

Ephesians 1:7-12 "Giving Praise for the Gift of God the Son"\*\*\*

Main Idea: God the Son deserves our praise because of three benefits we've received in Him that are identified in Ephesians 1:7-12.

From last week: At the beginning of Ephesians 1:3-14...

1. We learn that the Triune God put His grace on display (3-5).
    - a. The Father blessed us in Christ (3).
    - b. The Father chose us in Christ (4).
    - c. The Father predestined us to be adopted through Christ (5).
  2. We learn that the Triune God deserves our praise (6, 12, 14).
- I. In Christ we have redemption (7-8).
- A. It required His blood.
  - B. It resulted in our forgiveness.
  - C. It was made possible by the grace of God.
  - D. It puts on display the wisdom of God.
- II. In Christ we have revelation (9-10).
- A. We know that God has a plan (9).
    1. We know what the world doesn't know.
    2. We know the mystery of the gospel.
  - B. We know that God has a purpose (10).
    1. Because of Adam the universe fractured and fell apart.
    2. In Christ God is bringing everything back together where it belongs,  
under the headship of His Son.
- III. In Christ we have a rich inheritance (11-12).
- A. God designed it (11).
    1. Nothing just happens in God's universe.
    2. Everything happens according to the purpose of God's will.
  - B. God gave it to us so that we might make much of His Son (12).

1. Jesus Christ does not exist for me.
2. You and I exist for the praise of His glory.

Response: By God's grace, let's give the Son the place He deserves in our lives!

Anybody remember Vida Blue? I met him, well almost met him in the early 1970s in Cleveland. Vida Blue was a pitcher for the Oakland As who were playing the Indians that particular day. He wasn't just a pitcher. He was top of the game at the time. Pete Rose would later say that he "threw as hard as anyone" he'd ever faced. He went 24-8 in 1971 and won both the Cy Young and MVP awards, becoming the youngest player in the twentieth century to win the American League MVP award. He was the starting pitcher for the AL in the 1971 All-Star game, and after being traded to the San Francisco Giants actually started for the NL in the 1978 All-Star game.

So that's Vida Blue. On this particular summer day in Cleveland, Blue wasn't pitching, but he was on the sidelines signing autographs. And as a ten-year-old would be major leaguer myself, that's all that mattered to me. So I headed for the fence to get his signature, along with a hundred other young boys wanting the same thing. I pushed my way to get as close to the famous south paw as I could, and waited for my magic moment.

I never got his autograph, but believe it or not, I did get right up next to him, so close that I actually put my piece of paper out so that it touched his hand. But that's when he stopped his signing, and my paper returned to me signature-less. The funny thing about it was I kept that piece of paper for years (in fact, I've probably still got it somewhere in my collection of treasures), the piece of paper that Vida Blue touched.

It's interesting how we attribute value to things, and how that value is often disproportionate to their worth. For instance, if you'd asked me that day to trade you my Vida Blue paper for a college diploma, I'd probably have kept the Vida Blue paper (who cares about a college education when you're ten). And I hate to say, but if you had offered me a Bible, there's no question I would have rejected your deal.

It boils down to this. You prize what you consider to be valuable. You think about it. You spend your money on it. You invest your time to get it and then enjoy it.

We all value things, yet we all tend to attach the wrong value to things. That's a consequence of the sin-bent we've inherited from our forefather, Adam, who chose a piece of fruit over God and forfeited paradise.

You say, "Yea, how could Adam do that? What was he thinking?" The same thing you and I are thinking when we choose a boat over the Bible on a Sunday morning. We prize what we consider to be valuable, yet the value we attach to things is so often disproportionate to their worth.

That happens big time at Christmas. And that's one of the reasons why, for this particular Christmas series of messages, I'm taking us to Ephesians 1. Most of us just don't realize what we have in the gift of the Christ-child, and consequently we don't value Him as we should.

