

February 23, 2020
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Ephesians
Community Baptist Church
643 S. Suber Road
Greer, SC 29650
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IN CHRIST (CONTINUED) Ephesians 1:8-14

Last week we began to look at the three very important benefits God has given us in our relationship with Christ. Going back to verses three through six, we are reminded of what God has done by placing us in Christ. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:3-6).*

Because God has placed us in Christ and given us every spiritual blessing in the spiritual realm, we are now enjoying redemption through His blood (vv.7-10), an inheritance (vv.11-12), and the seal and guarantee of the Holy Spirit (vv.13-14). Last week we began to think through the amazing blessing of God's gift of redemption through Christ's blood. We will continue our study of that great truth picking up with verse eight.

Grace reveals God's purpose in redemption.

Paul has been speaking of our redemption that God has given through His grace, *which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (vv.8-9).*

Here we learn that Christ is the center of God's purpose. It is through Christ, only through Christ, that God pours out His grace in wisdom and insight. We have this blessing, *according to the riches*

of his grace, (v.7) which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight (v.8). It is not that the redeemed sinner has simply experienced God's grace. No, God has *lavished* grace upon us. We should stand amazed at the extent of God's grace given in Christ.

Because God's grace is so immense, it has to have serious ramifications in real life. Later in this study we will see the details of this effect when we get to chapter four. Paul introduces that large section about the practical results of God's grace by writing, *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1).* Or I prefer the translations from God's Word Version, *I, a prisoner in the Lord, encourage you to live the kind of life which proves that God has called you (Ephesians 4:1 GWV).*

Evidence of God's lavish grace is in the *wisdom and insight* God gives. Some people interpret this statement to mean that God exercises wisdom and insight when He poured out grace on us. It is true that God always acts in wisdom. Maybe not quite as much with insight. But since the next phrase refers to what we know because of God's grace, it is more likely that the wisdom and insight is part of what God gave us.

The English word wisdom in this verse comes from the familiar Greek word *sofia*. That was a big, important concept in the Greek culture. It speaks of practical sense, sound judgment and intelligence that can be found in the world as well as the Bible. But the wisdom God gives is superior to what we have by nature, the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of this world cannot grasp the work of God in Christ Jesus. Paul argued, *Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:20-24).*

God's wisdom understands His truth and understands how to make it work in life. That goes right along with the accompanying word *insight*, which speaks of thoughtfulness, thorough planning, or

planning with purpose and intent. Ultimately, insight is a **way** of thinking. Believe it or not, people who have had God's grace lavishly poured out on them in Christ do not think like their peers who are devoid of saving grace. If your way of thinking is not distinct from the world's way of thinking, you have good reason to ask questions about your identification in Christ.

Through that wisdom and insight that God gives in His lavish grace, He reveals the mystery of His will, *making known to us the mystery of his will (v.9a)*. The *mystery* is not a deep secret or cryptic truth. Often the idea of mystery in Scripture is simply a matter of timing. Once Christ came and died on the cross, the great truths into which the old prophets tried to look are made plain.

The mystery of God's will in God's purpose is set forth in Christ. The second clause of verse nine explains this mystery as, *according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (v.9b)*. For centuries, devout worshippers of God looked forward to the promised Seed of the Woman, the Lamb God would provide to take away sin. For eternity it has been God's will to provide the price to buy sinners out of sin, to take away the guilt of our trespasses through the price He Himself would provide. Everything in eternity comes down to the point of Christ dying on the cross.

God has revealed to us that His plan of redemption exalts Christ. It is His *for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (v.10)*. God's plan is eternal, but He brings it about *as a plan for the fullness of time (v.10a)*. God's purpose in Christ is a matter of strictest timing. God who created all things in perfect order, in perfect timing, would not leave something as critical as redemption to chance. A study of how God arranged the smallest of details in human history to bring the world to the "fullness of time" for Christ's sacrifice is very rewarding. Will God not continue to control all world events to complete His plan in Christ?

In the end, the whole of human history will understand that God's plan unites everything in Christ. His plan is *to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (v.10b)*. The phrase *unite all things in him* is very instructive. It is the translation of a compound word *anakaphalomai* that literally means to bring together under one head all things **again**. That idea looks back to the past

perfection when everything was under the headship of Christ. But sin ruined all that.

