Our Gracious God who Redeems and Reveals

Ephesians 1:7-10

The Blueprint: The Trinitarian plan of God "In Christ" - The Book of Ephesians depicts God as the architect of a major renovation project. The tornado of the fall, which ripped the entire universe apart, things in heaven and things on the earth are out of order, God is putting things back together brick by brick. A cosmic restoration project that is happening in stages – the Bible calls these stages "times and seasons" or "ages" or "dispensations" and it speaks of the project as a "household". Jesus Christ is the pinnacle, the summation, the reconciliation of all the stages and parts. Every member of the Trinity is involved in carrying out this project over which the Father is the administrator.

- **The Father is the architect**, the one who decrees.
- **The Son is the one who accomplishes the plan** so that the plan is fulfilled "in Christ".
- **The Holy Spirit is the one who then applies** what the Father has decreed and the Son has accomplished by putting us in union with Christ so that all that He has accomplished is applied to us.

Ephesians 1:10 – the thesis of Ephesians - This morning we come to the passage which, I would argue, is really the thesis, or perhaps a summary of the entire project seen in Ephesians. **1:10 – "as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth." The word "plan" is actually a word that speaks of the "administration, or stewardship of a household". Household language is used all throughout Ephesians to speak of the stages of God's building project – another word we use is "dispensations". These "dispensations" or stages of administration, aren't simply putting things back together as they were. GOD KNEW THE TORNADO WAS COMING! His plan is to build a house so much greater where Jesus is the cornerstone of the house and God's grace and love through the cross, which is the pinnacle of the project, are forever displayed to the entire universe, even to the spiritual forces of evil, unto the eternal glory and praise of God. This is the book of Ephesians.**

Big Idea of this text - We are currently in our first series where we are looking at "Our Spiritual Blessings in Christ". In the text we just read, Paul is praising God for the blessings over which He is the administer. We're going to look at vv.7-10 this morning in detail.

3 things that Paul blesses our Father, the architect, for that are in Christ:

1. **In Christ we have the deliberately lavish grace of God (1:7b-8) - "according to the riches of his grace, [8] which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight**

God is building the house in such a way where His grace and glory are on display. God wants us to know His grace that is "extravagant", "lavish". Notice that grace ***provides the basis*** for our redemption: ***"in Him we have redemption…according to [on the basis of] His grace"***. But grace is also seen (v.9) as ***making known to us*** His architectural plan: "[grace] He lavished on us in all wisdom and insight….[when He made known to us] the mystery of His will". We have redemption and we have revelation from the administrator of the plan solely because our gracious God has blessed us with both IN CHRIST JESUS.

Grace – God's Riches At Christ's Expense. Mercy is ***not getting what we deserve***. Grace is ***getting what we do not deserve***.

Notice that His grace is described in three ways: **First**, it is a "lavish" grace. The word could be translated "abounded". God's grace is "more than enough". It's the word that is used to describe the leftovers when the disciples received "more than enough" after Jesus fed the five thousand. **Second**, it's an endless supply because it comes from an eternal source. The word for "riches" is the same word used to describe the wealth of Solomon. ***This is an endless supply of grace. An inexhaustible storehouse. Forgiveness will never run out. His "once and for all sacrifice" is an eternal sacrifice accomplished by the eternal Son of God, and therefore grants to us eternal forgiveness.*** **Third**, it is a grace that is "deliberately lavish". Where do I get this? Look at v.8 – "[this grace] he lavished upon us, in [or with] all wisdom and insight. The NKJV – **"which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (1:8 – NKJV)**. So "lavish grace" is intentional, not haphazard, not arbitrary, it is deliberate, and purposeful. ***Paul isn't saying, grace is diluted with wisdom and prudence, no, He is saying grace is LAVISH and God has wisely and prudently made it so!***

God built the house in a very deliberate way…and it is extravagantly gracious. You can think of one of those bright, gaudy, blinking lights at Vegas blinking, "GRACE, GRACE, GRACE!" God, the wise and prudent architect, chose to build the project with grace! He means for it to be lavish! It's purposefully extravagant! There is a divine intention underneath God's lavish grace towards His children. That is God's constant demeanor towards you who are in Christ – GRACE, GRACE, GRACE!

