
Living Faithfully in the Riches of God's Grace

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ...(Ephesians 3:8)

We Are More Than “Okay” (Part 2b)

Our Standing With God Because of the Son

Ephesians 1:7-9

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.

The letter to the Ephesians is a store house of wonders; first doctrinally in chapters 1-3 in what it teaches us about God, man and salvation; and second, by way of duty in chapters 4-6, calling believers to live lives that actually and consistently honor Christ. Paul starts with the principles of Christian faith and moves his readers to the practice of Christian living. In other words, without right doctrine, there can be no right practice; without a right understanding of who God is, who man is and what salvation is about; there can be no right living before God.

To that end, consider with me that in the span of just seven verses, Paul has already addressed great doctrinal truths, many of which a number of Christians, sadly, would just rather avoid, but truths that actually provide the believer both the reasons (the “whys”) as well the methods (the “hows”) by which he can live to the glory of God. We have seen the doctrines of divine election (4); divine predestination (5); divine adoption (5); divine grace (6); divine redemption (7); and doctrine divine forgiveness (7).

Let me remind of you the repeated emphasis of grace upon all these doctrines. With regard to what God the Father has done in verses 4-6, it is all “**...according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace...**” (1:5-6) and again, in verse 7, the work of God the Son, that is redemption through the blood of Christ, along with the forgiveness of trespasses is said to be “**according to the riches (the wealth) of His grace...**” (“grace” – God’s undeserved, unearned, unmerited, based upon no human merit; the kindness and mercy of God toward sinners). It is clear to anyone who would fairly read these verses that salvation is wholly a God thing. It points to God; it flows from God; it is actually meant to glorify God and God alone.

This morning we are presented in verses 8-9 with yet another great doctrinal truth; the doctrine of divine illumination. Notice the ideas of “*wisdom*”; “*insight*”; and “*made known*” in our text. These speak to us of something God has done so that we might have understanding of what God has done for us. Before we look at verses directly, let me illuminate you on just what this doctrine of illumination is. Illumination is the idea of “turning on the light” spiritually speaking. It is the gaining of understanding that was previously difficult to grasp. Sometimes we call it “enlightenment” and when such illumination deals with new knowledge or with future things, we call it prophecy. And when enlightenment deals with understanding and applying spiritual knowledge already given (i.e. the Bible), then we call it illumination. *Illumination is the working of the Spirit of God upon the mind to bring the believer into a practical understanding of God’s revealed truth.*

Let me remind you that Ephesians 1:3-14 is just one long sentence in the Greek text, making it a bit difficult at times to know just where to put punctuation for us modern readers. So the first question we deal with is how verses 7 and 8 fit together. In the NASB we read, *7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight...* While this reading is fine, it makes the phrase “which He lavished on us” seem to apply only to end of verse 7 and the idea of “*the riches of His grace*” – a grace that has been lavishly, that is super-abundantly granted to us. There is nothing wrong with this and it is a true statement. But I do not feel comfortable with making such a “break” or “disconnect” in Paul’s thought. Let me read this passage to you from the NKJV where we see the ideas the grace in verse 7

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connected to this doctrine of divine illumination in verses 8-9. In other words, our very understanding of God is what is lavishly poured out on us and is the result of grace. Now we read: *7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself... (NKJV).* Now the idea is that our understanding of grace is the result of God's granting to us wisdom, insight and the revelation of His will.

The word "**wisdom**" ("*sophia*" in the Greek) speaks of God's complete, full and infinite knowledge of all things; most especially the knowledge of God, man, righteousness, sin, life, death, heaven, hell and salvation. The word "**insight**" (or "**prudence**") speaks of the practical application of spiritual truths to everyday life. By the revealed word of God, the Spirit of God illuminates our hearts and minds with God's "*sophia* - wisdom" so that we might know God and His will and then He grants us "insight" as to how we are to live out the great truths (or "doctrines") of God on a daily basis. Redemption through the blood of Christ not only grants us forgiveness of sins, but also provides us with the truth by which we can live lives apart from sin. To this point, John MacArthur wrote: "*God not only forgives us – taking away the sin that corrupts and distorts our lives – but also gives us all the necessary equipment to understand Him and to walk through the world day by day in a way that reflects His will and is pleasing to Him.*" In other words, God lavishly, super-abundantly, grants us the ability both to understand His Word and to know how to obey His Word. And where does this understanding to know and obey God come from? It comes through divine illumination; in that God has "**made known to us the mystery of His will...**"

