

7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace<sup>8\*</sup> which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight<sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him<sup>10</sup> with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. NASB95

The apostle Paul is enumerating some of the spiritual blessings that God has graciously bestowed on us in Jesus Christ. He has mentioned God's choosing us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him (1:4). He tells us that in love, God predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will (1:5). He says that in Christ, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace which He lavished on us (1:7).

Some scholars link the next phrase, "in all wisdom and insight," with the preceding phrase, meaning that God gave us wisdom and insight to understand our redemption and forgiveness. Or, it may (as in the NASB) point ahead to the next blessing, that God has given us wisdom and insight to understand the mystery of His will, or His plan for the ages. In 1:8b-10, Paul's message and its application are,

Because God's plan for the ages is to sum up all things under Christ, we should rejoice in and gladly participate in the expressed purposes of Christ our Lord.

Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life* is still phenomenally popular. The message is you use God to help you reach your goals, which completely perverts the biblical message of Christ's purpose for His body, the church. If we understand that God's purpose is to be glorified through the church and life you want your few years on this earth to count for eternity, you must bring yourself to understanding life under Christ's lordship and in line with God's purpose for the ages, which is to bring all things into one harmonious whole under Jesus Christ as Lord. Note four things:

1. God has a purpose for the ages.

It is only reasonable that an all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful God would have a

comprehensive plan for the world that He spoke into existence and that He would have the ability to carry out that plan.

A. God has a sovereign purpose (some prefer to use the word plan) and He has the ability to effectually and effectively have it come to its fulfillment.

Many Scriptures affirm this evident truth. For example, Job 42:2 declares, “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.”

Psalm 103:19 rejoices that, “The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, and His sovereignty rules over all.”

Psalm 115:3 states, “But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.”

In Isaiah 46:9-10, God declares, “For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all My good pleasure.’”

In Daniel 4:34-35, the humbled Nebuchadnezzar blesses, praises, and honors the Most High, who lives forever, “For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, ‘What have You done?’”

Or, as Paul comprehensively states in Ephesians 1:11, we have “been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.”

Some deny that God is sovereign over all that occurs, because they reason that it would make Him the author of evil. But, the Bible is clear that God decreed beforehand what will occur in history, including such evil events as the crucifixion of Christ (Acts 2:23; 4:27-28) and the rise of the Antichrist (2 Thess. 2:8-10; Rev. 13). Yet, at the same time, God is not the author of evil or responsible for it (1 John 1:5). God declares (Isa. 45:7) that He is “the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being

and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.” Or, Amos 3:6 asks rhetorically, “If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?” God declares to the prophet Habakkuk that He is raising up the evil Chaldeans to discipline His people Israel. In that context, the prophet rightly declares of God (Hab. 1:13), “Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and You can not look on wickedness with favor.” God is sovereign even over evil, yet He is not the author of evil and is not responsible for it. The Bible is clear that He has a purpose and it will be fulfilled and accomplished.

B. God’s purpose is according to His own good pleasure.

Paul states (Eph. 1:9) that God’s will is “according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him.” “Kind intention” is a single Greek word that means “good pleasure” (the same word is in 1:5).

Jesus used this word in Luke 10:21, when He said,

“I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.”

It refers to the fact that God does what He does simply because it pleases Him to do so. In other words, He does not determine His purpose based upon anything outside of Himself. He did not look down through the corridors of time and then decide on what His purpose would be. He did not base His choice on any merit or worthiness that He foresaw in us.

John Calvin (Sermons on Ephesians [Banner of Truth, 1973], p. 58) points out that Paul uses this word to “put away and shut out all opinion which men might conceive of their own worthiness.” Then he adds, “For God’s good pleasure can have no place unless men are barred from all deserving and come to him utterly empty.” So, God’s purpose to save us (which is Paul’s subject in the context here) is totally because of His grace and good pleasure.

C. God carries out His purpose according to His sovereign will.

D. God lives in a timeless existence but His purpose is accomplished as far as the temporal creation is concerned with a beginning and an end.

Paul says (1:10) that God's purpose is "with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times...." It means that "God orders everything in its full time and in sovereign wisdom orders the time of all things for His creation.

Paul uses a similar phrase in Galatians 4:4-5 with reference to the incarnation:

**"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons."**

In other words, God brought the Savior into the world at His appointed time. He promised to send a Savior to Adam and Eve after they fell into sin (Gen. 3:15). But at least 2,000 years went by before God chose to call Abraham out of Mesopotamia. God promised to give Abraham a son and the land and to bless the nations through His descendant, Jesus Christ.

But, Abraham's descendants had to spend 400 years in captivity in Egypt, while the world waited for the Savior. Then there was about 1,000 years of Israel's mostly disobedient history, including the Babylonian captivity. There were 400 more silent years, with no prophetic word from God. Finally, at least 4,000 years after Adam and 2,000 years after Abraham, God sent His Son into this world.