*For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son.* An incredible gift, yes? Then why, after the holiday ends, do we so often relegate this gift to back seat status in our lives? Again, a big reason is because we don't realize just how great this gift is. But Ephesians 1:3-14 can help us!

In the original text, Ephesians 1:3-14 is one, long packed sentence. You get the feeling that when Paul started talking about what God has done for us, he couldn't stop. And so on and on he went, with phrase after phrase, describing the amazing things that God has done for us.

From last week: At the beginning of Ephesians 1:3-14...we learn two things about God.

1. *We learn that the Triune God put His grace on display (3-5).* He's not just a generic God. He is a Triune God, for although He is one in essence He exists as three persons. Paul highlights the work of God the Father in verses 3-6, the work of God the Son in verses 7-12, and the work of God the Holy Spirit in verses 13-14.

Did you ever have someone give you more than one gift at Christmas, with this instruction, "Now you need to open this one first, and then this one, and then this one."? Why'd they tell you that? Because some gifts need to be opened in a certain order if we are to appreciate them fully. Well, if we want to appreciate fully the Son's gift at Bethlehem, we need to open up the Father's gift first, and that's a gift He "put under the tree" in eternity past.

We pondered God the Father's gift last time and discovered that His gift involves three activities.

**a. The Father blessed us in Christ (3).** With what? With every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. Notice that phrase "in Christ," for Paul uses it repeatedly in chapters 1-3. The Father's blessings are found *in Christ*. So if you are *in Christ*, as the first readers of this letter were, then you have every spiritual resource you need to live the kind of life that pleases your Maker. If not, then you don't.

**b. The Father chose us in Christ (4).** When? Verse 4 says He did so before He ever created the universe. And for what purpose did He choose us? He chose us in Christ so that we would be holy and blameless in His sight.

**c. The Father predestined us to be adopted through Christ (5).** Simply put, the Father wants a family of sons and daughters around His dining room table. And so in eternity past, He purposed to adopt unworthy rebels and to transform those rebels into holy and blameless children. Furthermore, He purposed to fulfill that plan through the work of His beloved Son, as we'll see in a moment.

2. *We learn that the Triune God deserves our praise (6, 12, 14).* After highlighting God the Father's activity, Paul announces in verse 6, "to the praise of His glorious grace." Then after God the Son's activities, Paul again states in verse 12, "for the praise of His glory." And after detailing God the Spirit's activity in our salvation, Paul says it yet again in verse 14, "to the praise of His glory."

That's what Christmas is all about...*glory*. Isn't that what the angels told the shepherds? "Glory to God in the highest (Luke 2:14)." God gave His Son. We are to give Him *glory*. Or as Paul puts it, *to the praise of the glory of His grace*.

What exactly is God's *glory*? John Stott explains, "The glory of God is the revelation of God, and the glory of His grace is His self-disclosure as a gracious God."<sup>[1]</sup> So God has revealed Himself. He has made His glory known, and specifically He has revealed that He is a gracious God. Now what's the appropriate response to His display of grace? *Praise*. We exist to call attention to, to give praise to the magnificent glory of His grace.

By the way, when grace stops being amazing, we are in trouble. Timothy George & John Woodbridge said it well in *The Mark of Jesus*:

"Most evangelicals have grown up with the language of grace and the music of grace, but sometimes our hearts have grown hardened to the true reality of grace. We suffer from grace-inflation. God's love and mercy no longer amaze, astound, and shatter. But once we understand who God is and what He has done for us in Jesus Christ, we will see that God's grace is an active, life-changing reality. The more we see our unworthiness, the more astounded we are at God's gracious favor and mercy toward us. And the more we realize that our life purpose must be to glorify God, to please Him in every way, the more others will notice the results of God's transforming grace in our lives."<sup>[2]</sup>

How can you tell if you've stopped being amazed by grace? Here's an indicator. It's when we stop being gracious towards the people around us, especially the hard to love people, which is precisely what we

were to God!

