

Ephesians 13-09-29a

But as we begin this morning, it is Sunday the 29th of September, 2013, and our study this morning, to give it a title, would be The Seven-Branched Chiasm. You've heard of the seven-branched candlestick, the Jews call it a menorah, well you'll be thrilled to know that in our chapter one here, we have what I think is a beautiful chiastic structure, a chi in Greek is the letter X, and you have a symmetry, you have a correspondence that is instructive, it's not just there for its own sake, it is helpful. Helps us to organize the material and helps us to focus at the center on the thing that is most important.

As I said last week, we looked at this first portion of chapter one and saw the Lord Jesus Christ and we saw ten separate statements of what God has done and what we possess in Him. And that's what I would call that two-part study last week, in Him. In Him part A, in Him part B. And those two parts are what God has done in Christ on our behalf and what we enjoy and possess in Christ.

Let's take a moment to go to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to bless our study and our fellowship in the Word and then we'll begin. Father, we're so grateful for Your grace. It is so multifaceted, it accomplishes so many things.

We are included in it, we are blessed by it. Through Your grace, we are cleansed, we are entered into permanent relationship with You and particularly in this age, we are united with Christ, we are sealed, we are filled with Your Holy Spirit, we are gifted, we are equipped for service to one another and to reflect Your grace and glory to the outside world. We have redemption and the forgiveness of sins available not only in the ultimate and forensic sense of having eternal judgment removed from us, but the daily cleansing and the daily restoration and the daily encouragement and motivation that comes to us through the removal of the defilement and the pollution that accrues as we move through this life and inevitably fail.

But this is not an impediment to Your plan and purpose because You give us more grace. You resist the proud, You give grace to the humble. And as we look at this great first chapter in Ephesians, we are humbled by the magnitude of what You have done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray that as we continue our study of this section of Your Word that God the Holy Spirit will be our teacher, that He will minister it to each heart, that we'll not only understand what it means and what it says, but how it pertains and how it applies as we move forward in what remains to us in this life before we come to that great day of restoration, of unification with the Lord Jesus Christ in the air to live evermore with Him and with You. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen. Ephesians chapter 1, I mentioned before we began that it will be very helpful, it's not essential, but it would be exceedingly helpful I think if you have something on which to write, pretty much a full blank sheet of paper, just to organize what we're going to look at this morning because there

is, it seems to me, a structure in this chapter that Paul consciously uses to emphasize the points that he's making.

Ephesians chapter 1 verses 3 and following, 3 through 14, verses 3 through 14, this is one sentence in Greek, one sentence. It is a zip file, it is a compressed expression of an incredible amount of information and there is a structure to it. We have seen the environment, we have seen the background, we've seen that God has done these things in Christ and if you notice, we began in verse 2 with Paul's reminder of grace.

Grace to you and peace, the source of it is God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. The source of grace and peace is God our Father. Note the articles and the possessives here.

In verse 2, it is God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. You think, well, he's just going to vary this for stylistic reasons? I don't think so. Before we formally begin, just take a look at verse 3, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2, He's our Father. Verse 3, He's the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if you have a Father and I have the same Father, what does that make us? We are related, right? We're either half-siblings or full-siblings.

That's what having the same Father means. Look at the sons of Jacob, four different mothers, but they are all sons of the same Father, all 12 of them. So it's not an accident that in verse 2, He is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Actually, He's got our Father in verse 2 and He's the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 3. Now, just skip forward. We'll get here eventually, but look down at verse 17. The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of what? Glory.

There are three verses in this chapter where you have God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in the same breath. Verse 2, verse 3 and verse 17. And when you lay them side-by-side, you get a wonderful expression of several truths.

God is our Father. God is the Lord Jesus Father. And He is the Father of glory.

And you get the idea that the combination of us and the Lord Jesus Christ is the place where this glory happens. This is how, where and why the glory shines forth. It is because He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ and our Father.

The other thing you notice as you look at this is that He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 17. See that? The God of our Lord Jesus Christ. Remember in verse 2, He was the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now He is our Lord Jesus Christ in verse 17. This is not, I think, accidental. In verse 17, He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In verse 3, He is our Lord Jesus Christ. He is our Father in verse 2. So all of these things interweave. It's like, I remember the first time I ever saw my sister braiding hair.

