

PURPOSEFUL REDEMPTION (Eph 1:7–10)

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Happy Father's Day. The book of Ephesians opens by declaring "grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph 1:2). On this Father's Day we get to revel in a current of amazing grace that has its headwaters sourced in the abundant, ever-replenishing love of our heavenly Father.

We pick up today in Ephesians 1:7, which directly builds on the declaration that ended last week's sermon. Look with me at verses 5–6; here Paul declares that God predestined us for adoption *through Jesus Christ* "to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved." Grace is God the Father's undeserved favor toward his adopted children, and verse 6 proclaims four beautiful truths about this grace: (1) It's praiseworthy or worthy of admiration. (2) It's glorious, displaying the very holy nature of God; central to God's being is a loving disposition even toward the ungodly. (3) Grace is how God blesses us; we are saved by grace alone, and without grace there is only curse. (4) God's grace only comes to us *in the Beloved*.

Jesus has already showed up many times in the letter, but Paul's common title for him is *the Christ*, using the Greek rendering of the Hebrew term Messiah, in whom Old Testament hopes for salvation rested. In verse 1, Paul is an apostle *of Christ*, and the Ephesian church are those faithful *in Christ*. In verse 2, Paul brings grace and peace *from Christ*, the very one whom verse 3 says has God as *his* Father and *in whom* we are blessed. Verse 4 notes that *in Christ* we were chosen, and verse 5 asserts that *through Christ* we are adopted. But now, in verse 6, rather than saying that we are blessed *in Christ* the text declares we are blessed *in the Beloved*.

In the Old Testament, "the Beloved" is a title given to God's people, who will specifically enjoy his help through his Messiah at the end of the age. Thus, the New English Translation of the Septuagint renders Deuteronomy 33:36, "There is none like the God of the Beloved; he who rides upon the sky is your helper." And in Isaiah 44:2, "You will still be helped; do not fear, O Jacob my servant the Beloved Israel who I have chosen." How will God help his people? He will do so through his messianic Servant, who represents the people perfectly and bears their identity (49:3, 6). The end-times people can be counted as children of the heavenly Father because Jesus, the perfect Son, is God's Beloved.

Having drawn attention to Christ in this special way, what follows are three assertions that clarify the evidence of God's blessing that comes to us in the Beloved. Look at verse 7: "In him" (that is, in the Beloved) we have redemption. Then in verse 11: "In him" we have obtained an inheritance or, perhaps better,

been selected as God's portion. And finally, in verse 13: "In him" you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. We have here three proofs of God's blessing toward us in God's Beloved Son. His perfect uprightness (= Jeshurun) resulted in his enjoying the covenant love of God, which is now directed toward us who belong to him. This Father's Day we get to revel in praiseworthy grace, glorious grace, blessed grace, all of which comes to us in God's Beloved Son.

In verses 7–10, one sign of God's blessing toward us is that, in the Beloved, God graciously redeems us. The text has three parts:

1. The essence of our redemption (v. 7)
2. Evidence of our redemption (vv. 8–9)
3. The end of our redemption (v. 10)

We will see that for God to redeem us means that he pardons our sins, and God pardons us as part of his gracious plan for universal peace. This is my main idea: *God pardons us as part of his gracious plan for universal peace.*

Read along with me beginning in 1:7.... Pray with me....

The Essence of Our Redemption: Our Pardon in Christ (v. 7)

Paul begins in verse 7, "In [the Beloved Son] we have redemption." The apostle uses a legal term for the rightful release or liberation of someone or something once bound, whether as a slave under hostile control (e.g., Exod 21:8; cf. Rom 8:23) or as one regarded as a criminal (Heb 11:35). Paul consistently employs this term "redemption" to refer either to the declaration of freedom from bondage to sin and God's wrath that believers presently enjoy (Rom 3:24; Col 1:14; cf. Heb 9:15) or to the complete freedom we will enjoy in the future day when there will be no more tears, death, or curse (Eph 1:14; 4:30; cf. Luke 21:28). We were all enslaved to sin's power, awaiting the just sentence for sin's penalty. "The wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). We were already spiritually "dead in the trespasses and sins" in which we walked (Eph 2:1), and as such we were "by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind" (2:3). Eternal hell exists not because God is a bad judge but because he is a good judge. Justice means giving someone what they are due, and a failure to give an infinitely glorious God the honor he deserves demands an infinitely equal punishment—eternal death.

