

Ephesians 13-10-06a

This is Sunday, the 6th of October, 2013. We continue our expedition through the Epistle to the Laodiceans, artfully disguised as the Epistle to Ephesus or in Ephesians. We have covered the first 16 verses and we will pick up this morning with a quick review of what we have covered, the structure that we have uncovered and the forward look that all of this gives us to the last half of this chapter.

Let's take a moment as we begin to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, how grateful we are for your grace, the things that you do on our behalf to sustain us, to bless us, to educate us, to carry us along and move us forward in your plan and purpose to enable and empower us to perform those things that are a part of your plan, the things that reflect your glory both to the world and to the angelic hosts and to us. We thank you for all of the blessings we have in Jesus Christ and we pray that as we study this passage that details all of these things that God the Holy Spirit will minister it to our hearts in a way that motivates each of us.

May each one of us see here pertinent and applicable truth that will motivate us, that will encourage us, that will sustain us as we navigate the circumstances, make the decisions, perform the actions that lie ahead of us in the days to come. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Paul an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God to the saints who are faithful in Christ Jesus. The sanctified and faithful in Christ Jesus are the recipients, the destination of the audience for this letter. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Benefit to Him. May we be a benefit to Him who has benefited us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that purpose clause, we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. Having purposed us, predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ, in Jesus Christ, through Jesus Christ, to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, the purpose being, the outcome being, the end result being the praise of the glory of His grace. And that grace is what made us accepted in the Beloved.

We are accepted in Christ. We began this study looking at all of the things that happen in Him. We are predestined in Him.

We have all spiritual blessings in Him. We are predestined in Him. We are accepted in Him.

We are redeemed and forgiven in Him. We see all things brought together in Him, whether in heaven or in earth. We have in verse 11 obtained an inheritance in Him.

So this is the sphere, this is the light that Jesus Christ Himself. In Him, verse 7, we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace which

He made to abound toward us in, by means of, all wisdom and prudence. These things don't just abound to us automatically.

It doesn't just happen like the sun rising and the radiant energy coming to produce plant life and plant production. It is something that is accessed in a specific way. It is by means of prudence, by means of the wisdom that He has made available to us.

And this is where choice comes in. Verse 9, having made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself. And you see those purposes scattered all down through here.

Unto the praise of His glory. Unto the glory of His grace. Unto for the purpose of our redemption, our inheritance, and so on.

So that, verse 10, in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him. Verse 11, in Him also we have obtained an inheritance being predestined, saw that earlier, being predestined, verse 5, now being predestined, verse 11, according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. So that, verse 12, we who were the first trusters, first hopers, should be to the praise of His glory.

Another purpose statement. In Him you also, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession to the praise of His glory. To the praise of His glory.

Another instance of that refrain. Well, this is a lot. When you try to read this and absorb it, it's just so dense.

It is so packed. So what I suggested to you last time is that we observe the structure that underlies the statement of these concepts, to try to help us link what is linked, especially when you look at it in its Greek. This 3-14 is all one sentence.

It's all one thing. So how can we organize it? So if you have your notes from last time, I suggested that you would need to write this down. For us in the modern day, looking at it at this distance, it's just a help to look at these concepts.

And I have suggested that this is a seven-branched lampstand. It's a seven-branched kiastic structure. And I've actually begun drawing this out for you.

It turned out to be at the very limits of my artistic and theological abilities. I've got it about two-thirds finished. And I'm going to finish it in color, put it on the website under our Ephesians study, so that you'll have it for next time.

I hope to get it done for this morning, but it was not to be. However, I can tell you, looking at your notes, what the structure is. And you'll see if it's confusing bear with me.

I'll have a diagram for you here very soon. But you should have seven lines across, the seven parts of this. And if you don't have notes and you're just listening to me, somebody's in the indefinite future driving in a car and got something playing through the speakers.

I don't want you to pull over at the road and try to draw this out. You should be able to keep it in your mind if you think about it. But we've got seven parts of this.

Now, you remember what a menorah looks like, right? Think of a menorah. You've got, start with a post. You've got the central stand, right? And that's the main thing.

Without that, you've got nothing. You have to have that. That's the central post.