I didn't know anything about braiding, but you get somebody with some long hair and you get those three strands and then, you know, the whole principle of braiding is take one of the outside ones and put it in the middle. And as soon as you've done that, take the other outside one and put it in the middle. And then you just repeat.

And they are interwoven. And a threefold cord, a threefold braid is not quickly broken. And these ideas that God the Father, God the Son, and we as His creation are united, united in Christ.

And this is a threefold reference to us, to God the Father, and to God the Son. And when you put verse 2, verse 3, and verse 17 together, you see the intermingling, the commingling, who belongs to whom. And it's turned in the light like a gem to show the different facets in each of these three expressions.

But this morning, as I said, what we want to do is notice a different kind of structure. We've seen the principal subjects here, God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and our place in the plan that God is working in Him. And we want to notice that.

Nothing happens for us in this age that isn't related to the Lord Jesus Christ. See if you can think of or name anything that we are, that we have, that we can access, that we can benefit from, that doesn't relate to the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Christ, we've got not one thing.

You are not predestined without Christ, predestined in Him before the foundation of the world, chosen in Him, elect in Him. We saw this last time. But I want to suggest to you another way of organizing the material here.

We've already seen that, for example, love is interwoven into this. We saw, for example, in verse 4, that we are holy and without blame before Him, before God the Father. Now, who doesn't want to be blameless? Do you really want to be guilty? Do you want to be the one that gets blamed? Even if you've done a thing, the blame part is the real odious part.

You hope if you do a thing, it can somehow be rectified and you don't have to stand there and be blameworthy. Well, we've run out of gas and we're 35 miles from the nearest station and there's no traffic. Who didn't fill up the tank? Who didn't watch the gas gauge? That was me.

I'm to blame. Nobody likes the blame part. Nobody wants to be blamed.

It's not usually healthy to sit around and try to fix blame on things when you've got a problem. You want to basically solve the problem. So blame is something we want to avoid.

Well, we can be holy and without blame before God. This is the highest and best place to not be blamed. If you blame me, that's one thing.

If God holds me responsible, that's an entirely larger thing. But we can be holy and without blame before Him in the sphere of what? Love, in love. Look at verse 4. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and people go off high and right about election and predestination and all these other things.

You can go down that way if you want to, but what I like is the last part of the verse. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Why? For what purpose? So that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.

Love is a policy of benefit. Love is a policy of love, even at one's own expense, even if you have to make a sacrifice, being a benefit. Isn't that what love really is? You know, John Lennon can sit in the bed with Yoko and sing all you need is love, all he wants, but what does he actually do by way of benefiting? If I'm starving, I don't want to hear a song about love.

I want someone to love me by helping me get back on my feet, by finding provision, by being stood back up and becoming self-sufficient. I don't even just want a handout. I want to be restored to a place where I can walk on my own feet, gather with my own hands.

This was the principle, as you well know, of charity in Israel. How did charity happen in Israel? What kind of, you know, Red Star of David organization did they have in Israel for helping people? Leave you owners of fields, leave the corners ungleaned. Did they say, the priests are going to have a handout of the holy bread after the loaves in the holy place have sat for a while, we'll take them out, then we'll distribute them to the poor.

It'll be a handout program. We'll have a bread line and we'll, when you gather up manna, set aside a tenth of the manna and put up a table and let the poor come and get the manna. Is that how it worked? When the manna fell, where did you get the manna that you ate as an Israelite? Rich, poor, high, low, Levite, whatever station and economic situation you had, where did you get your manna? You went out and gathered it with los manos attached to los brazos, right? They're my own two hands attached to my own two arms.

I gather, what was the charity program in the land once they got there and received their tribal inheritance and planted fields and grew crops? Leave the corners of the field ungleaned. So what did the poor do? Did they line up and wait for someone to hand them baked bread? No. They went to the corners of the field, they cut the grain, they took it home and trampled it to separate the wheat from the chaff, the edible from the inedible.