Even though we were unlovely, the Father blessed us, chose us, and predestined us to sonship through His Son, and for this He deserves our praise! But He's not alone. God the Son likewise deserves our praise because of three benefits we've received in Him that are identified in Ephesians 1:7-12.

### I. In Christ we have redemption (7-8).

Verses 7-8 "In him [referring to Christ; see the end of verse 6] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding."

We may not be familiar with the word "redemption," but the believers in Ephesus were. There were sixty million slaves in the Roman Empire in Paul's day, and they were often bought and sold like merchandise. And if a slave had a cruel master, that slave was in real trouble. But he had one hope, if someone else would buy him and set him free from the tyranny of life under a harsh master.

That's redemption, and that's what God has done for us in Christ. The English word "redemption" comes from two Latin words: *re* which means "again" and *emo, emere* which means "to acquire." So redemption means "to acquire again" or "to buy again." So by definition, redemption is "deliverance from bondage by the payment of a price."<sup>[3]</sup>

We learn four things about our redemption from verses 7-8.

**A. It required His blood.** "In Him we have redemption through His blood." Notice we are not self-redeemed (we didn't buy our own freedom), but redeemed *in Him*. It's in Christ that we have redemption. And what price did Christ pay to deliver us from our cruel master? We have redemption *through His blood*.

What does that mean? What about Christ's blood secured our freedom from sin? I don't think Paul is talking merely about the liquid substance that flowed through Christ's body. The shedding of blood is a reference to death. It's the fact that Christ shed His blood *and died* that accomplished our redemption. If the God-man had merely lived on planet earth for thirty-three years and then ascended to heaven without dying, His blood would not have rescued us. But He did die. He died as our substitute on the cross. He died as a sacrificial lamb, and His blood spilled out as a testimony of the price He paid to buy us again out of the marketplace of sin.

**B. It resulted in our forgiveness.** "We have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of sins*." The Old Testament tells us that God gave Israel a very special day called the Day of Atonement. On that day once a year two goats were taken. One was killed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat. The other goat was not killed. It was known as the scapegoat. Do you recall what they did with it? The sins of the people were confessed over the head of that goat, and then it was sent away, never to return. That's the meaning of the word *forgiveness* used here—the complete removal of sin.

And sin is plural here. We have the forgiveness of *sins* (Greek *paraptomaton*, which refers to our transgressions, our false steps, our acts of trespassing in God's world). They're all gone. Every sin we've ever committed has been removed from us. We don't bear them any longer because Christ bore them for us, and on the cross He endured the due punishment.

There's no double jeopardy with God. He doesn't punish sins twice. If you're in Christ, your sins are gone and so is the penalty for them. As Psalm 103:12 explains, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." And as God Himself announced in Jeremiah 31:34, "Their sin will I remember no more."

But why would a holy and just God punish His own Son rather than us? What would motivate Him to

offer rebels like us a redemption that results in total and undeserved forgiveness? It's not because of anything we have done.

**C. It was made possible by the grace of God.** "We have redemption...in accordance with *the riches of God's grace*." There's grace again. What was the basis of the Father's choice of us from eternity past? To the praise of His glorious *grace*, says verse 6. And on what basis did the Father choose to give His Son to pay our redemption price, and did the Son agree to shed His blood to remove our sins? Again, it's grace. We have redemption in accordance with the riches of God's grace.

Don't miss the obvious here. If you are in Christ, redemption is something you have. It's not something you have to wonder about. You either have it or you don't. Sadly, many people live their lives with the foolish notion that if they live a good life, then God will forgive them. But that's not true. And still others who do believe in Christ refuse to agree with what God says about their sins, and they continue to punish themselves with the horrid memory of their past sins. They're gone, beloved! If you're in Christ, your sins are gone. Your Savior has delivered you from your bondage by the payment of a price!

But there's more. The sentence continues in verse 8 where we discover something else about our redemption.