The mystery of God's will is the plan to bring everything in life and the universe back under the headship of Christ. Through the sacrifice of Christ, the payment God made, He will restore all things to perfection and completion "in Christ."

The story is told of a little boy and his father who lived on the edge of a large lake. One summer the boy and his father worked several hours to build a beautiful model boat. Day after day the boy took the boat to the lake and sailed it. But one day a gust of wind caught the little boat and drove it far out into the lake. The boy went home very discouraged. For several days he returned to the shore and scanned the lake for his little boat. One day he was in town and happened to see his little boat for sale in a the window of a shop. He ran into the store and announced to the owner that the boat was actually his. The owner disagreed telling the boy that he had paid good money to a local fisherman to purchase the boat from him. The boy left the store and began to save all the money he could earn by working sacrificially at odd jobs. Finally, one day he had the money the shop owner demanded for the boat and hurried into the store. He paid the price, purchased the boat, and then, walking out of the store, said to the boat, "Now you are twice mine because I made you and I bought you."

And now, if you are born again through the miracle of regeneration, you are twice Christ's. He made you for His glory. He bought you again for His glory.

Predestined Inheritance (vv.11-12).

The second blessing we have poured out to us by God's grace because we are in Christ is an inheritance. *In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (v.11)*.

Verse eleven literally teaches that we have been made to be an inheritance. That sounds a bit strange, but the phrase, *in him we have obtained an inheritance*, actually reads that way according to the Greek syntax. As we saw earlier in the chapter, like the blessing of redemption we have "in Christ," so too we have the inheritance in

Christ. The term “in Christ” is not only repeated many times in this letter, but Paul used the term 109 times in his various letters according to some commentators.

“In Christ,” speaks of relationship because of God’s grace. It speaks of identification. It speaks of sphere of existence. “In Christ” is a far more accurate term to describe us than “Christian.”

But stop to consider who “we” is. At this point in the letter, we are approaching the first mention of that incredible miracle of God in which He brings together the privileged Jewish people who first heard the gospel and the Gentile people to whom God sent the gospel through Paul, Peter, and other apostles. Compare, for example, the statements in verses eleven and twelve with the statements in verses thirteen and fourteen. Verse eleven: *we have obtained an inheritance*. Verse twelve: *we who were the first to hope in Christ*. But notice how the plural pronoun changes in verse thirteen: *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth*. And then again in verse fourteen: *who is the guarantee of our inheritance*.

Paul, the Jew, wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus which was predominantly Gentile. The amazing miracle was that God, in Christ, broke down the wall of partition (2:14) to bring Jew and Gentile together in salvation (the inheritance).

What is involved in us obtaining the inheritance? It is possible to read this phrase, *we were made an inheritance*. That is true. Scripture teaches that redeemed people are the Father’s gift to the Son. For example, Jesus referred to us redeemed people as “*All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out*” (John 6:37). Or again the Son prayed to the Father, “*Since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him*” (John 17:2).

Or it also possible to read the phrase, *we have obtained an inheritance*. Actually the verb used here (*kleirao*) means that “in Christ **we were appointed** an inheritance.” The word often spoke of being chosen by lot which was governed by divine intervention. Therefore, in Christ, God our Creator appointed us to the eternal inheritance of life in His presences, life with His full blessings. And even though the full obtaining of the inheritance is future, it is stated with a past tense verb. God’s promises are as good as complete the

moment He gives them. You can take God’s promise to you to the eternal bank in heaven.

God appointed us an inheritance in Christ because it was His choice to do so. He predestined us to that end. We are *having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will (v.11b)*. God’s predestination, our eternal life, His eternal blessing to us, was solely God’s choice. No one forced God to make the choice to give me eternal life. God predetermined before He ever created the first thing, that, as His elect, He would appoint me the inheritance. This was God’s purpose. God’s choices always reveal His purpose. And God’s purpose can never be thwarted because He brings about every detail of the counsel of His will by His works. His works are the demonstration of His power (*energeo*). No one can resist God’s power.

As a result of God demonstrating His power in predestining us to the inheritance of eternal life in Christ, we bring Him glory. God blesses us as He does, *so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory (v.12)*. This is an interesting verse because the Greek text actually has the order reversed. Greek text order is *that we might be to the praise of His glory, the ones having hoped before in Christ*.

