

## THE GLORY OF GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

(SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2019)

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**Scripture Reading:** Deut. 10:12-22; Eph. 1:3-13

### INTRODUCTION

There is an incredible growth in technology.

Some phones today, 1 trillion calculations per second, billions of tiny switches

This is nothing in comparison to the cell.

We have built nothing in comparison to what God has done.

Here we continue to look into the incredible, eternal, sovereign, gracious plan of God.

So much greater than we can fully appreciate.

Not in vain that we reflect on it.

The goal is to the praise of God's glory.

Notice: vv. 6, 12, 14 – praise of His glory.

We are part of God's plan of redemption.

It is much bigger than just you and me.

Ephesians – like a rich, dense gold mine.

We will not gather of all the riches it contains in this descent into the mine.

Just consider in verses 7-12, the number of key words and the structure of these verses.

Focus on verses 7-10.

- 1) Redemption and forgiveness, v. 7
- 2) Riches of His grace and revelation of His will, vv. 7-9
- 3) Restoration in Christ, v. 10

**Never lose sight of God's grace and the fullness of God's plan of redemption.**

## 1) REDEMPTION AND FORGIVENESS, v. 7

OT - Background in terms of Hebrew and the culture of the Ancient Near East

NT - Takes this background and adds to it aspects of the Greco-Roman world

**Theological background most important!**

Slavery in the OT and NT times.

Slavery in terms of bondage to sin, under the power of satan.

Listen to Romans 6:16-17.

**Romans 6:16** Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness? **17** But God be thanked that *though* you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

Martin Luther's most important book was *The Bondage of the Will*.

Outside of Christ there is no true freedom, only bondage.

Verse 7 - redemption and forgiveness

J. B. Lightfoot points out helpfully:

1) Present redemption - Eph. 1:7, Rom. 3:24, etc.

2) Future and final redemption - Eph. 1:14; 4:30<sup>1</sup>

Redemption through His blood

Forgiveness of sins

Why is redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ?

In God's order, this is the only acceptable way.

In God's rule, the shedding of blood is the only way to make payment for sin.

We see in this:

How serious sin is.

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<sup>1</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, *Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul from Unpublished Commentaries*, Lightfoot's Commentaries on the Epistles; Accordance electronic ed. (Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, 2006), paragraph 8273.

That the only acceptable way of salvation is through Jesus Christ.

The blood of bulls and goats could not remove sin.

Jesus had to be fully God and fully man in order to pay the price of full redemption.

Forgiveness is parallel to redemption.

Release; freeing from guilt and punishment

Shame, but we sometimes don't always appreciate the payment that was made.

Think of others who in some way trouble you.

How much worse it is to sin against a holy and righteous God who would be perfectly just in punishing us eternally in hell.

May we never lose sight of the preciousness of redemption and forgiveness.

## 2) RICHES OF HIS GRACE AND REVELATION OF HIS WILL, VV. 7-9

Grace is such a beautiful word.

155x NT; 12x in Ephesians

Most often it is an expression of God's love, kindness, and full acceptance of miserable, undeserving sinners because of God's choice and the work of Christ.

Riches of God's grace...

It is possible that the phrase **riches of grace** was designed to prick the conscience of those who first received this letter.

**Rev. 3:17** Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked –

Redemption and forgiveness – riches of His grace

He made this grace abound toward us.

Some versions translate as He lavished on us.

It is a beautiful word.

God is not stingy.

May we never lose sight of the richness of what God has given to us in Jesus Christ.

**Rom. 5:15** But the free gift *is* not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

In all wisdom and prudence...

Is this God's wisdom and prudence?

Are these gifts that God gives to us?

Both are true; difficult to answer this.

I would favor that these are God's gifts.

Part of the culture of that day and today - insight, secrets.

This is contrasted with the true wisdom and prudence/understanding.

"Christ gives to men the ability to see the great ultimate truths of eternity and to solve the problems of each moment of time."<sup>2</sup>

Think of people today:

- 1) Progressive perverse pagans
- 2) Decent people yet totally lost
- 3) Religious people yet totally lost

We who did not deserve or earn anything, yet we have been given wisdom and prudence.