And that's usually, in a Jewish menorah, it'll be a little bit higher. And then if you think about it, there are one arc, second arc below it, slightly larger, third arc below that, arching up so that you have three lamps on one side and three lamps on the other. So central post and then three arcs, half circles with the ends pointing upward, and you've got those flames on the top.

One, two, three, four, five, six, seven flames. That's the glory. That's the light that emanates from it, right? We have seven basic ideas here that are linked together by what God has done in the past, enabling Him to do something that has an effect in the present so that we accrue a benefit, so that there is some existing result.

Having done a thing, God has done a resulting thing so that we derive a benefit. That's how it works. Each of these branches, the three on the left and the three on the right, have that structure.

So let's start with the first branch. Now if you were... On the diagram you're going to get, I had to turn this sideways because we're not Chinese and we don't read vertically, and trying to write it didn't work. It gave me a crick in my neck.

So I turned it sideways. If you can envision this, and again, I'm not trying to overcomplicate this, I'm trying to simplify it, but imagine you took your seven branch candlestick and for the purposes of reading what's written on the branches, we're just going to turn it counterclockwise 90 degrees, just so we can read the branches. Now if you're of a Hebrew mindset, this would make sense because you think, well now wait a minute, doesn't that put the last branch at the top? Not if you're Hebrew and you read right to left.

Number one branch is over to the right, right? That's why I'm turning it to the left. Is everybody with me? The first branch, we're Hebrew, we're reading from right to left. Okay? So number one branch is over here on the right.

I'm going to turn it 90 degrees so I'm reading that one first, and I can read, I can write stuff on it this way. Okay? Just bear with me, it'll work. Lord willing.

All right, so we began looking at the first statement. This I labeled A last time. God having chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.

That was in verse four. We're first of all looking at verses three and four. The concepts there, God having done a thing, he has done another thing so that we have a result.

And this is in the having. God having chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. That had to be the pre-existing condition.

That's the aorist participle, so to speak, that precedes the action of the main verb, conceptually. Having chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that's what God has done. Because that is true, in verse three, he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ.

So that, second part of verse four, we should be holy and without blame before him in love. Those three concepts are united in that way with that structure. And that's our first little candlestick branch.

Now what do these branches do? They don't just float in the air, they all plug in to the central stem, the stand itself. Jesus said, I'm the vine, you are the branches. This is branches number one.

Because of what God has done, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing so that we can be holy and without blame before him in love. That's a branch. And there's an in him, in Christ, in verse three and in verse four.

In Christ, in him. This is all, without Christ, this wouldn't exist. That was the first row.

That's the one I'm calling A. Now we pick up in verse five. Having predestined us to adoption as sons in, by, through Jesus Christ. Without Jesus Christ, there is no destiny and there is no adopting.

So our second row there, having predestined us in him, having pre-purposed us because he pre-purposed Jesus Christ, he has adopted us as sons and accepted us. That's in verse five and in verse six. See in verse six, by which he made us accepted in the beloved and he having predestined us with a view toward adoption as sons, we weren't adopted in eternity past.

He purposed, he predestined in Christ that this would happen and now he can do it because of that purpose. You were not a son of God. You were not adopted as God's child in eternity past.

That happened in the present and it happened because he had already established that potential

in Christ. Having predestined us in him, in Christ, he has now adopted us and accepted us. We are adopted and accepted.

That's the middle part of that second row. And what is the so that? So that, verse seven, we have redemption through his blood and the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. What God has done in eternity past, what God has done in the present means that we can have redemption and forgiveness.

So the so that is the effect on us. You could say, well wouldn't that be in the middle because the so that is the effect on us. That's why it's over to the right.

That's our first two rows. Everybody with me so far? This ought to be a review. I'm sorry, the 6A is to the praise of the glory of his grace.

Yeah, sorry about that. It is not the simplest piece of material to go through. You're right.

It's 6A, to the praise of the glory of his grace is at the end of the second row. So that, he has predestined us in him, he has adopted us and accepted us so that we should be to the praise of the glory of his grace. Thank you for, I would have encountered tribulation in my next row.

In the next row, we start looking, and remember I told you this is kind of backwards. We go verse nine, verse eight, and then verse seven to stack these up in our logical pattern here. Having made known to us the mystery of his will, the good pleasure which he purposed in himself, that was verse nine, that's what God has done.

