

The Glory of His Gracious Act

Ephesians 1:6-10

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Introduction:

In our study of Ephesians so far,

- we have seen that God has chosen a people from before the foundation of the world...
 - And that He has chosen these people for one ultimate purpose...
 - that He might pour out His grace upon them.
 - In this way, He would demonstrate to them (and to the holy angels who are looking on) just how gracious He is—the glory of His grace.

Brothers and sisters, isn't this marvellous?

- If you are in Christ, God's whole purpose with you is to show you what a gracious God He is by being gracious to you!
 - He has planned out the whole history of this present world with that in mind!
 - It is as if He said,
 - "I am going to create a people, and I am going to have these people come to heaven and live with me...
 - I am going to let them share in the joyful communion that I have had with my Son and with the Holy Spirit for all eternity...
 - But they are mere creatures,
 - and if I just put them in heaven with me they will not be able to understand the depth of my grace and love and holiness as well as they might.
 - Therefore, I devise a plan by which they will be able to understand my glory more fully.
 - I decree that my elect will be part of a whole race which race will fall by their own fault, almost as soon as they come from my hand...
 - And I will sentence the whole race to eternal judgement...
 - And upon those who are not my elect,
 - I will finally pour out my wrath and judgement on them just as their sins deserve.
 - They will be vessels of wrath, fit for destruction...

- I will be to them a consuming fire so that all may see my vindictive justice, my purity, and my hatred of sin...
- But upon my elect, I will pour out my grace and salvation...
 - I will redeem them by the blood of my only Son...
 - He Himself will bear the full weight of their judgement so that they might be set free.
 - By His merit alone, I will raise them to all the privileges and joys of communion with me in heaven which they will fully enter into at that last day...
 - From then on they will live in joyful fellowship with Me.
- By this plan, their joy will be much greater than it would have been if I had brought them here without having first redeemed them from a sinful world...
 - By giving them a few short years as sinners in a sinful world,
 - my elect will be able to spend eternity with me with a far greater understanding and appreciation of my gracious character and justice.
 - In this way, I will be able to show them the glory of my grace.”

My dear friends,

- Just glance over the verses of Ephesians 1 and you will see that over and over it tells you that God’s purpose in saving His elect is the praise of the glory of His grace!
 - He wants you to see the riches of His grace and to praise Him for it!
- And there is something very important about this grace that I want you understand from our text (Ephesians 1:7-10) today...
 - Eph. 1:7-10 teaches you that this grace has already been fully given to us...
 - I don’t mean to say that we have fully grasped it—not at all...
 - That is what we must aim to do!
 - But I want you to see that...

I. The grace of redemption for which God is to be praised is something that has already been fully given to us.

- A. In verse 7, Paul says that he and his Ephesian hearers had already received redemption and the forgiveness of sins...
- “In Him we have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins.”

- Those words “we have” make it clear that redemption by His blood is something they already possessed.
1. “Redemption by His blood” refers to the cross of Jesus Christ.
 - a. It was at the cross that His blood was shed, and it was by the shedding of His blood that our redemption was fully accomplished.
 - Redemption means “to buy back.”
 - Paul’s hearers would have known of redemption in the sense of purchasing freedom for a slave.
 - In those days,
 - if your family fell on hard times, you might have to sell your children into slavery to pay your debts...
 - But if a gracious friend had the means and was so inclined,
 - He could redeem the child by purchasing him back from the one to whom he was sold...
 - He would pay the price for the child’s freedom.
 - b. At the cross, Jesus purchased our freedom.
 - 1) We owed a debt that we could never pay to God’s justice for having violated His holy law...
 - The penalty of sin was eternal death, consignment to the fiery indignation of God forever and ever.
 - 2) But in His immeasurable grace,
 - the Son of God left the glories of heaven in order that He might pay that price for us.
 - To accomplish this, the Father required Him to become man, and then as man, to bear in His own person the pains of Hell.
 - That was the high price that was required if we were to be set free from the penalty of the Law.
 - c. And Paul is declaring here (in Ephesians 1:7) the glorious truth that this redemption has already been accomplished by the blood of Jesus!
 - The price has been paid in full!
 - We **have** the redemption!
 - Nothing more can be done to make it more complete.
 - These Ephesians who were trusting in Jesus Christ had this redemption and so do all of you who are trusting in Him today...