They gathered up the edible portion, they ground it, they had to obtain by some means, perhaps trading with someone who needed grain and had oil and the other things necessary, but by barter or one way or another they would obtain the oil necessary to mix with the flour. They baked the bread, then they had bread to eat. There was an intrinsic requirement for providing for oneself.

The only help that you got is you were given the opportunity to harvest grain that you did not own.

You could reap where you had not sown. We saw that recently, didn't we? The poor could reap where they had not sown.

And from there it's all on them. They could sit there and try to chew the stalks or they could go through the steps necessary by dint of their own labor to have food for themselves and their family. Well, in love, love is beneficial.

It is a policy of benefit. The owners gave up a portion. They could have gotten slightly more grain, slightly more profit, slightly more in their silos if they gleaned every square inch of their land, but God said, at a sacrifice to yourself, leave some of this grain for others who are in a bad way so that we do not have starving people in Israel.

And that was the charity system. It was sacrificial toward self, beneficial toward others. The rich loved the poor when they were obedient to that command.

What was the summation of the Ten Commandments, the summation of the whole law of Moses? Love the Lord your God. Be beneficial to God your Father. Make it worth His while to have delivered you out of Egypt.

Don't be a bad representative and a shame to His name. Bless the Lord God. We saw last time, blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed means be a benefit. What does God do when He blesses us? He benefits us. And love is the name for ensuring that we benefit others.

You don't have to feel gooey. You don't have to approve. You don't have to have an emotion.

You find a way to benefit. This is why when Scripture says, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who spitefully use you, love your enemies. You don't have to write poetic songs about their attributes.

You know, he's a rascal, but I love him. He's a trickster, but what a guy. It's not that kind of love.

It is find a way to benefit. Love your enemy. Don't take advantage.

Don't attempt retribution. Love is a policy of benefit. So in love, God has done these things.

Why? It is to our benefit that we be sanctified even though we are unworthy. It is our benefit that blame can be removed from us. Where did the blame go when it left us? It went to Christ on the cross.

He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. The blame has to go somewhere. God can't just evaporate the blame and laugh it off.

God is just. God is righteous. Blame has to be handled some way, somewhere.

And in love, we can be made holy and blameless. What a great thing. God does this for us.

In His own grace and for His own purposes. So we saw that in love. And then we saw in verse 6 that God having done these things according to the good pleasure of His own will to the praise of the glory of His grace by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

If we are sanctified, if our sin is removed and if we are blameless, now we can be acceptable. You've got quality inspectors. They go through and look at different food products.

And it either gets a stamp of approval or it is rejected. I was looking at footballs this past week. And Wilson has made footballs for the NFL for a long time.

And a lot of the collector's grade footballs that people get, when you look at the pictures of them, they'll have a date code on them. There's all kinds of technicalities. I learned more than I ever wanted to know about footballs.

But I noticed that picture after picture had this wonderful football in pristine condition, but it was stamped blim. Blim. They sell some of these at a discount or a lower price because when they went through the quality control process at the Wilson factory, the stitches weren't quite the same tension.

The laces weren't quite straight. The punching or the stamping or whatever, whoever sewed the seams around where the laces are missed. Or maybe the leather had a flaw or a weird place in the grain.

And so they stamp them blim, blemished. And you can get that football, which works just as well as any other football, but it doesn't look as good. It's blemished.

It's got a cosmetic flaw. Well, we are blameless. We are blemish-less in God's sight, in love.

And we are made acceptable in the Beloved. In Him we are acceptable. None of us get stamped blamed, blemished, in Him.

So this is a great thing. But notice it's not just in Christ, it's in the Beloved. It's specifically in the sphere of love.

And it reminds us that this is a benefit that costs God something. Anytime you see love, look at who it costs. Genuine love costs somebody something.

It's a part of the concept. It's not just an abstract, look through the Bible, all you need is love, and all the rest of it. But find who is paying the price.

Where is the cost involved? This is one of the great principles of Scripture. Genuine love is sacrificial some way in some sense on the part of the person expressing the love, and it benefits

in a tangible, material, substantial, maybe not tangible, but in a substantial way, it benefits someone. If I say I love spaghetti, I haven't really benefited spaghetti, and it didn't cost me anything.

