

Lesson 16

The Gospel: Stages of Salvation

Introduction: In the last lesson, we ended with a brief look at Ephesians 1:7 that said we've received redemption and the forgiveness of sin "according to the riches of His grace." So, if you want to know how "redeemed" you are or how much "forgiveness" you've received, then figure out the depth of the riches of His grace. Figure out how gracious God is, how much grace He has to give. There is no limit and no end to it. This is how it is with EVERY spiritual gift we've received from God in Christ. It's ALL according to the riches of His grace. Remember, grace is receiving what you don't deserve, and we haven't deserved any of this.

Position vs. Condition

If you remember back to our early lessons when we were talking about Adam and Eve and the fall, you'll remember that God had created them upright, perfect, and sinless; but when they disobeyed and ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they received death just as God had promised they would. We talked about the many consequences they had received.

We know at that point they became sinners with a sin nature and were kicked out of the garden, separated from the presence of God. We also know their children and ALL future descendants have ALL been

born into that same state and position. All humans from that point on were born separated from God with a sin nature (**Romans 5:12**). This position that all of us were born into greatly affects our condition. That's why babies are born instantly self-centered, and the older they get the greater their ability to manifest that sin nature. Our condition or how we are living out our daily lives as unbelievers is fully determined by the sinful position we were born into.

This is exactly what God has been showing us that is true of us now as believers. It's our new position of being in Christ that will determine our daily condition. Let me lay out the progression of what we've seen so far, or how all of this comes together.

The Big Picture of God's Eternal Plan of Redemption

We've talked a lot about the fact that God's eternal plan of redemption began before the foundations of the earth (**2 Timothy 1:9; 1 Peter 1:19-20**) as the "good pleasure of His will" that would be carried out and fulfilled through Christ, God the Son. This plan included the choosing and predestinating us to the adoption of His children through Christ. Then, beginning in **Genesis 1**, God began the process of carrying out that plan. All through the Old Testament He was preparing, facilitating, orchestrating, and setting the stage for the plan to be fulfilled. All things were pointing to, typifying, and foreshadowing the coming Christ and what He would accomplish.

Jesus then came and paid the price to fulfill God's eternal plan of redemption by shedding His blood on our behalf as our substitute. The price He paid SO satisfied the heart of God, SO satisfied the justice of God that Paul states in **Ephesians 1:7** that we have indeed received redemption and the forgiveness of sin according to the riches of His grace. To be redeemed means that we were purchased back, bought back with a price. He purchased us with the blood of His Son in order to make us His own (**Acts 20:28**). Through the blood of Christ, God Himself purchased us, made us His own, and is now free to forgive ALL of our sin.

This redemption and forgiveness of sin we have received, then, is so complete and all encompassing—it has SO paid for the price of our sinfulness that it has also resulted in God being free to make us His children according to the good pleasure of His will. Because He's made us His very own children, along with it comes the FULL rights, privileges, and benefits of being His children.

- **Ephesians 1:6** – He has made us accepted in the beloved. This means we have been “highly graced/favored/honored.” The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in **Luke 1:28** where the angel calls Mary “highly favored” to be the one chosen by God to conceive the Son of God through the Holy Spirit. The beloved here means to be loved and esteemed. It indicates a direction of the will and finding one's joy in something or someone. In being the children of God Himself, God has highly favored

us and graced us with making us the joy and delight of His heart!

- **Ephesians 1:11** – As His children, we have obtained an inheritance that He predestined to us according to the good counsel of His will. This word for obtaining an inheritance actually means a “lot,” like to cast lots, to determine something, to choose someone. In **Ephesians 1:11**, it means “in whom the lot has fallen upon us also, as foreordained thereto... to be.” The idea expressed here is that Christians have become heirs of God since God predestined them according to His purpose. In a manner of speaking, the “lot” fell to believers not by chance but solely because of the gracious and sovereign decision of God Almighty to select them to be His heirs. (Source: The Complete Word Study Dictionary – New Testament.)
- **Ephesians 1:13-14; 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5** – We have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This speaks of sealing something up, to secure it, preserve it to be securely delivered. It also speaks of being proof of authenticity and genuineness. Another role of the Holy Spirit as our “seal” Who secures us and marks us being genuine and authentic is that of being a “deposit” or guarantee that we will indeed receive ALL that God has promised us in full!

ALL of our inheritance belongs to us right here and now, but we haven't laid hands on it all yet. It's like a boy being born into a royal family. All of the inheritance belongs to him positionally at birth, but his actual experiencing and control of it all will come incrementally as he grows into adulthood.

