

February 9, 2020
Sunday Evening Service
Series: Ephesians
Community Baptist Church
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Greer, SC 29650
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BENEFITS GIVEN IN CHRIST **Ephesians 1:7-10**

The concept of God's chosen people being "in Christ" is deeper, broader, higher, more pervasive in us than we can begin to imagine. It speaks of relationship, extreme relationship, ultimate relationship, eternal relationship. That relationship touches every part of our lives. Do a search on the phrase "in Christ" from Acts 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 and you will find 92 occurrences that have to do with the benefit we receive or characteristics we develop because of that relationship. The same is true regarding the phrase "in Him," as it refers to Christ, occurring 55 times. Likewise, the similar phrase "in the Lord," as it refers to the ramifications of our relationship with Christ, appears 41 times. Finally, the same idea using the pronoun "in whom" is used seven times in the same span of references.

On the basis of that evidence alone, we must conclude that our relationship "in Christ" is the primary reason God's chosen people are being conformed to the image of Christ. "In Christ" is not only the source of all our spiritual benefits, but the motivation for living the life worthy of our calling (Ephesians 4:1). We must conclude that if we are really "in Christ," the resulting lifestyle is going to declare the reality so loudly, so vividly, that our peers are going to know it.

"Without ignoring the importance of Christ's being in us, the neglected idea of our being in Christ is much more significant. If we emphasize only that Christ is in us, we define reality, and Christ is about one inch tall. If we realize we are in Christ, he determines reality and encompasses all we are." (Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary*, "Ephesians," Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996, p.61)

But what is it like? How do we explain it? God's Word does offer some illustrations of the concept. One of the best is the vine and branches picture that Jesus gave according to John 15:1-7. There Jesus taught us, "*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing*" (John 15:4-5).

There are many relationships in life that might also illustrate the concept in a very limited fashion. For example, one time Pat and I were on vacation in Florida and decided that we wanted to visit Tyndale Air Force base located near Panama City. We went to the office outside the gate and the nice man behind the desk said, "Do you have your military I.D.?" Well, no I didn't because I am not in that relationship. Because I am not "in the Air Force" I was not allowed on the base. Nor was I allowed to shop at the PX. Nor was I allowed to have the Air Force pay for my college education. Nor will I receive a pension in exchange for giving my life to the Air Force. I saw many of those benefits firsthand while our son, Michael, was in the Air Force. But I never have and never will benefit from them because I am not "in the Air Force."

In Ephesians 1:7-14, we find three very important benefits that are enjoyed by those who are described in verses 3-6: *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved* (Ephesians 1:3-6).

In Him, because God has placed us in Christ and given us every spiritual blessing in the spiritual realm, we are now enjoying redemption through His blood (vv.7-10), an inheritance (vv.11-12), and the seal and guarantee of the Holy Spirit (vv.13-14). We will consider the first of those benefits today, "Redemption through His blood" (vv.7-10).

Redemption (vv.7-10).

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace (v.7). In this statement we learn that redemption is forgiveness according to grace. We have that redemption in Christ. *In him we have redemption through his blood (v.7a).* That is a wonderful promise. What does it mean?

There is a group of Greek words found in the New Testament, all of which add to the understanding that redemption is the idea of paying the price necessary to buy something, generally out of hock or out of slavery. There are five of these Greek words that speak of redemption. The Greek words themselves make little difference to the layman. However, for the sake of clarity we will mention them.

First is the word *dikaiao* which speaks of a legal acquittal, a sinner vindicated, justified, or declared righteous. That word is found in Romans 3:4 which says, *as it is written, "That you may be **justified** in your words, and prevail when you are judged."*

The second word is *aphieimi* which means to legally send the bill away because it was paid. Often this word is translated forgiven or to forgive. It is found in Romans 4:7, *Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are **forgiven**, and whose sins are covered.*

The third word is *whiothsea* which refers to the legal process of bringing a child into a family. Romans 8:15 states, *For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of **adoption** as sons . . .*

Then there is the compound word *katalasso* which is to legally reconcile two feuding parties in court. Paul wrote in Romans 5:10, *For if while we were enemies we were **reconciled** to God by the death of his Son . . .*

There are four good examples of how all of these words appear in Romans (as well as other NT books) in the theological sense of being brought into relationship with God through the price of Christ's blood.

