

Title: **THE WISDOM AND PRUDENCE OF GRACE**
 Text: Ephesians 1:8-9
 Date: Evening —, 2006
 Tape # Z-01a
 Reading: Ephesians 3:1-21

Introduction:

If God will enable me to do so, I want to show you something of the wisdom and prudence of his grace. My text is Ephesians 1:8-9.

(Ephesians 1:8-9) "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; (9) Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself."

- The opening word of our text — "**Wherein**," refers us back to verse 7 and the riches of God's boundless free grace in Christ.
- "**Wisdom**" refers to God's infinite knowledge. "**Prudence**" refers to the great, infinitely great, skill by which our God accomplished his wise and good purpose of grace in making "*known us the mystery of his will.*"

Verses 8 and 9, tell us that our great God has, by his Spirit, abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, in all knowledge and insight, in all the wisdom and skill of his infinite being, in revealing to us "*the mystery of his will.*"

- "**The mystery of his will,**" which God the Holy Spirit has made known to in the revelation and experience of grace, giving us faith in Christ, is our eternal election in and redemption by Christ, "*which he hath purposed in himself*" (Rom. 8:28-30).

(Romans 8:28-30) "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose. (29) For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (30) Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified."

"**The mystery of his will**" is all that Paul has declared in verses 3-7.

(Ephesians 1:3-7) "Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: (4) According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: (5) Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (6) To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. (7) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

SECRETS REVEALED

God's everlasting love for us, his eternal purpose of grace toward us, even the redemption of our souls by Christ are secret things, known only to God, until they are revealed to us and in us by the Holy Spirit's gift of faith in Christ. — "*Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Heb. 11:1). When faith is given, the mystery is revealed (2 Cor. 4:4-5; Eph. 1:13-14; 2 Tim. 1:9-10).

(2 Corinthians 4:4-5) "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (5) For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake."

(Ephesians 1:13-14) "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, (14) Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

(2 Timothy 1:9-10) "Who hath saved us, and called *us* with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, (10) But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

That is what happens in conversion. We have a beautiful picture of it in the opening verses of the Bible (Gen. 1:1-3).

(Genesis 1:1-3) "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (2) And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. (3) And God said, Let there be light: and there was light."

Paul told the Thessalonian saints that he knew their election because God had given them faith in Christ by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1:4-5); and we know our own election by our God-given faith in Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 1:4-5) "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. (5) For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake."

Proposition: Our text is telling us that the sovereign purpose of God in redemption and grace is not some whimsical thing, randomly performed, but that it is the exercise of infinite wisdom and prudence, infinite knowledge and insight. — God's grace abounds toward us "*in all wisdom and prudence.*"

In a word, our God not only saves his elect in the only way we could be saved, but in the very best way. As is always the case, God's way is the best way. So let me show you the obvious wisdom and prudence of his grace. I said "show." I did not say "explain." Explain it, I cannot. In fact, I can only show you the little that is obvious. We will spend eternity diving into the depths and soaring in the heights of all divine "*wisdom and prudence*" of God's infinite, boundless grace toward us in Christ.

THE WISDOM OF GRACE

Only the all wise God could devise and execute the sovereign purpose of his grace toward us. Behold the great wisdom of God in grace, and worship him. I see the manifold wisdom of God in his choice of his Son to be our Redeemer., — in his determination to accomplish redemption by substitution, — the glorious incarnation of Christ, — the life of Christ in this world, — the sacrificial, sin-atoning death of Christ, — and in the glorious exaltation of Christ.

THE CHOICE OF HIS SON

God's choice of his Son to be our Redeemer displays his great, infinite wisdom. I do not pretend to understand the deep, hidden mysteries of the Covenant of Grace, the proposals, and agreements, and oaths of the triune Godhead. I know that God does not need to plan, devise, or work out anything in his great mind. He knows everything. But I do know that **a covenant was made** (Jer. 31:31-34), — that **God the Father made proposals** to his Son for the accomplishment of our redemption (Psa. 2:8; John 10:16-18), which **our Savior voluntarily accepted** (Isa. 50:5-7), — and that these transactions of grace

between God the Father and God the Son were **sworn to by God, and secured the salvation of an elect multitude before the world was made** (Heb. 6:17-19; 8:10-12). In the Covenant of Grace, as it is revealed to us in the Scriptures...

- God the Father proposed the conditions upon which redemption could be accomplished.
- God the Son pledged himself to satisfy all the demands and conditions required by the holy character and will of God.
- And God the Holy Spirit promised to effectually apply all the blessings of grace, earned by Christ's obedience, to the elect.