Was God late? Absolutely not. Although we may wonder why God waited so long, while millions of people down through the centuries died in their sins, God sent His Son at precisely the right moment, from His divine plan. He is in charge of the events of history, and no evil tyrant or disobedient nation can thwart God's plan.

William Carey understood this. William Carey was the first to see God's mission in India, at least as far as we know and since the 18th century. A Brahman asked him, "Why did not your God let my father's hear this message? William Carey responded, "At one time it pleased God to keep the Gospel from India. God has His reasons for doing so."

This truth gives us encouragement and hope, especially when we see frightening

international events unfolding, such as the threat of militant Islamic terrorists who are determined to destroy many nations. It also applies to our individual history, when tragedy strikes or things seem to be spinning out of control. God is still Sovereign and nothing is beyond His sovereign purpose.

2. God has graciously given us wisdom and insight to know His plan for the ages.

“All wisdom and insight” (1:8b) refers to the wisdom and insight that God has graciously given to us so that we can know “the mystery of His will.” We need to understand several terms. Wisdom is a general term that refers to understanding the true nature of things, whereas insight refers to practical discernment that results in right action in daily life. In the context here, the idea is that God has given us the wisdom we need to apprehend His gracious eternal plan of salvation and the practical outworking of it in our daily lives. William Barclay put it (cited by Grassmick, *ibid.*), “Christ gives to men the ability to see the great ultimate truths of eternity and to solve the problems of each moment of time.”

Paul says (1:9) that God “made known to us the mystery of His will....” Mystery does not refer to a closely guarded secret that only those in the secret inner circle understand. (It was used in this way in the “mystery” religions of the first century.) Nor does it refer to something vague, nebulous, and indefinite. Rather, it means something that was previously unknown, but now has been revealed. God has graciously revealed to us what we never could have figured out by ourselves, namely, His sovereign will or plan for the ages, to sum up everything in Christ.

Paul uses this idea of God revealing the mystery of His will, in other places. In Romans 16:25-26, he writes, “Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested ....” Or, in 1 Corinthians 1, Paul contrasts the wisdom of the world, through which they could not come to know God, with the wisdom of God as displayed at the cross. Then, in 2:6-7, he explains, “Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age

nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory." He goes on to explain how God has to reveal this wisdom to us, because the natural man is incapable of understanding it (2:14).

Even though God has given us wisdom and insight into the mystery of His will, such wisdom and insight is gained by diligent study of the Scriptures, asking God to give us such wisdom and insight, so that we might walk in a manner that is worthy of the Lord. As Proverbs (2:2-4) tells us, we must seek for wisdom as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures.

Thus, God has a purpose for the ages and He has graciously given us wisdom and insight to know this purpose

3. God's purpose for the ages is to sum up all things under Jesus Christ as Lord.

The Greek verb translated "summing up" means to bring together or to gather up in one. It implies that things were before in disharmony or disarray (because of the fall), but now they will be brought together in unity. "The idea is that the discordant and disintegrating elements in the creative realm will be renewed and unified under the Lordship of Jesus. Everything will be brought into submission to his will and subservience to his glory." The Greek scholar, J. B. Lightfoot concludes (Notes on Epistles of St. Paul [Baker, 1980 reprint], ed. by J. R. Harmer, p. 322), "Thus the expression implies the entire harmony of the universe, which shall no longer contain alien and discordant elements, but of which all the parts shall find their centre and bond of union in Christ."

Paul explains "all things" by adding, "things in the heavens and things on the earth." This is a figure of speech that expresses comprehensiveness. It includes the restoration of the fallen creation (Rom. 8:18-23); the salvation and perfect sanctification of all of God's elect (Eph. 1:4); and, eternal rest from conflict for the elect angels (1 Tim. 5:21), whose ministry to us engages them in battle with the forces of Satan (Daniel 10:12-13; Rev. 12:7-9).

God will sum up all things in Christ (reconciling all things to Himself in Col. 1:20) and every knee will someday bow before Jesus and acknowledge Him as Lord, either willingly or forcibly (Phil. 2:9-11).

Paul will go on (in Eph. 2 & 3) to emphasize that the church is now the prototype of God's ultimate purpose of reunification. Specifically, the mystery that God has now revealed is that the Jews and the Gentiles (who were about as discordant groups as you could find!) are now fellow members of the one body of Christ (see 3:4-6). Thus in chapter 4, he emphasizes strongly the need for practical, demonstrable love and unity in the church.

But here he is laying the theological foundation for such behavior, namely, that the church is the first glimpse of what God ultimately purposed. His intention for the ages is to reunite in Christ everything that has been torn apart and alienated through sin.

