; You will be the instrument of its demolishing during the time of tribulation. You will restore it in the kingdom where You will reign, and there will be no other king in this world. You will be everything, until You create a new heaven and a new earth, and You will be the light of that eternal place.

This is the blessing of redemption. We even hear that we will have redeemed bodies, Romans 8:23. So we are in the process of that redemption now; we have been redeemed from our sins and death and judgment. We will be redeemed. We will be rescued from even the presence of sin in Your glorious heaven of heavens, with a new body, a redeemed body like Your resurrection body. We will reign with You on this earth as Your redeemed people. And the final redemption will come when this entire universe goes out of existence and You create a new heaven and a new earth where there is righteousness, peace, and eternal joy. You are everything. You created when there was nothing. You have sustained it. You will bring it to its end. All judgment belongs to You. All salvation belongs to You. And then You will create that everlasting kingdom of righteousness.

We are amazed at the grace that has allowed us to touch Your glory, the glory of forgiveness and the glory of divine revelation. And so that we might glorify You, we have been given the account of the future so that we can glorify You for what is yet to come, and so that we can live in hope, hope that purifies and gives us joy even in the face of suffering. And as we look next time to that future and the eternal inheritance that awaits us, may it always be that we are drawn to worship and to bless Your name because You're worthy. And we're grateful that we who aren't worthy have been so blessed. We ask, Lord, that You would do a work in every heart here that pleases You, fulfills Your purpose. In Christ's name, Amen.

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