

Title: **THE ABOUNDING REVELATION OF GRACE**
 Text: Ephesians 1:7-12
 Subject: *The Revelation of the Grace of God*
 Date: Tuesday Evening — June 20, 2006
 Tape # Y-100b

Introduction:

Did you ever stop to think about how commonly we use adjectives with the word grace, whenever we talk about it? Seldom do we simply say “grace.” As a young man, I was satisfied to define grace in the way I had heard it commonly defined.

- “Grace is unmerited favor.”
- “Grace is the favor of God to people who deserve his wrath.”
- “Grace is God’s riches at Christ’s expense.”

But the more I taste and experience God’s grace, the more overwhelmed I am by it, the more I realize how little I know of it, and the more I feel utterly incapable of describing it. So, like you, whenever I talk about the grace of our God, I almost always speak of it as — “free grace,” — “sovereign grace,” — “rich grace,” “amazing grace,” — “matchless grace,” — “eternal grace,” — “immutable grace,” — “everlasting grace,” — or “abundant grace.” And, even if we should use all those adjectives together, speaking of “God’s wondrous, sovereign, eternal, everlasting, amazing, matchless, rich, free, and abundant grace in Christ,” we would not be speaking in hyperbole. Rather, we would still fail to adequately state even the little we know of the wondrous grace of our God.

The fact is, our experience of grace defies human language to define it, declare it, or even describe it. I have noticed lately that those men who wrote about God’s grace in the Book of God must have felt the same way. They almost always used superlative adjectives to speak of grace. And the word used most commonly in relation to God’s grace in this Book is “abundant,” or a word derived from it. Listen to the way saved sinners speak about God’s grace in the Scriptures.

In Romans 5, the Apostle Paul wrote, “*The gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many...Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord*” (vv. 15, 20, 21).

Peter speaks of God’s mercy like this: — “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*” (1 Pet. 1:3). — “*For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 1:11).

We are saved, “*not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour*” (Titus 3:5-6) — “*And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*” (1 Tim. 1:14).

(Colossians 2:6-7) “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: (7) Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.”

The Lord God calls sinners to faith in Christ, saying, — *“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD”* (Isa. 55:7-8).

Our Savior says, concerning his church, *“This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread”* (Psa. 132:14-15). — And **we respond**, *“How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures”* (Psa. 36:7-8).

He says, *“I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved”* (Song 5:1). **And our hearts cry**, *“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen”* (Eph. 3:20-21).

The first chapter of Ephesians is all about the abounding grace of the triune God toward poor, needy sinners in Christ. In verses 3, 4 and 5, the Apostle has set before us the mercy, grace and love of God the Father in that which he did for us and gave to us in Christ before the world was made. In verse 7, he shows us the mercy, grace and love of God the Son in the redemption he accomplished for us by the shedding of his blood in our room and stead at Calvary. Tonight, I want us to look at verses 7-12. In these verses, writing by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Apostle Paul shows us the mercy, grace and love of God the Holy Spirit in the abounding revelation of grace.

(Ephesians 1:7-12) *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (8) Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: (10) That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: (11) In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (12) That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.”*

ONE SUBJECT

Did you notice that our translators have given us these six verses as one sentence? That is because every phrase in these six verses sets before us different aspects of one subject. And that subject is the revelation of God’s abundant grace to us. Yet, Paul is describing both the work of God the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in the accomplishment of redemption, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in the application of that redemption to chosen, redeemed sinners in regeneration and conversion.

In verse 7, we are told that redemption is ours in Christ, — *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.”* Then, in verses 8 and 9, we read...

(Ephesians 1:8-9) *“Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.”*

The first word in verse 8, *“wherein,”* connects the work of God the Holy Spirit in us with the work of God the Son for us at Calvary and with the work of God the Father in eternity, and declares that all are according to the riches of God’s free grace in Christ. Paul is here telling us exactly the same thing he states in 1 Timothy 1:14. — *“And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”*

WISDOM REVEALED IN REDEMPTION

Without question, the Spirit of God is here declaring that God's grace is revealed, and "*he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence,*" in the redemption of our souls by Christ.

- "**Wisdom**" refers to God's infinite knowledge. In Ephesians 3:10, Paul is talking about this same grace revealed in the gospel, and calls it "*the manifold wisdom of God.*" In 1 Corinthians 1:21-23, he calls the gospel the wisdom of God and the power of God by which we are saved. It was the wisdom of God that found a ransom for our souls in his own dear Son. The gospel of Christ is the revelation of wisdom that is so infinitely higher than the wisdom of this world that the carnally wise call it foolishness.
- "**Prudence**" refers to the great, infinitely great, skill by which our God accomplished his wise and good purpose in sacrificing his darling Son for us at Calvary.