**D. It puts on display the wisdom of God.** "That [referring to God's grace] he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." I don't think the NIV gets the right sense here, for it uses the word "with" instead of "in." Granted, the Greek word *en* can go either way, and the verse could be saying that God lavished His grace on us "*with* all wisdom and understanding" (as in the NIV and NLT), or "*in* all wisdom and understanding" (as in the ASV, KJV, NKJV, and ESV).

In other words, the question is this. Is verse 8 telling us that God lavished on us grace *plus* some other things, namely wisdom and understanding? Or is it telling us *how* God lavished His redeeming grace on us, that He did it *in all wisdom and understanding*, referring to *His* wisdom and understanding? I think it's the latter.

I think that Paul here is affirming that in our redemption God demonstrated not only His grace, but also His wisdom and understanding too. Or to put it another way, God showered us with His grace in order to put His wisdom on display, and all the rest of His attributes, too! That's exactly what our redemption does. It puts the wisdom of God on center stage. How could God rescue rebel sinners and transform those sinners into His sons and daughters? Who could design a plan like that? Only a God who possesses all wisdom and understanding.

Let me give you a couple of texts to support this point. The first comes at the end of Romans 11. The first eleven chapters of Romans explain more fully than any other passage the marvelous plan of God's redemption. And how does Paul conclude that explanation? With a doxology of praise. And what divine attribute does he highlight first? He bursts into praise in Romans 11:33, "Oh, the depth of the riches of *the wisdom and knowledge of God!* How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" (see also verses 34-36, which conclude, "To him be the glory forever!")

The other text is right here in Ephesians. In chapter 3 Paul elaborates on the eternal plan of God to form a people for His glory. Why would God do this? Listen to Ephesians 3:10-11, "His intent was that now, through the church, *the manifold wisdom of God should be made known* to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God wanted to put His wisdom on display, so the angelic beings would praise Him (says Ephesians 3), so we the redeemed would praise Him (says Romans 11). That's what redemption is all about. It required His blood, resulted in our forgiveness, was made possible by His grace, and puts on display His matchless wisdom. The bottom line, it's for the praise of His glory! And in Christ, redemption is what we have.

But there's more! Not only do we have redemption, but...

## II. In Christ we have revelation (9-10).

Verse 9 begins, "And he made known to us." *He* is referring to God the Father. *Us* is referring to those who are in Christ (initially to Jews who are in Christ, and then by extension to Gentiles who are in Christ; we'll see Paul switch from "we" and "us" to "you" in verse 13). But for now, the point is this. God has made some things known to those of us who are in Christ. What do we know? Two pieces of revelation.

**A. We know that God has a plan (9).** "And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ." Did you catch that? According to this verse...

1. *We know what the world doesn't know.* We know it because God has made something known to the people He has redeemed that previously was a mystery to us and remains a mystery to the world. Paul here calls it "the mystery of His will."

What is this mystery? Paul used the word six times in Ephesians and four times in Colossians. By definition, the Greek word refers to something previously unknown that has been made known. Specifically, a mystery is a truth which would not be known to men if God had not revealed it.

And what is this revealed truth that we know? Paul says it's something which God "purposed in Christ." In 3:6 Paul tells us precisely what God purposed in Christ, "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." That's the mystery. Gentiles can become God's heirs just like Jews can.

But how? Paul explains in Colossians 1:27, "To them [referring to "the saints" in verse 26] God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory." And Colossians 2:2 boils it down even further, saying that the mystery is *Christ*.

So there's the mystery. It's *Christ*. It's *Christ in you*. It's the truth that if Christ is in you, then you are part of God's forever family, whether you were born in Jerusalem or Jakarta. That's God's plan, and that's what we know. To put it plainly...

2. *We know the mystery of the gospel.*

Do the following words mean anything to you? *Growl like a tiger, run like a deer*. Probably not. They do to me. They do to my dad and my brother. Why? Because when I was a child we had a clubhouse, and to get in you had to know and say the secret password. If you didn't know you, you couldn't get inside. To outsiders, the words were nothing but jubberish. But not to us on the inside. I knew the significance, and I knew it because it had been made known to me.