God displays His glory through the church. In the era of the New Covenant: God unleashes the display of His own glory more fully now than ever before- nothing is now held back, especially in light of His glory manifested in Christ.

This glory is all revealed under Christ because Christ rules and reigns as head of all things and in this New covenant era, the Church comprised of Jew and Gentile as, the bride, the body of Christ, His Temple in Him and One New People in Christ – is God's chosen means of displaying His glory now. This has **never** been accomplished before.

The Church – is God's chosen means of displaying His glory now.

God is a glory displaying and pursuing God. God is in pursuit of his own glory through Christ's church. This is the overriding umbrella under which God operates in the world.

**"he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace . . ." Ephesians 1:5-6a**

**We are also chosen ". . . in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory." Ephesians 1:12**

**We are sealed by the Holy Spirit " . . . who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory". Ephesians 1:14**

The drama unfolds because “9And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10to 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.

In the end, there will be no strife or rivalry or selfishness or jealousy or tyranny of one person over another in the future kingdom of Christ. While we wait for that great day, we must labor to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

The bottom line of Paul’s theology here is:

4. When we understand God’s eternal purpose, it will prove that Christ’s Spirit is causing us to live as the New Covenant people we are, under the Lordship of Christ as His kingdom people on mission to glorify Christ as we advance the kingdom by bringing the Gospel to all nations. If all things will be subject one day to Jesus Christ as Lord and if all of His subjects will dwell together in the unhindered harmony of heaven, then it follows that we now should bring every area of our lives and every relationship under His sovereign lordship in that now/not yet understanding. A taste now, the fullness later.

God has told us that His purpose for the ages is to sum up or reunite all things in one harmonious whole under Jesus Christ. We know that God will do as He purposes to do. It is certain that He will accomplish all His good pleasure (Isa. 46:10). Every knee will bow before Jesus as Lord, either willingly or under force. It is far better to bow willingly now than to bow under force at the judgment, when there will be no chance for repentance!

Our priorities and values are to reflect who we are according to Christ’s own words, “You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of world.” Do we hunger and thirst to know Him and His righteousness.

We are to order our relationships according to His Word.

Jesus is proclaiming that we have a purpose in the world regardless of how our witness is received. We are here to leave a mark on the world. We are here to make a



difference in this sinful, unholy, wicked and depraved world of sinners whether it is appreciated or not. In the end, all of the world is without Christ and is nothing but a heap of sin and all the results of sinners living in sin.

We are to show mercy and be meek and be peacemakers not compromisers.

And so it is amazing to me that Jesus uses the metaphors of salt and light to describe what our witness is to be like.

We are the salt of the earth Jesus says. We are the preservative for anything that may be good in this sin ridden world.

Everyplace place where there is a genuine normal Christian living as they should is a better place to some degree than if that person was not there.

You become absolutely foolish in the eyes of men and of no value to the kingdom if you lose your saltiness.

The Lord Jesus is saying, I didn't give you light, I didn't make you light, I didn't enlighten your hearts and your minds so that you could keep it to yourself. I did it so that you would share it with the world, so that you would influence the world by truth. You are to be spiritual light in the midst of depravity. You are to be spiritual wisdom in the midst of untruth. And that requires you to have a burning desire to do good for the world. To be an active witness in the world is to show genuine concern for the world.

It means we are here for a purpose and God cares enough about sinners to preserve His people and the word of God through the ages so all sinners whom He will save by His grace for His purpose and for His pleasure will be saved.

And so, we learn that we must hate the world without hating the world, but we must learn to love the world without loving the world. That is what Jesus is saying here. We must love the world without loving the world. Our love must be in accordance with truth and it must be without compromise.

when He says, let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven. We are God's people. We are salt

and light. That is His estimation of us no matter what the world thinks. And because we are salt and light, we must live in such a way to bear witness to His work in us for He is working to will and to do his good pleasure in us and so be working out work out your salvation.

The church must live in this way, not to draw attention to herself but to Christ and the Glory of the Father. The Pharisees did that. The Pharisees lived in such a way that the world would say to them, “how pious you are.”

We will get enough attention if we are living the norms of the Beatitudes which are the norms of the Christian life as individuals and magnified by the body of Christ.

Christ says, My goal for you My disciples is that I want you to live in such a way that they will see your good works and not praise you, but glorify the Father who is in heaven .

The outcome of redemptive history is certain and God has revealed it to us in advance. He is going to sum up all things under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Knowing that outcome, you'd be a fool to bet your life on anything else. God wants each of us to spend our lives furthering His kingdom purposes. In light of His revealed sovereign purpose, that's the only wise way to invest your life!

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You are the mystery kept hidden but now revealed – a new people for His own possession. You are the church of Jesus Christ unto the praise of His glorious grace.