

The glorious plan in Christ (Eph 1:7-10)

We just started a new series "In Christ," studying Ephesians. Today we will study from 1:7-10 this time. From v.3 to v.14 is one sentence. It is very long and very rich in content. Actually last time I said I divided it into two. But it's still too long. So, I divided it into three sections. Today's theme is "The glorious plan in Christ" from v.7-10.

1. Forgiveness in the riches of God's grace

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⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

The first thing is: The forgiveness in the riches of God's grace.

When we say "We have redemption and forgiveness," there is something we need to be forgiven. If you think you have no sin, why do you need forgiveness? Why do you need Jesus? There is sin in us.

Here what does "sin" mean? It means to "stray from the right path." It can be the mistake we make without realizing. Or it implies that we deviated from the right path, though we didn't mean to.

Even though we are not deliberately opposing, disobeying or going against God, we still have sin. Although we desire to live God's will, when we realize we find ourselves sinning. It happens.

When we realize we have sinned, we often try to fix the consequences of our sin one way or another. People try to make up for it, somehow try to fix the problem by their own effort. They try to make compensation for it and try to make up for the result of the sin. Do you know why they do that? One of the reasons is this. They are trying to escape from the guilty conscience. They have sinned and caused trouble, now they have this need to forgive themselves.

However, no matter what we do, we cannot erase that guilty conscience. We may convince ourselves by saying, "I have tried this much." However, the guilty conscience wouldn't disappear. We may cover it up, or dismiss it as the thing in the past. Or we may truly forget about it totally. However, the guilty

conscience remains deep down in the unconscious layer of our heart. And we keep blaming ourselves in some ways.

When people blame others, it often comes from the guilty conscience in themselves. The things you can't forgive in yourself, you can't also accept in others. You blame them, but actually you are blaming yourself.

Until we are forgiven, we cannot advance into the freedom from guilty conscience. We should know, feel and experience that we are forgiven for something we've been condemning ourselves for, then we can forgive ourselves. The freedom starts from there. It doesn't depend on what compensation we made. What is important is for us to know, feel and experience we are forgiven by God through Christ. Only then, can we go into the process of forgiving ourselves. And we will be set free. As long as we are still trying to make up for our sins and try to fix the consequences of our sin by ourselves, the guilty conscience will keep troubling us.

This letter was written to Christians. This was written to the faithful saints in Christ Jesus. The "saints" doesn't mean perfect people who never sin, but they are the people who believe that they are redeemed by the blood of Jesus. They know that their sins are forgiven by the sacrifice made by Jesus on the cross. This gospel of the cross, the forgiveness by His grace applies to our every experience in the past and now.

The forgiveness by His grace will reach every part of our being, deep down in our memories, penetrate though our unconscious area of mind. This is the process of coming to know, feel and experience that we are forgiven. This is the process of forgiving ourselves, who were forgiven by God. When we can forgive ourselves, we can forgive others truly. The more we taste His grace of forgiveness, the more we can be gracious to others. So, this is the process of transformation to be more like him, the process of recovering the image of God in us.

We believed in Jesus and were saved. We are His people because we were redeemed by the cross. For this reason, throughout life on this earth, we will apply, receive and experience this "forgiveness by God's grace" with our whole being.

Ps 139:23-24

"Search me, O God, and know my heart; Test me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, And lead me in the

everlasting way." (AMP)

God doesn't want us to keep going on the wicked, offensive, hurtful way, or keep feeling pains. Actually He invites us to join the relationship of the Trinity, where there is perfect harmony and unity. God's way is not just to stop the pain temporarily with paracetamol or something. God wants to apply His gospel to that wounded parts in us, the broken parts that are causing us troubles.

God doesn't want us to be bound by anxiety, for He has redeemed us. We must know that God won't forsake us even when He sees us not able to trust in Him though we want to. God helps us to understand how the cause of anxiety is formed in us and affects our hearts. God will lead us to experience that we don't have to worry when we are in His hands. God will recover our broken parts, which we cannot do anything about ourselves.

God is speaking to you, "You are already forgiven. You don't have to blame yourself any longer." We need to receive the forgiveness of God's grace again and again, and let it reach every part of our being. We will experience this forgiveness of grace from the past to the future all the way through our lives, until the day we see him face to face.

