

The Understanding that Grace Brings

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Lord's Day morning

Ephesians 1:8

Introduction: Open your Bible to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The title of this morning's message is "The Understanding that Grace Brings." Look at our text in Ephesians 1:7-10. We will be looking specifically at verse 8 this morning:

Ephesians 1:7-10

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of his grace**; 8 Wherein he **hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**; 9 Having **made known unto us the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

This morning we are going to talk about godly wisdom. A lot of people in this world seem very wise, but what does the Bible esteem to be true wisdom? We find ourselves back in the book of Ephesians, and by way of review, let's ask ourselves what we have learned thus far in our study.

Verse 1: We found that like Paul we need a radical change in our lives. It's not something we can work up ourselves—it is a miracle of grace, for *Paul* was called to do what he was doing *by the will of God*. In other words, there's no change without the sovereign grace of God.

We also found out what a Christian is. The Ephesians are called saints! Holy ones! They were normal, regular, everyday people—sinners like you and me—that had been stopped in their tracks like Paul to be called out of this world and made holy—*saints*—not by their own righteousness, but by having faith in the righteous life and perfect atoning death of Jesus Christ. They were the *faithful* to God's message. And of course these Ephesian believers were *in Christ*. They were Christ-besotted, God-centered believers.

Verse 2: We find the message of the Gospel—*grace*—God's undeserved favor—and *peace*—reconciliation to God. We were God's enemies, and we deserved the worst punishment imaginable, but God put down all His righteous justice on His Son instead of us (*grace*) so that we could be at *peace*, reconciled to God.

Verse 3: God has just opened the heavens of blessing toward us, and everything that is in heaven and in Christ is all ours!

- I. Do you **GET** it? (**What is Wisdom?**) We read in verses 7-8
7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of his grace**; 8 Wherein he **hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**;

We come to this place where Paul tells us how we came to accept this redemption and how our sins came to be forgiven. It wasn't our idea. You see the world has

this idea about knowing God. They think if you stuff your head full of knowledge you know God. Well let's talk about that. In order to "GET IT," to understand what this wisdom is, we need to look at

A. The **Possibilities** of wisdom.

There is a definite difference between human wisdom and holy wisdom. James gives us a good idea. Look at James 3:13 and following.

James 3:13-18

Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. 14 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. 15 This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. 16 For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18 And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

1. **Holy** wisdom:

Psalm 111:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom

Where does the wisdom that is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" come from (James 3:17)? It "is from above."

The word "wisdom" here is *sofia*. It emphasizes the "understanding of ultimate things—such as life and death, God and man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell, eternity and time. Paul is speaking of a wisdom that gives us a real understanding of the things of God."

You see when God saved you, He gave you all the necessary equipment to understand Him. He gave you WISDOM. He also gave you PRUDENCE, which has the idea of insight. So God's revealed to us through wisdom the reality of heaven and hell, sin and righteousness, and really the reality of Himself. He's always here—I'm accountable. These kinds of things. But PRUDENCE gives us the practical understanding, comprehension of the needs, problems, and principles of everyday living. It is spiritual prudence in handling the daily affairs of life.

2. **Human** wisdom:

1 Corinthians 8:1 Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up.

James 3:15

This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish.

B. The **Profits** of human wisdom

Please don't misconstrue what is being said here. Man has developed some amazing things scientifically and technologically that have been to our benefit. When I say we should reject human wisdom, I don't mean that we're to reject every possible application of human wisdom; rather, we're to object to human philosophy. We're only to reject that part of man's reasoning which attempts to answer ultimate questions.

Christians aren't saying they have the answer to everything. For example, if my wife's washing machine breaks down, just because I'm a Christian doesn't mean I can fix it. I have to call someone to fix it--perhaps an unsaved person. There are some things that human wisdom provides for me that I don't have. If I need my car fixed, I'm not so concerned about whether a Christian fixes it as I am that a good mechanic does it. Some of the greatest teachers I've ever had, and some of the most influential people in my life have been non-Christians who knew their area of education or technology very well. But when the world tries to understand where man came from, why he's here, where he's going, and what his meaning is, it can't do it. **When men try to define God, morality, real joy, real peace, and real happiness, they fail.** That's what philosophy is: the study of wisdom, and the search for ultimate wisdom.