God sending his Son into the world to suffer in our stead, and to satisfy his law and justice for us, was not only an act of special, boundless grace and peculiar favor, but the demonstration of his infinite wisdom.— "*He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom.*"

God's grace is gloriously displayed in all its riches, wisdom and prudence, in the redemption of our souls by Christ. Therefore the gospel, by which redemption is proclaimed, is called "*the manifold wisdom of God.*" And when it is revealed to us by his Spirit, it makes us "*wise unto salvation,*" showing us how that the holy Lord God can be both just and the Justifier, "*a just God and a Savior.*"

- What wonderful wisdom appeared in the contrivance of the work of redemption, and in the accomplishment of it!
- What wisdom is seen in appointing such a Mediator as Christ, One fit to reconcile man to God!
- What wisdom is revealed in our God choosing to secure and set forth his highest honor, glory and praise in redeeming lost sinners by the sacrifice of his Son, "*for the praise of his glory!*"
- What infinite prudence we see in our God's infinite skill, ruling all the affairs of providence to accomplish the work! — Adam's Fall! — Tamar and Judah! — Lot's Incest! — David and Bathsheba! — Herod's Decree! — Caesar's Order! — Judas' Betrayal! — The Crucifixion - Roman Method of Execution!

The gospel proclaims the recovering and saving lost sinners by a Substitute, by a crucified Redeemer. This was a mystery hidden from the world, so hidden the world could never have discovered it, hidden in God, in his breast and bosom, in his heart and thoughts, until Christ came, and hidden still from lost sinners, until Christ comes by his grace and reveals it (2 Cor. 4:4-6). — "*We preach the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew,*" or could know...

(2 Corinthians 4:4-6) "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. (6) For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

WISDOM REVEALED BY GRACE

Not only is the wisdom and prudence of God revealed in our redemption by Christ, "*according to the riches of his grace,*" "*he hath*" in the revelation of his grace, by the power and grace of his Holy Spirit in the conversion of our souls, "*abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself*" (vv. 8-9).

We are, like all men by nature, foolish and unwise. In regeneration, effectual calling and conversion God the Holy Spirit has caused us to know wisdom in the hidden part (Ps. 51:6). God has given us "*the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of*" Christ (Eph. 1:17). He has given us the mind of Christ, spiritual light, knowledge and understanding, by which we are now able to discern and know all things spiritual (1 Cor. 2:1; 1 John 2:20).

These two verses (Eph. 1:8-9) comprehend the whole work of God the Holy Spirit in us, from his first almighty act of grace in regeneration, until grace is finished in glory.

(Ephesians 1:8-9) "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

How we ought to admire and adore the matchless grace of God the Father who chose us, adopted us, and accepted us in Christ before the world was made! How we ought to admire and adore the wondrous grace of God the Son who redeemed us with his precious blood at Calvary, and obtained for us the forgiveness of all sin! How we ought to admire and adore the matchless grace of God the Holy Spirit who has revealed Christ in us to the saving of our souls!

Truly he is the Almighty "*Zaph-nath-paaneah*" (as Pharaoh called Joseph), the Revealer of hidden things (Gen 41:45). So essential is the work of God the Spirit that none can be saved without it. The Holy Spirit's work of grace in us is just as vital, just as necessary as the work of the Father in eternity and the work of the Son at Calvary. It is by the Spirit of God alone that chosen, redeemed sinners are brought into the experience and enjoyment of the blessings of grace given us in Christ before the world began and purchased for us by the blood of Christ at Calvary.

- His it is to take of the things of Christ, and reveal them to the soul.
- His it is to convince of us sin, of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8).
- All the knowledge of Christ, all the faith in Christ, and all the acquaintance with Christ that we have are ours only by the gracious operations of the Holy Spirit.
- Until the God the Spirit quickened, and regenerated us, we were dead in trespasses and sins, and children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:1-5).

(Ephesians 2:1-10) "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (4) But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, (5) Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (6) And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus: (7) That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (8) For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: (9) Not of works, lest any man should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

As **Robert Hawker** wrote, "All the actions of the newborn child of God, leadings to the throne, access to the throne, and acceptance at the throne in Christ are the immediate work of God the Holy Ghost. Hence Paul prays for the Church, that the Lord, (that is, the Spirit,) might lead their hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thess. 3:5)."

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

By the abounding revelation of his grace, abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence, in all the wisdom and skill of his infinite Being, God the Holy Spirit has *“made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself”* (v. 9). That is to say, “He has let us in on his eternal purpose of grace he took such delight in making. He set it all out before us in Christ, and revealed to us that our names were written in heaven before the world began.” He has brought immortality and life to light by the gospel, causing us by the gospel to hear the good news of our salvation in Christ (Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10).

(Ephesians 1:13-14) “In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.”

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) “Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

Grace was ours, salvation was ours, acceptance was ours, forgiveness was ours before we even knew we needed it, ours in Christ from eternity! But we knew nothing about it until God the Holy Spirit *“abounded toward us in all the wisdom and prudence”* of his grace, revealing Christ and giving us faith in him.

Illustration: I once read about a man in the nineteenth century who had fallen on hard times. He didn't have much of a job, he didn't have much money, and he was leaving from somewhere in the North, getting on a steamboat on the Ohio River, eventually desiring to make his way to New Orleans to make a new start in life. He scraped together all the money that he could, and he bought a ticket for the steamboat. But he didn't have anything left over to go to the dining hall on the steamboat to eat along the way. So he stuffed some cheese and some crackers into his coat pockets. When everyone went in their fine clothes to the dining hall on the ship, he would sneak off into a corner and eat his old cheese and some crackers.