But now let's focus on the special word for redemption that appears in verse seven of our text. This is the compound word *apolutrosis*. It is the combination of the Greek word *lutrao*, which means "to release," plus the adjective *apo* which means "from."

Therefore, the word means to release from, implying bondage, debt, or slavery. The last definition of the word was especially well known in a culture where there were as many as 6 million slaves.

This word speaks of the special way a slave was given freedom. If there was a friend or family member of a slave, they could purchase the slave at market (agora), pay the asking price, take ownership of the slave and then release him or her to freedom. That is what God the Father does for us sinners upon whom He showers grace. He is justified to release us because the price has been paid.

The price for that redemption, that releasing from bondage is incredibly high. Our text teaches that redemption is offered through Christ's blood. Christ explained that price at the last supper when He offered the disciples the cup and said, *"For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).* All of the blood shed in animal sacrifices pointed to the one and only acceptable price for sin, Christ's blood. The writer to the Hebrew Christians reminded them and us that *it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).* Therefore, *Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood (Hebrews 13:12).*

The only means for slaves to sin to be purchased out of that slavery is through the blood of Christ. And that explains the need for redemption. We are born into the sphere of rebellion against our Creator. Because of our sinful nature we choose to sin and rebel. We are, therefore, citizens under the influence of Satan who is the prince and power of the air. The whole world, including us in our natural condition, lies in his lap or under his power (1 John 5:19). Because we sin, we are slaves to sin and held in bondage (Jesus, John 9:34). We need to be careful not to conclude that God paid the redemption price to Satan or to sin. No, God, in Christ, paid for our release with His blood.

We have redemption through the blood of Christ. A second benefit we have in Christ is remission. The clause in verse seven states that in Christ we have *the forgiveness of our trespasses (v.7b).* We need to stop to consider what is meant by the word remission. It means to let go, dismiss or release. The word implies that someone has the authority to send something away. It means to remit as in the canceling of a debt. That is how Jesus used the word when He told

about the master who forgave his slave's huge debt (Matthew 19:27). The word pictures an authority, or a strong man, picking up something and taking it away, casting it far away, never to return.

The need for remission is that we all have these things called trespasses. The word translated "trespass" means to step out of line. Or better, it is the sin of stepping over the boundary like you would do if you saw a sign that says "No Trespassing," and yet you climb over the fence onto the forbidden property despite the sign.

In life, God determines that the acceptable boundary is perfect righteousness. Adam purposely, intentionally stepped over God's boundary in disobedience. Then, we are born unrighteous because of Adam's trespass, and because we are born out of bounds we commit actions, entertain thoughts, and maintain attitudes commensurate with being out of bounds. The penalty for being caught out of bounds is death – physical, spiritual, eternally separated from God.

That is why we need help! How do you get back in bounds? No one can do it on their own. We need to have SOMEONE pick up the huge burden of sin and take it away. That is the result of remission. Our text uses the word *forgiveness*. In Christ, because He sacrificed Himself to pay for our sins, we have forgiveness. Again, this is the word that means to dismiss, release, take away. When Christ forgives our sins, He removes them forever from us. He took them so far away that they cannot return. The psalmist described it *As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12)*. When God takes away our trespasses, He blots them out so thoroughly that they remain unseen. God told us, *"I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you" (Isaiah 44:22)*.

Furthermore, when God picks up our trespasses and carries them away, He chooses to never bring them up again. *"And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34)*.