- God asks of you that you confess your sin,
 - acknowledge that you have a debt that you cannot pay...
 - and look to Jesus who paid the penalty of sin when He died on the cross 2000 years ago...
 - If you trust in Him, you have this redemption.

TRANS> And because we have redemption through His blood...

2. It follows that we also have the forgiveness of sin...

a. The word for forgiveness means remission or release...

- The idea is that your sins have been cleared from your record so that they cannot be brought up against you again...
 - That is what you do when forgive someone...
 - You promise not to hold what they have done against them.
- And in Christ, even the sins that you have yet to commit are already forgiven...
 - not that God will not chasten you for your sins as His child...
 - but that He will never condemn you to His fiery indignation...
 - He is reconciled to you forever and will only chasten you as a son to restore you to the right way.

b. As one whose sins are forgiven, you now have access to God's favour.

- It is by Christ's work on the cross that you are, as verse 6 says, "made accepted in the beloved."
 - You have peace with God and full and free access to all the blessings of sonship.

B. Consider what great grace this is that has been given to you!

1. At the end of verse 7, Paul says that it is given "**according** to the riches of His grace..."

a. Now I want you to think about what this phrase, "according to His riches" means.

- It is not just that He has given us grace "out of" His riches, but "according to His riches."
- "According to His riches" means that the grace is in proportion to His riches!

- William Hendrikson illustrates this with two rich men who are asked to donate to a cause...
 - The first gives **out of** his riches—it is but a paltry gift, not at all according to his ability...
 - The second gives according to his riches—
 - The gift is large because his treasure is large—the gift is like his wealth—it is great.
 - Such is what the LORD of infinite grace has done for you, dear child of God—
 - He has given according to what He has,
 - and He has a lot!
 - How blessed you are!

b. In verse 8, Paul says that the LORD has made His grace abound to us!

- There is no stinting here, no doling out a little relief or a token help, no pinching exactness...
 - The word **abound** speaks of that which is running over!
 - It is a giving that gives way more than what was expected—
 - It is a lavish and extravagant giving...
 - Where sin had abounded, grace has superabounded!
 - God is making a clear display of His infinite grace to us as His creatures...
 - He is pouring it out in such a way that we might be able to understand more of its greatness.
 - And if you are His elect, He is displaying all this upon you!
 - How blessed you are!
 - You have been lavished upon!

2. How great this grace is!

a. First, it is great grace because it is given to those who deserve the very opposite—

- If you will only acknowledge that you fully deserve God's fiery indignation forever,
 - and that there is **nothing** in you that makes you deserve anything else...

- you can only marvel that this same indignation was borne by our dear Saviour on the cross...
- b. Secondly, it is great grace because it is grace that provided so great a sacrifice on the part of our Saviour...
- That He whose whole glory and joy it is to always please the Father should become sin for us is unthinkable...
 - that **He** should become before His Father an object of shame and an object of cursing and rejection...
- c. Thirdly, it is great grace because it does so much—
- It brings you into the very household of God to live in His gracious, majestic, loving society forever and ever, gazing upon His beauty in His sanctuary...
 - cleansed from all your sin...
 - wholly forgiven and fully accepted in His sight.
3. Oh Christian, do you realise what you have?
- a. Do realise what it means to *have* redemption by His blood and the forgiveness of sin?
- If you are trusting in Christ,
 - you lack nothing at all!
- b. You have no reason to go around as one guilty and condemned.
- Yes, you will have sins that you need to confess to your heavenly Father as you live before Him...
 - But if you are in Christ Jesus, there is no more condemnation at all!
 - Forgiveness will never be in short supply!
 - Your friends may tire of forgiving you, but not your Lord.
- c. Neither should you go around as one who is lacking in resources to live for God's glory... to keep His way...
- You have God's grace liberally poured out on you in accordance with His liberality!
 - You can face all the challenges you have knowing that with those challenges you have an infinite supply of grace.
 - What are you facing at work?
 - What are you facing in your relationships?
 - What challenges do you have as a parent?
 - What temptations are you struggling with?