Verse 9 - having made known to us the mystery of His will.

Mystery religions at the time of the NT, secret rituals and revelations

Mystery - the secret thoughts and plans of God that He chooses to make known.

We would never figure this out on our own.

There is knowledge that even the unbeliever can have related to the world and the existence of God.

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 10; IVP/Accordance electronic ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 59.

There are things that God has revealed in a special way in the gospel, the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The understanding of the significance of the work of Christ that the apostles made clear.

Ephesians 3 – 3 times Paul uses the word mystery

**Eph. 6:19** and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,

Special focus on how the nations, Gentiles, are adopted so as to become part of God's people.

Lose sight of this almost 2000 years later.

Good pleasure

Purposed in Himself

Good pleasure – v. 5

Focus is on God's will and purposes.

We do not serve a grumpy God, but one who delights in all that He does.

### 3) RESTORATION IN CHRIST, v. 10

Some scholars believe this is the key verse of Ephesians.<sup>3</sup>

**10** that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.

Several key words to observe.

#### **Dispensation**

Not a word that most Reformed people like.

Greek – economics (oikonomian)

7x in the NT; 2x Ephesians

**Eph. 3:2** if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you,

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<sup>3</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, 53.

Older translations: dispensation

Newer: administration or plan

We have to go back to previous verses.

God has made known the mystery of His will as part of the grand plan of redemption.

The early church especially understood this word in connection with the **incarnation**.<sup>4</sup>

Now we don't ignore God's redemptive purposes before the coming of Christ.

NT does importantly focus on the significance of the age starting with the coming of Christ.

Listen to 5 different passages.

**Gal. 4:4** But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

**1Cor. 10:11** Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.

**Heb. 1:2** has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

**1Pet. 1:20** He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you

**Jude 18** how they told you that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk according to their own ungodly lusts.

The last days then are not some future reality but something that started in the coming of Christ.

There is a completion and climax in the return of Christ at the end all time as we know it.

One commentator has written:

While the primary intent in this text does concern the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose at the end of time, Paul viewed that fulfillment as already having begun in Christ's life, death, and resurrection. He is already Lord of all times. Just as

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<sup>4</sup> J. B. Lightfoot, s.v. Ephesians 1:10.

redemption is both present and future, the revelation of God's will points both to the present and the future.<sup>5</sup>

Other key word translated – gather together in one.

Challenging word just 2x NT.

Romans 13:9 – 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> commandment – summed up in “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

One commentator suggests three concepts in this word: restoration, unity, and the Lordship of Christ.

All things were created in Christ (Col. 1:16). Through sin endless disorder and disintegration have come into the world; but in the end all things will be restored to their intended function and to their unity by being brought back to the obedience of Christ (cf. Col. 1:20).<sup>6</sup>

This is not the only place where we see this grand plan and work of Christ highlighted.

**Col. 1:19** For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness should dwell, **20** and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

**1 Cor. 15:24** Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. **25** For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. **26** The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. **27** For “*He has put all things under His feet.*” But when He says “all things are put under *Him,*” *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. **28** Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.

Can we grasp the fullness of this?

Not entirely.

God has an incredible plan focused on the glorious work of Jesus Christ.

Gospel is the foundation.

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<sup>5</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, 53-54.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Foulkes, 60-61.

There is an incredible, sovereign, plan that God has established that one day will reach its fullness in the return of Christ.

What does this mean?

We need no other mediator between God and man.

All man-centered plans of salvation of man and the earth will fail.

It is the Triune God that brings salvation and any true transformation of this world.

We as individuals are not the center of God's plan.

We must consider how we can be part of God's incredible plan.

Your daily life of prayer, service to the Lord, seeking the spread of the gospel and His kingdom is part of the calling of every believer.

**The rule of Jesus Christ is over all!**

Read the book of Ephesians thinking about this glorious plan of God.

**Never lose sight of God's grace and the fullness of God's plan of redemption.**

**Prayer**

**Closing Hymn:** 439

**Benediction: Eph. 3:20-21**

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.