More than that, God casts our trespasses into the sea. *He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19)*. It

is good to remember at this point that ancient Israelites had no idea of submarines.

There are various levels of remission or forgiveness. For example, there is the initial forgiveness when we become aware of our offense against God. We admit our sinfulness and ask God to forgive our sin, though we are unable to comprehend the depth and breadth of our trespasses. At that moment, God forgives more than we can imagine. At initial forgiveness God picks up and takes away the principle of sin, that is our original guilt having been born in Adam's line. God also forgives the actual trespasses. God forgives all wrong actions, attitudes, and thoughts that we will ever commit since He already paid the price in Jesus' blood before we were born and committed the first sin.

However, when God forgives, He does not take us out of the world, nor does He destroy our flesh that is given to the influence of sin. Therefore, though our sins are taken away through Christ's sacrifice, we still need continuing forgiveness (1 John 1.9). Yes, God has already taken away all our sin. But in order to maintain fellowship, we need to be continually cognizant of attitudes, actions, thoughts that offend Him, grieve and quench the Holy Spirit. Christ's blood has already remitted the sin, but we need to acknowledge it and admit that it is rebellion against God.

The third benefit that we receive in Christ is grace. We have redemption from and remittance of sin *according to the riches of his grace (v.7c)*. Grace is the channel through which redemption and forgiveness flow. God did not buy us out of sin or carry away our offenses because of anything we think or do. That is impossible, because the root problem in trespasses against God is human pride. Adam thought he deserved more than God gave him. Therefore, he rebelled. And we by nature think more highly of ourselves than we should.

Multiplied millions of people have and continue to errantly believe that they can force God into forgiving their sins. They become aware of their sins against God because of God's common grace. They hear the truth of the gospel and their conscience draws out the evidence against them. But, being devoid of effectual (saving) grace, they, in their pride, conclude that they can do enough good works to force God to take away their sins. In fact, many false

religions offer “ways” to atone for sin. The result is the sad picture of guilty sinners offering sacrifices to idols, washing in dirty rivers, carrying crosses through the streets, helping victims of earthquakes, attending church, teaching Sunday School, and giving offerings in an effort to pay for their release from the slavery of sin.

We cannot buy redemption because it is a gift. Grace is the undeserved, unmeasured, incomprehensible kindness and favor of God to people who do not deserve His kindness. That describes all of us. We who are recipients of God’s grace will spend our entire lives trying to come to grips with the extent of this truth: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).*

The extremity of our redemption and forgiveness is described with the words *according to the riches of His grace*. It is said that John D. Rockefeller would purposely create situations for the camera and press that would illustrate his supposed generosity. He would often find a poor boy on the city streets, reach in his pocket and take out a dime, and give it to the needy fellow while the reporters snapped pictures. If I was the poor boy and knew who this man, dressed to the hilt and surrounded by an entourage, was, I would conclude that he was not generous but was a skinflint. A dime is nothing to man with millions. He gave a dime out of his abundance.

The redemption and forgiveness God gives us in Christ does not come out of the abundance of His grace. No, He gives redemption and forgiveness according to the riches of His grace. Because God’s grace is immeasurable, we will never in this life comprehend the value of God buying us out of slavery to sin, of picking up our trespasses and throwing them in the sea.

The grace that God pours out on us through Christ reveals God’s purpose in redemption. Speaking of that grace, *which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (vv.8-9).*

Notice that God pours out His grace in wisdom and insight. First, consider that God didn’t dribble out a little grace, just barely

enough to save us from sin. No, God lavished grace upon us. That is what “according to” His grace looks like. We should stand amazed at the extent of God’s grace given in Christ. Because God’s grace is so immense, it has to have serious ramifications in real life. We are going to see the details of this effect when we get to chapter four. There Paul wrote, *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Ephesians 4:1).* I like the translation of this verse in God’s Word Version. *I, a prisoner in the Lord, encourage you to live the kind of life which proves that God has called you (Ephesians 4:1 GWV).*

Evidence of God’s lavish grace is wisdom and insight. Some interpret this to mean that God exercises wisdom and insight when He poured out grace on us. It is true that God always acts in wisdom. Maybe not quite as much with insight. But since the next phrase refers to what **we know** because of God’s grace, it is more likely that the wisdom and insight is part of what God gave us.