What does Paul mean by calling all of this a mystery? Paul uses the word "mystery" some 17 times in his letters, 6 of which are found here in the letter to the Ephesians and **not once** does it mean something **incomprehensible** or impossible to understand. Instead, Paul uses the word "mystery" to refer to a **truth that God kept** hidden for a time, but now has revealed to His people. And just what is the "mystery" that is being revealed before us? Is Paul referring to all that came before verse 9 or that which comes after? Yes, the mystery being revealed is how God saves people. Ephesians 1 is about God and what God has done in the salvation of people. It is not until Ephesians 2:1-3 that Paul mentions our part in salvation and what he reveals there is what we did to make salvation necessary saying, *1 And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2 in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.* This is what made our salvation necessary, our sin, our disobedience, the lusts of our flesh, the desires of a fallen mind, and the FACT that before God intervened with divine election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness of sins and the divine illumination to understand all this, we were by NATURE (our bent and condition before Christ) children of wrath (those deserving by our condition the eternal punishment of God). *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...(1:3)*

God, providing us wisdom and insight, has made known to us the greatness, the wonder, the scope and blessing of salvation that comes only "in Christ" – Christ alone! In verses 8 and 9 it reveals to us that our great God has abundantly supplied us with everything we need to know about Himself and how to live for Him. We are reminded that God's sovereign purpose in redeeming us is not the result of chance or some blind and random choice, but rather was performed by the wisdom of God and provides for the redeemed insight as to how to live for God. All of this God has "**made**

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known – that is “certified” and revealed to us. This was God’s purpose in Christ; to reveal to us the mysteries of salvation so that we would be in awe of God and lovingly live for Him.

As we have examined Ephesians 1:3-9, we are reminded that our God not only saves His chosen ones in the only way we could be saved, but that He has saved us in the very best way possible. We may not always understand every “how” and every “why,” but if God is good and all His ways are just and best; then what we are reading here is the very best way (and only way) in which a person must be saved. I would like to take the next few minutes to explain and expound upon these two ideas; the illumination of God’s wisdom and the illumination of God’s insight. We can only scratch the surface of such wisdom and insight as we will be spending all eternity delving into the depths and soaring the great summits of all divine “*wisdom and insight*” by which God illuminates our hearts to know the boundless grace of God toward us in Christ.

I. THE ILLUMINATION OF WISDOM

8b ...In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will...

Only the all wise God could have come up with and executed such a plan and purpose as described in Ephesians 1. We are being called to be in wonder of such lavish, super-abundant wisdom and then, in light of that wisdom, to worship Him. So then, based upon some of what we have already learned in Ephesians 1, what are some of the clear examples of the wisdom of God? We see it in Jesus who is our Redeemer, our Representative and our Ransom.

A. OUR REDEEMER

“In Him we have redemption...” (7)

When God the Father chose His Son to be the Redeemer of mankind, it displayed His great and infinite wisdom. Remember that sometime in eternity past, before the world, before the angels; before there was anything else but God; God, in some kind of inter-Trinitarian counsel, devised the perfect plan by which all three members of the Godhead would be glorified in the salvation of sinners. I would be doing you a disservice if I suggest that I somehow understand all the how’s and why’s of such a plan. Parts of the mystery have been revealed to us; other parts have not. But what I do know is that even my language now, saying God devised a perfect plan, diminishes God to a degree as God does not need to plan things out over time like we do. He simply knows it as He knows all things. But, this eternal plan of God is worked out in time on this earth. Part of this plan was that God the Father asked God the Son to be the Redeemer; the one who would accomplish the redemption of His people. We get a glimpse of this divine agreement in John 10:14-18 where we read, *14 “I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, 15 even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. 17 For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. 18 No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”* Jesus agreed to be the Redeemer. Jesus volunteered Himself to satisfy all the demands and conditions required by the holy character and will of God; and all of this took place before the foundations of the world. As 1 Peter 1:20 reminds us concerning Christ as the lamb unblemished and spotless who gives His own blood, *“For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you...”* Jesus then is the Redeemer of God’s own choosing. In Isaiah 42:1, He is called by God the Father, *“My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights.”*