Remember, I am talking to you about things that took place before the world began, when no one and nothing existed but the eternal God (Eph. 3:11; 1:3-6; 2 Tim. 1:9). **In those great, eternal counsels of grace, God set his heart upon his dear Son, and chose him to be the Person who would perform the great work of redemption** (Rom. 3:25 – “Set forth” is “foreordained” – 1 Pet. 1:20).

Christ is the Redeemer of God's own choosing. Therefore, he is called, “God's elect” (Isa. 42:1). When God set his eye upon his Son, choosing him to save his elect, he said, with regard to all his elect, “*Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom (an atonement)*” (Jer. 33:24). — “*I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people*” (Ps. 89:19).

The wisdom of God in choosing Christ to be our Redeemer is evident in many ways. We rejoice in the love, mercy, and grace of God. But it was the wisdom of God which found a way for a holy God to embrace fallen, sinful men and women in love, mercy, and grace. How we ought to admire the wisdom of God in providing such a Redeemer!

Christ is in every way a fit and proper Person to be our Redeemer. He who undertakes to redeem sinners, satisfy justice, make reconciliation for transgressors, and atone for sin must be...

- **A Divine Person** — None but God could be equal to the great work of redemption.
- **One who is infinitely holy** — None could take away the infinite evil of sin, but One who is infinitely pure. None can make satisfaction, except him who is of infinite worth and merit.
- **A Person of infinite ability** — The work of redemption is a great and mighty work, requiring both wisdom and power belonging only to God.
- **A Person infinitely dear to God** — In order for God to place infinite value upon the Redeemer's work, the Redeemer himself must be infinitely dear to God, the Beloved One of his heart, the Apple of his eye, the Darling of his affections (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:9-10).

Our Redeemer must also be a person who has an absolute right to redeem. — He must be one who is free of all personal obligation and responsibility. If he is a servant, or a subject, he has no right to redeem. He cannot merit anything. A servant has nothing of his own, no price to offer, and no merit before his Master. — Though Christ freely became Jehovah's Servant to do his will in redeeming us, he is not in anyway God's subject. He is God's equal, for Christ is God! He has the right to redeem!

And the Redeemer had to be a person of infinite love and grace! No one else would undertake a work so costly for a creature so worthless as man. Behold, how he loved us!

Once more, the one chosen to be our Redeemer must be a person of infinite truth and faithfulness. He must be immutably true and unalterably faithful. Otherwise, he could not be trusted to carry on the great work to the horrible, ignominious death of the cross.

God the Father found in his Son a fit person to be our Redeemer and trusted the whole affair of redemption to him (Ephesians 1:12-13).

- The honor of his law!
- The souls of his elect!
- The glory of his Being!

This is great wisdom. God found a Redeemer for sinners in the Person of his dear Son! But there is more — **The only fit person to be our Redeemer is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God.** Not only was there no other way for a holy God to save fallen man, but by the redemption that is in Christ, there is no other person who could be our Redeemer but Christ. The whole work must be on his shoulders alone!

- No man could make atonement, because all are guilty.
- No angel could redeem, because all are finite.
- God the Father could not redeem us, because in the divine economy he is the One whose justice must be satisfied.
- God the Spirit could not redeem us, because he is the One, by whom the blessings of redemption are conveyed to us, pleading the merits of the Redeemer.

Who but God, infinitely wise, could have thought to make Christ our Redeemer? Had God asked the heavenly angels or the sons of Adam, whom he would create, where can a ransom be found? None could ever have found the Redeemer we must have. But, thank God, he found a Ransom! And the Ransom, the Redeemer he found is his own dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

WISDOM IN SUBSTITUTION

God's wisdom is revealed in his determination to accomplish redemption by substitution. Having chosen Christ to be our Redeemer, the Lord God contrived the way in which he would accomplish redemption. And the way he devised, indeed, the only way in which he could accomplish redemption is substitution. The Son of God was made to be, and voluntarily became, our Representative, Surety, and Substitute for the accomplishment of redemption (Rom. 3:24-26; Heb. 7:22; Gen. 43:8-9). Before the world began, God's own dear Son became our Substitute. He stood in our room and stead. And God determined that his Son Christ...

- Must have the sins of his people imputed to him.
- Must take our guilt upon himself.
- Must suffer the utter extremity of the law's penalty to the full satisfaction of justice.

Not only did God determine to make Christ our Substitute, **he looked upon him from eternity as the Substitute slain for the salvation of his people**, and looked upon us as sinners redeemed by the precious blood of his dear Son (Rom. 8:29-30).

WISDOM IN THE INCARNATION

The glorious incarnation of Christ reveals the manifold wisdom of God wondrously (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Phil. 2:5-8; 2 Cor. 8:9). No mind, but the infinite mind of the infinite God could conceive and accomplish such a thing as this. — The great, eternal, incomprehensible God assumed our nature and came into this world! — *"The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us!"* God the Son became the Son of Man! God became one of us!