Do the following words make sense to you? *Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb*. They don't to millions of people on this planet who don't know that God has a plan, and that it's God's plan to rescue sinners through the ransom payment His Son provided on the cross. But we know, if we're in Christ.

And why do we know? Notice the phrase, "According to his good pleasure." Paul is talking about God the Father and clarifying that was the Father's good pleasure that prompted all this. Some people have the notion that God the Father is sort of the serious one in the Godhead, and that it's the Son who really loves us. I appreciate a comment I read by William Hendriksen on this phrase, "We learn from this that the Father, far from being less loving than the Son, *takes special delight* in planning whatever must be planned in order to bring about the salvation, full and free, of men who had plunged themselves into misery and ruin, and takes equal pleasure in telling them about this marvelous plan!"<sup>[4]</sup>

But there's another piece of revelation we know. First, we know God has a plan.

**B. We know that God has a purpose (10).** "To be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ."

Some say that history is meaningless, that this world is heading nowhere fast. We know better. We know that the Sovereign God has an amazing purpose that He's intent on fulfilling. What's more, we know what that purpose is, and we know what it is because in Christ we have revelation.

Okay, so where is this universe heading? To tell us Paul selected a very interesting word in verse 10, *anakephalaioo*, here translated, "to bring all things together under one head." The only other place it appears in the Bible is in Romans 13:9 where Paul says that all the commandments of the law "are summed up" in this one rule: love your neighbor as yourself." To *sum up*, that's our word. The verb means "to bring something to a *kephalaion* (to a head), that is, to bring together, to sum up, to bring to a conclusion."

That's what God's purpose is, but what exactly does this word indicate is going to happen? We find a clue at the end of the chapter where Paul uses a related term in Ephesians 1:22, "And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head [Greek *kephale*] over everything for the church." Two thousand years ago God made His Son *head* over the church. That's past tense. But the same thing is going to happen in the future, and this time regarding, not just the church, but the whole universe. God is going to bring everything in heaven and on earth under the headship of His Son.

Why does He need to do that, in the first place? Here's why...

1. *Because of Adam the universe fractured and fell apart.* It's true. When our representative, Adam, sinned, he split everything apart. He alienated man from God, man from fellow man, man from the created order, even man from himself. And what Adam initiated, we perpetuate. Because of sin, families fragment. Nations fragment. Workplaces fragment. Ball teams fragment. That's the norm. Bringing people together takes a ton of work and in the end, the effort eventually fails. We're living in a world that's fractured.

But here's the good news. The day is coming when that's going to change, and here's why...

2. *In Christ God is bringing everything back together where it belongs, under the headship of His Son.* That's what verse 10 says. When the times reach their fulfillment, God is going "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ." The *ESV* says God's purpose is "to unite all things in him." I like how the *NLT* puts it, "God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth."

That's the certain purpose of God, beloved, and by His grace we know it. Yes, right now we see discord and division in the world, but that's going to end one day when our Savior returns, and every knee bows to Him.

But there's more! As we continue to pull out the telescoping sections of this wonderful sentence, we discover a third benefit. In Christ we have redemption and revelation. Furthermore...

### III. In Christ we have a rich inheritance (11-12).

Verse 11 begins, "In him we were also chosen." Sounds like what Paul told us in verse 4, except this is a different Greek word. *Chosen* here comes from the word *kleroo*. The noun *kleronomos* means "heir," and the related verb *kleronomeo* means "to inherit." So Paul is talking about a particular kind of choosing. His word indicates that we have been chosen by God to receive His inheritance (in verse 18, Paul takes it a step further and tells us that we *are* God's inheritance). As the *ESV* reads, "In him we have obtained an inheritance."

So we have an inheritance? Yes. What's true of our inheritance? Two things.

**A. God designed it (11).** "In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the

plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will." As I mentioned last time, don't be frightened by the word "predestined." It's a wonderful, comfort-giving, God-exalting, evangelism-promoting, fear-removing, endurance-inspiring word. It makes it absolutely clear that...

