

THE GLORY OF THE SON IN OUR NEW BEGINNING, PART 2

Ephesians 1.8-12, Message 05: Abundance Now, Inheritance Later

What's the “key” to making right decisions in order to live for the right things in the “here and now”?

- Much of the time we get caught up in the things we have to do just to make a living in this world.
- What can help us live above all of that? What can motivate us to live for the Lord?
- I think one of the most important keys to right living in the here-and-now is a knowledge of the future.

Look how Paul makes a leap from our salvation (the here-and-now) into God's eternal plan for all creation.

- (v7) We spent all our time in the last message talking about how God, in Christ, *forgave us* and *redeemed us*. That is what Christ did for us in the *past*, and that is our standing right now in the *present*.
- And then, as if were the most natural thing in the world, Paul makes a huge leap from our salvation in the here-and-now out to the *dispensation of the fullness of times* when all things will be gathered in Christ.
- The message is simple: To live here-and-now like we should (according to God's purpose in our salvation in Christ), we need a knowledge of the future.

This message is about the final two blessings that we have in Christ, blessings that glorify the Son.

- One of these final two blessing will take us out into God's eternal plan, then bring us back to the present.
- The other blessing will take us out to the Rapture and the Judgment Seat of Christ, then bring us right back to the present again.
- Both of these blessings, as Paul presents them, ought to change how we live our lives today. They should motivate us to live for what we know is eternal, to make eternal investments with our lives.

I. (v8-10) Abundance Now: All Wisdom & Prudence

In Christ, God has provided for us all wisdom and all prudence, and He has done so by making His eternal plan known unto us.

A. Summary & Overview: Understand how the passage fits together

1. This first passage (the third blessing that glorifies the Son) fits together like one of those nesting dolls: you open up the first one and find another inside, which has another inside, etc.
2. (v7) In Christ we have redemption through His blood and forgiveness according to His grace (it was God's benevolent choice to forgive us).
3. (v8) Wherein: In that same grace (because of God's benevolent choice) we now have available to us an abundance of wisdom and prudence.
4. (v9) How: How did God abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence? He made known unto us the mystery of His will—He revealed His plan to us, a plan that was not revealed before.
 - God gave us new revelation and that new revelation has resulted in wisdom and prudence.
5. (v10) What: What is that new revelation—what is the “mystery” of God's will that He has made known unto us that was not made known before? “That”...
 - a) And here is where we'll begin our study, and then we'll work backwards in the text.
 - b) But, understand this: The knowledge (v10) has been made known unto all of us in Christ (v9), and this knowledge should result in an abundance of wisdom and prudence in our lives (v8).

B. (v10) The “what”: God's revealed will—His plan for eternity

1. In this verse Paul speaks of a time (the “dispensation of the fullness of times”) when “all things” will be gathered together “in Christ.”

2. Observe first of all what the passage does *not* say: This verse does *not* say that all “people” will be gathered together in Christ. What is being gathered together here are “all things.”
 - a) All people will *not* be gathered together in Christ in the future. Some will be (the saints), but most will not (the lost).
 - b) However, in the future, all “things” will be gathered together “in Christ”—in the sense of “under Christ’s authority” (in His realm of authoritative power).
3. (1Cor 15.20-28) All things will be placed in Christ (in His realm of authority) in the New Creation, in eternity future.
 - a) (v20-23) Paul is speaking of the resurrection of the saints: Christ first, then the saints.
 - b) (v24) Then, after our resurrection, will come “the end” of our creation and the beginning of a new creation where God will reign in a new and different way.
 - c) (v25-26) We are talking about eternity future, after the Millennium, when even death will be defeated (there will be no more dying—no sickness, no death, no sadness, no tears).
 - d) (v27) This will be the dispensation of the fullness of times when “all things” are placed under the authority and power of God (the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ).
 - e) (v28) At this time, God will be “all in all” (all things will be “in Christ” in the sense of “in His realm of authority”) and God, both Father and Son, will reign over all creation forever.
 - (1) (Rev 21.1-2) After the Millennium, God will destroy this creation and make a new one.
 - (2) (Rev 22.1-5) All things in that new creation will be “in Christ” because God (the Father and the Son) will reign over all things in the new heaven, on the new earth, and in the New Jerusalem.
 - (3) (Isa 9.6-7) This is the kingdom that will increase (expand) for ever and ever.
 - (4) We will not spend eternity as fat little winged babies sitting on puffy white clouds in “heaven” while we pluck little harps and “sing praises” to God all day every day.
 - (a) That is a very short-sited and narrow view of eternity (and a trick of the devil to make “heaven” sound boring so the lost will desire hell more than heaven).
 - (b) In eternity there will be a kingdom which will begin at New Jerusalem; it will extend throughout the whole new earth, and then increase forever throughout the new heaven.
 - (c) Christ will reign over all things and of the increase of His reign there shall be no end.
4. (v10) God’s plan for eternity is to gather together all things (in New Jerusalem, in the new earth, and in the new heaven) in Christ (in His realm of authoritative power as King on David’s throne).
 - How do we know that? (v9) God has made this “mystery of His will” known unto us...

