

# Vast, Unmeasured, Boundless, Free: Our Resources In Christ

## *The Summing Up*

Ephesians 1.1-4b-10

8.14.16

*In love <sup>5</sup> He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace <sup>8</sup> which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him <sup>10</sup> with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.*

We're at the second week of a short series (four sermons) on Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Chapter One... As I mentioned last week...I felt MOVED to focus on this passage for a few weeks (before we look at *Leviticus* and *Numbers* in the Fall) because it's *Good News Concentrate*. There's no express command or condition or imperative or requirement here.

In this moment when many are struggling and working through their "issues" and when the nation and the world seem dangerous and frightening and extremely uncertain...I thought we should soak in it.

Last week, I reminded us of how vitally important it IS that Christians *KNOW* who they are AND how really urgent it IS *that our society gets a clear message from the church on this* ...Most people don't know what a Christian IS or what the basic message of Christianity really IS (quite often people associate Christianity with a moral issue, or family values or even a political position) but THIS passage clarifies – Christianity is Good News about what God has done to save us...to make us right with HIM.

The great Welsh minister/medical doctor Martyn Lloyd-Jones used to say that it was perhaps THE most common pastoral problem that he faced... When he asked a person, "Are you a Christian?" and they answer, "Well, I'm trying to be one" or "I'm trying to become one" and "The Doctor" said, "That answer made clear to me that this person just doesn't GET IT...doesn't understand the first thing about what the Christian message really IS."

Today's compact passage sums it up for us... "the summing up" – Let's look at 1) The Divine Dilemma 2) The Divine Revelation and 3) The Divine Completion

The divine dilemma...is that WE...the human race have made ourselves incompatible with God...and yet God continues to love us...

And to call this a divine dilemma is not really accurate ...I mean, we saw last week that God is "ever blessing and ever blessed" ...EVER BLESSED, i.e. never worried...never ruffled...never in need or out of control...never wringing His hands (as it were).

But divine dilemma IS a way of *looking* at it... It's LIKE...if your child or spouse or parent ...someone you dearly loved and wanted to "have and to hold"...but this loved one had a deadly and aggressively contagious disease...and you could look at them through the hospital window but you couldn't actually have contact.

And that THING, that contagion or condition that makes us incompatible with the God who loves us IS (see v. 7) "*our trespasses*".

Isaiah 59.2 "*It's your sins that have cut you off/separated you from God.*" (NLT) And it's not only a sickness or contagion...that we can't help, THERE'S real moral responsibility for our "trespasses" (v. 7) AND sin is *also* a kind of power...something IN us, compels us to do things and say and think things that we know are destructive ...and we MAY even have a sense that these thoughts/words/acts are against God... but we do them anyway.

And modern psychology confirms what we already know and that is, "We don't really know WHY we do WHAT we do." The NLT of Psalm 19.12 says, "How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?"

And these sins... which are opposed to God...which each of us commit... which are lurking...and which come out of us *and seem to control US*...THEY ARE DEADLY serious to God. I mean we may call them "faux pas" or shortcomings or tendencies or imperfections... but from the start, God promised that they (even the less serious sins) they ALL deserve "death" – "In the day you eat of it – you shall surely DIE...the wages of sin is death...you were dead IN YOUR TRESPASSES and SINS " (as it says in the next chapter of this *Letter to the Ephesians*).

God states, from the start, a moral Law...like the physical law of *gravity* or *inertia*: SIN BRINGS DEATH AND ONCE IT IS COMMITTED, IT CAN NEVER JUST GO AWAY... it must be corrected...or fixed...remedied.

It's what Christians including Athanasius from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century have called a "*divine dilemma*"...not that God is perplexed...or nervous... but ... "IF SIN HAS TO BE PAID FOR, *HOW WILL MAN PAY FOR SIN*...when man himself IS sinful?"

And this is why Anselm of Canterbury in the 9<sup>th</sup> C wrote the book "Cur Deus Homo" – "Why the God Man" or "Why God Became Man".

Jesus Christ came...the God-Man, Human so He could pay the debt that humans owed...and Divine because ONLY GOD COULD PAY A DEBT SO GREAT.

"In Him" writes Paul (v.7) "we have redemption through His blood, *the forgiveness of our trespasses*".

The God who loved us...became Man so that He might satisfy the demands of justice...might ransom us and pay the price that we could not pay.

The OTHER great Apostle, Peter, mused on this divine dilemma and he pictures the angels in heaven, as it were, puzzled, wondering, "How is the Holy, Holy, Holy God...who is averse to evil...who opposes sin... but who loves people, people endowed with God's own image and MADE FOR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM ... how will this God, welcome sinful humanity into His presence?"