The English word wisdom in this verse comes from the familiar Greek word *sofia*. That was a big, important concept in the Greek culture. It speaks of practical sense, sound judgment and intelligence that can be found in the world as well as the Bible. But the wisdom God gives is superior to what we have by nature, the wisdom of this world. The wisdom of this world cannot grasp the work of God in Christ Jesus. Paul argued, *Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:20-24).*

God’s wisdom understands His truth and understands how to make it work in life. That goes right along with the accompanying word *insight*, which speaks of thoughtfulness, thorough planning, or planning with purpose and intent. Ultimately, insight is a **way** of thinking. Believe it or not, people who have had God’s grace lavishly poured out on them in Christ, do not think like their peers who are devoid of saving grace. If your way of thinking is not distinct from

the world's way of thinking, you have good reason to ask questions about your identification in Christ.

Through that wisdom and insight that God gives in His lavish grace, He reveals the mystery of His will, *making known to us the mystery of his will (v.9a)*. The *mystery* is not a deep secret or cryptic truth. Often the idea of mystery in Scripture is simply a matter of timing. Once Christ came and died on the cross, the great truths into which the old prophets tried to look are made plain.

The mystery of God's will in God's purpose is set forth in Christ. The second clause of verse nine explains this mystery as, *according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (v.9b)*. For centuries, devout worshipers of God looked forward to the promised Seed of the Woman, the Lamb God would provide to take away sin. For eternity it has been God's will to provide the price to buy sinners out of sin, to take away the guilt of our trespasses through the price He Himself would provide. Everything in eternity comes down to the point of Christ dying on the cross.

God has revealed to us that His plan of redemption exalts Christ. It is His *for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (v.10)*. God's plan is eternal, but He brings it about *as a plan for the fullness of time (v.10a)*. God's purpose in Christ is a matter of strictest timing. God who created all things in perfect order, in perfect timing, would not leave something as critical as redemption to chance. A study of how God arranged the smallest of details in human history to bring the world to the "fullness of time" for Christ's sacrifice is very rewarding. Will God not continue to control all world events to complete His plan in Christ?

In the end, the whole of human history will understand that God's plan unites everything in Christ. His plan is *to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (v.10b)*. The phrase *unite all things in him* is very instructive. It is the translation of a compound word *anakaphalomai* that literally means to bring together under one head all things **again**. That idea looks back to the past perfection when everything was under the headship of Christ. But sin ruined all that.

The mystery of God's will is the plan to bring everything in life and the universe back under the headship of Christ. Through the

sacrifice of Christ, the payment God made, He will restore all things to perfection and completion "in Christ."

The story is told of a little boy and his father who lived on the edge of a large lake. One summer the boy and his father worked several hours to build a beautiful model boat. Day after day the boy took the boat to the lake and sailed it. But one day a gust of wind caught the little boat and drove it far out into the lake. The boy went home very discouraged. For several days he returned to the shore and scanned the lake for his little boat. One day he was in town and happened to see his little boat for sale in a the window of a shop. He ran into the store and announced to the owner that the boat was actually his. The owner disagreed telling the boy that he had paid good money to a local fisherman to purchase the boat from him. The boy left the store and began to save all the money he could earn by working sacrificially at odd jobs. Finally, one day he had the money the shop owner demanded for the boat and hurried into the store. He paid the price, purchased the boat, and then, walking out of the store, said to the boat, "Now you are twice mine because I made you and I bought you."

And now, if you are born again through the miracle of regeneration, you are twice Christ's. He made you for His glory. He bought you again for His glory.