- He who is the eternal Jehovah became Jehovah's Servant.
- The infinite, omnipotent God became a finite, feeble man!
- He who is the eternal Spirit was born of a woman.

- The immortal God became flesh and blood!
- God, who is independent, self-sufficient, and all sufficient, stood in need of food, clothing, and shelter.
- God, who owns all things, became a man who owned nothing.
- He, who upholds all things by the word of his power, lived upon the charity of men.
- God, who knows all things, as a man, had to learn how to walk, talk, read, and write (2 Cor. 8:9).
- He who wrote the law and gave it to Moses in the Mount became subject to the law, and performed obedience to the law as a Man.
- The holy Son of God came under the obligation and sentence of the law as a guilty sinner when he was made sin for us.
- He who is life was made to die.
- God who is infinitely, immutably, unchangeably happy was made to suffer sorrow, pain, torment, and death.
- He who is the object of God's perfect love became the object of God's unmitigated wrath.
- The great sovereign of heaven and earth became a worm (Psa. 22:6).
- The eternal God died as our Substitute!

No man can even grasp the reality of the incarnation, much less understand it. But God, in infinite wisdom, purposed it before the world was and brought it to pass for the accomplishment of our redemption (Gal. 4:4-6).

WISDOM IN CHRIST'S LIFE

The life of our Lord Jesus Christ in this world reveals the manifold wisdom of God. If this gospel that I preach to you were the invention of men, the Savior would have been born in a palace, raised in royalty, trained with dignity, surrounded by riches, and presented with all the pageantry of one of the devil's popes. But this thing is not of man. This is God's work! When God's Son came into the world to redeem man, he was born in a stable, raised in poverty, and lived in obscurity. When he came to announce his Messiahship and the inauguration of his kingdom, he rode into Jerusalem upon an ass's colt. He died as a common malefactor. And he was buried in a borrowed tomb. **But what is the purpose, meaning, and significance of Christ's earthly life?**

The Lord Jesus lived in this world in perfect submission and faith toward God as a man (Heb. 2:10-11, 17-18).

(Hebrews 2:10-11) "For it became him, for whom *are* all things, and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. (11) For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified *are* all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,"

(Hebrews 2:17-18) "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto *his* brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. (18) For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."

Our Savior endured all the trials, temptations, and sorrows of manhood in this world, so that he might be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows all the emotions of manhood. The only difference between him and us is that he knew no sin. He is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.

- He lived in this world.
- He lived by faith in God.
- He lived in submission to our Father's will.

Our Savior lived a life of representative obedience to God (Rom. 5:19). By his obedience to God he worked out and brought in a perfect righteousness for us. Under more severe temptations and conflicts than any of us can ever know (In the wilderness — in Gethsemane — On the cross) our Mediator was perfectly obedient.

- He fulfilled and obeyed the ceremonial law.
- He fulfilled and obeyed the moral law.
- He even submitted to and obeyed the civil laws of human governments.

WISDOM IN THE CROSS

The sacrificial, sin-atonement death of the Lord Jesus Christ is a display of the manifold wisdom of God (Gal. 1:3-5).

(Galatians 1:3-5) "Grace *be* to you and peace from God the Father, and *from* our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: (5) To whom *be* glory for ever and ever. Amen."

This is the means, the only means, the only possible means, by which the great and holy God could redeem, justify, and save guilty sinners. Nothing but Divine wisdom could have devised such a plan. When it was announced in heaven, the angels must have been paralyzed with astonishment. Nothing in all the world is more astonishing and wonderful.

- Christ who is God blessed forever, infinitely and essentially happy, endured the greatest sorrow, suffering, and agony of the universe.
- The supreme Lord and Judge of the world was arrested, tried, and condemned by maggots.
- He who is the living God and the Fountain of life was put to death.
- The Creator of the world was crucified by his own creatures.
- The God of glory was beaten, spit upon, and mocked by vile men.
- He, who is infinite good, died by indescribable cruelty.
- The King of heaven was buried in the earth.
- And this ignominious death was the means of Christ's greatest honor and glory, for by his death he both glorified God and saved his people.

Be sure you understand what happened at Calvary. Be sure you know the meaning of Christ's death. — The Lord Jesus Christ died by his own voluntary will – sovereignly (John 10:17-18). — Our Savior died as the Substitute for his people (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 10:11, 15). — The Son of God died under the penalty of sin for the satisfaction of divine justice (Isa. 53:9-10). — Our Redeemer effectually accomplished redemption for his people when he died (Heb. 9:12).