C. (v9) The “how”: The revelation of God’s will—the revelation of His plan for eternity

1. A “mystery” in the Bible is something that once was hidden but now is revealed.
2. (Eph 3.1-3) God has made know unto us the mystery of His will through the writings of the Apostles, specifically the writings of Paul.
 - a) Through the writings of Paul we get the last “piece of the puzzle” (we get the final revelation of God’s will that was not revealed until Paul—it was a mystery until Paul).
 - b) Up until Paul, it was clear that God had a plan for the Jews and for the Gentiles. Paul gives us the last piece of the puzzle: The Church (Eph 3.5-7).
 - (1) And isn’t it interesting that God divides all mankind into three groups (Jews, Gentiles, and the Church) and He has also divided the New Creation in eternity future into three parts: the new earth, the new heaven, and the New Jerusalem.
 - (2) It’s almost as if God planned it that way for some reason...

3. How, then, is the whole plan of God (the mystery of His will; Eph 1.10) *made know* unto us?

a) (Eph 3.4) By reading: You may understand all that God has revealed about the coming kingdom by reading the writings of Paul and the other prophets and Apostles (the Bible).

b) The problem is that most *saints* today don't read the Bible.

(1) Sure, many read bits and parts here and there to “get them through the day.” But we will never grasp God's plan (for the future or for today) if we do not give ourselves to the systematic, disciplined reading of Scripture daily.

(2) Listen to what W. Graham Scroggie had to say about reading and knowing the Bible (from the Preface of his book *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*):

Bread is baked, not for analysis, but for consumption. A house is built, not to be surveyed and criticized but to be lived in. The Bible is given to us that we might know God, and live the life of His plan for us. ... It is the people's Book as inheritance, and should be theirs as possession. Every Christian worker, whether Minister, Sunday School Teacher, Class Leader, Open-air Preacher, or one engaged in any other form of ministry, should have a thorough working knowledge of the Bible in his mother-tongue. It is not enough that we be familiar with great texts, or great chapters; we should know the Bible *as a whole*, and should be familiar with the parts which make the whole; for here is Divine progressive revelation, in which every part is organically related to every other part; and, consequently, only by knowing the whole Bible can we worthily appreciate its greatness and experience its power.

c) And sadly, to make matters worse, most *pastors* today don't teach or preach the Bible.

(1) Rather, what the saints get from pulpits today are self-help sermonettes on how to live your best life now.

(2) Lewis Sperry Chafer, in the Preface to his *Systematic Theology*, had some things to say about pastors and teachers, and their relationship to the Scripture.

The unchanging emphasis in the Scriptures upon doctrine, which subject is referred to in the New Testament more than forty times and is that to which a Christian is to “take heed”..., stands as a silent rebuke, whether heeded or not, to all modern notions which belittle the importance of Dogmatic Theology, and also stands as a corrective to those who neglect any portion of it. ... No substitute will ever be found for the knowledge of the Word of God. That Word alone deals with things eternal and infinite, and it alone has power to convert the soul and to develop a God-honoring spiritual life. ... Regardless of the ideals held by modern seminaries, the preacher is called to “preach the Word,” to be “apt to teach,” to be one who avoids the “traditions of men,” and to be one who is a right divider of the truth. Since the attainment to the knowledge of the Word of God is a life task, no seminary, no matter how true its aim, can hope to do more than to give the student an introduction to the whole text of the Bible, a method and habit of study with true ideals, and to impart a momentum for unceasing research in the Sacred Text itself. To this end every curriculum study should be focused. Studies in theology, original languages, and history should contribute to the one idea, namely *the knowledge of the Scriptures*.

4. (2Tim 3.15-17) God's Scripture is sufficient to accomplish all His will in and through us today.
 - a) (2Tim 4.1-5) And it should not surprise us that today many (saints and “pastors” alike) refuse to give themselves to learning the sound doctrine given to us by God in the Bible.
 - b) But, if you want to know God and His eternal plan (Eph 1.10), He has made that “mystery of His will” known to you (Eph 1.9). All you have to do is read it.
5. And if we will give ourselves to the reading and study of Scripture, that revelation of God's will is going to produce something in us: Abundance of wisdom and prudence!