Illustration: **God's grace is lavish like a painter, not like a puppy dog.** A puppy dog is cute, cuddly, but not very bright – there is no wisdom or prudence there. They will just run up to any person, and they just want to LOVE LOVE LOVE and lick lick lick on everyone and anything and slobber lavishly on everything! Gods grace is NOT like that. God's grace is more like a painting. Planned, intentional, and used to draw attention to the painter as GRACIOUS. An artist sometimes will seek to draw your attention to a particular theme of their painting by emphasizing the image with lots of color, or lots of texture, or they simply make the image bigger than everything else on the painting.

God lavishes His grace in an abounding way…but He does this deliberately (it's wise and prudent) and it is uniquely given in relation to His Son Jesus Christ and to those who are IN HIM. The extravagance of His grace IS THE POINT of the painting, of the structure. God is a God who is gracious!!

2. **In Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of our trespasses (1:7a) – "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"**

The tornado has caused a fallen world that is enslaved to sin and death and the devil and placed us under the wrath of God. We need "redemption" and we need "forgiveness"! Sin is a cruel taskmaster – he promises the world and only provides guilt, shame, and in the end eternal punishment. Our eternal crimes against an eternal God demand an eternal payment.

For the Greeks and Romans the word redemption would carry with it the idea of manumission, or rescue from slavery. For the Jews, redemption would recall the Exodus where Israel was redeemed by God from their slavery to Pharaoh. This was a defining moment in their history where God became for them the God who "brought them out of Egypt" unto Himself.

One of the key passages in Scripture to look at in order to understand "redemption" is in Romans 3:23-25:

> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are **justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, [25] whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith (Romans 3:24-25)**

The architect has sent the Son of God to rescue those who have fallen, and bring them to Himself. Jesus is "put forward as a propitiation" (a sacrifice to appease the wrath of God).

There is a very important passage in the OT in **Leviticus 17:11 – "For the life of the flesh [the life of the creature] is in the blood…** ***it is the blood that makes atonement [makes amends, appeases God's wrath]." It's the same idea of the word here "propitiation"***. In fact, this idea of a blood offering was not unique to Christianity, the pagan world also sought to appease their false deities with blood (Satan always tries to mimic God's plans!)…however, what is unique in God's plan of redemption is that GOD THE FATHER APPEASES HIMSELF BY THE BLOOD OF GOD THE SON. The eternal Son of God became a creature with flesh and blood, and made atonement with His blood as a payment for sin. Who is payment made to? To God! Who pays for the payment? The Son of God who willingly was "put forward as a propitiation". Talk about grace! Talk about "good news"! We have a God who has provided all that we need for our redemption and forgiveness!

Application: Put your faith in Christ. What is our part of the plan? RECEIVE IT BY FAITH! Trust in Christ today for redemption and forgiveness. You may not know it, but if you have not yet put your faith in Christ the Bible teaches that you are enslaved to sin. You are ruled by it! Put your faith in Christ for redemption and forgiveness. You cannot pay your way! No amount of good deeds could ever repay God for the eternal offenses you've committed against Him! Do you know what offends God possibly more than your sin? The idea that you could ever EARN your way to Him. It lowers God's holy standard and it tramples the precious blood of God underfoot. If being a good person could get you to heaven, God's Precious Son on the cross was WASTED! THIS IS AN UNTHINKABLE THING. You have two options: God will be glorified in your life through His grace in redeeming you to Himself. OR, God will be glorified in His wrath and power on the judgment day when you stand guilty before Him. Those are the ONLY two options. Trust in Christ for redemption and forgiveness.

3. **In Christ we have received revelation into God's plans (1:9-10)** - making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ [10] as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

God has graciously concealed but then revealed His secret plans to His children regarding all that He plans to do in and through His Son, Christ Jesus. The plans of God's building project are unknown to the world around us, but to those of us who are His children, they are made known to us…although the unfolding of the times and seasons happen in stages.

The word "mystery" is actually a very specific word in Greek and more importantly in all of Scripture. The basic meaning is **a truth that was formerly concealed but now has been revealed**. It is the unfolding of God's architectural plan in stages, ages, times, seasons, dispensations.