- **Read Ephesians 1:15-23.**

After giving these Ephesian believers (and us) a taste of the new position that God has given them, as well as some of the privileges and benefits that go along with it, Paul then tells them that he is praying for them regarding the following:

- Verse 17 – That God would give them a spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Him. This is exactly what we've been talking about throughout the course of this study—the importance of knowing God, Who He is, and what He's really like. Knowing His heart. This is so important, for without being convinced of what the heart of God is truly like, without being convinced of how gracious God truly is, it will be impossible for us to believe that He's really bestowed so much grace upon us. We will struggle to believe that we really are who He says He's made us to be in Christ. That we've really received all that He says we've received in Christ.

- Verse 18 – That God would open the eyes of their (and our) understanding to know what is the hope of His calling and to know what are the riches of the glory of the inheritance that we’ve received as His children. First, this means that we’d know and be convinced of what to expect through our having been called/invited and placed in the kingdom of God. Second, that we’d begin to become assured and convinced of how abundant and glorious the inheritance is that we’ve been given. The “glory” of our inheritance speaks of the fact that the inheritance we’ve received is so “excellent in perfection,” so “divinely majestic,” that honor, praise, and applause must be rendered unto it.

So, putting these two together, Paul prayed that we’d begin to grasp what we can expect from being placed into God’s kingdom and to begin to realize how perfectly excellent and divinely majestic the inheritance is that comes along with it.

- Verses 19-23 – Lastly, that we’d become convinced of the abundant power of God toward us who believe, that same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated Him at God’s right hand and gave Him a new name which is above every name in heaven and earth. Paul is saying, *I pray that you will become convinced of what the heart of God is like, so you can then become convinced of how great and glorious the position and*

inheritance is that He's given you in placing you in His kingdom. And I pray that you will become convinced of His power and ability to truly bring this all about in your life. That the same power that raised Christ from the dead is the same power that has worked to make all these things true of you.

Why did Paul want the Ephesians (and us) to know these things? All through the Old Testament, we have seen various individuals, as well as Israel as a nation, get into many situations they needed deliverance from. Each time it was God who provided the plan and way of escape. It was then God who went to great lengths to communicate to man how to obtain that deliverance. Man's only part in any of it was to believe what God told him. It's the same for us regarding this great salvation we've received in Christ.

Justification is being made right with God through the blood of Christ. It's a new identity. We needed justification. We needed to have our sins forgiven. God communicated the gospel to us, convinced our hearts of the truth of it, we believed it, and instantly received the forgiveness of our sin and eternal life.

- **Read Colossians 2:6.**

Now the same is true regarding our sanctification or the fact of our position becoming increasingly more experienced or made to be the characteristics of our condition or daily lives. Paul said in **Colossians 2:6**

that this takes place the same way we got saved, by faith.

This is why Paul was praying that the Ephesians' eyes would be opened to understand and become convinced of the position, privilege, and promises that God had given them, so they then would BELIEVE it's so. It's in believing we've truly received all that God says the finished work of Christ has given us that will enable us to live the Christian life. It will allow who we've become positionally to be lived out more and more conditionally in our daily lives.

Paul states these same truths in other epistles as well. In **Romans 6:1-14**, Paul's premise clearly begins with a focus on the believer's daily condition, whether or not one should continue to walk in sin since it will lead to receiving of more grace. His premise for no longer walking in sin is the fact of our position being one of which we have been identified with or placed into His death and resurrection.

Paul says that our "old man," our old humanity, who we were in Adam—that old position of being a separated enemy of God—has been crucified with Christ. It's been done away with. That is no longer our identity. He says the moment we accepted Christ as our Savior we were placed into Him. And being placed into Christ means that He is SO much our representative, that the full effects of all He has done and all He's received from God the Father as the result of all He's accomplished, ALL becomes equally ours through our having been placed into Him (**Ephesians 1:3**).

Discussion: What is the current state and standing of Jesus' relationship to sin? Is He controlled by it? Is He under its authority? **No, He is dead to it in the sense that He is free from it.**

The state and standing of His relationship to it is now the state and standing of our relationship to it, too, because we are in Him. Not only has Jesus' death to sin become our death to sin, but Paul goes on to say that Jesus' resurrection to new life has also become our resurrection to new life. Therefore, he says, "even so we should walk in the newness of life." Again, he is stating that our position determines our condition or daily walk.

