

—{1}. **Ephesians 1:8b–10** **The Mystery of His Will**

A. Introduction

1. before our communion service we read that great benediction from the Bible, Hebrews 13:20–21 from the version; it may be that the Authorized Version is more familiar to you:
 - a. “Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
 - b. in both versions, as part of this prayer, there is the request concerning the salvation which we have realized in Christ through His death and resurrection,
 - (A) that this salvation will result in a change in our lives
 - (B) that this will be shown in our actions and works
 - (C) that we may do His will
 - c. ‘that we may do His will’ – this prompts the question, ‘what is God’s will?’; ‘what are His purposes’
2. today we are going to look at the ‘mystery of His will’
 - a. at what is God’s good pleasure
 - b. and find the fundamental requirement underlying our ever being well pleasing in His sight
 - c. in this our text, Ephesians 1:8b–10: “... In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him with a view to an administration suitable to the fulness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. ...”

B. Let us Link our Text to the Context

In all wisdom and insight {or, prudence} – verse 8b

1. but first, some questions to answer:
 - a. what is the difference between these terms?
 - (A) wisdom is the broader word, a moral understanding of truth and its implications; in the Bible it is

used

- (1) of humans in relation to God, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments; His praise endures forever." (Psalms 111:10)
- (2) and of God to His works, "O Lord, how many are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all; The earth is full of Your possessions." (Psalms 104:24)

(B) prudence, or insight, is generally used on humans, and is the right use and application of the mind, the faculty of knowing and doing the proper action

- (1) in humans, it results from experience and wisdom
- (2) in God, this is inherent to His Being

b. so here, whose are wisdom and insight? ... God's or ours?

- (A) because prudence is usually applied to humans rather than to God, there is an inclination to apply them in this passage as ours; something God gives to us
- (B) but God is the subject, the One performing the actions, throughout this extended passage, so that wisdom and insight must primarily be understood as facets of who God is, as seen in what God has done and is doing

2. now to the context: just what is it that God has done?

- a. "... He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. ..."; v. 4
- b. "(In love) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself ..."; v. 5
- c. "In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, ..."; v 7
- d. the context tells us that what God has done is to carry out His gracious, eternal plan of salvation for you and me

3. and what now is it that God is doing?

C. He Has Revealed His Plan of Salvation

He made known to us the mystery of His will ... – verse 9a

1. what does the Bible mean by the word 'mystery'?

- a. it not a whodunit as written by Agatha Christie, say
- b. in the N. T., it refers to something which has now been revealed which formerly was hidden, or, perhaps unclear; it is a previous secret now disclosed

- c. in particular it is used of God's whole plan of redemption or a particular aspect of it, such as the fact that we shall all be transformed when Christ returns, 1 Corinthians 15:52
- d. so what God is now doing – in the writing of the N. T., in the preaching of the gospel – is that He is making known

2. God's will ... God's purpose and plan; in the O. T., this was

- a. hidden in shadows and types in the sacrifices, in the feasts, and in the tabernacle and temple – the book of Hebrews is given to us to show how these were accomplished in Christ
- b. hidden in prophecy – ["As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating ..."](#) (1 Peter 1:10-11a) – which the N. T., and particularly the Gospels, have clarified and made known to us
- c. so God's will is
 - (A) now made clear, not just to a nation, but to the world: ["Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent"](#) (Acts 17:30)
 - (B) ["The Lord is ... not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance."](#) (2 Peter 3:9)

D. Why Has God Done This?

- 1. sometimes you may hear or read, as I have,
 - a. such phrases as
 - (A) ['God had to do this because He is righteous ...'](#)
 - (B) ['God must answer this prayer because He is kind ...'](#)
 - (C) ['God ought to do this because He is love ...'](#)
 - b. frequently these are in error, misinterpreting some attribute of God – righteousness, love, purity, truth, etc. – in human terms, when really it is WHO GOD IS that defines what those terms mean and what they imply about God's actions
 - c. such statements deny God's sovereignty, power, and so on
 - d. one lesson from the Old Testament is that God would be completely just in destroying all of sinful humanity
 - e. 37 books were written to show that sin deserves death; ["For the Law was given through Moses; grace](#)

and truth were realized through Jesus Christ." (John 1:17)

f. yet, on the other hand, in this morning's text, we find 3 reasons given why God has planned our salvation from such destruction

2. One: it is according to His gracious, kindly purpose

... according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him{self}
– verse 9b

a. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

b. "In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John 4:10)

c. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

3. Two: it is in keeping with His plan for His household

with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of times, ...
– verse 10a

a. meaning of 'administration' (AV: 'dispensation')

(A) this word is the source of our English word, economy

(B) originally, and most commonly, used of administering a household: setting out responsibilities, schedules, finances, organization and the like

(C) the whole creation is a great household of which God is the Master and which as a system of management wisely appointed by Him; in more than one of Jesus' parables, God is portrayed as the Master of the house

(D) God established this in the manner suitable to His plan

b. that plan had the mystery disclosed in the fulness of times

(A) the fulness of times, the gospel age, was introduced by the incarnation: "... when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, that He might redeem ..." (Galatians 4:4 NAS)

(B) these times continue until its consummation in the final item

4. Three: when it achieves God's goal in creation

... the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. – verse 10b

- a. the mystery of His will is the disclosure of God's purpose to unify all His creation in Christ
- b. all things ... 'upon the heavens, upon the earth'
 - (A) the great division of creation, Gen 1:1
 - (B) both the material and spiritual
- c. redemption is God's work in Christ so that this may be achieved, "and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven." (Colossians 1:20)

E. Conclusion

1. many today live in a world, in a universe

- a. in which they can find no purpose, nor rhyme nor reason
- b. chasing vain philosophies – riches, pleasure, achievement – just as the Preacher outlines in the book of Ecclesiastes – and making no sense – 'vanity of vanities, all is vanity'
- c. as the Preacher concludes that the answer is to 'Remember your Creator' so here we find it is in our Creator's plan for salvation; your salvation; my salvation; that He might bring to completion in Christ, in His church, in all things, the purpose for which He brought all these into being

2. What is the mystery of God's will?

- a. it is the salvation of a lost sinner
- b. it is that the church consisting of sinners, redeemed by the blood of Christ, should become the bride of Christ
- c. what a tremendous purpose for us, to give our all to God!

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NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
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