There are other things that human wisdom has done. Do you know that soon you'll probably be able to select the sex of your child before it's born? Do you realize that very soon there will be genetic controls and microsurgery by radiation and laser beams? The control of the aging process will soon enable us to live as long as a hundred years. Someday tooth decay will be eliminated by welding enamel on your teeth with laser beams. (You'll be able to choose any color you want!) There will be spot welding of the retina, and a bloodless knife in surgery, which is a beam that cuts and cauterizes at the same time.

So, Christians aren't saying that man's technology hasn't helped us. They think that the advancements of medical technology and scientific technology are wonderful.

C. The **Problems** of Human Wisdom

But one thing that is bothersome about the philosophy of man is that it continues to drown man in print. Did you know there are two thousand new book pages printed every second? There are 365 thousand hardback books printed every year--that doesn't include the paperbacks. There are 60 million pages a year produced. And most of it espouses the philosophy of man. It became so difficult to store all this information that microfilm was developed. But microfilm doesn't work anymore; it's too big. Now we have the information superhighway, and people are intoxicated with information. The world's wisdom and philosophy and knowledge is in abundance now more than ever, but where has it gotten us? "Knowledge puffeth up" and so men have become prouder and more arrogant. The Lord resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble (James 4:6).

Christians are not denying that man's wisdom has made great contributions. In fact, in some ways, worldly people are lot smarter

than Christians are. You say, "Are you kidding?" No, that's what Jesus said in Luke 16:8: ". . . the children of this world are in their generation **wiser** than the children of light. . ." In other words, the world is smarter about some things in their own domain than Christians are about other things in their domain. This is the principle: The Christian must apply himself to the gaining of godliness in the same way that the worldly man applies himself to the gaining of worldly things.

Human wisdom has its place in the world. But when it's applied toward ultimate truth--the things which deal with God, sin, man's destiny, salvation, transforming lives, morality, and ethics--it is absolutely bankrupt and worthless.

So let me ask you—Do you GET it? Do you understand life? Do you understand eternal things? Do you really get what life is all about, or are you living for yourself? You may have human knowledge, but do you have WISDOM?

II. Do you **WANT** it? (**Where is Wisdom?**)—How do I get it? We come back to our text:

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of his grace**; 8 Wherein he **hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**;

A. The **Selection** of Wisdom. You ought to be searching for that which is eternal.

Christ is the Wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 1:30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

We should go after, desire, get wisdom. You will not understand eternal things until you get Christ!

Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Proverbs 16:16 How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

B. The **Source** of Wisdom. Where does it come from? Well wisdom is "according to the **riches of his grace**; 8 Wherein he **hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**" (Ephesians 1:7-8).

God is the only one that can **give** it.

God gives enlightenment, wisdom, in other words, salvation, through Sovereign Grace. It is "according to the riches of His grace!" It is He that has "abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." This

same idea is found in verse 18 "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened."

James 1:5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all *men* liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.

You see, God gives this wisdom "according to the riches of His grace" (verse 7).

Matthew 11:25 I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

You can't discover God on your own; you can't transcend the supernatural. You can't understand God any more than something lower than you can understand you. Did you ever hear two bugs discussing human anatomy? It's just as ridiculous to hear two men saying to each other that they understand God. Truly knowing God is outside our human realm.

C. **Stories** of Divine Wisdom

1. The Man Born Blind (John 9)

This giving of wisdom is really another picture of REGENERATION, or the NEW BIRTH—being born again.

It is like the man born blind in John 9—just like Him we are all born blind! Oh we may think we can see.

The blind man testified in John 9:32, "Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind."

Jesus summed up the gist of this amazing miracle of grace, which was a picture of salvation:

John 9:39 Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.

