

Christian: Do You Know Who You Are? • Part 3

Ephesians 1:7-14

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Alexander*

1. Alexander the Great was determined to marry a certain man's daughter
2. The father demanded a huge dowry from Alexander in exchange for her hand in marriage.
3. The ruler consented and told him to request of his treasurer whatever he wanted.
4. So he went and asked for an enormous amount.
5. The treasurer was startled and said he couldn't give him that much without a direct order.
6. Going to Alexander, he argued that even a small fraction of the money requested was sufficient as a dowry.
7. Alexander replied, "No, let him have it all. I like that fellow. He does me honor. He treats me like a king and proves by what he asks that he believes me to be both rich and generous."
8. The Holy Spirit wants you and I to know the greatness and extent of the spiritual treasure that is ours in Christ
 - a. and knowing, he wants us to lay hold of them
 - b. there is no need or reason for us to live like spiritual paupers when in Christ we have all
9. Just as that man asked of Alexander in proportion to Alexander's wealth, we should go to the throne of God's grace and present petitions that express honorable views of the love, riches, and bounty of our King!

B. *Open Your Eyes*

1. This is our third week in this series as we seek to understand who and what we are by virtue of our faith in Christ.
2. Though we've only covered through v. 8, already we've seen that in Christ we are
 - a. blessed with every spiritual blessing
 - b. chosen
 - c. adopted
 - d. accepted
 - e. redeemed &
 - f. forgiven
3. Today as we read on, Paul adds even more to what he's already revealed about our wealth and identity in Christ . . .

II. TEXT

A. Vs. 7-10

{7} In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace

{8} which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence,

{9} having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

{10} that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him.

1. Both Frank Pastore and Robert Morey spoke about the Christian Worldview at our conference this past week
2. A *worldview* is nothing less than the grid through which we look at reality
 - a. it answers the great questions that all people have asked in every generation
 - b. where did I come from, why am I here, where am I going?
 - c. this is what all philosophy and religion are about - answering these questions
3. Vs. 9 & 10 are nothing less than the answer to them = this is the Biblical-Christian worldview in a nutshell
4. God has made known to us the mystery of His will
5. In other words = Here's what it all about!
6. God doesn't want men and women to be in the dark
7. In Christ, He has made known to us the great mystery that has occupied the hearts and minds of the greatest thinkers
8. The first thing revealed - is that God created . . .

according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself,

9. This answers the first great question: Where did we come from?
 - a. we came from God's good pleasure!
 - b. God didn't create one day when He was in a bad mood and wanted something to vent His anger on
 - c. all things sprang into being as a result of God's goodness
 - d. and He delights in the work of His hand
 - e. in John's vision of the throne of God in Heaven, he hears the accumulated praise of the heavenly host say

{Rev 4:11} "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your pleasure they exist and were created."

10. Though sin has temporarily thwarted and hindered it, God intended from the beginning that we might enjoy His goodness in unrestricted exchange
 - a. what originally arose out of His good pleasure, He intended would be our consummate and abiding pleasure
 - b. but sinful man chooses to rebel against this good plan of God's
 - c. and since God honors the choices we make, He lets us go our way - away from genuine fulfillment and pleasure
 - d. but when we turn to Christ, we are restored to the original plan
 - e. so that's where we come from - from God's good pleasure!
 - f. but we also see here where we are going

{10} that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ,

11. Just as there was a definite point at which God created, so there is a definite point at which the creation is summed up
 - a. Paul presents us a picture of a column of figures that are to be added
 - b. that column is made up of the individual years of history since creation
 - 1) the years 1, 2,3
 - 5) the years 479, 2750, and now, the new Jewish year which began just 2 weeks ago; 5759
 - c. soon, God will draw the line at the bottom of the column; no more years will be added to them
 - d. and He will write the sum
 - e. you know what that sum will be? J-E-S-U-S!
 - f. history is His story
 - g. before the Eternal Son of God became a middle eastern Mediterranean Jew, all history was leading inexorably to the moment of His birth
 - h. God was setting the stage for His appearance to redeem fallen men and women from slavery to sin & death
 - i. since then, all history is the *result* of the event we call the Incarnation
 - j. history flowed TO the cross and *since* it has been flowing FROM it.
 - k. but this flow to history is not like a flood - it is a river whose course is set by God
 - l. the flow of history is going somewhere - there is purpose and direction
 - m. God's plan is still in operation and is moving to a great consummation
 - 1) a day of reckoning
 - 2) a totaling, a summation
 - n. Paul tells us here the sum is Jesus
12. Now, Paul uses some interesting terminology when he speaks of this great consummation
13. When Paul says, "in the dispensation of the fullness of the times" he means that point in the future when all things have reached their intended end
 - a. when all creation is brought to it's conclusion
 - b. when history comes to this point it will be seen that it was all created FOR Christ!

{Col 1:16} By Christ all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.

c. then in Phil 2 we read this . . .

