

God's Great Purpose
Ephesians 1:8-11 (09/10/17)
Ernie Godshall
Faith Bible Church
Evansville, Indiana

Life is full of mysteries. I'm sure you've got some stuff going on that you just can't figure out, and I'm not talking about your husband or wife. I have a mystery noise in my car. It's random and changes locations – under the steering wheel, then inside the glove box, behind the radio. I've made it my friend. Some of us find technology a mystery and ask, "How do you hook this thing up?" I have no idea how to program a DVR. First, what does DVR mean? So I googled technology initials or acronyms and it gave me 13 pages. "Start by plugging in your HD PVR into your TYZ. Once you've done that, check to see that your LMS isn't connected to your AES or you'll lose all your data." Mysteries. I can't even follow a mystery movie. "Do you know what just happened?" "No, but I like that car."

This morning we are face to face with the greatest mystery in the universe, and by the grace of God we as believers have some measure of understanding of it. Paul is going to reveal God's great purpose for this universe, a purpose of which this world is really clueless.

Ephesians 1 tells you how God has blessed you in His Son. He chose you, adopted you, redeemed you by the blood of Christ, wiped away every ounce of guilt and condemnation from your record, forgave you once for all, and will never use your sins against you again. You are truly blessed. You were a condemned sinner and now you are in God's family.

Now God wants to open your heart and mind to grasp this mystery revealed only to believers. That's what verses 8-11 are about. We'll start with the end of verse 7, God redeemed and forgave us through the blood of Jesus, to the praise of the glory of His grace...

Ephesians 1:8-11 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 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. In Him 11 also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will.

Here are four truths about this mystery that only God's people really can grasp in a life-changing way.

First, God is delighted to reveal this great mystery to you – vv. 8-9

8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him

Don't miss that word "lavish" which reaches back into verse 7. He has lavished grace on you. When you give a lavish dinner that means you have the best food and plenty of it. God has given you the cream of His grace in His Son and plenty of it. There is more than you need. That's the nature of God's redeeming grace. Jesus said, "I didn't just bring you life, I brought you abundant life." (John 10:10) There is nothing cheapskate about God when it comes to pouring out His grace in saving sinners. He lavished it on you! It's a feast of His goodness and love and all undeserved! He is glorified by this lavish outpouring of grace into your life, my friend.

What does God do for you in His lavish grace? He doesn't leave you ignorant or just reciting mindless religious clichés. He has lavished into your heart all wisdom and insight. All that you need to live your life here in this world for His glory! This wisdom is not your everyday worldly intellectual wisdom. It is wisdom which His Spirit enables you to grasp in your heart through His word and then informs your mind and directs your affections and behavior – that's wisdom and insight.

God has lavished a ton of knowledge on you that is really important and you need to feed your soul on it. This isn't just facts anyone can know. 1 Cor. 2:13 says the natural man does not receive the things of the

spirit, they are foolishness to him, and neither can he know them spiritually. The natural man outside of Christ doesn't have the capacity to really understand what life is all about. But here we are told God has made known to His children all this truth about His mystery in Christ. And we love Him for it; we love the truth of the gospel and the entire Word of God. This is a gift of lavished, abundant grace God gives to His people.

Let me apply this to you who are students. In every subject you study, ask yourself how this relates to God. History is "His story;" it's not just secular. Social political sciences relate to God; only God has the answer to hatred and violence and evil. Psychology clearly relates to God; the study of the soul! Remember, even though every human is an image bearer of God, each one is a sinner and is accountable to God. Medicine deals with the body that God designed and is a marvel of divine engineering. My knee bled when I scraped it the other week, but those platelets rushed to the wound and stanching the blood so that it healed. If you personally know Christ, He has given you by His Word and by the illumination of His Spirit – revelation and illumination, and you have a kind of heart and life-changing wisdom and insight the most brilliant atheist doesn't have! This isn't perfect wisdom because you are still growing in wisdom, but God is lavishing out the capacity for you to grow in knowing Him and in gaining more insight on how to apply His wisdom in your life.