2. Lazarus Raised from the Dead Our knowledge of God is dead—God must impart it to us miraculously as He did with Lazarus in John

Listen to the words of George Whitefield who preached during the time of our country's Great Awakening:

"Come, ye dead, Christless, unconverted sinner, come and see the place where they laid the body of the deceased Lazarus; behold him laid out, bound hand and foot with graveclothes, locked up and stinking in a dark cave, with a great stone placed on top of it. View him again and again; go nearer to him; be

not afraid; smell him, [Smell the stench.] Stop there now, pause a while; and whilst thou art gazing upon the corpse of Lazarus, give me leave to tell thee with great plainness, but greater love, that this dead, bound, entombed, stinking carcase, is but a faint representation of thy poor soul in its natural state;...thy spirit which thou bearest about with thee, sepulchered in flesh and blood, is literally dead to God, and as truly dead in trespasses and sins, as the body of Lazarus was in the cave. Was he bound hand and foot with graveclothes? So art thou bound hand and foot with thy corruptions; and as a stone was laid on the sepulchre, so there is a stone of unbelief upon thy stupid heart. Perhaps thou has lain in this estate, not only four days, but many years, stinking in God's nostrils. And, what is still more effecting, thou art as unable to raise thyself out of this loathsome, dead state, to a life of righteousness and true holiness, as ever Lazarus was to raise himself from the cave in which he lay so long. Thou mayest try the power of thy boasted free will, and the force and energy of moral persuasion and rational arguments (which, without doubt, have their proper place in religion); but all thy efforts, exerted with never so much vigor, will prove quite fruitless and abortive, till that same Jesus, who said "take away the stone" and cried "Lazarus, come forth," also quicken you."

So do you understand the difference between human wisdom and holy wisdom? Do you GET it? And do you WANT it? It is God alone that gives wisdom! He gives it because He wants to—He is good and merciful. Now let me ask you another question.

- III. Do you **SEE** it? (**What does Wisdom Reveal?**)
Look at our text again.

Ephesians 1:7-10

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the **riches of his grace**; 8 Wherein he **hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence**; 9 Having **made known unto us the mystery of his will**, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: 10 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times **he might gather together in one all things in Christ**, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him:

A. **First we see a God's Power.** God opens our eyes! The word "mystery" is the Greek word musterion. It doesn't mean something that's occultic, clandestine, or puzzling. It's not referring to finding your way through a maze in the quest for the wisdom of God. The word "mystery," in this context, means "a secret which is impossible for man to penetrate, but which God has chosen to reveal." The word points to the impossibility of man knowing God's secret, and the love of God which makes it known.

Paul is saying, in effect, "The world can't understand this wisdom; it doesn't come from the world. God has hidden it.

Because of that, men will never find God on their own. Men will never develop a religion that is true. God's wisdom cannot come from within man's world. "

B. Then we see God's Plan. We read about the "MYSTERY of His will." It's not a mystery to the saved, but it is a mystery to the lost. They think that life is all about making money and being happy and that's it! In other words, they think that life is all about ME! We live in the ME generation. We go to Burger King, and everything is done "Your Way."

The sooner you realize that life is not all about YOU, the better off you will be. It's not about me, and it's not about you! It's all about Christ! Look at our text again.

God's given us this wisdom because of His grace. And this wisdom uncovers the true meaning of life...

So here's God's plan. There's coming a day when all creation. You, me, the angels, all creation will be in perfect harmony with Christ. We will all do His will. Are you doing His will NOW?

Do you realize that your life is NOT about yourself? You were created by God for His glory!

Conclusion: Do you understand that just because you have knowledge does not mean that you know God? Do you GET that? Do you WANT to know God? He alone can give you that wisdom that comes from a regenerated heart and life so that ultimately you can SEE it. You can see that the only thing worth living for is CHRIST!! May the Lord give us this knowledge and may we be CHANGED by it!!

Closing Hymn: 333 Open Our Eyes