- Face them all as one endowed with the grace of God—
 - not a grace that is given in pinches,
 - but a grace that is poured out with all liberality!

TRANS> Now you will say to me...

- That's easy enough to say, but where is God's grace at those times I fail?
 - The short answer is that God's grace is there to pick you up again...
 - But that answer doesn't really satisfy you, does it?
 - You want to know why His grace did not keep you from falling in the first place...
 - why didn't it keep you from falling in the first place?
- Well now, I want to make a distinction this morning between two kinds of grace...
 - This morning, I am talking primarily about the redemptive grace that brought the full forgiveness of sin to the church when Jesus died on the cross...
 - This is the grace that has been fully given...
 - But there is also what we might call sanctifying grace—
 - And this is grace that is still be given...
 - This is the grace that is at work in you to make you more conformed to God's commandments—to make you more and more like Jesus in heart and behaviour.
 - Sanctifying grace is the grace that we spoke about last week that make us holy and without blame as we are transformed by the Holy Spirit.
 - Sanctifying grace has not yet been given in all its fullness...
 - God has promised to fully unleash this gift upon us on the day that His Son returns to bring us to heaven to live with Him there.
 - The Father will honour His Son's second coming by lavishing this gift upon us on that day.
 - God often works this way...
 - In fact, I have said all this about sanctifying grace in part because I want you to understand that redeeming grace was not always complete either...
 - It was not complete until Jesus came and died on the cross—until He shed His blood.
 - Until Jesus came, redeeming grace and the forgiveness of sins was promised and the people had access to the promise,
 - but the promise had not be fulfilled until Jesus did His work...

- There was not a free access to God in the Old Testament as there is in the new—
 - their consciences were not yet perfect because there was an awareness that they were waiting for God’s redemption in Christ.

And so, as we have seen in the first place this morning that God has fully poured out His redemptive grace,

- I want you to consider secondly that...

II. God revealed His redemptive grace to us gradually until it reached its climax in the appearing of Jesus Christ.

A. Paul describes the gradual process as God’s pouring out His grace with wisdom and prudence...

1. Verse 8 says that

- He cause it to abound to us...“in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.”
- To summarise this,
 - It means that God was pleased to reveal His redemptive grace very gradually until the coming of Christ when it was fully revealed

2. This is described as wisdom and prudence because it brought more attention and glory to Jesus Christ and to the grace of God in Him.

a. The scriptures speak of God waiting until the appointed time, the best time, to do His work...

- All through the ages before Christ,
 - He was preparing the world, and especially His elect, for His coming.
 - He waited until the church was mature enough to receive the gift.
 - In the Old Testament, it was a gift promised, but veiled,
 - and when Jesus came, the veil was removed and the world broke forth with worship in spirit and truth.

TRANS> There is wisdom in knowing how to give a gift at the proper time.

b. My parents purchased pearl necklaces for my sisters when they were babies, but they waited until they were sixteen to present them.

- As babies, they were not ready for a pearl necklace... they would have more likely choked on it!

- They needed to learn certain things first so that the necklaces could be more fully appreciated.
 - Withholding them at first was the way of wisdom and prudence.
- c. Perhaps marriage is even a better illustration...
- What man would give his daughter in marriage when she was five?
 - A man lacking in wisdom and prudence!
 - A man of wisdom and prudence would spend many years preparing his daughter for marriage—
 - training her up to maturity so that he might present her to a husband at the proper time when she is ready to be a blessing and to receive the blessing of marriage.
- B. God did very much the same thing with His chosen people...
1. He made known to us the mystery of His will—little by little He revealed Christ to us...
- a. Just after the fall,
- He revealed that He would put enmity between the woman's seed and the serpent's seed—
 - that is, that He would raise up a seed to the woman that would stand against the rebellion into which Satan had led the world
 - and who would at last crush the rebellion once and for all.
 - This was a veiled way of saying that God would gather His elect in Christ and by Christ would crush Satan.
 - It set the people to look to God for the fulfillment of this promise.
- b. And then in the day of Noah,
- The LORD revealed His great displeasure with wickedness and His purpose to utterly destroy it...
 - The world may even have been as populated as it is today when the Lord sent that world-wide destruction...
 - He was revealing His wrath and indignation against sin.
 - But He also revealed His grace in sparing Noah...
 - Showing that He did indeed have a purpose of grace for His elect...
 - And He showed further that the basis of that grace was not the goodness of Noah,

- He promised that he would preserve the earth only when He smelled the sacrifice of Noah's offering...
 - showing in veiled way that it was not Noah, but Christ who was to come that pleased Him well.
 - God would preserve the world because Christ was going to come to redeem the world.