Yet into our darkness and dismal future the Father sent his Beloved Son to die in our stead and by this to free us from our sentence of death. Thus, Paul here says, "We have redemption through [Jesus's] blood." The apostle assumes here that you and "I heard the old, old story, how a Savior came from glory, how he

gave his life on Calvary to save a wretch like me.” Paul assumes that you and “I heard about his groaning, of his precious blood’s atoning,” and he believes that we’ve repented of our sins and won the victory. “O victory in Jesus, my Savior forever. He sought me and bought me with his redeeming blood. He loved me before I knew him, and all my love is due him. He plunged me to victory beneath the cleansing flood.”

Paul here speaks of the great exchange wherein our sins are placed on Christ, and his perfect righteousness is counted as ours. “As one trespass [from Adam] led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness [by Jesus] leads to justification and life for all men” who are in him (Rom 5:18). “For our sake God made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). The blows Jesus bore and the blood he shed are the sole means by which we can be saved. The redemption in Christ only comes through his suffering unto death, as the full force of God’s wrath was poured on the Son so that ungodly men and women like you and me could be freed from sin’s penalty and sin’s power.

This is why Paul now defines what he means by “redemption.” “In [the Beloved] we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses.” In Colossians 1:14 Paul says the same thing but uses the term “sins.” Both “trespasses” and “sins” refer to the violation of God’s standard that demands punishment. You and I owed the all-glorious God our perfect, unstained loyalty, yet we have failed to pay him his due. Yet we who “were dead in our trespasses and sins” (Eph 2:1), “God made alive together with [Christ], having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross” (Col 2:13–14). In Christ—that is his Beloved Son, God graciously pardons us.

Like a massive debt that has been absolved, God forgives an ocean of violation and offense. If you’re a father today or if you’re offspring of a father, consider the breathtaking scope of sins from which God has redeemed those in the Beloved: addiction, adultery, anxiety, apathy, argumentativeness, arrogance, backbiting, bestiality, bitterness, blasphemy, boasting, carelessness, cheating, coarse joking, covetousness, a critical spirit, cowardliness, cross dressing, deceit, disobedience, dishonoring parents, dissension, division, divorce that’s unlawful, drunkenness, enmity, envy, evil thoughts, faithlessness, fear that’s misplaced, fits of anger, foolish talk or action, fornication, gossip, greed, gluttony, hating God and others, haughtiness, heresy, homosexuality, hypocrisy, idolatry, immodesty, immorality, impurity, insolence, jealousy, laziness, lawlessness, lovelessness, lust, lying, malice, materialism, mercilessness, murder, neglect of God’s Word, occult activity, orgies, passivity, pornography, prayerlessness, prejudice, pride,

procrastination, profanity, quenching the Spirit, rebellion to authority, resentment, reveling, rivalry, rudeness, ruthlessness, sedition, seduction, self-harm, selfishness, self-righteousness, sensuality, sexual immorality, slander, sloth, sorcery, stealing, strife, swindling, theft, transgenderism, unbelief, unforgiveness, ungodliness, unrepentance, unrighteousness, unholiness, vanity, witchcraft, workaholism, worklessness, worry, wrath. And this is just a beginning list of what Jesus, God's Beloved, came to save us from by his blood.

Are the fathers in this room happy that you can be forgiven? Are those who have fathers in this room relieved that you can be redeemed? Paul stresses elsewhere that we are "justified by [God's] grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.... Since, therefore, we have been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God" (Rom 3:24; 5:9). Brothers and sisters, this is amazing grace.

Indeed, as the apostle now says, this pardon was "according to the riches of [God's] grace" (Eph 1:7). To speak of "the wealth of God's grace" points to the immeasurable amount of favor he has stockpiled in his heavenly storehouses (cf. 2:7 with 1:18; 3:8, 16). Our redemption manifest in the forgiveness of our trespasses stands in conformity with or in alignment with these riches of grace. The measure of grace we enjoy in Christ is an overflow of the wealth of heavenly grace that God has poured out. The damn has broken, the flood gates are opened, and our once parched, wilting souls are now receiving the unending, ever-replenishing life-giving saturation of saving grace. *God pardons us as part of his gracious plan.*

Evidence of Our Redemption: Our Perception of God's Purpose in Christ (vv. 8–9)

Not everyone in this world enjoys the precious pardon of sins. It's only those who are *in the Beloved* Christ. Paul now offers one proof for us as to whether we are indeed in him—we will perceive God's plan in Jesus. Verse 8 notes that the riches of grace that birthed our forgiveness were indeed "lavished upon us," which highlights again the immeasurable vastness of grace at God's bestowal.

