

God's Grace Displayed in the Church Age and His Plan of the Ages

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My assigned subject is God's Grace Displayed in the Church Age and His Plan of the Ages. In order to fulfill my assignment, I intend to lift out golden gems from the first _____ chapters of the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

I tell my students that the first _____ things you have to do when studying any passage of Scripture is to determine the _____, the _____, and the _____. What I mean is simply this. You should understand the broad context of where your intended passage fits in the _____ scheme of God's revelatory plan.

Paul wrote _____ Epistles from his imprisonment in Rome:

- _____ is written to a great church in Philippi which had faithfully cared for Paul's needs and needed little doctrinal _____ though two of the women of the church were at odds and needed to live out the love of Christ.
- _____ was a personal letter that provides a wonderful example of the doctrine of _____ as Paul asked Philemon, one of his converts, to treat Onesimus, an _____ servant who had been recently converted under Paul in Rome, as if he were Paul himself, and Paul freely took upon Himself the _____ of Onesimus. Church history tells us that Philemon set Onesimus free, and Onesimus followed Paul, Timothy, and John as one of the _____ of the Church at Ephesus!

- The Epistle to the _____ is largely focused on Christ as the _____ of the Church and battles _____ from the Jews and Gnosticism and philosophy from the _____.
- Then there is the Epistle to the Ephesians which we are going to see is the mirror _____ of Colossians and yet much like it in content. **Colossians dealt with Christ the _____ of the Church, and Ephesians is focused on the _____ the Body of Christ.** Perhaps nowhere in such a concentrated space can we find so high and so profound a statement of both doctrine and practice as in the little Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians.

Now moving into the context of these truths in the book of Ephesians itself, allow me to give a simple _____ of the Epistle to the Ephesians. Paul begins this Epistle with one of the longest single Greek _____ in the Bible (1:3-14). It is a beautiful and powerful exposition of the inner workings of the Divine _____ in accomplishing the salvation of mankind. This passage is organized into three stanzas, each of which end with the phrase "**to the praise of his _____.**" With this ringing phrase, Paul introduces his theme, which is **that the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, His _____, is a part of God's purpose in unifying all things in time, space, and eternity in _____.** Paul deals with the body of believers upon the earth known as the Church. **He emphatically states that the Church was a _____, or a doctrine not revealed in the Old Testament.** He goes on to point out that it was God's purpose to break down the old distinction between Jew and Gentile in order to create a third race of people: **the _____.** **The Church was created to demonstrate for all time and eternity the love and grace of God. The Church is God's masterpiece which is to be preserved and presented faultless before God for all eternity. Therefore, he argues that the Church**

should live up to its birthright by being pure in conduct in an evil world, and to accomplish this, the believer must put on the whole spiritual _____ of God.

Having given you the overall context of Ephesians in Paul's display of truth and having briefly summarized the _____ of the whole book of Ephesians, I want to briefly develop _____ of Paul's major teachings concerning the Church in the New Testament.

I. The Church is a part of God's purpose in unifying all things in time and eternity in Christ. " Ephesians 1:7–10

In Ephesians 1:7-10 we are told that it has been God's purpose and plan to _____ us, to _____ us, and to _____ something to us.

Redeem: The word redemption is from ἀπολύτρωσις which is a compound word (apo – from and lutron - the price of release) meaning to set free by the payment of a price or a ransom.

Release: Then we come to the word forgiveness which is ἄφεσις which comes from the verb αφιμι which means to liberate a _____ or _____ a debt. Many Christians fail to realize this today, but when we are saved, we are released from the bondage to sin, death, and debt. God makes all His children free.

Reveal: The final word I would like to mention here is what God now _____ from this Church Age on – God's purpose and plan is to reveal to us a precious truth - "having made known to us the mystery of His will, **according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in _____, both which are in heaven and which are on earth—in Him.**" (Ephesians 1:9–10, NKJV) He might gather together is an infinitive compound word from

ἀνακεφαλαίωμα (ana- up and kefhale – head). God is _____ heads as it were. You see in the Old Testament, if you asked any Jew, who would be in the Kingdom, he would proudly answer “Only the _____, the children of Abraham, the children of Isaac, and the children of Jacob – we _____ are the children of God.” But Paul here reveals that in this Age of Grace we can all clearly see God seeks to bring the whole world together in one - all people _____ CHRIST. No longer bring a lamb for a temporary covering as in the age of Conscience, Human Government, Promise, and the Law. That which was hinted at in the Ages past has now come to pass! Jesus saves by grace alone through faith alone in His finished work alone. And it will be our wonder in eternity future to grasp hands with our brothers and sisters from all Ages when all God’s children get home!