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What wisdom there is in God choosing Christ to be our Redeemer? Of course we take great delight in the love, mercy, and grace of God; but often at the expense of God's holiness, justice and wrath against sin. It is the wisdom of God that provided the way a holy God to embrace, accept and adopt fallen, sinful men and women in love, mercy, and grace. All of this found in God's provision of Christ as our Redeemer! And let us consider our Redeemer for just a moment. God chose a Redeemer who was sufficiently adequate in every way necessary. As our Redeemer, Christ can satisfy justice our sins demand, can make reconciliation for we who are transgressors of God's law, and who can atone – make peace between God and sinners. What kind of Redeemer is necessary for all this? He must be...

- ✓ A Perfectly Divine Person – for no one but God Himself could accomplish a task as great as that of redemption.
- ✓ A Perfectly Holy Person – for no one could deal with the magnitude of our sin who was not Himself infinitely pure. Only a person of infinite worth and merit could make an eternally lasting satisfaction.
- ✓ A Perfectly Able Person – for no one could accomplish the work of redemption who was not able to pay the cost.
- ✓ A Perfectly Loved Person – none but Jesus is the most Beloved Son, of infinite value to God the Father.

This is the illuminated wisdom of God. Look with me at 1 Corinthians 1:30 where we see the ideas of the wisdom of God united with redemption and all in the person of Jesus Christ; *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption..."* The Father chose a Redeemer for sinners in the Person of His dear Son! No mere man could bring redemption for all are guilty sinners. No angel could bring redemption because they are not infinite, nor have they become like us. Not even God the Father could redeem us because in the divine economy He is the One whose justice had to be satisfied. God the Spirit could not redeem us because He is the One through whom the blessings of redemption would be conveyed to sinners who plead the merits of the Redeemer. In the wisdom of God, only Christ could be our Redeemer. So the, Christ is our Redeemer, but He is also...

B. OUR REPRESENTATIVE

"In Him we have redemption..." (7)

God's wisdom is revealed in His determination to accomplish redemption by substitution, by having someone, namely His own Son, to stand in the sinner's place. Notice throughout Ephesians 1 that our standing with God is being chosen "in Him" that is in Christ. He is our representative. He stands for us and stands in for us. The Son of God was made to be, and voluntarily became, our Representative; our Substitute so that our redemption might be accomplished. Again, before the world began, God's own dear Son became our Representative; He determined to be our Substitute on the cross. By this act, Jesus, our Representative...

- ✓ Took the sins of His people upon Himself as His own (our sin was imputed, charged to the account of Christ); and so...
- ✓ He suffered the extreme penalty of sin; the full wrath of God sinners deserved; thus satisfying the full justice of God.

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Most of us are familiar with 2 Corinthians 5:21 where we see this very action spoken of. Here then is the wisdom of God... *[God the Father] made Him [Jesus] who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf [our substitute; our representative], so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* To be made right with God, we needed a completely righteous sacrifice and Jesus alone was the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29) – taking our place on the cross. So Jesus is our Redeemer and our Representative, but He is also...

C. CHRIST OUR RANSOM

In Him we have redemption through His blood...(7)

All of what we have been saying about Jesus points to the fact that in the wisdom of God; the price to be paid for the sinner would be the very life, blood and person of Christ. In Psalm 49:7-8 we read some startling words, *7 No man can by any means redeem his brother Or give to God a ransom for him — 8 For the redemption of his soul is costly, And he should cease trying forever —* But Jesus was not merely man; but perfect man and perfect God. As such, Jesus did not simply pay the ransom; the price necessary to redeem sinners; but Jesus Himself, being of infinite worth and value, was the ransom. In the wisdom of God, the only possible means by which the great and holy God could redeem, justify, and save guilty sinners was by the ransom of Jesus very life. Nothing but Divine wisdom could have devised such a plan. When this plan was announced in heaven the angels must have been gasped in utter astonishment – the Son of God would give Himself to redeem man!