1. *Nothing just happens in God's universe.* There is no such thing as luck or chance, for there is a Sovereign Lord on the throne, one who said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (Matt. 28:18)." And this Sovereign God had us in mind in eternity past. We were *predestined* according to His plan. Verse 5 says He predestined us to be His adopted sons and daughters. Now verse 11 indicates He predestined us to have a share in His inheritance. This wonderful word also makes it clear that...

2. *Everything happens according to the purpose of God's will.* If He chose you from eternity past, and He's already declared that you will receive His inheritance in eternity future, you can be sure there will be no surprise glitches along the way! If you are in Christ you have an eternally secure inheritance.

But why? Why would the Sovereign God give us His own inheritance? Here's why.

**B. God gave it to us so that we might make much of His Son (12).** "In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ [the "we" is probably a reference to Paul and other Jewish Christians, for they were the *first* to hope in Christ; the apostle will switch to "you" in the next verse], might be for the praise of his glory."

There it is again. Why did the Father bless us, choose us, and predestine us? So that we might be *to the praise of His glorious grace* (6). And why did He give us in His beloved Son redemption, revelation, and a rich inheritance? Same reason! So that we *might be for the praise of His glory*, with "His" referring to the Son, in my estimation.

Now take a good look at that statement, for we tend to turn it around. We tend to want God to make much of us. And so we treat Him like He's a Genie in a bottle. He's not! Look again.

1. *Jesus Christ does not exist for me.*

2. *You and I exist for the praise of His glory.* We should be looking for ways to make much of Him, not ourselves. That's why church is important. That's why evangelism is important. That's why serving the needy is important. These are ways to make much of Him.

But do you know what short-circuits praise? Pride does. Our pride is a barrier to God-exalting praise. Proud people don't praise God because they're thinking about themselves. So if we're going to praise our Savior as He deserves, we need to cultivate humility in our hearts, and do that by the grace of God.

You say, "How can I tell if there's pride lurking in me?" Here's a tell-tale sign. Do you tend to judge other people while tolerating sin in your own life? Jonathan Edwards offers this important assessment: "Spiritual pride is very apt to suspect others, whereas a humble saint is more jealous of himself; he is so suspicious of nothing in the world as he is of his own heart... The eminently humble person has so much to do at home, and sees so much evil in his own heart, and is so concerned about it, that he is not apt to be very busy with others' hearts; he complains most of himself, and cries out of his own coldness and lowness in grace, and is apt to esteem others better than himself."<sup>[5]</sup>

Is that describing you? Are you are a person who spends a lot of time on your knees dealing with the evil in your own heart? If you are, you're probably spending a lot of time praising God, too, for He's the only One who can clean up a wicked heart. But if you're not on your knees, if you're a critic and a finger-pointer, you're probably not praising God much either, are you? Beloved, our pride prevents praise. May God help us to be hard on ourselves and gracious towards each other.

*Response: By God's grace, let's give the Son the place He deserves in our lives!*

As we finish, please notice how that *doctrine*, when rightly understood, leads to *doxology*. The doctrine of God the Father in verses 3-5 leads to doxology in verse 6. The doctrine of God the Son in



verses 7-11 leads to doxology in verse 12. And as we'll see next time, the Lord willing, the doctrine of God the Holy Spirit as explained in verses 13-14 leads to doxology at the end of verse 14.

## *Communion*

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\*\*Note: This is an unedited manuscript of a message preached at Wheelersburg Baptist Church. It is provided to prompt your continued reflection on the practical truths of the Word of God.

[1] John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, p. 50.

[2] Timothy George & John Woodbridge, *The Mark of Jesus*, p. 45.

[3] James M. Boice, *Our Savior God*, p. 139.

[4] William Hendriksen, p. 85.

[5] Jonathan Edwards, *Thoughts on the Revival in New England*, Part IV, pp. 274-5; quote taken from Timothy George & John Woodbridge, *The Mark of Jesus*, p. 53.