It would be like putting an ice cube in a slingshot and shooting it at the sun... we can't bring our soiled selves and the long record of our sins INTO the presence of God...SO, WHAT WILL GOD DO?

"These are things", said Peter, "into which angels long to look..." (1 Peter 1.12)

And here Paul says to the Ephesians (9), "*God in these last times has made the mystery known according to the kind intention of His will*" – God would pay the price, would redeem us, ransom us... and in the Deeper Magic (as they say in Narnia) – in order to pay our debt, HE would have to become US ...thus Anselm, "Why God Became Man". (It was a metaphysical necessity!)

This is the “economy” of God, that’s the word used in v.10 “an administration suitable to the fullness of the times” – IT WAS ETERNALLY IN THE MIND OF GOD... *He always planned to DO IT...but now...in time and space...at a point in human history...in God’s economy, “God became one of us...in order to pay the debt that humanity owed...satisfy the unbreakable Law of justice (Romans 3.26).”*

The justice of God demanded that the price would have to be paid...and the mercy of God determined to pay that price Himself.

God became a Man and that Man...became a sacrifice... the Lamb of God. All the types and shadows of the ceremonial law (as we’ll see in Leviticus in a few weeks) ...all the sacrifices...fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

“Not all the blood of beasts on Jewish altars slain, could give the guilty conscience peace or wash away the stain. But Christ the heavenly Lamb takes all our sins away, a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they.” They all pointed to HIM!

God doesn’t sweep our sins under the rug...He pays for them...and in doing so...He astounds the angels... He lavishes grace on us in all wisdom and insight...He makes known to us the everlasting plan, the mystery of the ages is now revealed...at just the right time...the fullness of the times.

And THIS is the reclamation plan for this fallen planet: *there is a Man who demonstrated a love supreme* (John Coltrane) who was without sin...He has reclaimed the Throne that Adam abdicated and relinquished...and He is the Ransom, the Redeemer of all who trust in Him...creation’s rightful King!

God the Father will put all things under His feet... He will rule the World and the Universe...with perfect beauty and equity and shalom... *“the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.”*

It seems like SOME people are not too excited about the political scene in modern America...some people are NOT thrilled about any of the presidential candidates or even the third party candidates... Well, the Good News is...eventually... the Redeemer will claim every square millimeter of earth and space...IT WILL ALL BE SUMMED UP UNDER HIM... That’s how history will end...or...should we say...that’s how eternity will begin?

And in the meantime, we have the delight of *walking with Him by faith*. Our Redeemer calls us to engage the grey areas of the present political process...and to endure the difficulties of these our light and momentary troubles (that) are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. (2Cor 4.17) and to be teachers...managers...salespeople...dads... students... X-Ray technicians and court-reporters... and accountants...and nurses...writers...welders

He is calling us now...to live in such a way as to acknowledge *WHO OUR REDEEMER IS*...to bring everything under Him...to walk with Him and joyfully acknowledge His worthiness ...

AND to walk in such a way as to know ourselves... that we, who believe in Jesus Christ, are the forgiven and the redeemed... NOT THAT WE'RE TRYING TO BE REDEEMED OR FORGIVEN...but that we've received it as a gift...the riches of God's grace lavished on us.

It enables us...as we bank on it...and explore it...and take it seriously and CELEBRATE IT...it enables us to see ourselves as big sinners...no better than anyone else...and therefore to move toward people...and imitate God's love for our fellow sinners (Miroslav Volf).

Let me close by asking YOU... *do you need forgiveness?* Is that something you're working on? Because if that's how you see it, then you don't really see the Good News of Jesus Christ for what it is: it's NOT a project to work on – it's the riches of God's grace lavished on the unworthy... received by trust...*by simply relying on what the God-Man did.*

If you need forgiveness...if you are carrying the crushing burden of guilt...if you are separated from God...TODAY, come to the Ransom, the Redeemer.

Trust Him...believe Him...begin the beautiful adventure of summing up all of life under His beautiful reign...let us love and sing and wonder...

"Let us wonder, grace and justice, join to point to mercy's store; when THROUGH GRACE in Christ our trust IS, justice smiles and asks no more...He has washed us with His Blood..."

Receive it ...put your past, present and future into the nail-scarred hands of Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

OR *maybe the power of sin has dominated you and you have a very real sense of your own powerlessness and weakness...* OR *maybe you need to forgive but you can't...maybe you've been*

*hurt or abused and it haunts you ...Come to Him; receive His forgiveness and trust Him to empower YOUR forgiveness toward others.*

It's not about YOUR commitment to HIM...but HIS COMMITMENT TO YOU...Receive it.

Pray.