We were dead in our transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1). We were the objects of God's wrath (Eph 2:3). We were His enemies (Rom 5:10). But Jesus died on the cross for us and redeemed us. We were slaves of sin (Rom 6:20). We couldn't do the good we wanted to do, but practiced the evil we didn't want to do (Rom 7:19). But Jesus became our salvation in order to set us free from the slavery. Jesus, God himself, sacrificed his life. The only one who is worthy to receive all praise, glory and honor received curse for us (Gal 3:13). In him, in him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.

This is the riches of God's grace. We are forgiven, accepted and loved by God. He is taking our hands and leading our journey of transformation and sanctification. There is no other grace greater than this. We have received this riches of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

2. Revelation of the mystery of his will

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⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹ he has made known to us

the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ (NRSV)

The second thing is the revelation of the mystery of his will.

Immediately after he mentioned about “the riches of His grace,” Paul says “that he lavished on us.” The riches of His grace is already rich enough. And not only that but also he has given it to us so fully and freely (NCV). He made his grace abound toward us (NKJ). How rich it must be! This is His glorious plan for us. He made us live in this glorious plan.

How is this glorious plan carried out?

“He has made known to us the mystery of His will.” The mystery. People don’t usually reveal the mystery to everyone. Even if we want to know it, it’s not easy for us to know about it. And this is not a human mystery. It is God’s mystery! It is the mystery of God who has created heaven and earth and the whole universe out of nothing, and who is still ruling, governing all of them. His mystery is made known to us.

What is the mystery of God? “This mystery is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:27). We were by birth the objects of God’s wrath. But we were saved by God’s grace. Not only that, but Jesus also lives in us. That is the riches of His grace poured into us and is now overflowing from us. It is so rich that we humans cannot contain it all within us.

Jesus lives in us, you and me. And he will let us know His will. We can directly hear from God, what is deep inside His heart, without any hindrance. We can know God’s will because Jesus, God himself, lives in us and let us know His will. We can feel God’s presence, just like we can feel his heartbeat, the warmth of his embrace. We can directly know how much God cares for us, what he thinks of us, how he feels about us, and how He wants to take care of us. And it is not just we have heard of how wonderful God is from someone somewhere. But He is in us. We can directly feel how great, mighty and faithful He is. It’s amazing!

Think about it. With whom do you want to share your honest thoughts, all your feelings, and what is deep inside your heart? We wouldn’t share that much with someone whom we’ve just met and exchanged email addresses. We would hardly share what we think of or how we feel about very honestly. Those things, we would only share with someone we really trust, with someone who would really understand us, with someone whom we really want to understand us. And now, God wants to share with us that much. How God loves us, trusts us,

cherishes us and desires to be near us! What a rich grace have we received!

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¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment -- to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

All things in heaven and on earth will be gathered together in one in Jesus. God created each one of them. God saw everything He had created and said, "It was very good" (Gen 1:31). The heaven and the earth are expressing how great God is.

But as we live on this earth, in this body, we sometimes encounter incidents that make us think, "Why did it happen?" "Why me?" "This is not fair. This is unreasonable."

In the Old Testament, there is a record about Job. He was blameless, upright, feared the Lord and shunned evil. Not only he himself was upright, but he also made sure that his children will be upright before God. He was rich, but suddenly he lost all of his wealth. He also lost his beloved children. He even lost his health. If I were him I would have thought, "I've always been serving the Lord so sincerely. How could this happen? The Lord has been blessing me so far. Why did He not protect me this time?" His friends were giving him plausible explanations, but he was not convinced. He kept claiming their arguments were not enough.

Through these experiences, he reached this point. "My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you" (Job 42:5). He came to know how great God was. He understood that God had power which no man could understand. He recognized that he was in God's hands and made alive in him.

Everything will be gathered as one under Jesus. He is king of kings and lord of lords, who reigns everything. There comes a day when everything will kneel before Him. This Jesus now lives in us! That is the mystery of his will.

We are only from dust, but God loves us, treasures us and made us alive with Him. This great God revealed himself to us, and led us into fellowship with Him. Is there any plan greater than this?

For LifeNet groups and personal refraction.

- 1) Describe how rich God's grace is. Share if you have any experience of the richness of His grace.
- 2) What is the mystery of God? (Look at Cor 1:27) Why is it so great? And, God revealed it to you. What does it mean to you?
- 3) It is said "to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment (v.10)." What kind of period of time are we in? Through it, what does God speak to you?
- 4) What can you expect when you pray the prayer in Ps 139:23-24?
- 5) Choose one experience of forgiveness or recovery of the image of God in you, and write it down as a 3 minutes sharing note, and share it with someone this week.