Consider with me. It was Jesus, He who is God in the flesh; the most blessed and supreme Being who would endure the greatest sorrow, suffering, and agony in the universe. It was Jesus, Lord of Heaven and Earth, who was arrested, tried, and condemned by sinful, ungrateful, and pathetic humanity. It was Jesus, the very Author and Fountain of life who was put to death because of our sin. It was Jesus, the very Creator of the world who was crucified to a cross by His own creatures. It was Jesus, the God of eternal glory and splendor who was beaten, whipped with leather strips and pieces of bone, spat upon and mocked by vile men. It was Jesus who is, by definition, “good” – the greatest good, who was subjected to man’s most horrific cruelty. It was Jesus, the King of kings and the King of heaven who was buried in the belly of the earth. And yet, through all of this, it was Jesus, who would, as a result of these things, receive the greatest honor and glory in the universe; for by His death; by this ransom of Himself, He bought and brought many sons to glory; glorifying God and saving His people.

Jesus is our Redeemer, our Representative, and our Ransom. The wisdom of God in making Jesus these things has been made known; it has been revealed to us. May the Spirit of God illuminate our hearts to understand what happened on the Cross; that we appreciate the meaning of Christ’s death; namely that Jesus, gave His life voluntarily (John 10:17-18) to be the Substitute for His people (Galatians 3:13; John 10:11, 15); to suffer the full penalty of sin for the full satisfaction of divine justice (Isaiah 53:9-10). This is our Redeemer; this is our Representative; this is our Ransom; Jesus is the wisdom of God; satisfying justice; putting away sin; purchasing our salvation. This is the grace of God lavished upon us in all the wisdom of God. Oh blessed thought! But there is more.

II. THE ILLUMINATION OF INSIGHT

In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will

Not only does the Holy Spirit reveal such profound “wisdom” concerning the mystery that is our salvation; but He also reveals profound “insight.” Remember that “wisdom” is the cumulative truth concerning God, man, sin and salvation. And “insight” is the practical application of that wisdom.

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Having revealed the wisdom of divine election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption and forgiveness of sin; the Spirit of God is also responsible for revealing to us how this is to impact our daily lives. And this divine illumination that has been made know to us does two things...

A. God has shown us how to live...

In keeping with the wisdom of God to reveal the multifaceted nature of our salvation; God also reveals to us; shows us how we ought to live our lives before Him. Paul will do this specifically in Ephesians 4-6. Turn over to Ephesians 4:1-3. There we read, *1 Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, 3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* We are to know that the Holy Spirit provides this kind of "insight" as to how we are to live.

God has continually shown His people how He expects them to live in light of all that He has done for them. In Micah 6:8 we read, *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?* Justice (doing what is right), mercy (loving what is right) and humility (mindful of what is right) are to be ever present characteristics of the people of God. And this leads to a second consideration...

B. God has sanctioned us to live for Him

Not only has God shown us how to live; but He has also sanctioned us; commissioned us; called us to live out the wisdom of God. In the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament letters, God most often will state a truth about what He has done for us in Christ and follow such a statement with an expectation. In other words, God states His "wisdom" and follows with that wisdom an "insight" we are to employ in our lives. All biblical imperatives (commands) rest upon divine indicatives (*statements of fact concerning what God has done*).

For example, turn with me to Romans 6 where we see this idea being worked out. In Romans 6:1-3 we have the stated "wisdom" of God; the divine indicative; something we are to "know" - *1 What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase? 2 May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? 3 Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?* Then, beginning in verse 4 we have the stated expectation; to walk in newness of life. *Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.* To walk in newness of life is "insight" as to who we are to live in light of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We see it again in verses 5-6; first the wisdom of God revealed in crucifying our sins in Christ – the divine indicative, followed by the expectation (the imperative) that in light of this, we would no longer live as slaves to sin. We read, *5 For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;*

And again, we see it in verses 8-13. In verses 8-10 we read of the wisdom of God – the divine indicative: *8 Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.* And this is followed by the insight, the skill, the expectation, the imperative that flows from that wisdom which here is to consider one's self dead to sin (regarding yourself as unwilling and, as best as you can by the grace of God, incapable of sinning) and alive to God (regarding yourself as willing and as best you can by the grace

