

QUEEN OF THE EPISTLES 2 - THE GOAL OF HISTORY
EPHESIANS 1:9-23
2026-01-11

We began a new series last week on Ephesians, referred to by some as the Queen of the Epistles; the apostle Paul is presumed to have written it while he was in prison in Rome near the end of his career. He had time and was free to teach and write to the Philippians, the Colossians and this letter to the Ephesians. Having finished the contentious issues in his writing to the Colossians—where he emphasized freedom from works for salvation, freedom from the need to be circumcised, freedom from food sacrificed to idols as well as the rumour that Christ had already returned (the second coming) and had been missed. With those matters behind, Paul set to writing one supreme letter, not controversial, positive in tone, fundamental, and the great doctrine of his life —**the unity of all humanity in Christ and God's purpose for the world through the Church.**

Containment of the Gospel to just the Jews suddenly exploded after Stephen was stoned to death. Believers scattered for fear of persecution and took Stephen's (and Christ's) message with them. But seeing the Gospel as being for all people was considered heresy by the Jews. So, Jew and Christian suddenly came into deadly opposition with each other. What was this confusion breaking down the barrier separating Jew from Gentile in God's house? How could the kingdom of Israel be restored if the new society included Gentile equal to Jew? Could anyone be a good Christian unless he was 1st a good Jew? To Paul's bitter sorrow, he saw his doctrine of Christian freedom was erecting a new barrier against the conversion of the Jewish nation; the universality of the Gospel was ironically excluding the Jew. This change was swift once it started as a result of Paul's missionary action. Splitting the Church into Jewish and Gentile factions was fatal to the mission of Christianity, which was intended to be the healer of the world's divisions. So, the best years of his life were devoted to reconciling this rift; hence letters to the Romans. and Galatians.

This background shaped Paul's understanding of **God's plan** and **our place** in it. In fourteen verses, we hear **who God is, who we are, what God wants for us and what we need to do/how.**

Paul referred to himself as an apostle of Christ, by the will of God—a call directly from Christ to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles. As an apostle he was sent out by Jesus with a special task to do. We too, as members of God's special task force; have a mission to serve Christ. Like Paul, we should be filled with wonder that God finds each of us worthy to share in His work.

We spoke about grace and peace. With respect to grace, we need to be winsome individually and collectively. Second, grace is a gift that's impossible for us to procure for ourselves and which is never earned. It's about the sheer undeserved generosity of the heart of God.

In terms of peace, the Hebrew *shalom* is everything which makes for a person's highest good—dependent of outward circumstances. The only source of peace is doing God's will.

"*To the saints*": those set apart because they belong to Christ—called by God. "*In Christ*," speaks of a life totally different from those who aren't in Christ—justified by grace through faith when they receive Christ, they're united with Him—made new persons, part of a new humanity.

WE WERE CHOSEN BY GOD before the beginning of the world. It was always God's plan to confer salvation on us. We've been in God's plans forever. He chose Christians to be different from others—different from the world—not superior to or intolerant of others or judgmental. The real difference should be evident by the measure of care and concern and love for others.

THE PLAN OF GOD: verse 5: "*He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.*" How could God convey His love and care for us or the privilege He gives us to be fullfledged family members in any deeper way? We were absolutely in the power of sin and of the world. Jesus took us out of that power into His and that adoption wipes out the past and makes us new. He's given you full unalienable rights as His child and has equipped you to be who He wants you to be. So believers in Christ find themselves participating in God's eternal plan. Our whole lives are to be an offering to God (Romans 12:1).