- c. And then again in the day of Abraham...
 - The LORD, having shown His displeasure with the united pride and rebellion of the nations at Babel,
 - and having separated those nations...
 - then came to one of those seventy nations,
 - and in particular to the household of Abraham,
 - and promised to be His God and to make his descendants His people...
 - and through his seed to bless all the now scattered nations of the world—
 - This was a veiled way of saying that He would bring them all together in Jesus Christ in whom they would all find acceptance.

 - d. And then again in the day of Moses,
 - God revealed the redemption of His people by bringing them out of bondage in Egypt,
 - And then by giving them His law which law showed them how to love Him and how to love one another—
 - it showed them what He was redeeming them to be and what they would be when they were at last gathered into Christ...
 - And He also gave them the sacrifices by which they were able to live before Him despite their sin...
 - which sacrifices also showed them in a veiled way what Christ would do when He was joined to them in order to redeem them—
 - even the shedding of His blood to atone for their sins.
 - But in wisdom and prudence, God meant it to remain veiled until Christ would actually come and perform the work.

 - e. And then again in the day of David,

- The LORD promised that He would raise up a king that would please Him,
 - a king that would lead the nation into obedience and that would destroy all His enemies according to His will,
 - bringing down the rebellion that was begun by Satan...
 - crushing the serpent and all who were in league with him
 - But David was not that promised King,
 - The promised king was to be David's seed, even Christ, who was revealed in the promise to David and by David as a type—
 - as David gained temporal victories and earthly reform around the earthly tabernacle signifying what Christ would do by the Spirit.
- f. And then there was the new covenant promised in the context of the captivity...
- When God by the captivity showed His people His displeasure with them and only restored them in a very partial way—
 - far less glorious than what the kingdom had attained in the day of David...
 - and yet promised them a complete and even fuller deliverance than that had in David...
 - He did all this to put into them a hunger for a greater deliverance that only the Messiah, Jesus Christ could bring.
 - And it was then that He promised the outpouring of the Spirit when Messiah came who would make His people holy.
 - It was clear that they could not be holy unless He gave them a new heart and put a new spirit within them.
 - This He promised would come in Jesus Christ in whom they would be gathered and who would take away all their sins.
2. Now you can see in all this how God prepared His people for the coming of Christ.
- a. He revealed the mystery little by little...
 - He was unveiling the mystery to them that at last everything would be brought together in Jesus Christ.
 - b. And then when the time was right,
 - In the fullness of time...

- He sent forth His Son, born of a woman, to redeem these ones who had been set apart to wait to for Him...
- You can see how this method made the coming of Christ all the more glorious and made us to appreciate and understand the grace in Him that enables us to draw near.
 - That the Old Testament Saints did not receive the full blessing that we now have makes little difference to them now...
 - Just as in heaven it will make little difference to us that God did not perfect us in holiness until His Son returned...
 - More properly, I should say that it will not offend us, but rather make us glad because we will understand God's grace the better because of it—for all eternity!

TRANS> But brothers and sisters,

- Though we are waiting for our sanctification to be complete...
- I want you understand with all assurance that...

III. The revelation of God's redemptive grace *has* reached its climax in Jesus Christ.

A. Verse 10 shows that **everything** comes together in Him!

1. We are to look at Him and His work and we are to say,
 - "That's it! That's everything!"
 - There is the seed of the woman that came to gather a people to oppose the serpent and that will crush the serpent's head...
 - There is His cross—the sacrifice whose aroma pleased God when He spared Noah...
 - There is the one promised to Abraham in whom his descendents and the nations of the earth are gathered together that they might be God's people and have their sins forgiven...
 - There is one who fulfills all the demands of the law of Moses—
 - so that as gathered together in Him, we are cleansed from all our sins and are made new...
 - And there is the King, the seed of David, who pleases God and who leads His people into pure worship and who destroys all their enemies...
 - And there is the One promised in the New Covenant who pours out His Spirit upon the people and secures their forgiveness by His death...