{10} At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, those in heaven, and those on earth, and those under the earth, {11} and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

14. This leads us to the last great question that has occupied the minds of history's greatest thinkers: Why am I here?
 - a. we've seen where we came from -from God's good pleasure
 - b. we've seen where we're going - to the great consummation where Christ is openly declared by all to be Lord

- c. but what about in the meantime? Why are we here?
15. Look at the last words of v. 10 . . .
- {10} that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; in Him.**
- a. you are a part of God's great plan to bring all things together in Christ
 - b. because there is direction to history *at large*, there is direction to our *personal* history
 - c. our ultimate destiny is to be brought to Christ as our head
 - d. so we yield to His plan and headship *now* - we embrace Him as Lord and live out His Lordship so that the world will be challenged with the reality of His resurrection and hopefully come to know Him
 - e. we steadfastly resist the cynicism of a man like GN Clark who in a speech to Cambridge University said, "There is no secret and no plan in history to be discovered. I do not believe that any future consummation could make any sense of all the irrationalities of preceding ages."
16. We who live in the last half of the last decade of the 20th century are faced with 2 opposing worldviews
- a. Naturalistic Materialism, or Biblical Christianity
 - b. either we are nothing more than grown up germs or we are unique creatures created in the image of God
 - c. either life was an accident or it was designed
 - d. either there is no meaning whatsoever to our existence or we were each called into being for a special purpose
 - e. if the first of these options is the right one, then life is as Shakespeare has Macbeth saying; it is "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."
 - f. but if the second is the right one, if God created us out of His own good pleasure, and our lives have both purpose and meaning, then it would be the height of folly to neglect discovering what that purpose is
17. Christian - take comfort in the knowledge that God is seated on the throne of heaven and over rules in the affairs of earth
- a. we need not be anxious or troubled by the turmoil foretold by the doomsday mongers
 - b. whether it's Y2K, the environment, the economy, war, disease, or this conspiracy or that
 - c. these are not sledge hammers God is using to destroy
 - d. they are but the chisel and mallet He uses to sculpt a glorious new day in which Jesus reigns!

B. Vs. 11-12

{11} In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,

{12} that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory.

1. These verses comprise a rather complicated construction in Greek
2. And at first reading we might think that Paul is saying that *we've* been given an

inheritance

3. But it's the other way around - Paul is saying that we *are* the inheritance!
4. The word translated "obtained" is better understood as *allotted*
 - a. and an inheritance has not been allotted to *us*
 - b. the idea is that we've been allotted as the inheritance
 - c. to who? GOD!
 - d. *we* are what God gets out of it all!
5. You see, this flows perfectly from v. 10 and the consummation of the ages
6. When all is said and done - and the creation has been summed up, what does God get out of it all? Us!
7. We are the prize Christ won at Calvary
8. From our perspective, it might not seem like a very good deal
 - a. Jesus gave Himself to secure us?
 - b. might seem like He gave an awful lot to acquire a pretty meager return
9. But that is Paul's whole point in chapter 1 - he wants us to trade *our* perspective for *God's*
10. God considered it a great deal!
11. He counts us worthwhile of His love and affection and attention
12. He counts us as His inheritance and treasure
13. Remember the parable Jesus told about the man who found a treasure in a field, so he went and bought the field so he could have the treasure?
14. Or the man who found a pearl of great price, for which he sold all his possessions to acquire?
15. My friend, God considered you precious - so precious, He gave all He could give to acquire you!

C. Vs. 13-14

{13} In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,

{14} who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

1. Paul employs a word picture here with which the Ephesians would have been well acquainted
2. You see, Ephesus was a well known and busy sea port
 - a. goods from the orient found their way to the docks, wharves and warehouses of the city
 - b. merchants and buyers from all over the Mediterranean would come to Ephesus to visit the markets and make purchases
 - c. then they would crate up their goods and find a ship which would take them to their hometowns around the Roman Empire
 - d. to mark a crate as belonging to them, they would affix their personal seal on it
 - e. then they would return home and await the arrival of the ship
 - f. when it arrived, they would head down to the dock, look for their crates, prove they belonged to them by showing the harbormaster their seal and

- take their goods home
3. You and I have been redeemed by Christ, He has paid our ransom
 4. Now, we belong to Him
 5. And He has set His seal of ownership on us - that seal is the Holy Spirit
 6. One day He will come and take possession of what he has purchased with His blood
 7. In the day of consummation, He will know who belongs to him by the seal of His ownership
 8. The word "guarantee" is the Greek word *arrabon*
 - a. it was used to describe a deposit that someone would place on a purchase to show their intention to redeem the whole thing
 - b. today we call this a *deposit*
 - c. the Holy Spirit is God's deposit guaranteeing that eventually, in the fullness of time, God will come to take possession of His inheritance

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Be Not Troubled*

1. Let's end this morning with the words Jesus comforted His disciples with
**{John 14:1-3} "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.
{2} "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you.
I go to prepare a place for you.
{3} "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to
Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**
2. Jesus came - then after completing His mission, He returned to the Father
3. But He is coming again - to lay claim to that for which He died
4. Are you ready for Him?