THE GIFTS OF GOD: **Christ redeemed** (delivered) **us** through His blood. Redemption is God's **continual** rescuing of His people, always delivering each of us from a situation we're totally powerless to liberate ourselves or from a penalty we never could have paid. That's the liberation which Jesus brought. In short, Jesus can make bad people good. Second, there is forgiveness. Jesus changed the sense of sin and the dread of God that all had, teaching not hate, but the love of God. The primary meaning of redemption is forgiveness. Finally we also spoke of wisdom (of the most precious things) and understanding (of things both human and divine—the answer to the eternal problems of life and death, God and man, time and eternity). According to the Greeks, if a person had both, she was perfectly equipped for life. And so we are. Christ brought them both to us. God "*lavished*" all wisdom and insight on us—extreme, overflowing and intentional. Sweet!

THE GOAL OF HISTORY verse 9-10: It's God's pleasure to reveal the mystery of His will—Christ is the mystery revealed and His love and care, His grace and mercy are meant for all the world. Jesus came into the world to wipe out all divisions—Jew/Gentile, Greek/Barbarian. That was the secret of God. All should be gathered into one in Jesus Christ. Jesus came to wipe out all the divisions. All history has been a working out of this process, working out the will of God. The purpose of all life is found, is central to, and rests in Christ. All things are gathered together, the sum of all things, the uniting of all things in heaven and earth, all things everywhere are **in Christ!**

Oikonomia (verse 10) is the Greek word for household management. The *oikonomos* was the steward who kept family affairs in order. It may also be “the working out of a policy or project”. This is phenomenal; the significance is **all history** has been a preparation for, an arranging and an administering for the goal of God—that the world would be brought together as one family in Christ! Our redemption is great because it meets us at the core of what we need and want—a family. To have a dwelling place that includes family, that includes all creation and for that “extended” family to be **in Christ**—wow! **Everything** is to be united in Christ. What part of your world or mine could we bring together to change from disunity to unity to move that from vision to reality? Paul builds this theme of unity—the unity of Jew and Gentile throughout this letter.

We’ve an inheritance that God planned from the beginning (verse 11) so that we will bring praise and glory to Him (verse 12). Our purpose is to bring praise and glory to Him! Having believed in Christ, each of us has been marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit who is a deposit (verse 14) guaranteeing our inheritance (as adopted children) until the final redemption of us who are God’s possession. You and I belong to God. We are His. When many people find you’re a Christian, often their first question is, so what kind of Christian are you? What’s your denomination. My answer, so as not to split hairs, is, I belong to Jesus. That settles matters.

Paul’s dedication is amazing. When he first heard of the Ephesians faith in Jesus and love of all the saints (there’s our mandate—noteworthy faith {love for Christ} and love of each other) he didn’t stop thanking God and praying for them—that’s a lot of people and prayer! Then he returns to what we spoke of earlier, asking God to give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they (us) would know Him better (growth in knowledge of God—getting to know God better each day--and grace) and that the eyes of your heart (isn’t that a beautiful piece of imagery!) may be enlightened so that you may know the hope He has called you to. Once again we’re drawn back to Advent and the theme of hope. You are called to hope! It’s a glorious hope, an inheritance for all the saints and it comes packaged with God’s incomparably great power, just like when God raised Jesus from the dead,

“and seated Him at the Father’s right hand “in the heavenly realms far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but in the age to come. and God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything, for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.”

I’m overwhelmed by Paul’s description here. The sheer awesomeness of Jesus—far above anything, owner of every title—not just here but forever and with **EVERYTHING** under Him; the One who fills **EVERYTHING IN EVERY WAY**. We’re standing/bowed before total Majesty! This just adds to what we hear and know about Jesus within the context of the Gospels, in a way we’d never know without Paul’s God-given insights. The knowledge of God’s will unites and brings all things together in Christ; we are destined to praise God in Christ. It is the mission of the church to make Jesus Christ known, the cure for the world’s malaise. God’s plan

for the world is in the hands of the church. Jesus is counting on every one of us. God has adopted you and given you full unalienable rights as His child and that He has equipped you to be who He wants you to be. So, our job is to use that equipping that God has given us and live like He wants us to—loving and honouring Him above all else and loving every other being in such a way that brings about the unity of all people—**the reason Jesus came.**