- Justice was satisfied!
- Sin was put away!

- Salvation was purchased!

The blood of Christ left nothing to chance. When he cried, "*It is finished,*" all the hosts of God's elect were forever redeemed, justified, and sanctified!

WISDOM IN THE EXALTATION

And the wisdom of God is evident in the glorious exaltation of Christ (Phil. 2:9-11).

(Philippians 2:9-11) "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (10) That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; (11) And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Divine wisdom saw that it was needful and expedient that he who died for us upon the cross should be raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the majesty on high as the Supreme Governor of the universe. The exaltation of Christ...

- Assures us of the salvation of God's elect (John 17:2).
- Comforts us with the knowledge of his good providence (Rom. 8:28, 32).
- Gives us assurance of perpetual pardon and acceptance at the throne of God (1 John 2:1-2).
- Promises exaltation and glory to every believer (Rev. 3:21).
- Is the pledge of his final triumph — Every knee shall bow!

This great Redeemer and the great redemption he has accomplished is the wisdom of God. And he is also the power of God unto salvation to every believer. God help you to believe. By means of this great scheme of redemption and grace God has achieved the highest goal and ambition of his own great heart. — He has given Christ all pre-eminence (Col. 1:18).

- Trust him!
- Adore him!
- Proclaim him!

THE PRUDENCE OF GRACE

Now, let me take just a few minutes to show you something of the infinite prudence, skill, and insight displayed in the riches of God's grace abounding toward us. A wise father makes provisions for his family, both immediate and future provisions. The wiser the father and the greater his abilities, the more certain and secure the provisions are. Our heavenly Father has, in infinite wisdom, provided all things for us, and with infinite prudence, skill, and insight, he accomplishes his designs.

I see the grace of God abounding toward us in prudence in the sacrifice of his darling Son for the accomplishment of our redemption. — "*We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory*" (1 Cor. 27).

(1 Corinthians 1:18-25) "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (19) For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. (20) Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (21) For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (22) For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: (23) But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; (24) But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

(1 Corinthians 1:30-31) "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: (31) That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

And the providence of our God, what a display that is of his infinite prudence, insight and skill!
Truly...

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform!
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm!

- Lydia
- The Jailor
- Paul at Malta
- Onesimus
- My Own Experience

I see great prudence in the means God has ordained for the salvation of his elect. God has chosen to save sinners by the foolishness of preaching (Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25).

- The message he employs, the glorious gospel of Christ, is the revelation of infinite wisdom.
- And the men he employs to preach that message are themselves a constant display of infinite prudence (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

(1 Corinthians 1:26-29) "For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, *yea*, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: (29) That no flesh should glory in his presence."

I see great prudence in the way God's grace abounds to his chosen in the experience of it (John 16:8-11; Ps. 107).

- He slays, that he may make alive.
- He strips, that he may clothe.
- He empties, that he may fill.
- He imprisons, that he may set the prisoner free.
- He abases, that he may exalt.
- He condemns, that he may pardon.

(John 16:8-11) "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: (9) Of sin, because they believe not on me; (10) Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; (11) Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

(Psalms 107:1-6) "O give thanks unto the LORD, for *he is good*: for his mercy *endureth* for ever. (2) Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; (3) And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south. (4) They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. (5) Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. (6) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he delivered them out of their distresses."

(Psalms 107:10-21) "Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron; (11) Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High: (12) Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and *there was* none to help. (13) Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, *and* he saved

them out of their distresses. (14) He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. (15) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! (16) For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. (17) Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. (18) Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death. (19) Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses. (20) He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered *them* from their destructions. (21) Oh that *men* would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!"

I see great prudence in the means our great God has chosen to employ to preserve his saints in grace, the means he has chosen to secure our perseverance. — **THE WARFARE** (Rom. 7:14-23). He has fixed it so that we are in constant need of his grace, in constant need of his Son, in constant need of his forgiveness, in constant need of his mercy. And he has given us and continually supplies us with grace and faith, by which we are sweetly inclined and compelled to seek him (Heb. 4:16; 1 John 1:9; 2:1-2; 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

(2 Corinthians 12:7-10) "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. (8) For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. (9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

How often I sleep, though my heart wakes. How often when my Savior comes, I refuse him. Yet he puts his hand into my heart, dropping the sweet-smelling myrrh of his grace into my wretched heart, and graciously causes me to awake, arise, and seek him, until at last I find him. Then, he brings me into his banqueting house and spreads his banner of love over me, causes me to know more fully with every experience of his love that many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods of my sin drown it! — "*Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself!*"

(Romans 11:33-36) "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! (34) For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? (35) Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (36) For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.

Amen."