TRANS> God revealed His grace little by little in the Old Testament...

2. But Christ is the final revelation of His grace and the one who actually brings the promised grace of the Old Testament to us in all its fullness...
 - He is the logos, the word of God, the revelation of God to us for all eternity...
 - The one who comes to show us the glory of God in a way that we can understand...
 - The connecting point between us and our God so that we can understand.
 - a. You need to realise that Jesus Christ and the work that He did during His time on earth is the very heart and centre of God's revelation of Himself to us...
 - It is to this revelation that we will look for all eternity to behold the glory of God's grace...
 - And the glory of His judgement...
 - We will look at the cross and we will see how wide and how deep and how broad His love is...
 - And we will look at the cross and we will see Christ's suffering and we will know how our God despises sin...
 - and we will see the glory of His wrath and judgement against it...
 - and we will marvel at His grace as our understanding deepens through the ages of eternity.
 - b. There will never be a greater revelation of grace of God than there was two thousand years ago when Jesus hung on that cross...
 - The cross is the place where God's revelation fully comes together!
 - God is pleased that all things should be summed up in Him.
 - With wisdom and prudence, God has put us into this sinful world in order that we might forever know His glory in Jesus crucified...
 - and that seeing it, we might have the joy of knowing the grace of God that we might marvel at His beauty all the more through endless days.

TRANS> That is what we shall do in heaven...

- And I say, if the revelation already given to us is the revelation that will show us our God in eternity...
- Does it not follow that

B. God calls you now, in this life, to find everything in Christ?

1. Don't be looking for something more—of for something else!

- a. Perhaps the greatest error of our day is in looking for something beyond Christ or instead of Christ or beside Christ...
 - as if we don't have everything in Him.
 - as if the glory revealed is somehow inadequate!
 - b. It seems that every few years, some new answer to all our problems comes sweeping through the church—
 - At one time, it was all about being in touch with your feelings and being honest with yourself...
 - Then it was all about the power of positive thinking...
 - Then it was all about building your self-esteem...
 - Then the key to life was to pray the prayer of Jabez every day...
 - Then it was about the purpose driven life and the purpose driven Bible study and the purpose lawn mower...
 - And all along the way there are traditional additions—
 - high church worship with its altars and candles and processions and holy days and holy water...
 - or low church worship with its “Jesus is my pal who accepts the me the way I am” approach...
 - c. All these things do is stir up hope in God's people until a after a few weeks or years of it,
 - they realise that they are really no different than they were to start with.
2. So why do these movements flourish?
- a. Is it not that because people have taken their eyes off of Jesus Christ—
 - that they are not glorying in the cross?
 - that they are not marvelling in what He has done a living a life in response to Him?
 - b. The Bible tells you again and again to remember the cross—
 - to boast in nothing else but the cross—
 - to see God's great love in that He gave His Son for us while we were yet sinners—
 - to preach Christ and Him crucified...
 - to take heed lest we be led away from the simplicity of Christ.
 - c. Away then with all the higher life movements that keep setting you up for disappointment with their empty promises!

- Too many people are getting burned out after two or three bad experiences.
 - Our goal is not to get hyped up in Christ or to get a spiritual fix—
 - our goal is to live in Him,
 - to grow day by day in our love for Him,
 - to die every day that we might live for Him.
3. Brothers and sisters, in Him you have everything!
- a. God's revelation of His grace for all eternity has already reached its climax...
 - And it is not in the latest new Christian fad or in the oldest extra-biblical church tradition...
 - It is in Jesus Christ and Him crucified...
 - God has been pleased to sum up everything He has to say in Jesus Christ.
 - This is His revelation to us and this is where our attention needs to be fixed once and for all.
 - b. Here is the community you seek...
 - gathered in Him with your brothers and sisters...
 - Here is the love you long for, fully revealed like it will never be revealed again...
 - Here is the new life that God calls you to live forever, a life that glories in Christ and Him crucified.
 - Everything comes together in Him.