But let's go further. The wisdom in this text is called "the mystery of God's will." What is a biblical mystery? It has nothing to do with the Masons or mystery dinners or mystery novels where we try to figure out who the murderer is. It has nothing to do with weirdness or mysticism, where God whispers in your ear as you walk in your garden. There's an ancient monastic discipline that has come into our own day and is popular in Roman Catholicism; it's called *lectio divina*. It erroneously claims that when you read the Bible something mystical happens and you experience something special from God; God speaks to you in a special way not related to the words of the Bible. God's Word the Bible is truth for everyone and He speaks clearly through those words to each of His children.

This great mystery in Ephesians 1 is truth that only God reveals; no man or woman would ever have come up with it or discovered it or reasoned their way to it. And there are a number of mysteries in the Bible. There's the mystery of the rapture in 1 Corinthians 15 where Paul used a sign from the nursery to illustrate what will happen when Jesus descends from heaven – "I show you a mystery, he says, we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Every parent appreciates that when they come to pick up their infant! Seriously, the rapture is a mystery no one would have come up with; God designed the rapture and then revealed it to us. And He reveals it to us through the Scripture as the Spirit of God helps us understand it. Paul explains this in 1 Corinthians 2:7-10.

*7 but we speak God's wisdom in a **mystery**, the **hidden wisdom** which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 9 but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 For to us **God revealed them** through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.*

The mystery in these verses in Ephesians is God's great purpose in Christ for the future. God opens this mystery for us, a mystery in which He finds great pleasure or "kind intention." If there is one thing my studies in Ephesians are pressing into my heart, it is how delighted and willing and with great relish and pleasure God redeems His people through His Son. Notice, "His kind intention which He purposed in Him," that is, in His Son! God is not reluctantly saving you or me through His Son. Let's not have a suspicious eye toward God, as if He hardly wants to save us. No, He delights greatly in saving sinners through His Son, and He has this great purpose in view.

Second, God wants you to be awe-struck at His great purpose in His Son – v. 10

10 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. In Him

The phrase “the fullness of time” means history is going some place; there is purpose in what often seems like madness. We aren’t just going in pagan circles or out here on the end of a branch of the tree of evolution purely by chance without real meaning or purpose. In 1997 I heard Stephen Jay Gould, the evolutionary biologist, speak at USI and here is what he claimed: there is no ultimate meaning or purpose in the universe and all is chance; we could have evolved in any number of ways, but we chanced to evolve this way; you really are just dust in the wind; you have to make your own purpose; you have to create your own reality. Mr. Gould may be a brilliant man, but he is ignorant when it comes to the purpose of our universe.

There is a true and living God and He has a great purpose for this universe. We have purpose and are heading somewhere; this understanding should undergird every Christian’s worldview. There is a future administration or management of this universe which will be headed up in Jesus Christ. Don’t take that lightly or ignore it. Martyn Lloyd Jones writes, “There is nothing higher than this, nothing beyond God’s final purpose... The human mind can never contemplate anything greater.” We live in a time of turmoil, terror, anger, threat, and rage; how good to know God’s great purpose. The immediate future we don’t know. The ultimate future – ah, we know! We do know where we’re going and we know that everything going on today is not out of God’s sovereign control.

God’s Word tells you that God has His sovereign hand on the reins of history. You know His great mystery is unfolding. With your Bible in hand you can stand above the seeming randomness of history and have a universal world view. You can look back 2000 years through the church age, back further to the incarnation and cross and resurrection, back through those 400 silent years, through Israel’s history, back to Moses and Sinai and the law, through Israel’s 400 years of slavery in Egypt, back to Abraham, back to that global flood, then before the flood to those long ages when people lived nearly a millennium, all the way back to the garden of Eden, to our first parents, to see them rebel against our Creator, defying His authority and eating the forbidden fruit, and then before Eden into those first seven pristine days of this universe, when God spoke and it was done, earth, plants, sun, moon, stars, fish and fowl, animals and that special creation of man and woman, male and female in His own image to rule the earth! As believers we see all this looking back with God’s revelation. We see that by that one man sin and cosmic chaos came into this universe.