D. (v8) The revelation of God's eternal plan results in wisdom and prudence.

1. Wisdom in the Bible is the combination of knowledge and understanding—when you know a subject and you understand it and its implications for your life, then you are “wise.”.
2. Prudence refers to your behavior (your daily discernment and decisions) based on wisdom (what you know of God through Scripture, and what you understand of what you know).
3. The more knowledge we have of God's eternal plan (v10) through the reading of Scripture (v9; where we find the mystery of God's will that has been made known unto us), the more we will be motivated to live the right way today.
 - a) Why is that? Because we know (and are growing in knowledge of) what the future holds!
 - b) God is planning an every-expanding kingdom in the new creation in eternity future, and He has revealed that plan to you because it would please Him that you would have a part in it.
 - c) To have a part in it, you must live a prudent life—you must live according to God's wisdom.
4. And that brings us to our second point of study in this message:
 - a) God has given us an abundance of wisdom and prudence through the revelation of the mystery of His will (His plan for the every-increasing kingdom in eternity future) and...
 - b) We can have an inheritance in that kingdom, if so be that we live according to His will today.

II. (v11-12) Inheritance Later: Obtained & Conditional

What we “have obtained” in Christ, we will receive when He comes back for us in the Rapture...

A. Our Inheritance: Obtained in the past

1. We “have obtained” (in the past, in the moment of our salvation) an inheritance in Christ.
2. We saw this before when we looked at verse 5 and our predestination unto the adoption of children.
3. Now, in verse 11, Paul mentions this predestination again and says that we have been predestined, not to salvation but rather to an inheritance.
 - a) (Php 1.6) Everyone who begins the journey (all born-again Christians) will finish it, because it is God who started the work in us and it will be God who finishes it.
 - b) (1Cor 4.5) That includes our inheritance: Each and every one will receive something at the Judgment Seat of Christ (God will reward each with at least something).
 - c) But, it's not just God's desire to just give us “something”; it is His pleasure to give us a full and complete inheritance.
 - d) However, because He is good and holy and just, He cannot give to all the same reward of the inheritance. Why? Because not all the saints are faithful...

B. Our Inheritance: Conditional in the future

1. We decide, each moment of every day, how we will live. We decide how we will invest our resources (time, talent, treasure, and testimony): in things eternal or in things temporal.
2. (Eph 5.1-5) There is a great portion of our inheritance that is conditional. It depends on the choices we make today—the choices of how we live and in what we invest that which we have been given.

3. (2Tim 2.12-13) The decisions we make today will effect the inheritance we will receive later.
- a) God has revealed the mystery of His will: In the dispensation of the fullness of times He will gather together all things under Christ's authority in the new creation, and God will reign for ever and ever over an ever-increasing kingdom.
 - It will start at the Second Coming, continue through the Millennium, and then flourish out in eternity.
 - b) And it is God's good pleasure (it would please Him greatly!) to give us a full inheritance in that kingdom to reign with Christ.
 - (1) We have been predestined to take part in that kingdom, but what part we play (how much inheritance we receive; our "position" and "glory" in the kingdom), depends on... us.
 - (2) (v12a) If we suffer with Christ today (expanding His kingdom by being and making disciples), we will reign with Him.
 - (3) (v12b) If we deny Him our suffering today in the Mission, He'll deny us the reigning later.
 - c) (v13) It is not a matter of losing our salvation (we cannot lose our salvation). It is our inheritance (our reigning with Christ) that stands in the balance.
 - d) (2Cor 5.10) We must all (each and every Christian) give an account to God at the Judgment Seat of Christ so that each one may receive according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. It is a judgment of our works for our reward (the reward of the inheritance).
4. Do you see now why the knowledge of the future is key to knowing how to live in the here-and-now. If we know what's coming, we can make the right adjustments to live for that (and not for the things of this world that will soon pass and leave us, at the end, full of remorse).

Conclusion: (v12 cf. v7-12) Four blessings that glorify the Son.

1. Redemption by His blood.
2. Forgiveness according to His grace.
3. Abundance of wisdom and knowledge (through God's will revealed in Scripture).
4. An inheritance, full and complete if we will but decide to live today according to God's revealed will.

God has a plan far bigger than anything we could ever imagine: (v10) The kingdom is coming!

- (Rom 8.29) God has predestined us in Christ to be a part of that plan (to be like Christ).
- (Rom 8.16-17) We can be joint-heirs with Christ, the Firstborn, if we will but suffer with Him a little while (in the Mission He is accomplishing in this world), until He comes back for us.
- (Rom 8.1) If we will choose to walk after the Spirit (to walk according to God's revealed will in the Scripture), we do not have to fear the "condemnation" at the Judgment Seat of Christ—the "condemnation" of losing the reward of our inheritance.

How are we going to chose to live? ...for self or for Christ? ...to follow selfish desires or to follow the Lord?

- Our *purpose* in this life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
- The only way to do that is *to be and make disciples* of the Lord Jesus Christ, because that is the work to which God had called us (that is the "suffering with Christ" that will glorify God and bring to us the unspeakable joy of our salvation).
- Anything else will leave us, in the end, full of remorse (wishing we had lived differently).
- Let's not end life that way: Let's follow Christ! Follow Him in salvation (repentance and faith) and then follow Him daily as His disciple (growing in His likeness and helping others do the same).