So it's really an inane thing to say. We use these terms so loosely they're robbed of their meaning. If I say I love my wife, and if it's true, then there are other things at work.

If we love God, then it means we will set some things aside that might be important to us that we might view as a sacrifice, because we want to be a benefit to Him. It's a crude way of saying it, but we want to be worth His while in saving us, that in some way we contribute to the accomplishment of His purpose. We reflect His glory.

We are faithful and obedient. We can be used by Him to bring blessing to each other and to the world. It justifies, it vindicates, something beneficial happens through it because of God's love, which came at a great cost.

So there is so much going on in this passage, and what I want to suggest to you now is get your foreordained, predestined, and called out and elected piece of paper that we foreknew we were going to need, and get it out, because I want to suggest you a way to understand these verses. Across the top, this is going to be a three column, seven row arrangement. Three columns, seven rows.

Seven, this is my seven branched candlestick, my seven branched chiasmic structure. Keep in mind that that middle row out of the seven is going to be something special. You remember how a chiasm works, right? It emphasizes what is at the center.

So just remember that center row is going to be out of symmetry. It won't have a corresponding thing. It's going to sit at the center, and the rows above and below are going to center on it, and are going to complement.

The ones above will be complemented by the ones below. Our three columns, and this is my suggestion, this is ex nihilo, but it makes sense to me. Hopefully it will make sense to you, and hopefully it will help all of us understand the things that Paul is getting across in this very beautifully crafted section of God's Word.

On the left column, your first, if you're looking at it this way, your left hand column over here, just write the word having. Having done something. You remember the principle of the Greek eris participle? The action of the eris participle does what? Precedes the action.

Having done a thing, here's the action. Having established some pre-existing condition, here's what happens. So column one is kind of the eris participle column.

Having whatever. The middle column is have, and this can be possession, position, but because of what's in the left hand column, we have an established condition in the middle. We have an

established circumstance in the middle.

The right hand column, so that. Make sense? This is sort of a logical thing. We do this all the time.

If I'm going to put some countertops in, which I'm actually going to do here in the near future, having gone and gotten the supplies that I need, I have put them together in a happy way, and I'm going to do that in a happy way so that we have a usable and cosmetically pleasing countertop. I make provision in advance. I do a thing and establish a condition with some set purpose.

Having in the past some conditions. In the present, we have a new set of conditions so that some purpose is accomplished. Make sense? Having, have, so that.

Everything in this section, this one glorious sentence, verses 3-14, organizes itself logically into the boxes that you have there. So the actor in this case for our first set of rows is God. God, having done a thing, has established something else so that God has accomplished some purpose.

God is the one making all of this take place in actually our first five rows. Row 6 is going to be you, and row 7 is going to be the Apostle Paul. So we have this established at the beginning in verse 3, "...blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This is where it all begins.

So up above my three columns, just up there in the upper left corner, I've got God in capital letters. God, having done some things, has done things so that His purposes are accomplished. This is God.

So first, in verse 4, what has He done? Now these are not necessarily given in order in the Scripture, but they fall logically into our boxes. So first of all, in verse 3, what does it say? "...blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us." What column does that go in? It goes in the middle column, doesn't it? He has done a thing. So what do I write there? I put a little 3 there and I circle it.

Verse 3, "...God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing." That's what He's done. Now, He didn't just sit up there in heaven and say, well, I think I'll create a bunch of people and I'll just give them every spiritual blessing. There was a condition.

There was something He had to do first so that He could do that. Make sense? So God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing, that's verse 3. Verse 4, "...having chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." He's blessing us now in the world, having chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world. That's having done something in the past, right? So where does that go? It goes in column 1, row 1, right? This was what God had to necessarily do.

We had to be chosen in Christ. Christ was chosen before the foundation of the world. And the only way God can give us these spiritual blessings is if we're in Christ, because He's the one that was designated before the foundation of the world as the avenue, as the means, as the sphere.

And without Christ, you can't get these blessings. Having chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, we are blessed with every spiritual blessing. And look at the second part of verse 4, "...so that," see it? Make sense? Having chosen Christ and chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, He blesses us with every spiritual blessing so that, what does it say in verse 4? "...we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Holy and blameless before Him in love.