He has to do that first. He has to make known his will so that in the middle, he has made his grace riches abound in wisdom and prudence to us. That's verse eight.

Having already made known the mystery of his will, his good pleasure which he purposed in himself, he has made his grace riches abound to us so that, verse seven, we have redemption and forgiveness. The redemption and forgiveness are not possible until he has made those grace riches abound to us, having made known his purpose and his will. That's our third row.

Now we have come to, and if you remember I've got this thing turned on its side, row four is going to be our great big lamp stand. This is what unites all the branches and that is verse 10. This is the center of the chiasm if you're looking at it that way.

The whole purpose, the fulfilled destiny, the whole idea, the big idea here, the lamp stand is that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times. You can see why this would be the lamp stand. This is the central post that everything else attaches to, depends upon, contributes to, fleshes out and makes purposeful.

It's all, verse 10, in the dispensation of the fullness of the times, God might gather together in one all things in Christ. Then this really makes sense to be the lamp stand. It's where all things are

gathered together in Christ.

This is where all the branches converge. Things which are in heaven and which are on earth, in Him. So your big central thing, verse 10, this is the mystery.

This is the mystery that Paul has been made the steward of to reveal. All things united in Christ. That's my short version of verse 10.

God has united all things in Christ. Now, we're on the other half of our arc-shaped branches and you would expect in a chiastic structure that there will be some sort of correspondence. Row 5 will have some correspondence to row 3. That's the way they usually work.

God having predestined us according to His purpose and will, this is in verse 11, God according to the purpose as He works all things according to the counsel of His will, we in verse 11A have obtained an inheritance. We have obtained an inheritance having been predestined to that. God set up that destiny in Christ in eternity past.

That's why we have now an inheritance. So that, verse 12, see it? So that we who first trusted, is how it's translated here, in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. We're going to come back in a minute and look at that first trusted.

It's real interesting behind the English. We who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. That's your fifth row there.

The sixth row, now we're in verses 13 and 14, in Him you also after you heard the word of truth. So we've shifted the first five of these were God acting. God having done a thing has provided a thing so that we should be something, right? That's roughly the outline.

But here it doesn't say in verse 13, God having done a thing, it says in Him you having done a thing. You also after you heard the word of truth, after you heard the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed. You heard and you trusted.

You heard and you believed. That's in the having column, the first part of the row, of row six. Having heard and having believed and this is you.

What happened? What has happened now? Verse 13, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which, verse 14 tells us, is the mark of the purchased promise. Now possession, it's God's ownership tag. It's like engraving His mark on us.

So that, in verse 14, we should be to the praise of His glory. Really a recurring refrain over there in that far right hand column, isn't there? That we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace, to the praise of His glory. We should be holy and blameless, have redemption and forgiveness.

Our redemption and forgiveness, our sanctification reflect His glory. It's just like cleaning brass,

polishing brass. When you remove the corruption, when you remove the impediments, the incrustations, the corrosion, it can reflect the light.

And us being made holy, being made blameless, being redeemed, being forgiven, we now can reflect the glory of God. That brings us to the bottom branch here now, or the leftmost branch, if you have the lamp stand upright. And this is actually verse 15, I also, Paul, having heard of your faith, after I heard of your faith toward the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the sanctified ones, all the saints, all the ones who are the recipients of this letter, back in verse 1, to the saints, I've heard that you love the saints.

I'm writing to the saints, you love the saints, and you trust in Jesus Christ, which is the sphere in which all of these things take place. So Paul, so we had five God branches, God having done, God having done, God having done, God having done, God having done. The sixth branch, you having heard and having trusted, Paul says, I, and the seventh branch here is the Apostle Paul, I, having heard of your faith toward Christ and your love toward all the sanctified ones, all the ones who are on this road, continue to thank God and intercede in prayer.

Verse 16, I do not cease. I have been praying for you. I have been making mention of you in my prayers.

It's an ongoing thing. I have been doing this. I continue to do it.

I started doing it after I heard of your faith and your love. I began interceding and began praying, and I've continued to do so to the present. Having heard, this is what I do.

So that, and that's verses 17 through 23. Paul's so that is the rest of this chapter. Why does he pray? Why is he on their side and in their corner and making intercession before the Lord God? That's what we're going to study.

And that is going to branch out itself into what you might call the base of the lampstand. All of these branches converge in Christ, and Paul says, when I heard of your faith in Christ and your love for one another, I knew that these things pertain to you. My prayer is that, and then we're going to branch out and see a threefold understanding that he wants them to have.

And to me, this is just what enables them to appreciate the entire purpose of God in Christ, everything that we've seen up to this point. Now, what is the correspondence? Why is this, why do I suggest to you that this is chiastic, that these things are linked? What I did, and I hope it didn't get completely out of hand, but you remember the purposes. If you look at the purposes over in the right, the so that's, this is the easiest place to see it.

Verse seven, if you, right in the middle, the center row there, that's Christ, that's the mystery, everything united in him, everything in him accomplishes God's purpose. That's the big main idea. And if we were going to stop right now and say, why do I need to parse all of this out? A, the word

of God spends a whole chapter on it.

Paul prayed emphatically, earnestly, and continuously that these believers that he's writing to would understand these things. It was his prayer, his fervent desire that they appreciate these things as he had come to appreciate them. And so we want to try to get it figured out because we want to answer the question in our own minds, so that, how are you and I going to be different? If we can get a grasp on these things and understand what God has done, what God is doing and what his purpose for us is, it's that much easier for us to fulfill the purpose, right? There's nothing more confusing than someone really urgently wanting to accomplish a goal, but they give you fuzzy instructions.

And there are other people wandering around that also have fuzzy instructions, and people don't know who's supposed to do what. Have you ever been in that situation? Have you ever known that there was an urgent goal and there were lots of people buzzing around, but nobody really given clear guidance? Or the guidance seemed to be conflicting? Or there are people that thought they ought to be doing your job and thought you ought to be doing something else, but your understanding was that you were supposed to be doing it? It's chaos. It isn't orderly.

We want to know exactly what God's purpose is, and we want to know what our particular role is. How can I do this? If I understand Ephesians 1, how should I then live? What should I be doing? What should I be doing different? What should I continue to do and try to do better? That's why it's here. Paul says, I pray that you will come to know these things, because it is going to work itself out in the praise of God's glory, in the praise of God's grace, in appreciation for the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the lampstand where our light shines. And when I finish drawing this little diagram, the so that, that's the end of the branches. That's where the flame is.

That's where the glory comes out. The whole purpose of the lampstand is to get those lights up there where they will shine. Remember the golden lampstand that was in the holy place? They didn't just have it in there because it was a beautiful piece of gold work.

They lit it. There were oil lamps. The seven churches of Asia that Jesus speaks to through John in Revelation chapter 2 and 3. He says, I walk among these lampstands.

I walk in their midst. I've always wondered, if you pictured that as a menorah, how does Jesus, does He do it like the wall in the upper room? He walks through it. He says He's in the midst of the lamps.

He's in the center of the lamps. He is the, He's what makes that lampstand work. He is in the midst.

He's an integral part of it. It wouldn't be there without Him. But the purpose of it is that glory, that

flame, that shining brightness that illuminates, that blesses.

So that's, that's the idea. So how can we get a grip on these concepts? Well, looking at these branches, look at the things that God has done in and through Christ. Just look at your, at your rows there.

You don't have to worry about whether the branches meet right now. What has God done? God not only purposed the Lord Jesus Christ, but He said there's going to be a people, a unique, a peculiar people attached to, identified with, integral with the Lord Jesus Christ. And that's you and me.

That's the church. We're not Israel. We're not patriarchal.

We're not pre-flood. We're not millennial. We're not tribulational.

We are church, uniquely so. We are united with Christ uniquely. Nobody in the Old Testament has these privileges and these purposes.

Nobody in the Old Testament has these provisions and these potentials. And if you go back and listen to that, that's all P's. That's like Dallas Seminary alliteration coming out.

Purposes, provisions, potentials, all of these things are ours in Christ and they are unique. You are unique. People are casting around today, trying to find their identity, trying to, to affirm themselves, feel good about themselves, feel like they're leading a meaningful life.

For you and me, there is nothing that literally holds a candle to being in Christ. This is what makes us special. This is what makes us unique.

This is what makes us valuable. This is what gives our lives purpose and direction and accomplishment. Accomplishment in this field is eternal.

People can accomplish a lot. They can build charities. I have lived long enough now to see things go up and come down.

I was digitizing a sermon for First Baptist the other day and the pastor was talking about how we are going to build this building and what a blessing it's going to be and how much of an expansion and an enlightenment and a wonderful thing it's going to be and do. Well, they built it. I was an adult at the time.

They built it. They used it. And it has now come down and been replaced by something else.

And all of the encouragement and the exhortation for people to give and to invest in it and certainly good things happened there, but it's gone. It's no longer there. It is like everything else in this earth, temporary.

Things that were done there that accomplished God's purpose, blessings in people's hearts, and as those people move forward into eternity, that will remain. But the buildings themselves are gone. It doesn't matter how many tens of thousands of dollars you raise and contribute and buy things with, it ultimately perishes.

Things that perish with the using. I cleaned all of the dishes, but that was yesterday. I look in the sink and it's all full again today.

I mowed the lawn and it looked beautiful last week, but it's all hairy and overgrown and unkempt this week. My efforts in the material world are ephemeral. They perish.

Genuine meaning, genuine accomplishment, genuine value in the plan and purpose of God is building into eternal things. This is what you lay hold of by faith, laying hold of eternal life. Your production, the fruit of faith lives on.

It will reflect the glory of God from now on. It will reflect it in eternity. There is some mechanism that we don't understand by which the things we do right here on a daily basis, they build something.

I don't know what it is. You think about the wall that records all the guys that died in Vietnam. If you've ever been there, it's very impressive.

And the wall is as big as it is and as high as it is because it has to hold as many names as it holds. And without those guys going and fighting for their country and dying in place, the wall would be shorter and smaller. If nothing else, that name is going to be carved there probably until the atoms of this world disintegrate.

And in a very crude way, the things that we do in this life that partake of faith and obedience are building something infinitely grander and greater, something that glows, reflects, emanates the glory of God. And every moment of faith on our part, every righteousness that we accomplish builds into that. And it's got your name on it.

Christ's name is written on us. We are in Him and He is in us. And as it reflects His glory, we are a part of that.

We are a branch in that vine. It may seem small. It may seem unknown.

Nobody may know but you that you successfully squelched a temptation to sin, that you successfully did not go down a bad road, that you disciplined yourself, that you prayed, that you claimed promises, that you persevered, that you were steady, you were reliable. And nobody knows it except God and the angels who are constructing that glory wall that's got that moment and that act of faith and that piece of righteousness built into it like a gemstone that brightly reflects the glory of God because nobody could do that but you in that time, in that place by

claiming the power and promise of God. And it creates a permanent glory reflection that will exist for all eternity.

And you think people go and visit that wall? You think about eternity where people are going to be able in some fashion beyond our comprehension to visit the accomplishments of God in and through us and they are permanently recorded. Every thought, every decision, every act of faith survives the fire. Wood, hay and stubble is incinerated.

It's gone. But the gold and the silver and the precious stones survive the fire of judgment. They survive the fire that destroys this heavens and earth.

It makes a difference. What you think right now and what you think this afternoon, what you decide and what you trust makes a permanent eternal difference. It builds something that can never be destroyed.

And we tend to forget that. We think, ah, who's going to know? Who's going to care? It will all be forgotten in the wash of time. No, it isn't.

No, it isn't. There is a permanent eternal construction. That's what this passage is trying to impress on us.

This is what Paul is praying we will come to understand. And it's what we're going to look at when we come back from the break. We're going to see that these purposes are not just theological constructs.

It's not just a nice little set of rows or a diagram we can make on paper. We ought to be motivated. We ought to be strengthened and encouraged to lay hold of righteousness by faith because it counts.

I wish we could see, and I think Paul wishes we could see, the construction project in the kingdom of the Father. When the Lord says, I go to prepare a place for you, part of what He's doing is overseeing whatever this is that reflects the glory of the Father in Jesus Christ and us in Him. This is big.

It is huge. It is a privilege granted to nobody else in the history of angelic creation, nobody else in the history of this earth except the church. We are so privileged if we just recognize it to be a part of this great undertaking that God has purposed in Christ.

And we'll look at it more when we come back from the break.