Next is the phrase "in all wisdom and insight," and there is question whether this modifies what follows or what precedes. The ESV translators were apparently divided. In the main translation they put a comma before "in all wisdom and insight," thus connecting it with what follows and saying that it clarifies how God's wisdom and insight gave rise to his revealing a mystery (also NIV, NASB). But see if your Bible includes a footnote in verse 9 after the initial phrase "making known"; in my ESV the translators highlight that the phrase could relate to what precedes, thus clarifying that the grace God lavished on us is seen in our own wisdom and insight into God's plan (also NLT, CSB, NET). I think this latter

option is more likely because in 1:17 Paul prays that his hearers would enjoy “a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of [God].” Similarly, in 5:18 Paul wants his readers to be wise, and in Colossians 1:9 he likewise prays that the believers would “be filled with the knowledge of [God’s] will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.” So, as I look at the text, I think the comma should go at the end of verse 8.

One proof that you and I enjoy God’s saving grace is that we are growing in our understanding of his plan for history culminating in Christ. The Lord has taught us, and we have heard and learned from the Father and come to Jesus (John 6:45; cf. Isa 54:13). We thus have wisdom and insight—a personal experience of knowing how the reigning God eternally saves and satisfies sinners who believe and does so through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (cf. Jer 31:34).

The beginning of verse 9 clarifies how we have this understanding. God has lavished his grace upon us in all wisdom and insight by “making known to us the mystery of his will.” The phrase “making known” refers to God’s revelation that results in us having new spiritual sight. Thus, in verse 18 Paul will pray, “having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.” The revelatory language is like how Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians 3–4, where he says of most Jews of his day: “Their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed” (2 Cor 3:14–16). For believers, “God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6). And now “we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (3:18). This is the proof of our redemption to which Paul points.

Next, we see what God had made known: “the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ” (Eph 1:9). Throughout the New Testament, the term “mystery” refers to something that was partially known in the Old Testament era but is now more fully understood in the New. The Old Testament is loaded with promises and predictions about Christ’s coming, about his tribulation and triumph, and about the universal work of salvation he would ignite. Yet it is only in his coming that the full picture becomes clear. Like a good mystery novel that is filled with clues that are not fully recognized or understood until the last chapter, God waited for Christ’s appearing to clarify how all the earlier clues related to each other. And now that Jesus has come we have a better sense of God’s purposes in the world, for God has made them known to us.

Specifically, the revelation of God's mystery relates to the latter-days or end-times work of God through Jesus. Later in this letter, Paul unpacks the revealed mystery and its significance for the Ephesian believers, and he would have expected that what he says later would impact a second or third reading of chapter 1 for those like us who would give sustained and intentional thought to his message. For example, in 3:4–6 he says,

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. (Eph 3:4–6; cf. v. 9)

He then refers to the mystery in 3:7 as “this gospel,” and in 6:19 he asks the church to pray that he would be able to boldly “proclaim the mystery of the gospel,” for which he is presently in chains.

One evidence that you are redeemed is that you have personally experienced God's curse-overcoming, universe-reconciling work in Jesus. You've seen that Christ is King; you've embraced that he is the only Savior; you've repented of your sins, have surrendered to him as Lord, and have joyfully affirmed that you are now part of his mission of reconciling the world to God. If the word of the cross is no longer foolishness to you and if Christ Jesus has indeed become to you “wisdom from God”—your “righteousness and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor 1:30), then you have proof that indeed you are among the redeemed. *God pardons us as part of his gracious plan for universal peace.*

The End of Our Redemption: Universal Peace with God in Christ (v. 10)

In verse 7 Paul clarified the essence of our redemption: our pardon in Christ. Then verses 8–9 supplied evidence of our redemption: our perception of God's purpose in Christ. Now in verse 10 we see the ultimate end of our redemption. What is its goal? God's plan for universal peace with God in Christ. *God pardons us as part of his gracious plan for universal peace.* This is the passage's main idea.