Well, about halfway down the river someone saw him as they were heading to the dining hall, and said, “Where are you going?” He said, “Oh, I can't eat in there.” — “Why not?” the man asked. — “Well, to tell you the truth I don't have the money. But I brought a little food with me. I'm getting by just fine.” — The man said, “Look at your ticket!” — “What do you mean?” — When he looked at the bottom of his ticket it said “All Meals Included.”

Now it wasn't that he didn't have a right to go into the dining hall. He had every right to go into the dining hall and enjoy all the good food he wanted. He just didn't know it. — When God the Holy Spirit gives us faith in Christ, he causes us to look at our ticket!

Oh, how wondrously he accomplishes his gracious purposes, when he makes known to the chosen, redeemed sinner the plague of his heart, making the sinner know his guilt and making him feel the weight of its burden of sin! Then he opens to our view the super-aboundings of God's free grace in Christ and causes us to believe the record God has given, that he has done away with all our sin by the blood of Christ.

It is this work of God the Holy Spirit that causes us to know our interest in our Savior. That is what is meant by him making known to us the mystery of his will. When we behold the vast pile of sin, reaching up heaven, our hearts break within us. As Ezra puts it, *“When I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished”* (Ezra 9:3). At the same time, by the same mighty operation of grace, he causes us to see the blood of Christ, washing

all our sins away; so that, "*when the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found*" (Jer. 50:20).

This is grace indeed. It abounds like the ocean, burying in its bosom the high and horrible mountains of my sin. God's grace is the vast, infinite sea into which he has cast my sins! Christ's precious blood is the vast, infinite sea that rises above all the highest water-mark of sin, and the boundings of sin (Micah 7:18-19; Rom. 5:20-21).

(Micah 7:18-19) "Who *is* a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth *in* mercy. (19) He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."

(Romans 5:20-21) "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (21) That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

That was his purpose, which he purposed in himself before the world was. And that purpose he has revealed by his abounding grace!

A GREAT GATHERING

In the tenth verse, we read about a great gathering, the gathering of all things together in Christ at God's appointed time, "*according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.*"

(Ephesians 1:10) "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him."

Here God the Holy Spirit opens to us the very heart of God in all his designs of grace toward his elect. Here he shows us that which has occupied the mind of God himself from everlasting. — It is the everlasting purpose and heart determination of the triune God to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ.

All things were decreed for him. All things center in him. All things are ruled by him. And all things shall give praise to him. The dispensation of all events, and the fulness of times, are all moving in one direction, to this one point of termination. Like countless rays of light converging to one center, all things are soon to meet "*in him.*" It is repeated for wonder and for emphasis, "*even in him.*" Here the Spirit of God is telling us that the ultimate manifestation of the glory of Christ in saving our souls (which is the only visible revelation there ever has been or can be of the glory of the triune God), is the only reason why God created the universe (Rom. 11:33-36; Col. 1:18-20).

(Romans 11:33-36) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable *are* his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, *are* all things: to whom *be* glory for ever. Amen."

(Colossians 1:18-20) "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence. (19) For it pleased *the Father* that in him should all fulness dwell; (20) And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, *I say*, whether *they be* things in earth, or things in heaven."

How dear to God the God-man, our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ is! How dear he ought to be to us! Try to imagine what the gathering together of all things in Christ shall be in that day! What glory he shall have, when he comes to be glorified in all his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (2 Thess. 1:10).

(2 Thessalonians 1:7-10) "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, (8) In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: (9) Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; (10) When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day."

AN INHERITANCE OBTAINED

Now, read verse 11.

(Ephesians 1:11) "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

We will, the Lord willing, come back to this. Let just show you four glorious facts here revealed.

1. We were predestinated to the eternal inheritance of heaven with Christ.
2. Our great God, in all the affairs of time, works all things together to accomplish that great purpose of his grace, to bring his elect into the possession of their predestined inheritance (Rom. 8:28-30).
3. This inheritance, whatever it is, is altogether in Christ. — The inheritance is by him, from him, with him and in him. — Christ is our inheritance.
4. And we have already obtained it (Eph. 2:6; Heb. 12:22-24; John 17:5, 20).

(John 17:20) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;"

(Ephesians 2:6) "And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:"

(Hebrews 12:22-24) "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, (23) To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, (24) And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of Abel*."

(John 17:5) "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

WHY?

Now, I have to ask, "Why? Why has our great and glorious God been so gracious to us? Why is his grace so continually abounding and super-abounding toward us? Why did he save us? Why did he love us, choose us, adopt us, accept us, redeem us and forgive us all our sins in Christ? Why has he made known to us the indescribable wisdom and prudence of his grace?" He did it all... "*That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ*" (v. 12). It shall be the everlasting glory of the triune God to be known as God our Savior!

(Ephesians 2:7) "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

(Colossians 1:27) "To whom God would make known what *is* the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."

Imagine that! Just imagine that!

Amen.