In Daniel 2 we see that King Nebuchadnezzar was given "mysteries" regarding the stages of kingdoms that would rise and fall all the way to the Messiah. Only Daniel was able to interpret these mysteries for the King.

> **He changes times and seasons [like stages in His plan]; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding (Dan. 2:21)**

In the gospels, the word "mystery" is only used by Jesus when teaching parables of His Kingdom that was coming. His parables were often hard to understand, because to most the secrets of His Kingdom were concealed…and yet He would take His disciples aside and reveal the meaning. He says this to His disciples: *"To you has been given the secret* (μυστηριον) of the kingdom of God, *but for those outside everything is in parables" (Mk. 4:11).*

In Ephesians we're going to see that "mystery" is used for the mystery of Christ as coming to the Gentiles – especially in chapter 2-3. He uses the word "mystery" over and over in chapter 3 and "household language" over and over in chapter 2 and into 4 as well. The plan that the Messiah would be not only for the Jews but for the nations was formerly concealed to Paul and to the Jewish people, although many of the prophets alluded to this, but now this revelation had come and Paul was entrusted with its message. In 3:7-9 Paul speaks in detail of the "administration" of the "mystery" (same words used in vv.9-10) given to Him as a stewardship of a household to preach to the Gentiles the gospel:

> **Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me … to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things (Ephesians 3:7-9)**

Notice in our text:

- **First, God and Jesus are both the administers of this mystery** – "***according to his purpose [good pleasure], which he set forth in Christ*** [10] ***as a plan***" It is probably better translated "which He set forth ***with*** **Christ**". This plan of God was set forth with Jesus Christ from the beginning of time. The Father decreed with the Son all that comes to pass in Son. The Son accomplishes the plan, and the Spirit applies it to those who are in Christ.
- **Second, the plan comes to fulfillment at the right time** – "a plan for the fullness of time"…the plan was before the foundation of the world, but fulfilled at the right stage, at the right "times and seasons" of the building process.
- **Third, the ultimate plan itself is that all things in heaven and earth would be summed up in Christ** – this plan is "***to unite [think summation, or sum up] all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth***" This is the book of Ephesians in a short, concise statement. Everything in the universe that the tornado has destroyed, is now being put back together in stages, and in Christ Jesus! A Cosmic renovation with Christ as the pinnacle pointing to the lavish grace of God.

What are some things we can take away from this passage this morning?

APPLICATION

You are no longer slaves to sin, but you are now slaves of righteousness

The Bible doesn't give the picture of us as those who are free from slavery…ALLTOGETHER. The Bible depicts redemption as slavery from one form of slavery to another form of slavery. From slavery to sin, to slavery to righteousness. From slavery to sin to slaves of Christ.

> But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, [18] and, **having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. (Romans 6:18)**

Do you know what it looks like when a Christian walks in bondage to sin? It looks like someone who has had the chains cut…and with chains, broken and hanging from your wrist, you go over to a new set of chains and chain yourself once again! A redeemed Christian that is enslaved to sin is an impossibility in the mind of Paul, because you have a new master now! What fruit did you have in the things of which you are now ashamed! With what kind of intensity did you serve your taskmaster sin? Will you take that same intensity and focus that intensity on serving righteousness?

You are forgiven, so be forgiving

Take caution how you treat those for whom Christ has purchased with His blood. Especially in the church, when someone faults you…take care how you respond. Remember the low point from which God has rescued and forgiven you, and see one another through the blood stains of Jesus Christ.

> **Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)**

The gospel has been entrusted to us

God has graciously given us the greatest revelation in the history of mankind – the gospel of grace! God, who is the great steward over the plan, has now made you and I to be stewards over the mystery of Christ. Think of the care that a parent has when they are given a newborn child. How attentive, how careful and cautious. We have been entrusted with the gospel. Paul saw himself as a steward of this mystery. You and I are now stewards over the mystery of Christ. God's revelation comes with a high expectation to share His revelation with others and to live as members of His household in a way that honors Him and points people to His grace. Will you choose this week to be an ambassador for Christ and for righteousness?