Out of the abundance of God's grace, he redeemed us, evidenced in our perceiving his purposes set forth in Christ. These purposes, which verse 4 highlighted began before the foundation of the world, are now said in verse 10 to be part of “a plan for the fullness of time.” In Galatians 4, Paul says, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law” (Gal 4:4). Similarly, Mark highlights how Jesus kicked off his earthly ministry by “proclaiming the gospel of

God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:15). Before the foundation of the world, God had a plan, and from the moment he set space and time in motion, history has been progressing toward a climax that the Sovereign God has determined—a plan literally “for the fullness of the times.” In 3:9 Paul calls it “the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.” Every epoch in the history of the world—from Adam and Noah to Abraham to Moses to David to Jesus to us.... every age has been predetermined and participates in one great end that Paul now declares in the latter half of verse 10—“to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth.”

Within this book, “heaven” and “earth” are not simply two opposites brought together to represent the whole universe (= a merism). Paul’s focus is indeed universal, but in Ephesians the heavens are a place from which God reigns yet also in which spiritual powers are in rebellion against him—rulers and authorities that Christ came to put in order. In 1:21 we read that Christ’s place at God’s right hand in the heavenly places is “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.” Also, in 3:10 God’s purpose is that “through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” Finally, in 6:12, Christians are said to wrestle not “against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness.” God ordained a world where such evil forces exist in the heavenlies so that he might put all of them under Christ’s feet (1:22).

With this, in the earthly sphere, from the time God dispersed the nations at Babel until Paul’s day, ethnic distinctions had separated the “haves” from the “have nots,” the blessed from the cursed, and the remnant of believers from the rebel of the world. Yet Jesus came to overcome the alienation of humanity from God and of Jews from Gentiles. Listen to what Paul says in 2:14–16:

For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. (2:14–16)

God’s plan in Christ has always been to bring unity and harmony where the fall caused friction and alienation. God’s “plan for the fullness of the times” has been “to unite all things in [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth.” Or, as my main idea statement is worded: *God pardons us as part of his gracious plan for universal peace.* The book of Ephesians clarifies how the fragmented and alienated

universe becomes centered and reunited in Christ and how Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, becomes the focal point of the new creation.

When we summarize the book as “pursuing peace with power,” it’s this type of peace—a universal reconciliation with God wherein people and all creation are once again at peace with God and wherein God is at peace with them. This is what verse 10 means by “unity.” In Christ’s first coming, his death satisfied God’s wrath against all who believe, and his resurrection “disarmed the rulers and authorities” (Col 2:15). In Jesus’s first coming, God’s saving plan reached an initial climax, our pardon became secured, the eradication of enemy hostility became certain, and our future redemption and hope for universal peace became clear.

Yet this peace will only be fully realized because in Jesus’s second coming he will overcome all his enemies, casting them into eternal torment. The universe will be made right only because full justice will be served. And this means that either your sins will have been forgiven in the Beloved Son or your sins will be punished on the last day. To unite all things in Christ, God will magnify the beauty and abundance of his saving grace to those he redeems by punishing those who have been unwilling to receive redemption. God’s justice demands that he punish either the sinner or the substitute. We are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone for the glory of God alone. Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). So, if you fail to surrender to King Jesus’s Lordship, you will incur the full force of his fury when he reconciles all the world to himself. There will be no more time for surrender.

If you are an unbelieving father today, I urge you to turn to Jesus as your Savior and Lord. If as an unbeliever you came from a father today, I am praying that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened and that the saving grace of God would be lavished on you in all wisdom and insight. If you pray for pardon and commit your life to Jesus, you can experience redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of your sins. Today you can be redeemed from an eternity of bondage and brokenness by an all-Sovereign, all-loving Father. Will you receive this joy?

Finally, brothers and sisters, the saving grace of God to you in the Beloved is real. As we saw in verse 6, this grace is praiseworthy, it’s glorious, and it’s your only means for blessing. If God has lavished wisdom and insight on you and if you already know the joy of forgiveness, let your heart praise the Father’s name as we move into communion, reflecting on the riches of God’s grace packed into your redemption through Christ’s blood. And if today you find yourself longing to enjoy redemption, ask God to forgive your sins and to reconcile you to himself through Jesus’s blood. *God pardons us as part of his gracious plan for universal peace.* Today is the day of salvation. Amen.