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of God, capable of living a life that pleases God). We read, *11 Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its lusts, 13 and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

It is one thing to “know” that in Christ your sins are paid for and that they were paid for by the plan and wisdom of God. It is quite another thing to “know” what to do about it. This is “insight” which God lavishly, abundantly illuminates our heart and minds with; that we may not only know the truth of God with our heads, but we might also live out the truth of God in our lives. And again, what are the truths we already know from verses 3-9? What wisdom has God revealed to us? What are the indicative truths? We are to know that God has, in Christ...chosen us (4); predestinated us (5); adopted us (5); graced us (6); redeemed us (7); forgiven us (7); illuminated us (8-9). There is the wisdom of God!

Now then, what is the imperative? What is the expectation? How are we to live in light or such indicative truths? The answer is found in back up in verse 3. Our lives are to be characteristically ones of constant blessing and praising of God. If you are redeemed by Christ, then God, through the preaching and study of His Word, has revealed to you how such great doctrines such as we have considered are to daily impact your life. Your life is to be one of praise; a monument of God's saving grace. A monument – you are a statue or a plaque that informs all who see it why it is there. This past week I had lunch with some of the men and we discussed some deep things; the origin of evil; why God created people whom He knew would go to Hell; and the basis upon which God choose people for salvation. After a great time of fellowship and discussion, as I we were leaving, a man asked me over and share with me how impressed and blessed he was to hear us publically and boldly talking about deep truths concerning God. In other words, we were being a monument of grace; allowing others to “read” us. Beloved, our lives and conversations are to point people to the grace, wisdom and application of salvation in Christ. Some of you may get “alerts” on your phone. This past week, with the severe thunderstorms rolling through, my phone was constantly going off; telling me that storms were coming! Beloved, our lives are to be like those alerts, going off in front of all people, calling attention to the great salvation that God has provided us in Christ. What is the alert? It is found in verse 3, *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...”* for He has blessed us most extraordinarily. Are you going off?

In one of my favorite Psalms, David expresses this commitment to “going off” daily; of daily proclaiming the praises of the God who saves. Notice with me the intensity of David's commitment in Psalm 145:1-7 where we read, *1 I will extol You, my God, O King, And I will bless Your name forever and ever. 2 Every day I will bless You, And I will praise Your name forever and ever. 3 Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised, And His greatness is unsearchable. 4 One generation shall praise Your works to another, And shall declare Your mighty acts. 5 On the glorious splendor of Your majesty And on Your wonderful works, I will meditate. 6 Men shall speak of the power of Your awesome acts, And I will tell of Your greatness. 7 They shall eagerly utter the memory of Your abundant goodness And will shout joyfully of Your righteousness.*

Beloved, that is insight from God! This is how God desires us to live in light of the wisdom He executed in saving us from the penalty, power and presence of sin. The words of David ought to be the words of every believer; they ought to describe each one of us. Do they describe you, believer? I pray so and I pray that your commitment today would be this; “God, make me an ever greater monument of your saving grace for people to gaze upon and be in awe of what You have done in my life.” This is why God has made known to you the mystery of salvation; the mystery of divine election,

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predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, and forgiveness; that it would be meditated on in your heart; lived out in your life; and spoken of in your words. God demands nothing less. We ought to desire nothing else. Before I close in prayer, let me share with you the words of a song; a song that is a prayer of commitment, expressing this very desire, that the wisdom of God would be lived out and that God would give the insight as to how it is to be lived out. Hear the words of the songwriter:

*Make my life a prayer to You
I want to do what You want me to
No empty words and no white lies
No token prayers; no compromise*

*I want to shine the light You gave
Through Your Son You sent to save us
From ourselves and our despair
It comforts me to know You're really there*

*I want to die and let You give
Your life to me, so I might live
And share the hope You gave to me,
the love that set me free*

*I want to tell the world out there,
You're not some fable or fairy tale
That I've made up inside my head,
You're God the Son - You've risen from the dead*

Soli Deo Gloria

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