Just really organizes verses 3 and 4, doesn't it? Then we come to verse 5. This is going to be our second row now. "...having," oh, well, that's easy. What column does that go in? "...having predestined us in Him." Having chosen us in Him kind of reminds you of what's above there.

Chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. Having predestined us in Him, what do we have? What are we now? We weren't this in eternity past. We weren't sons.

We weren't adopted in eternity past. He predestined us in eternity past. When do we become adopted sons? Now, we have become.

So in your center box, we are adopted as sons to Himself by the Lord Jesus Christ to Himself. Having predestined us in Him, He has adopted us as sons and you see those same two actors by the Lord Jesus Christ unto Himself. There you've got that God the Father, Lord Jesus Christ synergy going again.

God the Father does these things through the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now what's the purpose? Look at verse 6, "...so that we are to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted." Wow, that goes back in the second box.

He has made us accepted. So in the center box there, we are adopted as sons and accepted. We're acceptable and these two things are related, aren't they? You can't really well say I don't accept you but I adopt you or I accept you but I don't want any relationship with you.

The adoption and the acceptance are linked. One reflects the other. Each reflects the other.

So our second row, verse 5 in the left hand thing, "...He has predestined us in Him." That's what He has done. Having already done that, in the center there, He has adopted us as sons and accepted us. "...so that we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace." And that's verse 6a.

And verse 6b goes back into that middle box. So you've got verse 5 at the left, you've got verse 5 in the middle and verse 6b in the middle and you've got 6a on the right. I don't want to

overcomplicate this and if you don't get wrapped around the diagram but just think about it logically.

God had to do some things before the whole world got started so that right now He could establish certain things. You right now are adopted. You have a father-child relationship with God right now.

But that didn't come out of nowhere. God just didn't think that up at the point that you expressed faith in Christ. He made provision and arrangement for it in an eternity past and He has a purpose in it.

We think, well, the only purpose I care about is I'm not going to the hot place and I'm going to get to live forever and that sounds good to me. That's not God's purpose per se. We benefit but God's purpose is that we reflect His glory.

The praise of the glory of His grace and this ought to be our attitude, our gratitude, our recognition that God didn't have to do this and it cost Him something. It cost Him a lot. It cost Him the most precious price that has ever been paid for anything.

The blood, the death of His blameless Son, the second person of the Trinity, that's what it took to make this possible and He ordained that. He figured that out in eternity past. To predestine basically means to pre-purpose.

We've got pre-positioned supplies all over the world for our military if a conflict erupts someplace. We've got beans and bullets sitting in warehouses ready to be used. Now which specific rations, which specific bullets? Did somebody say, well, here I am at the Remington factory and you, oh bullet, I'm going to make sure that you are over here in case something happens in the Southeast Asia.

No, there are categories. We say, I want to have so many tons of this kind of ammunition in this place in case I need to accomplish this purpose over here. Which individual bullet fills that slot isn't the concept here.

In the same way God predestining the people who come to faith in Christ is like pre-positioning supplies. We are pre-purposed. Those who come to faith in this age are pre-purposed to be body and bride of Christ.

Don't get the fat head and think, well, God loved me before the foundation of the world. No, God loved His Son before the foundation of the world and in that love God said, I am going to give you a bride. When you achieve this victory, when you accomplish my will and purpose, this is going to be my special gift from Father to Son.

Those who come to faith in this space of time in human history are yours, uniquely yours, especially yours, united with you forever as your body and bride. That's not true for the Old

Testament age, won't be true for the Tribulational Saints, won't be true for the Millennial Saints. It's true for us.

We are pre-purposed, predestined. That's what predestination is. And all the dead seas of ink spilled in other debates, I think, really miss this point.

But hopefully we'll see this here as we organize the information that is in this beautiful chapter. We're going to pause here and take our break. We've completed our first two rows.

When we come back, we'll do our third row. Then we're going to get to the good part. We're going to get to that center emphasis.

And Lord willing, and I don't run out of time, we'll fill in the bottom three rows as well. And it is my purpose to do so, but whether we can get to the end and say, having fulfilled it, we'll be ready to move on next week, that remains to be seen. But let's pause here and take our break.