Then with Bibles in hand we look forward this morning into what has not yet come to pass, but knowing treacherous days will keep coming as 2 Timothy 3 says. Men are lovers of self, brutal, filled with godless hatred and murder and arrogance, living for self and pleasure and not wanting God in any aspect of public life, pure secularism, materialism, humanism. But at some point the second Adam will intervene and restore all things. Christ will break through the clouds and rapture the dead and living believers to Himself, followed by those seven years of tribulation when the Anti-Christ will take his seat in the temple of God claiming to be God and reigning in global terror.

Then we see the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, Jesus Christ Himself descending to earth on a white horse with the saints following (Rev. 19). Jesus will throw the Anti-Christ and the False Prophet into the lake of fire, an angel will bind Satan for 1000 years in the bottomless pit. Jesus will take over the immediate rule of this world for 1000 years, bringing every continent under His direct authority, ruling in righteousness and justice from Jerusalem. The glory of the Lord will fill the earth like the waters cover the sea. Evil will be judged swiftly. No porn, abortion, twisted gender, or robbing and raping and pillaging will be tolerated. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control will dominate.

At the end of the 1000 years Satan will be loosed for a short while and then thrown forever into the lake of fire. Christ will sit for the Great White Throne Judgment when all the unsaved dead of all the ages will be gathered before Him, judged, and finally thrown into the lake of fire. Then you have the new heavens and earth with the heavenly Jerusalem coming down out of heaven and all Christ’s servants will serve Him with His name on their foreheads and reign with Him into an endless eternity of pure, holy love and joy. God shall be with His people and all the hardships and tears of this time will be a faint memory. The present trials you are going through, no matter how awful, are a feather compared to this weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17).

This is where we are headed, to the fullness of the ages, when all the epochs of history are completed, when everything will be headed up in Christ. The thrill of the Hallelujah Chorus will be nothing compared to the thrill of seeing our Savior at the top of everything! He came the first time to die. He'll come the second time to reign, and reign He will, as our great and mighty king!

Friends, this is what God wants you to know. You may be a young or new believer or you may have walked years with your God. He wants you to know these things. He lavished His wisdom and knowledge into your hearts through His word by His Spirit so you might live with this great hope focused on His beloved Son! I'll never forget hearing John Walvoord, then president of Dallas Seminary, speaking at a church in Souderton, Pa, shortly after we were saved. We had never heard anything about prophecy or end times. He was preaching on the rapture of the church when Jesus will come into the atmosphere like a groom coming for his bride and all the dead and living Christians will be caught up to meet Him and be taken back to the Father's house for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Hey...that's us! We were excited, "What? When is this going to happen because I'm all in?" This is where we believers in Christ are going – to a universe created for this one great and final purpose, for the Father to exalt or head up everything under His Son. But wait, there's more!

Third, God wants you to know you will be right there with Christ, a joint heir with him – v. 11

11 (in Him in whom) also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

When Christ redeemed and forgave you, you became one with Him and where He goes you go. God made you a joint-heir with Him, and that means you inherit this future status of ruling and reigning right there along with Christ. He promised this to all who overcome. Revelation 3:21, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne!" And Revelation 21:7, "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My son."

Fourth, God wants you to know He's got it all under control – v. 11b

according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

We're on schedule. God is working everything in this universe including all history, as crazy as it may seem. God is energizing everything, the evil and good. He is moving all these epochs of history, one after another, all nations, all leaders, all people churning, moving, driving forward, all heading toward the fullness of the times. He is sovereign. He has His hands on the reins of history. And He's right on schedule. He will accomplish His good pleasure in His Son. This is the mystery of the ages, God's great purpose for this universe, all headed up in Christ!

The last thing we want to say is in Philippians 2:9-11. God has highly exalted His Son and given Him a name above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow (Marx, Darwin, Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Lenin and Stalin, and every Christ-denier) and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God. Every human being's path will end at one place, kneeling before Jesus Christ whether they want to or not. Everyone will go into eternity on their knees confessing Christ is Lord, whether into the eternal wrath of God or into the eternal glory of heaven. Your final destination depends on whether you submit to Christ now as your Lord and Savior, or reject Him and are finally forced to submit to Him in judgment. Today is the day to bow your knee before Christ.