II. The Church breaks down the _____ between Jew and Gentile and demonstrates for all time and eternity the love and _____ of God. (Ephesians 2:1–22, NKJV)

First, let’s consider the _____ state of the Gentiles outside of Christ. I shall only have time to list our previous condition as Gentiles outside of Christ.

1. _____ in trespasses and sins
2. Walking the way of the world
3. Living under the dominion of _____
4. Controlled by the _____ of the flesh and of the mind
5. Deserving of the _____ of God
6. Uncircumcised
7. Without _____
8. Aliens from _____ and strangers to her covenants
9. Having _____ hope
10. Without _____ in the World

Now, let's consider the _____ position of all those in Christ. What a change because of the finished work of Christ and the creation of Christ's masterpiece, the Church:

1. We have been made _____ through Christ's resurrection power.
2. We have been raised up together with _____.
3. We are _____ in Heavenly places in Christ Jesus.
4. We will experience God showing us kindness through His riches of grace through all of _____.
5. We are created in Christ to do good works not in order to be saved or keep ourselves saved but because we _____ Him.
6. We have been brought _____ to God.
7. We are one _____ of saved Jews and Gentiles.
8. We are fellow citizens with the _____.
9. We are _____ of the household of God.
10. We are a living _____ indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

Finally, let's consider the peace made by the death of Christ.

1. We once were called _____ by those who underwent a ritual of circumcision, but now we are called brother/sister by saved Jews because we both have had circumcision of the _____.
2. We once were kept _____ of the Temple by the same Jews who could only go so far into their own Temple, but now the _____ of the Temple has been torn asunder, and all God's children have immediate access to Him through the blood of Christ.
3. We once were enemies to the Jews who viewed us as _____, yet the very law they boasted in condemned them. Christ died for us all making peace not only between Jews

and Gentiles, but more importantly, between a _____
God and sinful man.

III. The Church was a _____ hidden in the Old Testament but now revealed in the New Testament. Ephesians 3:1–13

Perhaps one of the loveliest things ever said about the Apostle Paul was that he was a _____ of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles. This is certainly not the trajectory of his life at its beginning. He was a proud _____ and utterly self-righteous. He would have destroyed the Church if Christ had not stopped him on the road to Damascus and placed him under arrest by Jesus Christ who told him through Ananias that “he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15–16, NKJV)

Paul went through _____ years of training in the desert of Arabia and seventeen years of obscurity before Barnabas went to get him for the work at Antioch. One can read of his passion to communicate Christ to the Gentiles in missionary journeys and years of weary, uncomfortable imprisonment and marvel at his tenacity. But nothing is greater than God’s use of Paul to reveal at least _____ mysteries to the Church. So great was Paul’s gift of revealing mysteries that God gave him an infirmity of the flesh to keep him _____. My studies convince me that it was poor eyesight or some sort of eye disease that left him nearly blind and dependent on others for everyday necessities. It’s pretty hard to think of yourself too highly when you can’t put on your own clothes without help.

One of those mysteries is mentioned here. Namely, “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the _____, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel” and Paul calls this truth “the _____ of the _____, which from the beginning of

the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the _____ to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

I should quickly say a word about the word “_____.” In our modern language a mystery is a story like the works of Arthur Conan Doyle or Agatha Christie in which a crime is committed, and the detective must solve the clues to bring the perpetrator to justice. In this case, the Greek word μυστήριον means something _____ in the Old Testament that is _____ in the New Testament. And what a secret it was! You see, if you lived in the _____ Testament and wanted to know the God of the Bible and you were not fortunate enough to be born a Jew, you could through _____, circumcision, and a series of ritual _____ eventually become a Jewish proselyte. However, very few Gentiles ever did this.

When Gentiles started hearing and believing the Gospel, the _____ Christians struggled with how to treat these new believers. Paul’s clear teaching was that a person did not have to become a _____ to become a Christian. In fact, he brought great clarity to the fact that we may not be a part of the Fellowship of the Ring, but we are a part of the Fellowship of the Mystery. In this age, if you are in Christ, you are no longer a Jew or a Gentile, but you are a _____, a joint heir with Jesus Christ, a saint, and a child of God. You don’t have to wait for the secret handshake or the sacred secrets. They are yours by right of birth. No wonder Paul is fairly bursting to say: “To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.” We all have a share in the glorious doctrines of _____!

Even the _____ are curious about this gracious mystery according to our passage to “the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

And what should be our response to this glorious truth? Paul tells us: “in whom we have _____ and access with _____ through faith in Him. Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.” Our faith should be _____, and we should avail ourselves of our access to the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ!