

Ephesians 13-11-24a

This is Sunday, the 24th of November, 2013. We resume our study in the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Ephesians. More accurately perhaps, the letter to the Laodiceans, using its alias, its pseudonym, its nom de plume here, the Book of Ephesians.

And we resume in Chapter 2. Let's take a moment as we prepare for the study of God's Word to ensure that we have come before the throne of God and are in a suitable condition to meditate on these truths and benefit from them. Shall we pray? Father, we are thankful for Your great grace and mercy extended to us, expressed toward us through the Lord Jesus Christ. Without Him, we would have such a small understanding of who You are and what Your purposes are, the extent of Your compassion, the wideness of Your mercy, the greatness of Your patience and longsuffering toward us.

When we were hopeless and useless, You saw fit not to simply eliminate us but to promote us to enter us into a condition where we can have fellowship with You. We thank You for the revelation of these truths that we find in the book that we study this morning. We ask Your blessing on us as we do so.

May God the Holy Spirit find us alert and ready pupils, quick of understanding and of comprehension, not only of what Your Word says but how it affects us and how we should then live. We pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen. We saw last time that there is a very interesting interchange of pronouns in chapter 2. And it is not without significance that Paul points out the wall of separation between Gentiles and Jews, because God had two separate programs underway all the way up until the time of Christ.

And to be related to God in Old Testament days meant to come to the God of Adam, the God of Seth, the God of Noah, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And coming to that family and later that people and that nation was the way to plug into God's revelation. There wasn't a Mount Sinai in China.

There wasn't a set of tablets of the law in Australia. There weren't prophets of God in New Zealand. There weren't reed boats coming across through the Mediterranean and out to Gibraltar and coming across the Atlantic Ocean and landing in South America with the Pentateuch or the prophets or the writings.

People geographically isolated in ancient days had no access to the details. What did they have access to? The knowledge of God, that there is a Creator. God has put eternity in their hearts.

The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament shows forth His handiwork. Everybody can see the firmament.

The sky is even clear in the British Isles from time to time. They can see the firmament. They can

see the heavens.

They can see creation around them. The earth shows forth His handiwork and God the Holy Spirit comes to each heart and reveals the presence and the power of the one true Creator God. There is a decision that is made at that point.

Yes, I want to know Him. No, I do not. God knows ahead of time what that decision is going to be for any given individual.

He's God. How does He know? Not because He determines it. That's limited human thinking.

The only way we can know something for certain is if we determine it. I know my dog will be dead tomorrow because I have killed him today. You don't like it, but you will remember this illustration.

I know what will be true tomorrow because I made it happen today in an irrevocable way. If you don't like that, I know I will need a new windshield tomorrow because I put a sledgehammer through it today. I can ensure a future truth when I make an irrevocable thing happen today.

It's unchangeable. It can't be changed. And so in the human mind, the only way God can ensure that someone is going to come to faith in Him is to predetermine it.

My yard will be flooded because before I came to church, I turned all of my hoses on. And when I get home, I know the yard will be flooded because I made it happen. And it's limited human thinking that says the only way God can be omniscient and know all things is if He predetermines them.

And they ignore the truth of Scripture that says God exists outside of time. He is before time and He is after time. Even that is an accommodation to our limited human thinking.

If you're trying to explain the electrical wiring diagram of your car, your wiring harness that controls everything, the air conditioning, the lights, the GPS, the radio. If you're going to try to explain all of that to an earthworm. Come here, Mr. Worm.

Look at this book. See these lines? You're a worm. You understand lines.

It's linear. Look, here's how the 12-volt system in my car. You can't get to the worm's level with a book.

You can't get to the worm's level with a diagram. You can't get to the worm's level with a simple explanation of how 12-volt electricity travels from positive to negative and things need to be grounded and here's what happens when it goes through various things to create heat or light or whatever. The earthworm is just not going to comprehend that.

So you've got to put it in earthworm language. So you put a little piece of organic something in front of him and he eats it and you say, okay, earthworm, well, I mean, it's hopeless. You can't

teach an earthworm anything.

But such a worm as I, how does God communicate with us? He uses language of accommodation. He puts things in terms that we can understand. So what does he say? We are so linear in our thinking, all we can think about is sequence.

The Yogi Bear-ism, history is just one darn thing after another and that's what it is. It's just sequence. We can't understand things that are not sequential.

It's just incomprehensible to us. Can you picture an object that is four or five dimensions? You can't. Our minds aren't built for it.

We're built for three spatial dimensions and a four-dimensional object does not compute. It's impossible to visualize in your mind a four-dimensional object. You can't do it.

Well, we can't picture God's economy, God's culture and society. We can't picture it because it's in dimensions we don't understand. So it's accommodated to us.

So we are told he is the beginning and the end. He is before all things. He's after all things.

And so in our understanding, the way we can make some sense of this about how God knows things before they happen is, well, he's after time. He's already in the future looking back. If somebody could put me two days in the future, I could be instantly rich.

If I could just travel two days into the future, what would I do? I'd pick up the newspaper and see what the stock market did. I'd come back to the present, buy the ones that are going to rise, sell the ones that are going to fall. I could be rich.

Just give me a two-day, you know, put a button on my watch. I push it. I'm two days in the future.

Oh, well, I see what that is. Wow, there's going to be traffic on Central. I'm taking the toll way.

And then I come back to the present. There's all kinds of ways I could make my life easier. Well, in language of accommodation, God is already in the future looking back.

He doesn't have to determine our choices because he sees them as history. We can be totally free agents, and we are. So all of these people in China and in Borneo and in Australia and in South America in ages past were placed there, were born there, and were given to Satan.

They're Satan's crowd. God knew that they were going to reject him. There's no point in putting them in Israel.

There's no point in putting them in a place where they're just going to suffer and chafe and grind under the law of Moses. And why do I have to be here and these prophets and these kings and all these people trying to worship God, these sacrifices? I hate this. Get me out of here.

They would leave anyway. So God puts them in cultures and societies and on continents and says to Satan, you want to be like the Most High? You want to have a civilization where you're going to run it and you're going to be all things to all people? Here you go. Take them and run with it.

They don't want me to begin with. In their free will, they're choosing something else. You can be the something else.

You try to make it go. So you look at the history of ancient Japan, ancient China, all these ancient civilizations, the Sumerians, and many of these others that we have recorded history for, the ancient Egyptians, going back to the pyramids. Fine.

Satan has tried to make civilizations work apart from God, tried to come up with alternate law systems, alternate judgment systems, alternate economies, alternate plans. And what has happened to all of those cultures and civilizations? They corrode. They erode.

They degenerate. You've got your Incas and your Maya in this hemisphere. What happened? Have you ever seen that what's-the-mill Gibson movie where they're trying to show you what it's like with people, human sacrifice, blood running down the ziggurats? What is it? Apocalyptic.

Lipto. Lupto. Apocalyptic? Yeah.

It's, you know, it's Upsilon in Greek. Anyway, you know, it's horrific, and that's what happens in China. All this wonderful fascination with the samurai and all of that, you know, China Grove, the samurai swords and all that.

It's grotesque. It's abysmal. It's abominable.

Look at the oppression, the binding of feet, and these things are what happens when you're separated from God. There's no knowledge of God in their hearts. There is this one, God says, you can have the whole world.

You can have all these continents, cultures, civilizations. I'm going to have this one little family. I'm just going to work with them.

And with my little finger and these tiny people, I will overturn and leverage out everything you're doing all over the world. And that's what God has done with Israel. So when Paul comes to Ephesians chapter 2, and he says, you who were dead in trespasses and sins, that's who he's talking about.

This is the economy that existed before Jesus Christ. This is how God set it up. It's a part of the grand demonstration.

It's not an experiment. It's a demonstration. Satan? Have you ever seen these chef cook-off

shows? I actually have not seen one, but I've heard about them.

I've heard that they give them ingredients. They say, all right, make the dish, and I guess somebody judges it. Well, it's kind of like that.

Satan has got his ingredients in his oven, and he's going to cook something. And he's got all kinds of stuff. He can do anything.

God's over here, and what has he got? Unleavened bread. I'm going to make a meal out of unleavened bread that is going to put your whole spread to complete and utter shame. And he takes that bread, and he sanctifies it, and he hallows it, and he pours oil on it.

And he puts it in the holy place. And in the presence and power of God, these things transcend and overcome. And there is actual righteousness by faith.

And people are drawn up and out. Now, you remember in Ephesians chapter 1. You remember the candlestick, the seven-branch candlestick. And you remember that I offered this to you.

God, having done this, we have this so that. You remember that progression? There are things that God has done in the past. Before the foundation of the world, He has set these things up, which gives us a present status which enables a future potential.

And that's the so that. You remember that, right? Take a look at chapter 2. We've looked at it from a pronoun point of view. I want to look at it from a time point of view, from that same sort of perspective.

Because this is a continuation of Paul's thought. You who were dead in trespasses and sins. Hopefully you scribbled out the italics there.

He made alive, goobers it up. It shouldn't be there. We have a main verb here.

But this isn't it. And it's not the time for it. You who were dead in which you once walked, verse 2. Among whom also we all once.

This is past, right? That's the prevailing conditions of the past. Verse 1, verse 2, and verse 3. Now look at verse 4. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ. That's the present situation.

Specifically here in our suggested view. He's talking about us, meaning those to whom the promises had been given in that previous dispensation. That small group that God was working with.

He loved us when we were dead in trespasses. Notice trespasses. He doesn't say sins.

We were dead in trespasses. Why? Because specifically these are the crossing of the lines of the law. A trespass is a breaking of the rule.

There are no rules for the unbelievers. They're hopeless. But this is trespasses.

We were dead in trespasses. He made us alive together with Christ. Who is Christ sent to? What does He tell the woman? I am sent to whom? The lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Those sitting in darkness have seen a great light, and so on. The ninety and nine safely lay in the shelter of the fold. One was lost.

It's the lost sheep. Sheep belongs to the Master. He was in the fold.

Now he's lost. He's being brought back. This is the Good Shepherd.

The Good Shepherd gives His life for who? The goats? Who does the Good Shepherd give His life for? The sheep. I have other sheep who are not of this fold. You're the sheep.

I'm talking to you right now because it's the age of Israel and Jesus Christ. What does Christ mean? Christos in Greek translates Mashiach in Hebrew, which means what? The Anointed One. He is the Messiah to Israel.

So here was the previous condition. You Gentiles were subject to the forces of the world, the prince of the power of the air, and so on. We were captive to the lusts of our flesh in which we walked.

And we were children of wrath. Notice, sons of disobedience in verse 2. What does a son of mean? Son of disobedience. Well, if you're a son of something, that means that whatever it is, is in your nature, right? If I'm a son of my parents, then I partake of a mix of their nature.

And if you call somebody a son of a thing, that means you're genetically, you're inherently infected, tainted, blessed, enabled, whatever. It may be good or it may be bad, but if you're a son of that thing, you reflect it. You partake of it by nature.

You've inherited it. It's ingrained. It's innate.

It's inherent in you. That's what son of means, right? So if you're a son of disobedience, what does it mean? You're disobedient by nature. It's in your genes.

It's in your bones. It's in your flesh. You can't help it.

You were born with it. You're a son of disobedience. Notice what he says in verse 3. We also, we Jews, conducted ourselves in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling those desires and of the mind, the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of what? Wrath.

We were children of wrath. What is wrath? Disobedience means that somebody made rules and you've disobeyed. Somebody set a policy and you've gone against it, right? So when you say disobedience, there has to be somebody to disobey.

If there's no God and no authority and no law, how can there be disobedience? Obey means to comport and to follow the will of someone, right? So if you're a son of disobedience, there's somebody you're disobeying. And if you're a child of wrath, wrath is a policy of judgment and retribution from an entity, from a personality, right? Now you can disobey an abstract government, but for wrath, do you say, well, I'm going to feel the wrath of the government? Government doesn't have emotions. Beings have emotions.

So children of wrath. We have not just disobeyed a policy, but we are children of wrath. Why are the us's children of wrath where the them's are sons of disobedience? There is an overall understanding of what constitutes morality and they disobey.

If you're in a covenant relationship with God, now there's wrath. So we are children of wrath just as the others. And of course, God is ultimately going to judge the world for these things, but we are children of wrath and we're supposed to be something better.

So look at the movement here in verses 1 through 3. Here's the way it used to be in the past. But God in the present, because of His love, has made us alive together with Christ, has raised us up together, has made us sit together. That's a present reality that He's talking about.

So He talks about the past, He's talking about the present. Now look at verse 7. We who were the first to hope in Christ. Remember that? We who were the first to hope in Christ.

That's Israel. In the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches. So there is that same sort of a thing that we saw in our preceding subject.

God having done things in the past in chapter 1, remember? God having chosen us in Him. God having made known the mystery of His will. God having predestined us.

God having done these things, has blessed us, has adopted us, has made His grace, riches abound to us, so that... And you've got a reflection of that same thing here. But instead of what God did in the past and has done in the present, so that we have this potential. Now He's saying that we're looking at us.

We in the past were this way, in the present are this way, so that in the future we can be this way. And it's the same kind of logical movement. And it fulfills and completes the thought that got started in chapter 1. Now, so what? So what? That's a bunch of Bible verses.

I get it. That was then, this is now. Jews and Gentiles, great.

So what? Here's the thing. Why do you do what you do? We're having food after class this

morning. I trust.

I've seen dishes. I've smelled good food smells. But in order for that to happen, people had to make preparation ahead of time.

There wouldn't be a meal if we all looked at each other after class and said, Hey, I'm hungry. How about you? Well, let's start raiding the cupboard. Let's see.

People looked ahead and said, you know, we're having potluck. We're going to have a fellowship meal after class. So I need to have a plan.

I need to think up what I'm going to bring. And then I need to prepare it. So if I'm making green beans with that brown stuff on top, got to get the beans.

Got to get the brown stuff. Got to cook it. What is the brown stuff? What's on top of it? Onions.

Yeah, it's got an onion. It's got an onion. I don't know.

Well, there's more than onions. It's not just onion. Okay, so they're fried, but there's more in it than just onion in there.

Yeah, so it's brown stuff. And it's on top of the beans. And you have to cook it.

You got to get the, you got to know the ingredients. I don't know the ingredients. I didn't do the preparation.

If it was up to me and you wanted green beans, there would be none. I brought no green beans, had no recipe. I wouldn't know the first thing about how to make those.

You wouldn't want to see what I made if you handed me green beans in a skillet and said bring the beans with the brown stuff on top. It would be carbonized, caramelized green beans on top of the green beans. I would just flip it out of the skillet, and I would say, there you go, beans with brown stuff on top.

But the point is there's preparation. You look ahead. You know that here is an event.

I want to be ready. I want to be prepared. And so what do I do? Ahead of time, I plan.

Ahead of time, I avail myself of opportunities. I make provision. I get the ingredients.

I plan. What dish is it going to be? What recipe do I need? What ingredients do I need to accomplish the recipe? I bake the thing. I cook the thing.

I prepare the thing. I put it in the refrigerator, whatever it needs. And on the day and at the hour when it is time to eat, here it is.

It's ready. It's not undercooked. It's not overdone.

It's not wrong. It isn't, well, wait, I'm like the foolish virgins. I've got to go back and I've got to go cook this.

I forgot. By the time you get it cooked and bring it back, the meal is over. Knowing what you know ahead of time, you make preparation.

You follow the recipe. You get the thing in hand. And at the hour, on the day, you're ready.

Why does God tell us all this stuff? God, having done this, has put us in this position. Here's the position we used to be in, in chapter 2. We used to be subject and entrapped and enslaved and having no options. Now, He has done what? Notice in verse 5, when we were dead in trespasses, God, verse 4, made us alive.

I told you a week or two ago, this whole section here, verses 1 through 7, is one sentence in Greek. What is the subject of the sentence? It's in verse 4, God. God is the subject.

What is the verb? It's in verse 5, made alive. God made alive. That's the main verb.

Seven verses to say, God made alive. Now, notice, you have another verb in verse 6, and raised. It's a second verb.

Also in verse 6, and made sit. Made alive, raised, and seated. God made alive, raised, and seated.

Now, where have we seen these ideas before? Look at chapter 1, verse 20. The working of God's mighty power, which He worked in Christ when He did what? Raised Him from the dead. That's your made alive and raised, right? And seated at His right hand in the heavenlies.

God worked His power in Christ, made Him alive, raised Him, seated Him at His right hand. Now, look at verses 5, 6, and 7. What is the modifier here? He made alive together. See that next word? What's the direct object? Us.

Made us alive together with Christ. Verse 6, raised us up together with Christ. Verse 6, made us sit together.

You see the three together? What's the antecedent of that? It's up in verse 20. When God raised Christ, He raised us. When He seated Christ, He seated us, Paul says.

And he's talking specifically here, in my view, about Israel. About the believers constituting the group we call the Old Testament saints. Now, obviously they're patriarchs before there was a nation of Israel.

They're all lumped together. They're prototypical. Verse 7, so that there is a purpose in this.

Now, why did you cook your dish? Why did you make your jello or whip together whatever you whip together to bring for the meal today? Did you do it because you just love to cook? Now that I'm done, I'm just going to set it outside. I'm going to throw it in the trash. It's just the process.

It's the journey, not the destiny. I just wanted to make it. Now that it's made, I'm tired of it.

I'm just going to slide it out the door. Put it out and let the dog eat it. The whole effort, gathering the ingredients, identifying the recipe, following the recipe, putting the ingredients together, finishing the dish, and bringing it is for what? So that on the day, at the hour, it is ready and it accomplishes its purpose.

You did all of this in anticipation of a specific place, time, and occasion. Verse 7, so that. God did these things so that.

In the ages to come. Has he talked about ages in the past? Look at verse 21. He has seated Christ at his right hand in the heavenly places far above all principality and power and might and dominion.

Now Paul was anticipating what he's going to tell the Gentiles because he's writing to the Gentiles. He's writing to y'all. He's writing to you all, right? There's us and there's you.

But when he talks about Christ and he says he seated him far up, he doesn't say seated him above Moses. He could say that, couldn't he? Moses isn't seated at God's right hand. Elijah's not seated to God's right hand.

Daniel, David, other great Job, the great Old Testament saints. Who does he specifically point out that God has raised Christ above? Principalities, powers, might, dominions, every name that is named. Not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

This age and that age which is to come. Christ has been raised above it, right? Now he says in verse 7 that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness, in chesed, in loyal love. Would be the Old Testament way of rendering it.

In Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. That not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for God's works, good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. We are his workmanship. We were crafted.

We are the vineyard. We are the olive tree. We are the ones and God gave us these good works.

That was the law. It was given at Sinai. The sacrificial laws go all the way back to the expulsion from the garden.

This is how you do a sacrifice. This is how you mark yourself out as the people of God through circumcision. These are the good works that God foreordained that we Jews should walk in them.

Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh, uncircumcision, without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, without the covenants. Strangers from the covenants of promise. Having no hope and without God in the world, now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Now, he's already talked about we who were entrapped. God has raised us up together and has seated us in the heavenlies in Christ. We're all good to go.

God has fulfilled his Old Testament promises in Christ and everything is downhill from here for us. Everything is going to be easy and is denouement. We're going to have the millennial kingdom and it's all going to be fulfillment.

But the victory is won at the cross. The foundation for the fulfillment of those promises to Israel, to we who were executing these foreordained good works, that's accomplished. You were far off but the bonus, the additional thing God has done that nobody saw coming was that the Gentiles who were far off without any claim, without any promise, without any hope, without any expectation, God has brought near and is giving the very same things.

The Old Testament saints, Israel, didn't see it coming even when it was revealed. They had a really hard time with it. Well, but they've got to come under the law.

They need to be circumcised. They need to do these foreordained good works that we walk in. They need to walk in them also.

Remember the Jerusalem Council? What are we going to do with these Gentiles coming to faith? Well, we've got to give them some rules. They can't be without these good works that God has foreordained that we should walk in them. And Paul is explaining, look, nobody saw this coming.

Now, what was the purpose of fulfilling the covenant promises to Israel? What was the purpose in saving them and raising them up? So that, verse 7, in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. This is the Bible for the Gentiles. They look at this and say, here is a gracious God.

Look what He does for those who come to Him, for those who receive Him. If I receive Him, He will do for me what He has done for them. We do this throughout the Old Testament.

We look at what God did for Israel, as goes the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. So goes the individual believer. That's what this is.

That's what this is about. We look at Israel and see the revealed character of God. Now, what does that mean? Again, so what? Can you expect God to care about your individual needs and

problems? Or is it all happening at a higher level and I'm just dust under the wheels? I'm just a minor detail.

I'm just a speck in the great sweep of human history. How much attention did God pay to Israel? How closely did He watch? How much did He communicate? How long-suffering was He? How willing to forgive and restore was He? Read the book of Judges over and over again. Failure, recovery, failure, recovery, failure, recovery.

The whole nation of Israel is in such a sad state. You think, why did God send Jesus at all? By the time you get to, you know, 0 B.C., A.D. 0, A.D. 1, there is no year 0. Why did God even bother? Because it's all about God and not about the object. God loves based on who and what He is, not who and what the object is.

And He is faithful to His own promises because it reflects His own integrity. And what He has done for Israel, He does and wants to do for us. And He is actively involved.

He is intimately aware. You are as important, I am as important in God's sight as the entire nation of Israel was in the Old Testament. God doesn't diminish if you zoom in.

He doesn't start to pixelate. He doesn't start to fragment or come apart. God is as interested and as aware and as involved with an individual life as He was with the entire nation of Israel, as He was with the sweep of human history.

God does not dilute. He doesn't thin. He doesn't diminish when working at the microscopic level.

Nor does He condense and gain mass and weight when you go to the macro level. God is the same in time past, time present, and time future. He is the same in the small as He is in the large.

And you can't decide that God isn't really interested or isn't paying attention. One of the things that this passage emphasizes and impresses upon us is how important it is to recognize and appreciate God's active daily interest and involvement in our lives. It's not casual with Him.

Therefore, it shouldn't be casual with us. Look at what He has done. He took the nation of Israel.

He took the Old Testament saints and made them alive and raised them up and seated them with Christ in the heavenlies. And why can Paul say that? Because all of those people are past. Why doesn't he say all of us? Well, the whole Gentile age is future for Paul.

He's living in the first few decades of it. And people haven't been born yet, like you and me. We were not yet made alive and raised and seated with Christ at the time that Paul was writing.

But positionally speaking, all of the Old Testament saints have been because the age is over. That's finished. I heard a statistic.

You know, the manager for the band the Eagles was talking about all their accomplishments and

how many records they sold. And they hold the record for the most albums sold in the 20th century. And the guy said, that record will never be broken because the 20th century is over.

And more than the Beatles, more than Frank Sinatra, yes. The Eagles greatest hits is the absolute best-selling album of the 20th century bar none. And that will never change because that century is over.

In the same way, what God did for Israel will never change because that century is over. That age is over. That time is over.

And God in Christ has fulfilled and has made possible all of the fulfillments that will take place because it's over. So this is why Paul uses the we. I'm answering the question, why does he not include everybody and has made us rise and sit together? Because the Gentile age, for Paul especially, is all future.

We are going to enter into these same things. Just like we look at the Old Testament and draw truth from it and we see its application to us. The same is true here.

It doesn't mean that these don't apply to us. But they are fulfilled in Israel. They are fulfilled in Paul's people.

And God's mercy, by grace you have been saved. Therefore, verses 11, 12, and 13, now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. And in verse 14, He has made both one.

And all these things I just told you that apply about the Old Testament, now He's doing that for you. You enter into the very same thing. Well, does it make a difference? It ought to make a difference for us.

It's easy to look at the Israelites and say, why weren't they more faithful? Why didn't they take to heart the examples and the miracles and the provisions and the blessings and the words of encouragement and exhortation that they were given? A more pertinent and profound question is, why don't we? Why aren't we more motivated, more diligent, more aware, and more appreciative of what God has done for us? Because everything He did for them, He's done for us and then some. They were near. We were far off.

And God's mercy and God's grace is even greater in spanning the gulf to us than it was to those that He had already brought near and was working with at first hand. What difference does that make to us? Do we live any differently? Do we think any differently? Do we set our priorities any differently? Are we any more interested in prayer, any more interested in reflecting on the things that we learn based on this? Paul is laboring. Look at how much ink has been devoted now in this first chapter and a half of this letter to making this point.

Look at everything God has done to put us in this present situation so that. And it's up to us to fulfill the so that. Because God's not going to sovereignly decree us faithful, sovereignly decree us mature, sovereignly decree us righteous.

We make that choice. Having been given so much, what do we do with it? Well, we'll pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to pick up at verse 14 and look at Christ our Irenae, our peace.