The hope we express is to Christ’s glory (v.12b). God created humans in order to reflect His image. We learn that God created us in His image from the very beginning of the Bible. *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26)*. We cannot fully comprehend the extent of that likeness. But we are aware that, being in His likeness, we should bring glory to Him.

The commands God gives to Christians to live for His glory actually reveal God’s purpose for every person. His standard for us is, *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31)*. Or *Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies – in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:11)*.

That was God’s original plan for all humanity at creation. Sin changed how we live so that we do not bring glory to God by reflecting His image. God redeems us sinners so that we reflect the

character of our Savior for God's glory. The redeemed person's reflection of God's character is continually growing or increasing. That is the end result of ministry in the Body of Christ. Later in this letter God teaches us, *Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Ephesians 4:15)*. Becoming more like Christ was Paul's motivation in life. He confessed, *For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Philippians 3:8b, 10)*.

That God desires for His creation to reflect His glory begs a question in some people's minds. Is it right for God to have a passion for His own glory? Human weakness and the sin principle struggle with the rightness of God desiring His own glory. Sin cannot acknowledge that, first of all, God is perfect in all His ways. Allowing God to be enthralled with His glory is why human weakness also struggles with salvation being completely of God. Humanness wants to determine what is fair based on our finite wisdom rather than rejoicing in what God calls righteous. God receiving all glory is what He deserves because He is God. And salvation by grace is all to the glory of God with no glory to the recipient.

Who gets that? Who can understand it? The answer is in the next phrase in our text. *So that we who were the first to hope in Christ (v.12a)*. The people who understand God's purpose for His creation are the people who hope in Christ. The principle of living for God's glory applies only to those who hope in Christ. Everyone else lives for their own glory or for the glory of someone/something that is passing away. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the person who refuses to glorify God through Christ does not know God. The person who ignores or is unconcerned to bring glory to God through Christ also probably does not truly know God.

Guarantee of Possession (vv.13-14).

The third incredible blessing God has given us in Christ is our sealing by the Holy Spirit. We are sealed at the moment of faith

according to verse thirteen. *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (v.13)*.

It is important to see in this statement the miracle that we believed when we heard truth. *In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him (v.13a)*. When we Gentiles heard the word of truth we believed. That alone is astonishing! Why or how could we who are spiritually dead, blind to truth, deaf to God, respond? Sure, natural human physiology hears words with the ear, processes the message with the brain, and comes to conclusions in the heart. But natural human physiology cannot begin to grasp the reality of offenses against God, the need to repent and have sin forgiven, or the truth that the man named Jesus is God who shed His own blood to cover our sins.

It is true that the natural human conscience can process all that, come to an intellectual conclusion, and utter words that sound like repentance. But only the miracle of faith that brings redemption through Jesus Christ will change a person. And only the changed persons grow into the likeness of Christ to the glory of God.

The blessing to those changed people is that God the Holy Spirit seals us. When we heard and believed we *were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (v.13b)*. At the moment of the miracle of salvation, the forgiven sinner is literally indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. That indwelling is not only a matter of head knowledge, familiarity with God's promise, but an experience of Him speaking to us. His presence is God's guarantee that we have been redeemed, that we have eternal life, and that we can bring glory to God through Christ.

God's seal, our possession of the Holy Spirit, shows authenticity – we really are redeemed. God's seal shows ownership – we belong to God now. God's seal shows authority – in life we represent the God who seals us.

The seal also works to prove that our inheritance is guaranteed (v.14). *He is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (v.14)*. The Holy Spirit is our *guarantee of our inheritance*. Our inheritance is the full experience of all the blessings that are with Christ in the heavenly places (1:3). We cannot imagine the glory and majesty, but we can

have certain hope because of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The unchanging God has given us the pledge of the unchanging God the Holy Spirit. Nothing in the universe is more certain than that!

We have the promise of the inheritance. We have God's seal as the guarantee that we will receive the fullness of our inheritance. But still we wait for the inheritance. God the Holy Spirit gives us hope about our inheritance *until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory (v.14b)*. God's pledge sealed by the Holy Spirit reminds us that we will acquire possession of the inheritance. Thinking about this, talking about this, praising God about this in song and testimony is to the praise of His glory. God delights to hear such praise.

And that is the end of the very long, but very sublime sentence that began in verse three. Our minds cannot begin to contain the depth of this truth. Our spirits cannot endure the extreme heights of God's grace. Truly our contemplations of these things should cause us to erupt in praise to God's glory.