

EPHESIANS 1:8b
The Wonderful Work of Salvation
Message 18, June 20, 1999

INTRO: In the last message we began looking at the policy of God's redemption. We saw that He grants redemption, or the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace which He made to overflow towards us in all wisdom and prudence. In the midst of a great lack of ability to adequately convey this great truth I sought to show you how man, when he makes his riches overflow toward others freely it often if not usually does not produce good. But God, in salvation makes His grace to overflow toward us, and when we receive of the abundance of His grace freely God is able to bring good out of such a program.

This morning I want to spend some time on these two words, *wisdom* and *prudence*. Then by the grace of God, I want to seek to show you how God can make His grace to overflow towards us in everyday redemption or the life of sanctification and bring good out of that as well.

5) The policy of God's redemption

We have seen that God made His grace abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. We now come to the question, what is wisdom? What is this aspect of God that makes Him able to pour out freely and abundantly of the riches of His grace and make people better rather than badder? Well, what is wisdom anyway? Someone has said wisdom is learning how to effectively say, "Nice doggie, Nice doggie, long enough to get a stick." Another man said he had learned wisdom in marriage. Here are his words, "My wife and I have a perfect understanding. I don't try to run her life, and I don't try to run mine either."

Wisdom: There are a number of closely related words. Three of these are knowledge, wisdom and prudence. It must first be understood that wisdom is not knowledge. Charles Haddon Spurgeon says, "Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To

know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal and are all the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great as a knowing fool, but to know how to use knowledge is wisdom."

Wisdom and prudence are truly big words. I have not yet fully worked out my own definition of wisdom. I think Vine's dictionary gives the best definition of it that I have read so far. Vine says *it is the insight into the true nature of things.*

The Bible speaks of the wisdom of man and the wisdom of the world. James writes of a wisdom that is earthly, sensual and demonic. That is different from the wisdom of God. The Bible further tells us in Ps. 111:10 that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Solomon had this fear. And when God asked him to ask for anything he wished for, he said, "...give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours!" (2 Chr. 1:10). You will remember how two ladies came to him. They had been together and both had a baby and during the night one of the babies died. The mother, whose baby had died took the living baby and claimed it was her own. So these two ladies came to Solomon. Solomon said bring the baby and a sword and we'll cut the baby in half and give both half. Well, the woman whose baby it was begged to let the baby live and then Solomon knew who the real mother was. The wisdom in the matter was understanding the nature of a true mother. The prudence in the matter was the manner in which this motherly nature would be brought to light.

When Satan drew up his strategy against God he used every wicked means he could possibly imagine. In all his demonic wisdom he thought that if He could have

the Messiah killed, the battle would be over (1 Cor. 2:6-8). A modern picture of the devil's way of operation is clearly demonstrated by the Palestinians in Israel. The Palestinian will use every kind of terrorist activity he can scheme up. Truth matters not a whit. That is the system of Satan.

But when God drew up the plan of salvation and planned to make His grace available to overflowing, He did so in wisdom and prudence. God understood the true nature of Himself, Satan and man. And in this wisdom God's plan of salvation is 100% limited to using those things that are true, righteous, holy, honest etc... And when God is done and has lavished His grace upon the believer giving freely to overflowing, the sinner has become a saint.

Prudence: The Greek word translated prudence is *phroneesis*. For those who have sat in my classes you will understand that my view of the Biblical picture of the mind is that it is made up of several parts. The two major parts are the *nous*, which I believe is the data storage part of the mind, and the *phreen* which is the thinking part, the data processor. Both of these root words have many sub words in the NT. The NT gives more information on the mind and how it works than all the information put together outside the Bible. There is a whole list of words that come from the word *phreen*.

Now when some data is pulled out of the storage part of our mind and is thought through it is called *dianoia*. In Matthew 22:37 Jesus instructs us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. The word translated *mind* there is not really a word for mind. It is *dianoia*. *Dianoia*, in my understanding is a thinking through of things stored in the

nous or storage part of the mind. It is information that has already been stored and is regurgitated and thought through again. This thinking through takes place in the phreen, but the material thought through comes from the nous.

But many times in life we come to new situations. There is no data available in our memory bank on this new situation. This data is worked through in the phreen in measurable units called thoughts. A thought is measured as a complete sentence. It is made up of some of the various of the eight parts of speech. Now the phreen is capable of many things. It can take a new situation, go to the memory bank and find a similar situation, put the two together and make a good decision. That ability is described by the word *sunesis* (Luke 2:47; 1 Cor. 1:19). But I think this word *phroneesis* is the ability to take a new situation in which there is no parallel to be found in the nous or memory bank, and make a plan of action which will work. While wisdom is the insight into the true nature of things, prudence is able to make a successful plan of action.

Vines Dictionary says that, "While sophia (wisdom) is the insight into the true nature of things phroneesis (prudence) is the ability to discern modes of action with a view to their results; while sophia is theoretical, phroneesis is practical." Solomon, in the situation with the two women arguing over the one living child, used both wisdom and prudence. He understood the true nature of a real mother, that is wisdom. And he knew how to get the truth of the matter out. That is prudence, the practical.

When God made the plan of salvation, He had a plan of action regarding something that He had no experience in in the past.

Since He had insight into the true nature of Himself, Satan and man He was able to devise a plan that would work. In this plan He would offer salvation to all mankind. He would make His grace to overflow toward mankind. This grace would abound in both initial salvation and in the life of sanctification. This plan would leave man with a free will; would leave God sovereign and holy and just and good, and would turn sinners into saints of God.

In our text we have redemption in Christ through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace, which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence. In our last message I sought to portray to you the rich outpouring and overflowing of God's grace toward us in initial salvation. I showed how we as people often bring about bad results when we pour out of our riches because we do not do so in wisdom and prudence. I mentioned to you also that our redemption is an ongoing thing. As Christians we have been saved; we are being saved, and we shall yet be finally and ultimately saved.

In our last message I sought to show you how God made His grace to overflow toward us in initial salvation. This morning, I wish to illustrate to you how in practical, every day life, God can pour out of His grace toward us in our difficulties, trials and sorrows and bring about victory. Remember that I defined grace as being whatever you need to either become a Christian (initial salvation) or live the Christian life victoriously (sanctification).

Recently Jessie Derksen, from our congregation here, got some news none of us wants to hear. She was informed that she had cancer. I call her from time to

time and the other day I asked what might be some particular needs to pray for. She said, "Nothing in particular really. The Lord has been so good, I just can't complain." A few days later I phoned her and asked if she would share with you what she shared with me and anything else she might have learned from her experience. I am going to ask Jessie to come and share with you her experience. See if you can recognize the overflowing grace of God in her life without either spoiling or ruining her; but rather causing her to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jessie, may God bless you as you share with us for His glory.

CONCL: The redemption we have in Christ according to the riches of His grace, He made (past tense) to overflow to us in all wisdom and prudence 2000 years ago. And this overflowing river of grace has been flowing ever since and flows today for all who will come and take. In our next message, which will be some time from now we will see how God makes the riches of His grace overflow toward us in all wisdom and prudence.