In verse 6, Paul says we are to know that our old position of being people whose every thought and intent of the heart was only evil from childhood has been crucified, so that the power of sin in our lives could be broken or done away with, and that we'd therefore no longer live as slaves to sin. Again, this emphasizes the progression of knowing what's been done and who we are positionally. In believing it to be true, it will affect us conditionally on a daily basis.

In verses 7-10, Paul goes on to describe more about Jesus' death to sin and therefore OUR death to sin as well, but in verse 11, he says that we are to "reckon" or believe that we are dead to sin and alive unto God. That this is Jesus' state and standing before God, and because we are in Him, it's ours, too; therefore, believe that it's true of you.

In verses 12-14, Paul gives us the results of knowing and believing that these aspects of our new position

in Christ are really true of us—namely, that faith in these facts will enable us to live as those who are alive and in communion with God rather than as those who are slaves to sin.

Faith in these facts of our new standing and position in Christ will enable us to present our bodies as instruments of righteousness, rather than instruments of unrighteousness.

Folks, this is the second part of our salvation which is sanctification or salvation from the power of sin. It's meant to transform the daily condition of our lives. You will notice that it fits the same pattern we saw all the way through the Old Testament, as well as in regard to our justification. Simply faith in what God says He has done!

In order for us to get a glimpse of what our future glorification is going to be like, I think we have to go back and look at the characteristics of Adam's life before the fall. This was the only time in the entire Bible when mankind existed without the presence of sin.

So, let's look at some of the main characteristics of Adam's life at that time and compare it to what God has said is true of us spiritually. God had provided Adam with everything he needed, both physically and spiritually in order for God to enjoy a relationship with him. When Adam was first created, he was just a body until God breathed life into him. Just like Adam, we were spiritually dead and unable to commune with God until He made us alive through Christ.

- **Read 2 Peter 1:3; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 2:1-6.**

Because God had created Adam in His image with a mind, will, and emotions, Adam had the capacity to enjoy a relationship with God, learning about God's love for him and reciprocating that love. Because we have now been made spiritually alive in Christ, we, too, now have the capacity to know God's love for us and love Him in return.

- **Read 1 John 4:19.**

God created the world and everything in it and then He created a special garden, the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve. It contained all they needed to live as well as much that God knew they would enjoy.

- **Read John 14:1-3; 1 Timothy 6:17.**

Adam and Eve were created sinless and perfect, and God could therefore enjoy being with them and they could be in His presence. Because our sin has been paid for in full, we are no longer separated from God. He is free to come out from behind the veil and we are free to enter into His presence.

- **Read Hebrews 4:16; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 1 John 1:3.**

In Genesis, we read that God would come down in the evening, in the cool of the day, and would walk

and fellowship with Adam. Because we have been restored to oneness with God, we can enjoy His fellowship here and now; but one day we will actually enjoy His presence face to face in heaven.

- **Read 2 Corinthians 5:1-7; Revelation 21:1-5.**

Being in the presence of God, walking with God, fellowshiping with God personally, I believe was Adam's reward. Look at what God once told Abraham.

- **Read Genesis 15:1.**

The New Testament talks a lot about rewards that we believers will receive, but nowhere does it actually tell us straight up what those rewards are. When you consider ALL things—the greatness of God, His heart, His grace, the glory and wonder and beauty of Christ, the fact of His great love for mankind and deep, deep desire for relationship—I can't imagine there being a greater reward than finally being with Him, in His presence, with no flesh, for ALL eternity!

This is not to say we are “going back to the Garden.” In fact, our glorification will be far better. God's eternal plan has always been to reconcile us to a relationship that is far better than the one we broke in Adam in the garden. The relationship was creator/creation in his image, fellowship as creator/sinless image bearers, Son of God who as yet knew not humanity, man with the possibility of

rebellion who always had the forbidden fruit as a temptation.

We instead are being reconciled to a far better relationship of Bridegroom and Bride; Christ as the God-man fully knowing the human experience and the church as the Bride of the Lamb in the most intimate relationship with her Bridegroom for eternity, without the presence of that tree of rebellion tempting us to want to be our own gods. Without Christ being at the center of God's unfolding plan, this wouldn't be possible.

Our obedience doesn't contribute to our salvation. In fact, any obedience that we "have" was really His. It's only grace that allows us to be saved and participate in His work, and that Grace is manifested clearly through His spilt blood. That's what saves us—His blood, not our works. This blood is good for every part of our salvation.

Christ has been the FOCUS of God's heart from before the foundations of earth, and from **Genesis 1** on, He has been the focus of all of scripture.

To go deeper into this topic, read through Lessons 40-43 in the full Knowing God curriculum.